

22nd January 2021

PRESS RELEASE

Children, adults and care professionals use RMHC Learning Centre facilities in 2020

More than 120 children and young people with diverse needs benefitted from programmes and hundreds of sessions hosted by the Ronald McDonald House Charities Learning Centre in Qawra last year as the centre diversified and adapted its services to stay close to the community despite the difficult circumstances in 2020.

The Learning Centre's mission is to safeguard the well-being of children or young people in need of educational support. The centre features training rooms, activity areas, and a learning kitchen for children and teens with learning or social challenges, as well as their families.

A total of 270 sessions and activities took place in 2020, with 91 aimed at supporting Caritas Malta in the delivery of Solidarity Meals provided by The Alfred Mizzi Foundation. With volunteers from Hili Ventures and McDonald's staff and sponsors, more 3,500 cooked meals were packed at the Learning Centre over three months to be delivered by Caritas' volunteers to families in Malta's northern region.

Additionally, 124 children and young people participated in the Learning Centre's programmes; 45 young clients are on the autism spectrum and others live with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. Furthermore 92 parents participated in training programmes and activities with the support of 95 professionals. Self-care, communication, socialization, emotions, problem-solving, elements of mindfulness were some of the topics covered by ADHD Malta at the Learning Centre, through the Social Smarts 2020 programme. More than 550 hours of training took place at the Learning Centre.

RMHC continued to support ADHD Malta to raise awareness about the condition and the Learning Centre served as a virtual exhibition space for works of art produced by adults and children with ADHD. RMHC also partnered several organisations, including the Richmond Foundation and Smiling with Jerome Foundation, by offering its facilities for their activities. Hundreds of 'Chemo Bags of Hope' were packed with essentials at the Learning Centre to be delivered to cancer patients. The centre also hosted children from the Richmond Foundation's KIDS Programme with all safety protocols strictly in place.

During 2020 students from the Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology were hosted at the Learning Centre to attend training on 'student to student' support, a programme leading to the launch of a peer mentoring scheme at the college. Anti-bullying charity bBrave delivered an online press event from the Learning Centre to launch the anti-bullying week and campaign.

In collaboration with Malta's National Literacy Agency the centre hosted parent groups for a five-week programme on young children's language development. RMHC was also instrumental in the opening of Caritas' Tal-Ibwar Adolescent Therapeutic Services Centre by hosting Caritas professionals as they finalised their preparatory work on programmes for their own young clients while their new premises were being finished. With the University of Malta's Department of Counselling, the Learning Centre accommodated free counselling sessions in person and virtually to all of the organisations with which RMHC works.

"Like all aspect of our lives, COVID-19 has brought significant changes to RMHC Malta's Learning Centre. Over 2020 we continued adapting 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 hosts 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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