



# Aloha From Our House to Yours

[www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org)

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii

February 2014

## A.J.'s first Hawaiian vacation

*The January 15 text message from Jeremy Meekins said: "We made it home to Houston safely. Thanks again for everything. We will always remember the kindness and hospitality we received at the Ronald McDonald House. Aloha!"*

If all was to go according to plan, Aaron "A.J." Meekins wouldn't have gazed upon Hawaii's shores so soon. He would have been more of a passive

tourist, snugly tucked away in mommy Heather's tummy.

But sometimes the unexpected happens, and when A.J. decided to make a premature curtain call - out at the Turtle Bay Resort no less - the Meekins family had to suddenly kick into a whole new gear.

Jeremy and Heather left Houston, Texas with their 9-month old son Benjamin on August 28th and planned for a two-week vacation in Hawaii with

They made it in time, and A.J. came into this world crying and weighing two pounds, four ounces at 5:53 am on September 5. But because he was so premature, he was sent immediately to Neonatal Intensive Care.

And there he stayed for four months, slowly gaining weight and strength, and as preemie babies often need to do, overcoming setbacks. When the Meekins family set off for home, A.J. had reached 10 healthy pounds.

"His biggest setback was when he caught a Rhinovirus," said Jeremy. "Adults can fight it off, but for a premature baby it's pretty devastating. When he got that he had to go back and re-make some of the progress he had made with his feeding and breathing."

The one constant was having mom or dad by A.J.'s side through it all.

When they weren't at the hospital with A.J., Jeremy, Heather and Benjamin huddled together at the Ronald McDonald House. During the time they were there, Benjamin celebrated his first birthday, and took his first tentative steps. "It truly was a home-away-from-home for us," stated Jeremy.

"And we met a lot of wonderful people," added Heather. "We've been able to learn a lot about the Hawaiian culture and meet other families from different islands. We've experienced peace. We've experienced the rest that we needed. There has been a lot of good emotions and blessings while we have been here."

Jeremy talked about what connected everyone at the House. "We've met people from all different backgrounds but the one thing we always had in common was we all had children in the hospital. So, with that common ground, we became a support for one another by showing compassion for one another's situations and being respectful of that."

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### Wish List

#### Gift Cards

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

#### Household Items

Paper towels  
Canned goods  
Plastic forks  
Ziploc bags -- quart  
Garbage bags  
(10 gal., 13 gal., 33 gal.)  
Aluminum foil  
Plastic food storage containers  
Cutlery set  
Can openers electric/manual

#### Food Items

Flour  
Cooking oil  
Fresh fruits & vegetables  
Frozen meals (microwave)  
Individually wrapped snacks  
Rice

#### Miscellaneous

Rolls/sheets/books of Forever  
postage stamps  
Fitted white sheets - full/twin  
Pillows  
White photo-copy paper



O.K. dad, I think it's a wrap here at the hospital. Let's go home!

Jeremy's parents. One week into their vacation, they decided to take a trip to the North Shore to stay at the Turtle Bay Resort.

"We had checked in on Wednesday, September 4 and we had dinner," recalled Jeremy. "That's when Heather started having labor pains, and she was only 26 weeks pregnant."

They went straight to Kahuku Hospital, but were referred to Kapiolani Medical Center. "So we drove in to Honolulu around midnight," Heather recounted. "I was having contractions every five minutes. I was like, 'just get me there!'"

Jeremy was getting nervous. "It was the longest drive of my life," he said.

## Message from our President



Terri Chong

Aloha,

The year 2013 finished with quite a flourish, and the holiday spirit warmed our full Houses each and every day of the Christmas season. It was a good year. We managed to raise enough to cover our expenses and we want to thank everyone in our caring community who made it possible.

But looking back, we also see a year of real people facing real life dramas. Through our Ronald McDonald House program, nearly 650 individuals came to us for assistance and they all received the support they needed. Our Family Room at Kapiolani Hospital was there for more than 10,000 visitors.

One need just visit our Facebook page to see how our friends and neighbors with a sick child in the family depend on us to get them through, and how we help. Our website is another great resource, and there you can even take a self-directed virtual tour of all three of our facilities.

Meekins continued from page 1

A few days before they departed, Jeremy said that, although he loves Hawaii so much, and will "never forget this experience," he and Heather were ready to take their new son home.

"And we'll begin planning our next trip to Hawaii," said Jeremy with a twinkle in his eye.

Heather agreed, "We want the boys growing up knowing Hawaii and we want to make sure A.J. knows about where he was born."

Jeremy wants to come back - and give back. "After all the support we were given, we want to do the same thing for someone else."

"The volunteers are wonderful," declared Heather. "They believe in the Ronald McDonald House and they want to help others. It means a lot to know that people really care."



With A.J. released from the hospital, the Meekins family shared some quality time together at the Ronald McDonald House before heading home.

