



## FROM STRUGGLE TO STABILITY

Despite their best efforts, Will and Lori struggled to make ends meet for their family of six, often falling behind on rent and utilities. Will's eyesight was in decline due to a degenerative health issue. He was the primary income earner, but eventually was unable to continue working as a maintenance worker to support the family.

A concerned friend told them about Catholic Charities Hawaii's (CCH) Akahai E Komo Mai Program (Akahai), based in Waianae on Oahu. It offers financial wellness education and assistive services designed to help struggling families achieve stability and develop skills to build a pathway out of poverty.

Will and Lori met with Kimie, a CCH case manager, who helped them identify resources and referrals for rental and utility assistance programs to help the family get back on their feet. Additionally, she located some donations to provide them with some furniture and household items that they needed for their home.

Lori, who had never worked before, was determined to contribute to the family's income. With the help of Kimie, she landed a job at a local market and has been working diligently for over a year. She enjoys her job and has developed great relationships with her co-workers. "They are like family," she shared. Her paychecks, combined with TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) benefits, and a financial plan they developed with their CCH case manager, allowed the family to catch up on rent and finally stabilize their finances.

After an eight-month process, Will was finally able to receive social security income, helping to provide more stability for the family. Since January of 2024, they have paid rent on time every month, maintained payment plans for their utilities, and even enrolled their older sons in sports and extracurricular activities.



The family is thrilled to have overcome their struggles and is now living without the stress of not knowing where their next rent or utility payment will come from. They're grateful for the help they received and look forward to a brighter future.

This success story is a testament to the power of community support and the impact it can have on families in need. We're proud to have played a part in helping Lori and Will achieve stability and security.

Catholic Charities Hawaii's Akahai E Komo Mai Program is an Aloha United Way (AUW) and Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) partner of Hawaii's ALICE Initiative Cohort that supports the upward mobility of ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households by focusing on improving systemic economic inequities in Hawai'i.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



**ROB VAN TASSELL**  
President & CEO



**TINA ANDRADE**  
Chief Operating Officer

Dear Friends,

As we reflect the past year, we are filled with immense gratitude for the unwavering support from friends like you. Your generosity has empowered us to continue our mission of service to those in need throughout our beautiful islands.

Your support has made a significant impact on our community and together, last year we:

- provided safe and stable housing to over 13,000 families and individuals,
- kept over 5,000 of our beloved kūpuna active and connected,
- offered vital counseling and support services to nearly 5,000 individuals and families navigating difficult times,
- connected over 87,000 individuals with essential resources and
- assisted over 11,000 individuals and families on our neighboring islands with a variety of services, including disaster relief.

We continue to lift up our Maui community on their journey of healing and recovery. We are honored to be able to expand our services to the Maui community through partnerships with organizations like the Hawai'i Community Foundation and the American Red Cross.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities to expand our services and reach even more individuals and families in need. We are deeply grateful that you continue to place your trust in us as we explore new ways to serve our community.

We hope that you take the time to read the stories shared in this newsletter - from the Akahai program to our neighbor island efforts, to devoted supporters like Gerry Ching - these are just a few examples of the people and programs that make Catholic Charities Hawaii's work impactful and meaningful.

We extend a heartfelt "Mahalo" (thank you) to each and every one of you. Your compassion and generosity have made a profound difference in the lives of so many. Thank you for working with us as we strive to bring hope, transform lives, and build a more loving community.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob'.

Rob Van Tassell  
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tina'.

Tina Andrade  
Chief Operating Officer

# VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

## GERRY W. CHING

By Donna L. Ching



A self-described “PROTESTant” member of Central Union Congregational Church, Gerry W. Ching is not Catholic. But she knew about the good things Catholic Charities did for ALL in need and thought she should convince her non-Catholic friends to support our organization.

“I wanted it to be a mix of people to help dispel the misconception that Catholic Charities was a program BY Catholics FOR Catholics. I started by asking my personal friends to donate,” explains Gerry.

Together with co-founders Bob Tsushima and Tom Huber the “Friends of Catholic Charities” was formed to raise funds for important program needs that earmarked sources would not cover. The Friends have since paid for everything from vans for transporting clients to furnishings and security upgrades for residential program homes. Over more than 30 years, Gerry’s persistence, charm and arm twisting have helped raised over \$1 million in small donations over time for these initiatives. On November 16, 2016 the trio were honored on National Philanthropy Day as Hawaii’s Volunteer Fundraisers of the Year.

Gerry Wong’s childhood was spent on Maui where she attended Sunday school at Wailuku Union Church and elementary school at Kaunoa Standard English and hung out at the Wailuku bridge with her rabble of friends. In 6th grade, she came to Oahu to attend Jefferson Elementary and then Punahou School. In California, Gerry earned a bachelors degree from Mills College, where she was

elected the first non-white student body president with the successful campaign slogan, “Vote Right! Vote Wong!” After earning a masters degree at Stanford University she returned to Hawaii with husband Philip Ching.

Gerry’s life of leadership with local community organizations include 40 years on the distribution committee of the McInerny Foundation. She was the first Chinese woman admitted to the Junior League of Hawaii in 1968 and was the 2017 winner of JLH’s Laura Dowsett lifetime achievement award. Gerry founded WIRCA, the Waiialae Iki Ridge Community Association, organized and trained zone captains, raised funds to create a private security detail for over 600 homes and marshalled a landmark legal defense of design covenants. Gerry was the first non-Catholic to be given the Catholic Charities ‘Ulu Award.

