



Aloha

From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

October 2011

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii

Even in her passing, she would help others

Florida resident Bridget Pier first visited Hawaii last year when she served as maid of honor for her mother Meighan's Makapuu beach wedding to fiancé Steven Alexander. Something about the islands touched Bridget deeply, and the cheerful seven-year-old was thrilled when her family returned to Hawaii again this year to celebrate Meighan and Steven's first anniversary. "Bridget loved the ocean and all the creatures in it," shared mom Meighan. "She embraced the Hawaiian Islands and the people." Bridget even surprised



Bridget Pier. Hawaii was her paradise.



her family during this year's trip by declaring that she would live in Hawaii someday. The love she had for life and her passion for helping others reflected her Aloha Spirit, and she felt at home here.

But on June 29, after returning to their hotel from a joyous day of surfing the North Shore with her mom, step-dad, and 10-year-old brother Brent, Bridget suffered a massive stroke. Doctors at Kapiolani Hospital tried valiantly to save her but the damage was too great, and

she passed away on July 3. An undetected heart infection may have sent tissue to her brain, where it blocked the blood flow.

During her hospitalization and the days immediately after Bridget's passing, Steven, Meighan, Brent, and Bridget's Auntie Reni stayed at the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House.

Continued on page 2

More about Bridget Allison Pier (May 13, 2004-July 3, 2011)

The energetic, blue-eyed seven-year-old was eager to move into second grade this fall because she had big plans for a fundraiser to help a local children's hospital. She was planning on having a lemonade stand, selling cookies and taking on extra household chores to raise cash.

"It was just her nature to want to give and help," Mom Meighan Alexander said.

"I'd like people to know what a very happy life Bridget lived," Meighan added. "She was always smiling and laughing. I also think people should take her example and be friendly and nice to others. Bridget could not stand for anyone to be mean."

In a letter to friends, the family described Bridget this way:

"A truly independent soul, she was a girly-girl, preferring fancy party shoes (although she liked her mommy's spiked heels the most) and formal dresses, to sneakers and shorts. Her concept of style was colorful and courageous."

"Bridget's sense of humor and intelligence were two of her greatest traits and she will be missed desperately by those lucky enough to have known her."

Wish List

Gift Cards

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

Household Items

Non-stick pots & pans cookware
Paper towels
Ziplock bags—gallon
Garbage bags (yard & kitchen)

Food Items

Sugar
Cooking oil
Flour
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

A Message from our President



Jerri Chong

Preparations are well under way for the 6th Annual RMHC-HI Share-A-Night Gala Dinner on November 20 at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel. This year's honoree, the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, has been providing support for Hawaii's Ronald McDonald House from the very start, nearly 25 years ago. Of course, for much of that time it was the paper's ancestors, the *Honolulu*

Advertiser and *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, pitching in to help. Now, without skipping a beat, the combined newspaper's contributions continue to make a big difference to RMHC-HI in many ways - and we are not the only worthy charity receiving assistance from the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, either. The truth is, the entire community benefits from their sincere commitment to give back to the islands.

So, it is our pleasure to honor the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* on November 20 for their outstanding contributions to RMHC-HI and the entire state. The event's honorary co-chairs are Peter Ho and Mark Dunkerley.

It's going to be a classy, festive and fun evening, and I hope you can share it with us. Tables for the event are still available at various levels, as are single seats. Just

give Candace Asam-Lopez a call at 973-5683 ext. 239.

As I inferred above, we will be observing our 25th anniversary in 2012, and we are already making plans for some special activities to mark the occasion. One thing we are hoping for is that families who have called Hawaii's Ronald McDonald House their home-away-from-home sometime during the past quarter century will re-connect with us—right now, as we near the big anniversary. We invite your letters, stories, remembrances, photos, and even videos, so we can put together a very distinctive personal history of "The House That Love Built." There are now more than 22,000 individuals that have been assisted through the Ronald McDonald House program in Hawaii. If even a fraction of those contact us, it will be really helpful and exciting.

But it's not only families that we would like to hear from. Volunteers past and present: want to share your feelings about your experiences? Former board members: has it been awhile since we've seen you? This is the perfect time to check in with your RMHC-HI 'ohana! It's easy to get our attention. Call, write, email, or reach us through Facebook or our web site.

Mahalo!

