



Aloha

# From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® Hawaii

Issue 1, February 2021

## Your Gift Helped Kanani and Twins Grow Stronger Together

Kanani had only minutes to prepare before being medevaced from the Big Island to Oahu for an emergency C-section. One of her twins had been diagnosed at a high stress level, putting both babies and her at extreme risk.

At the end of July, she had gone on maternity leave early, expecting to relax and deliver healthy twins near her home on the Big Island with her parents. She had no idea about the events ahead—her extended stay on Oahu, and an unexpected surgery.

Circumstances had changed.

Rather than being at bed rest at home, Kanani was being flown to another island. She feared the unknown: whether or not her babies would survive; the outcome of her surgery; or where she would stay, sleep, and be safe during the pandemic.

Her C-section was successful, but twins, Michael and Matthew, were each born two months early, weighing under three pounds, making them fragile and underdeveloped. They needed to stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Kapiolani Medical Center until they at least reached normal birth weights—twice what they weighed at birth.

With nowhere to stay and an uncertain future for her babies, Kanani was referred to the Ronald McDonald House, which was accepting only a few families at the time because of the pandemic. "I felt so lucky, because I had been looking at different hotels and other places to stay, not sure how I could afford it."

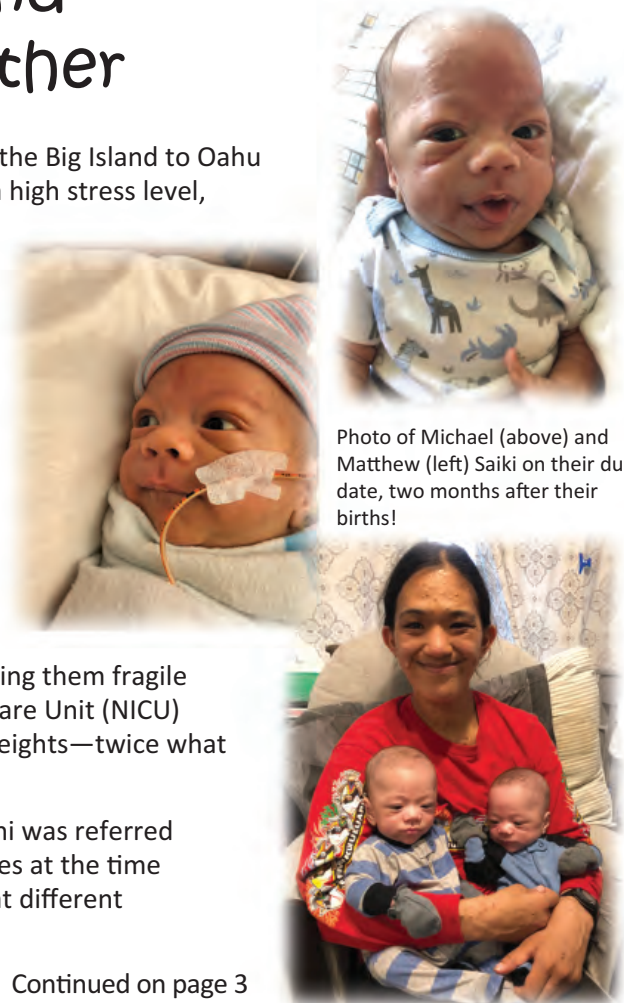


Photo of Michael (above) and Matthew (left) Saiki on their due date, two months after their births!

Continued on page 3

## Labor of Love In 2020, Symbol of Hope For 2021

We are so excited and proud to announce the opening of our new Family Recreation Center at Judd Hillside! To meet the growing needs of families that call the Ronald McDonald House "home," we began construction early last year, combining existing playroom and outdoor lanai space at our Judd Hillside House to provide diverse areas for family-centered activities. It is our first capital renovation and expansion since 2006.

The new Center combines cutting edge design with thoughtful and innovative family-centered spaces that foster an extraordinary sense of community between families staying at the Ronald McDonald House. Most important, are

the feelings of hope and healing that embrace anyone who enters the room.

"Anything else wouldn't have been enough," said Interior Designer Cathy Lee of Cathy Lee Style, whose creative vision and love of our cause were the driving forces behind this ambitious project. "More than just designing a space for children to play, we wanted to create a world of hope and inspiration which kids and parents alike could enjoy. What motivated me throughout this project was imagining the joy this space would bring to these children. And as a mother, I hope to lift whatever burden I can from their parents' hearts."

Continued on page 3

# Message from our President



Jerri Chong

Aloha,

We welcome in the New Year with hope, exciting news, and deep appreciation to our family at large – our island community who do so much to

help provide a home-away-from-home to families with seriously ill children needing medical care on Oahu.

