

**'Fan Up' for Food Check-Out Week**  
*By Terry Gilbert*

If you're involved in social media, something you'll want to be on the lookout for and consider supporting in February is a new joint Facebook fan page of the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Soybean Checkoff. The page was created to promote Food Check-Out Week (Feb. 21-27), 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" in recognition of current economic conditions.

AFBF will donate \$1 to the Galveston Ronald McDonald House in Texas for every person who becomes a fan of the new Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/NationalFoodCheckoutWeek](http://www.facebook.com/NationalFoodCheckoutWeek) — by the end of February, up to \$5,000. The money raised will go to a very worthwhile cause, as the House sustained major structural damage due to flooding during Hurricane Ike.

Ronald McDonald Houses (and 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.

Margie Chavarria, executive director of the Galveston RMH, says repairing the two elevators in the house that were damaged remains a critical priority. With the elevators out of service, some families had to be turned away, unless the parents were able to carry their ill children in wheelchairs up and down three flights of stairs.

What's more, the devastation to the small island of Galveston resulted in one-third of the residents leaving their community for good. Many of the local residents that remain lost their own homes and businesses. Although their hearts are with the Ronald McDonald House that has long served patients of pediatric acute care hospitals in the area, they're simply not in a position to donate cash, food or much-needed supplies.

That's where the Food Check-Out Week "fan up" Facebook promotion comes in. By going online and becoming fans of the page, everyone can help the Galveston Ronald McDonald House along the road to being a fully functioning asset to the community.

On the page, you'll find more information about how the Galveston RMH and others 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 new "fan-up" Facebook effort, AFBF will promote Food Check-Out Week through activities involving 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 Ronald McDonald Houses in Wichita, Kan., this year in addition to going to a local school to teach children about nutrition and who produces the food they eat.

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