Bridget Pier continued from page 1

"The House was wonderful," Meighan said in a Miami newspaper interview. "There are some families that are facing weeks of care for their children, and the cost of lodging in a hotel could very well bankrupt them. To have this lodging available is a godsend and people should do all they can to support it."

When it was clear that they were going to lose their little girl, the family gathered its courage and made a remarkable decision. Because of her resolute desire to be in Hawaii, and her strong belief in helping others, it was decided that they would honor her life and dreams by donating her organs to those in Hawaii who needed them, thus creating a living legacy that Bridget would have been proud of.

"We are touched and overwhelmed with the support and love we've received," Meighan said. "People have asked us what they can do for us. My answer is: consider becoming an organ donor. You can save a life. It's an awesome gift."

The family has also encouraged friends to make charitable donations to RMHC-HI and Kapiolani Hospital in honor of Bridget. "We were fortunate to be housed at the Ronald McDonald House," she said. "It was such a peaceful and loving environment."

So, even though Bridget wouldn't be able to spend her life here as she had dreamed, she was able to help someone else live who may not have made it, if it weren't for her. As a final statement of her love for the islands, her family took Bridget's ashes by Hawaiian canoe out into the ocean that she cared so much about, and scattered them.

Happy Meals = Helping Families

Don't forget! For every Happy Meal and Mighty Kids Meal sold throughout 2011, our friends at McDonald's of Hawaii are donating five cents to RMHC-HI.

Those nickels will really add up and make a big difference in our ability to serve the children and families.

Thank you McDonald's for choosing RMHC-HI as your charity of choice. Thank you McDonald's customers for your continual support of our mission through participating in special promotions like this one, and by dropping your change into the handy collection boxes near cash registers.



Combined Federal Campaign Attention Federal Employees!

All Employees of the U.S. government, including service personnel, may designate a charity to receive a monthly donation that is deducted automatically from their paychecks.



RMHC-HI's CFC designation code is:

89629

Thank You!!

AROUND THE HOUSE

by Nikee Wainit, Manager of House Operations

The activity level has increased here at the Ronald McDonald House as we begin preparations for 2012 and our 25th anniversary! Sometime during next year we will welcome our 10,000th family into the Hawaii Ronald McDonald House program that started back in 1987! We will also be approaching a total of 100,000 room nights provided for families with seriously ill children.



Life for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House is punctuated by exhausting, uncertain days at the hospital separated by anxious periods of waiting between treatments, tests, or therapies.

It's really important for families to achieve some kind of normalcy in their lives while trying to cope with all that is happening.

That is why it is so gratifying to see how businesses and members of our community step forward regularly to do what they can to help our families. Those of us who are here on a daily basis have seen how even a small gesture of support can mean the world to them.

Among those offering their support is Tessie Sotelo, a professional

Left, Tessie Sotelo works on Maui's Ana Lynn Lopez at the Oahu Ave. House. Right, Kids enjoying a round of mini-golf.

masseuse who visits each week to offer massages for our stressed out families.

Also helping to ease the pressure the families are feeling are Rock Island Café, the Honolulu Zoo, and Jungle River Mini Golf, all of whom have extended open invitations to RMH families to be their guests for a meal or an excursion. The people behind these businesses have huge hearts! Mahalo!



MAINTAINING

by Richard Atsatt, Maintenance Manager

It is a great blessing for RMHC-HI to have professional tradesmen within our community step forward and donate their time, materials, and services. Large and small pledges alike from these folks help us maintain the quality and high standards of our facilities, so that our guests feel comfortable in their surroundings during their stays with us. During the past several months, many projects have been completed with the help of numerous people and businesses. Here are a few of them, along with the names of the generous individuals that made each possible:

Atunasia Latu, of V. Eng Construction - Donated concrete pads for our tables in the barbecue area, and our new cement walkway that leads to them.

John Cheung, of CC Engineering & Construction Inc. - Leveled out our onsite manager's residence, the "Cottage," after water runoff shifted part of its foundation. Then they did ground work to prevent it from happening again.

Craig Kojima, of Craig's Air Conditioning - Donating annual maintenance for our systems, free labor, and steeply discounted parts. Craig also donated a new refrigerator for our conference room.

Peter Maskell, of Island Solar Service Inc. - Donating repairs and annual maintenance of our solar hot water system.

