



Aloha

# From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

July 2009

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii

## Given a Chance

*An eight-year friendship between two employees at the Four Seasons Hotel on Maui turned into love, and the "thirty-something" couple began to plot the course their lives would take together. Little did they know that bringing a baby into the world would bring with it such challenges.*

After finding out that their baby was going to be a boy, Lara Bellini and Darrett Schoeppner started thinking about what to name him. Although Lara wanted to name the baby Darrett, dad wasn't too excited about that.

"I love my name now, but I hated it when I was growing up," he admits.

### Wish List

#### Gift Cards

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

#### Household Items

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

#### Food Items

Cup Noodles (microwave)  
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  
Professional picture framing

"I wouldn't want to make him go through all the confusion."

But all of their plans—including what to name the baby—were suddenly put on hold when they found out there were serious problems with the pregnancy, about six months in.

Lara was flown to Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children in Honolulu, where doctors put her on strict bed rest, trying to delay what appeared to be an imminent premature birth.

"The doctors at the hospital are very caring, but they don't sugar-coat anything," Darrett says. "From the very beginning, they objectively discussed with us the chances of our baby living or dying. They told us that since Lara was in her 24th week, his chances were 50-50, and that each day he stayed in mom's womb, his chance of survival would increase significantly. Every day seemed to revolve around his 'chance' of making it. The right name for him just came to us."



Chance had an uphill climb after being born weighing just one pound, nine ounces.

So it was then, that Chance Keali'i Salvatore Schoeppner was born on April 21, 2009. Lara had managed to make it to her 25th week of pregnancy, but Chance weighed just one pound, nine ounces.

The Wailuku couple now spends countless hours each day by their baby's side as he fights for his life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Doctors are working to help Chance grow stronger and make sure



Lara and Darrett at their home-away-from-home in Honolulu—the Ronald McDonald House.

his organs begin to function fully. With each of the benchmarks that he meets, he is closer to going home. But as preemies slowly develop, parents quickly learn to temper their high hopes with realistic expectations because often, progress is followed by setbacks, and the emotional roller-coaster could be too much.

Recently, it happened to them. Chance had been doing so well that it began to look like he could be able to go home even before his original due date of August 3. But he had a bad reaction after a vaccination, even requiring resuscitation at one point. Lara and Darrett said they felt like they were "starting all over again." But the couple is determined to do whatever it takes to see this through, and Chance seems to have that fighting spirit too. "All the nurses down at the NICU say he's 'feisty,'" Lara proudly tells.

Lara and Darrett credit their employers at The Four Seasons and

*continued on page 5*



Jerri Chong

## A Message from our President

Aloha from the House That Love Built!

It's hard to believe that the Ronald McDonald House Family Room at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children is already well into its 7th year of providing respite and support for families with children in the hospital. Since opening its doors on January 13, 2003, this little "slice of the Ronald McDonald House," staffed entirely by caring and well-trained volunteers, has now assisted more than 50,000 visitors!

The majority of those utilizing the Family Room are from Oahu.

Visitors often comment that when they enter the Family Room, it is suddenly as though they have been transported into someone's home. That's how different the atmosphere is from the hospital corridors just outside.

It is important that it remains warm, friendly and comfortable, and a place that is fully prepared to offer sup-

port for parents when they just can't leave the side of their ill or injured keiki for more than a few minutes at a time. While at the Family Room, folks can grab a snack or drink, make phone calls, check e-mail, do research on the internet, or just have some private time.

The Family Room receives about 8,000 visitors each year, and as you can imagine, upkeep and constant re-stocking of supplies at the Family Room is essential. With that much traffic, the Family Room also has to occasionally be refurbished, and its furnishings, wall treatments and carpeting replaced; its electronics upgraded. Please take a look at the photos on pages 4-5 to see how beautiful the Family Room looks today, after its most recent renovations.

We just can't say enough about the dedicated volunteers who work regular four-hour shifts at the Family Room and add such a caring touch as they assist visitors and oversee the Room's use. Many of them attended the recent appreciation luncheon that we held in their honor. For more on that, please read the Volunteer Spotlight below.



