

# SHARING *Hope* THROUGH HARDSHIP

From Hawaii to Manila, the gift of a wheelchair opened the way for the Gospel and made multiple dreams come true! Find out how Nicole and her family received the Perfect Gift through your love!



*The Perfect Gift*

# from the heart

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

JEREMIAH 29:11

I will never forget when the seed idea for Joni and Friends was planted in my heart. It was a few years after my accident, and I was living on our family farm in Maryland. Our farmhouse had become a beehive of activity with friends—people like *you*—who studied the Bible with me late into the night. Thanks to these dear Christians, I began taking a real interest in God’s plan to give me hope and a future.

Obviously, his plan didn’t include healing me of paralysis. But if not that, then what? Well, how about a Spirit-energized plan that would transform a very hard thing into something beautiful—something life-changing and glorifying to God. And why not give that same Good News to *other* people with disabilities, too?

That’s when God’s glorious plan for my life began to take shape. My wheelchair would be the vehicle that would carry the hope of Jesus to families like mine.

It’s been costly and difficult to sit in this wheelchair for 56 years, but it’s also been a blessing... for me and for others. God took something that harmed my body (namely, my accident) and used it to not only give me Christ-centered hope and a future in

eternity with Jesus—he also used it to give birth to Joni and Friends! And if sitting in this wheelchair all this time gives God more glory—if it advances the Gospel more quickly—then I am all for it!

This wheelchair has taken me to truly amazing places over the decades, but the most wonderful destination has been at the foot of the cross. It’s why we “do” Joni and Friends—so that disabled people and their families can draw nearer to the One who has hope-filled plans for them.

Because of you, countless people struggling under the strain of disability have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Be it through *Retreats & Getaways*, *Joni’s House*, or *Wheels for the World*, your prayers and generosity make it possible for thousands of disabled people around the world to embrace Jesus Christ.

It’s been an astounding year. And we couldn’t have done it without you! *God bless you* for being a *big* part of God’s plan at Joni and Friends!



Turn the page to find out how this wheelchair carried the hope of Jesus all the way around the world!

# Dreams REALLY DO COME TRUE

THROUGH YOUR  
LOVE & PRAYERS

On the day Kekoa was born, doctors told his mother, Joy, that little Kekoa would never survive through the night. But Kekoa, whose name means “Courageous Warrior” in Hawaiian, not only fought through that first night; he lived an incredible life. Severely disabled and medically fragile due to his cerebral palsy, Kekoa said goodbye to his hardships when he changed addresses from Hawaii to Heaven and went to live forever with Jesus. Hundreds of caring family and friends joined Kekoa’s celebration of life service, which was held on his 26th birthday.

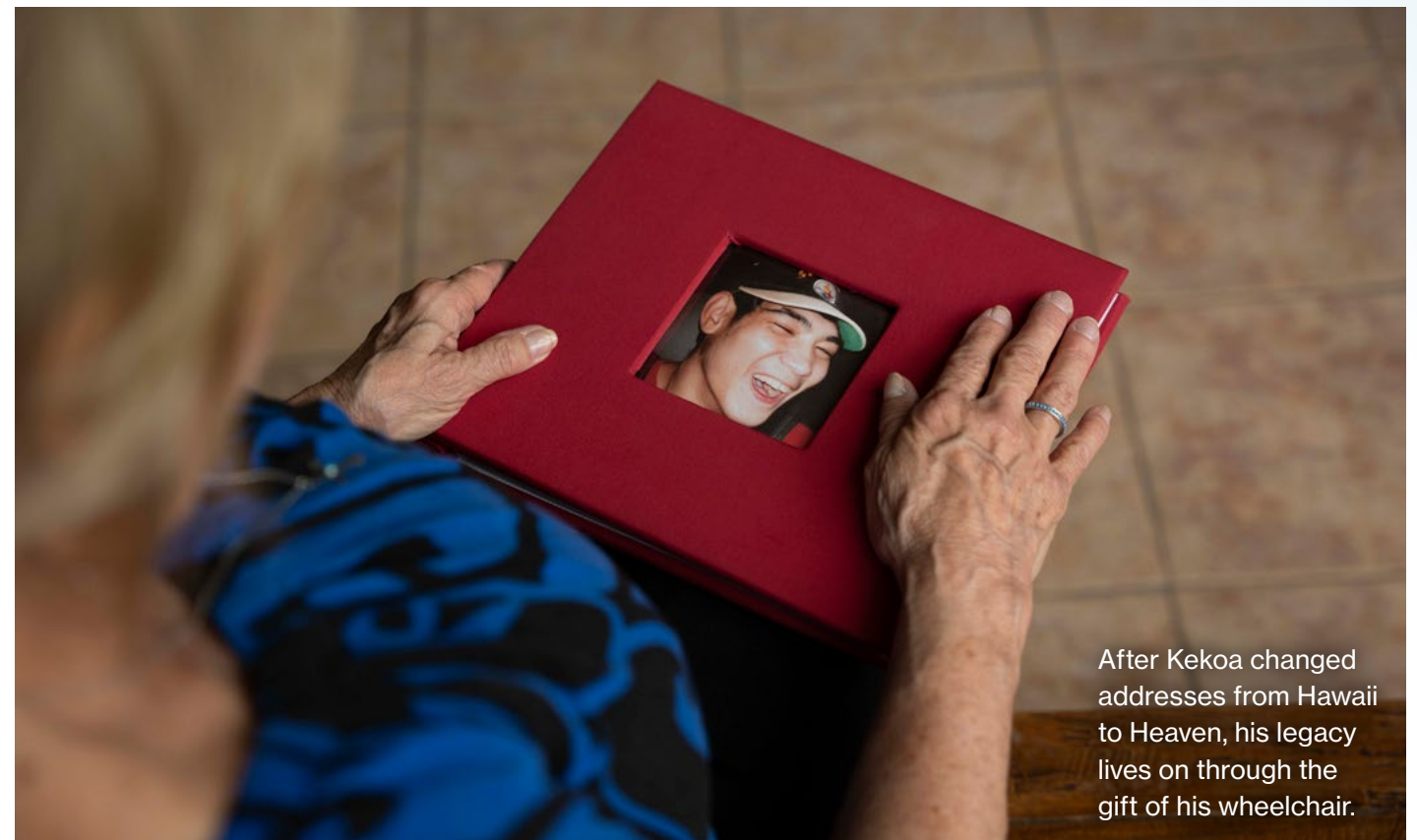
Kekoa was never able to speak, but he communicated unending love through his big smile and loud giggles. He was never able to walk, but Kekoa’s mission was to teach others how to walk with the Lord, which he did daily through his life message: “Come as you are. We were all created with value. Jesus loves you, and his plan is worth following.”