Paul Okamoto, of Rainmaker Hawaii LTD. - Furnished a filtered hot and cold water system with annual system maintenance.

Robin Mori, of Island Flooring - Supplied new flooring for our special bathroom that accommodates persons with disabilities.

Mahalo gentlemen, and hats off to you!



The professionals from CC Engineering and Construction, Inc. diagnosed the problem with the Manager's Cottage foundations and quickly took measures to solve it.

20th Annual RMHC-HI Golf Classic

Nearly 200 golfers took advantage of the beautiful conditions at Mamala Bay Golf Course on July 20 to participate in our Golf Classic. It was a perfect day for golf—warm and breezy—and the 20th edition was the best ever! The Golf Classic brought in nearly \$100,000 for RMHC-HI, including a \$5,000 donation by the PGA—Aloha Section. Among the lucky winners was Mike Kaya, who went home with a \$6,200 Rolex watch. The watch was courtesy of Rolex By Kaimana Kea.



Guy Hagi golfed and then emceed the after-golf banquet.



Visit our Facebook page for more photos from the RMHC-HI Golf Classic, or use your Smart Phone to view them with this QR code:



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McDonald's Golden Arches Merchants Assoc. - Team A
McDonald's Golden Arches Merchants Assoc. - Team B
McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii - Team A
McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii - Team B
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Outback Steakhouse - Waipio
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Servco Foundation
Sky River Management

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Chili's Bar & Grill
Crazy Shirts
Egan Inoue's Fit Body Boot Camp
Grand Wailea Resort Hotel & Spa
Honolulu Club
Pacific Soul Hawaii
Rolex by Kaimana Kea
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Ruth's Chris Steak House
Sea Life Park
Ritz-Carlton Kapalua
Rolex Presented by Kaimana Kea
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Egami & Ichikawa CPAs, Inc.
Grace Pacific Corp
HawaiiUSA Federal Credit Union
Honolulu Disposal Service
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Kamehameha Schools
Ko Olina Resort & Marina
Koga Engineering, Inc.
Leland Onekea & Partners, Architect
Locations Foundation
McDonald's of Hilo - Team A
McDonald's of Hilo - Team B
McDonald's of Wailuku - Team B
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N&K CPAs, INC.
Ng & Niebling, LLLC
PKF Pacific Hawaii LLP
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"They will be greeted with love."

When Caylee Preston-Akana was born in mid-June she weighed 1 lb., 2 oz. and was 11 inches long. "She came out crying strong," mom Christal Letizia, 29, recalled. Her lungs have been top-notch from the beginning."

But when a baby is born 15 weeks early, it is never easy, and it has been a long up-and-down battle for Caylee. Christal, who lives on the Big Island, has been by her side every day. "I get up and eat breakfast, and then I take the 8:30 a.m. shuttle to the hospital. I stay there all day and take the 8:30 p.m. shuttle back to the Ronald McDonald House. I eat dinner, take a shower and go to bed. I can breathe at the end of the day and go to sleep grateful that my baby's ok, and that I will have food in my stomach. Then I get up the next morning and do it all over again."

"Caylee did awesome for the first three weeks," said Christal. "Then



Christal Letizia holds her baby Caylee in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Kapiolani Hospital.

she started showing a heart murmur, which indicated a valve that was supposed to close after birth didn't close. They had to perform surgery to repair it and she did perfect. But that night she was really sick. Something was wrong. We couldn't figure out what was going on."

Doctors found that Caylee's intestines were not functioning correctly. "They said that when she was in severe physical distress, all the blood was going to her heart and brain," recalled Christal. "It robbed her bowels of necessary blood and may

have caused part of it to die or have a blockage." It's something doctors have been working on ever since.

Each day, Christal sits next to Caylee in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, bonding with her, and helping nurses take care of her when appropriate. "Caylee has everyone in the NICU wrapped around her little finger," chuckled Christal. "She's a happy, happy baby. She's so strong. And just beautiful."

Sometimes when Caylee snoozes, Christal reads or visits the nearby Ronald McDonald House Family Room. "It's wonderful! It's got comfortable chairs and no beeping machines. It's got Internet, and they have books too, so it keeps me sane. I borrow a lot of books from there."

Christal looks forward to the day that Caylee is released from the hospital and can join the family in Kurtistown. The new baby has a 10-year-old-brother named Joshua to get to know and a large extended family there.

