



Aloha

From Our House to Yours

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii

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RMHC of Hawaii unveils its Ronald McDonald House Family Room



Parents and other family members that find themselves at the hospital attending to the life-threatening medical emergencies of their children feel as though they just can't go home—they want to remain near their precious keiki. But when hours turn into days—no matter how caring the hospital's medical professionals are—lingering uncomfortably in the corridors and waiting rooms, grabbing a few minutes of rest when possible, not being able to take care of personal chores and daily activities that we take for granted all become incredibly stressful.



Sarah Carter takes a break on one of the comfy couches. (see related story on page 6)

Now, at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children (KMCWC), seconds away from the Intensive Care units, there is a place of respite for these families—the Ronald McDonald House (RMH) Family Room. In this special home-like setting, weary parents and other immediate family members may take a break, rest, gather

strength, and have privacy. Or they may utilize the kitchenette, watch a video, read, check e-mail, make phone calls and send FAXES. It is a 450-square-foot slice of the Ronald McDonald House—and an obvious extension of "The House That Love Built."

After much anticipation and hard work by so many people, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii (RMHC) swung open the doors of its newest facility on January 13. It means that we now have a way of helping even more families facing the difficult experience of dealing with a child's serious illness.

At a special opening ceremony and blessing, dignitaries representing KMCWC, the Governor's Office, and contributing businesses and foundations gathered outside the RMH Family Room to listen to remarks from Jerri Chong, RMHC Executive Director; Larry O'Brien, President & CEO of KMCWC; and Lieutenant Governor "Duke" Aiona, who read a proclamation from Governor Linda Lingle creating "Ronald McDonald House Family Room Day in Hawaii."

In her remarks, Chong pointed out the depth and strength of the community partnership that came

together for the sake of children and families. "The Family Room is very special, not because of the plaster, paint or materials used in its construction, but because of the love, and support, and caring hearts within its walls. Fifteen years ago, it was the combined efforts of so many people and organizations working together that resulted in the Ronald McDonald House. Today that same spirit and tradition of caring and giving continues, bringing us this Family Room."

Kristi Koga, RMH House Manager, praises KMCWC. "Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children graciously invited us into their home, gave us the space and entrusted us with their families," she says. "Now, we will do what we do best—nurture families in a comfortable setting so that they can better cope with these extreme situations."

Building the RMH Family Room took some time. "Working on the room with 4 contractors, 2 budgets, and a myriad of input from both organizations was challenging but so rewarding," says Koga. "In fact, each minute spent on every detail was more than worth it. In the final months of preparation we only had to look outside the door to see the families and children who would eventually benefit from our labor. We could see the importance of making this room really special."

RMHC volunteers manage the RMH Family Room 365 days a year. Their commitment of time is substantial

Continued on page 4



Participating in the Hawaiian blessing that officially opened the RMH Family Room were (l-r) Lt. Governor "Duke" Aiona, KMCWC President and CEO Larry O'Brien, Chaplain Gail Sugimoto Leong and RMHC Executive Director Jerri Chong.

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A Message from our Executive Director



Jerri Chong

The New Year is upon us and, if the past is any indication, we will mark the months ahead by sharing the personal struggles of the many families that we will welcome and support.

The Ronald McDonald House, cornerstone program of RMHC, is a wonderful place. But as welcoming and supportive as it is, no one truly wants to have to stay here because it means they are far away from home, coping with the serious illness of a child.

Some families only stay a night or two, while others are here for months. While they are here they are part of an extended family that shares not only a living space, but also many common concerns and experiences gained by each of their medical crises. Life-long friendships are often formed.

The road of life isn't always easy; for some, it's so much harder and frightening than most of us could imagine. Yet many travel that difficult road with courage, grace, dignity and remarkably, even humor.

Each person that stays here touches the lives of our staff members as well. Because of the families that come through our House, we think of people differently and we treat our own family with extra grateful aloha. Because of them we try to express our feelings more openly, freely, and with compassion. At the Ronald McDonald House, it's common to be touched by uncommon people. People who share a very special gift - the gift of cherishing the moments, and treasuring the ordinary.

Yes, the families we assist affect our own lives significantly. We are inspired by their devotion and courage, and motivated to appreciate our own blessings. These are the secret "perks" that our staff and our many volunteers are privileged to receive.



Santa arrives at RMH.



Shawn tells Santa what he wants for Christmas.



Mom, Cora, accepts Kevin's (inpatient) gift.



Santa visits RMH families at Murphy's.



The karaoke Christmas carol contest is fierce, but fun.



Jon and volunteer "Uncle" Brian.

Around the House

By Carol Nord

Another year has come and gone at "The House That Love Built." The walls have reverberated with lots of laughter and a few tears as well, but we endure it all, one day at a time. Our guests come together under this one roof for the purpose of keeping their families together during a child's medical emergency, and by sharing their struggles with each other they create an extended "ohana."

