



Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Kukui Center

A gathering place for those who serve vulnerable children and families

Volume 3 Number 4

Winter 2013

Kukui Center Realizes Its Promise

The Kukui Center has been open for five years and we are proud to be doing our part to help our community's needy children and their families. Please consider:

When **Kids Hurt Too** established their offices in 2009 they served 133 kids who had lost a parent. In 2013, they are serving 308. Similarly, in 2009, the **Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition** served 60 youth a year. By 2013, that number had expanded to over 300. "We have been able to grow in spite of the economic challenges of the past 5 years, serving more grieving and traumatized children, foster youth, and engaging more volunteers and community collaborations. As the ED, I am deeply grateful for the support provided and all the organizations in the building. The combined energy, knowledge, and passion for children have made me a better and more hopeful leader. I learned important skills through the training offered and our families greatly benefit from the **Community Partners Program** (CPP). The Kukui Center is like a home to those we serve and all of us who work there". (Cynthia White)

"When **Family Promise of Hawaii** opened our second Family Center in the Kukui Center we were able to start a Day Program for waitlist families which enabled us to increase the number served by 36%. The Kukui Center also allows our families access to a wide array of services right next door. A wide range of Kukui board trainings also provides us with educational opportunities for our staff and board." (Mary Saunders)

"The **Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii** appreciates the quantity and quality of support we obtain from our building landlords, collaborations provided by our co-tenants, and the comfort of space provided for our operations. It is much easier to concentrate on the primary tasks of our agency when the quality of our housing is not a concern. Thank you Kukui Center". (Marge Neilson)

"Being in the Kukui Center is wonderful because other agencies here who



Back Row: Michael Moore, Kata Issari, Suzanne Skjold, Mary Saunders, Tracey Wiltgen, Judy Lind. Front Row: Lorraine Gershun, Jaque Kelley-Uyeoka, Calleen Ching, Cynthia White

welcoming atmosphere helps to put our clients at ease. Helping people feel comfortable is key for a successful mediation. It is a convenient location for clients and we have many more walk-ins. It is wonderful to partner and work with the other organizations in the building. We regularly collaborate, share resources, ideas and together better serve our clients. The donated resources through the CPP have helped increase our efficiency and direct more financial resources to our programs and clients. The generosity of the Kukui Childrens Foundation board and staff is a constant source of support and inspiration." (Tracey Wiltgen)

"Being part of the Kukui Center 'ohana is an honor and privilege. As a small staff, we feel blessed to share this lovely space with our sister programs it truly feels like home when we walk in the door to greet our neighbors and friends. This building is a safe haven for our clientele and community colleagues- a favored gathering spot and our program participants truly feel at ease when they're here. Our ties to other KC programs has only furthered our connections with so many individuals, organizations and partners who share our commitment to healing and justice for children and survivors."

(Kata Issari, **Joyful Heart Foundation**)

At this season of thanksgiving and celebration, we thank all who are helping us and sincerely hope for a peaceful, just and successful new year for everyone in our Kukui Center family, those we serve, and everyone in our community.

help foster youth and transitioning teens and young adults struggling with literacy can walk them right to our office and introduce them, so they know they are cared about and there is a free and convenient way to get help with reading and writing, right here in the center." (Darcy Walker, **Hawaii Literacy**).

"The **Mediation Center** is deeply grateful to be part of the Kukui Center. The building's warm and

welcoming atmosphere helps to put our clients at ease. Helping people feel comfortable is key for a successful mediation. It is a convenient location for clients and we have many more walk-ins. It is wonderful to partner and work with the other organizations in the building. We regularly collaborate, share resources, ideas and together better serve our clients. The donated resources through the CPP have helped increase our efficiency and direct more financial resources to our programs and clients. The generosity of the Kukui Childrens Foundation board and staff is a constant source of support and inspiration." (Tracey Wiltgen)

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Our Programs



Art project engages youth participating in a peer support group.

Grieving children find their smiles

Kids Hurt Too Hawaii has been providing grief-stricken children on Oahu with a safe space to express feelings about their loss of a parent.

Our peer support and mentoring services are offered for free every year to more than 300 children who are struggling with the loss of a parent to such factors as a divorce, death or incarceration.

Most of the children we serve come from single-family homes that have been pushed to their financial edge.

In addition, the families that benefit from our efforts are dealing with a crisis that disrupts communication, contributes to emotional instability as well as mental, behavioral, academic and

social health problems.

Our programs directly address the grief and trauma of the children, between ages 3 and 19, that we serve.