## Volunteer Spotlight 2009 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon by Michael Ahakuelo



Nearly 50 RMHC-HI volunteers shared an afternoon of good food, music and warm fellowship at this year's Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon held at The Willows Restaurant on May 20.

Some of our volunteers have been with us for more than a decade and we were delighted to bring special attention to these exceptional heroes.

Volunteers loved the music provided by Annette Alcos Oasay and listened intently as Oahu resident Jeffrey Baza shared his story of going from a parent who used the Family

Room extensively while his child was hospitalized, to now helping other parents who use it by donating money, food and DVDs.

Volunteering can be incredibly rewarding, and my goal as Volunteer Coordinator is to match you up with exactly the type of volunteer role that compliments your interests. Making it easy is the variety of volunteer duties we have.

Volunteering at the Family Room is one opportunity, but there are numerous other volunteer jobs that need to be done at our Houses and our events.

A good way to get started is to visit our website at [www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org) and click on "Become a Volunteer". You can review descriptions of our volunteer needs, and even download volunteer application forms and information. If it's easier for you to call, you can reach me at 973-5684 ext. 241.



Jeffrey Baza told the audience about the heartbreak of losing his child, and the unexpected outcome of gaining a new Ohana at the Family Room. Watch for Jeffrey's full story in our next newsletter.



Many RMHC-HI volunteers gathered at the Willows on May 20 for the 2009 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.

# Our Community Heroes

By Michelle Takahashi  
RMHC-HI Community Relations

It is truly heart-warming to see how many caring people in the community are stepping forward to help the children and families of Ronald McDonald House—even during these difficult economic times. Each company, school or individual that donates to the House all have one thing in common, they do so because they want to give back in some way, and we

are so grateful to receive such kindness and support.

Some recent examples are the Pacific Stampers Scrap Camp, a scrapbook workshop held at Ward Warehouse. Organized by Naoko Page, it generated \$300 for RMHC-HI. Over on the Big Island, Waiakea Intermediate School held a school-wide coin collection campaign for RMHC-HI and raised \$863.62. Back on Oahu, Chaminade University raised \$424.61 through a service learning project by selling snacks at their basketball games and washing cars.

Also, a big mahalo to Macy's, and everyone that participated in the recent Community Shopping Day. The

promotion netted nearly \$6,500! We are very grateful, too, for Pacific Office Properties, which assisted in our efforts to sell the \$10 coupons at some of their properties.

Every donation, large or small, makes a big difference. We wish that we could thank everyone who participated in these events personally, but please know that your acts of kindness and gifts of aloha are so greatly appreciated by the families and the children who will benefit from your generosity.

Below are photos representing some of the other recent community efforts to lend a hand.

Mahalo for being our Heroes!



*Keoneula Elementary School purchased 3,425 McFun-Raiser Coupon Booklets, the most so far this year. Through their involvement with RMHC-HI McFun-Raiser Program, I was invited to participate in their Community Read Aloud and Career Sharing Day. I read two books to Mrs. Morgan's 1st grade class and shared the importance of reading in my career. That's me in the back, on the right.*



*Vicki Kam with Forest City Residential Management Company (right) presented us a check for \$1,005 from their "Casual Fridays". Employees were given the opportunity to wear jeans on Fridays by donating \$5 to RMHC-HI.*



*I was happy to accept several boxes of Wish List items for the House that were donated by the employees at Coach Factory Waikale during their month-and-a-half "Wish List Drive". Assistant Manager John Puapuaga dropped the items off at the Judd Hillside House.*



*Beverly Hashimoto's ceramic class at Roosevelt High School hand-crafted ceramic bowls that they sold together with homemade Portuguese bean soup at their school's May Fair. I accepted their donation of \$417 to RMHC-HI.*



*Need Entertainment?'s Summertime Party at Pipeline Café raised \$409 for RMHC-HI. Jaime A'ana (left) stopped by the Ronald McDonald House to present the check to RMHC-HI's Candace Asam-Lopez.*



*Wal-Mart Keeaumoku's store manager Walter Lott (left) presented RMHC-HI's Gene Davis with a check for \$1,000 from the Wal-Mart Foundation. Gene was also given the opportunity to share information about RMHC-HI with their employees.*



# The Ronald McDonald House More than 50

The Ronald McDonald House Family Room, which opened in January 2003, has now assisted the Medical Center for Women and Children provides an extension of the Ronald McDonald House game room, comfy living room, and much more, it remains open 365 days-a-year from 9am-9pm but most of families using it are from Oahu. Here are some photos of the Family Room taken during the post-renovation Open House.



