Aloha
From Our House to Yours
www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org
Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii Vol. XV, Issue III, September 2015

Accepting what is – and its rewards

Sometimes, when you least expect it, life throws you for a loop. So it was for Kaimana (Kai) and Babby Kanekoa of Kipahulu, Maui when their four-year-old son, Kahuena was diagnosed with bladder cancer on February 17 of this year. "We were really focused on trying to build a radio station at the time and trying to take care of the family aina in Hana," said Kai. "We were also just beginning with the process of getting Kahuena in pre-school for the first time. It was busy, but comfortable.

Wish List

Gift Cards
Restaurants
Stores/Markets
Gasoline gift cards
Family activities
Movie tickets

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

Food Items
Fresh fruits & vegetables
Frozen single-serving meals (microwavable)
Frozen Pizza
Individually wrapped snacks
Frozen Hot Pockets
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 size)

We felt pretty much in control of our lives."

But then the diagnosis came and everything changed. "You think you have everything planned out but we found out you never really do," Kai reflected.

Overnight, they were taken by air ambulance to Honolulu without even a change of clothes. Then they were shocked to learn of Kahuena's diagnosis and that they might need to be on Oahu for a year. The Kanekoas live in a remote area with no infrastructure, let alone near neighbors and now everything was so different. "Oahu and the big city was the last place we wanted to be, "Babby admitted. "So we had to accept all these things that we didn't want to accept."

Kahuena had appeared to be just a normal, healthy kid until he exhibited symptoms of a urinary tract infection around Christmas. When they sought treatment for him, a test showed that he might have cancer and doctors wasted no time in getting him over to the experts at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children. They found themselves in the Oncology Unit, but without any reference they weren't sure what it all meant until one of the doctors used the word "cancer" when he was speaking with them. "It shook us," said Babby.

But things started going right for the Kanekoas when they were referred to the Ronald McDonald House. Babby said that "It was like a total breath of fresh air. We had our first good night's sleep there. There were birdsongs in the morning. It was quiet at night, and it just felt like we were out of the big city. It allowed us to regain our grounding. We realized that we were safe and comfortable and we could stay together as a family every day during Kahuena's treatments. It was a major, major weight off of our shoulders."

So they all hunkered down together while Kahuena underwent 23 consecutive radiation treatments, and weekly chemotherapy. Some days he was fine, other days he was a little cranky, but as Babby said, "He rose to the occasion big time. He didn't have a choice. He had to step up and he did it."

Babby said that Kahuena's tumor appears gone but they don't know for sure if there are still any cancer cells there. "At least we know we can spend part of the time at home now, which is great."

Kahuena was painfully shy when he first arrived at the Ronald McDonald House, but in the midst of everything else, began to open up. "Going through all this, Kahuena matured and developed in ways far beyond his years," said Babby, proudly. "He's learned character-building traits that a lot of adults never have a chance to learn in this life after having

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Kahuena (left) was being treated for cancer, but finding a new friend like Trinity made it seem easier.

Message from our President

Jerri Chong

Aloha,

We are Cooling Down and Greening Up!

It's been one of those summers. Both of our Ronald McDonald Houses were very busy with families and their seriously ill kids, working hard to be healthy and whole again – and thankfully, there were numerous success stories and individual triumphs against long odds.

It was also one of the hottest summers I can remember for a long time, with little relief expected in the near future. With the heavy humidity, vog, and soaring temperatures, it has been challenging to keep our kids comfortable and families safe from overheating. These children are fighters and their families resilient, but this added discomfort makes the struggle to care for their keiki's health and well-being harder than ever.

We are trying to address the problem. For the short term, we have ceiling and standing fans throughout the Houses, and we have installed insulation and attic fans. We are looking at placing portable AC units in all of the bedrooms (although the island-wide shortage of available units creates a challenge). Unfortunately, these measures haven't significantly reduced the temperatures and we're concerned about our families.

This means we need to install right-size air conditioning units in each of our guest rooms as soon as possible. Because our Judd Hillside House is an older home, electrical upgrades are necessary to make sure we can accommodate the increased electrical load. We will also face a huge spike in our electric bill after the installation, which means the final piece of this puzzle is to install photovoltaic solar energy panels. We want this to support our other conservation efforts like switching out light bulbs for energy efficient models, recycling, using energy efficient appliances, solar powered hot water, etc. We really want to do our part in preserving our environment!

