



Aloha

From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii

June 2013

How Koa earned his name

Brian and Julie Romias have been able to reach many of their goals in life, including becoming medical doctors, but the one thing they wanted more than anything else seemed elusive to them for many years. They wanted to be parents. Then, one day last summer came the wonderful news that Julie

was expecting! Finally, their dream was coming true. But it turned out to be far from easy. The Manhattan Beach, California couple couldn't have possibly expected all the obstacles that they would end up facing, nor the monumental efforts that it would take by not only Julie, but Brian and baby Koa too.



The Romias family waited patiently at the Ronald McDonald House before heading home to California.

Wish List

Gift Cards

Restaurants
Stores/Markets
Gasoline gift cards
Prepaid phone cards
Family activity passes
Movie tickets

Household Items

Paper towels
Canned goods
Paper plates & forks
Ziploc bags – quart, gallon
Garbage bags
(10 gal., 13 gal., 33 gal.)
Aluminum foil
Plastic food storage containers
Cutlery set

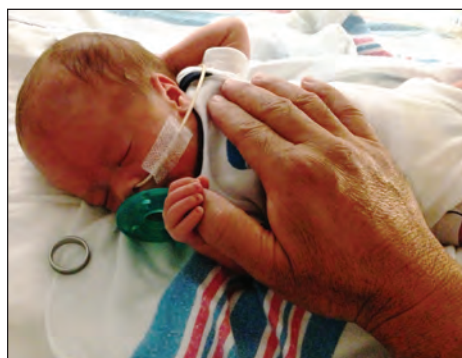
Food Items

Mayonnaise
Ketchup
Cooking oil
Soy sauce
Fresh fruits & vegetables
Frozen meals (microwave)
Individually wrapped snacks

Miscellaneous

Rolls/sheets/books of
Forever postage stamps
Kitchen knife block set
Baby Clothes 0-12 mo. (new)
Flat white sheets – full/twin
Pillows
White bath towels

Brian, 48, and Julie, 43, had made numerous trips to Hawaii over the years to visit relatives on both Oahu and Maui, and back before they were married, Julie (Bremner) traveled here with her UCLA Women's volleyball team to compete against the University of Hawaii. She was the setter for the Bruins' 1991 NCAA National Championship team; became a member of the United States National Team; and played on the pro beach volleyball tour. Their most recent trip, around New Year's Day,



Baby Koa overcame many hurdles before gaining enough strength to go home. That is Brian's wedding ring on the pillow to add perspective.

was what they called a "babymoon", sort of a last chance to vacation together before their first baby arrived.

But the pleasant one-week Hawaiian vacation that the couple was enjoying suddenly took a dramatic turn when Julie developed serious complications with her pregnancy that

threatened both her baby's life and her own. "I was starting to go into kidney failure and liver failure," recalls Julie. "The only treatment for that is to have the baby." An emergency C-section saved her, but their baby came into the world nearly three months early and weighing just 1 lb., 10 oz.

Born with an extremely low white blood cell count making him susceptible to any and all infections, Koa was also "extremely growth restricted", meaning that he was even smaller than a 29-week baby should be. Then, there were the "spells" he suffered in the days after he was born, where he would stop breathing and his heart rate would dip down. "It was really scary," Julie says.

During it all, the newborn showed so much strength and courage as he fought for his life that Brian and Julie spontaneously chose to name him Koa instead of the name they had settled on earlier. "The meaning of the name Koa is strong and brave," they explain.

It took Koa 77 days of hospitalization to grow strong enough to be released. When he was, he still needed another month of monitoring before he could travel to California. So Koa and mom Julie bided their time at Ronald McDonald House. Brian joined them as much as possible,

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Message from our President



Terri Chong

Aloha,

Our annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon took place on May 24 at The Willows and it was one of the best ever! We saluted all of our incredible volunteers and everyone enjoyed the restaurant's exceptional food, music by Kea Davis-Milo and Friends, and the fellowship of all the other like-minded,

caring people.

Among the attendees were Trinette Hepa and daughter Tishelle, who stayed at the Judd Hillside House during Tishelle's treatments for leukemia about seven years ago. Recently, they appeared in a TV public service announcement for us, and on this day, took the time to attend the luncheon and personally let everyone there know how important being a volunteer is. They have a unique perspective since they experienced our volunteers for almost a year while residing at the House, and now mom and daughter are volunteers at RMHC-HI themselves!

