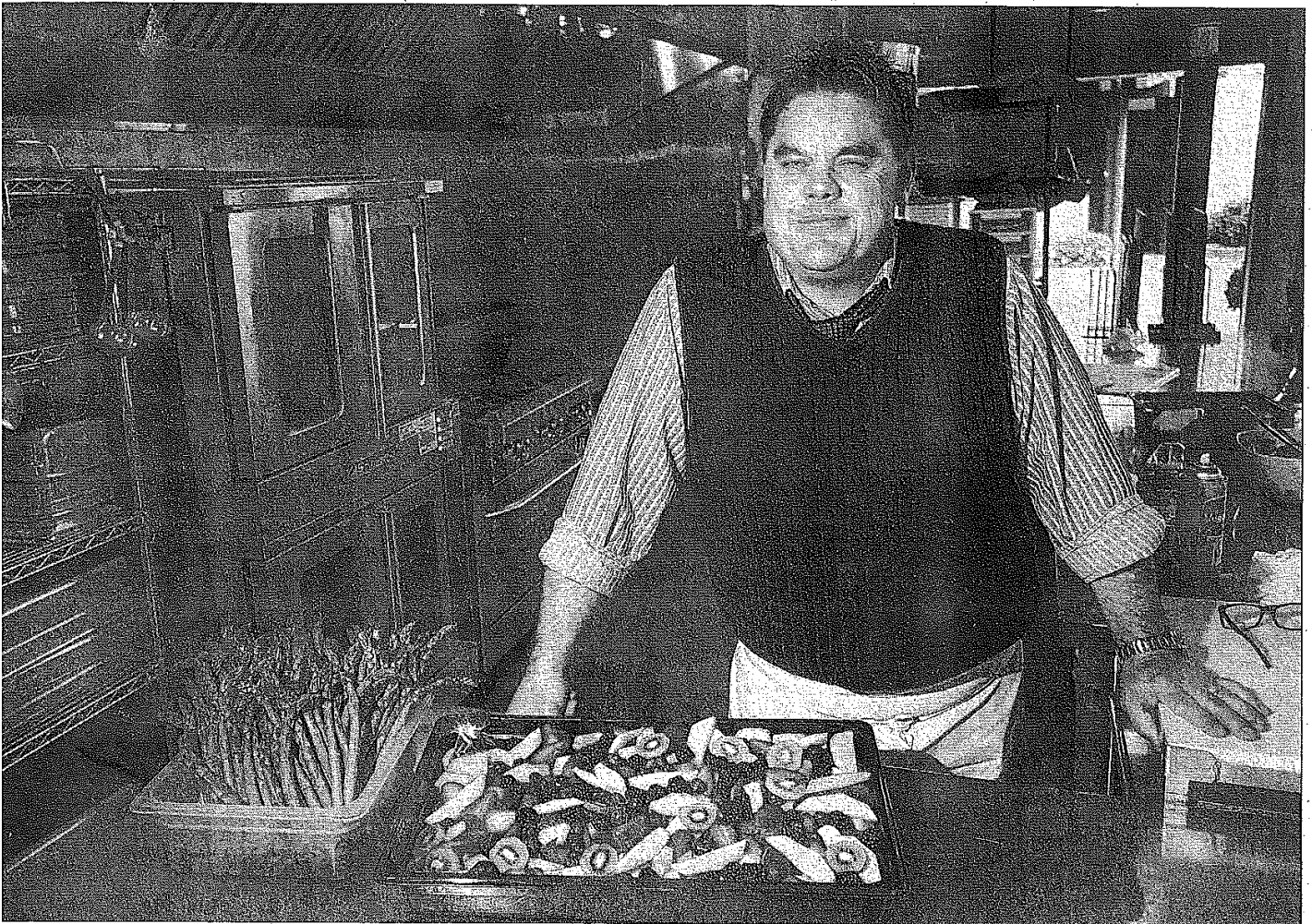


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UNSUNG HEROES • A DAILY NEWS SPECIAL FEATURE

“Whenever (the families) see WestFresh on the calendar, they say, ‘Oh my god, that’s the really good one. I’m going to that one.’”