On this page are photos of the newly renovated Ronald McDonald House Family Room. Above (left to right) are one of the Room's two computer stations; the living room; and game room. Left is the entertainment console, and right is the kitchenette. The photos on opposite page were taken during the post-renovation Open House.



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 - \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My check/payment is enclosed

Please Charge my:

Visa     MasterCard     American Express

Please Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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).

# McDonald House Family Room 50,000 served!!

hosted more than 50,000 people. This collaboration between RMHC-HI and Kapiolani Hospital is right in Kapiolani Hospital. Offering respite, support, snacks, beverages, Internet, a TV, and is supervised by volunteers. The Family Room welcomes visitors from all over, even right after its recent renovation and during its Open House on February 27.



RMHC-HI Volunteer Coordinator Michael Ahakuelo welcomed everyone attending the Family Room Open House. Doctors, nurses, social workers and other hospital staff streamed through the newly renovated facility during the event.



## “I’ve made great use of the Family Room”

Each day at the hospital while Darrett Schoeppner and Lara Bellini attend the bedside of their premature son Chance, Darrett makes regular visits to the Ronald McDonald House Family Room. “It’s a quick escape from the intensity of the NICU,” he says. “As good as the bedside manner of the doctors and nurses is, there is a balance going on between life and death. There are constant struggles going on. The Family Room is a place I can just go, sit down, take a breath and briefly take my mind off of everything that is going on just a short distance away. Lara calls me her Rock, I guess because I seem unflappable. But the only reason I can be that way, is because I can get this occasional escape, regain my bearings, and when I go back to the NICU for round two that day, I can be who I need to be in there.”

### Given a Chance (continued from page 1)

their friends on Maui for their “enormous” support. A close friend on Maui has even created a website at [www.helpchance.com](http://www.helpchance.com) so that extended family members and friends can follow regular updates on Chance’s condition, and even make a donation to help the family with their medical expenses.

“And we can’t say enough about you guys here at the Ronald McDonald House who have made it as easy as possible for us to get through this,” praises Darrett. “We’re fortunate to be here, just three minutes away from the hospital. We don’t have to worry about where we’re putting our heads down every night, where we’re getting our meals, or where we’re going to shower. We’ve been able to just focus on being there for Chance

without having to worry about everything else. That’s all really important, especially when you realize you will be in Honolulu for two to three months or longer.”

“And we’ve really learned a lot,” adds Lara. “It’s been very interesting meeting people from Guam and other islands. For me personally, it’s been nice talking with other people who are going through the same type of things we are. It’s just comforting.”

Darrett agrees. “Regardless of what walk of life we all come from, we are all parents with children who need medical assistance, and we all have that in common. We have the same stresses, the same worries. We all sit down over dinner and share our experiences with others that we probably never would have met if not for the circumstances. It’s inspiring

when others tell of their successes on a certain day.”

Lara adds, “And when you think you’ve had a bad day, talking with everyone else here helps to put it all in perspective.”



Lara is able to hold Chance now that he is out of the incubator.

# Sam Choy's 12th Anniversary Celebration

## A Benefit for RMHC-HI

On June 24, more than 200 people gathered to help celebrate Sam Choy's Breakfast Lunch and Crab's 12th anniversary celebration. The fundraiser for RMHC-HI raised over \$22,000!

Those attending were treated to a special menu created by Chef Aurelio Garcia that reflected Hawaii's rich cultural diversity. Entertainers Augie T, Willie K, Laga Savea, Sean Tiwanak and Fiji took the stage to entertain the crowd, and encourage support for Hawaii's Ronald McDonald Houses. Jerome Koko and Moon Kaukahi of the Makaha Sons, guests of Sam, also took the stage to perform a song. It was quite a night!



RMHC-HI's Board Chairman Brian Takeda (left) and President Jerri Chong (right) presented Chef Sam Choy and co-owner James Lee with a special plaque featuring photos of Chef Sam with some of the children at the Ronald McDonald House taken during his visits there.



