

SOCIETY

Smooth sailing for Ronald McDonald

The Ronald McDonald House has gone from hosting its annual gala at such varied spots as airport hangars and the Detroit Institute of Arts to this year's venue — the Ovation Yacht on the Detroit River.

Thing is, on this inaugural boating expedition on Sept. 11, Mother Nature did her Michigan thing by dumping an unexpected steady rain over Detroit for several straight hours.



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And, as if it were pre-arranged, at exactly 7 p.m., when the boat was scheduled to depart, the rain stopped. From there, it was smooth sailing.

The 250 diehard partygoers were greeted at the valet station at GM Renaissance by attendants wielding black and gray umbrellas.



Ricardo Thomas / The Detroit News

From left, Sabrina Smith-Campbell of Detroit and John and Miriam Samani of Bloomfield Hills chat with Ronald McDonald at an annual gala that raises funds for the Ronald McDonald House of Ann Arbor and Detroit.

Food stations were set up offering carved tenderloin and turkey, along with a pasta station, a cheese and veggie station,

and a shrimp station. Most of the action took place on the lower level, where recording artist Kimmie Horne dazzled

guests with her exciting Las Vegas-style show.

As the evening's emcee, WXYZ-TV anchor Diana Lewis



Local restaurant owners contributing to the evening event: Marla Thrower of Detroit, Dave Younger of Franklin, Claude Murphy of Novi and Trisha Stanton of Birmingham.

navigated the crowd through the program. She, along with Trevor Lauer, Michael Layne and Tom Moroch, were honorary chairs.

The event was hosted by the Southeast Michigan McDonald's Operators Association and sponsored by DTE Energy.

"This is always a fun party, and the work they do at Ronald McDonald House is remarkable," said David Younger, who owns several McDonald's franchises and was on the gala host committee. "And it's important for us

to show the commitment to community that the Operators Association has."

Guests paid \$250 each with proceeds benefiting Ronald McDonald House of Ann Arbor and Detroit. Ronald McDonald House provides a home away from home for families of children hospitalized for serious illness or injury.

Chuck Bennett is a Metro Detroit freelance writer and host of Style Minute, which airs twice daily on WGPR (107.5-FM).