Asked why a Congregationalist would be such a devoted volunteer for Catholic Charities Hawai’i, Gerry considered a moment and observed, “Catholics are very good people. They’re not class-oriented and going to church is not a social thing. Their relationships are with God, church and acts of service. That’s what I admire.”

In return, her Catholic husband and four daughters admire their mom for her spirit of service. Mahalo Gerry!

## WAYS TO GIVE

Our mission is to provide a wide range of social services to all people especially those in greatest need, regardless of their faith and culture. Our vision is to be your trusted partner in advocacy.

With your support we can make a difference! Here are ways you can make your gift:



Make a gift online:  
[www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org/donate](http://www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org/donate)



To make a gift by phone:  
**(808) 527-4820**



Make checks payable to Catholic Charities Hawai’i and mail to:  
**1822 Ke’eumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822**



For more information and options, scan the QR code with your mobile device.

## CHARITY WALK FUNDS HELP FAMILIES IN CRISIS

By Ku'uipo Keopuhiwa

Each year, we come together as one 'ohana with our staff, Leadership Council, and parishes to actively recruit walkers, runners, and sponsors to fundraise and participate in the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association's Annual Charity Walk event. It is through our collective efforts and collaboration that we are able to serve our communities in need. Funds raised through the Charity Walk event goes right back into our Charity Walk program.



Thanks to the funds raised we have been able to help people like Viviana and her family of eight who found themselves in a desperate situation after receiving a notice to vacate due to their current rental being placed for sale unexpectedly.

Viviana with her children ages 12, 11, 9, 7, 6, and 5 was referred to Catholic Charities Hawai'i by a community partner agency. The family had nowhere to go and was unable to locate another rental or get into an emergency shelter. While couch surfing and staying in their vehicle at a safe parking zone, the family reached out to CCH while actively searching for another rental that would accommodate their size.

Proceeds from the Charity Walk program allowed the family to get back into housing by covering their security deposit while they utilized their Section 8 subsidy towards their rent. Viviana expressed immense gratitude for the services and support she received to get back into housing. "It's a very good feeling. I was overwhelmed after being in a car with my children. The kids were jumping up and down. I feel so happy and blessed to be back in a house. The service was beyond my expectations. Thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts," said the mother of six.

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## HEALING WITH THE MAUI COMMUNITY

As the anniversary of the Maui Wildfires approaches, our team reflects on the profound impact of the disaster on the Maui community one year later. The devastation of Lahaina and upcountry Maui was unimaginable – lives and homes were lost and many were left with just the clothes on their backs.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, Catholic Charities Hawai'i was on the ground assisting with basic needs and temporary housing for those affected. The CCH team worked closely with our local VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) partners, national Catholic Charities USA organization, FEMA, Maui County and other community partners to identify gaps in services and coordinate critical support services needed. Our team also included our Counseling Center staff of trained therapists who connected with survivors and assisted them with mental health support.

During the first six months following the disaster, we processed over 1,600 applications for help and provided vital aid to over 2,300 individuals. This provided a lifeline for survivors who had lost everything, connecting them with resources, financial assistance and compassionate services when they needed it most.

Today, we continue our work in the community with disaster case management services in partnership with Maui County. Our team develops personalized recovery plans with each individual or family in need. We connect them with resources, such as housing assistance, mental health services, and financial support, to help them rebuild their lives.

"We are incredibly grateful for our supporters and community partners during such an unprecedented time of need for the Maui community," shares CEO and President Rob Van Tassell. "The needs are immense - and we hope that folks will continue to stand with our community of hope as we will be here for as long as it takes."

A close-up photograph of several white and yellow plumeria flowers, which are the state flower of Hawaii. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing vibrant yellow centers and others being mostly white. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light brown color.

# PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS

## CCH Around the Community



1 Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) Pres & CEO Kerry Alys Robinson visited and met with members at CCH's Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center. 2 Grilling over 200 burgers, Honolulu Burger Company donated their time and resources to offer CCH staff a fun food break at CCH's Clarence T.C. Ching Campus. 3 The CCH Kauai 'ohana participated in the Hawaii Visitor's Industry Charity Walk held at the Vidinha Stadium. 4 Rev. Msgr. Terrence Watanabe blessed CCH's Maui Community Office and Kahului Lani Multi-Purpose Building. He is joined by CCH's Pres & CEO Rob Van Tassell and CCHDC Board Chair Mike Magaoay.

## HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS

At Catholic Charities Hawai'i we're dedicated to our mission of service and advocacy. Together with our ohana – including staff, volunteers, supporters and partnering agencies, we are working together to build a stronger and resilient community.

### CELEBRATING MILESTONES

**77 years**  
of services and  
advocacy in the  
community



### 2023 IMPACT

**113,00+**  
lives  
impacted by  
our programs  
and services in  
2023



### OUR TEAM

**300+** staff  
team members  
statewide



### TEAMWORK ACROSS HAWAII

**800+** volunteers  
who help  
carry our  
mission  
and work



### DIVERSE SERVICES

**50+** programs  
serving and  
empowering the  
community





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



### OUR MISSION:

We are a community of hope that promotes the dignity of each person by helping others empower themselves. We provide a wide range of social services with compassion and a commitment to excellence. Through our programs and our advocacy for social justice, we lovingly serve all people, especially those with the greatest need.