



Aloha

From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® Hawaii

Issue 1, February 2023

A Home-Away-From-Home

"I look at kids and see the miracles."

--Marie Treloar

While she looks like a typical healthy eighteen-years-old, Leah, has various special needs syndromes so rare that only a handful of people have them.

Leah remembers having stomach aches and pain while eating when she was seven. Then, when she was a teenager, she had to buy pants two sizes larger than her size to accommodate swelling in one leg.

Leah has MALs (Median Arcuate Ligament Syndrome), also known as Dunbar syndrome, which is a rare vein compression disorder that affects blood flow and causes other complications, especially if untreated. She also has been diagnosed with May-Thurmer syndrome, a rare vascular condition that affects a pelvic area vein. The compression prevents blood from flowing properly, leading to narrowing and scarring. Treatment of these conditions involves surgery to release (decompress) ligaments putting pressure on arteries and to restore blood flow.

Leah's vascular issues have caused her GI (Gastro-Intestinal) issues. At

her young age, she's already developed ovarian cysts and deep vein thrombosis. Complicating matters even more, she synthesizes medications differently than most. A doctor in Colorado where they live referred her to a doctor at Queens Medical Center who is familiar with these conditions.

While awaiting testing and staying at our Judd Hillside House, Leah and her mother Marie found a home-away-from-home.

"The Judd Hillside House is so 'homey,'" Marie said. "We love the donated prepared meals. It's also wonderful to be able to chill and hear laughter of staff and others during the day."

When they arrived on Oahu, they had to test negative for COVID before coming to the Ronald House, where they would stay for two weeks while Leah underwent testing and procedures. Leah and her mother made the best of the situation, playing music, singing, and cooking chicken fajitas for other families staying at the House.

Leah and her mother have been on a medical journey to get Leah diagnosed and treated so she can live a normal life and be pain free since she was a child. Since 2019, Leah has had seven



Leah (left) and Mom Marie cooked chicken fajitas for other families at our Judd Hillside House during their stay.

operations, helping to block and alleviate her pain.

Marie said that part of the medical journey is "growth and healing." Leah and Marie have both gained strength and patience while getting through medical struggles. Marie prays for energy now.

She finds help and support through others with children who have the same symptoms and syndromes as Leah. She hopes to help others in return.

Wish List

Individually Wrapped Snacks
Juice Boxes
Tin Foil, Saran Wrap, and Wax Paper
Plastic Food Containers

Ziploc Bags (all sizes)
To-go Food Containers
Food Handling Gloves
Paper Towels, Toilet Paper and Napkins

Paper Plates
Xerox/copy paper
Crosswords/coloring books

Message from our President



Jerri Chong

Aloha,

We are hoping for a peaceful and healthy 2023.

While over the past few years, we've all felt the impact of a global pandemic, economic turbulence, and political unrest, some parents have been dealing with their own personal crisis—a child's illness.

The heart wrenching, life stopping diagnosis that a child is sick or injured leaves families feeling isolated and different. Some are financially strapped and overwhelmed, often wondering how to cope.

The ripple effect leaves extended family and friends feeling helpless. As individuals, we can offer hugs, an attempt at understanding, and sympathy. As a community, we can help alleviate a family's pain and stress by providing them with what they need to be strong for their sick child.

Thanks to you, Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii is here for them. Our two Houses are homes away from home where families can stay together near the medical care they need and in the comfort of others going through similar situations. During the past 35 plus years of helping families with ill or injured children, we have seen the healing power of community support. Your volunteer hours, the home cooked

meals, the donations, the compassion, and caring all make a difference. Your support is the cornerstone to giving families strength to help their children heal.

We thank you for your loyal support and will remain steadfast in our commitment to providing lodging and services for children from around the Pacific and Hawaii when they need it the most.

Mahalo,

Jerri Chong, RMHC Hawaii

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Rick Barbieri, Associate Director, Field Operations, RMHC Global (right) and Susan Decker, BoardSource Consultant (left), held a two-day

training retreat with our Board of Directors last September. Director of House Operations, Kanoe Paauhau, gave them a tour of our House on Judd Hillside following a morning session.



RMHC Hawaii kicked off the New Year with an employee appreciation event and luncheon at Stage Restaurant in January. It also marked the launching of RMHC Hawaii's Employee Wellness Program.

