

## One Day at a Time

The Tamashiros were your typical happy family. Paul, a district manager, and his wife Elsa, an accountant, are parents of Mari (age 7) and Kai (age 4), students at Montessori Community School. Their lives dramatically changed while on vacation on Maui in 2012. During the trip, Mari got a fever. It was a low-grade fever with no other symptoms, so Paul and Elsa didn't think much of it. She seemed a little tired, but they thought it was just a common cold. When they returned home they went to see Mari's pediatrician. Even the pediatrician believed it to be a common virus. But after a few days, despite the fever going away, Mari began coughing and soon after she developed stomach and leg pains.

The Tamashiros took Mari back to the doctor for a follow-up visit, when he noticed she was pale. He decided to order some blood tests. Not long after they left, they received a call from the doctor telling them to come back immediately. They were told to take Mari to Kapiolani Medical Center for blood and platelet transfusions. At that moment, they knew something was wrong. When Mari was admitted, the doctor confirmed that she had leukemia. Medical professionals wasted no time starting Mari's treatment. She received her first chemotherapy treatment two days later.

### "LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME"

When Mari was diagnosed, the Tamashiro family knew their lives would never be the same. While there are days when Mari is taken out of school and needs to Skype with her teachers and classmates to participate in school activities, she also has many days when



*The Tamashiro Family*

she attends school, and laughs and experiences life just like every other child. Mari's entire family has been dramatically affected by her condition. They have rallied around Mari loving and supporting her, making it clear they are more than willing to make any life adjustments needed to overcome this obstacle.

### "SO YOUNG, YET SO STRONG"

Because of Mari's condition, she is susceptible to common colds and illnesses, so her parents must be more aware of her surroundings keeping in mind the people and activities occurring around her. She takes a variety of daily medications, as well as hospital-administered treatments. Her entire family organizes their schedules around her medical regimen. While this can be challenging at times, the Tamashiro's involve Mari and Kai in as many everyday activities that they can, including trips to the beach, museums, camping, aquarium and the zoo.

Mari has shown incredible strength and courage in overcoming many challenges

in her life. Despite her frequent treatments and doctor's visits, Mari keeps up with her studies at Montessori Community School. Mari has a very positive outlook and bubbly personality. Throughout the numerous tests, uncomfortable treatments, and long, unpleasant procedures, Mari rarely complains. She is an inspiration to her family, the medical

staff, her friends and teachers. Recently she was recognized in the MidWeek's Good Neighbor column for donating toys and gifts to help other children at Kapiolani Medical Center.

Paul and Elsa say the best advice they can give is to take life one day at a time and not to be afraid reach out to others for help and support.

"The journey will be long, and many times very difficult," says Elsa. "Although you will meet a lot of other families going through some of the same challenges as you, no one really knows exactly how you feel, and or what decisions are right for you, except for yourself."

The Tamashiro family joined HUGS about a year-and-a-half into Mari's treatment. In the beginning, the focus was on getting through the difficulties of treatment. They didn't have time or energy to think about anything else. Now two years into this journey, they look forward to the monthly HUGS events.

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**For Hawaii's Seriously Ill Children and their Families**

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*Aloha,*

Throughout the past 7 years as a HUGS Board member, I have learned about the many HUGS families whose seriously ill child requires emergency medical treatment on the mainland. HUGS families from the neighbor islands often have to travel to Oahu for their medical treatment as well. I am reminded of one particular family whose 5 year old son required a liver transplant. After waiting for a long time, the family was so excited when they learned a match was found for Mikey. They needed to fly to San Diego immediately for the transplant but were financially challenged by the mounting medical bills. Dad's medical insurance was willing to pay for airfare for Dad and his son, but there were no resources available for Mom and their 3 year old daughter to go along with them so they could be together during the life-saving surgery.

HUGS was able to tap into its Hawaiian Miles Charity Donation account to help Mom and Sister to be with Mikey when he needed them the most. Fortunately, Mikey's liver transplant went well and now he is able to live his life as an active 8 year old.

HUGS is grateful to Hawaiian Airlines for allowing us to be a part of their Hawaiian Miles Charity Donation program. You can help other seriously ill children, such as Mikey, by donating your Hawaiian Miles to HUGS. Just go to <http://www.hawaiianairlines.com/hawaiianmiles/pages/donate-miles.aspx> and click on the HUGS donate button.

