MGVs @ Work Ronald McDonald House Secret Garden
by MGV Ann Phillips

The Ronald McDonald House Secret Garden designed by Vicky Garcia has been a SEWMG approved project since 2002. We now have 18 gardeners in the Garden every weather-worthy day, from April through November.

The House began with 25 rooms, added 13 long-term rooms and in 2014 expanded into a total of 70 rooms! The Secret Garden has also expanded. The Brewer's Community Foundation gave us a beautiful playground and Randy Wolf financed a patio, grilling area and raised vegetable gardens. Eagle Scouts built a playhouse we tucked into a grove of Austrian Pines. We helped repurpose a room in the House, named it the Green Room and filled it with plants from NASA's Clean Air Study.

A four-season garden, the families enjoy its back yard and interactive garden. We garden with them and staff in the vegetable gardens and have Family Garden Education Programs all year. We have an Alphabet Garden of perennials, a Fairy Garden, a Mesozoic Garden of living fossil plants, a redesigned water feature island, an updated sprinkler and lighting system. Already a certified National Wildlife Backyard Habitat, we are working to become a Monarch Way Station. We have an organic garden specializing in Native Wisconsin plants. The families enjoy picking berries and ripened tomatoes, and using other fresh vegetables and herbs in cooking their meals.

The Secret Garden provides comfort, pleasure, rejuvenation and peace to staff, volunteers and guest families. A memorial plant is chosen for each child who passes away. Since 2011 we have planted 60 plants, each with a heart and the name of the child. We write to the families, send photos and let them know we will always remember. Families come back to visit the garden, photograph their plant and experience again the comfort the Secret a Garden gives. The Garden speaks when there are no words.

Contact Ann Phillips nana@milwpc.com if you’d like to volunteer.