

My Search (Thankfully) Led Me to Sarah's Guest House

My name is Kristin McNamara and I live in Boynton Beach, Florida (originally from Binghamton, NY) with my fiancé and two step sons. On March 15, 2023 my mom, Suzanne York, who resides in Binghamton, was sent to St. Joseph's Health Center in Syracuse for open-heart surgery. The surgery part went well; but after surgery, the medical team had trouble bringing her out of sedation. She was having numerous seizures and the nurses and doctors were unable to bring her into consciousness. On March 19, I received a phone call from the doctor who told me it was time to fly to New York to make some very tough decisions.



My beloved mom, Suzanne

I was going to have to leave my family rather abruptly and did not know what the duration of my stay would even be. There were so many unknowns. My biggest fear was I did not know where I was going to stay in Syracuse and how I was going to be able to afford a potentially lengthy stay. I don't have any family in the area, and hotels and car rentals were proving to be very expensive. Luckily, a coworker of mine asked if there was any kind of "Ronald McDonald" type of house in the area that might be able to help me. I know places like that are usually for parents of sick children, but I took a chance and googled "Ronald McDonald houses for adults" in the Syracuse area. To my pleasant surprise, I found Sarah's Guest House through this search.

Here I am; 12 hours before my flight, calling the house to leave a message on their machine that I was looking for a place to stay. I knew nothing about this place, or if they even had a room. The next morning, I was in between flights and Kimberly Darling from Sarah's Guest House called me just as I was boarding the last leg of my flight. I told her I would call her as soon as I landed in Syracuse. She told me all I needed was a referral from the hospital. When I landed in Syracuse, I called the hospital to get the referral and they called right over to the guest house. Literally within minutes, Kimberly had set me up to stay at the house until that Friday. It was such a relief to know I would have a place to stay. I didn't know what I was walking into regarding my mom's health prognosis, and if I was going to have to make end of life decisions. It was all very stressful and nerve wracking.

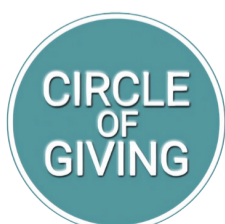
When I got to Sarah's Guest House, Kimberly was so welcoming and I was so grateful to be in such a warm environment. As she gave me a house tour and told me about daily home cooked meals and laundry facilities, I felt so incredibly blessed that I found this special place. When she told me that I could schedule rides to and from the hospital free of charge; I couldn't believe it! When I got back from the hospital the very first evening, I was very emotional. I was sad, scared, and alone. My mom was in ICU and on multiple machines to keep her alive, and I just didn't know what I was going to do. Sitting down to dinner with some of the guests at the house and talking with them made me feel not so alone. We were all going through similar things and sharing similar fears and feelings. Over the next few days, my mom started to improve. By Friday my mom was awake. I went down to talk to Kimberly and found that I could stay longer. I ended up being able to stay all the way until Easter Sunday was such a huge blessing to me.

I couldn't have asked for a better place to stay. David, Kimberly, Kim and all the volunteers, and house guests were so kind and welcoming, and asked me every day how my mom and I were doing. They all took the time to talk and to listen. One of the volunteers I got to talk to was Christine. She volunteered on Thursdays, and I looked forward to seeing her when I came home from the hospital. Her mom would make sandwiches every week and she would bring them to the house. It was so nice - I could take one with me to the hospital to have something to eat while I was there all day. Being so far away from my family and friends in Florida, it truly felt like I had a pseudo family at Sarah's Guest House.

My mom was going to be in the ICU for 6-8 more weeks so I had to go back home until she could be transferred to a skilled nursing facility. I came back around Memorial Day weekend and again was greeted warmly by the staff, volunteers, and guests. I was there for another two weeks while I transitioned my mom from the hospital to a skilled nursing facility. Without Sarah's Guest House, I would not have been able to be by my mom's side during her recovery. I was planning to return to the house to relocate my mom from skilled nursing to where I live in Florida when she was ready. Sadly, my mom passed away on July 4th, 2023 before we could move her closer to us. Besides all the family and friends I had to call - one of the most important calls I made about my mom's passing was to Sarah's Guest House to share the sad news. That is how close I was to this place and these people. I received a beautiful sympathy card from the staff that still sits on my desk today.

I wish I was closer so I could volunteer and give back to others at the house. I personally tell everyone I know about this amazing place and, if I ever win the lottery, I will make a big donation to them! When you have a loved one in hospital and are trying to take care of them, it is emotionally exhausting. I found peace of mind knowing I had a comforting place to lay my head down, have home cooked meals, and decompress after long days at the hospital. This is the kind of place Sarah's Guest House is. It is a house filled with love and compassion. **Please help support the house and the love it provides to so many, so that others can benefit from it the way I did. Your donation will truly make a difference in peoples' lives.**

With love & gratitude ~
 Kristin McNamara & Family



P.S. Sarah's Guest House also has a **Circle of Giving** program where you can make an automatic monthly donation to support the house and its guests. This is also another great way to spread love and compassion to others and help sustain the house for years to come!