Willie K (left) and emcee Augie T delighted the audience with song and humor.



**Mahalo Sam and James!**

Staff members of RMHC-HI and Sam Choy's Breakfast Lunch and Crab got together for a photo following the successful event.

## Kailua-Kona residents contribute nearly \$3,000 to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii

*Two Kona physicians had a great idea—and they ran with it!*

Kailua-Kona's, Dr. Monica Scheel and Dr. Michael Traub turned their March 29th participation in the 2009 LavaMan Waikoloa Triathlon into a fundraiser RMHC-HI. Participants in the event must swim



Dr. Monica Scheel (left) and Dr. Michael Traub cross the finish line.

1.5 kilometers, bike 40 kilometers and then run 10 kilometers to complete the grueling test. The pair encouraged patients and friends to donate \$10 to RMHC-HI, and take a guess at what their finishing times would be. Doctors Scheel and Traub matched the amount generated and turned over the final donation to Ruthie Mersburgh, who along with her mom Charlene delivered it in person to RMHC-HI. Charlene works in the doctors' office.

Dr. Scheel said that they were motivated by knowing the seven-year old Kona youngster. "Ruthie is an inspiration to all of us who at times feel like we are going through a rough time," she said. "She went through a cancer treatment that most of us will truly not understand and came out a beautiful, giving, caring little girl." Ruthie and her family stayed at Ronald McDonald House in

Honolulu for several months during Ruthie's aggressive treatments. For Dr. Traub, the best part of his race experience was "seeing people come forth generously with donations to RMHC-HI during this time of economic hardship for us all."

Dr. Scheel is a dermatologist, and Dr. Traub is a naturopathic physician.



Ruthie Mersburgh presented the proceeds from the fundraiser to RMHC-HI's Jerri Chong.

# You Can Help Too!



## Philanthropizza



RONALD McDONALD  
HOUSE CHARITIES®  
OF HAWAII

Please join **California Pizza Kitchen** for a flavorsome fundraising event to support Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii. **All you need to do is clip this coupon and present it to your server when ordering, or when picking up your take-out order, on Tuesday, August 4, 2009 between 11am and 10pm.**

**20% of your check will be donated\* to RMHC-HI, and you will receive a FREE appetizer card for your next visit!**

Only valid at California Pizza Kitchen  
Ala Moana Shopping Center  
Ho'okipa Terrace  
941-7715

\* Donation amount excludes proceeds from tax, gratuity and retail purchases. Manager, please attach this coupon to the guest check.

**A Special Promotion at McDonald's Now!!**  
**FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY!**  
**teenie BEANIEBABIES®**

**Happy Meal®**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Birthday Promotion**  
**July 17 - August 13**  
**20¢ from every Happy Meal® and Mighty Kids Meal® sold benefits Hawaii's Ronald McDonald House®**  
(the cornerstone program of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii)  
[www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org)



Price of required purchase on menu board. While supplies last at participating McDonald's. © 2009 McDonald's



give aloha

Foodland's Annual Community Matching Gifts Program

Foodland's yearly drive to help the community takes place during the month of SEPTEMBER. Shoppers may make a donation to their favorite charity when they are making a purchase, and the folks at Foodland and the Western Union Foundation will match up to \$325,000.

The program honors Foodland founder Maurice "Sully" Sullivan.

To make a donation to RMHC-HI when checking out at any Foodland or Sack 'N Save store let them know that it is for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii, organization number **77306**.

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii

# Share a Night Annual Gala

## Save the Date

### Saturday, November 21, 2009

Honoring  
The Kelley Family & Outrigger Enterprises Group

Honorary Co-Chairs  
John and Marylou Brogan

Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort & Spa • Coral Ballroom, Waikiki  
5:30 p.m. Hosted Cocktails • 6:30 p.m. Dinner

Table Levels:

Maile - \$10,000    Ilima - \$5,000    Pikake - \$3,000    Individual Seats - \$225

Please call 973-5683 ext. 239 or e-mail Candace Asam-Lopez at [calrmhc@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:calrmhc@hawaii.rr.com) for early reservations and preferred seating.



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

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is published by Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii!  
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