Something special happened that day at the luncheon and I'm pretty sure not too many people in attendance were aware of it. Among our current families that were able to attend the luncheon were Aloha Fo and her daughter Nanea from Maui. Nanea was recently diagnosed with acute lymphatic leukemia (ALL), which is the same type of cancer that Tishelle was being treated for when she was staying at the House. Those of us that

were around when the Hepas first arrived from Kauai back in 2006 could see some other parallels with Aloha and Nanea. Every family's story is unique, but the utter and lasting shock of finding out the diagnosis and the anxiety of an uncertain outcome, is hard to disguise. But what we also saw in both moms' eyes was courage. Courage to put fears aside, and show optimism and strength, because they must lead by example and these traits are needed by their keiki to recover. Sometimes it's almost overwhelming for parents and even the

comfortable surroundings and support at Ronald McDonald House aren't enough. But once in a while something magical happens and it always involves families helping other families.

At the luncheon, Trinette and Tishelle made it a special point to seek out Aloha and Nanea, spending time with them, offering encouragement, sharing experiences, and just showing that there is a version of the future where they might be able to feel "normal" and happy again. Tishelle, a soon-to-be junior at Kamehameha Schools, herself benefitted from being friends

with some of the older kids here when she was a patient, and now she is able to pass on that healing spirit to other youngsters with cancer, boosting their morale. Watching the four interact meant a lot to us because we know that these inter-family connections are sometimes the best medicine of all.



New friends. Trinette and Tishelle (wearing leis) meet Nanea and Aloha.

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although he continued to work on the mainland. "I thought it was going to be easy to commute," Brian says. "But it became more and more difficult. When Julie was first hospitalized and I had to go back to the mainland, it was really hard because I was so worried about her."

Fortunately, Brian was comfortable entrusting Ronald McDonald House with his wife and baby while he was gone, and Julie also felt contented at The House That Love Built. "Coming here was just wonderful," Julie says. "It's been a huge blessing because there were a lot of other preemie moms staying here and we were able to support each other and go through the experiences together. You need to have your physical needs met, but you also need to have your emotional and spiritual needs met, and that's what's been so great here. There is such a peaceful calmness; a teamwork kind of feel. It's been so great to be able to recover here."

Brian agrees. "Families need a place to get away from the sterile environment at the hospital and get away from people giving them bad news all the time. Someplace to decompress and have their own space, and commune with other people who are going through similar difficulties and just kind of lean on each other."

Koa has brought a new level of excitement and contentment to Julie and Brian. They remain philosophical about their three months of tribulations. "You know, nobody wants this to happen to them," Julie reflects. "But Baby Koa has touched so many lives. When I think about the outpouring of love that we have had and how Koa has inspired so many people, I just know he is going to go on to great things. We know he's a gift from God on loan to us and we just hope we can be the best parents we can."

Support Page

Some quick ways to get involved

Make Change Count

Want your spare change to make a big difference for seriously ill kids in our community and their struggling families? Just collect as much as you can around your home or business (we'll even give you a container to use) then either drop it off at your nearest McDonald's; the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House in Manoa; or bring it with you to our big change round-up on August 1 in the parking lot of the Keeaumoku Street McDonald's. In some cases, we may even come to you to pick up your collection!

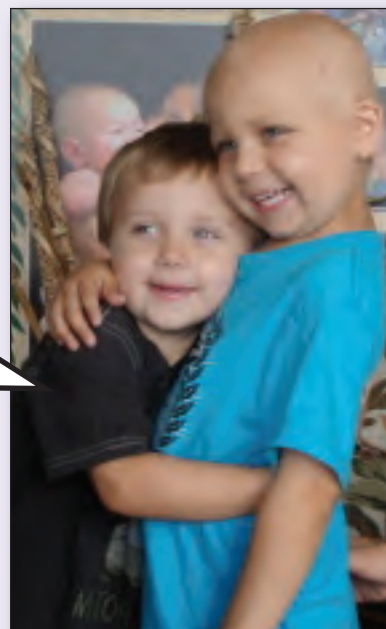


Everyone can help!

From school children to retirees, more and more individuals are joining together to lend a helping hand. It's hard to imagine just how much it means to families staying at the Ronald McDonald House when they see that others in our community care about them at their time of need.

Schools: contact us at 973-5683 ext. 240 to take part in our Make Change Count service project this coming fall semester.

Thank You!



Tax break available until December 31

If you are at least 70 1/2 years old and want to save on your taxes, the I.R.S. has given you until the end of the year to make a tax-free gift of up to \$100,000 directly from your I.R.A. to a non-profit or non-profits of your choice. For more information on how to take advantage of this limited time tax regulation, call Lisa at (808) 973-5683 ext. 243.

