



# Aloha, From Our House to Yours

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii

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

Issue 1, February 2026

## “A Place to Breathe”

As told by Aja Allen at our 2025 Gala

A few months ago, life threw me into a nightmare. I was 20 weeks pregnant when my water broke, and the doctors told me my daughter wouldn't survive. They offered to deliver her so I could hold her briefly before saying goodbye.

But I couldn't accept that. I said, **“As long as there's a heartbeat, she stays inside.”** And my tiny warrior held on for nearly four more weeks.

She arrived at 24 weeks—**four months early**—weighing **1 pound, 6 ounces**, lighter than a laulau, but stronger than anyone expected. She had no amniotic fluid, collapsed lungs, chest tubes, Stage 4 brain bleeds, and breathing machines helping her fight.

I remember standing over her incubator, looking at this tiny girl covered in wires, and whispering, **“Please stay.”**

Every day, it felt like a roller coaster. I'd catch my breath, and then a doctor would walk in and take it away again.

We weren't even on our home island. I was medevacked from the Big Island to Oahu, so my daughter and I could be treated at Kapiolani Medical Center. I was scared, overwhelmed, and unsure of what the next day would look like.

Back home, my two older daughters, ages 8 and 10, stayed with their dad. My 10-year-old FaceTimes me at night, braiding her sister's hair, telling me, **“Mom, it's okay. I'm helping Dad so he doesn't have to do everything.”**

When she said that, my heart shattered because I was not there. I'm on a different island, fighting for the life of the daughter I was afraid I might not get to keep.

That's when the Ronald McDonald House on Oahu stepped in.

When your world turns upside down, it's life-changing to have one place that feels steady. For me, that place has

been the Ronald McDonald House. They gave me more than a roof; they gave me stability when everything else felt uncertain.

They offered meals when I didn't even realize I hadn't eaten. A comfortable bedroom when sleep felt impossible. A shuttle service that took one giant burden off my shoulders—no planning, no thinking, just “Get in, Mom. We'll get you to your baby.”

And it's the people that make it: the warm smiles at the front desk, the volunteers who cook with so much love you can taste it, and the other families who understand without needing an explanation. You pass another parent in the hallway, and you both just... know. A nod. A gentle smile. A silent “I see you.”



*“Your support doesn't just fund a house. It fuels hope.”*



Today, I'm happy to share that my daughter is now **5 pounds 9 ounces**. She's still tiny, but to us, she's gigantic. She's growing, fighting, and proving every single day that she's stronger than the circumstances she was born into.

Because of the Ronald McDonald House—and because of people like you—I get to stay close. I get to read to her, touch her tiny hand, celebrate every gram she gains, and be present for every milestone, no matter how small.

I truly don't know what we would have done without this place. Your support doesn't just fund a house. It fuels hope. It keeps families together. It gives parents the strength they need to show up for their children every single day. And I promise you—every bit of your support makes a difference.

From the bottom of my heart, on behalf of my daughter and my entire family—**thank you.**

# Spring Forward: Families First—A Bold Vision for 2026

Spring is a season of renewal—and at Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii, renewal means strengthening what families rely on most: comfort, stability, and the simple gift of being together when a child is receiving critical medical care.

At RMHC Hawaii, our mantra is Families First. It's more than a theme—it's the standard behind every decision we make. Whether we're planning an event, launching a program, or investing in our Houses, we ask one question first: What is best for families?

In this issue, you'll read inspiring stories that reflect the heart of our mission, including the Allen family's remarkable journey after their baby was born at just 24 weeks. You'll also see highlights from our Hope & Heroes Gala, holiday moments at the House, and Family Day at Wet'n'Wild—along with excitement building for our Red Shoe 5K on March 22 and more.

But I want to share what's ahead—because 2026 will be transformational for RMHC Hawaii.

We are preparing for major renovations at both our Judd Hillside House and Oahu Avenue House, designed to elevate the family experience and strengthen our ability to serve families for decades to come. These Houses are more than buildings; they are a refuge. A place where parents can exhale after long hospital days, where siblings can feel safe, and where families find warmth, dignity, and peace. Our renovations

are about protecting that refuge and ensuring every family who walks through our doors feels supported.

