



Aloha

From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org



March 2009

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii

SHARING THE HOPE

Each and every day here at the Ronald McDonald House, families sit down and talk together about what they are going through. More experienced families guide the less experienced, and children reassure one another about what lies ahead. They share each others' exhilarating medical victories and frustrating setbacks. The closeness families feel is difficult to describe.

Not long ago, a chance meeting here by two young cancer patients resulted in a special moment that really brought home for all of us the true essence of the Ronald McDonald House experience.

"Don't worry May, your hair will grow back. Mine did, see?" said seven-year-old Ruthie Mersburgh of Kailua-Kona, showing off her flowing,

was still actively battling her cancer. With her mother Miliama and sister Seeseei always by her side, May continues to reside at the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House, waiting for doctors to allow her to return home.

May comes from Masausi, American Samoa. She was diagnosed with leukemia on June 27, 2008 and was flown immediately to Honolulu with her mom Miliama. Her sister Seeseei chose to temporarily withdraw from college to join them, while dad Aloso, a cab driver, stayed at home to work and look after May's two brothers.

For the Toas, the suddenness of their emergency was stunning, and being away from their home and family is very difficult. "Our family is extremely close," Seeseei told us recently. "Not a day goes by that we don't talk with them on the phone."

Wish List

Gift Cards

Wal-Mart
Costco
K-Mart
Sam's Club
Longs Drugs
Supermarkets
Gasoline gift cards
Prepaid phone cards

Household Items

Non-stick pots & pans cookware
Paper towels, napkins & plates
Ziplock bags
Aluminum foil
Plastic food storage containers

Food Items

Cup Noodles (microwave)
Rice
Sugar
Flour
Cooking oil
Fresh fruits & vegetables
Frozen meals (microwave)
Individually wrapped snacks
Assorted canned goods

Miscellaneous

Rolls/sheets of "Forever"
postage stamps
Xerox paper (8.5 x 11)
Office supplies



May Toa (right) met cancer survivor Ruthie Mersburgh at the Ronald McDonald House. Ruthie's encouragement meant a lot to May.

sun-kissed locks. Ruthie had sensed her new friend's uncertainties, and was comforting her.

What brought special meaning to us was that we knew not long ago Ruthie herself was fearful and confused about her cancer, and in need of inspiration. She got that encouragement from other children that were staying at the House when she arrived, and now Ruthie was passing it on.

Her cancer in remission, Ruthie was staying at the House for a couple of nights with her mom and dad while she underwent her periodic testing at Kapiolani Medical Center. Previously, the family had spent several months at the House during Ruthie's long treatments. Eight year old May Lisa Toa, on the other hand,



Miliama, May and Seeseei playing the piano together at the Ronald McDonald House.

"She misses her dad so much," Miliama added, gazing over at May, who was happily teaching herself how to play the piano nearby. "The only thing she wants to do when she gets home is to spend the whole day with dad."

Now, as the weeks have turned into months, their strength is being tested as never before. However, their faith is not a problem. "Our family is very spiritual," Seeseei

Continued on page 3



Jerri Chong

A Message from our President

Aloha from the House That Love Built!

Virtually all of us are feeling the effects of the economic downturn, and no one is experiencing the impact more than the families that are staying at the Ronald McDonald House. It is painful to imagine what it would be like for them if our pro-

grams hadn't been established here in Hawaii nearly 22 years ago.

Most of the families we serve could never afford the hotel rooms, restaurant meals and taxi rides during their child's hospitalization. Throw in the uncertainty about when and if the patient can go home, and this added stress profoundly affects entire families. It's hard enough to deal with your child's condition, let alone worry about surviving in an unfamiliar city at the same time.

Thankfully, they do have a "home-away-from-home" waiting for them in Honolulu near the hospital, where they can find refuge, encouragement and sustenance. Having the Ronald McDonald House as their base of operation enables them to be more physically and mentally prepared to deal with the reality of having a seriously ill child.

The Ronald McDonald House is really just an expression of the love our community feels for its less fortunate members. All of us at the Ronald McDonald House feel that it is an honor to help turn those wonderful intentions into reality.

By reading through this newsletter I hope you will get a sense of the breadth and scope of the community's support, and even take note of those groups and individuals that continually step forward to help. It would also be great if you were inspired to join our efforts in 2009. We and the families need you more than ever.

