



Aloha

# From Our House to Yours

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

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii

June 2015

## "Oh yes, it's fun to breathe!"

Big Island seventeen-year-old Keali'i Ross-Lucas can do something now that he was never able to do before - something that we all take for granted. He can take a long, deep, satisfying breath through his nose. Keali'i and his mom Lili'u Ross are both hoping that this breakthrough will mean a new beginning.

Growing up has been difficult for Keali'i, who had severe learning disabilities. When he finally began

speaking at age seven, it sounded like gibberish - that is until his family decided to try recording what he was saying and then playing it backwards.

They were stunned when they realized that Keali'i was speaking in backward phrases and sentences. It was just a sign that the wiring in Keali'i's brain wasn't like most people. Through hard work, he began putting his words together normally but then at age ten, as Lili'u describes, "His organs started to dysfunction and his condition became serious. Everything started clogging up in his face and then elsewhere in his body."

Lili'u learned of a relative who had fought similar symptoms and got relief from oxygen therapy. They didn't have a better theory, so they took him in for an examination. "A CT Scan showed that his nasal passages were completely twisted and blocked," she says. "He was getting no air through his nostrils. I realized that he had been suffering all this time from a lack of oxygen and he had no idea because it was the norm for him."

Keali'i remembers that day as well. "The doctor said he had never seen anything like this before," he says, almost proudly.

"So he had his surgery and all I could do was pray," remembered Lili'u.

"It took them three and a half hours to finish. Not only did they open up his blocked sinus passages, but they removed his tonsils as well."

Keali'i needed to recuperate from the surgery and stay close to doctors for a couple of weeks so the Ronald McDonald House was their temporary "home-away-from-home".

"When we got here to the House and he was resting, we found peace and comfort," Lili'u, said. "This place has given us friendship. It gave us a greater understanding that life is so precious and anything can happen at any given time. This House encapsulates faith and hope, not just for me and Keali'i, but all the families here so they can remain so positive and help to bring positivity to each other."

For Keali'i, a kind and likable young man whose childhood was anything but typical, it has been another of his many adventures. "Oh yes, it's fun to breathe,"

he says enthusiastically. His organs appear to be responding to the increased oxygen supply, and he was looking forward to returning home to see his family, his dogs, continue his life with mom in their modest home at the 2,500 foot elevation on Mauna Kea, and resume farming their organic vegetables and herbs. "I want us to all get together to see each

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### Wish List

#### Gift Cards

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

#### Household Items

Paper towels  
Microwavable paper plates  
Plastic forks, knives & spoons  
Garbage bags (yard & kitchen)  
Cutlery set

#### Food Items

Fresh fruits & vegetables  
Frozen single-serving meals  
(microwavable)  
Individually wrapped snacks  
Frozen Pizza  
Cup O' Noodles

#### Miscellaneous

Forever postage stamps  
Office supplies  
Fitted white sheets - full/twin  
New Pillows  
White bath towels  
White shower curtain liners  
White photo-copy paper  
(letter & legal size)



Keali'i also enjoys what he refers to as "his job" - he fashions various lizard creatures using his hands to mold the rubber. He creates entire detailed adventures to go along with his creatures. If you are lucky, he will patiently recount the drama that his characters are part of. "Each one is like a novel," he says. Keali'i envisions turning this passion of his into a career in computer-based animation.

## Message from our President



Terri Chong

Aloha,

The Ronald McDonald House is here simply because the community wants it to be here to assist the children and families. Your support means we have a warm, comfortable place near the children's hospitals for the families to stay, shuttle service, and many other features that help create a positive and nurturing

environment.

We provide the setting, but it's really the families themselves that create the healing magic every day. Together, families staying at the house are such a powerful loving force that anything is possible - sometimes even medical miracles. One cannot overstate the value of kids and parents having daily interaction with other kids and parents who are facing so many of the same challenges.

They come here from Maui, Hawaii Island, Kauai, Molokai, Lanai and all over the Pacific, and deep, enduring friendships form between families staying at "The House That Love Built."

There are countless examples of families meeting,

bonding, and helping each other. Sharing the gift of togetherness here brings out the absolute best in people.

The other day we all gathered in the living room to listen to an original song that two of the mothers staying here had collaborated on. The moms, Babby Kanekoa of Maui and Lili'u Ross of the Big Island co-wrote the tune called "Kahuena." It is about Babby's son Kahuena and the healing spirit of Manoa Valley and the Ronald McDonald House. It brought tears to our eyes and joy to our hearts because it was so beautiful and inspirational.

Lili'u, who performed the song for us, apologized for a slight flub, saying "Sorry, I'm feeling so emotional." As we told her then, we are all emotional here at the Ronald McDonald House because every day we are immersed in so much gratitude - and gratitude is one of the most powerful emotions there is. We are humbled by the deep appreciation of the families, and we are overwhelmed with our own gratitude for being able to stand shoulder to shoulder with those families and seriously ill children - and to be a part of their healing journeys.

If you would like to listen to the original composition, "Kahuena," there is a link to it on our website's home page at [www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org).