Soon we will be observing the 27th anniversary of Hawaii's Ronald McDonald House. Each year, we add momentum and we gain more and more experience serving families with seriously ill children. Sometime during 2014, we will surpass 25,000 people assisted through our House program since we opened, and also will reach a total of 110,000 room nights provided for families. In addition, we will reach a total of 100,000 people served at our in-hospital Family Room during its 11 years of operations.

When I think of all those years of service to the kids and families, I think of the many, many individuals, businesses, foundations, clubs, organizations, and schools that clearly saw their way to join us in our compassionate mission. It is this caring community that has identified the need and continues to step forward with the resources necessary to get the job done.

I see the families staying here every day, and I know how grateful they are. Thank you for being there for them.

**MOMS ON A MISSION HAWAII**  
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**ROCK N' ROLL NIGHT**  
Rock N' Rollin' to the 60's & 70's  
featuring LS 34

**Saturday March 22, 2014**  
5:30 PM - No Host Cocktails  
6:00 PM - Dinner  
Pomaika'i Ballrooms at Dole Cannery

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Special Performance by Chaotic Five

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# Pro Bowl makes big impact on RMHC-HI



Matt Forte, Chicago Bears running back at the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House on January 23.

The N.F.L. Pro Bowl game will be sorely missed if it doesn't continue to take place in Hawaii. In addition to the millions of dollars it brings the state's economy, each year the game generates significant donations for Hawaii non-profits. These grants are not the only way the Pro Bowl contributes to the community, either. Many of the players have a genuine enthusiasm for giving of their time when they are here to meet and encourage young people.



In addition to the \$3,500 gift RMHC-HI received from the N.F.L., we had the pleasure of getting a visit from All-Pro running back Matt Forte of the Chicago Bears. A young father himself, Matt helped the kids bake cookies, did crafting, signed autographs and posed for pictures with everyone!

## Forever Ohana



Growing fast!  
The Flaherty family.



A few days before delivery, Jessica was in good spirits.

## Back for a visit!

Jessica and Chris Flaherty, of Kula, Maui, returned to Ronald McDonald House on January 21 to share their twin boys, Jensen and Alexander with everyone. Jessica made it through a high-risk pregnancy while staying at the House in the weeks leading up to their November birth.

## From our Mailbox



Aloha,

I want to thank everyone at the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii! You made our long weeks on Oahu a lot more bearable – even pleasurable. We have fond memories that will last a lifetime - things that I will tell our daughter Nevaeh about when she grows up. Yes, she is doing well!

Without you, I don't know how we would have survived the whole 33 days we were on Oahu.

The House is really well taken care of and the free dinners really helped the pocket books. You guys went far beyond my wildest expectations and everything came from the heart.

I feel blessed to have been able to stay there and I will be donating every time I have a few extra dollars lying around in my wallet. Not because of the money you saved me, but because you folks opened my eyes to what charities do and how much they can affect someone's life in more ways than any dollar value can put on anything.

You have helped my family so much and I am extremely grateful for everything. I hope that the future brings many blessings to you and your families.

Sincerely:  
Isaac Flores

# 2013 RMHC-HI Share A Night Gala

November 23, 2013  
Sheraton Waikiki Hotel

It was all about creating a magical night to thank the wonderful people that have stepped forward to support RMHC-HI and help us with our mission over the years. The 526 attendees were treated to world class entertainment, a delicious dinner, live and silent auctions, and true fellowship among people who all share a common love for family and our keiki. The event at the Waikiki Sheraton Hotel generated \$280,000!

The event featured performances by legendary entertainer Melveen Leed; saxophonist extraordinaire Michael Paulo; Hawaii's first American Idol finalist Jordan Segundo; Brian Robertshaw; and the Hawaii Vocal Arts Ensemble, under the direction of Musical Director Timothy Carney. Entertainer Al Waterson was the evening's emcee. Here are a few of the photos.



Bruce and Aileen Yanagihara



Headlining the entertainment were Jordan Segundo, Melveen Leed, and Michael Paulo.



The Hoslers (left) and the Jolls family both came in from the neighbor islands to attend the gala and speak about their experiences while staying at the Ronald McDonald House.



RMHC-HI board member Carrie Jeanne Oda (front, left) with her Bank of Hawaii colleagues and friends



Honorary Co-Chair Dennis Francis (front, center) with his Star Advertiser colleagues and friends



Robyn Polk and Honorary Co-Chair Jim Polk



Robert Palma of Robert Palma Designs, presented drawing winner Amy McAngus with her prize—a beautiful new bracelet valued at \$12,500!

## Mahalo to Our Shining Stars

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*Maurice & Joanna Sullivan  
Family Foundation*

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Karen Wong  
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Bruce Yanagihara

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Robert Palma Designs • Sheraton Waikiki Resort • The Fairmont Kea Lani • Trump International Hotel Waikiki Beach Walk



Miles and Barbara Ichinose, Veronica Kaneko and Dr. Jay Cambra



Jordan Segundo, Terri Chong, Michael Paulo, Nancy Bernal and Al Waterson



Ginny Tiu, Vicky and Ben Cayetano, George and Lynn Ariyoshi

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mahalo!