Around the House

When Bronson was injured during football practice, the family physician on Lanai referred him to an orthopedic surgeon on Oahu. Bronson's mother, Crystal, and sister, Gizelle, flew with him from Lanai to Oahu. Grandma Georgina flew to Oahu from Hilo on the Big Island to help. They all arrived with only backpacks, expecting to stay for the day.

At Kapiolani Medical Center, however, Bronson was diagnosed with two serious fractures; he needed immediate surgery. The family was referred to Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii where they could stay together in a house that was like home and focus on Bronson's healing.

"We didn't even need to have clothes, because Ronald McDonald House has it all," said Grandma Georgina. "It was such a relief to know we could stay at Judd Hillside House in a room on the first level where we had wheel chair access to the kitchen, living room, family recreation center, and bathrooms."

With Grandma, Mom, and Sister by his side, Bronson was able to return home to Lanai after just three days.



Bronson had the love and support of his sister, Mom, and Grandma at the Judd Hillside House.



Kaipo Wong (Dad) and Hina kept busy at Judd Hillside Ronald House.

Kaipo, Kaylie, and their daughter, Hina, stayed with us at our Judd Hillside House in January. Father and daughter spent some quality time together doing activities and chores, including coloring, eating, and laundry. Meanwhile, Mom spent her days with newborn, Hoku, in the hospital NICU nearby.

Hoku's sudden delivery on Maui had left the family scrambling for a place to stay and child care on Oahu, where staff at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children was prepared for the early child birth. Hoku was medevaced to Oahu before Kaylie (Mom), who flew to Oahu on Hawaiian Airlines within 24 hours of giving birth.

"We couldn't have juggled child care and being together without Ronald McDonald House," Kaipo said.

After 24 days, Hoku had gained enough weight and motor control to breathe and eat on his own and was discharged from the hospital.



Kaylie (Mom) joined Kaipo and Hina at Diamond Head Theatre to watch Cinderella.



The Takamoris (from left): Eiko, Brad, Emma, Grayson, and Reona visited Ronald McDonald House and gathered in our loft, upstairs in the family recreation center.

The Takamori ohana from Oahu visited our House in November 2022 on the way to Northern California, where 5-year-old Grayson was scheduled to have his third heart surgery. His first two surgeries were to mitigate a hole in his heart. The third was to repair it.

During Grayson's first surgery, when he was just two-months-old, the Takamoris had stayed at the Ronald McDonald House in San Diego. With the day-to-day ups and downs Brad (Dad) described as "an emotional roller coaster," they found it comforting to return from a long day at the hospital to hot meals prepared by volunteers. They also appreciated the support of staff and other families as well as being able to stay together near the hospital.

Following their return from San Diego, the Takamoris cooked meals for families at Ronald McDonald House Hawaii. They also formed a Hawaiian Airlines Holo Holo Challenge team, 'Hustle for Heart', to raise funds for RMHC.

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Hope

Share A Night Benefit Gala & Auction

November 19, 2022

After a two year in-person hiatus, the 2022 HOPE Share A Night Gala & Auction was held at the Alohilani Resort Waikiki on November 19.

A huge mahalo to all of the sponsors, auction donors, volunteers and attendees who helped make the largest fundraiser of the year such an extraordinary event.

Guests were welcomed to a butterfly oasis, where hope was the theme of the evening. Inspired by RMHC guest, Faith, who was diagnosed with AML, a form of Leukemia in 2014. Faith and her

mom stayed at RMHC Hawaii while she was treated with chemotherapy before returning to the Big Island to recuperate. During their stay – a staff member walked into the yard and saw Faith with a butterfly. The butterfly and Faith offer a metaphor for hope and transformation that touched every Gala participant.

The Dudoit family took the Gala stage to share their story of positivity and perseverance. Son, Keaka and mom Cara recently returned to the Big Island after completing a final round of treatment.

The live auction had guests bidding on prizes including an NCIS: Hawaii prize pack, Vegas trip with Katy Perry tickets, signed-Paul McCartney guitar, and an Alaska Reel fishing adventure!

Not a dry eye was in the house when featured entertainer Lani Misalucha performed a stirring mini concert. The evening exceeded fundraising goals by bringing in nearly \$300,000 – helping to ensure the RMHC Hawaii mission of keeping families close.



