



Aloha

From Our House to Yours

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii

Volume IV, Issue 3, August 2004

You and Me Against the World

--A story about a mother and child from a small Saipan village, the long road they have traveled together, and the promise of a future filled with continuing happiness, love and mutual support

The day Erlynn Romolor gave birth to her daughter Amber some 14 years ago, doctors knew there were problems. Soon, Amber was diagnosed with a condition called Tetralogy of Fallot, a complex congenital heart defect preventing enough oxygen from reaching her system. "She was eight days old when she had her first bypass," recalled Erlynn. "When she was two, doctors in San Diego replaced a defective heart valve."

Soon after, Amber's arteries needed to be shored up but she was too young to endure existing procedures. In a daring, life saving treatment, doctors in San Diego performed an experimental therapy never tried before that involved the insertion of stents to allow oxygen to flow through her weakened arteries. "It was her only hope," said Erlynn. This first-of-its-kind surgery attracted national attention and Erlynn was interviewed for the NBC Evening News.

The operation was a success, but treatment for her condition became ongoing and complicated. During the following 12 years, Amber has endured a series of procedures and surgeries to address many heart-related issues.

It was one of those procedures that brought the pair to Hawaii's Ronald McDonald House on June 25. Amber's San Diego doctors met them in Honolulu and they performed another important stent insertion. A projected two-hour operation lasted four and a half hours, causing Erlynn many anxious moments. But it went well and after Amber's convalescence at Ronald McDonald House, she and mom returned to Saipan on July 20 to the waiting arms of their family.

"It has been a long and challenging road," Erlynn reflected. "All of these things have made us so close. You know that song, 'You and Me Against the World'? That's what it felt like to us sometimes. But we have faith. God only gives you what he knows you can handle."

That is the medical side of Amber's life, and her challenges are not over yet. In the next year she will need a pacemaker implanted and have additional stents placed in arteries leading to her lungs. But as we learned while they were staying at the House, there is much more to



Erlynn and Amber

the story than just that. The young woman that Amber has become, despite her medical condition, is the real tale.

Optimistic, kind, and curious, Amber has an infectious enthusiasm for everything she does and Erlynn is fiercely proud of her daughter. "Amber is sweet, responsible, selfless...everybody else comes first," she says.

And then there is her musical talent. Amber is a singer/songwriter and performs professionally with her mother's group, Tropic Sette. She has also been featured in two solo concerts for her Saipan fans.



Amber strums the ukulele for mom.

Wish List

Gift Certificates

Wal-Mart
Longs Drugs
Safeway
K-Mart

Household Items

Laundry detergent
Fabric softener
Paper plates
Plastic utensils
Hand roll paper towels
Multi-fold paper towels
Dish washing detergent

Food Items

Spam
Canned corned beef
Vienna sausage
Canned corn/veggies
Rice
Oil
Shoyu
Individually wrapped snacks

For Our Kids

Gifts for infants
Gifts for teenage boys & girls
DVDs
Outdoor toys

(Due to health concerns,
we ask that donations be new
or in "like-new" condition)

continued on page 3

Board of Directors

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A Message from Executive Director Jerri Chong

I recently took part in a remarkable event sponsored by the Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation. Best known for their substantial and timely donations to charitable organizations' capital projects, this large Foundation also has programs that promote volunteerism and offer incentive grants to encourage philanthropy in the community. At the event I attended, called Christmas in July, every one of the Weinberg Foundation's staff had the opportunity to select a deserving local charity to be the recipient of a \$10,000 donation. When you think about it, it is really a wonderful opportunity for their staff to be involved in the core mission of the Foundation.

RMHC was fortunate enough to be selected by Weinberg Foundation's Jeanne Murata and we participated in the check presentation luncheon with the other lucky organizations. The group was touched by the humble comments of RMHC guest Ana Marie San Nicolas, who accompanied me to the event and had an opportunity to address the crowd. Even though she had "never seen so many people," she wasn't intimidated one bit and explained how difficult it can be for families forced to travel far from home seeking treatment for a sick child. She is a wonderful ambassador.