As we turn the corner into 2021, we hold fast to the things we learned in 2020. About ourselves, our organization, and our community. And there is shared hope that the year ahead will bring renewed strength in the global fight against COVID-19, new opportunities to continue delivery of services for our RMHC children and families, and overall, a renewed sense of connectivity, respect, and humanity for everyone.

Like everyone else, we were greatly affected by the pandemic, constantly adjusting our sails to deal with the rapid changes of Covid infection and transmission, city and state lock-down orders, and implementing very stringent health and safety protocols to

keep our children, families, and staff safe. Almost overnight, we suspended outreach and volunteer programs, cancelled all fundraising events, temporarily shut down construction of our Family Recreation Center, and experienced significant loss of funding support for our family programs.

But in a year when so much went wrong, we were also encouraged and inspired by the support of so many in the community who helped us do things right!

There was a dramatic shift in our fundraising – going from “high-touch” to “virtual” for our Golf Tournament, Gala, and Silent Auction events. We focused on partnering with others in the community to create mutually supportive relationships, began building a new, secondary market of support through social media and online fundraising, and relied heavily on donated goods and services to support our programs.

Most exciting, was the completion of our Family Recreation Center. Interior planning and design, architectural and engineering services, craftsmen and artists, and so much more were either completely donated

or significantly discounted. And the Center’s focal point – our Tree of Hope, designed by Cathy Lee and built by Dayton Ching, Nick Ybl and Yves Kline – inspired friends, supporters, and corporate donors to contribute funds and close the funding gap so that the Family Recreation Center project could be completed.

2020 was a year of hardship, uncertainty, and sacrifice. But we ended the year by celebrating our blessings – children who are many steps closer to recovery; families that came through adversity stronger, closer, and with renewed hope; and a community that steps forward when help is needed. A community that cares.

From all of us, to all of you – thank you for an incredible year! For believing in us. For helping us stand strong in the face of tremendous challenges, so we can continue our mission delivery for children and families in Hawaii, and beyond.

With gratitude,

Jerri Chong, RMHC Hawaii President

“Aloha From Our House to Yours,” the newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii (RMHC-Hawaii), is published three times a year.

## Welcome to Our Newest Board Members

### Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii Board of Directors

**Stacey Miyamoto**  
Chair

**Duane Seabolt**  
1st Vice Chair

**Annie Stamps**  
2nd Vice Chair

**Wesley B. Hiyane**  
Treasurer

**Lisa Kikuta**  
Secretary

Angela Ballard  
Lois Chiu, MD, FAAP  
James Haruki  
Barry Mizuo, MD  
Justin Nowak

Dyanna Okazaki  
Tommy Silva  
Markus Staib  
Melissa Yara



**Dr. Lois Chiu**  
Attending Neonatologist  
at Hawaii Permanente  
Medical Group



**Dr. Barry Mizuo**  
Pediatric Hospitalist with  
Hawaii Pacific Health  
Medical Group



**Justin Nowak**  
Senior Operations Manager  
Hawaiian Airlines



**Melissa Yara**  
District Manager of  
Old Navy



**Annie Stamps**  
Trustee of the  
Stamps Foundation



Twins at Christmas, healthy and thriving now.

**Your Gift** continued from page 1

*“The House gave me a nice place to stay, great food, and transportation to and from the hospital. I felt safe and cared for in this warm, comfortable home. I could focus on my babies and recuperate.”*

After two months, Michael reached a healthy newborn weight of more than seven pounds. Kanani took him back to Hilo, where he could stay and be cared for by Grandma and Grandpa. She returned to Oahu, excited to see Matthew again and to take him back to the Big Island.

But a day before his anticipated discharge from the hospital, doctors recommended that Matthew have immediate surgery to correct a hernia.

Kanani ended up staying two more weeks at the Ronald McDonald House before reuniting with her family on the Big Island.

Tired, relieved, and adjusting to motherhood, Kanani and Matthew returned home—to reunite with Michael and other family, just in time for the holidays!

**Labor of Love** continued from page 1

“Cathy was rooted in this project from the very start,” said RMHC President Jerri Chong. As mom of Kidz For A Cause founder Nicki Lee, whose groundbreaking, peer-to-peer fundraising initiative raised more than half of the project’s total cost, Cathy took on a huge commitment when agreeing to design and create the Family Recreation Center.

“She put her own design business on hold to donate over a year of her time and talent to this special project,” said Jerri. But what no one expected was an international pandemic that would stop construction, affect work crews, delay shipment of materials, and result in the loss of critical donated goods and services.