Donated art work's surprising history

by Reenie Rea

If you walk down the halls of the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House, you will marvel at the beautiful images of island children that adorn the walls. But until recently reconnecting with Big Island artist Mary Koski, the full story behind the art work, was a bit of a mystery to us.

Mary visited the House during a recent trip to Honolulu, and told of how, during the 1990s, she had donated pastel originals and several prints to the organization, hoping that it might help us fundraise. What she didn't know was that no one could bear to part with the remarkable paintings, and that they have been hanging on the walls at the House for everyone to enjoy all these years. Surprised to see them, Mary went one by one and shared details about

each of the children pictured, and revealed an unexpected connection between one of her paintings and the Ronald McDonald House. It was a painting of a little girl entitled, "The Littlest Hula Dancer".

"This little girl stayed here at the House," explained Mary, while gazing at the image of the rosy cheeked child. "But this picture was done before she got sick, when she was about a year-and-a-half old."

The girl in the painting, a Big Island child named Jasmine Quitezis, recovered, grew up, and "Now, I'm about to paint Jasmine's child!" Mary declared.

Jasmine, who is 21-years-old now, told us during a phone call that she remembers when Mary took pictures of her in the yard and house before painting her. She also remembers staying at the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House at the age of four. She said, "I remember everything. I couldn't eat and I went back to breast feeding because that's all I could keep down."

Jasmine came to stay at the House for about a month after she got an allergic reaction to a shot she was given that affected her bile duct, the tube that connects to the liver. This infection made Jasmine very sick with jaundice. Although she periodically still sees a doctor for this condition, she is very grateful that her daughter, Kyra, is healthy.

"I'm glad you have my painting on the wall after all these years." Jasmine added, "I think it does help to see kids on the wall smiling and having fun. It's great that I can be a part of making everyone more comfortable."

Mary said Jasmine and the other beautiful island children are her inspirations. "I'll see a particular face that just cries out to be painted. There's a certain expression that really gets to me," she said.



Jerri Chong welcomes Mary Koski back to the House.

"The children have that look of innocence; I just paint what's there."

It's clear that her inspiring paintings found their way to the right home, where they are seen and cherished everyday by people truly appreciative of the encouragement—the children and families of Ronald McDonald House. Mary believes it was meant to work out that way. "There are no mistakes in life, no coincidences," she said. "It's nice to be able to make so many people happy with so little effort."



Mary Koski paused during her walk through the Ronald McDonald House to tell the story of Jasmine Quitezis, the girl in her painting, "The Littlest Hula Dancer".

(The Hope continued from page 1)

said. "The most important thing is for May to get well, but we believe that even in these hard times, each day brings us many blessings. In fact, we feel blessed to have met and received the support of everyone at the Ronald McDonald House, including the other people staying here."



Best of friends, May and Ruthie enjoyed themselves at a camp for kids with cancer. May's cap reads: "Cancer Fears Me".

For the Toas, the chance encounter that day with Ruthie couldn't have happened at a better time. "Others give us courage to stay strong," Seeseei said. "When May met Ruthie, it really meant a lot to her. She could totally identify."

Now it is up to May to persevere and fight for her future, just as Ruthie has done. May has undergone five rounds of chemotherapy, and has handled her treatments well. The nausea and pain she felt couldn't stop her from flashing that wide smile of hers. When you are the recipient of one of those wonderful smiles, it can make your day.

It certainly won't be surprising at all to one day see May "sharing the hope" herself—reaching out to another bewildered youngster with a serious medical condition, and using soothing words to help make things better.

Clearly, a major part of the healing spirit of Ronald McDonald House is imparted from family to family and from keiki to keiki.



(Top) Meredith Palafox of the Big Island visited Rica Ada of Saipan to offer her encouragement in the hospital. The two cancer patients became friends after meeting at Ronald McDonald House. (Bottom) Later, Rica comforted bed-ridden Meredith during her hospitalization.



Meredith and Rica were among those who befriended Ruthie Mersburgh...who then took May Toa under her wing...and so it goes.

New RMHC-HI Public Service Announcement on Television!



The latest RMHC-HI public service announcement is a follow-up to one of our previous PSAs that focused on Ruthie Mersburgh of Kailua-Kona. In this one, Ruthie and her family are shown moving on in life following Ruthie's scrape with cancer.

These PSAs were made possible because of the generous support of McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii and in-kind assistance by its local advertising agency Milici Valenti Ng Pack. They made sure that no public contributions to the organization were used in the project.