Please support our Annual Golf Classic on July 18!!

All of the slots for teams have been filled and we are SOLD OUT.

However you can still contribute to its success by adding an item or gift certificate from your company to the list of prizes for the event. There are about 200 people entered, and many of them are community and corporate leaders. It's a great way to get exposure and helps make our golf event the best on the island! Please call us right away at (808) 973-5683 ext. 243 and confirm your prize donation.



MIGHTY, HAPPY TO HELP THE KIDS!

Don't forget! For every Happy Meal and Mighty Kids Meal sold throughout 2013, 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 to our ability to serve the children and families.

Thank you McDonald's customers for your continual support of our mission by participating in special promotions like this one and by dropping your change into the handy collection boxes near cash registers.



You can really make your change count!

July is Mobi PCS/Ronald McDonald House Month!

Recycling for keiki!

Just about everyone has old cell phones, cell phone accessories or other outdated electronic devices lying around their house somewhere. It's time to get motivated and turn that clutter into healing power!



Pull together your used cell phones and other electronics (see list to right) that are gathering dust in your junk drawer and put them to work helping families with seriously ill children. Bring them in to any of the 11 Mobi PCS stores or 40 dealers in Hawaii during July. Every cent raised from the recycling will be donated to RMHC-HI.

"We are tremendously excited by this program because it's a chance for everyone to help the world around them in three different ways," stated RMHC-HI President Jerri Chong. "By participating, you will be cleaning up the jumble in your personal environment, while protecting earth's environment, and helping the families and keiki staying at Hawaii's Ronald McDonald Houses!"

While you are dropping off your recyclable items at Mobi during July, be sure to enter the drawing to win a Samsung Galaxy S2 phone + 1 year of service (\$1,000 value), or a 2nd place prize of a Hele MiFi + 1 year of service (\$750 value)!

Did you know?

Mobi PCS is a local company that has been supporting RMHC-HI since 2008 by providing our families with complimentary phones and phone service while they are here. That amounts to a \$39,000 contribution so far!

Mobi's "Recycling for Keiki" program has raised more than \$2,500 for RMHC-HI already and it's just picking up steam!

The list of items eligible for recycling has grown and now includes:

- Phones
- PDA
- iPods
- Digital Cameras
- Tablets
- Chargers

Any condition, age, model, and carrier accepted.



RMHC-HI welcomes three new Board Members!

The Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii Board of Directors has added three new members to its ranks. The organization's Board consists of volunteers from Hawaii's business community, and is the body that governs its operations. The latest additions are SpeediShuttle President and CEO Cecil Morton; Clayton Kamida, President and CEO of the Hawaii Employers Council; and Brian Takeda, Planning Coordinator for RM Towill. This is the return of Mr. Takeda, who has served previously on the Board, including a term as Chairman. Thank you for your valuable service!

Wade Nakashima, Chairman

Martin Lau, 1st Vice Chair

Cheryl Soon, 2nd Vice Chair

Karen Wong, Treasurer

Bruce Yanagihara, Secretary

Lawrence Chew

Clayton Kamida

Francis Nakamoto

Diane Sumida

John Cheung

Beth Lum

Carrie Jeanne Oda

Brian Takeda

Dr. Robert Durkin

Cecil Morton

Dennis Pang

To the staff, volunteers & people at the Ronald McDonald House:

Dear all,
Thank you so much for allowing us to stay here, for all the support, kindness and love shown to us. We appreciate it more than can be expressed in words. You'll always be remembered along with the incredible event of the birth of our son. Thank you for providing a secure, safe, comfortable environment for us so that we could relax and focus on our baby's birth. Thank you for the extras as well, the food, Valentine's Day cards, etc., it all meant so much. What you guys do here is incredible.

With our deepest gratitude,
The Rasmussen Ohana, Mountain View, Hawaii

A Family's Parting Words



Microsoft Volunteer Day May 30, 2013

What a day it was! THEY DID EVERYTHING!! A huge MAHALO to our special friends from the Microsoft Store at Ala Moana Center, some 40 strong, who rolled up their sleeves and dug in to every sort of job there was at both Ronald McDonald Houses, from upgrading our software, to yard work, organizing, cleaning, taking inventory, making phone calls, data entry, and much more. They even cooked lunch for everybody!



See all the photos from that day on our Facebook page (Ronald McDonald House Hawaii)

COMMUNITY SUPPORT *Mahalo!*

Brian Derby Football Campers do it for the kids



Brian Derby Football Camp held its annual Wish List drive for Ronald McDonald House. Participation in the youth camp is free to those bringing Wish List donations. Brian is striving to balance the kids' love of football with the love of community.