This gift from the Weinberg Foundation and Jeanne Murata will help us help people just like Ana Marie.

Interestingly, Jeanne's support of RMHC didn't end there. Her children volunteered at the Judd Hillside House this summer and did everything from clerical work to House chores to making sushi (see photo on page 5). Obviously, caring runs in this special family.

We are so very grateful for the community's continued support this summer. Mahalo!



Ana Marie San Nicolas (front) with (l-r) Jerri Chong, Jeanne Murata and RMHC's Gene Davis.



Kau Kau Challenge raises thousands for RMHC

An enthusiastic crowd gathered at the Mai Tai Bar in Ala Moana Shopping Center on Sunday

July 11 to witness the finals of the 2004

Kau Kau Challenge—a benefit for RMHC. Hosts Alicia Michioka Jones and Shannon Scott introduced the local contestants, whose original recipes had vaulted them through the preliminary rounds. One by one, their innovative dishes were presented to the appreciative group and the three celebrity judges.

There were three finalists in each of the three divisions, Soups and Salads; Pupus and Entrees; and Desserts. The judges obviously had their work cut out

for them, but they enthusiastically proceeded to sample each dish and judge them on three criteria: presentation, taste and value.

Judging the event were RMHC Board President Dr. Jay Cambra; *Honolulu Advertiser* writer, James Gosner; and *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* reporter and columnist, Jason Genegabus.



Dr. Jay Cambra displays the grand prize creation, Asato-Ganiron's Banana Bread Pudding.

The Kau Kau Challenge, brainchild of Robert Caldwell, Director of Operations for the Mai Tai Bar as well as neighboring Bubba Gump Shrimp Company, was presented by Amstel Light and sponsored by Times Supermarkets, Tyson Chicken, BV Wines, and KCCN FM 100. The event netted \$4,120 for the kids and families of RMHC.

Kau Kau Chefs were vying for \$10,000 in prizes.

And the winners were:

Soups and Salads—Lance Nitahara, for his Fresh Ahi Carpaccio

Pupus and Entrees—Chris Dorsaneo, for his Southwest Grilled Pizza

Desserts—Chauncey Asato-Ganiron, for his Banana Bread Pudding

Asato-Ganiron's dessert was the Grand Prize winner. His dish and all the other first place finishers are now part of the permanent Mai Tai Bar menu.



Mai Tai Bar GM Robert Caldwell presents proceeds from the Kau Kau Challenge to RMHC President Dr. Cambra.



Room diaries offer a window into the RMH experience

Around the House

By Nikee Wainit

There is always a steady stream of families checking in and out of Hawaii's Ronald McDonald Houses. Some stay a week or less, some stay for months. Ultimately, most of the families are able to return home with renewed hope. We keep the numbers, but none of the families are in danger of becoming merely a statistic to us because we know each guest has a unique and very personal story. We share their day-by-day challenges.

Recently, we placed permanent diaries in each guest room. Guests now have the option to share their thoughts, emotions and their personal reactions to being part of the Ohana within the "House That Love Built."

The benefits, I think, have been many. As they write, family members are able to get in touch with their own feelings. At the same time, families that will check into that room after them gain the knowledge of things already learned and get a sense of the healing spirit of the House. I believe that new arrivals reading these diaries feel comforted and supported knowing that they are not alone.

I would like to share with you just a few selections from the many warm, heartfelt entries I have come across in our diaries.

"Our problems would have been so much harder to take if it weren't for the other families we have met here. To be able to unwind together with them after our trying and long days at the hospital is a true blessing. We have laughed together and we have cried. But we have been there for each other through it all.

"I believe we have all grown and have become better people because of our experiences here."

*Larindo M.
Father (Big Island)*

"When we came we were very lonely and missing my kids and family at home. Then later on it got easier for me and my son Ryan because we got to know the families and staff that were here also. Everyone in this House made me feel really comfortable making me feel like I was at home. It's been really hard for my son and me. I'm really grateful for everyone being there for me. Thank you all and God bless you."

