



Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Kukui Center

A gathering place for those who serve vulnerable children and families

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Making a Difference and Changing Lives

By Judy Lind

The Kukui Center is a unique and special place. You feel that as soon as you walk in the front door. The center exists to serve vulnerable children and families. A continuum of services, collaboration among programs and co-location insures that help will be received. For example, a teen aging out of foster care can get help with housing, vocational and educational programs, mental health services, legal advice, and learn how to resolve conflicts, all within the center.

Since moving to the Kukui Center, our programs have greatly expanded the numbers served and the programs they offer, despite having to do more with less in these very challenging times.



Judy Lind, Kukui Children's Foundation; Patria Weston-Lee, Consuelo Foundation; Tracey Wiltgen, Mediation Center of the Pacific; Jaque Kelley-Uyeoka, Hale Kipa; Mary Saunders, Family Promise of Hawaii; Cynthia White, Kids hurt too/Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition; Kata Issari, Joyful Heart Foundation; Calleen Ching, Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center at LASH; Michael Moore, Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii/Maximum Legal Services Corporation

- Family Promise of Hawaii utilized their large space to serve an additional 279 clients through development of a day program for their waitlist families
- The Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii utilized Kukui Center conference space (not available in their former site) to provide onsite training to at least 250 parents with special needs children to prepare them for meetings with the schools.
- Kids hurt too has greatly increased children served, growing from 105 in 2008 before they moved into Kukui to 250 in 2011 (projected) and developing many new services such as weekly mentoring activities, a doubling of peer support groups, new suicide and crisis intervention programs, increasing volunteer group facilitators from 15 to 35 and improved quality of training
- The Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center at Legal Aid utilizes their attractive, clean and well maintained space to build collaborations throughout the state; the conference room has increased their ability to hold meetings and trainings related to language access and domestic violence in immigrant communities for the 25% of Hawaii residents over 5 years of age for whom English is not the primary language spoken at home
- The Mediation Center of the Pacific has increased the number of clients served by 10%, has more walk in clients because of the location, increased the number of mediators and trainings and collaborated with and made referrals to other tenants
- Joyful Heart Foundation moved their offices from Kona to Honolulu to establish a Hawaii Regional office for services to victims of child abuse, domestic violence and sex assault bringing those needed programs to Oahu.
- The Consuelo Foundation Family Center provides children in foster care a child friendly space for supervised visits with their families, significantly improving the outcomes of the visits. A wide variety of agencies and committees utilize this free and comfortable setting to discuss issues and provide training to strengthen families who are working with abused children.

This is just a short summary of the many activities that are happening inside the center. Each of our partner agencies provides vital and high quality services. We know you will be touched by the testimonies of some of their clients that you will read in these pages. For more information or a tour, please visit our website at www.kukuicenter.org.

Family center reduces stress of supervised visits

By Amanda Major and Patria Weston-Lee

Many families have visited the Consuelo Family Center. For some families it is a one-time visit, for others the visits are part of a weekly routine. This is the case for the "Taylor" family. They have been coming to the space for several months now as part of their Child Protective Services plan with Family Court.

Being involved with CPS is highly stressful for both parents and children. They are dealing with separation and must meet at a designated location for supervised visits. The Taylors have repeatedly shared how much they enjoy visiting at the Consuelo Family Center.

Ms. Taylor said that she appreciates coming to such a welcoming and relaxing space to connect with her children. Sometimes they will pull out the mats and tumble on the floor. Other times they will sit at a table to have a snack or work on homework. They often spend time on the playground right outside.



On occasion the kids will choose a book from the "free exchange" shelf. Perhaps our favorite moments to witness are when a child becomes fussy and a parent snuggles together in the rocking glider chair. We have seen some special moments of parent child quiet nurturance. We are happy to provide a space to facilitate these interactions.

Joyful Heart makes healing their priority

By Kata Issari



Joyful Heart Executive Director Maile Zambuto and Mariska Hargitay

When Mariska Hargitay started playing Detective Olivia Benson on *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* over a decade ago, her preparation for the role opened her eyes to the epidemics of child abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence. She learned staggering facts such as nearly four children die every day as a result of child abuse; or 10 million children a year are exposed to domestic violence.

But what really opened her eyes—and her heart—was the fan mail she received. The letters didn't just say, "I love

your show." They said, "I was raped when I was eleven. I'm forty now, I've never told anyone." Victims were disclosing their stories to her, many for the first time.