“It was unbelievable,” Cathy said. “But I’m fortunate to have such an amazing and talented team without which the Family Recreation Center would not be what it is today. They also donated much of their time and provided the muscle, hearts and hands to make all of my crazy ideas a reality!”

Cathy also reached out to every sector of the community that she has worked with in the construction and design industry – artists, craftsmen, flooring and furniture vendors,

landscapers, etc. – receiving significant donated and discounted professional services for the project. And ever the visionary, knowing the importance of continued funding to support RMHC programs, Cathy came up with a way for people to continue giving to our house in the form of the “Tree of Hope.” This 18-foot-tall custom sculpture not only serves as the awe inspiring focal point of our new Center, but also displays name plates of supporters who donate to our Ronald McDonald House.

The tree is both beautiful and functional, as it invites future donors to add their own names to it – providing funds for the house and much needed

support and hope for the families,” explains Cathy.

The Family Recreation Center was completed just before the holidays and has begun receiving families. Already, the multi-purpose spaces which include family gathering areas, computer stations, a gaming wall, reading loft and library, an indoor tree house and children’s play areas, have become family favorites. For parents, the Center provides comfort and relaxation; to teens and ‘tweens, it’s fun and exciting; for the little ones, it’s magic! There is talking, sharing, caring, and laughter. And yes, fulfilling the most important part of Cathy’s master plan, there is great joy!



Top row: Dayton Ching, Nicholas Miklos Ybl V, Yves Atom Kline, Jordan Krost, Bottom row: Nicki Lee, Cathy Lee

# Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii Unveils its Family Recreation Center



Students can do school work via distance learning.



A comfortable gathering space lets adults gather while children and youth are nearby.



A gaming area entertains all ages.



New Family Recreation Center, on left.



Children's imaginations can go wild in Nicki & KIDZ Treehouse.



Our Tree of Hope, an 18-foot tall custom sculpture, recognizes project donors and supporters.



The Family Recreation Center was built on the former footprint of the children's play area and lanai.



The kids' picnic area brings the outdoors inside.



Keiki can take center stage in the Treehouse.



Caregivers and moms can rest in the loft or read to keiki.



Children and families are invited to play in this magical place.



Donor appreciation wall by KIDZforacause.org.

# Volunteers in Action – Despite the Pandemic

Nearly 8500 volunteer hours were clocked in to provide meals and essential services at Ronald McDonald House, as well as fundraising assistance, in 2019.

In 2020, our volunteer services programs were partially suspended due to safety measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet our community of volunteers and supporters still kept Ronald McDonald House at heart. They volunteered at a social distance, with masks. They dropped off pre-made meals for our families, donated cleaning supplies and other items requested on our Wish List, provided e-cards for groceries and other household supplies, and shopped Amazon Smile designating Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii as their choice.

**THREE ways YOUR donations MATTER.**

**Impact 1:** CREATE A HOME-AWAY-FROM-HOME FOR SERIOUSLY ILL KEIKI AND THEIR FAMILIES

**Impact 2:** DEVELOP PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS AIMED AT IMPROVING THE LIVES OF KEIKI IN HAWAII

**Impact 3:** PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES FOR FAMILIES TO THRIVE



Our #HelpingHero millennial volunteers—Ciera Maglangit and Michael Lim— told their stories on social media, sharing why they volunteer at the House and why your support is so important to our families. They were spokespeople for the Gifts of Togetherness digital fundraising campaign that was developed on a voluntary basis by University of Hawaii MBA students.

In 2020, despite the pandemic, volunteers and supporters helped keep our House open and provided extra hands needed to develop and implement programs in a new way—virtually.

## Full Circle

What started as a school project, with a mother providing support and guidance for her daughter, has come full circle.

In 2008, Nicki Lee raised \$1,100 by holding a concert in her family’s living room as part of a 3rd grade community service project she named Kidz For a Cause. She donated the funds to the Ronald McDonald House, and when her mom, Cathy, took her to deliver the money to the Judd Hillside House in Manoa, the experience changed her. Meeting some of our RMHC families made her realize the importance of giving back and inspired her to continue growing Kidz For A Cause. Nearly 10 years later, in her senior year of high school, Nicki told her mom she wanted to bring Kidz For A Cause “back home” to the Ronald McDonald House. Over

200 local kids joined together to raise more than \$350,000 to help fund the renovation of the new RMHC Family Recreation Center.

Knowing Cathy’s beautiful interior design work, when it came time to



Cathy Lee and Nicki Lee

begin renovations, RMHC President Jerri Chong asked Cathy to design the new space. She knew that Cathy would

create a magical, healing place for the children and families at the Ronald McDonald House. It was a huge undertaking, but with her family already such a big part of the House for so many years, Cathy not only agreed but also decided to donate all of her time. Then the pandemic hit, but with unanticipated results for the Lees.