Alongside these improvements, we are planning new projects and expanded support services that remove barriers and respond to the full reality families face—emotional stress, financial strain, and the exhaustion of uncertainty. Because when we say Families First, we mean we will keep finding ways to help families stay close, stay strong, and stay together and never charge for anything.

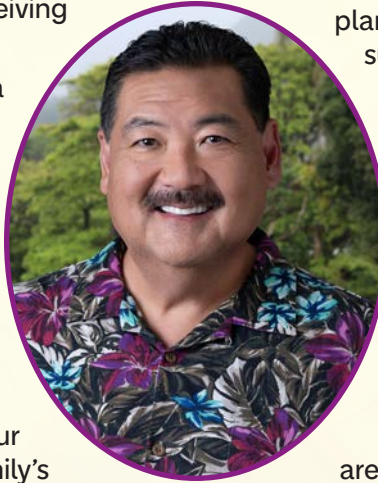
As we build toward the future, we are also grateful for strong leadership and partnership. We're proud to welcome Dr. Brian Wu of HMSA to our Board of Directors, and we appreciate everyone who stands with RMHC Hawaii and believes families deserve care beyond the hospital walls.

Mahalo for being part of this mission. Because of you, families find comfort when it matters most—and because of you, we are stepping into 2026 with bold purpose and strong momentum.

Families First—always.



Ed Nishioka  
President & CEO  
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawaii



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

## Mahalo to Our Board

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## Welcome To The Family!

We would like to welcome **Dr. Brian Wu** to our Board of Directors. Dr. Wu has a great deal of experience working at Kapiolani Medical Center previously and is currently working as a Director at HMSA. He has already been instrumental in helping us build up our Medicaid/Quest reimbursement program that is now a strong funding source for our organization.



# Lace Up for the Red Shoe 5K Walk!

## Sunday, March 22, 2026

Get ready to step out, step up, and have a blast at the **Red Shoe 5K Walk at Ala Moana Center!** Join us starting at 7:30 a.m. for a feel-good morning filled with community spirit, movement, and smiles—all in support of RMHC families.

**Registration is open to create and customize your own team!** Recruit friends, family, co-workers, and even pets to support your team and help us reach our goal of 800+ walkers. See you at the start line where the fun begins! (Virtual participants are welcome too!)

To register, scan the QR Code below or go to <https://bit.ly/RedShoe5kHawaii>



Registration Page



Interested in sponsoring or donating? Contact Casey Metrose, Outreach and Business Development Manager, at (808) 892-1907 or email [RockYourSocks5K@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:RockYourSocks5K@rmhchawaii.org)

## Volunteers Make It Happen!

We're also looking for awesome volunteers (individuals or teams!) to help with:

- Packet Prep (one week prior)
- Event set-up & breakdown
- Walker check-in
- Greeting participants and directing walkers.
- Passing out goodies and smiles

Want to volunteer as an individual or group? Scan the QR code at right or go to <https://forms.gle/cAT3J9CkL9BCRAiV6> to fill out the form!

Any questions, please contact Zara Bagasol, Special Events Manager, at (808) 892-1906 or email [RockYourSocks5K@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:RockYourSocks5K@rmhchawaii.org)



Volunteer Form



# Hope & Heroes 2025 Benefit Gala

Our annual Gala took place on Saturday, November 22, 2025, at the 'Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach. The nautical theme highlighted how supporters are true “lifesavers” whose generosity shines a beacon of hope, like a lighthouse, for families with keiki needing medical care.

A big, “Mahalo!” to our incredible Hope & Heroes sponsors, partners, and donors who made the Gala a success. With their support we raised \$345,000 through table sponsorships, donations, and live and online auctions. And we are thrilled to share that the funds raised during the Drive Hope Forward Mission Moment—combined with a grant from the Atherton Family Foundation—will allow us to purchase a brand-new van to support our families’ transportation needs. This is an incredible gift that will make a meaningful difference in their daily journeys.