Whether it be cooking and sharing meals with all the families, watching each other's kids while the one parent naps, or giving rides to other families when needed, it is a caring and sharing environment. This helps to lessen the stress of being away from family members back home and create a familiar routine of home life.

The coming of the fall season can be an especially difficult time for some folks. RMHC volunteers and donations are really important during this time.

- ♥ Punahou kindergarten classes decorated the house walls with painted pumpkins for Halloween, turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas tree cutouts for the recent holidays. For Christmas they also sang carols. It was a diversion that put a lot of smiles on faces and love of sharing in hearts.



- ♥ The donation of Halloween costumes was a gift that came at the right time. Many of our families are on a fixed income, so expenditures for costumes are a low priority. The opportunity to participate in trick or treating was fun and exciting to the young kids, and even some adults.

- ♥ Kitty Wo and her troop of girl scouts came up the day before Thanksgiving and prepared some dishes such as stuffing, green bean casserole and a dessert to accompany the turkey which was donated by Auntie Doris and cooked by guest Theresa Sultas from our Dole St. facility.

Simple acts of kindness such as these bring much relief to the families, as it gives them more time to relax with their children instead of rushing about trying to keep up with holiday traditions that they might not want their kids to miss.

Christmas is the tradition that is hardest on families when they are away from home. What is so heartening each year is the amount of caring that the community shows for our families.

Special people like Don and Miriam Murphy, who each year provide a wonderful night at Murphy's Bar & Grill for RMHC families, volunteers, staff, board, and supporters. Highlights include trolley rides to see the downtown lights, a fabulous dinner, hundreds of wrapped presents, and of course the arrival of Santa.

How did the families travel to and from the Murphy's Christmas party? In a stretch limo, complete with chauffeur, thanks to the big hearted people at Exclusive Inc.!

Of course, the holiday season held other special moments as well. Wonderful gestures of aloha were provided by HECO Financial Department, Kamehameha Schools, Alston, Hunt, Floyd and Ing, 4H, Olivet Baptist Church, the ConAgra Hawaii Bowl, and all the individuals that made the traditional RMH "at home" Christmas celebration so special this year.

In the months to follow, families will continue to find hope and the gift of friendship and compassion in many small doses, day after day at the Ronald McDonald House. One anonymous poet wrote: "In the dew of little things, the heart finds its morning, and is refreshed".



Manoa House families harmonize during karaoke contest.



The limo ride to Murphy's made families feel special.



The trolley ride was enjoyed by all.



*"RMHC Unveils Family Room"
continued from page 1*

and the training vigorous, but for the right person, one with a passion for helping others, it is the perfect volunteer opportunity. "Our volunteers are truly the heart of our Family Room and we are so thankful for their time and service to assist our families," says Koga.

The Kapiolani Medical Center staff deserves a BIG MAHALO for their enthusiastic support of our vision and for working so hard to help make it happen. A special thank you to Larry O'Brien, Rosemary Bucher, Linda Leleikas, Dale Reimer, Laura Bonilla, Louise Coppola, Pat Oda, and Lisa Chung from the Planning Committees; Fego Alconcel & his Security crew, Brian Lim, Gloria Lau & their Environmental Services crew, also Al Easterday, Chaplain Gail Sugimoto Leong and Dale Aipa for their kind assistance.

**RMH Family Room
Supporters**

MAHALO!

Platinum Sponsor

Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA)

Gold Sponsor

Mary & Walter Frear Eleemosynary Trust

Silver Sponsors

- Alexander & Baldwin Foundation
- Ching Construction
- Design Logix
- First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu
- Home Depot
- Kotero Design Corporation
- Oahu Visitor Industry Charity Walk
- Sears



Larry O'Brien shares his thoughts on the importance of the Family Room.



Lt. Governor "Duke" Aiona reads proclamation.



Ronald with RMHC staff members (l-r) Kristi, Gene, Terri, Candace and Michelle



(l-r) RMH House Manager Fujihara-Chong, Jean



Ronald visits Larry O'Brien (KMCWC) & Cliff Cisco (HMSA).



KMCWC staff members (l-r) Dale Reimer & Laura Bonilla.



Volunteer presents cake to guests.

AFTER



RMHC President Everett Kaneshige (left) prepares to greet guests.



Manager Kristi Koga with board members Kathy Ogawa, and Avery Aoki.



RMH Family Room supporters, RMHC & KMCWC reps. and the Lt. Governor are all smiles.



Gloria Keller serves guests at the opening.



The Reeves use the computer to check their E-mail.



Angela Tabandera is thankful for some coffee and a place to relax.



Nancy Lam volunteers her time to staff the Family Room.

