



WINTER 2025

Hauoli Makahiki Ho

The past year at the Kukui Center has been a remarkable one, filled with growth, collaboration, and meaningful progress. Working alongside the dedicated Kukui Children's Foundation Board, tenant agencies, community partners, and the incredible team behind the scenes has made it an especially rewarding experience. Special recognition goes to Community Partners Program Coordinator Marlene Among, Property Manager Leilani Clayton, Bookkeeper Susan Fairbairn, and Custodian John Hurd for their invaluable contributions. Together, significant milestones have been reached, furthering the mission of supporting vulnerable children and families in the community

May this year bring joy, harmony, and abundance to you and your 'Ohana.

The Kukui tree, Hawai'i's State tree, symbolizes learning, protection, and peace. At the Kukui Center, we proudly use the Kukui as our logo to reflect our mission as a gathering place for organizations dedicated to serving vulnerable children and families.



by Lorraine Gershun
Executive Director



Lahaina Light Parade

ILLUMINATES THE COMMUNITY WITH JOY AND RESILIENCE

On December 14, 2024, Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Hawaii (HMHB) hosted the first-ever Lahaina Light Parade, bringing the community together for a magical evening of lights, music, and celebration. This unforgettable event, held along Ka'anapali Parkway, was designed not only to spread holiday cheer but also to honor the strength and resilience of Lahaina families following the devastating 2023 wildfires.

The parade featured beautifully illuminated floats (which included non-profit partners such as Kids Hurt Too) local performers, and marching bands, culminating in a festive Night Market at the Ke Ola Hou Resiliency Center. Families enjoyed local vendors, delicious food, and live entertainment, making it a true gathering of hope and healing.

Thanks to the support of community sponsors like Royal Lahaina Resort, Aloha Diaper Bank, and Centene/Ohana Health, the event was entirely free for families to attend. HMHB's goal was to create a safe space for healing while bringing much-needed joy and light back to Lahaina during the holiday season.

We extend our heartfelt mahalo to all the partners, volunteers, and families who made this event possible. Together, we continue to build brighter futures for our Hawai'i families.



healthymothers
healthybabies
COALITION OF HAWAII

Collaboration Strengthens Hawai'i's Communities

Kids Hurt Too Hawaii, in partnership with two other Kukui Center organizations, is launching an initiative to provide wrap-around services to the Nanakuli and Waianae Coast communities. Using mobile units like the Mana Mama van from Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies and the Bookmobile from Hawaii Literacy, we aim to offer direct support to children and caregivers.



Hawaii Literacy - Book Mobile



Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies
Mana Mama Van

Our services include emotional support for kids, maternal and family wellness, literacy programs, and workforce development. Through workforce support, we help caregivers with job readiness, resume building, and resources for employment to improve financial stability. The Mana Mama van will focus on maternal health and family wellness, while the Bookmobile will deliver educational resources. By offering these services through mobile units, we're making critical support accessible to underserved communities.

This collaboration highlights the Kukui Center's commitment to strengthening Hawai'i's communities. Stay tuned for updates and find out how you can support this important work in building brighter futures for local families.

Healing Young Hearts



Kids Hurt Too Hawaii

English Language Learner Program

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY & MORE!

Hawaii Literacy's English Language Learner (ELL) program continues to grow, offering free English classes and 1:1 tutoring for a diverse and determined group of learners on four islands. The program provides in-person and online offerings, designed to accommodate participants' varying needs and schedules. The program has expanded its reach, fostering a strong sense of community and collaboration among learners. Thanks to a partnership with the DOE and Safe Haven in Waipahu, Hawaii Literacy is able to offer programming tailored to the unique needs of Micronesian and Chuukese adults.

The program's impact is demonstrated through the success of learners: With initial support from program staff, Fah, an ELL participant, connected with employment support and resources through Work Hawaii. After the first meeting, Fah gained the confidence to return independently the next day, prepared with the necessary paperwork to access job training. Within two weeks, Fah got a job and took a significant step toward financial independence.

Eunchae, a participant with a degree in Dental Hygiene from South Korea, faced challenges finding work in her field due to limited English proficiency. After six months of classes and working with a tutor, Eunchae secured a position as a certified dental hygienist at a clinic in Oahu, demonstrating how the ELL program helps skilled professionals transition into meaningful employment.