2009 RMHC-HI Golf Classic

Preparations have begun for our annual Golf extravaganza, to be held on July 23 at Mamala Bay Golf Course, and we need your help!!

Want to make a difference in the lives of struggling families while getting your company's name out to a select group of community leaders and businessmen?



Here is how:

Sponsor a hole-call 973-5683 ext. 239

Enter a team-call 973-5683 ext. 240

Donate prizes-call 973-5683 ext. 243

Volunteer-call 973-5683 ext. 241

Around The House

By Kanoë Paauhau, Judd Hillside House Manager

The peace and warmth of Christmas and the fresh excitement of the New Year always seems to intensify the spirit of caring and giving that abounds here at the Ronald McDonald House year-round. Of course, the families staying here would prefer to be back home observing their own traditions, but they cannot, because of the seriousness of their child's medical condition.

But they are far from alone. Staff, volunteers and contributors all step up to make sure the kids and families have a special time despite the challenges they face. It means a little normalcy in their lives, which is very important to them.

Unfortunately, it isn't possible to thank every single person who performed a recent deed of aloha here, but please know that every gesture is so deeply appreciated by families and staff alike. I do have room to acknowledge a few folks, though. Let's do it with photos.



Eileen Tupman, Creator of **Akamai Games** (left), dropped by the Judd Hillside House to present her latest children's educational board games to the House. The games, *Ohana Mana* and *Pele's Perils*, will amuse (and educate) kids at the Judd Hillside House and the RMH Family Room. Nikee Wainit accepted the donation on behalf of the families.



Annual Christmas Toy Drive at Murphy's Bar & Grill

Again this year, Don and Marion Murphy opened up their restaurant for a special evening to show the families staying at the Ronald McDonald House how much they care. Everyone enjoyed the food, the trolley rides and all the holiday spirit!



Alisa Onishi of **Mobi PCS** showed Neha Prasad how to use one of the House's new cell phones. The local Mobi people donated phones and service so families can stay in touch with home while on Oahu.



Our families were treated like VIPs at Hawaii Winter Baseball's RMHC-HI Night.

They had special box seats to enjoy the game between the Sharks and the Honu. They were invited onto the field, acknowledged by the crowd, and got to meet the players!



OC16's Dave Vinton (left) dropped by the House to present Jerri Chong a check for \$1,163. Also shown are current House guests Juanita Marngun, Neha Prasad, and May Toa. RMHC-HI was selected as the beneficiary of the first annual OC16 Senior Girls Volleyball Invitational!



Pageant Queens visit the kids

The new Miss Hawaii USA 2009, Aureana Tseu (back) and Miss Teen Hawaii 2009, Ashley Moser dropped by to bring good cheer to the children. Enjoying their company are May Toa (in red) and Waisake Matasarasara.

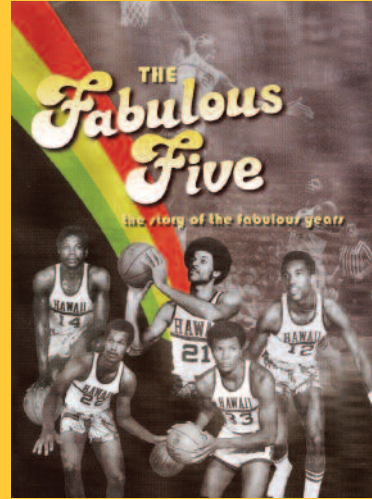
MORE COMMUNITY SUPPORT!



(Top) Beth Munson of **Price Busters** visited the House to donate decorations and treats for the children. Price Busters also donated decorations for our Gala and items for the Gala's Country Store.

(Middle) **Moms on a Mission** continue to heap love on RMHC-HI. In this picture, group members Roxanne Kimura and Annie Komatsu make sure the House is supplied with its cleaning products. Donating Melaleuca products each month is just one of the ways this group gives to the House.

(Bottom) **The Cherry Blossom Queen and Court** pose with some of the guests and the goodies they baked with the families!



Nostalgia time!

"The Fabulous Five—the story of the fabulous years" is now available on DVD at stores statewide. This look back at the excitement created during the highest peak of University of Hawaii basketball features interviews and rare footage of the team in action.

The Fabulous Five selected RMHC-HI to benefit from the sales of their story and \$1 is donated to the organization for each DVD sold.

