



Todd Mazza helps assemble the 'rock-climbing' wall during Windward YMCA's marathon playground-building extravaganza May 25. Even Mickey and Minnie stopped by to watch the action. Photo by Rachel Breit, rbreit@midweek.com.

200+ Hands In Y's Instant Playground

By CAROL CHANG

Organized chaos, they recalled. "We lived through it," said Bill Stone, Windward YMCA executive director. That's what happens when KaBOOM! comes to town.

In just over four hours on May 25, the Kailua facility got a playground of colorful, sturdy climbing stuff, set permanently onto a grass expanse with help from 122 local and military volunteers, 87 YMCA staff and ohana, 28 Aulani Disney workers, and two rather large, friendly mice.

Financed by Aulani Disney Resort and Spa with 2,500 square feet of equipment and 20 tons of safety surfacing from the national nonprofit KaBOOM!, the workday was indeed one of organized chaos. Tiny parts were lined up, lumber stacked; a flurry of shovels, paintbrushes, water bottles. Like ants folks came together to give the Y kids a special play area that will last a very long time.

"Every child deserves to have a great place to play, and we're thrilled to continue our work with Disney in striving toward that goal," said KaBOOM! founder and CEO Darell Hammond. "Thanks to the efforts from Aulani, KaBOOM! and YMCA of Honolulu, we moved

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KaBOOM! Adds More Happy Kids To Its List

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one step closer to our vision of a great place to play within walking distance of every child in America."

According to Stone, who plans to retire in September after 15 years at the Windward branch, it was the designs and drawings of the Y children themselves that inspired the final product (including a large wall mural). After learning its application was accepted, the Y put its youngest members in charge of ideas three months ago. They created a dream list of what a playground should be, such as one boy's computer-generated drawings of a

space ship, zipline and climbing wall.

"Then we went through their 'want' list searching for the reality of what we could build," Stone said, noting that he stayed out of the color scheme debate. "But it looks great, and today the kids love it and are bouncing in it as we speak."

KaBOOM! playgrounds are at Camp Erdman and the Leeward YMCA in Waipahu, as well as Waimanalo's Weinberg Village. Now Kailua has one, too — right next to its heated saltwater swimming pool. Just in time for 130 Summer Fun children to test out.



Jen Leshnowar, a KaBOOM! project manager, tightens some screws at the structure nears completion.



Joe Peach Graves (in KaBOOM! purple wig) with cement ready to fill the hole for the rocket ship. Photos by Rachel Breit, rbreit@midweek.com.