Their activities include talk-story time and recreation that is therapeutic.

Teens support each other as they share their struggles.

Families come together to share their pain, exchange resources and find hope.

Children, parents and mentors participate in activities that teach Hawaiian values, increase coping skills, provide social interactions and create a caring community.

Their crisis is transformed into an opportunity to connect, to grow, and to heal.

The children are clear about their needs for Kids Hurt Too Hawaii's services.

They choose to participate and they don't let their parents forget their scheduled meetings.

The most powerful outcome is to see the children's despairing faces change to smiles and eyes that brighten from the reality that they are not alone.

At the same time, Kids Hurt Too Hawaii also provides educational programs to increase support for grief and trauma informed care in Hawaii as well as in Japan.

In 2014, educational opportunities will expand to fulfill a vision for all grieving and traumatized children to receive support.



A family brings their young children for screening at LDAH's School Readiness Project.

Autism is NOT a Learning Disability

The staggering growth in the percentage of parents that Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii (LDAH) assists who have children with autism would astonish most people. However, what is little known is that autism itself is NOT a learning disability; rather it is a developmental disorder. A learning disability is a neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to process, store, and respond to information.

A learning disability is a "processing" problem that impairs a person's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do math calculations. Learning disabilities have a genetic component and often run in families. They do not include visual, hearing or motor disabilities. They are not caused by intellectual or cognitive disabilities, emotional disturbance, or cultural, environmental, or economic disadvantage. Both learning disabilities and autism are not conditions that are outgrown or that disappear over time. Intellectual disability, formerly known as mental retardation, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and autism are not learning disabilities.

Although our agency name is Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii, we lend a hand to parents of all children who have any type of disability, with the lion's share of our caseload composed of children who have autism. It is still unknown as to why the numbers of these children are exponentially increasing. It will become, or already is, a concern for society as caring for those affected by this disability is a lifelong commitment.

Resource: National Center for Learning Disabilities



Did You Know?

- 1 in 6 adults in Hawaii is considered functionally illiterate, which means they lack the basic reading and writing skills often needed for everyday life, like reading a medicine label or filling out an application.
- 43% of Americans with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty.
- Children whose parents cannot read are much more likely to remain illiterate themselves and to leave school before graduation.
- School testing in 2013 found that 29% of Hawaii's eighth graders read at a "below basic" level. This is improvement from 32% in 2011, but still higher than the national average of 22%.
- Helping low-literacy parents increase their reading ability has been shown to directly impact their children's quality of life and education.
- Children who attend family literacy programs have been shown to have better school attendance, higher grades, and are more likely to graduate.
- In 2012, Hawaii Literacy's four programs: served over 2,700 people, 75% were children ages 3-15.
- Over 540 children and families who are most at-risk of educational failure or dropping out of school benefitted from nearly 11,000 hours of service, including access to books and computers, homework help, Story Hours, and hundreds of educational activities.
- Last year, our Bookmobile lent out over 12,000 free books and reached 2,000 children on the Waianae Coast who lack access to traditional libraries.

Our Programs

Worth the wait: A home of their own

Family Promise of Hawaii continues its important mission of providing intensive support services to families with children experiencing homelessness. To date, we have provided these services to over 1,200 parents and children on Oahu. One of the most gratifying moments for us at Family Promise is when we are able to see lives literally transformed. Lucky for us, this can be a daily occurrence!

Rose and her two grandchildren came to the program this year. Rose's daughter is currently serving time in jail and Rose was forced to care for her two beautiful grandchildren. She found herself in a difficult situation and encountered obstacle after obstacle before coming to us.

Rose's hard work in the program and her commitment to raising her grandchildren paid off when they moved into their own



Rose and her grandchildren at their new home.

apartment a few months ago. "I would like to thank Family Promise for accepting us into the program.

We'd like to extend our deepest appreciation for all their assistance to help us move forward. They were kind, giving, helpful and caring. I never thought I would ever need the help they provided but Family Promise was a blessing. We are finally in our own apartment ...we are so thankful." (Rose, September, 2013)

There are so many other families we have served with different stories and backgrounds to share. However, our families do have one thing in common – they come to us in crisis but with support and much hard work they turn their lives around so they can attain long-term housing. The joy we feel watching our families succeed and move into housing never gets old.

