

‘Like’ Goes a Long Way for Food Check-Out Week

By Cyndie Sirekis

Social media campaigns and promotions are proliferating on the Internet these days, but now and then one that is truly worthwhile pops up.

In the coming weeks, consider supporting a joint Facebook page of the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Soybean Checkoff. The page was created to promote Food Check-Out Week (Feb. 20-26), which celebrates the abundance and safety of food in the U.S. Again this year, the theme of the week is “Stretching Your Food Dollar with Healthy, Nutritious Food.”

AFBF will donate \$1 to the [Ronald McDonald House of Roanoke](#) in Virginia for every person who “likes” the Facebook page—www.facebook.com/NationalFoodCheckoutWeek—by the end of April, up to \$3,500. The money raised will go to a very worthwhile cause, as the House provides 9,000 meals for critically ill children and their families each year.

In fact, about 11,000 people are served each year by the Ronald McDonald House of Roanoke, which is approximately three blocks from [Carilion Clinic Children’s Hospital](#). The House provides lodging and meals for up to 18 families each day, 365 days per year.

“The Roanoke House does an outstanding job of helping families in need on a very limited budget,” said Terry Gilbert, chair of the AFB Women’s Leadership Committee.

Ronald McDonald Houses (and Ronald McDonald Rooms inside some hospitals) provide a “home away from home” for critically ill children undergoing medical treatment and their parents. But beyond that, they are a safe haven where parents of sick children can be with others who understand their situation and are able to provide emotional support.

One way families find a touch of comfort and familiarity at the Roanoke House and other Ronald McDonald Houses is through the meals program. Something as simple as a hot, prepared meal each evening can bring a sense of normalcy to families in an otherwise upside-down world.

A family member familiar with the house made this comment: “In a life full of ups and downs, it is nice to know there is a place we can all be together when our son is sick, a place that has wonderful staff, clean rooms, hot meals and offers us the feeling of home. Thank you RMH for making one of the hardships of life with a special needs child a little more bearable.”

That’s where the Food Check-Out Week Facebook promotion comes in. By going online and clicking to “like” the page, everyone can help the Ronald McDonald House of Roanoke.

On the page, you’ll find more information about how Ronald McDonald Houses around the nation help seriously ill children undergoing medical treatment and their families. Photos, articles, videos and links to related Web sites about nutrition, smart grocery shopping strategies and animal agriculture also are available.

In addition to the Facebook effort, AFBF will promote Food Check-Out Week through activities involving many Farm Bureaus at local and state levels across the U.S.

On the national level, the AFB Women's Leadership Committee will staff sampling stations at supermarkets and distribute educational information to shoppers. The committee also will make cash and food donations to the Ronald McDonald House in Jackson, Miss., this year in addition to going to a local school to teach children about nutrition and where the food they eat comes from.

The third week of February was selected for Food Check-Out Week as a bridge to National Nutrition Month in March.