



Aloha

# From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® Hawaii

Issue 2, June 2021

## Life Happens in Unexpected Ways

*Life is what happens to you while you're making other plans.* This popular saying holds true for the Silander Family.

Jason and Evlynta had made Waikoloa on the Big Island their home and had three children attending school and thriving. They had steady jobs in the visitor industry and were enjoying life, just as they had planned. But the family would be tested.

Evlynta was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2018 and underwent radical treatment and chemotherapy. In 2020, Jason and Evlynta were both furloughed from their jobs because of the pandemic. Then, as Evlynta was about to return to work, their twelve-year-old son, Jayden, became ill.

At the time, it was challenging to get appointments due to measures taken to curb the spread of COVID-19. Although he began treatments for pain, Jayden's symptoms increased and he started losing feelings in his leg.

**"We feared the worst...that Jayden might have a condition similar to mine," Evlynta said.**

Jayden and his parents flew to Oahu to get a diagnosis with medical specialists in October 2020. He was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma, a bone cancer. Curing this would require chemotherapy treatments for up to seven months and then, possibly, radiation.

In a moment, The Silander Family's life changed drastically. The entire family moved to Oahu.



The Silander Family (left to right): Jason, Jeremiah, Evlynta, Jayden, and Mykah

**"I wanted to be by my son's side and to keep our family together," Evlynta said.**

When they arrived on Oahu, a social worker gave them a choice of staying at a hotel or at the Ronald McDonald House nearby. Jason laughed at recalling that they chose the hotel because they didn't know about Ronald McDonald House Hawaii. But they decided to check it out months later—becoming the first family to stay at the Judd Hillside

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## It Takes A Family

When a medical emergency hit the Giese family, four generations living in their Kona home were thrown into crisis mode.



Charytee, the daughter of Daniel and Emylee Giese, had gone from being happy-go-lucky to exhausted, with a headache and tingly arms and legs. Her illness progressed quickly. Within a week, she was unable to walk.

Charytee and Kaylee Giese barbeque in one of the play areas in the new Family Recreation Center.



The Giese Family (left to right): Grandma Leesa, Grandma Kathy holding Beckett, Kaylee, Charytee, and Emylee Giese.

The whole family—Mom, Dad, sister Kaylee, two-month-old Beckett who was still nursing, and Grandma Leesa—flew to Oahu, where Charytee was diagnosed with GBS (Guillain-Barre Syndrome), a rare disorder in which a body's immune system attacks its nerves, eventually paralyzing a person if not treated.

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# Message from our President



Jerri Chong

Aloha,

While we see a light at the end of the tunnel this month, the international pandemic continues to challenge everyone. Many businesses have

closed or reduced staff. Temporary suspensions of volunteer activities, programs, and traditional fundraisers have impacted RMHC Hawaii as well.

However, we are fortunate that our island community has embraced us with the Aloha Spirit and gifts of the heart, whether participating in our events—recently held online—or donating food, household items, money, or helping hands. With community support, we have been able to continue to offer a home-away-from-home and essential services, although on a limited basis, at our Oahu Avenue House throughout the pandemic. And, starting this year, we were able to accept additional families at our Judd Hillside House, where we just opened our Family Recreation Center to meet the needs of entire families and to keep them close during difficult times.

Your support is so crucial to helping us provide services and compassionate care for families struggling through a child's medical crisis. Seriously ill or injured children in Hawaii and throughout the Pacific almost always require specialized medical care on Oahu. We are the only state in the country where an ocean literally separates many families from lifesaving treatment that their very sick children need.

Each year, we welcome almost 400 families to the Ronald McDonald House. Here, they find a safe and comfortable place for the family to stay. Warm beds and hot showers. A fully stocked kitchen and laundry room. Daily transportation from the airport to the hospital and doctor appointments. Healthy meals and support services to keep the family strong.

Since opening 34 years ago, more than 13,000 families have spent 135,000 nights with us, and almost 150,000 people have been supported by or received help from RMHC family programs and services.

Our mission is to help families with sick or injured children stay together,

close to the care and resources they need when they need it most. We believe that when a child is sick, the entire family needs comfort and support.