Big Island Family Staying Together; Holding Each Other Up

In April 2002, 17-year-old Hilo High School student Melanie Carter wasn't feeling well. She had been experi-



Melanie and her cuddly friends.

encing a pesky fever that would seem to go up and down and back up again, but wouldn't go away. Thinking that it was just a cold, she continued to go to school until one day when severe abdominal discomfort sent her to the nurse's office and then on to the doctor.

Much to Melanie and her parents' surprise and dismay, she was

told that she was pregnant. A false positive urinalysis had led the doctors in the wrong direction.

Soon Melanie's pain and fever got much worse, requiring a trip to the emergency room. It was there that the real truth began to be unveiled. More tests were done and an ultrasound detected a tumor. Melanie was immediately flown to Honolulu's Queen's Hospital and then moved to Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children for urgent surgery.

After removing the large Germ Cell tumor, doctor's decided against chemotherapy because of the tumor's appearance and other indicators, believing that it wouldn't recur.

"They thought that because it was encapsulated that there was a good chance they had gotten it all," recalled mom Sarah, a program coordinator for an organization in Hilo offering traditional Hawaiian methods to address alcohol and substance abuse.

But within a few months, a second tumor struck with a vengeance and Melanie was rushed back to Oahu for another surgery.

A little more than a month later, in her hospital room flanked by her parents, Sarah & Clarence, Melanie talked freely about her medical problems and her life as a teenager back home. It was day three of a five-day chemotherapy cycle, the third of four rounds scheduled for her.

"They said I was pregnant but they found a ten pound tumor instead," said Melanie from her bed.

Aside from being a little self conscious about losing her hair, she was coping bravely with the other unpleasant side effects of the treatments. "I look silly without my hair," she laughed, pulling up her bandana to reveal her few remaining curly locks.

But Melanie doesn't feel alone without hair. Dad Clarence, who also works for an agency in Hilo that offers substance abuse treatment, began sporting a shaved head himself during this second trip to Oahu. "They were trying to stabilize Melanie in emergency but she was having problems," he said.

Rather than sitting helplessly in the waiting room he decided to visit a nearby barber to take his hair off in support of Melanie. "It made her laugh," he added with a smile.

"Melanie spent her 18th birthday in Intensive Care," said Sarah.

Since April, Melanie has fought off pneumonia, organ function failures, and the significant side effects of the treatments designed to save her life.

What is her inspiration to keep fighting? The love of her parents; brothers Clarence III and David; and sister Kaleiolani, of course. "Sports!" added Melanie, a club swimmer. "And my friends. They told me they miss me a lot."

Like most families unexpectedly uprooted from routines and support systems to attend to a child's medical emergency away from home, the Carters camped out in Melanie's room, to be nearby, thinking an expensive hotel was probably their only other option.

When a hospital social worker told them about the Ronald McDonald House, they visited and immediately felt comfortable. "If I could choose between any hotel and the Ronald McDonald House for Melanie and us to stay at, I would pick the House," Sarah said. "The support system is so wonderful and there are others there going through the same things, able to share stories and advice. It's a wonderful place."

Melanie said her fight against cancer has made her stronger and "not afraid of anything." She would like to get home soon to see her friends and continue work on her latest art project—a chalk drawing of "a Hawaiian lady in a beautiful Hawaiian dress."

"She's the one holding up the mom & dad," said Clarence, gesturing to Melanie. "You might think that it's the other way around, but it's not."



Getting a reassuring hug from dad who would soon sport a new look for her.



Melanie rests at the hospital with loving parents, Sarah and Clarence after chemotherapy.



Open Your Heart...Make a Difference

With the start of each New Year, we all look forward to fresh new beginnings, good health and prosperity and this is our wish for you and your loved ones. It is also when resolutions are made. There are the proverbial resolutions of losing weight, eating healthier, starting an exercise program, spending more time with loved ones and so on. All of these are wonderful and should be nurtured to achievement, but we also encourage you to include a resolution to make a difference to others in need, such as the families serviced by RMHC. For those currently facing a medical crisis within their family, the New Year brings hope. Yet, many more families who started the year on a positive note will be stricken with sadness when a child is taken ill or injured. A resolution to support RMHC families is achievable, warm and fuzzy too, because it will also be helping to fulfill a family's resolution to stay together to see a child through their illness.

