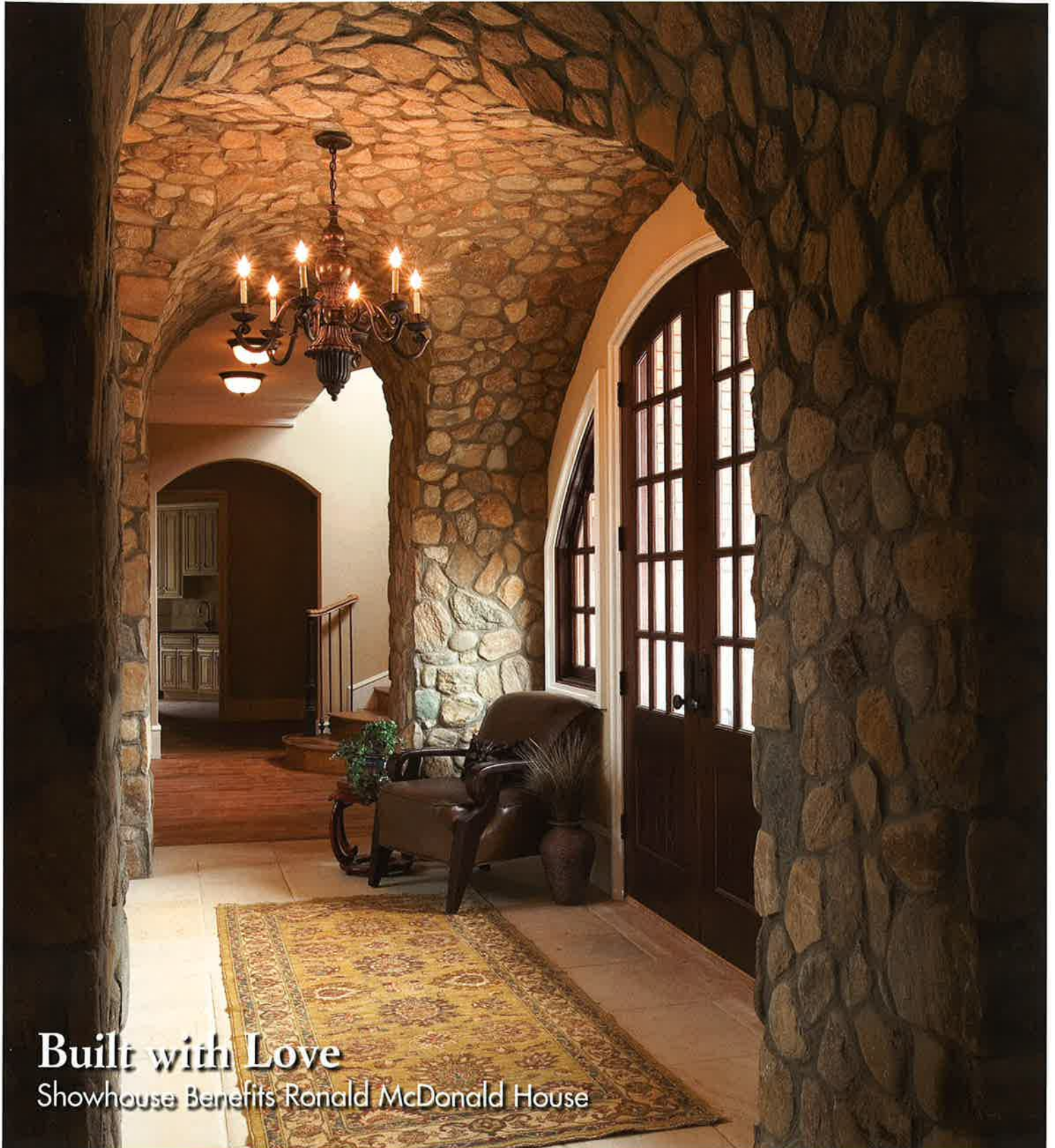


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CUSTOM HOME

CHARLOTTE'S COMPLETE GUIDE TO BUILDING OR REMODELING YOUR CUSTOM HOME



Built with Love

Showhouse Benefits Ronald McDonald House



The Charity Estate to benefit the Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte will delight visitors with an updated European interior by interior designer Robbie Warren. Among the surprises are chrome lighting fixtures and circular backsplash tiles that lend modern appeal to this classically styled kitchen.