SARAH REICHANADTER,
FAMILY ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR FOR THE RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE IN PALO ALTO, ON SCOTT PARSONS’ CATERING COMPANY



Kirstina Sangsahachart / Daily News

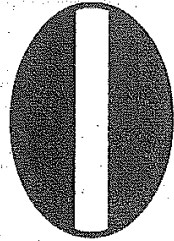
Scott Parsons poses at his catering business, WestFresh Catering, in Los Altos on Thursday. As co-owner of WestFresh, Parsons has provided meals once a month to the Ronald McDonald House in Palo Alto for the past four years. He also fulfills last-minute requests at the charity.

Not a meal to miss

Partner of a catering company and kitchen staple in his own right, Scott Parsons lends his culinary talents to the Ronald McDonald House, where he spoils families with fine dining

By Jesse Dungan • Daily News Staff Writer

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On the day before Christmas two years ago, Scott Parsons went to his catering business in Palo Alto and finished preparing a dinner for more than 100 people that he later delivered to the Ronald McDonald House.

"On that holiday, he wanted us all to have the day off," said Amaury Macareno, Parsons' friend since high school and manager of WestFresh Catering, which today is located in Los Altos. "He did it himself."

And because he did, Parsons didn't get to spend much time that Christmas Eve with his wife Farah Parsons and 7-year-old daughter Michelle.

But Michelle, now 9, recalls her dad's decision as the good deed it was.

"To this day, that's one of the proudest things she knows about her dad," Farah Parsons said.

In his modest way, though, Scott Parsons brushes off the accolades by noting that his colleagues did some of the cooking and other preparations the day before.

Parsons, 47, of Mountain View, bounced around kitchens much of his life before establishing WestFresh Catering, whose employees include some family members and longtime friends.

Since January 2007, WestFresh Catering has provided free meals to the Ronald McDonald House every last Thursday of the month. The house typically accommodates about 200 guests — the families of children with life-threatening illnesses who are treated at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital.

Parsons can be seen most days through the glass storefront of his business at 4546 El Camino Real whipping up macaroni and cheese or any other number of dishes for his many clients. "I was a child dishwasher and never left the field," he said.

He moved around a lot when young, got his first job washing dishes in a St. Peter, Minn., kitchen, and worked at the Fish Market and a French restaurant in Palo Alto while attending Menlo-Atherton High School. He says his work at restaurants "snowballed into catering."

He dismisses taking any credit for his volunteer work, noting his wife Farah is the real hero. "My wife's really the charitable branch of what we do."

But Farah Parsons won't have any of that. "If he didn't dedicate himself, I couldn't say yes."

Sarah Reichanadter, a family activities coordinator for the Ronald McDonald House who nominated Scott Parsons as a Daily News "unsung hero," says that although there are hundreds of volunteers, Parsons sticks out because of his commitment and consistency.

"He's definitely one of them who's been extremely faithful about coming every month and just willing to help us out whenever we need an extra meal," she said.

And the food he serves is pretty popular too.

"Whenever they see WestFresh on the calendar, they say, 'Oh my god, that's the really good one. I'm going to that one,'" Reichanadter said.

Farah Parsons said the idea to partner with the house was hatched at a Palo Alto-Menlo Park mother's club she joined after her daughter was born. A club member led food drives for the house and Farah Parsons thought she and her husband could take it a step further. So they reached out.

"We thought it was something that was right up our alley and that we had the bandwidth to do such a thing," Scott Parsons said. "We had done similar things in the past and we felt we could do something for them."

He added that the children and families the Ronald McDonald House serves make it an easy call.

"We try not to bore them," Parsons said. "They get a full range of cuisine. They may have French food, they may have Mexican food, they may have barbecue."

EDITOR'S NOTE

Several months ago, we asked you to let us know who among you are unsung heroes — the people whose deeds quietly touch others' lives in positive ways yet seldom get the recognition they deserve. Thanks to your responses, we are featuring these special people once a month in this section.