The DVD is available at Walmart, Sam's Club, Don Quiote, and Borders.

Kids helping kids



Degan Collier celebrated his sixth birthday by asking friends and family to donate something from the RMHC-HI Wish List instead of giving him presents. Degan and mom Melissa (far right) presented his gifts to RMHC-HI's Nikee Wainit!



Punahou second-grader Risa Hata, also chose to think about others instead of herself on her birthday and dropped off the cash she received to RMHC-HI's Michelle Takahashi!



Scouts Jessica Lung from Brownie Girl Scout Troop 701, and Emily Lung, Girl Scout Troop 405, delivered a donation of Nike shoes for the kids at the Ronald McDonald House. Their Scout Troops decided to share a donation they had received from the shoe makers.

2008 World Children's Day

Once again, World Children's Day at McDonald's restaurants inspired strong community participation, and brought out some of Hawaii's biggest celebrities too. All day on November 20, the purchase of any Extra Value Meal gener-

ated a contribution to Hawaii's Ronald McDonald House. Customers could also donate one dollar and receive a paper cut-out hand to sign and post at the restaurant. The special day raised nearly \$50,000!



Live, in the morning from the Keeaumoku Street McDonald's—KHON2's Manolo Morales and Trini Kaupuiki.



Jasmine Trias worked the drive-thru at Kahala McDonald's.



Morning anchor on KGMB-TV's Sunrise, Grace Lee interviewed Terri Chong at the Keeaumoku St. restaurant.



KHNL-TV's Stephanie Lum and Howard Dashevsky say "lend-a-hand" with RMHC-HI's Gene Davis and McDonald's of Hawaii President Veronica Kaneko at the Nimitz McDonald's.



Jordan Segundo learned the ropes from Ronald McDonald at the Keeaumoku St. McDonald's.

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

I want to step forward for the families. Enclosed is my gift to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii.

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

Please Print

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Email: _____

My check/payment is enclosed

Please Charge my:

Visa MasterCard American Express

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Name on Card _____

Your Signature _____

I'd like to make a monthly donation of _____ to the above credit card, effective _____

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).

RMHC-HI's 3rd Annual Gala Dinner

To honor our special families

Four hundred people shared a wonderful and emotional evening at RMHC-HI's Gala fundraiser on November 30, at the Hilton Hawaiian Village's Coral Ballroom.

The event honored the families assisted by Ronald McDonald House—past, current, and future.

On hand were several families that have called the Ronald McDonald House their home-away-from-home during their child's urgent medical treatments. Former House guest Leona Toler of the Big Island, whose grandson is recovering from cancer treatments, gave the invocation and shared her family's story. Kaniala

Masoe, a professional musician also from the Big Island, spoke of his family's experiences at the Ronald McDonald House and even sang an original song he and his wife Melody wrote for the House.

The special dessert for the evening was an original creation by former House guest Ronald Vilorio, now pastry chef at Sam Choy's. He also shared the story of his child's illness and their days staying at the Ronald McDonald House.

Mahalo to everyone who attended and made it possible! The special event raised more than \$195,000 to help RMHC-HI continue to assist the kids and families.



Past guests at the Ronald McDonald House shared their stories with the 400 people attending the event. (Left to right) Ronald and Chris Vilorio, Leona Toler, Melody and Kysen Masoe, Jordan Toler and Kaniala Masoe.

Mahalo To Our Shining Stars

HONORARY CO-CHAIRS

Veronica Kaneko and Kitty Lagaretta

MAILE SPONSORSHIP (\$10,000)

Mr. Arnold Baptiste, Jr. and Mrs. Joji Baptiste * McDonald's of Hawaii Owner / Operators
McDonald's Corporation * McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii

ILIMA SPONSORSHIP (\$5,000)

Bank of Hawaii * First Insurance Company of Hawaii * Fresh Start Bakeries * Golden State Foods
Henry & Lucille Chun Family * Island Insurance Company, Limited * Dr. Thomas and Mi Kosasa
Maurice and Joanna Sullivan Family Foundation (2) * Meadow Gold Dairies
R.M. Towill Corporation * Tesoro Hawaii Corporation

PIKAKE SPONSORSHIP (\$3,000)

AlohaCare * BAMA Companies * CC Engineering & Construction, Inc. * Communications Pacific
Dr. Robert Durkin & Mrs. Paraluman Stice-Durkin * Grant Thornton LLP * HMSA
H.T. Hayashi Foundation * Hawaii Five Stars * Hawaiian Airlines * Hung Wo & Elizabeth Lau Ching Foundation
Sara Isonaga * Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children * Marr Jones & Wang * McDonald's of Maui
McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii * MW Group, Limited * Jack and Zelig Myers
Pacific Guardian Life * Fred Turner * Bruce Yanagihara



Kaniala and Melody Masoe, performed a special song and hula.