There are significant costs involved in this project, and we are working hard and reaching out to raise the funds to help cover a budget of almost $200,000 for our "Cooling Down and Greening Up Project". Companies and groups like SSFM, Midas Hawaii, Redfin, OC16, and Moms On A Mission have made us the lucky beneficiaries of some of the most exciting and creative fundraising events and company celebrations, helping us raise the monies to lower the temperatures! But we still have a ways to go and could use your help. We know everyone is feeling the heat these days – not just with the weather but also when making financial choices – so every bit of support offered to the Ronald McDonald House and our families is very deeply appreciated. Come "chill" with us and help make the warm, sunny days comfortable for everyone at the House That Love Built.

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***Accepting what is**, cont. from page 1*

to endure what he's had to go through—so there are many blessings hidden inside of it, and we are here to learn."

Kahuena made his first best friend while staying at the House—and had his first crush when he met fellow cancer patient Trinity Dugay from Lanai. They became inseparable and Trinity was there to offer comfort and gentle pats when Kahuena lost his hair. After all, she had been through it. Kahuena celebrated his fifth birthday surrounded by family and his new friends. He also helped to celebrate Trinity's seventh birthday.

The Kaneokas brought much aloha to the Ronald McDonald House. They connected so well with the other families. Babby would bake her special bread for everyone. She and Kai shared their native Hawaiian noni health tonic and offered their moral support to all the families gathered each night around the dinner table.

"We got to meet some of the most amazing people at the House," Babby reflected. "We met a lot of outer island people, which is great because they are a lot like we are—country folks."

One of those families was Lili'u Ross and her teenage son Keali'i, who also live in a very rural setting, but on the Big Island. "Lili'u was one of these incredible women. She is so akamai, so strong and she embodies that great Hawaiian dignity." said Babby.

The Kanekoas—Kahuena, Babby and Kaimana.

Together, Babby and Lili'u wrote a song about Kahuena and the healing power of Ronald McDonald House and Manoa Valley.

Lili'u's music video of "Kahuena" is available for viewing on YouTube, with a link from the RMHC-HI website home page.

The Kanekoas were able to fly home to Maui in July, but must return for regular treatments at Kapiolani Hospital. So their adventure continues, and with a new understanding and appreciation for life and its many lessons, they are stronger—both as individuals and as a family.

Around the House

Families staying at the Ronald McDonald House can often benefit from activities that help them get their minds off of their difficult health issues. So when Nancy Bernal of the Waikiki show **"Burn'n Love"** called and offered to host our families and staff, everyone was so excited! Our party of 20 had great seats, and everybody really enjoyed the show. Afterwards we were treated to a "meet & greet" with Elvis and his dancers. They spent time talking with us and posed for as many pictures as we wanted. We found out that they genuinely support the work that RMHC-HI does.

Burn'n Love's Leo Days (Elvis) posed with Chad and Maki Fontes (left) an Kelly Ruabaro, who were staying at the Ronald McDonald House.

Jesus and Ada with baby Alma, finally ready to head home.

One of the happiest times at the House is when a child completes treatment and is cleared to return home. It happens regularly, but never ceases to excite and inspire us. Big Island residents Ada Leon and Jesus Reyes-Segundo had waited for such a long time for their baby Alma to develop and gain the strength to be released from Kapiolani Hospital, so when the big day came, it was pure joy.

When you serve hundreds of families each year, there is significant wear and tear on appliances like those in our laundry room. Recently, two of our three washer-dryer stacks broke down and thankfully, our community stepped forward to help us quickly purchase new stacks. We are so grateful for the support of the **Million Dollar Round Table Foundation (MDRT)** and the **Golden State Foods Foundation**, whose grants made it possible!

Heroes Of The Heart

RMHC-HI partners with Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children (KMCWC) in various ways that are so important to families with seriously ill children. They care for the child-patient, and we look after the needs of the whole family, keeping them close during their difficult time.

