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Ronald McDonald House finds its secret gardener

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When the chief operating officer of the Ronald McDonald House was negotiating with Rady Children's Hospital over the charity's move from a hospital building into newly built quarters on hospital property down the block, she asked if Children's would continue to pay for their landscaping.

A gardener had been stopping by regularly to mow grass, trim hedges, pull weeds and prune flowers.

"They didn't know what I was talking about," said COO Sandra Camarillo. "We tracked the man down and found out he had been doing this for the last 18 years — for free."

The soft-spoken gardener, in his 50s or 60s, refuses pay and doesn't want recognition for his contribution. Bill Lennartz, CEO of the Ronald McDonald House, which provides a home away from home for families visiting their seriously ill children, asked him why he does it.

"He is so appreciative of what we do for these families in need," Lennartz said. "It's just his way of saying, 'Thank you.'"

When the charity moved into its new home in late July, Camarillo asked the gardener if he would continue his work at

the new facility.

Sure enough, he quietly showed up, clippers in hand.

Bill on the run

The Presidential Suite of the Hilton Bayfront hotel lived up to its name last Wednesday. Former President Bill Clinton occupied it while preparing to address the National Business Travel Association's annual conference. It was his second trip to San Diego for a speaking engagement last month, days after returning from North Korea, where he negotiated the release of two imprisoned American journalists.

The Brady Bunch

When Mary Alice Brady turned 65 last year, her husband, Ron, focused on buying a meaningful present.

Mary Alice loves foster children, having been raised by a foster family from the age of 8. So Ron, a longtime La Mesa contractor, set up a \$250,000 endowment with Walden Family Services, which finds homes for special-needs children and hard-to-place teens. The interest would be spent to create care kits annually for needy youngsters entering foster care.

The Bradys, with eight children and 24 grandchildren between them, bought items for the kits throughout the year. Last week, about 40 family members and friends gathered to fill 260 rolling duffel bags with such items as backpacks, disposable cameras, photo albums, blankets, clock/calculators, teddy bears, and other items, depending on the age. It's the Bradys' way of giving back.

San Diegans Ink

San Diego Councilman **Kevin Faulconer's** aide, **Stephen Puetz**, is moving to Connecticut to help run **Tom Foley's** Senate campaign. **Brian Pepin**, former aide to **John McCann**, a Chula Vista councilman and Navy reservist recently deployed to Iraq, is stepping into Puetz's post next week. ...

San Diego Junior Theatre alumnus **Christian Hoff**, an original cast member of Broadway's "Jersey Boys," returned to his roots yesterday to give a master class for the local acting program he entered at age 8.

He will perform some "Jersey Boys" tunes in a Sept. 12 benefit concert in Balboa Park's Casa del Prado theater. For tickets, go to juniortheatre.com or call (619) 239-8355.

"I am so excited to return to the very stage that launched my journey to Broadway and my Tony Award," said Hoff, who is now in the cast of "Parade," debuting Sept. 24 in Los Angeles.

San Diego Junior Theatre, founded in 1948, has spawned several other talented alumni. Among them are actors **Dennis Hopper**, **Raquel Welch**, **Annette Bening** and the late **Victor Buono**; **Gore Verbinski**, director of all three "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies; and **Casey Nicholaw**, choreographer for the Broadway production of "Monty Python's Spamalot."

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