### Fun to breathe continued from page 1

other again and help each other and to make each other healthy and happy," he shared.

Lili'u was looking forward to getting back home too, which she described as "a 9' by 12' lean-to that my carpenter son built for us. It's small but very functional and we have solar panels." What will Lili'u do first when she gets home? "I'm going to grab my daughters and my moopuna (grandchildren) and give them a big hug and a kiss and then to get back to helping to build my family," she said.



Lili'u got a hug from son Keali'i at the Ronald McDonald House after she performed a song that she and another mother (Babby Kanekoa) wrote about Babby's son Kahuena and the healing powers of the Manoa House.

## Your change changes everything!

Don't forget! For every Happy Meal and Mighty Kids Meal sold throughout 2015, our friends at McDonald's 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 customers for your continual support of our mission through participating in special promotions like this one and the one that awards a donation to RMHC-HI



for every newspaper bought at McDonald's!

# Around the House



This year's "Lemonade Alley" took place at Pearlridge Center on April 11. The event helps youngsters learn about operating a business—and at the end, their profits go to the non-profit they choose. Here is Team A+ Grade Lemonade—(left to right) Emi Okumoto, 9, Ashlyn Ito, 7, and Ari Ito, 9.

They choose RMHC-HI as their non-profit, and also visited the Judd Hillside House to learn about what the organization does for families, and to drop off the proceeds of \$745.12 to RMHC-HI's Candace Asam-Lopez.

## A fun Easter egg hunt!



Our special friends at the Microsoft Store dropped by during the Easter season to make sure the kids had a chance to hunt for Easter eggs!! It was a blast for the keiki!

## Heroes Of The Heart speediSHUTTLE

This community-minded company, led by CEO Cecil Morton, supports Hawaii's families by providing those staying at the Ronald McDonald House with complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport. speediSHUTTLE also extends its kindness in many other ways throughout the year!

"speediSHUTTLE has done so much to help families with seriously ill children coming to Oahu for medical treatments," said RMHC-HI President Terri Chong. "It's a company with a big heart and we are so grateful."



## UPCOMING EVENTS

July 23—RMHC-HI Golf Classic  
We are looking for prizes and sponsors.

Contact: [cal@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:cal@rmhchawaii.org)

November 21—RMHC-HI Gala

# Please help us help the kids and their families

## Become a Legacy Donor

With just a little planning and a big heart, you can give hope and comfort to seriously ill children and their families.

You can support future generations of Ronald McDonald House families through your will or estate plans. The most common form of planned giving is a designation in a will or trust. Other options include gifts of stocks or naming the House as a beneficiary in life insurance policies, IRAs, pension plans or retirement funds.

A planned gift can offer benefits for you and provide a significant, lasting contribution for tomorrow's families.

Please contact Lisa Levine at (808) 973-5683, ext. 243 for more information.

## Donate a vehicle to help families!!

We're kicking off our new vehicle donation program and we have made it as easy as it can be.

1. You contact us at our toll-free number (855)-227-7435 or go to [www.onecarhelpsrhmhc.com](http://www.onecarhelpsrhmhc.com)
2. At no cost to you, our vendor (I.A.A.) tows your vehicle to the nearest auction location.
3. I.A.A. sends you the receipt. Your vehicle donation may qualify for a tax deduction.
4. Eligible vehicles include cars, motorcycles, RVs and boats!



## Your change changes everything!



McDonald's makes it possible and very simple for you to join them in lending a helping hand to our families each and every day. RMHC collection canisters at the in-store counter and drive through window are available for you to help "change" a life by depositing coins or bills. It may seem like your change won't help much, but with each coin you deposit at each of your visits, in combination with others, it makes for a "super-sized" contribution each year.

## McFun-raiser Coupon Books

Every day, more and more schools, teams and clubs are discovering the fundraising power of the RMHC-HI McFun-Raiser Coupon Book Program.



It's really simple and it really works! McDonald's Restaurants of Hawaii donates menu items, which is really the key to this program. RMHC-HI packages these menu items in a handy coupon book, which it sells to organizations like those described above for \$3 each. The group then sells them for \$5, making a \$2 profit on each coupon book sold. Since the coupons in the book are valued at approximately \$13, everybody is a winner!

Check out more information about McFun-Raiser on the RMHC-HI website at [www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org), or call Kalei at 973-5683 ext. 244.

## Forever Ohana (from our mailbox)



“Aloha,

Staying at the Ronald McDonald House gave me a whole new perspective on life and how it should be everywhere. Strangers helping strangers get through their hard times even though they're going through their own.

I cannot thank you enough for the hospitality and the sincere warmth you showed to us day in and day out. I felt like it was home. My family and I will never forget the love that you shared with us.