*From
Cathleen S.
Mother (Guam)*

"The other families that share this House were indeed like family. After seeing what the other children were encountering as far as their illness and diseases, we knew we weren't alone. This House offers the serenity and peace of mind for the children and parents as well.

"We will never forget the families, faces and the staff here at the Ronald McDonald House. We hope and pray that the present families experience what we did. God bless us, God bless you all and thank you very much!"

*Mary A.
Grandmother (Kauai)*

"Today, I had fun playing with Ryan and Amy. My mom said we are going home soon because Tony is getting better. I will miss my new friends when we leave. I will pray for them all."

*Love,
Allen, 7-years-old
Patient's brother (California)*

You and Me continued from page 1

Amber is a prolific songwriter, even penning two new tunes while staying at the Ronald McDonald House—one being a farewell song, which she sang for the appreciative families and staff before leaving.

Her next goal is to complete her first CD before the end of the year, which will feature her singing her own originals and mom signing backup vocals.

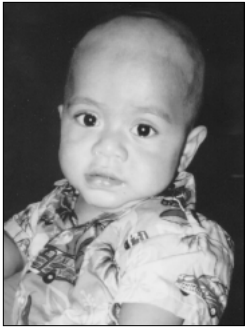
"She comes from a musical family," Erlynn pointed out. "Her father is the top lead guitar player in Saipan."

Despite all their travels and hospital stays, this was

the first time they had stayed at a Ronald McDonald House. "When we first arrived we were already homesick," Erlynn explained, on the day before they left for home. "But now we are really sad to leave because we have gotten so close to the other families.

"Being here has really made me appreciate my kids. The children are so sick and I just wish I could do something to take it all away. But I can't. All I can do is pray.

"I want to thank the RMH staff for caring so much, for their warm hospitality—everyone is just like family. I now know the true meaning of Ohana. I'll never forget everything that they have done for me and my family."



Open Your Heart...Make a Difference

Everyday here at the House, we see children dealing with a variety of medical conditions ranging from cancers, premature births, severe trauma, and birth defects to heart conditions, organ failure, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, and runaway infections. But as different as the keiki's conditions may be, the patients' families usually end up facing many of the same situations. Agonizing over a first diagnosis, nervously pacing outside a surgery room or waiting anxiously for never-ending test results are just a few of the challenges that families often share. Fortunately, these frustrations are made a little easier to bear because of the sympathy and encouragement of the other guests staying at the House.

There is an unconditional love for children, and an unwavering spirit of hope flourishing within our walls. It is an atmosphere that inspires families to caringly support one another through good, bad, and sad times. It truly makes a difference.

This irreplaceable support system called Ronald McDonald House would not exist without your belief in its mission and we ask for your continued support.

Yes, you can count on my support. Enclosed is my gift to RMCH Hawaii.

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

Please Print

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

♡ My check/payment is enclosed

Please Charge my:

♡ Visa ♡ MasterCard ♡ American Express

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

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Your Signature _____

♡ Skip my acknowledgement and save the funds for your programs. I know my gift is appreciated and being utilized well. My cancelled check/credit card statement will serve as a receipt (all gifts of \$250 or more will be sent a written receipt in compliance with current tax requirements).

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

Calendar of Upcoming Events



Give Aloha—Sept. 1-30
Support RMHC at any Foodland or Sack N Save location. **RMHC's Give Aloha code number is 77306.**



Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)—
Sept. 7-Oct. 19
Military and federal government employees may designate RMHC as their donor choice for payroll deduction donations. **RMHC's CFC code number is 9102.**



Sam Choy's Diamond Head Anniversary Celebration—
Sept. 22

Help us celebrate Chef Choy's 9th anniversary at a fabulous fundraiser for RMHC—"A Big Taste of Aloha, A Plateful of Love!"
Tickets: \$85



McDonald's Halloween Treat Packs—
Oct. 8-31 (while supplies last)
Trick-or-Treat! Visit your neighborhood McDonald's Restaurants in Hawaii to purchase Halloween Treat Packs for \$2.50 + tax each.

\$1 from each Halloween Treat pack sold will be donated to RMHC.