For more information, please call (808) 778-8490.



Hawaii Literacy ELL participant, Fah, with Law Chavez, ELL manager



THE JOURNEY TO CITIZENSHIP

This past year, Legal Aid assisted over 30 individuals become U.S. citizens. Among them were several young adults just starting out their lives, a group of elderly friends who celebrated becoming citizens together, and moms and dads who also bestowed citizenship on their children through their applications, and survivors of domestic violence who prevailed through adversity and lengthy immigration processes to be able to take the oath of allegiance as US citizens. It is always a special moment to celebrate a client's naturalization.

Recently my client Jordan (not their real name) received her green card after a long wait after self-petitioning under the Violence Against Women Act. Initially, her husband had petitioned for her to become a green card holder, but she needed to flee from him to a shelter because it was unsafe for her to stay with him. It took several years for her self-petition to be approved but now she is a permanent resident of the United States and will be eligible in several years to become a citizen.

Legal Aid continues to help survivors of domestic violence and other serious crimes realize the protections available to them so they can achieve independence and live without fear.



Leadership
in Disabilities &
Achievement of
Hawai'i

career ready

and proud of it!

Dustin Park began his career as a high school volunteer with Leadership in Disabilities & Achievement of Hawaii. His precise and detail-oriented work ethic was utilized in brochure assembly. It wasn't long before he proved that he was able to take on more responsibilities including maintaining the agency library and data entry. Over the years he stayed diligent, keeping to his bi-weekly appointments and showed himself to be a reliable, efficient and organized member of our team.



Dustin Park
UCLA Data Clerk

After nearly four and a half years, Dustin officially became an LDAH employee in April of 2019. His main responsibility was event data entry which plays a key role in grant reporting for the agency. Dustin has always been open about being on the Autism Spectrum and never let his diagnosis limit his involvement in his community or workplace. His favorite things about working for LDAH are having his own computer and enjoying agency holiday luncheons.

Today, Dustin has moved onto UCLA's pathway program where he has graduated from their program and lives independently. He is now working for the Engineering Department at UCLA as their data entry clerk and thriving as he navigates the independent productive life of a college student.

Creating Positive Change THRU COLLABORATION



Hale Kipa's Independent Living Program and Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies (HMHB) has formed a vital collaboration to support former foster youth by providing free and safe access to healthcare and birth control. This partnership specifically focuses on addressing the unique health needs of young adults who have transitioned out of foster care, an often overlooked and vulnerable group.

HMHB has played a crucial role by supplying Hale Kipa with Plan B, an emergency contraception option, to ensure that these youth have access to reproductive health resources when needed. The provision of Plan B is particularly important in preventing unintended pregnancies and offering young adults a sense of control over their reproductive health. By working together, both organizations are helping to reduce health disparities that may disproportionately affect youth aging out of foster care, who often face barriers to healthcare access.



This collaboration goes beyond providing just birth control—it also emphasizes education, support, and the importance of healthcare for overall well-being. It provides former foster youth with not only the tools to prevent unplanned pregnancies but also the opportunity to learn about and engage in responsible healthcare practices.

Ultimately, this partnership between Hale Kipa's Independent Living Program and HMHB demonstrates the power of agencies working together to create lasting positive change. By addressing the unique needs of this population, the program empowers young adults to lead healthier, more independent lives while navigating the transition from foster care.

“EXTREME RELIEF”: FAMILY PROMISE REUNITES FAMILY ON MAUI

The Rodriguez family lost their home and restaurant in the Maui wildfires last year. They were among thousands of families who faced the unimaginable loss of their homes, businesses, and the community they knew. Building on its transformative programs on O‘ahu, Family Promise of Hawai‘i expanded in 2023 to serve families on Maui on their journey to recovery, connecting them to stable housing, financial assistance, and any other resources they may need.

In the wake of the tragedy, the Rodriguez family made the difficult decision to temporarily split up: The three children — ages 5, 7, and 11 — and their mom temporarily relocated to live with relatives in Michigan, while the dad remained on Maui to figure out their next steps and turned to Family Promise for support.