Oceanic Time Warner Cable cares



The good folks at Oceanic recently conducted their "Kasual Klothes for Keiki Day" fundraiser for the Ronald McDonald House to help us purchase a new laptop for the Family Room and guest PC at the Oahu Avenue House. They also provided dinner and items from our wish list!



Employees from **Enterprise, National,** and **Alamo** came up to the Ronald McDonald House on April 12 for a group clean up at Judd Hillside and Oahu Avenue facilities.

The Honolulu Police Department District 2 Community Policing Team sponsored dinner at the Ronald McDonald House on



Thursday, April 25. They provided chili, rice, hot dogs, dinner rolls, and tossed salad. They spent time with all the families during dinner and also allowed the kids to take a tour of the HPD squad car. It was a very memorable experience for the families!



The **Kahaluu Young Women Church Group of Latter Day Saints** volunteered at the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House on June 5 to help with around the house cleaning. The cheerful bunch also brought items from the House Wish List.

Auntie Karen bakes love into every tasty morsel



Every Wednesday afternoon the families staying at the Ronald McDonald Houses are treated to delicious pastries courtesy of Auntie Karen Ehrman. It's a tradition that her close friend, May Balding began more than 26 years ago and that Karen is carrying on with her own flair.

Auntie Karen took over the weekly baking for Auntie May in 2010 and has offered a wide variety of treats, always accompanied by her special touch—lovingly hand-written labels listing all the ingredients and adding other encouraging words and drawings.

The always cheerful volunteer says, "Part of the reason for continuing the weekly jaunt up to Judd Hillside is that I feel so very blessed to have raised our children without any significant health issues."

On her visits, Auntie Karen says that she finds inspiration. "I admire and respect each and every parent I encounter while at the RMHC Hawaii houses for their tireless devotion to the healing and well-being of their ill children. If the smell of my freshly baked cookies, bars, cakes and pies can make them feel a little bit more at-home in their temporary home, then I have helped make their day at least a tiny bit better."



Auntie Karen shows off her popular "Mystery Pie" in the kitchen at Ronald McDonald House, and shares her recipe below.

MYSTERY PIE (from Boomvanger's Cookbook)

Ingredients:

3 egg whites	1 cup sugar	1 cup chopped nuts (I use pecans)
1/2 tsp. baking powder	20 Ritz Crackers, crumbled	Choice of jam or preserve

Directions:

Put egg whites in a mixing bowl and beat slightly. Add baking powder until combined, and then gradually add the sugar, beating until stiff peaks can be formed. Fold in the cracker crumbs and the nuts with a rubber scraper. Pour into a buttered 9" pie pan and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Top cooled pie with your choice of jam or preserves, melted slightly in a microwave so you can easily spread jam without damaging pie crust. Top with sweetened whipped cream (Cool Whip works well). Refrigerate overnight. Makes one 9" pie.

Enjoy!

Moms on a Mission has done it again! Their latest show of support for the kids and families staying at the Ronald McDonald House was an April 6 event at the Hale Koa Hotel that featured music of the 60s and 70s by LS 34; dinner; prizes; and an amazing "Candy Bar". Lina Girl exceeded the event and there was a special performance by Drill Team Hawaii.

Moms On a Mission has also provided Melaleuca cleaning products for Ronald McDonald House for several years, totaling more than \$30,000 in value!

Rockin' & Rollin' for those who can't



Photo: JohnT Media Hawaii

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Mahalo for your support!
www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org



Volunteer Spotlight

by Michael Ahakuelo, Volunteer Services Manager



Every small gesture of caring has a very real impact on the families staying at the Ronald McDonald House. That is why our volunteers make such a big difference as we set out each day to fulfill our mission. Whether it is staffing the RMH Family Room at Kapiolani Hospital or lending a helping hand at our two residential locations, each small act of kindness reverberates through the hearts of those that have found themselves dealing with a child's serious illness.

Once a year, we bring together as many of our volunteers as we can to spend an afternoon with each other, enjoying a nice meal, great entertainment and a lot more. Last month's Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon attracted more than 100 people. One of those honored was Mamie Murray who has been



volunteering at the House now for 26 years! Here is Mamie (right) receiving her award from RMHC-HI President Terri Chong and Board Chair Wade Nakashima.

To volunteer, please contact me at
(808) 973-5683 ext. 241 or
Michael@rmhchawaii.org