Yes, I will fulfill my resolution to support RMHC by making a tax-deductible gift of:

- \$250
- \$150
- \$100
- \$75
- \$50
- Other - \$_____

Please Print

My check/payment is enclosed

Please Charge my:

Visa MasterCard American Express

Name _____

Card Number _____

Address _____

Expiration Date _____

City _____

Name on Card _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Your Signature _____

----- Please clip and mail to RMHC, P.O. Box 61777, Honolulu, Hawaii 96839-1777 -----

MAHALO TO OUR FRIENDS

- ♥ **Alston, Hunt, Floyd, and Ing** for donating household goods, a Christmas Tree, two large Christmas wreaths, and monetary donations. **Bank of Hawaii's 21st Century Scholars** for doing a clean-up day at the House. **First Insurance** for donating a Lilo and Stitch themed Christmas Tree and monetary donations.
- ♥ **Disney on Ice** and **Uncle Tom Moffatt** for providing tickets to shows for our families.
- ♥ **Fuji Film** for donating a camera and ancillary photo supplies.
- ♥ **Wili Gacutan** for decorating the outside of the House with Christmas lights and cooking several dinners in the past couple of months.
- ♥ **Rotary Club of Honolulu Sunset and Rotaract** for maintaining the garden and preparing a meal for the families on a monthly basis.
- ♥ **Ms. Corinne Kalani and the Students of E.B. deSilva Elementary School** for donating \$50 from collecting and recycling 140 lbs. of pull-tabs*. **Kaimuki Middle School Band Booster** for donating household goods and participating in our McFun-Raiser Program. **Leilehua High School Students** for donating \$1,023.39 from their homecoming activities. **McKinley High School Class of 2003** for donating \$200 from their penny carnival.
- ♥ **Mahalo to all the schools and organizations who participated in our McFun-Raiser Program.** A special mahalo to **Alphabetland Preschool and Kindergarten**, our largest participant in 2002, ordering 3,500 booklets.

* While Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii encourages and appreciates the recycling efforts of the community on our behalf, we are no longer able to pick-up your collection of pull-tabs for recycling. If you or your organization would like to continue recycling pull-tabs we ask that you take it to a recycling center in your community and then mail the proceeds to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii. We appreciate and thank you for your continued cooperation. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call Michelle at 973-5683 ext.240.

FROM OUR HOUSE TO YOURS, THANK YOU!



Volunteer Spotlight

TESSY ULLOA - by Malia Martyak



Tessy and current guest Shawn

Tessy Ulloa is not your typical eighth grader at Stevenson Middle School. Although Tessy joined our team of volunteers only a few short months ago, she has a very special bond to the House. In 1999, Tessy spent an entire year living here at Hawaii's Ronald McDonald House while her brother underwent chemotherapy for leukemia. Due to her brothers lengthy treatment plan, she and her family relocated

to Oahu from Guam. Now that she is older and her brother is in remission, Tessy has decided to give back to the House by spending a priceless amount of time on her weekends volunteering.

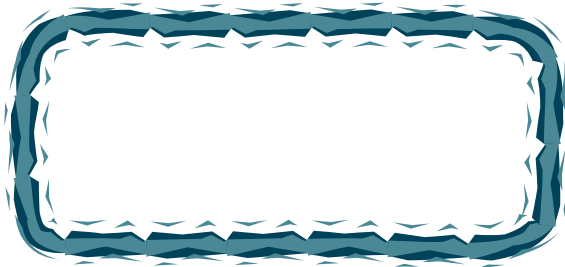
Tessy spends about forty hours a month volunteering on Saturdays and Sundays. In these past few months, she has assisted us so many ways—from doing office work, to answering phones, to cleaning, to spending time with the children. Her willingness, dedication, and ability to relate to these families are just the qualities we love to see in a volunteer. She is a very special and valued person to the House.

When Tessy is not here washing the van or filing paper work, she plays the clarinet in the marching band at Stevenson. Due to the band's successes, they will be attending a festival on Maui in March that she is really looking forward to. When she has some free time she enjoys watching a movie with her friends or reading Harry Potter books.

When asked some questions about volunteering here at the House, Tessy said she likes the House and really enjoys playing with the children. When asked why she feels other teenagers should volunteer here she stated, "Not only does it feel good, it's fun, and the families really appreciate your company." The feeling is mutual, Tessie!

With the start of the New Year, we have many new volunteer opportunities including the RMH Family Room, and the Sunday Night Dinner Program. For more information on how to get involved or remain involved with our organization, please contact Malia Martyak at 973-5683x225.

Aloha From Our House to Yours is published quarterly by Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii. Address all inquiries regarding this publication to Gene Davis, Editor, RMHC, P.O. Box 61777, Honolulu, Hawaii 96839-1777 or call (808) 973-5683 ext. 223



Wish List

- Cooking Utensils
- Cotton Pillow Case Covers
- Kitchen/Bathroom Rugs
- Plastic Shower Curtain Liners
- Fabric Shower Curtains
- Washcloths
- Rechargeable Flashlights
- Laundry Soap
- Family DVD's
- Individually Packed Snacks

If you would prefer that we purchase the items on your behalf, please mail a gift certificate from Walmart, Sears, or any other store of your choice to RMHC.

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