Sammi (left) and Makaleta Ma helped to decorate the sponsored tree.



Some of the 35 Gala volunteers that helped make the event possible. (Left to right) Richard and Nancy Akamichi, Nobu Oshiro, and Donna and James Asam.



RMHC-HI President Terri Chong and McDonald's of Hawaii President Veronica Kaneko.



RMHC-HI Board Chairman Brian Takeda, Pam Takeda, Board member and Gala Master of Ceremonies Bruce Yanagihara.

Volunteer Spotlight

By Michael Ahakuelo, Volunteer Coordinator

As people ring in a New Year, it is tradition to make resolutions. The most common are probably to eat healthier; invest more into savings; and quit those nasty habits. But thankfully, it appears that more and more people are resolving to help others too.

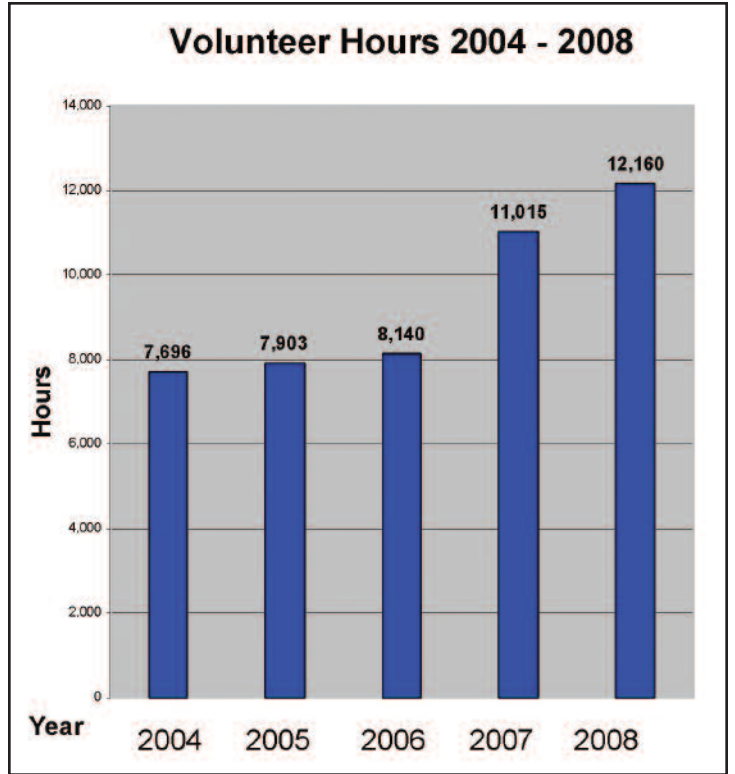
A look at our statistics shows that, during the past few years, the number of volunteer hours performed at Ronald McDonald House and the RMH Family Room by people in our community has risen steadily—and it has had such a positive affect on everyone here.

Volunteers enhance our services and provide additional warmth and support for the children and families we serve. They are a large part of our success. During 2008, community groups and individuals volunteered a total of 12,160 hours! That's awesome. And believe it or not, this giving of time and talents can sometimes be just as important as a cash donation to the organization.

A big "mahalo" to all those who take time out of their lives to lend a helping hand at our two Houses, the Family Room, and/or at our many special events. We are truly grateful for all your support and dedication.

If you are someone who has been thinking about volunteering but hasn't taken that first step, now is the perfect time to start. I'm sure you will be glad you did.

Let's continue this wonderful growth in RMHC-HI's volunteer hours during 2009!



Find out about all the different volunteer opportunities available at Ronald McDonald House by visiting RonaldHouseHawaii.org or calling 973-5683 ext. 241.

A special mahalo to Ryan's Graphics for helping to bring this newsletter to you in color.



Aloha from Our House to Yours
 is published by Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii
www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii
 1970 Judd Hillside Road
 P.O. Box 61777
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96839-1777

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage Paid
 Honolulu HI
 Permit No. 635