Through the selfless and back-breaking work that was involved in caring for Kekoa—the lifting, turning, and changing of over 70,000 diapers over the course of Kekoa’s 26 years—Joy discovered that there is more to this life than suffering. Kekoa taught her to “focus on the good and true instead of on exhaustion and pain.” And Kekoa’s short life gave birth to Joy’s beautiful dream... to give Kekoa’s wheelchair to another disabled person in need, and carry his legacy of love into the future.

That’s why Joy donated Kekoa’s wheelchair to Joni and Friends. “If one person can come to know Christ because of Kekoa’s life in his wheelchair, then Kekoa’s life will continue to have an eternal impact for glory,” explained Joy as she tenderly caressed her son’s empty chair.



Kekoa’s life shined a bright spotlight on Jesus.



After Kekoa changed addresses from Hawaii to Heaven, his legacy lives on through the gift of his wheelchair.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right,  
whatever is pure...think about such things.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

“A wheelchair changes an entire family’s life,” said Joy. It shows the needy and disabled that “love is real, love is tangible, and love can roll.” And through the gift of a wheelchair, dreams really do come true.

Kekoa’s chair didn’t stay empty for long! Because it was restored to like-new condition by inmates at one of our partner prison restoration centers. Through this program, Joni and Friends gives inmates the chance to give back to society by helping others. And through their service, the hearts of prisoners are restored by the love of Christ.

“My dad is a prison chaplain,” explains Joy. “I thought of prison inmates finding purpose and meaning while refurbishing Kekoa’s chair—knowing that their lives could now be different because they had a hand in changing someone else’s life through a wheelchair. The prisoners’ lives are being restored by Jesus while they restore wheelchairs!”

Joy’s prayer was that “a new child will come to know how much God loves them” through Kekoa’s wheelchair. And her wildest dream was that she might actually get to be part of the *Wheels for the World* team delivering the Gospel along with Kekoa’s wheelchair.

When Joy joined our *Wheels for the World* team and traveled to the Philippines to distribute wheelchairs and share the Gospel, her wildest dream came true! She met the beautiful young lady who would be blessed by Kekoa’s wheelchair!



“Giving a gift can open doors” (Proverbs 18:16). And through the gift of a wheelchair, Nicole received the gift of a new outlook on life! A wheelchair opens the door to the Perfect Gift—a real relationship with Jesus.

Joy isn't the only mother who brought her dreams to Jesus. Nicole's mother, Chonda, was dreaming her own dreams in her tiny home in the Philippines.

"I used to take Nicole out when I could still carry her," says Chonda. "Even though Nicole has a disability, she has a right to live in this world."

At 25 years old, Nicole never had a wheelchair, and it had been many years since Chonda was able to take her outside. The last time Nicole saw a doctor was when she was thirteen. Her last therapy session was when she was five. "Nicole just lays down at home all day. She never goes out of the house. It hurts me to see her like this," said Chonda with tears rolling down her cheeks. Chonda's dream was to provide a wheelchair for her daughter, but she knew there would never be enough money for that.

Then, the day Chonda brought Nicole to our *Wheels for the World* outreach in the Philippines, multiple dreams came true.

"When I saw Kekoa's refurbished chair for the first time, it was overwhelming. The legacy of Kekoa's life will continue to roll!" says Joy. She cried when she met Nicole. "Nicole and Kekoa have the same disability! And they're the same size!"