Built With Love

Showhouse Benefits Ronald McDonald House

By Trish Stukbauer • Photography by Matt Silk

Custom builder Jeff Conger is painfully familiar with the difficulties faced by families whose loved ones are hospitalized with serious illnesses. So when interior designer Robbie Warren approached him about creating a charity estate to benefit the construction of a Ronald McDonald House in Charlotte, his response was enthusiastic.

"I had always wanted to create a show home for a reputable charity. When Robbie brought the idea to us, we were immediately on board, and we quickly got together with residential designer Jim Phelps of Carolina Design Group to create the home," says the owner of Conger Builders, Inc.

The result of their collaboration is a striking \$2.65 million estate of more than 8,000 heated square feet that was inspired by Scottish manor homes. Proceeds generated from estate tours and facility rentals, as well as a significant portion of the profits from the sale

of this estate, will fund the construction of the Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte, which will be built near medical facilities on Morehead Street.

The theme of the charity estate stems from the home's location in Skycroft and the team's desire to create something unique. "When you're doing a showhouse like this, you want to show people something different. Skycroft is a Scottish-themed community, so we wanted the home to have that feel," Conger says. That begins with the exterior Phelps envisioned. "We used a large round stone that's a true building stone. The home has a modified Tudor design, with v-groove cedar paneling inside rough cedar borders, which is different from anything seen in Charlotte before," Conger says.

That will be evident as soon as visitors step across the threshold and enter the foyer, where the walls and a modified groin vault ceiling



Unique touches can be found throughout the Scottish country estate created by Conger Builders, such as the distinctive placement of the balusters on this curving staircase.

are all crafted of stone. "The interior is quite grand," Warren says, describing stone fireplaces and distressed cabinets that add to the aged appearance. Yet she and her design team have surprises in store. "When you look at European design magazines, they have a different twist on what we term Old World style. In Europe, they take these great old houses and update them. The features that stay true to the architecture are the permanent ones – such as fireplaces and floors, but they update homes with modern paint colors, fabrics and lighting. Here we build new homes and make them look old, but that's not truly what an old house looks like. We're striving to create the illusion that this is an old home that's been updated."

That's displayed in places such as the master bath, where extensive wood panels conceal built-in shelving. "The false walls provide wonderful storage, while the room looks like a library in a castle that has been converted into a master bath," she says. Other touches, like round backsplash tiles and



Updated furniture and surprising colors give the interiors the look of a European manor that has been thoughtfully refreshed over the years.