World Children's Day—Nov. 20
Join Hawaii McDonald's restaurants in this worldwide effort to help seriously ill children. Buying "Helping Hands" Nov. 9-20 and choosing special designated menu items Nov. 18-20 will **generate a cash donation for Hawaii's RMHC.**

If you have any questions regarding these events, please call us at 973-5683.

Our Community Really Cares

More than 50 smiling, motivated volunteers descended upon the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House on Saturday June 26 for the annual "Healthy House Cleanup," an intense and meticulous cleaning of the large home and grounds. Individuals from the community joined people from the Honolulu Sunset Rotary Club, Marimed Foundation, Golden State Foods and Phi Theta Kappa Sorority to make our "home-away-from-home" inviting and warm for the families.

The incredible folks from Golden State Foods also took over the kitchen and prepared a sumptuous lunch for everyone participating.



Inside and outside: Above, Travis Koke makes the dining room windows sparkle. Right, Mitalina Hethon makes sure the grounds have that well kept look. Below, GSF Foundation's Mike Hutchinson helps whip up lunch for all the volunteers.



Honolulu Sunset Rotarians, Cindy Hirsch, Grissel Hodge and Ginny Kolb harvest a pineapple from the House garden that their club maintains for RMH families.

NFL PLAYERS SCORE WITH THE KIDS

On a sunny June afternoon, the boys and girls (and parents) of Ronald McDonald House were treated to an exciting and inspiring visit from several National Football League players, who were in town to conduct free youth camps for Pop Warner football players.



Seattle Seahawks receiver Ituli Mili spends some time with M.J. Kitalong.

Led by Joe Salave'a of the Washington Redskins, the players spent time talking and playing with the kids. Before leaving, they presented the keiki with special Joe Salave'a Foundation T-shirts, which they all promptly autographed for the thrilled kids. Accompanying Salave'a was Kerry Carter and Ituli Mili of the Seattle Seahawks,



The NFL contingent poses with the RMH kids before heading off to Samoa.

Chris McAllister of the Baltimore Ravens and former NFL standout Leo Goetas. Personal trainer Tui Filiaga and DEA agent Ed Ulufanua joined the players to help encourage the children.

Their message to the kids? Stay in school, say no to drugs, set goals. "Then your dreams can come true," Salave'a told them.

A Sushi Surprise



Young volunteers Chanz Murata, Chelsea Murata and Keane Omaye-Backman (l-r) treated RMH families to an afternoon Sushi Party at the Judd Hillside house, compliments of dad Todd Murata's Yatai Sushi. Here, John Muna is served one of the very first. Everyone agreed: "It was sooo ono!"

RMHC Golf Classic a smashing success

A record number of players turned out for the 13th annual RMHC Golf Classic July 15 at the Hickam AFB Mamala Bay Golf Course. Nearly 200 enthusiastic golfers teed it up on a beautiful, sunny day to help RMHC net more than \$55,000. Everyone got a shot at winning a new Mercedes-Benz, and Gerald Tomosawa even had a swing at winning a million dollars. There were some surprises too—a hole in one by RMHC Board President Dr. Jay Cambra, as well as par-three excellence by Dave Chun, who won the closest-to-the-pin contest on two separate holes!

Dr. Cambra donated his hole-in-one prizes—cash and four new tires from Lex Brodie's—to RMHC. In addition, McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii matched the cash amount to double the donation.

Shooting the lowest net score (54.8) was the Noguchi & Associates team of Richard Nakayama, Francis Kuroiwa and Paul Bunda. Winning the Grand Prize was Golden State Foods Team A with Glenn Waki, Brian Sato and Carl Guhl. Again this year, Outback Steakhouse provided the popular post-tournament "Bonzer Banquet"!

Guy Hagi MC'd the awards banquet immediately following the round and helped hand out thousands of dollars worth of prizes donated by dozens of supportive businesses in Hawaii and on the mainland.

It was announced that next year's tournament would be held on Thursday, July 21, 2005 "When can we sign up?" several players asked. Needless to say, a good time was had by all.