Mariska founded Joyful Heart Foundation (JHF) in 2004 with the intention of helping survivors heal. Mariska's vision for how she could best serve survivors through Joyful Heart was born here in Hawai'i. Her intention was to create a space for survivors to heal in a holistic way - mind, body and spirit - while reclaiming their lives. Today, Joyful Heart's mission is "to heal, educate and empower survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse, and to shed light into the darkness that surrounds these issues."

JHF is situated in 3 cities: New York, Los Angeles and Honolulu. As of October 2011, JHF was honored to join the Kukui Center when we moved our office from Kona to O'ahu. Our presence in Hawai'i seeks to support existing programs throughout the state. We believe firmly in collaboration, which comes from an understanding that we are stronger together—something embodied by the partnerships at the Kukui Center. We are delighted to join the Kukui Center 'ohana and invite all of you to join the Joyful Heart community that says to survivors "We hear you. We believe you. We feel for you. You are not alone. And your healing is our priority."

Hale Kipa and Coalition help foster youth thrive

My name is Tiare Lokelani Taetuna. I am currently 21 years old and a single mother. When I was about 15 years old I was in a foster home and consistently ran away which led me to doing drugs, stealing from stores and doing what I said I'd never do. In between those moments of my life I would get arrested and get sent to Detention Home.



I got sent to Hale Kipa in Manoa and in my head it wasn't going to be for long cause I was a runner. That is where I met Pomai Villalon and the other youth counselors. They helped me to recognize my patterns in life. I just wanted attention and to feel loved. They kind of gave me that. I felt comfortable. We did sober activities, went to the swimming pool and park, and I actually wanted to change.

After applying with Hale Kipa's Step-Up Program, and receiving rental assistance from Section 8, I am now renting my own apartment with my 3 year old son. Happy as ever can be. Oh, and not to mention I graduated from Women's Way treatment. I am still sober today and I am really grateful for Hale Kipa's services.

My name is Brianne Lyn and I first got involved with Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC) in February, 2011.

I was invited to participate in HFYC's Real World Event, where foster youth gather together and complete a series of



Brianne Lyn (second from the right) with HFYC Board

workshops that teach us about real world responsibilities like paying bills, budgeting, career building, buying a car, and more.

I am 16 and live on Kauai and am currently the Vice President of the HFYC Youth Board. Since joining, I have increased my network, gained skills in communication, exercised leadership skills and found a venue where I can volunteer and give back to my community. I think that these help me attain my goal of becoming a positive independent adult.

I recently gave a presentation at this year's Ohana Is Forever V Conference, where I was the only 16 year presenter amongst college-aged panelists, adult GALs, Judges, and Social Workers. I am also at the top of my class at Kauai High School.

Homeless family finds shelter and comfort

My name is Dawn Levi and my family and I became homeless on January 31, 2011. The reason we became



homeless is because my fiancé lost his job in August of 2009 and was without a job until January of 2010. It was hard to pay our rent and pay back our back rent. I never thought we would end up homeless, but we did.

At first, we rented a room at a hotel

but when the money we had ran out, we ended up on the street. It was a hard and depressing time because we had two little children. For me, it was scary- when my fiancé would go to work and the children and I were left alone, I'd catch the bus around the island with my children so we

would be around other people. On February 28, 2011, we were blessed to become a part of Family Promise. We entered the day program where we had a safe place to go during the day and be able to shower and do laundry. We became a part of the night program on March 6, 2011. Again, such a blessing. My children had a place to lay their heads down at night and we were provided breakfast and dinner. We met a lot of great people who made us feel comfortable. I never knew there were so many congregations on this side of the island.

Thanks to Family Promise, we got linked with the Rent-to-Work Program that assists families with finding a home and pays a percentage of the rent. We also got linked with Catholic Charities who paid our deposit for us. Another thing we learned was that saving was important and rent comes first. Here we are in a two-bedroom apartment, a place to call home and a place that is safe for our children. We are so very grateful to Family Promise, the congregations and all the volunteers. Without you folks I honestly don't know where we would be today.

Children's grief begins to heal at Kids hurt too

By Nicole C.

We have experienced a lot of loss and Kids hurt too has helped a lot. My children Zepheniah and Angelique who are nine and six were separated from their father because of domestic violence. We ended up homeless for a while due to my health and then their grandparents passed away. We have been participating in Kids hurt too for more than three years and because of their help my kids are able to express feelings about their losses. They feel safe and respected. It is a consistent place to come to where there are role models and a sense of belonging.

The activities have enriched their lives giving them self confidence and something to look forward to. Kids hurt too activities taught them to take care of themselves, the environment and each other. It also provided a safe place to come and a great outlet for feelings and energy without feeling judged. The parents group has given me support too and that helps me understand my children better and be a better parent.