Because of COVID-19, Nicki, who would have been in her junior year of college at Duke University, was on-island and able to contribute to the project. *“This truly has been a difficult and unprecedented time for everyone, but my silver lining was that Nicki was here to work alongside me. After all, having started this journey with the Ronald McDonald House 12 years ago, it seemed serendipitous that the two of us could wrap up this special chapter in our lives together. I love that we’ve come full circle.”*



# First-Ever Virtual Gala

*Helps Families and the House That Love Built*

What a day to remember! Our first VIRTUAL gala was full of fun, food, and friends. Participating restaurants from Kailua to Ko’olina served delicious Curbside Cuisine. Volunteers greeted guests with smiles & shakas as they handed out goodie bags and meals to go. Then, away they went to head home and watch the 30-minute Gala program. (can view at [www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org)) Guests had the opportunity to bid on an array of awesome silent auction items all week prior to that Sunday, on November 22nd. Sundays are a special day of the week at RMHC, when everyone gets together for Funday-Sunday meals, so this was the perfect day for us to select to celebrate being together too!

Mahalo to all our sponsors, restaurant partners, special guests, auction donors and volunteers who helped us realize our vision of “Giving Togetherness” for our most important fundraiser of the year. We would like to acknowledge 3660 on the Rise, Bamboo Catering, Roy’s Hawaii Kai and Ko’olina, Goen, MW Restaurant, Al Waterson, Nancy Bernal, Jordan Segundo, Jim Brickman and all of our Silent Auction donors. YOU are all our heroes and we sincerely appreciate your stepping forward in support of our first ever “Virtual” Gala—making it a success, raising over \$150,000. Your generosity was a bright spot during a difficult year that will continue to light the path in 2021 for our families at the “House that Love Built.”



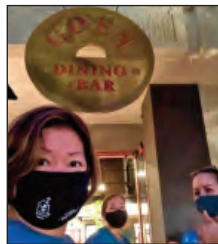
GRAND PRIZE winner Troy Wada & Ohana @ Roy’s Hawaii Kai getting their Grab-n-Go meals.



Volunteers & Chef Jason with Bamboo Catering ready for guests at the FILCOM Center.



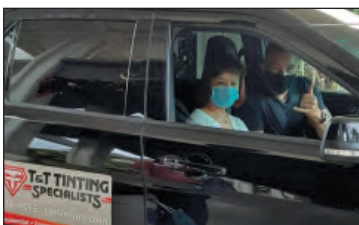
MW Team ready for the Big Day!



So was the GOEN gang in Kailua.



Roy’s Ko’olina team.



Silent Auction Pick-Up Day -Mahalo to All



Steven Kam won the LUCKY Tahitian Pearl Necklace!

## Unity Sponsors

McDonald’s Hawaii



## Hope Sponsors

Annie Stamps & Dustin Ridgeway



George & Barb Hegarty  
Ginny Tiu



## Courage Sponsors

Brown & Brown Pacific Insurance Services, Inc.  
Central Pacific Bank  
Eric Higashihara & Associates  
Hawaiian Electric  
H&H Overhead Door of Oahu, Inc.  
Hung Wo Ching & Elizabeth Lau Ching Foundation  
Kaiser Permanente  
McDonald’s of Kapolei, Nanakuli & Waianae  
The Shidler Group  
Melissa Yara

## Strength Sponsors

Accounting Management, LLC  
Barry Mizuo  
Chung Restaurants of Kailua, LLC  
Dennis & Sandy Okazaki  
Hawaii Pacific Health  
Lois Chiu & Nicholas Dang  
Midas Hawaii  
MVNP  
SSFM International, Inc.  
T&T Tinting Specialists  
Timothy Au & Shaina Sonobe  
Todd & Seabolt, LLC  
Tyson Foods  
Veronica Kaneko  
Wes & Elyne Hiyaene

Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii  
1970 Judd Hillside Road  
P.O. Box 61777  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96839-1777  
Phone: (808) 973-5683  
info@rmhchawaii.org  
www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Honolulu HI  
Permit No. 635

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



McDonald's restaurants on the Big Island sold out of 3,200 McFun-Rasier Booklets in one day—helping their community and our families! You can too!



33-Gallon black trash bags  
Hand soap  
Paper towels  
Valentine's Day Treats

To create your own McFun-Raiser, go to [www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org) or call Leah Funtanilla at 808-892-1907, or email [leah@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:leah@rmhchawaii.org). It's a great way to raise money for your school or organization.



McDonald's Owner/Operators, Pat Lim & David Lim, flew from the Big Island to deliver the check to Ronald McDonald House Hawaii.