When families first come to the Ronald McDonald House, they begin a very difficult, very frightening journey. Most don't know where the journey will end, just that the road along the way will be one of the hardest they've ever traveled. But they also know that they will not have to travel it alone. That is a promise we make to all of our Ronald House families. When a family walks through the doors, they know they have come to a safe and healing place.

Hope lives here, at the House that Love Built. And through the Aloha Spirit and support of so many caring people and organizations in our community, the Ronald McDonald House has become a gift to our island families. It represents the best of who we are and what we have to share.

With gratitude,

Jerri Chong, RMHC Hawaii President

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

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**Silander Family** continued from page 1

House and to experience its new Family Recreation Center in 2021.

**"Now, the kids don't want to leave the Ronald McDonald House," Jason said. "If we go out as a family, they want to come back to the House."**

**Evlynta credits the House, as well as treatments, with giving Jayden the courage to walk again after being in a**



Jayden and his brother, Jeremiah, like the gaming area in the Family Recreation Center.



Mykah studies in the Family Recreation Center, by the Lego wall and the House's new mascot.

**wheel chair.**

The children, now in middle school, use their own laptops or computers in the House's Family Recreation Center to study remotely. The family stays close to each other while Jayden gets medical treatments nearby, gathering strength and helping him heal.

**Giese Family** continued from page 1

While Charytee stayed at the hospital for treatment and observation, reality set in for the family: they needed a place to stay. Ronald McDonald House Charities, which only had been accepting families on a limited basis at its Oahu



Charytee and Kaylee Giese hug on the stairs to the Treehouse in the Family Recreation Center.

House because of the pandemic, had just re-opened its Judd Hillside House. The House had room for them and was practicing social distancing and other measures for the safety of its staff and families—so even 2-month-old Beckett could stay while nursing.

Meanwhile, Grandma Kathy was on her way to Honolulu from San Diego to join them, pending COVID-19 protocol, including testing and quarantines

for anyone flying into Honolulu at the time.

Once at the House, she said the family loved it. **“The House, environment, and services are so welcoming; it**

**feels like home...even during COVID-19.”**

Emylee commented on the House’s hospitality as well, saying, **“Uncle Dwayne, the weekend manager, told us to let him know if we needed anything else. He even offered to keep our dinner warm while we were at the hospital. And—when he offered to hold Baby Beckett for a moment—I didn’t hesitate to say yes.”**



Charytee and Kaylee share musical talents on stage in Nicki and KIDZ Treehouse.

As Charytee’s health improved, she started spending time at Judd Hillside House, watching movies with her family at night and playing with her sister during the daytime in the Family Recreation Center. By the time she was leaving, nearly two weeks after arriving on Oahu, she was eager to get back to school, along with her sister, Kaylee.

While the family went through an incredibly stressful period, their strength and a huge support system, including school, church, doctors, and the Ronald McDonald House, played a large roll in Charytee’s quick recovery.

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# Meals from the Heart

*Our meal donation program helps keep families fed so they can focus on helping their keiki get better! We rely on meal drop offs to keep our kitchen well stocked and to feed families needing to focus on the health of an ill child getting treatment nearby.*

*You can schedule a no contact drop off by contacting [info@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:info@rmhchawaii.org).*

Pre-pandemic, RMHC Hawaii had a robust meal program. Groups and volunteers would come to the House with groceries, meal ingredients, and cooking supplies. They would prepare nutritious and tasty meals for our families—most who had spent the day bedside at the hospital with their children, or balancing doctor appointments, medical tests and treatments, and home health care. The meals provided more than just sustenance. They offered a sense of normalcy and security, of being at home and cared for by family and friends.

Unfortunately, our meal program and all volunteer activities were suspended at the start of the pandemic in observance of safety protocols, and have remained inactive for a year. Staff and families took over all meal preparation, stretching time and resources to make sure meals were provided and the families' nutritional needs were met.

Our community found a new way to donate with our drop-off meals program. Individuals and organizations have been preparing meals to fuel our families who have flown to Oahu for urgent medical care for a child—whether they come from Neighbor Islands, the Pacific, or the U.S. Mainland.

