

# Boys and Girls Clubs of Maui are so much more than you think

By JOSEPH W. BEAN

When Keone Ball became president of the Realtors Association of Maui (RAM), in 2005, he wanted to do something to encourage Realtors® to get involved with charities and service organizations.

“You have to do what you can because it isn’t some remote power that improves Maui. It’s the community that makes the community better,” said Ball.

“Volunteering is a way of taking care of the community you live in.” He knew what he was talking about. Ball was already a veteran volunteer all over Maui in all kinds of boards, commissions and charities.

So, as he took the reigns at RAM, he asked that the organization begin publishing a weekly column celebrating volunteers who are Realtors® or affiliates of RAM. He called the column “Kahiau,” translated as meaning “to give generously or lavishly with the heart and not with expectation of return.” The column you are reading now is No. 274 in that series. What Ball has been doing through all those weeks is obvious: more volunteering, fundraising and community service.

One of Ball’s major com-



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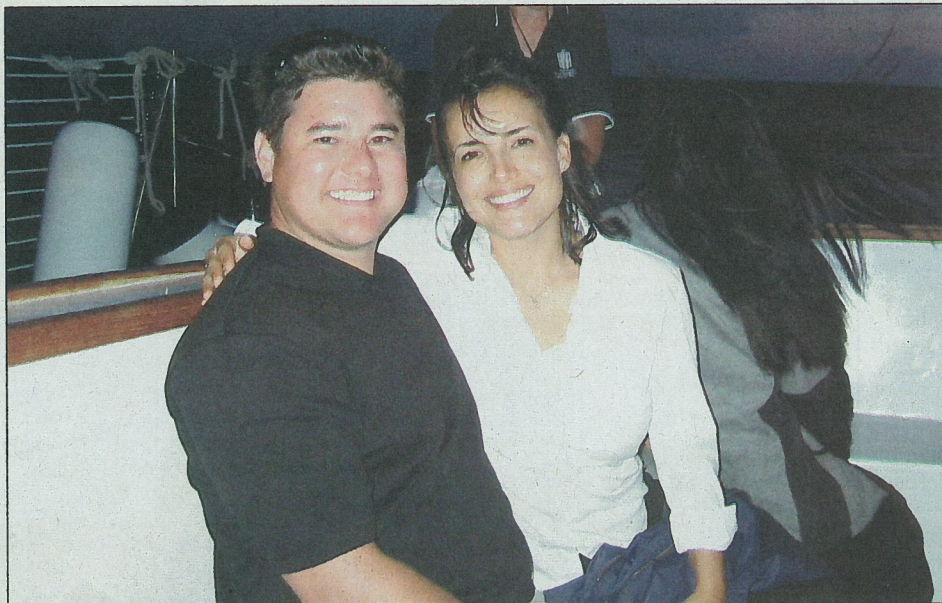


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mitments is Boys & Girls Clubs of Maui. He’s helping — serving as chief volunteer officer. If you’re thinking, “Big deal! A place to go after school, beaches work fine for that,” you’re in for a surprise or two. BGC Maui’s mission statement is “to inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens.”

That sets out some big shoes to be filled, but how?

Well, first you have to give kids a reason to become members at one of the six clubhouses around the island. Fun activities in after-school hours serve that purpose, but there is so much more involved. When young people, aged 9 to 17,



Keone Ball, seen here with his wife Marianna during an RAM sunset cruise in 2005 when he was just starting the Kahiau column program, continues to believe that giving back to the community is an important part of the role of the Realtor®.

come to a BGC location they find friends and activities in a situation that is supervised by caring professionals. They find themselves in what BGC calls “a safe, supportive, non-judgmental, nurturing environment.” They don’t just find friends among age-mates. The adults at the clubhouses are engaged with the kids, providing the positive role models so many Maui youngsters don’t

have, or have too little time with, in homes where both parents work, or where they have only one parent struggling with both providing a good home and being a good parent.

Schools and teachers do what they can, but the pressures on them are such that they cannot take up all the slack for busy parents and often-absent extended families in terms of social skills. When it

comes to providing youngsters with opportunities to develop skills that are not required to pass standardized tests, schools find fewer and fewer options. Boys & Girls Clubs of Maui keep expanding those options, instead, looking for ways to give members time to learn and do what, from the perspective of test-writers, is perhaps not essential.

Sometimes, the thing most

needed in a child’s life is physical activity. There’s not as much of that at school as there once was, nor at home. Kids who go out looking for a “pick-up game” of basketball are as likely to end up in bad company as good, unless their search brings them to a place like Boys & Girls Club.

Kids who find their way to BGC don’t just find fun activities to distract them until Mom or Dad is home, they find an opportunity to figure out who they are and what they want to do, and they discover that there are more options than might be suggested to them elsewhere.

All in all, the aims and achievements of BGC of Maui are obviously laudable, but they can only be achieved, as Ball told us five years ago, with the help of the community. “Volunteering is a way of taking care of the community you live in.” At [www.bgcmaui.org](http://www.bgcmaui.org), you will find opportunities to volunteer, to donate money, to make in-kind donations, to sponsor programs you can feel good about and many other ways to support Boys & Girls Club of Maui.

The Clubs ask, “It just takes one, one gift, one person... are you the one?” Ball echoes that question, not just to Realtors® but to everyone.