

Baker & Daniels, LLP: A Member of O'Hana Foundation's Family

The word "Ohana" is Hawaiian for "family", and as *Lilo* in the Disney animated picture "*Lilo & Stitch*" says, "Family means no one gets left behind". The O'Hana Heritage Foundation's family is large and getting bigger all the time. On October 5, 2006 the law firm, **Baker & Daniels, LLP.**, hosted a fundraising event at the Summit Club in downtown South Bend to help make the dream of **O'Hana, a respite home for medically fragile children**, a reality.

Dr. Mark and Carla Meekhof attended the event and spoke from the parents' perspective of having a child with fragile needs and how it affects the entire family. Kelsey Meekhof was born with cerebral palsy, a disorder of the central nervous system, which weakened her muscles and kept her confined to a wheelchair. In August 2004, the 15-year-old Granger girl died unexpectedly of complications from the condition. The Meekhofs also have three other daughters. The couple talked about what a blessing O'Hana House will be for families like their own. A place like O'Hana would have provided a safe place for Kelsey to be cared for if the couple or the rest of the family wanted to do an activity or even take a short trip.

Also at the event was **Charles "Lefty" Smith**, Notre Dame's first varsity hockey coach. Smith is also known locally for helping to bring the International Special Olympics Summer Games to South Bend in 1987. Smith and **ND Hockey Alumni** raised more than \$30,000 for the construction of a room at O'Hana House in memory of Timmy Tomassoni. The medically fragile boy was the son of former Notre Dame Hockey player Dick Tomassoni, who played for Smith.

Smith also spoke about the in-kind contributions from several members of the community such as **Ben and Roberta Ziolkowski**, **Lou Pierce of the Big Idea Co. Inc. (producer of a video about the home)**, **Steve Cooreman of Cooreman Real Estate (the developer of the subdivision where the home will be built)**, **Tony Leininger of Carmi Design Group (the home's architect)**, and countless others who have generously made donations to see O'Hana House built.

The audience at the Baker & Daniels event watched the touching video Pierce produced called "*Somewhere to go*" about families who truly need O'Hana House. Many audience members commented on how powerful it was and how they were struck by some of the comments it contained such as, "genetic illness does not discriminate" and "wouldn't it be nice to have cared before it became personal?" and "this is something money couldn't fix" (a parent speaking of their fragile child).

Kathryn Schalliol, an O'Hana House benefactor, was moved to tears when she saw, for the first time, the home's floor plans which include a room that will be named for the grandmother who raised her. Her grandmother helped many children during her lifetime, and Schalliol had always wanted to do something in her honor.

Work will start soon on a five-acre lot in the Boulder Bay residential subdivision on Quince Road, west of South Bend Regional Airport. The campaign to raise \$1.2 million for construction and development of the site continues. O'Hana Heritage Foundation has already secured more than \$350,000 in donations and pledges. The \$50,000 lot has already paid for. If you are interested in contributing, please **contact Tial Bishop at (574) 315-6283 or send directly to P.O. Box 186, South Bend, IN 46624.**