Love — Rory Morris, Kauai”

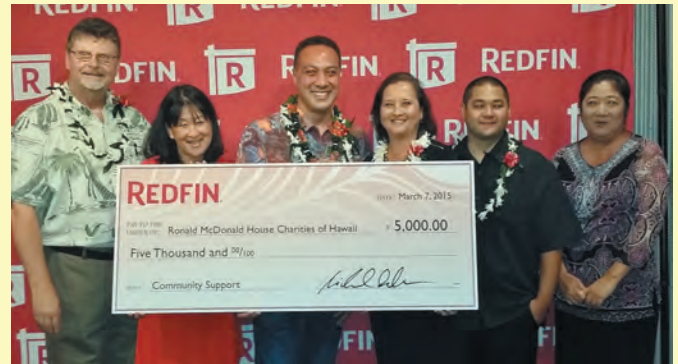
Dear Ronald McDonald House:

Thank you!!!

I think having our son go into cardiac arrest on our vacation is the scariest thing that has ever happened to our family. We were thousands of miles away from home and friends. Thank you for giving us a place to stay. Our son is back in school, and doing well. We will never forget the kindness shown to us and the spirit of aloha.

Love - Mark, Shelly and Gordon Geddes, Ogden, Utah

## Redfin arrives in town; donates to Ronald McDonald House



The Hawaii launch party of the new real estate brokerage Redfin, graciously designated Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii as its March 7 event beneficiary. Redfin donated \$10 to RMHC-HI for every guest who attended the free event. REDFIN's donation was \$5,000!

# REDFIN

## Showing appreciation for our incredible volunteers

Dozens of RMHC-HI volunteers were honored on Friday, May 22 with a luncheon at Stage Restaurant. The volunteers, part of our large corps of caring individuals and groups, were presented with certificates of merit, and those reaching milestones received special awards for their service. Entertainment was provided by Kamuela Kahoano.



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mahalo!



"Moms On A Mission does so much for us," says RMHC-HI President Jerri Chong. "We are tremendously grateful for their exceptional support."



M.O.M.'s Roxane Kimura (Left) and Anne Komatsu (right) flank the Kanekoa and Dugay families at this year's Rock & Roll Night on April 4 at Dole Cannery. The fundraiser for RMHC-HI raised more than \$8,000 to help the families!



The Shidler Group is an organization that gives back to the community and they have been cooking with the Ronald McDonald house for over 10 years! They celebrated Cinco de Mayo with the families by cooking enchiladas and tacos for them. People of the Shidler group admire the strength of the parents who are going through a challenging time and want them to know that they support them and they would gladly do anything to make their day better.

## COACH BRIAN DERBY'S ANNUAL OFFENSIVE LINEMAN CAMP



This popular camp for aspiring young football players is free to those lucky enough to be invited - as long as they bring a Wish List donation for Ronald McDonald House Hawaii.

This year, participants contributed hundreds of pounds of rice, paper goods, and canned food for our guest families. Mahalo Brian! Mahalo young men!

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mahalo!



OC16's Dave Vinton stopped by and dropped off a check for more than \$2,000 to RMHC-HI's Joyce Fukata. The donation represents the proceeds from the TV station's Senior Goodwill Girls Volleyball Classic.

DECA is an association of young, emerging leaders, preparing to embark on careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges.

At DECA's recent annual awards luncheon, this large group of emerging high school and college leaders and entrepreneurs conducted their "Miracle Minute" to raise more than \$1,200 for RMHC-HI.



(Left to right) Jamie Ikeda (Vice President) Waiakea High School, Nyadean Campbell (Secretary) Hilo High School, Kira Baird (Treasurer) Waiakea High School, RMHC-HI's Kanoe Paaahu, and Justin Scharf (President) Hilo High School.



RMHC-HI's Candace Asam-Lopez visited Pearl City Highlands Elementary School on June 1 to congratulate them on their two-day bake sale that raised \$751.50 to help the Ronald McDonald House. Above, Candace posed with the check and the Pearl City Highlands committee members.



This is Josephine, Mark, Barry and Javante - members of the 21st DENTAL COMPANY of Kaneohe M.C.A.S. volunteering to pitch in and help keep the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House beautiful and welcoming for families. Members of the 21st Dental Company have been volunteering regularly at the House for more than three years!

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## Volunteering – The Gift of You

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii volunteers are at the very heart of what we do. As a volunteer, you assist us in many ways, from administrative duties to light housecleaning. By contributing your time, you are joining other people like you who care—and easing the burdens of families with seriously ill children. Examples of some volunteer opportunities:

### **Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner Volunteers**

Sponsoring meals for 35 - 40 people, provides a great opportunity to meet and greet the families at the House. You can cater, pot luck, or cook a home cooked meal for our families at the Judd Hillside House. Be creative and incorporate a theme cuisine at/or around your favorite holiday throughout the year.

### **Extra Hand Volunteers**

We are always looking for individuals who are willing to help around the House with all the "extras" that need to be done.



To become a Ronald McDonald House volunteer, contact Kristen at 973-5683 ext. 241. Find more information and applications at [www.RonalHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonalHouseHawaii.org).

### **Family Room Volunteers**

The Ronald McDonald House Family Room offers patients and their families a place to "get-away", a place to rest and relax away from the hospital conditions. This room is completely managed by volunteers 18 years or older; open seven days a week from 9 am - 9 pm.

### **Green Thumb Volunteers**

Do you enjoy working with your hands? As a Green Thumb Volunteer you help to

ensure that our grounds are always looking healthy and beautiful.