The kindness and goodwill shown at the Gala will not only sustain our mission today; but it also builds a brighter tomorrow for the families we welcome through our doors. If you couldn’t join us, we look forward to seeing you at next year’s magical evening of fellowship, great food, entertainment, and auction excitement.

Until then, we invite you to continue standing with us in giving families the stability, strength, and hope they deserve—so together, we can keep families close when it matters most. Your support means we can always put families first.



We were honored to have Jenniffer Robbins, Chief Meteorologist at Hawaii News Now, as our “Al Waterson Master of Ceremonies” for our special evening.



The 2025 Gala marked the introduction of a new tradition: the President’s Distinction Award. President and CEO Ed Nishioka presented this award to Dr. Lois Chiu in honor of her dedication, service and aloha towards Ronald McDonald House Hawaii and its mission. Thank you, Dr. Chiu!



Victor and Anita Lim received their own “little transportation” after making a donation during the Drive Hope Forward Mission Moment.



The Tris Imboden Yacht Stars, a world class group of musicians, including Hawaii’s own Michael Paulo, put on a terrific concert featuring award-winning hit songs they have been part of.



Aja Allen, from Mountain View on the Big Island of Hawaii shared her experiences (as featured on the cover of this newsletter) with what it’s like to live in “The House That Love Built” and become part of the Ronald McDonald House community.



President & CEO Ed Nishioka (far left) and Board Chair Dr. Barry Mizuo (far right) received a donation of over \$11K from the “Round Up” McDonald’s People Week. Presenting the check were Owner/Operator and board member David Lim (next to Dr. Mizuo) as well as general managers from McDonald’s of Puainako, Hilo, Waimea, and Nanakuli.



We held a live auction during the program, as well as an online silent auction with many amazing items.

# Mahalo for Your Generosity



## Hope Sponsors

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## Hope & Heroes Auction Champions

The Ambassador Hotel of Waikiki  
Alaska Airlines | Hawaiian Airlines  
Alaska Reel Adventures  
'Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach  
Andaz Maui at Wailea Resort  
Mrs. Nancy Bernal  
Drunch Crew  
Elite Island Resorts  
Embassy Suites by Hilton -  
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Romer House Waikiki  
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Royal Sonesta Kaua'i Resort  
Mr. Kelly Sanders  
Sheraton Kauai Resort  
Southwest Airlines  
Mr. Ricky Tamashiro  
Ms. Norma Tanaka & Family  
Wailea Beach Resort  
The Waterfront Beach Resort,  
A Hilton Hotel  
Mrs. Charlotte Yamamoto



Mahalo to everyone who participated in our Hope & Heroes online auction. Bonnie C. won this custom Brian Buckley longboard for her husband Bradley, who was so happy when he picked it up.

# Love at First Crunch

February is known as the month of love, and Big Island Candies is showing their love for "The House That Love Built."

All month long, the ever-popular Big Island Crunch Bars will be available for purchase at their Hilo and Ala Moana locations, with 5% of proceeds benefiting RMHC Hawaii. And if you can't make it in person, for one special weekend—expected February 20–22, 2026—you can also shop the Crunch Bars online and give back from wherever you are.

Whether you're indulging on these decadent bars yourself (you deserve it), sharing with a special someone on Valentine's Day, or gifting them to friends and family, you're spreading love 🍷 and creating smiles 😊 on behalf of our keiki and their families.

Don't wait—get them today and let the love (and the crunch) begin.

CANDIES  
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# Around the House

## Holiday Recap



Time warp! Staff got in the spirit of Halloween with a "Favorite Decade" costume contest. Kathy (front, center) won with her clever "Elliott & E.T."



The Chamber Singers for the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa charmed staff and families with Christmas carols and an impromptu rendition of "Happy Birthday" for a house guest who had just turned one years old.

This past October, the House had a visit from Ronald himself! He also brought breakfast from McDonald's. We love being able to have fun days like this for the keiki and 'ohana at the House.



Volunteers from Marriott's Ko Olina Beach Club helped design and decorate a Toy Story themed "Santa's Workshop" with a collection of donated items (toys, clothing, accessories, etc.) Families were able to shop and wrap presents, free of charge.