(Top row l-r) Noly Paa on the grand piano. Comedian Augie T in action. Ronald McDonald House Charities® Hawaii Emcee Al Waterson and Entertainment Director Nancy Bernal with Gala Greeters. Congressman Ed Case's Chief of Staff Jackie Conant and Blaine Miyasato from Hawaiian Airlines.

(Bottom row l-r) Narcissus Queen Jenalyn Ng shows off an autographed guitar by Beatles' Sir Paul McCartney during the live auction. The Dudoit family spoke and shared their story of staying at RMHC with son, Keaka. Featured entertainer, Lani Misalucha dazzled the crowd.



RMHC Hawaii President Jerri Chong shared a message of hope.



Faith was the inspiration for our Gala butterflies this year. She is now a teen who loves to surf!



RMHC Hawaii Board Member Dyanna Okazaki and her mom proudly wave RMHC Hawaii 35th Anniversary towels after donating during exciting Gala crowdfunding.



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Other Ways the Community Supports Us

Meals from the Heart

Our meals program is back on track, with individuals, families, friends, and organizations bringing us meals and cooking at our House. A healthy meal is a key ingredient to helping families stay strong and a blessing for anyone spending the day bedside with an ailing child. The meals not only provide nourishment, but give parents more time to focus on their children and healing.

For more on volunteering or our meals program, please contact Kiree@rmhchawaii.org.



Members of **Associated Chinese University Women** recently prepared a hearty meal of chili, toppings, cornbread, salad, and blueberry mochi.

RMHC Hawaii Board Member, Dr. Lois Chiu, and her daughters and friends made delicious pies for our families.



American Savings Bank representatives cooked dinner and baked cookies for families staying at our House.

The **Hawaiian Electric** team of volunteers donated time and household goods, and cooked ono food for our keiki and their families.



The **Ohana Kokua Club** joined us at our Judd Hillside House in December, making ornaments and meals—bringing holiday joy to our staff and families.

BAYADA Home Health Care visited Judd Hillside House and cooked chili and cornbread for families staying here, adding to the comfortable flurry of holiday activities and smells of home cooking.

Other Ways the Community Supports Us

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization, helping us with a myriad of events, paper work, cleaning, and even decorating for the holidays.



VI Resorts volunteered at our House. They cleaned everything, from rooms to our shuttle vans. They also made a donation!



The team at **Crum & Forster Hawaii** made a tremendous impact in helping families at the Ronald House in 2022. The staff volunteered hundreds of hours to assist with mailings during the year. They also organized a toy drive and contributed \$1,500 in gift cards!



Macy's Hawaii volunteers hung lights and other decorations for the holidays.



SSFM International presented a check to RMHC Hawaii at its annual gathering last September. Jerri Chong, President, RMHC Hawaii; Duane Seabolt, RMHC Hawaii Board Chair; and Stacey Miyamoto, RMHC Hawaii board member and Principal at SSFM International accepted the check for \$5,000 from SSFM President & CEO Michael Matsumoto and his team.



Aloha Petroleum donated funds to RMHC Hawaii that were collected from its Giving Pump Campaign that included select Shell stations across the state from Aug. 1-Oct. 31. Pictured are Casie Bui (left), Aloha Petroleum Director of Sales Operations and Marketing, and Jerri Chong, President of RMCH Hawaii. PHOTO COURTESY ALOHA PETROLEUM



Takamori Family continued from page 3:

After two more surgeries, one on Oahu and one in the Bay Area where the family stayed at the Ronald McDonald House at Stanford, Grayson is doing well.

Eiko (Mom) said Grayson's last EKG showed he had a normal heart rhythm. She described Grayson—who had a birthday in January—as a typical six-year-old boy. "He has so much more energy now!"

When stopping at Ronald McDonald House Hawaii on their way to the Bay Area, Grayson presented a check to RMHC Hawaii's Director of Development Candace Asam-Lopez.



Enterprise Holdings Foundation's Nadine Cunningham delivered a check donation to Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii. Pictured are (from left): Kanoë Paauhau, Director of House Operations, RMHC Hawaii; Nadine Cunningham, Enterprise Holdings Foundation; Kiree Higa, Volunteer Services Manager, RMHC Hawaii.

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