Mahalo to Hawaiian Airlines and all our Hawaiian Miles contributors! ❤️

Patrick Klein  
*President, HUGS Board of Directors*

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**MUCH NEEDED SUPPORT FOUND**

"HUGS is a tremendous organization with kind and supportive staff members and volunteers," said Paul.

The Tamashiro family finds HUGS' respite care as a welcome relief and the monthly family dinners as a time to relax and have fun as a family.

"It's been comforting and encouraging to meet other families who share some of the challenges and difficulties that they've experienced," says Elsa.

*"HUGS has also done a great job of recognizing how siblings are affected when there is a serious illness in the family by including them in HUGS events and developing special 'sibling' events."*

Initially, the Tamashiros felt that their greatest support would be limited to each other, as they faced this difficult challenge in their life



together. However, they found support in their families, employers, associates, Mari's teachers at school, her friends, the many doctors, nurses, child life specialists, the staff at Kapiolani Medical Center and HUGS. People all over have all reached out to them offering more love and support than they could have ever imagined. HUGS would like to send a big mahalo to the Tamashiro family for taking the time out of their busy schedule to share their story with all of us. We are sending our positive thoughts and best wishes your way! ❤️

# HUGS Gala

On May 2nd, 2015 The Annual HUGSLove Gala was held at Pomaika'i Ballrooms at Dole Cannery. This event is our biggest fundraiser of the year, making it something that our friends and supporters look forward to annually. The event sparkled this year, with a "Once Upon a Time" theme, turning the ballroom into a magical HUGS fairytale.

The event raised a record breaking \$191,000 in funds that will directly benefit Hawaii's seriously ill children and their families as they navigate the challenges of life-threatening childhood illness.

"HUGS is a grassroots organization and relies heavily on funding from supporters and donations from our community to keep all of our programs free of charge to the families who need them." Executive Director, Joan Naguwa. "This event brought together old friends and new, creating a new level of compassionate giving to our event".

Over 300 business and community leaders and their guests were treated to a fun evening that featured both silent and live auctions to provide of myriad of ways for people to give. Of the many exciting auction items a few memorable pieces included a Heather Brown "Honolulu Surf" Glicee painting, an autographed football by Heisman Trophy winner Marcus Mariotta and teammates, two tickets to a New York Yankees Baseball game in a Legends Suite and more than 140 unique items. Guests were also treated to a gourmet dinner buffet, and a variety of fine wines.

"An important part of our Gala is the awards ceremony. It's a way for us to



thank those people and groups who have impacted the work we do and our families in such positive ways, that we want to publicly acknowledge and honor them for their partnership with HUGS".

**Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children** was presented with our 2015 Corporate Philanthropy Award. Since hugs started, thirty-three years ago, Kapiolani Medical Center worked in partnership with HUGS to improve the physical and emotional health of hundreds of Hawaii's seriously ill children and their families. Through this partnership, we are able to offer our programs and services to families in need of support during one of the most critical times in their lives – through weekly hospital visits with our laughter wagon, providing interactive activities at bedside and offering needed breaks for their parents. More recently, Kapiolani Medical Center, together with hugs, have developed a new program, sibling time, which help siblings and young patients to enhance their relationship with each other. We thank the child life specialists, social workers,

administrators, doctors, nurses and all medical staff of Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children for this incredible partnership.

**Punahou School's Luke Center for Public Service** was recognized as this year's Tommy Holmes Community Service Award for its ongoing support of HUGS. The Tommy Holmes Community Service Award is given to a community group or organization who exemplifies the spirit of Tommy Holmes, one of the founders of HUGS. For over 17 years, Punahou School and its Luke Center for Public Service has been a vital source of compassionate and enthusiastic student volunteers. The Luke Center has been committed to supporting and enhancing their students' development in social responsibility and meaningful learning opportunities through service learning. It has also enabled hugs to be the beneficiary of thousands of hours of valuable service to our HUGS children and families. Whether it's serving as buddies for our children at our Respite Program, creating crafts and games for them or brightening our playground, the service of these young leaders and support of the Luke Center have been priceless.

We'd like to give a special mahalo to our Gala Committee, Event Volunteers, Board of Directors, Auction Donors and everyone who has helped to make the 2015 HUGSLove Gala a success. 💖

In February, HUGS held its 3rd annual Family Dinner at Sunset Ranch on O'ahu's North Shore. The children enjoyed horseback riding, a petting zoo, arts and crafts, lawn games, and most of all spending quality time with their peers and the ones they love. HUGS is grateful to Greg Pietsch and the Sunset Ranch staff who generously hosted a delicious lunch and fun activities for HUGS families at the beautiful ranch. *"This is my favorite event here, I look forward to it every year,"* said Pietsch.

