

“I don’t think anyone, not even a Blue Jay, could throw this curve ball at you.” Aurora’s dad muses over the journey he and Aurora’s mother have shared since the day Aurora was born nine months ago in South Africa.

Aurora was born with Gastroschisis, a congenital condition where her bowels were on the outside of her body through a little cavity in her abdominal wall. “They had to remove basically everything a day after she was born.”

Because South African hospitals are not able to do bowel transplants and do not have the expertise to deal with Gastrochisis, or Short Gut Syndrome, Aurora’s mother, a nurse originally from British Columbia, emailed two doctors at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto. “I went on their website and found two doctor bios that I thought fit the bill.” They received a response in less than two days advising that SickKids would be happy to take Aurora as a patient.

After fundraising for their trip to Toronto, which required an expensive medical escort, “we just packed up and came here, ready to sleep in a park if we had to,” says Aurora’s dad. Although they didn’t have any friends or family in Toronto, an old friend of the family offered to let them stay with her in North York until they could figure something out. A social worker at SickKids convinced them to visit Ronald McDonald House Toronto. “Me coming from South Africa, we don’t have anything like this. I thought it was just a small house. But then when the social worker said ‘just go have a look at it’, and we came in here, I was like ‘yeah sure we can live here – this looks good!’” he laughs.

Aurora’s mom adds, “We were both blown away. We were just wowed and couldn’t believe what was available. I never suspected that all your kitchen supplies would be available and that you’d have your own fridge space, there’s a gym and laundry room.”

“We walked in and it seems so calm and you get a homey feeling even though it’s this big building. You know you have some place, even if it’s just to sleep. It’s there, it’s waiting; you don’t have to worry about it. Just being able to come here and just...be... is the best part” says Aurora’s dad.

“Everyone who needs to stay here, you don’t understand it until you’re in this position, how much upheaval it causes in your life, first of all to have your child so desperately sick and then to have your life thrown completely off track. For us Ronald McDonald House Toronto has meant stability in a time of supreme chaos. It makes an intolerable situation tolerable” says Aurora’s mom.

Aurora’s dad sums up Ronald McDonald House Toronto’s mission: “You wake up in the morning, even though your child’s in this situation, you have this feeling of ‘I can do

this'. I've had a good night's sleep and a shower, I'm refreshed and ready to start a new day."

See the Global News video about Aurora and her family:

<http://globalnews.ca/news/1155092/baby-flown-from-south-africa-to-toronto-awaiting-transplant-at-sick-kids/>