Volunteers help translate and provide legal services for immigrants



AT THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF HAWAII

Hawai'i has one of the largest per capita populations of foreign born in the nation at 18%, compared to 13% nationally. Our state also has one of the largest populations of limited English proficient persons, those over the age of 5 who speak a language other than English in the home, at 26% compared to 20% nationally. Yet resources to serve this population of foreign born do not meet the demand for the services they need.

Motivated and diligent volunteers have helped Hawai'i Immigrant Justice Center at Legal Aid (HIJC) serve our immigrants. HIJC's volunteers include bilingual interpreters and pro bono attorneys and paralegals. They lend their valuable time and efforts in a range of volunteer activities, from interpreting for victims of human trafficking to providing legal services in clinics for immigrants in citizenship classes.

One of our valued volunteers, Aphirak Bamrungruan ("AP"), played a critical role in assisting HIJC in reaching out to human trafficking victims and applying for their immigration status, which is crucial in reuniting broken families and ensuring children are protected. AP served as an interpreter, translator, and attorney.

"I'm an immigrant myself, so I have a personal understanding of what's needed. As an immigrant I empathize with all their problems including immigration problems. I see that immigration problems are especially difficult for victims to overcome. Volunteering with HIJC allows me an opportunity to directly help victims overcome the immigration hurdles," he said.

In early December HIJC honored its committed volunteers like AP with a Volunteer Appreciation event. If you are bilingual in the frequently used languages in our State, or have immigration law experience, and would like to volunteer, please contact our office at 536-8836.

At this holiday season

Donations of Services

- Ace Security and Locksmiths
- After School Art
- Alston Hunt Floyd & Ing
- ALTRES *
- American Massage Therapy Association-Hawaii Chapter *
- Anthology Marketing Group
- Brasserie du Vin
- Carr, Gouveia, Matsumoto CPA's *
- HACBED
- Hagadone Printing
- Hawaii Digi Doc
- Hawaii Self Storage
- Hawaii USA Federal Credit Union
- Law Offices of Neal K. Aoki
- Michael Powell Art *
- Seymour Kazimirski *
- The Bead Gallery
- YMCA of Honolulu

Donations of Funds

- Friends of Hawaii Charities
- Evans Fund
- Aloha Fund

* Indicates new Community Partner in 2013

It doesn't surprise us that our Community Partners Program (CPP) continues to grow and new partners regularly join the effort to assist the Kukui Center's (KC) agencies. Our community is generous and wants to help whenever possible and the CPP gives them the opportunity to do just that. The collective support this group of 40 businesses, organizations and individuals provides for the KC is a wonderful example of the aloha spirit.

Because of their generosity, the CPP has provided regular donations of goods, valuable services for clients and volunteers to help at events and support agencies' staffs at the Kukui Center. We have also held training sessions for staffs and boards. This saves our agencies time and money and lets the staffs focus on the work that they do serving our community's most vulnerable children and families.

There isn't nearly enough room in this newsletter to list the range of benefits that our partners contribute. Here are a few highlights from recent months:



Erik Soderholm with Michael Moore, LDAH Executive Director and Neal Aoki, LDAH Board President

Soderholm Bus Sales and Leasing

The Rotary Club of Honolulu came to visit the Kukui Center in the fall of 2012. They toured each of the programs' spaces and learned about the work that they do with children and families. Erik Soderholm was one of the guests. After the visit, he said that he was so impressed by how

much the agencies help others that he wanted

to do something to help them. He offered to donate a van and ended up donating a bus to the Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii to use as a mobile screening lab for the School Readiness Program that provides vision, hearing and developmental screening for keiki under five years old in the Leeward area. LDAH Executive Director Michael Moore said, "We have been working to obtain a mobile screening unit since 2009. We know having one will increase our options for reaching and serving the children in their own neighborhoods. We are extremely grateful to Soderholm Bus Sales and Leasing."



The Bead Gallery hosted a jewelry making workshop.

The Bead Gallery

The Bead Gallery owners Jamie and Jason Yoshida have partnered with the Kukui Center since we opened in 2009. Every year they donate funds, jewelry making supplies and even bring kids to their store for jewelry making workshops. They are committed to the Kukui Center and its

mission to help kids. This winter they took it to the next level. Jamie and Jason travelled to Japan with Kids Hurt Too Hawaii which helps grieving children in Hawaii and also goes to Japan to help those who lost family members due to the 2011 tsunami. When Jamie and Jason decided that they can help these people who lost everything and that making jewelry can be their therapeutic contribution.

We feel truly blessed



You Are In Charge group meets on Wednesdays at 4 PM.