The Charity

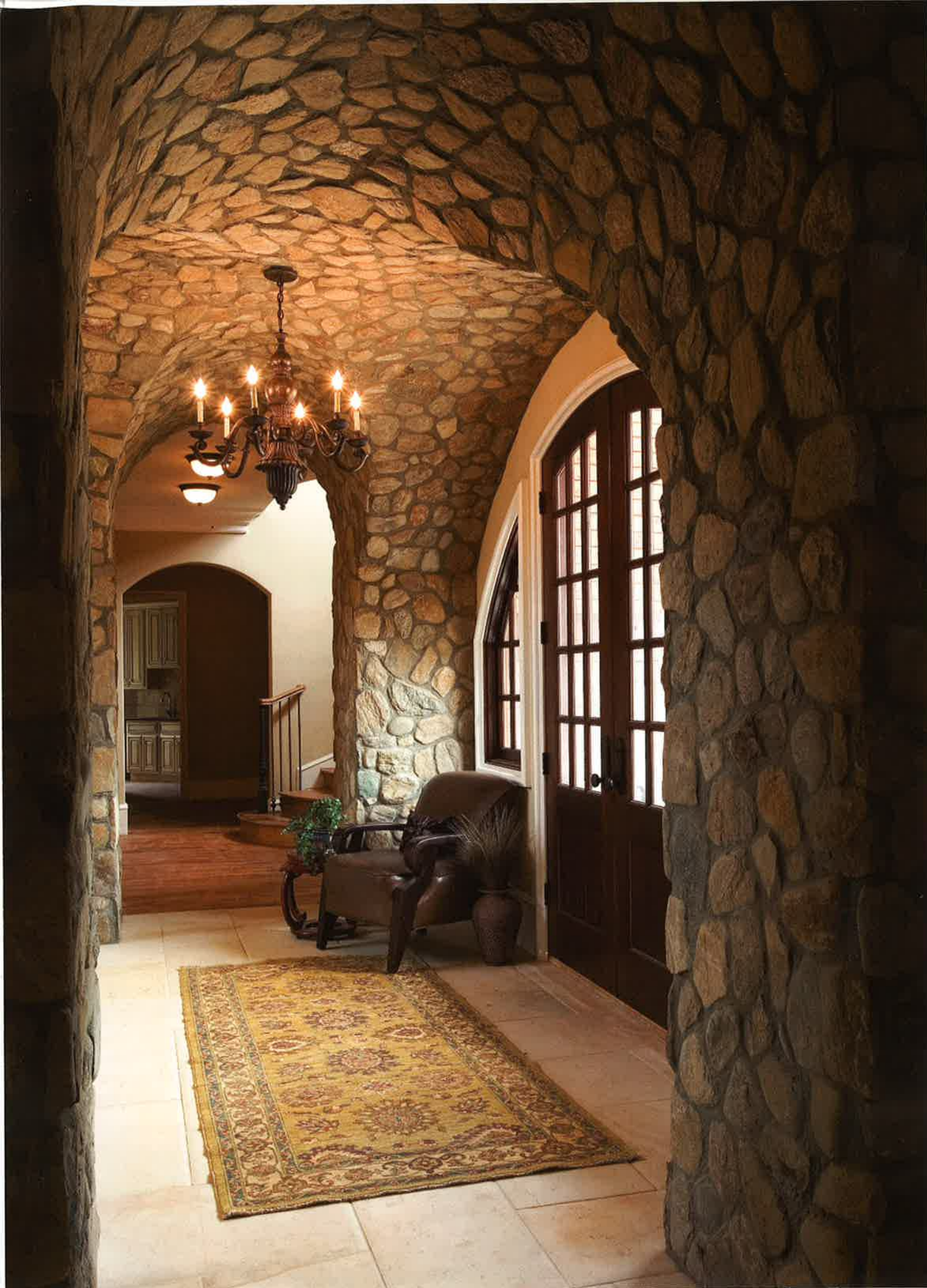
Love is the strongest medicine.

When a child's life is at stake, doctors can offer treatments, but medical professionals agree that the ongoing love and support of his or her family have essential healing qualities. To reach specialized treatment facilities, families sometimes must travel many miles from home for long periods of time. That's where Ronald McDonald Houses step in to provide a welcoming and affordable home away from home for families near children's hospitals.

In spring 2008, Charlotte will join the hundreds of cities that take that extra step to care for families of sick children. Levine Children's Hospital is fast becoming one of the top pediatric medical facilities on the east coast. Its more than 240 beds for ill children result in many family members who need a temporary home. Presbyterian Hospital is also on track to double its current practice, adding substantially to the number of ill children treated.

To address these needs, the 30,000-square-foot Charlotte Ronald McDonald House is being built, and will ultimately have 21 suites for families in need. The Charlotte Ronald McDonald House will be sustained through a network of volunteers and community support. Generous contributions by individuals and corporations have enabled plans for the house to come to life. However, more help is needed to support both the construction and the ongoing workings of the house, for which ground will be broken this winter.

To learn more about how you can help Charlotte build a legacy of caring for families in need, visit www.rmhofcharlotte.org or call (704) 361-4379.



Above: Luxurious bedding, comfortable furnishings and elegant touches such as a crystal chandelier create a welcome retreat in the master suite.

Left: As soon as they walk in the imposing front doors, visitors will feel as if they have stepped onto the Scottish moors, thanks to architectural details like this stone foyer.

chrome lighting fixtures give the kitchen a modern, updated feel, while its architecture harkens back to the past. "There's a main kitchen and a scullery kitchen. In Europe, scullery kitchens were used by servants. For modern families, that space now becomes an ideal prep kitchen for caterers, with a microwave, sink and under counter washer and dryer for linens and tablecloths."

Throughout the home, the fabrics are a sophisticated surprise. "The colors and fabrics are brighter and create an upbeat look. We have aqua blues, apricot bordering on bright orange, and some fuchsia. It's a great blending of colors that is quite striking and very much updated European," Warren says. That's evident in the teenage girl's bright bedroom, a colorful X-box room, and a vibrant boy's nursery filled with strong colors. The furnishings used throughout are keeping with the modern look. "They lean more toward clean lines, and are not so heavy and ornate," she says.