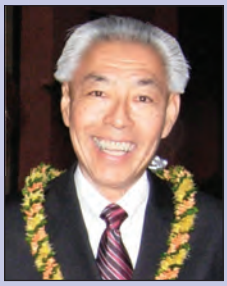
From the very beginning, we have worked hand in hand with KMCWC's caring team of medical professionals to assure that no family suffers needlessly while they are on Oahu seeking medical attention for their keiki. Thank you Kapiolani!

Troy Wada second from right, representing the MDRT Foundation bestowed a check for $3,000 to (l-r) RMHC-HI's Bruce Yanagihara, Martin Lau, Jerri Chong, and RMHC-HI Board Chair Carrie Jeanne Oda.

Please help us help the kids and their families

Join us at this year's Gala!

Share a Night
Annual Gala



Honoree
Bruce Yanagihara

Tables and individual seats are available for the upcoming RMHC-HI Gala on November 21. The event, which will take place at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, is honoring longtime organization hero Bruce Yanagihara.

Bruce first joined the RMHC-HI Board of Directors in 1993. His connection to the Ronald McDonald House has remained strong and his commitment unwavering throughout the years. He has served as Board Chair, Fundraising Chair, Strategic Planning Officer, and has chaired our golf tournament committee for more than 15 years.

The RMHC-HI Gala always delivers outstanding food, drink and entertainment, and this year will be no different. Please join us for an outstanding evening of fellowship and good times—all to help the children and families staying at the Ronald McDonald House. To purchase a table or tickets to the RMHC-HI Gala call Candace at 973-5683 ext. 239.

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.

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.onecarhelpsrmhc.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!**

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 $18, everybody is a winner!

Check out more information about McFun-raiser on the RMHC-HI website at **www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org**, or call RMHC-HI at 973-5683 ext. 244.

2015 RMHC-HI Golf Classic

Veronica Kaneko (right) held the lucky ticket and collected her Rolex watch from Kaimana Kea Rolex Boutique's Debbie Medeiros.

The 24th Annual RMHC-HI Golf Classic took place on July 23 at Mamala Bay Golf Course at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. Nearly 200 golfers participated in the fun. When the playing was done, our friends at Outback Steakhouse Waipio provided a delicious dinner for all. One lucky player, Veronica Kaneko, went home with a $6,200 Rolex watch, courtesy of Kaimana Kea Rolex Boutique, official Rolex jeweler.

In addition to the golfing, players always find plenty of games, food and drink. The event brought in more than $100,000 to help the families we serve.

Mahalo to everyone who helped make it a success, and a special acknowledgment to the more than 150 volunteers who helped make the experience a very special one for everyone.

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Waikiki Parc Hotel
Wells Fargo Home Mortgage
Norman and Sharon Wong

Forever Ohana

By Christine Riley

It's been almost a year since we experienced our unexpected health crisis with our youngest son, Ethan, yet we still remember just how catastrophic this event was to our family, and how it would have been nearly impossible to get through emotionally if it wasn't for the Ronald McDonald House in Honolulu.

Ethan was born on the Big Island with significant, life-threatening issues. We still don't know exactly what happened to him, but we know he couldn't breathe properly and had Persistent Pulmonary Hypertension. He was in distress, and we were completely thrown when doctors said Ethan would need to be airlifted to Honolulu in order to survive. My husband Colin went with Ethan that night, while I was mandated to stay on the Big Island to recover from my C-section. I've never felt so helpless or scared in my life. Ethan wound up in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Kapiolani Hospital, kept alive by sixteen machines.

Dad Colin and mom Christine flank their three sons, Ethan, Dylan and Daniel.

Colin called me from Oahu to tell me he thought we may have a way for all of us to be together while Ethan was recovering, and for the first time, there was relief in his voice. He explained that the people from Ronald McDonald House let him know that they would have room not only for Colin and me, but for Dylan and Daniel too. He went on to say that they'd even be willing to make accommodations for us to have Colin's parents stay with us, so that the older two boys would be taken care of and we could tend to Ethan together. Colin tried so hard to explain how wonderful these people were, how peaceful the House was, how warm the atmosphere felt, but would tear up as he talked. I had to see it for myself, he said.

I was able to fly to Oahu the next day, and after my first visit to see Ethan, I was physically and emotionally exhausted, and couldn't articulate the needs I had. It turns out the RMHC-HI knows what a scared, shocked and exhausted parent/family member needs: food, comfort, validation, listening ears, kindness, attention to detail, support from their internal "community" as well as the support from the community of Honolulu who comes to the House to help.