“Providing a meal for the RMH guests is one of our favorite projects.”



Members of the **Pilots Club of Honolulu**, a non-profit organization serving the community through service projects and charitable donations paid a visit to the Ronald McDonald House on Sunday, January 26 to prepare four different types of yummy chili, three different desserts, salad and cornbread for the families.

The group is part of a worldwide network of volunteers who take an active part in helping our communities to be a better place to live ...today and tomorrow.

“We had a delightful time and I hope your guests enjoyed the food!” noted organization member B.J. Wade.

*Note: everyone really did enjoy that food!*

## Dear friends on Maui



Maui McDonald's owner-operators Diane Sumida (left) and Linda Rosario recently accepted a \$500 donation to RMHC-HI from Gary Fukuroku, President & CEO at **Maui County Federal Credit Union**.

## Rubber Ducks race for RMHC-HI!

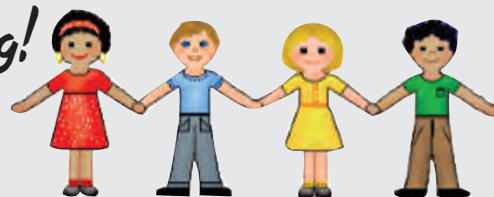


RMHC-HI's Candace Asam-Lopez received **Hilton Grand Vacations'** Ducky Race donation of \$2,372 from Grant Nouchi and J. David Richardson.



**Hawaii USA Federal Credit Union** teamed up with its members at all 10 Oahu locations to collect wish list items for the Ronald McDonald House! This photo was taken on the big delivery day, when Lisa Chun led a group from the Credit Union as they dropped off what was collected. Demonstrating that there is real strength in numbers, members and staff donated more than 5,400 items, and made a cash donation of another \$335.

Amazing!



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mahalo!

## Don & Marion Murphy do it again

It was another amazing year for Murphy's Ronald McDonald House Christmas dinner and toy-raiser! The December 11 event featured a sumptuous dinner, a street party, movies, Santa Claus and trolley rides to see the Downtown City Lights. The families staying at the



Ronald McDonald Houses were taken down to Murphy's in Limousines courtesy of our friends at Elite Limousine Service.



Another highlight—enough toys donated to bring comfort to dozens of children at the Ronald McDonald House!

## Shop With A Cop!



A project conducted by District 7 (East Oahu) Police Officers on December 7 brought sunshine into the lives of youngsters at the Ronald McDonald House, and it was so great that it represented kids helping other kids.

Students selected from East Oahu's 16 elementary schools spent a morning shopping at Kahala Mall with police officers from District 7. The boys and girls were able to select a toy for themselves and a second toy for a child staying at the House. Their toys were placed under the Christmas tree at the Judd Hillside House for the kids to open on Christmas Day.

## OC-16 HELPS OUT AGAIN!



Gene Davis accepted the \$1,354 check from OC-16's Dave Vinton on December 23.



For the fifth straight year, OC-16 selected RMHC-HI as beneficiary of their Senior Girls Volleyball Invitational, held November 13-14 at Mililani High School. A total of 42 players — at least one from each school in the I.L.H. and the O.I.A. — were randomly split into four teams (North, South, East, West).

## ANCIENT ORDER OF FORESTERS



On January 6, our friends at A.O.F.'s Court Camoes # 8110 presented RMHC-HI's Manager of House Operations Sally Manglicmot with check for \$400.

The group does regular fundraising to help the kids and families.

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## Volunteer Spotlight Bryson Kawakami



by Michael Ahakuelo, Volunteer Services Manager

This winter season, we shine the volunteer spotlight on Bryson Kawakami, an energetic young man with a can-do attitude. Bryson is a student at KCC studying to join the EMT program. He volunteers twice a week at the Ronald McDonald House. On Sundays, he volunteers at the Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children (KMCWC) emergency room and works three times a week at their valet station through Elite Parking.

While finishing his prerequisites, Bryson has become certified in First Aid, CPR and AED. He says he enjoys volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House. "One of the best things in life is helping others in need. The EMT program at KCC doesn't require volunteer hours but I wanted to get involved here."

Bryson is an "all-around volunteer". He helps wherever he can during his three hours at the Ronald McDonald House. "I provide support to the operations and development departments," says Bryson. He's approved to drive the RMHC-HI vehicles and he provides back up for our morning shuttle. In addition, he's able to help maintain the Judd Hillside property - specifically the barbecue and Hawaiian garden area. "I enjoy running the shuttle and interacting with the families," he says. "It's a chance for me to get to know them even if it's for a short moment. They are really happy they have a place like the Ronald McDonald House to stay at."

On the first and third Thursday of each month he assists with



Bryson gets ready to put away a donation of chairs that he picked up.

Meadow Gold donation pickups and deliveries for both Ronald McDonald Houses and Family Room.

"Bryson is a great volunteer! He works hard and we truly appreciate all his help and support," says Kalei Grant, Development Assistant.

Good luck to Bryson on joining the EMT program. Ronald McDonald House supports you all the way!