Seymour Kazimirski of Global Consulting Company

Seymour is the kind of person who is a natural helper. You can find him with the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition every Wednesday afternoon at 4:00 PM. His initial effort to be a mentor has expanded

from working with 4 youth into a full-fledged mentoring program, "You Are In Charge," involving 35 teens. He meets with the youth every week, guiding them as they chart a course to reach personal, academic and career goals. In the process, he connects them with successful members of the community who can be an example of success and also mentor and advise the youth along the paths they choose. His generosity has been extended to all of the Kukui Center agencies with his commitment to also offer connections to them as needed for events and programs. He and his wife kicked off the holiday season, hosting a Thanksgiving Dinner on November 27 for 24 people connected with the mentoring program, most of whom don't have anywhere else to celebrate.



Artist Michael Powell helped the children create murals that express love and peace in the beautiful Kahaluu setting.

Michael Powell Art

Renowned artist Michael Powell expresses his aloha by helping the children express themselves through art. A group of youth, ages 7-22, who are clients of Kukui Center programs, were invited to the former Tagami and Powell Gallery in Kahaluu to spend time with the artist in this inspiring setting.

It resulted in a series of murals expressing love and peace painted on plexiglass panels that have been installed on the Kukui Center lanai. Not only did the kids create, they were treated to a delicious lunch and went home with backpacks and school supplies donated by the current owners, the Yuen family. Two panels have been installed with plans for more in 2014.

We wish there was room to describe all of the wonderful support our partners shower on all of our programs on a daily basis. No wonder we appreciate them so much and extend our gratitude and appreciation as often and in as many ways as possible. Mahalo Nui Loa.

Donations of Goods

- Hawaii Association of Legal Administrators *
- Big City Diner
- Central Pacific Bank *
- Honolulu Sign Company *
- Pepsi Beverages Company
- Servco Home and Appliance Distribution *
- Soderholm Bus Sales and Leasing *
- Vim and Vigor

Volunteers, Service Clubs and Non-Profit Organizations

- Arcadia Retirement Residence
- Bruce McEwan
- Habitatat, Inc.
- Hands in Helping Out
- Junior League Sustainers
- Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority
- Luke Center for Public Service at Punahou School
- Rotary Club of Downtown Honolulu
- Waianae HS Seirider Productions Skills USA Club *
- Trees of Hawaii
- Winners Camp Foundation

* Indicates new Community Partner in 2013



Foster youth gather at the Kukui Center every Wednesday for the "You Are in Charge" program.

Foster Youth move forward despite loss of funding

The Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC) mission is to “empower youth voices in the community and state to advocate and support current and former displaced youth.”

HFYC moved into the Kukui Center in January 2009. Kids Hurt Too Hawaii brought the youth led organization under its non-profit status because we offered peer support and mentoring opportunities for transitioning foster youth, which matched their mission. These young people led the way for current and former foster youth

to have a safe, supportive drop in center that caters to the needs of transition age youth.

Since locating to the Kukui Center, HFYC became more visible, reaching over 870 displaced youth on Oahu; and more than a thousand statewide. The coalition has made significant changes to the foster care community and helped develop resources to meet needs identified by youth.

Now, we face the loss of state funding that sustained this unique and meaningful opportunity for youth to have a voice and help improve the foster care system for the past 12 years. The Coalition's youth-led board unanimously agreed to keep moving forward and raise money on their own. They started with a car wash in November.

Now, we need to reach out to others and ask if they are able to help HFYC. Donations will help maintain Oahu's only drop-in center for foster youth so they have a place to shine, grow in confidence, and learn from mentors.

HFYC's new initiatives for 2014 respond to the real challenges that youth leaving care experience. We have a voice and, with HFYC, we are heard.

We hope that funders hear our plea for support, donating through PayPal at the Kids Hurt Too Hawaii website: kidshurtoo.org or sending a check to Kids Hurt Too Hawaii at the Kukui Center and designating it for HFYC.



Helping divorcing couples focus on needs of children

Every day at the the Mediation Center of the Pacific, we help people talk and resolve conflicts creatively. Rather than fighting it out in court, mediation enables divorcing and unmarried couples with children to take their time to share their concerns and perspectives and agree on plans that meet the specific needs of their children.