The Ronald McDonald House became our home away from home, and within the next week our two boys and Colin's parents joined us. It's hard to express the feeling I had the night I knew that all of the people I love the most were finally in one place again.

RMHC-HI changed our lives and reminded us of the power of good. We laid our heads down at night, praying for Ethan to get well and thanking God for organizations such as RMHC-HI.

Ethan has made almost a full recovery, from what we can tell so far. His development is baffling considering where he started from. And as his family-we've recovered too. We still talk about our stay at Ronald McDonald House and can't say enough about how much you helped us. We're more grateful, humbler, and open to the powers at work in the universe. And the people at every level of the RMHC-HI are channeling that power, that compassion and that love.

We are forever thankful for every single thing you do, big and small, every day. Because it all makes a difference.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mahalo!

Moms On A Mission's "All That Glitters" took place on Saturday, September 12 at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel.

It honored designs from Bete Mu'u, Manuheali'i and Kini Zamora, and the fashions that have made people glitter through the years. The event, a benefit for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii, also featured specialty artists, vendors and activities that made for the perfect girls night out!

Creations by Kini Zamora were among those featured at "All That Glitters".

SSFM International

SSFM International, a professional planning, design and project management firm, selected Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii as the beneficiary of their 56th Anniversary Celebration, held on September 10 at Honolulu Country Club. SSFM President Mike Matusmoto (third from left) and his management team presented the company's $5,000 contribution to RMHC-HI President Jerri Chong. In addition to the company's gift, many of those attending the event added their own personal donations, helping the grand total to be $12,367!

IN LOVING MEMORY

Joanna and Maurice "Sully" Sullivan

The RMHC-HI Ohana was deeply saddened by the recent passing of Joanna Sullivan, 94, philanthropist and wife of the late businessman, Foodland founder and entrepreneur Maurice J. "Sully" Sullivan.

The Sullivan family have been strong supporters of Hawaii's Ronald McDonald House since the very beginning. Sully was the chairman of the initial capital campaign that funded the startup of the House in the mid-1980s.

Joanna was a donor who continually showed she cared through her many acts of graciousness, kindness, and support. She was named Philanthropist of the Year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals-Honolulu Chapter in 2008 and again in 2013. The Sullivans were also honored at the 2007 RMHC-HI Gala.

Thank you MIDAS HAWAII!

Bob and Diane Pereira, owners of Midas Hawaii, visited the Judd Hillside House on September 2 to present RMHC-HI with a check for $38,426 – the amount they raised with their APIII Memorial Golf Tournament. Accepting for RMHC-HI were Jerri Chong and Bruce Yanagihara. The event honors the late Anthony Pereira III. Next year's APIII Memorial Golf Tournament is set for January 25, 2016

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Volunteer Spotlight

By Kristen Kawachi
RMHC-HI Volunteer Services Manager

When Chris Siercks first stepped into the Ronald McDonald House, all he knew was that he believed in our message of hope and wanted to contribute to RMHC-HI's mission to help children and families. Now, nearly two years later, he continues to volunteer, because he says he feels inspired every time he walks through the door.

As a volunteer, Chris provides major support to our administration department and for special event fundraisers for the Ronald McDonald House. He puts in long hours after his own work day. Our staff is grateful for his friendly demeanor and reliability – we can always count on Chris to help with anything he is asked to do.

Volunteers like Chris are truly part of our RMHC-HI ohana. Perhaps Chris puts it best in his own words: "My favorite part about volunteering here is the sense of community. Everyone here, whether they're guests, staff, or volunteers, treat each other like family and seem to take on challenges - large and small - as a team."

Born and raised in Central Florida, Chris is a graduate of the University of Florida. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 2012 and has been stationed at Marine Corps Base Hawaii (Kaneohe Bay) since April 2013. As for life after the Marines, Chris hopes to attend law school but acknowledges that life is always full of unexpected surprises. Here at the Ronald McDonald House, we are certainly thankful that one of those surprises has been Chris himself! Thank you for your service, Chris!

Chris Siercks at work at the Ronald McDonald House.