2004 RMHC Golf Classic Photo Gallery



2004 Golf Team Sponsors

Platinum Sponsors - \$2,000

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 Christopher James & Kaimana Kea
 The Coca-Cola Company
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 Golden State Foods – Team A
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 & Guaranty Co., Ltd.
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 Island Air
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 Team A
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 Team B
 McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii –
 Team B
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The Honolulu Advertiser

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 - Team A
 CC Engineering & Construction, Inc.
 - Team B
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 William G. Obana, M.D. - Team B
 Yamaguchi & Yamaguchi, Inc.

2004 Golf Hole Event Sponsors

Advantage Webco Dodge Hawaii
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 Christopher James and Kaimana
 Kea
 The Coca-Cola Company
 Compadres Bar & Grill
 Crazy Shirts
 Fresh Start Bakeries

Frito-Lay of Hawaii
 Golden State Foods
 Hawaii Candy, Inc.
 Hawaii Coffee Company
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The Honolulu Star-Bulletin/MidWeek
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2004 Golf Donors

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 California Pizza Kitchen
 Candace Asam-Lopez
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 HTH Corporation
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 Kauai Coconut Beach Resort
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 Hotel
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 Mauna Lani Resort
 McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii
 Meadow Gold Dairies
 Michelle Takahashi
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Oahu Gas Services
 Pacific In Vitro Fertilization Institute
 Paul Brown Salon & Day Spa
 Pleasant Hawaiian Holidays
 Polynesian Cultural Center
 Princeville Golf Club
 Radisson Kauai Beach Resort
 Red Lobster
 Restaurant Suntory
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 Royal Kona Resort
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 Wells Fargo Home Mortgage



Volunteer Spotlight

MAURICE LUCAS-BY BRIAN KOREN



Evelyn and Maruice Lucas

For most of us, Monday is the start of the work week. The typical "it must be a Monday" innuendos don't last long for me though, because I know that around 8:30 a.m. I will be talking to a very energized, upbeat volunteer named Maurice Lucas. Each

Monday morning, Maurice stops by the office to sign in and grab the necessary tools he uses to keep the grounds of the Dole Street Residence looking immaculate.

Over the past four years, Maurice has not only helped beautify and maintain the grounds of the Judd Hillside and Dole Street Residences, but also assisted with bulk mailing campaigns. His wife Evelyn has also spent many hours volunteering with us.

Maurice is originally from the Washington D.C. area and relocated to Hawaii over twenty-five years ago. One day, Maurice was enjoying his usual morning breakfast at McDonald's, in the heart of Waikiki, when some of the employees explained the functions of the Ronald McDonald

House. The conversation sparked an interest and after a couple of phone calls Maurice became a part of our ohana.

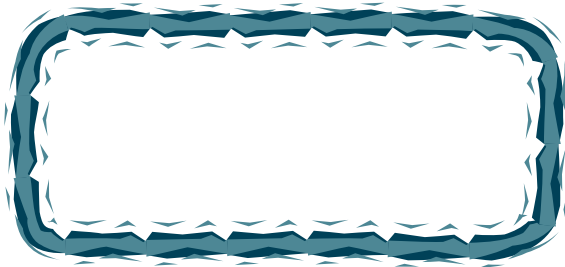
Maurice has traveled all over the world representing our country through his service in the United States Air Force and working for the United States Government. He says that one of his greatest work accomplishments was breaking down racial barriers through his work with the government while working on petroleum contracts.

Now semi-retired, one way Maurice stays busy is by teaching tennis to youngsters. He fell in love with the sport thirty-five years ago while shagging balls for his older brother and later became a certified tennis professional. In between tennis lessons, volunteering, and making an occasional timeshare deal, Maurice spends the rest of his time with his loving family.

Maurice is the proud father of two sons and one daughter and delights in spending time with them and his precious grandchildren—two boys and two girls. Maurice's plan for the future consists of teaching, volunteering, watching his grandchildren grow, and not slowing down.

Thank you for all you do Maurice!

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



Ryan Unchangco (Guam)



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