In the midst of all these hardships, the one thing that never changed was the support we got from Kids hurt too.

The mentors encourage them to never give up.

The program has helped improve their moods, behavior and emotional well being. They have many opportunities to interact with



other children who are going through similar losses and that has helped them get along better with others. Because Kids hurt too connected us to many resources including LDAH and Family Promise, my children are doing well in school and our life is more stable. We continue to participate because the people in this program have become like family. I don't know what would have happened to us without Kids hurt too.

iPad helps challenged child communicate

By Keaton's Mom



My son Keaton was diagnosed with autism when he was five years old. He is now 11, but we just found out about Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii (LDAH) last year.

A wonderful woman named Deborah Kobayakawa brought LDAH into our lives. I started with a PIN (Persons in Need) grant for an iPad to

help Keaton with his issues with fine motor skills. We spoke with Michael Moore who helped us with the process. We were approved and Keaton received his iPad before the 2011-2012 school year started, and what an amazing instrument it is for an autistic child!

What a tremendous help it has been for Keaton to keep up with his peers in class. He can type on his Alpha Pad app and it speaks for him which helps him determine if his writing sounds correct (like the way other people talk). He can use his Emotion and Choice Board apps to help show his aide what he needs and how he is feeling without having to say it out loud and potentially be embarrassed in front of his peers.

Other apps have helped him as well, but I don't have to tell you that being the "cool" kid with the iPad doesn't hurt his social introductions with peers either! Kids he would normally not know how to approach are now approaching him.

If that weren't enough, I had mentioned to Michael about Keaton having a Dragon system ordered at school, but we were having some difficulty getting it set up. He introduced us to Kevin Forde-Nihipali. Kevin flew to Maui and set Keaton up and provided training for school staff! LDAH, your volunteers and your donors really are amazing! To so selflessly help a child with special needs and in turn help an entire family you don't even know. We are forever thankful and grateful!

Keeping immigrant families unified and safe

By Calleen Ching

Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center at Legal Aid Society of Hawaii (HIJC at Legal Aid) helps victims of certain crimes, human trafficking, and domestic violence to obtain legal immigration status in the United States. One of our main goals is to keep nuclear families unified and safe.

Our client was a teenage victim of sexual assault born in another country. "After coming to HIJC I felt safer and realized people were willing to help me. They provided a Spanish interpreter for my parents. That helped me because I didn't have to worry about translating for my parents, so I could focus on telling my story. No matter what happened I knew [HIJC at Legal Aid] tried; they fought for justice for me and that's what mattered."

After she received help from HIJC the client said, "I felt great because I knew that if they could do it for me



then they could do it for someone else, help other people. I believe in them. I felt great and happy about what they could do for me. They've been really great to me and my family in helping me get through this."

Mediation helps with custody agreements

By Tracey Wiltgen



We help people talk, rebuild relationships and resolve their differences through mediation. Many of our cases involve divorcing couples with children. For example, Samuel and Helen, a young couple with three children, ages 2, 4 and 7, had been fighting for several months. When Samuel filed for a divorce, he learned about the Mediation Center and was encouraged to try mediation.

Initially, Samuel and Helen were so angry with each other, they only traded insults. After working through two three-hour mediation sessions with impartial mediators, they were able to focus on the needs of the children and agree to a time-sharing arrangement that would allow both parents to spend quality time with the children. They both agreed that reaching agreements in mediation was far

better than fighting in front of the children and ending up in a legal battle in court.

"The mediator that facilitated the mediation was awesome, I was comfortable sharing feelings, thoughts, and ideas with him. He really made it easy for my wife and I to reach an agreement. There wasn't any tension, arguing or name calling, just positive results. Mediator set the tone right making it easy to communicate and compromise."

Carla is another client who called the Mediation Center in a panic. The people she rented a home from for her family, including her 86 year old mother, were now evicting them. Carla wanted to mediate right away just to "buy a little time to find a place to live and keep the family off the street." At the end of the mediation a few weeks later, Carla wrote:

"It brought our family so much relief to have someone listen to both sides, and resolve the problem with no aggression toward us and other party."

While the names are changed because the process of mediation is confidential, the people and their comments captured in the surveys are real. We hear these types of comments and see positive outcomes from the mediation process every day. Through mediation, people learn to listen to one another in new ways and negotiate creative agreements that work for their specific situations. Through mediation, people make their own decisions... and that's the power of mediation.

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Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition

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