This means so much to parents and families staying at the Ronald McDonald House. They are all emotionally drained, financially strapped, and far from family, friends, and a support network. Their primary concern is keeping the family together and focusing on their child's recovery.

We have been blessed that individuals and organizations have stepped in to provide a variety of meals, food, and snacks—greatly appreciated by our families.

Mahalo!



First Insurance Company of Hawaii



Eri and family



Girl Scout Troop 11



Iolani School Key Club



RMHC Hawaii President Jerri Chong with Touch a Heart representatives



Jason Silander, about to enjoy a meal, appreciates the variety each week.



"We are so thankful that someone really cares, especially for us families who are away from home."



The nonprofit organization Touch a Heart [www.touchahearthawaii.org](http://www.touchahearthawaii.org) cooks meals for other nonprofits and generates income through commercially marketed products, catering

services, and food delivery programs to sustain program operations. At the outbreak of COVID-19, they saw a need at Ronald McDonald House Hawaii and offered to partner with us to bring us home cooked meals on a regular basis. To date, Touch A Heart has donated more than 1,200 meals to RMHC Hawaii to help fuel our families who need the extra energy to care for a sick child getting medical treatment nearby.



## GET ACTIVE FOR A GREAT CAUSE...and they did!

The House put on a "Virtual" RED SHOE 5K from March 7th – 27th raising over \$64K! Participants chose

when, where and how they would do their 5K. We had walkers, runners, bicyclists, tennis players, skateboarders, hikers, swimmers, Zumba exercisers, and more. Over 700 participants Rocked their Socks and Showed their Stripes from 34 different states, all Neighbor Islands and even as far as Germany and France. We were very excited by the overwhelming response for this first time "FUN" raising event.

We received many photos of participants completing their 5K, showing their spirit and their critters to enter photo contests. All ages participated. Dogs, cats, horses, and even pet pigs got active. To see more photos visit [www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org) News & Events page.

**CONGRATULATIONS** to the LUCKY DRAW winners from each tier:

### TOP "FUN" raising TEAMS & Captains

- #1: EXCELorators - Dana Abe
- #2: ELA & Friends - Pamela Chow
- #3 Team TEMANA - Tamara Perry

### TOP "FUN" raising INDIVIDUALS:

- #1: Marilyn Furuta, Team Ballard
- #2: Gina Yasuda, EXCELorators
- #3: Malu Davidson-Eborn, NOT FAST JUST FURIOUS

Mahalo to all those who joined us. We look forward to seeing how you will Rock your Socks next year.



Ruth Blum rocks her socks with Honu friend.



ELA & Friends created a "FUN"raising Tennis Tournament.



BOD, Melissa Yara, crossing finish line with her family.



Callahan Crew showing their stripes from TN.

## Photo Contest Lucky Draw Winners



**Most Spirited** – The Hawaii Five Star Team came out in full force doing a parade in Hilo & Kona.



**Cutest Critter** – Maya & little Nikki rocking their red.



**Finish Line** – Lori Naone & Krystal Rogers had a beautiful finish!



Malu receiving his trophy & certificate.

# Behind the Scenes



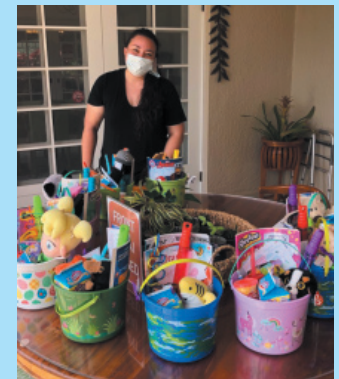
House Manager Karl Cubangbang prepares to challenge families at our Judd Hillside House to find the one 4-leaf clover he hid in our Family Recreation Center during two contests in March.



## St. Patrick's Day



House staff stopped by Manoa McDonald's to get Shamrock Shakes to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day!



RMHC Hawaii supporters, including Coldwell Banker Realty Cares Foundation, Moms on a Mission, and Bethany Lazor, prepared and donated Easter goodies for families at our Houses.



# Internships for a Cause

Bayne! He honed his skills and shared his talent—a win, win—working with our IT consultant Frank Godek.

From Aiea and studying at KCC (Kapiolani Community College) on Oahu, Kendel jumped at the internship opportunity upon his college counselor's suggestion. He was majoring in Information Technology, with the goal of becoming a systems analyst.

