

## Ronald McDonald House Healing Garden

By Kevin Soergel

Kevin Soergel, owner of Soergel Landscapes, Aquascapes and Florascapes, located in Pine Twp. had an idea that a water garden might be a nice addition for the Ronald McDonald House in Shadyside.

The Ronald McDonald House is a home away from home for families who relocate temporarily to Pittsburgh to receive medical treatment for their seriously ill children. The house, located close to area hospitals, gives family members a place to sleep, eat, relax and find support from other families in similar situations. Last year, more than 750 families stayed at the Pittsburgh Ronald McDonald House.

Within a month's time, Soergel designed the project known as the Healing Garden and lined up a training exercise for about 20 local area landscapers. All the participants donated something, either plants, rocks, pumps, wood timbers or labor.

Soergel designed a pondless waterfall that incorporated some new and advanced technologies. "Because this is a home that houses children, I didn't want any deep water that could be potentially dangerous to small children," Soergel said. No where in the design is the water deeper than an inch and a half. While the area Soergel had to work with was rather small, less than 20 foot by 20 foot, he managed to design a mountain stream with two waterfalls. The Healing Garden begins with a bog garden, a small wetland with suitable plantings such as water iris and hyacinths. From there the stream splits into two waterfalls. One fork runs near the patio and the other runs perpendicular to the house and has a stepping stone bridge and flows to a second bog garden. The streams then converge and the water collects in an underground

reservoir that is below the second bog which filters water and is disguised with boulders and landscaping.

Incredibly, the installation of the garden was accomplished in one day, June 21, 2007, with the contractors working from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“The administration, parents and visitors love it,” Soergel said. “But most importantly, the kids love it. One little boy from Columbia, who was about three years old, came out on his walker to see it and kept saying, *agua*, which is Spanish for water, and *aryo*, which means waterfall or stream. It was great to see him so excited,” Soergel said.

You can see the Healing Garden during the Sixth Annual Parade of Ponds on July 25-26, and the proceeds from the event will benefit the Ronald McDonald House. Tickets and information are available on Soergel's website, [www.YourEscapes.net](http://www.YourEscapes.net) .

Please support the Ronald McDonald House Charities and enjoy Soergel's Sixth Annual Parade of Ponds