The Old World flair returns in the lower level. "You walk down a spiral staircase into a wine cellar adjacent to a tasting area. Between them is a stone hall that leads to a door with a cedar header," Conger says. Visitors will have an extra incentive to visit that space, as the room has been transformed into a chocolate tasting room for the show.

While this home might not be set against the Scottish moors, it boasts a striking view. "We have an infinity edge pool overlooking Skycroft's main



Wood paneling in the master bath conceals built-in shelving, providing homeowners with needed storage space while conveying the impression that the space was converted from use as a library.

The Builder

Since Jeff and Fred Conger founded Conger Builders, Inc. in 2001 as a small firm that built just a few homes a year, the company has been growing by leaps and bounds. Managing that exponential growth to benefit his clients by getting a solid team of skilled professionals in place has been his main priority.

"Our key advantage has been that we are structured to deal with and manage our growth," says Conger, whose firm now annually builds between 12 and 15 homes, generally priced above \$1 million. "We would like to be known primarily as a reputable custom builder, not a spec builder. We like to work on projects from the ground up, and work with clients to give them their dream homes. We want to build a custom home building machine to the extent that we have the people and procedures in place to make the custom building process run as smoothly as the spec home building process. When we do that, it's a win-win for everyone."

The firm is currently building in sought-after neighborhoods along the Providence Road corridor like Skycroft and Founders Circle in Myers Park, and small enclaves that they are developing, like Sumner Hall off Old Providence Road and Fletcher Creek, off Providence Road across from Charlotte Latin School. Conger's plans for the future include new introductions designed for an underserved niche. "We are working on creating high-quality homes priced in the \$700's. We have seen a number of people who are looking to downsize or move up who want the quality of a million dollar home but just can't afford that price point. We will be putting together the type of homes that meet their specifications," he says.

To learn more about the builder, visit congerbuilders.com.

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Authentic stone work, heavy cedar beams and v-groove cedar paneling lend a true Scottish flair to this elegant estate, the sale of which will benefit the Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte.

pond. When you're below the pool looking back at the house, you'll see a 5' waterfall," Conger says. While you're taking in that spectacular view, take a moment to reflect that touring this home benefits a worthy cause that is near to the heart of everyone involved in this project.

"My family has experienced what these families are going through," Conger says. "My brother died of leukemia when he was 20. My family spent a lot of hours in the hospital, and there wasn't a Ronald McDonald house for my parents to go to. My mother passed away from pancreatic cancer this past December, which was one more opportunity for us to spend time in the hospital. So there has always been a place in our hearts for this cause. We understand that during that time, we can't reduce the stress and pain, but it may soften it just a little if there's a place like the Ronald McDonald House for families to turn to." ■

Home Tours

The Charity Estate to benefit the Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte is located in Skycroft. Tours will be held September 8th through October 14th on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fridays from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sundays from 1 to 6 p.m. Tickets will cost \$12 at the door. Patrons who present a McDonald's trayliner will receive a \$2 discount. After touring the home, don't forget to visit the Gardener's Mercantile shop for unique finds. For more information, visit rmhofcharlotte.org or call (704) 361-4379.

The Designer

Architectural elements of interior design are the aspects of a project that most intrigue Robbie Warren. The owner of Robbie Warren Interiors enjoys nothing more than getting involved with a home in its initial planning stages and seeing every element through to completion.

"Custom home is a term that's thrown around a lot. What I'm doing is much more personalized. We're creating a home for a particular family that's focused on their lifestyle and how they need that house to function," says the award-winning interior designer. That level of attention is why Charlotteans have trusted Robbie to create homes that are elegant interpretations of their individual style for over 19 years.

Warren and her staff of talented designers have brought to life authentic homes and interiors that range from Old World elegance to relaxed Mediterranean and urban contemporary. "We have five designers on staff to meet our clients' needs," Warren explains. "That includes one designer who focuses solely on spec homes, since so many builders don't have the time and resources to dedicate to those homes." By focusing on such homes, Warren's staff is ensuring that future buyers receive a home that boasts a designer's studied approach to fulfilling their needs and meeting their desires.

To learn more about the designer, visit www.RobbieWarren.com or call (704) 378-4211.