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THE LOOK *of* LOVE

*The SFDC and Ronald McDonald House at Stanford's Landmark Partnership
Brings Together 48 Designers to Create Beautiful, Healing Spaces*

By ANH-MINH LE

Photography by KEITH SCOTT MORTON

IN 2013, RHONDA HIRATA, vice president of marketing for the San Francisco Design Center (SFDC), heard Cary Kravet, of the venerable home furnishings company that bears his surname, speak about the Ronald McDonald House of Long Island. Kravet was spearheading the interior redesign of the House, enlisting industry heavy-hitters to contribute design services, entirely pro-bono.

Hirata came away inspired. Later that year, as she considered the SFDC's philanthropic efforts, she thought of the Ronald McDonald House at Stanford, and reached out. "I thought if they could do it on Long Island with designers like Bunny Williams, Jamie Drake and Anthony Baratta — we could replicate in San Francisco with our amazing community of designers," explains Hirata.

It just so happens that at the very same time, the local House was embarking on a 52,000-square-foot expansion adjacent to its existing building on Sand Hill Road. Laura Boudreau, the House's COO, recalls her initial conversations with Hirata: "I was immediately excited about the possibility — it seemed such a natural fit. We had always been concerned about how to make this very large building feel like home, and here was a chance to engage the design community to help."

And so "Where Hope Has A Home" was born (wherehopehasahome.com). An 18-month, strategic philanthropic initiative, the program would engage 48 Bay Area design firms to create spaces for the house, entirely pro bono. Hirata tapped Geoffrey De Sousa, principal of his eponymous design firm and co-founder of design

showroom De Sousa Hughes, and Beth Martin, founder of Martin Group, to lead the design side.

For Martin, it was a no-brainer. "In the Bay Area, we're so blessed to have the economy that we do, the clients that we have, and many opportunities," she says. "The reason this project is so interesting, is that we have a wonderful charity that absolutely relates to interior design. So by using our talents and our skills in the best possible way, we are able to give back to the community."

Hirata, De Sousa and Martin and the designers ultimately brought nearly 100 extraordinary spaces into existence. In addition to 67 bedrooms with bathrooms en suite, the expansion encompassed kitchens, dining areas, activity rooms, a garden and other communal amenities.

"I would call people," recounted De Sousa of his outreach, "and without even finishing my schpiel, they would said they'd do it. We really have been fortunate to get some amazing people from the industry involved."

For example, award-winning hospitality design firm BAMO undertook the entry and lobby spaces. "It was easy to see what a great opportunity this was to contribute to a wonderful cause of lasting value," said Gerry Jue, a principal at the San Francisco firm. His team, in particular senior associate Anne Wilkinson, was quick to sign up and take the lead. "What was most exciting," he continued, "was the opportunity to create the 'front door' experience for the entire House, one that conveys comfort,



KRISTI WILL
HOME + DESIGN
DINING ROOM

inclusiveness and support — a home away from home.”

Added Wilkinson: “We tried very hard not to make the space feel institutional, but comfortable and inviting. Our lobby is meant to promote a sense of community spirit and shared experience.”

What was delivered was an absolutely exceptional House featuring the finest in residential interior design. The spaces include a quartet of bedrooms by Kelly Hohla Interiors that features art from San Francisco’s blue-chip Dolby Chadwick Gallery; Brian Dittmar’s stylish sitting room showcasing furnishings by Lee Industries; and Nicole Saraille’s bedroom, made cozy with chic furniture and accessories by Serena and Lily.

Notes Los Altos-based Sindhu Peruri of her bedroom, “I wanted the colors and the mood of the room to be such that the family walking inside to make this their home felt fresh and uplifted, yet calm and serene.” Peruri commissioned A-list decorative painter Willem Racké to create an abstract landscape on the headboard wall. Additional artwork—a series of glicée prints with whimsical animals—was donated by New York painter Pam Smilow.

Although each design firm brought its own style to the project, the common thread is a home-like, rather than hotel-like, atmosphere. The House’s CEO Annette Eros called attention to one spot that is particularly imaginative: the Toddler Room devised by Reba Jones of Butler Armsden Architects. “It was designed to keep children entertained by transporting them to the seaside,” says Eros of the space, which features an undulating custom wooden seating struc-

ture, and a whimsical hand-painted wall mural by children’s book illustrator Lark Pien. “It’s a completely flexible space that provides a whimsical environment to stimulate imagination and fun,” she adds.

The designers also had to observe rigorous health guidelines on the project. Because the House would be home to children with autoimmune deficiencies, one of the main considerations was infection control, and designers adhered to strict criteria in selecting materials.

Designers also made extraordinary fundraising efforts. Because the House’s budget for décor was limited, all of the designers fundraised and secured donations. Many of them produced special fundraisers engaging friends, family and community. Kristi Will, who designed the dining room, raised over \$200,000 for her undertaking. Laura Martin Bovard held a live auction to help reach her goal of \$40,000 for a pair of family guestrooms.

The Ronald McDonald House organization has long benefited from generous partners and collaborators, and the expansion was no different. Generous design industry brands also donated or reduced pricing on many furnishings and materials. For example, Poggenpohl donated all of the cabinetry for the family, volunteer and prep kitchens. Cosentino, Romo, JAB, Robert Allen, Lee Industries and many other companies all donated or offered deep discounts.

Design work culminated in late 2015, and families moved into the fabulous new building in April. Boudreau notes, “Thanks to the care and creativity of these designers, and the quality of the materials and furnishings that were donated, we have something truly special.”



MELINDA MANDELL INTERIOR DESIGN GUEST ROOM

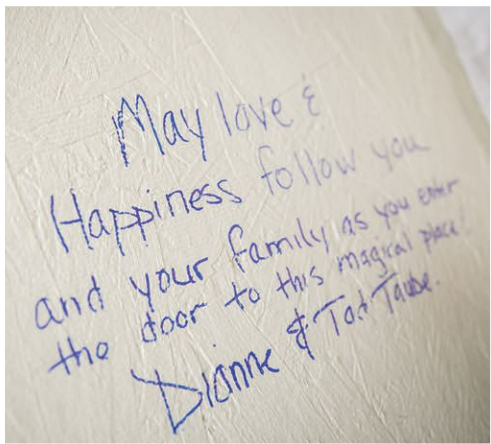
"The mission of RMHS hits a very personal note for me," says Melinda Mandell. "As a child, I was hospitalized at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, with a life-changing diagnosis. Having a safe place to retreat and recoup is essential." In the two bedrooms that she designed, she opted for soothing colors, with references to animals and nature. The furniture and fabrics include family-friendly selections from Robert Allen, colorful pillows in Lee Jofa textiles, and bedding from Serena & Lily.

KATHY BEST DESIGN

LAUNDRY ROOM Kathy Best transformed a pair of laundry rooms on the second floor into cheery spaces. The window shades, in the Chivasso fabric Birdsong, and made by Susan Lind Chastain, have a colorful avian motif. Best also incorporated childrens' areas in the spaces complete with toy washers, dryers and ironing boards, as well as books. Pottery Barn and JAB Anstoetz are among the vendors she worked with.



EVENTS



RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE top row, left to right: Matt Gallagher and Melinda Mandell; Geoffrey De Sousa, Rhonda Hirata and Elizabeth Martin; Jamie Belew and Cecilia Sagrera-Hill ; Message from Donors Dianne and Tad Taube; Gerry Jue and Anne Wilkinson; Geoffrey De Sousa and Elizabeth Martin; Annette Eros ; Donors and Designers