When things get back to normal, Christal will continue working toward her nursing degree. "After seeing these caring nurses in action at Kapiolani, I'm re-inspired to be a nurse. They are just wonderful."

Christal has had quite a learning experience this summer and can offer some words of advice to others that may face similar situations. "Number one is to take it day by day. As hard as it is, you can't plan tomorrow, so don't try. It's just more stress. Number two: Accept all the help you can get—all of it. Number 3: As hard as it seems, the bad days go away.

Christal has gone from being a tentative newcomer at the Ronald McDonald House, to being someone the newcomers look to for information and support. "I made a ton of friends at the House. Being able to help them through their rough days and to have them help me through Caylee's rough days is priceless. I didn't intend to make friends while I was here, but I will never lose contact with these people."

What would she tell someone who was about to arrive at the Ronald McDonald House? "That they will be greeted with love. Enjoy it."



Christal must bide her time, but misses her son and extended family at home on the Big Island.

Oceanic Time-Warner Cable cares about keiki

In case you haven't noticed, Oceanic Time-Warner Cable is a lot more than just a large media company. It is actually a big group of local folks that live in our community and believe in giving back to it. RMHC-HI has been fortunate to be a recipient of their kindness numerous times, and so many families staying at the Ronald McDonald House have benefitted greatly. Most recently, these caring individuals conducted a company-wide fundraiser called "Kasual Clothes for Keiki Day", which allowed



employees to dress casually for a day in exchange for a donation to RMHC-HI.

Then, several members of the group visited the House on September 15 to drop off the checks and gift cards, and cook dinner for all the families. Their smiles, energy and generosity were inspiring to staff and families alike. From all of us, Mahalo!

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mahalo!

The Gold Party and the "Gold Guys" show their mettle



On Friday, August 12th, Kathy Ireland Weddings by World Oasis Estates and Rock Fever hosted The Gold Party, a benefit event for RMHC-HI and the Hawaii Kai Chamber of Commerce. The event was held at Kathy Ireland's Oceanfront Oasis, a beautiful beachfront estate located in Aina Haina. The evening was filled with activities including a DJ, fashion show, art auction, food from the Tiki Truck, a donut eating contest sponsored by Regal Bakery and numerous prize giveaways including a two-night stay in an oceanfront room with Regency Club access from the Hyatt Regency Waikiki Resort and Spa. The Gold Guys also sponsored the event and brought their staff with them to appraise and exchange gold on-site. To top off the night, Joe and Shane from The Gold Guys decided to donate \$10,000 to RMHC-HI!



Shane Maguire and Joe Beasy ("The Gold Guys") presented RMHC-HI with the check for \$10,000 to help families. Accepting for the charity was Jerri Chong (left) and Linda Ishikawa.



U.S. Navy personnel really put their shoulders into volunteering at the Judd Hillside House! On July 16 (left) a group from CommPacFlt managed to completely clear the area behind the House. Then on August 27, Pearl Harbor's Chief Petty Officer Selects cleaned the House from top to bottom and prepared lunch for the families.

Kids who want to help others

Andrew Dawson and Ryan Higa are two friends who celebrated their 9th birthdays over the summer by having a joint party. Their party included the regular activities - swimming at the beach, Nerf battles, cake and ice cream and all the other things boys of their age like to do. But instead of receiving birthday presents, Andrew and Ryan (with the help of their mothers) asked for items off of the RMHC-HI Wish List. Together, they were able to collect and donate a variety of things including various food items, non-stick frying pans, bed linens, postage stamps, \$150 in monetary donations and \$550 worth of gift cards. It's both amazing and inspiring to know that these two young boys selflessly gave up what most kids their age look forward to each year in order to make a difference in other people's lives. We are truly grateful for their caring and generous spirit!



A summer to remember

On July 24, as Joseph Keanini of Lahaina lay in the Kapiolani Hospital emergency room, overcome with stress and dehydration, his thoughts raced, as he watched the contents of his IV slowly drip into his arm. His three-year-old son Tyson was scheduled for surgery in just a few hours over at Pali Momi Hospital, and it would be then that he and his wife Donna would find out what was causing the bleeding behind Tyson's right eye that was making him lose his sight. Doctors had warned that cancer was a possibility.