Our annual Christmas Party was so much fun! We love celebrating the holiday season with friends and family here at the House!



# Family Fun Day at Wet'n'Wild

On Sunday, November 30th, Ronald McDonald House Hawai'i enjoyed a joyful and refreshing Family Fun Day at Wet'n'Wild in Kapolei,

This special event brought together our keiki, families, top McFun sellers, volunteers, and staff for a well-deserved day of fun, relaxation, and connection.

All who attended had an amazing time and left with full hearts, full stomachs, and lasting memories from a much-needed splash-filled day.

Mahalo to our generous host Wet'n'Wild and lunch sponsor Little Caesars Pizza for helping make this day possible for our 'ohana.



## Eat, Play, Save with McFun

Get ready for a year filled with smiles, savings, and nonstop fun! The 2026 McFun booklet is here—and it's valid through December 31, 2026 giving you a full year to enjoy the perks.

**Fantastic Fundraiser!** The McFun booklet is an easy fundraiser for your organization, school, club, or sports team. With \$126+ in savings, this little booklet delivers big-time value, making it a great deal. Rally your group to participate and soon you'll see the reward of

your efforts come to life. Plus, you'll also be supporting our keiki and families with each booklet purchased.

**Buy for \$6, sell for \$10, and earn \$4 profit per booklet** (50-book minimum).

Don't miss out—McFun booklet is your pass to food, more play, and big savings throughout the year.

For more information, call Casey at (808) 892-1907 or email: [mcfun@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:mcfun@rmhchawaii.org)

### McDonald's Favorites (Value: \$21):

- **FREE** Frozen Carbonated Beverage
- **FREE** Small French Fries
- **FREE** Cheeseburger
- **FREE** McMuffin® Breakfast Sandwich (BOGO)
- **FREE** 4-Piece Chicken McNugget® Happy Meal® (with purchase of any medium combo meal)

### Discounted Family Fun Activities (Value: \$105+)

- Wet'n'Wild
- Kids City
- Sea Life Park
- Bishop Museum
- Wai Kai



## Hospitality Cart Wishlist

Our "Built with Aloha" Hospitality Carts bring comfort to families waiting in NICU and pediatric areas with free refreshments, care essentials, and small activities for kids and adults. As an extension of Ronald

McDonald House Hawaii's programs and services, these carts help caregivers take a breath and stay focused on what matters most: their keiki's health and recovery.

- ♥ Bottle Brushes & Baby Bottle Soap (travel size if possible)
- ♥ Earplugs
- ♥ Sleeping Eye Masks
- ♥ Compression Socks
- ♥ Breast Pads
- ♥ Mommy and Daddy Care Essentials (Body Soaps, Lotions, Facial Cleansers, Deodorant, etc.)
- ♥ K-Cup Coffee Pods (Any Flavor & Decaf)
- ♥ Individually Wrapped Snacks, Cookies, & Chips
- ♥ Writing Journals
- ♥ Small Board Games, Card Games, Books & Activities

To set up a drop-off, call us at **(808) 973-5683** or email [info@rmhchawaii.org](mailto:info@rmhchawaii.org)



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**Red Shoe 5K Walk**  
**Sunday, March 22, 2026**

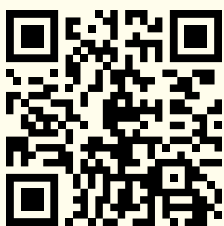
**Golf Classic**  
**Friday, July 17, 2026**

**Hope & Heroes Gala**  
**Saturday, October 24, 2026**

Mark your calendars for 2026—our signature events are coming up, and we'd love to see you there! Join us for the Red Shoe 5K Walk, tee off with us at our annual Golf Tournament, and celebrate in style at our Gala. Your support at these events helps keep families close to the care their children need. Save the dates now—watch for more details on registration, sponsorship, and volunteer opportunities.

**SAVE  
THE DATES!**

For more information visit [RonaldHouseHawaii.org](https://www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org)



Scan QR to be taken directly to our Events directory page.



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