Having the opportunity to meet in a safe, private environment, and take as much time as needed to be heard, sets the stage for creative problem solving. One client, a 33 year old male roofer who participated in a paternity mediation shared, *“The judge don’t want to hear it, they want you to get to the point. With the mediator, I can tell the story and go on and on. I really appreciate the mediator.”*

Mediators help the parties focus on the needs of their children, enabling them to create and agree to co-parenting plans that take into consideration their unique situations. For example, a 39 year old female participant in a paternity mediation stated: *“I appreciate the mediator for taking time to hear out our different sides of the situation and for helping us resolve our differences with scheduling, and working together for our son’s interest.”*

Equally important, the parties learn a new way of talking to one another, which improves their communication and enables them to make decisions together in the future about their children. A 27 year old woman who participated in a paternity mediation commented: *“Our mediators were amazing. We never talked so much and agreed on something in 8 months! Thank you.”* And finally, a 29 year old female who participated in another paternity mediation case stated: *“My hope is that this agreement will help us to move forward and to communicate better. This will greatly benefit our daughter now and for the long-term.”*



Nicole is happy to be home at her new apartment.

Former foster youth finds a place of her own to call home

Nicole is a young lady who aged out of the foster care system. With limited housing options and a slight disability, she participated in a couple of different programs that offered her a place to live. She rented a room from her auntie until her auntie

left the island. Then she rented a room in the home of a stranger in Waimanalo. But this situation seemed questionable and Nicole needed something more stable.

Nicole embraced an opportunity to have her own affordable one bedroom apartment in the Hale Pauahi Towers (HPT) through the Independent Living Program at Hale Kipa. She is now living in her very first apartment in downtown Honolulu, fully enjoying her independence and experiencing less stress.

After moving in, she got a new job right down the street from her new apartment. She loves living downtown because she can walk to restaurants and shops, and can even walk to work.

"I love it! I feel more responsible, more in charge of myself. I was usually counting on my auntie before. I want her to come over to visit and to see how proud of me she will be." She reports that her furnishings are simple and she is still trying to collect up a number of kitchen items, but she couldn't be happier now that she has a place to call her own.

In collaboration with HPT and the City and County of Honolulu, Hale Kipa holds the lease on several affordable units and then sublets the units to the young adults in our program who pay for their own electricity while paying rent to Hale Kipa.

The youth are able to remain in the unit for approximately one year, and often transition successfully into their own units in the community with all of the experience of independent living under their belt.

Myths surrounding child abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence

The myths about child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault can sound very convincing. Believing these myths prevents us from understanding how the violence works and what we can do about it. Social belief in such misinformation often keeps victims silent, stops communities from identifying offenders, and fosters barriers to effective prevention. Knowing about these myths helps us understand the reality of how these issues impact us and our communities.

The misconception that child abuse and/or sexual/domestic violence are not major problems can be countered with important – and staggering -- statistics:

- In 2012, DHS in Hawai'i received 3948 reports of child abuse.
- Every day in the U.S. nearly 5 children die from abuse or neglect.
- 1 in 7 women in Hawaii are raped each year.
- Every two minutes in the US someone is sexually assaulted.
- 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men experience rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetimes.
- 50,000 women a year experience domestic violence in Hawai'i.
- 15 million children witness domestic violence each year.

Joyful Heart believes we have to shed light on these issues and speak the truth about the violence to counter myths and stereotypes. You can help by challenging misconceptions about abuse. This helps to validate the experiences of survivors while changing attitudes that will eventually stop the violence. Together we can create a community free from violence where children and all people are cherished, living in peace and safety.



Kukui Children's Foundation
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Winter 2013



Harry and Jeanette Weinberg
Kukui Center

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Family Promise of Hawaii
Resources for homeless families with children
(808) 548-7478
www.familypromisehawaii.org

Hale Kipa
Outreach services for child abuse victims in, or transitioning out of, foster care to become independent
(808) 853-4660
www.halekipa.org

Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition
Advocacy and independent living skills training for foster youth
(808) 545-5683
www.grievingyouth.org

Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center at LASH
Legal services for immigrant victims of abuse and domestic violence
(808) 536-4302
www.hijcenter.org

Hawaii Literacy
Literacy and lifelong learning services
(808) 537-6706
www.hawaiiliteracy.org

Joyful Heart Foundation
Helping victims of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault
(808) 532-3520
www.joyfulheartfoundation.org

Kids Hurt Too
Support for grieving children who have lost a parent
(808) 545-5683
or (808) 256-3176
www.kidshurttoo.org

Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii
Training center for parents of children with disabilities
(808) 536-9684
www.LDAHawaii.org

Mediation Center of the Pacific
Conflict resolution for cases involving children and others
(808) 521-6767
www.mediatehawaii.org

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