Sunset Ranch has more to offer than just horses. It also has a coffee and citrus orchard, aquaculture site and botanical garden. Pietsch has made it Sunset Ranch's mission to preserve the land and share its beauty with the public by offering tours, retreats, farming, botanical gardens, and horsemanship programs. One of Sunset Ranch's highlights is its partnership with Hawaii Equine Assisted Reflection and Therapy (HEART) to provide therapeutic programs to individuals and organizations throughout Hawaii and the United States. Many of its horsemanship services, including horse therapy, focuses on providing programs with horses that promote personal growth, learning and healing. HUGS families were able to take advantage of the HEART program during the family dinner. It was the first time some of the kids had ever seen, let alone, ridden a horse.

HUGS family events aim to be welcoming, supportive, uplifting, and most of all fun for the whole family. ❤️

# Sunset



# L Ranch



# VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Left to right: Ken, Makana, and Denise

**H**UGS has selected Ken Stridiron as its 2015 Volunteer of the Year and was recognized at the HUGS Love Gala on May 2, 2015. Stridiron, a recent UH Manoa graduate and HUGS Laughter Wagon volunteer since 2013, makes time in his busy schedule to go into Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children to sit at the bedside of critically-ill children. Every Tuesday morning, Stridiron dons a bright pink shirt bearing the HUGS logo. Behind him, as he walks the halls of Kapiolani Medical Center, he pulls a pink wagon full of toys and games.

“Initially, I worried that I’d have a difficult time being with families in



these unfortunate situations, not because I felt bad for them, but because I was unsure how they would respond to me,” Stridiron said.

Raised in a military family, Stridiron is no stranger to adapting to different personalities, values and family dynamics. He has been fortunate enough to travel around the world exposing him to different cultures and

experiences. This upbringing has allowed him to be sensitive to the unique situation and challenges being faced by the family waiting for him on the other side of the door. Stridiron believes the ability to adapt and respond to people is an important skill to have, especially in the hospitals where many are in such a vulnerable state.

“In Hawaii, it is common to hear kids call their elders ‘uncle’ and ‘auntie’ despite not being related. It’s used as a term of endearment, respect and sense of ‘ohana spirit. It didn’t take long before I went from “Mr. Ken” to “Uncle Ken”. I wear that name proudly knowing that my visits bring comfort and joy,” he said. 🧡

# Mahalo



A huge Mahalo to CPB HR Department for organizing a toy donation towards our Laughter Wagon!



Each year, Aunty Linda and Uncle Vic from Foresters Financial Services write a grant for HUGS which allows them to purchase \$2000 worth of food for our Kokua Kupboard! Thank you for filling our cupboards for our HUGS families!

**HAVE A HEART FOR HUGS**  
June 1 - July 31, 2015

**HUGS**  
HELP, UNDERSTANDING & GROUP SUPPORT  
Embracing Hawaii's seriously ill children and their families.

MANY WAYS TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR HUGS

**\$1** Thank You for your support!  
I have a heart for HUGS!

**BUY A HUGS HEART**

**BUY A KOKUA PAC**  
25¢ from every Kokua Pac sold will be donated to HUGS.

**Zippy's RESTAURANTS**

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

**\$808** Fast Food

Restaurant Price: \$3.99. Prices may vary at locations. Offer valid June 1 - July 31, 2015. Offer not valid with any other promotional offers or discounts. See us in-store. Other restrictions may apply.

If you're looking for a delicious meal and want to support Hawaii's seriously ill children and their families at the same time, head over to Zippy's this summer! From June 1, 2015 -July 31, 2015, Zippy's is conducting its Have a Heart for HUGS Campaign to benefit HUGS. Purchase a heart for \$1.00 and show your support or buy a Kokua Pac (Star Edition) and HUGS will receive 25 cents. HUGS is honored to partner with Zippy's, a local, family owned and family friendly restaurant! ♡



HUGS wants to go green. If you are interested in receiving the quarterly Heart to Heart Newsletter via email please let us know by emailing us at [info@hugslove.org](mailto:info@hugslove.org). ♡



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**“We are so  
greatful for HUGS,  
everyone is  
so happy and  
loving.”**

— HUGS Mom