Cerebral palsy is the most common motor disability among children. 10,000 babies are born with cerebral palsy each year in the United States alone. Approximately 18 million people have cerebral palsy worldwide.

Chonda took one look at Nicole in her new wheelchair and declared, "It's as if it was made for her! Nicole was chosen for this chair!"

Nicole, Chonda, and Joy celebrated Nicole's very first wheelchair side by side. "I know Kekoa is cheering us on today, too!" says Joy. "Kekoa's life was hard and painful, but God gave him joy. And I see that same joy in Nicole!"



Your love and prayers opened the door for Nicole's life to be transformed forever! And during that same *Wheels for the World* outreach, 138 people received wheelchairs, 301 people heard the Gospel, and 215 souls accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior!



"We live in a not-so-fancy place," says Chonda. Six family members live in this dark room—the tiny space that Nicole has been limited to for over twelve years. Her new wheelchair allows her to experience life outside this room again!

“Nicole is very excited about this!” says Chonda. “And we are both grateful!”

And when we asked Nicole how she felt about her first-ever wheelchair, her smile lit up the room. “I’m so happy!” says Nicole. “I’m very happy that I can get out of the house.”

Nicole had a big dream, too. It was a dream she thought might never come true. But once our *Wheels for the World* team custom fit Nicole into her new wheelchair, hope welled up inside her as she dared to dream again. And Nicole’s big dream?... Very simply, Nicole wanted to go to the mall.



Something many of us take for granted—a simple trip to the local mall—had been impossible for Nicole until she received her new wheelchair!

Our Joni and Friends team was more than happy to help make Nicole’s dream a reality. We picked her and Chonda up in an accessible van and headed off to the mall where Nicole could eat ice cream, be part of her community, and feel like any other young lady her age.

“I love you all!” says Nicole. “I hope you can help many more people like me!”

As Chonda looked over at Joy, they connected mother-to-mother and Chonda knew in her heart, “Joy can see Kekoa today in Nicole.”

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

1 PETER 2:9



The Hawaiian lei is a symbol of love, friendship, celebration, and honor. In ancient Hawaii, wearing a lei represented royalty. Joy brought a very special lei to give Nicole on the same day she received Kekoa’s wheelchair. It’s a fitting symbol given that Nicole is the daughter of the King of all kings!



So many prayers answered—so many dreams come true—and none of this would be possible without the love of Jesus and your strong partnership in ministry. *Thank you for loving people with disabilities... not just with your words, but with your faithfulness put into action! The gift of your love is opening doors and opening hearts to the Perfect Gift—the Good News of Jesus Christ!*

The real beauty of this story doesn't center around the fact that Nicole finally got to visit the mall, or get out of her tiny house, or even get her very first wheelchair. The best part of this story is that Joy got to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with Nicole and Chonda. The gift of a wheelchair opened their hearts to God's wonderful plans for their future—because the Perfect Gift is more than a wheelchair. The Perfect Gift is a relationship with Jesus!

Sending Kekoa's wheelchair across the world and wrapping it in the Gospel... that's why we do everything we do at Joni and Friends—so that lost and lonely families struggling under the strain of disability can find practical help and the eternal hope of Christ! Proverbs 18:16 tells us that "giving a gift can open doors." And through the gift of a wheelchair—through your love, prayers, and generosity—Nicole's heart opened wide to all Jesus has in store for her!

"This has been one of the biggest blessings of my life," says Joy smiling ear to ear. "Our God is a good Father who prompts us to get out there and love people—to not just talk about it, but to really show them love."

THERE'S NO  
BETTER GIFT  
ON EARTH  
THAN THE  
NEVER-ENDING  
LOVE OF JESUS!

"God is love."  
1 JOHN 4:8

# O Holy Night Christmas Cards



Joni's Christmas cards are available only through Joni and Friends. Quantities are limited, so please order right away.

Joni loves sending Christmas cards and singing Christmas hymns! This year her new Christmas card brings the two together. Featuring Joni's rendering of Mary cradling Jesus, set against a background of "O Holy Night" sheet music, this elegant card will bring the joy of the season to your friends and family members.

### Product Details:

- High quality paper stock
- 5" x 7"
- Each box contains 15 cards and 16 envelopes

**\$14**

100% of proceeds go directly to advance ministry to children and families living with disability.

**TO ORDER:** • Mail order form • Call toll-free: 800.736.4177

• Online: [joniandfriends.org/store](http://joniandfriends.org/store) • Phone: Text **ORDER** to 818.707.5664

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We gratefully acknowledge contributions given in memory or in honor of loved ones to further ministry in the disability community. To give a gift in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special occasion, visit [joniandfriends.org/donate](http://joniandfriends.org/donate) or contact Joni and Friends at 818.707.5664

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# It's Here!

## JONI'S 2024 PLANNER

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- Gold spiral binding
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*100% of proceeds go directly to advance ministry to children and families living with disability.*

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