"During this internship, I've been able to practice and use my knowledge and skills from both school and working with a nonprofit," Kendel

said. "The challenge with a nonprofit organization is that it's based on fundraising. Nonprofits usually need an extensive computer network and system even though they can be smaller than commercial businesses. Working near the families staying at the Ronald McDonald House really puts computer work into perspective. It grounds you and gives more meaning to what you're doing. It's clear that interning in IT at Ronald McDonald House Hawaii is making a difference in others' lives."

He will be joining us part-time on a regular basis. We appreciate Kendel's talent and time.

*Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii is looking for interns for summer and fall of 2021. If you or anyone you know wants to positively*



*impact the lives of others while building skills, view our intern opportunities posted on our website [www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org](http://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org) and Email: [kiree@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:kiree@rmhchawaii.org). You'll be helping support our mission of providing a Home-Away-From-Home for families with children getting medical treatment nearby.*

# Keeping Families Close



Daneisha stayed at the Judd Hillside Ronald McDonald House with her mother, brother, and grandmother earlier this year. Diagnosed with Anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis, she received medical treatment nearby at Kapiolani Medical Center. Her family stayed with her during treatment for the curable autoimmune condition. Mom, Leizel, stayed by her side throughout, while her brother and grandmother returned to Hoonokaa on the Big Island. Daneisha recovered and returned home with her mom at the end of March. We recently caught up with the family to find out that all is well! We wish them the best!

*At Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii, we believe that keeping families together helps a child heal and a family grow stronger.*



Daneisha and her brother, Davian, picnic in our Family Recreation Center.



Daneisha and Davian play on the jungle gym at our House.



Daneisha and her mom, Leizel, finish a game of Mancala.



Daneisha and Davian hang out in the Judd Hillside House yard.

# Other Ways the Community Supports Us

There are so many ways to help support RMHC Hawaii and its mission of providing a home-away-from-home and keeping families close. Some of our supporters have made long-term “in-kind” donations of services and products.

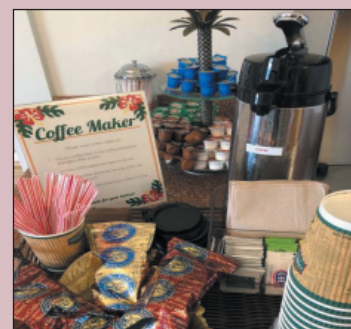
**Eggs Hawaii** has been supporting our families with fresh egg donations on a regular basis since 2019. They even brought eggs to our staff. Their local Hawaii Egg Farms in the beautiful Waianae Valley provide Hawaii with some of the highest quality and best eggs, including the brands Hawaiian Maid and Ka Lei.

[www.eggshawaii.com](http://www.eggshawaii.com)



**Hawaii Coffee Company** has been supplying our two Houses—one on Judd Hillside Road and the other on Oahu Avenue—for more than thirty years! We have two kitchens, fully stocked with coffee from Hawaii Coffee Company, creamers, and related products.

[www.HawaiiCoffeeCompany.com](http://www.HawaiiCoffeeCompany.com)



**Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Hawaii**

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**Wish List**

- Disinfectant wipes/sprays
- Individually wrapped treats
- Hand soap
- Paper towels
- Xerox/copy paper

We are happy to announce that we will be hosting our annual Golf Classic in-person. The tournament will be limited to 144 golfers as we're still not out of the "bunker" just yet with COVID-19. Reserve your team space now at [www.ronaldhousehawaii.org](http://www.ronaldhousehawaii.org).

We also need help with prizes, in-kind donations for swag bags and hole sponsorships for food and beverages. If you are able to "chip" in please email [golf@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:golf@rmhchawaii.org).

**Save the Date**  
**RMHC Hawaii 30th Golf Classic**

Wednesday, August 4, 2021  
Hawaii Prince Golf Course  
Shotgun Start: 11:45 am

Team Sponsorship Levels (includes 3 players/team)  
**Platinum \$2,700 • Gold \$1,900 • Silver \$1,500**

**HAWAII PRINCE GOLF CLUB**  
ISLAND OF OAHU