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PRESS RELEASE

RMHC Learning Centre supports children with autism, ADHD in its first year

More than 45 children and young people on the autism spectrum and others living with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder were among the first users of the Ronald McDonald House Charities' Learning Centre in Qawra since its official inauguration a year ago.

During its first year, RMHC partnered with several organisations including ADHD Malta and the Autism Parents Association allowing them access to its purpose-built premises to provide support services to young clients and their families or carers. The charity also worked closely with the University of Malta's counselling, mental health, and literacy departments to host a variety of programmes and services.

A total of 65 counselling sessions for parents and children were held at the Learning Centre in 2019 and earlier this year. More than 30 parents and carers participated in a specific programme providing them with the skills and strategies required to support children with ADHD.

The charity also welcomed anti-bullying NGO bBrave and the Inspire Foundation which will begin to hold activities at the centre soon. In early 2020, RMHC collaborated with Malta's National Literacy Agency to host groups of parents, caregivers, and children for reading activities and courses on language development. Talks are also under way with other organisations in order to extend RMHC's reach in the community.

Through its Learning Centre, RMHC seeks to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable children or those in need of educational support. Covering an area of 360-square metres, the centre features training rooms and activity areas, including a fully equipped learning kitchen, for children and teens with learning or social challenges, as well as their families.

Last March, due to the risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, RMHC suspended its programmes and instead partnered with Caritas Malta to support the delivery of Solidarity Meals provided by The Alfred Mizzi Foundation. With volunteers from Hili Ventures, McDonald's staff, and sponsors, more than 50 cooked meals were packed at the Learning Centre daily to be delivered by Caritas' helpers to families in the local area adversely impacted by the crisis.

“In our first year we are proud to have been able to support children and families to cope with social and educational challenges. COVID-19 has changed the world, and over the last few months we have adapted the way in which we help the community in line with our mission to keep families close,” RMHC Malta Chairman Martin Xuereb said.

The Malta Chapter of RMHC is part of the Ronald McDonald House Charities global network which delivers programmes and services in more than 65 countries, benefitting the lives of millions of children and their families around the world. RMHC has enjoyed the support of the McDonald’s system – owners, operators, suppliers, employees and customers – around the world since it was established in 1974. RMHC Malta’s leading benefactor is Premier Restaurants Malta, the operator of nine McDonald’s restaurants in Malta and Gozo.

About Ronald McDonald House Charities in Malta

The Ronald McDonald House Charities Malta Chapter is committed to give children access to specialised support to enable them to pursue their education and enrich their lives. It creates, funds and supports programmes to directly improve the health and wellbeing of children at its purpose-built Learning Centre in Qawra to serve children challenged by poverty, disability and learning difficulties. On its own and in partnership with other organisations, RMHC offers educational and therapeutic programmes to assist children and young people gain the core skills and competences necessary for adulthood.

The Ronald McDonald House Charities is an international non-profit network with a mission to keep families with sick children close to each other and to the care and resources they need (www.rmhc.org). McDonald’s has been the RMHC’s Mission Partner since the first Ronald McDonald House was built in Philadelphia in 1974. RMHC delivers programmes and services in more than 65 countries and regions and impacts the lives of millions of children and their families around the world every year.

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