Joseph was also deeply concerned about his new grandson Logan who was upstairs in Kapiolani's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Joseph's 20-year-old daughter Tia had given birth on July 18, and it was a complicated delivery. Logan had been immediately air lifted to Honolulu with grandma Donna by his side, as Tia was recovering from her caesarean section. When Logan arrived at Kapiolani Hospital, he was given only a 50-50 chance of survival.

So Joseph had a lot on his mind, with a son about to have important surgery, his grandson in intensive care and his daughter still recovering from her difficult delivery, here he was out of commission



Logan overcame life-threatening birth complications and now has a bright future.

at the worst possible time.

But Joseph did recover enough to make it to his son's surgery that morning, and he and Donna heaved a sigh of relief when doctors said the bleeding wasn't from a tumor. However, there was the sobering news that Tyson may or may not regain some vision in that eye. "They couldn't tell us exactly what happened to cause it," Joseph shared. "It could have been when he was born, and it just took that long for it to be noticed, or he may have hurt it in a fall or collision or something. If that's what happened, we

Right: Mom Donna holds Tyson a few days after removal of his eye patch.

Below: Joseph, Tyson, Tia, Logan and Donna pause before heading back to Maui.



never caught it."

Meanwhile, baby Logan was slowly improving and the odds had shifted in his favor. It would just take a little time. "Thank goodness for Ronald McDonald House," said Joseph, who works at the front desk at the Maui Kaanapali Villas. "It made a really big difference to us, and staying there lowered our stress level a lot. It's almost like being in your own home and the hospital is right down the street."

Joseph, Donna and Tyson stayed at the Judd Hillside House while



Tyson recovered from surgery, and while they waited for the doctors to clear him for travel. At the same time, Tia resided at the nearby Oahu Avenue House (which is reserved for parents of in-patient children) until Logan became strong enough to go home.

It took a couple more weeks, as Logan went from being hooked up to four machines, then down to one, and then none. In fact, Logan was cleared to go home on the very

same day Joseph, Donna, and Tyson had to come back to Oahu for a follow up appointment, so they were all able to return to Maui together.

As they left the Ronald McDonald House, Joseph and his family looked around at their Oahu "home-away-from-home" one more time. "This has been a summer I will always remember," he said. "I just want to thank everyone here and all the volunteers and everyone whose donations make this place possible."



Volunteer Spotlight



by Michael Ahakuelo, Volunteer Services Manager

Golf Tournament Volunteers

We shine the volunteer spotlight on the many volunteers who participated in our 20th Annual RMHC-HI Golf Classic on Wednesday, July 20, 2011 at Joint Base Pearl Harbor—Hickam's Mamala Bay Golf Course. Over 200 volunteers helped with many different tasks throughout the day. Volunteers commuted from all over the island to help with the event. There were also volunteers who traveled all the way from the U.S. mainland and Canada to help make the Golf Classic a big success.

There were three shifts volunteers could sign up for at the golf tournament. Shifts consisted of morning (8am - 12pm), afternoon (10am - 6pm), and an evening shift (6pm - 9pm). The morning started with volunteers registering and receiving their assignment(s) for the day. The morning duties included:

volunteers greeting our golfers while unloading their golf bags; providing shuttle service from the parking lot to the clubhouse; helping unpack and unload a 40-foot truck container provided by Golden State Foods filled with tournament supplies; assembling tables, tents, and chairs at the clubhouse and on the course; along with setting up the raffle, silent auction, and registration area. Lunch was prepared and provided by our friends from McDonald's of Kahala.

During the afternoon shift, volunteers manned all eighteen holes and prepared the clubhouse for the dinner banquet. On the golf course, volunteers monitored a variety of games and activities for the golfers, and also distributed local food & snack products, and miscellaneous items. Other volunteers with golf



Beverly Roach (left) and Sally Gibson came all the way from Vancouver, Canada to volunteer at our Golf Classic!

experience measured and kept score for the par 3 and greenie games.

As the sun set, the evening shift of volunteers arrived to prepare for the dinner banquet and the conclusion of the tournament. The fabulous folks from Outback Steakhous - Waipio cooked dinner for the golfers and volunteers, right at the clubhouse. Many other volunteers helped with the course breakdown, scorecard collecting, and golfer dinner check in. Ronald McDonald House could not have had such a successful event without all the volunteers help and support. We are truly appreciative of their dedication and hard work. Mahalo!



Mahalo for your support!
www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

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