

House, Sweet House: Ryan House

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HOUSE, SWEET HOUSE

Tears flow freely from the eyes of a young couple holding their newborn while sitting in the color-filled kitchen with hand-drawn pictures covering the walls. But the emotions weren't filled with sadness; they were tears of hope.

Sitting in [Ryan House](#) didn't feel institutionalized, they said, but in every aspect it reflected and acted as a home for not only their daughter but their entire family during this time of need. The respite and palliative care facility exemplifies the motto, "Our family is your family, and our home is your home."

Ryan House is a 12,500-sq.-ft. home in Phoenix that provides respite, pediatric palliative and end-of-life care as well as appropriate life-enhancing therapies and activities in a supportive, homelike setting where all are welcome, from newborn to 17-year-olds. "It gives the patients and families the gift of time and a warm loving embrace," says Executive Director Alyssa Crockett. "[Ryan House] wraps its arms around the family."

The home facility was started from the example of Helen House, the only palliative and respite care facility based in the United Kingdom. This was where Ryan Cottor, a then infant, and his Arizona family received care after his diagnosis of Spinal Muscular Atrophy in 2002.

With help and contributions from Hospice of the Valley, St. Joseph's Hospital, Junior League of Phoenix and Board of Directors, Ryan House, envisioned by the Cottor family, was granted its 501(c)3 status in 2004 and opened its doors in March 2010.

Ryan House comprises eight themed children's bedrooms, three family suites and specialized rooms dedicated to art, music, sensory stimulation, relaxation and fun. One of the most sentimental rooms is the multimedia Story of Me room where children create any type of video; an opportunity taken by most to use as gifts to their families. It is their story as a child, documented forever, long after the strike of their diagnosis.

This holiday season marks the fifth-annual White Christmas fundraiser benefitting the Story of Me room. The event is co-chaired by founding member Judy Shannon and longtime [Ryan House](#) consultant Jan Johnson on Dec. 11 in the Arizona Biltmore's historic Gold Room. The evening will reflect an old-time 1930's club atmosphere with formal attire, cigarette trays and a big band sound. The evening is meant for nostalgia and celebrating life, just as what's celebrated at [Ryan House](#).