Family Promise helped reunite this family back on Maui and connected them with long-term housing assistance, gift cards for household essentials and furniture, and free shipping for their vehicle back from Michigan. Today, the Rodriguez family is filled with hope for the future and is eagerly preparing to reopen their restaurant. As the father said: “We felt such extreme relief knowing we were going to have a place to stay and that our family could be together again.”

The Rodriguez family was one of 700 families that Family Promise served last year — totaling 2,000 individual children, parents, and family members. This year, as Family Promise celebrates its 20th anniversary, the organization hopes to prevent and end homelessness for even more children and families.



mahalo nui loa Light the World Giving Machine

The Kukui Children’s Foundation (KCF) extends our deepest gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to the Light the World Giving Machine, sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through this incredible initiative, four KCF nonprofits—Hawai‘i Literacy, Hale Kipa, Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement in Hawai‘i, and Kids Hurt Too Hawai‘i—were blessed with the opportunity to receive generous donations. These contributions, designated for both global and local charities, will be distributed in March 2025, creating lasting impacts in the lives of many here in Hawai‘i and around the world.

We are especially grateful to **Governor Josh Green, M.D., First Lady Jaime Green., Mufi Hannemann-Coordinator of the Giving Machine, Heather, Lei, Wailana,** and everyone who extended their kokua and unwavering support to make the Light the World Giving Machine a reality. The Board of Directors and staff at the Kukui Center will forever hold each of you in our hearts with profound gratitude.

Mahalo Palena ‘Ole for helping to bring hope, joy, and transformation to those we serve.



Opening Ceremony of the Giving Machine
Polynesian Cultural Center, November 18, 2024



Opening Ceremony of the Giving Machine
Ala Moana Center, November 23, 2024

Welina mai i ka 'Ohana

Welcome to our Family of Community Partners


HAWAI'I FLOWER LEI


We're thrilled to welcome Hawai'i Flower Lei as our newest community partner! Hawai'i Flower Lei has been spreading Aloha for 24 years with its gorgeous Hawaiian leis, shipping them all over the U.S. for weddings, cultural celebrations, and more. But what makes them special is their big heart for giving back to the community.

Over the years, Hawai'i Flower Lei has supported countless local nonprofits, donating their time, resources, and stunning flowers to causes that make a difference in Hawai'i. Now, they're teaming up with the Kukui Center to bring more beauty and connection to our events and ceremonies.




Here's what's coming up with this awesome partnership:

 Lei for Kukui Center Events – Hawai'i Flower Lei will provide their signature creations for our special moments.

 Lei Making - Workshops will be held to learn how to craft lei and celebrate this beloved Hawaiian tradition.

This partnership isn't just about beautiful flowers—it's about ohana, tradition, and giving back. Together, we're celebrating the best of Hawai'i: connection, culture, and the spirit of aloha.

Stay tuned for more updates on this collaboration, and don't forget to check out Hawai'i Flower Lei if you're looking for a stunning lei that spreads aloha wherever it goes. 



"We couldn't be more excited to work together with the Kukui Center 'ohana and continue strengthening our island community."

Emily Harper - Owner
www.hawaiiflowerlei.com

Email:

info@hawaiiflowerlei.com

Mahalo Nui Loa

COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF GOODS AND SERVICES

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Simplicity HR by ALTRES
Take2 Production
The Bead Gallery
The CPA Collective
The Lightman
YMCA of Honolulu

Partnerships for Donations of Funds

Aloha United Way
Alapaka Charitable Fund
Altres Foundation
American Savings Bank
Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation
Davis Levin Livingston Charitable Foundation
Ekkebus Charitable Foundation
Evans Fund

Partnerships for Donations of Funds (cont'd)

First Insurance Charitable Foundation
Friends of Hawaii Charities
Ii'ili Fund
Izumo Taishakyo Mission of Hawaii
Jhamandas Watumull Fund
Na Lei Aloha Foundation
Women's League of Central Union Church

Partnerships for Donations of Goods

Aloha Diaper Bank
American T-Shirt Company
Association of Legal Administrators
Beautiful Gifts Hawai'i
Big City Diner
CS Wo & Sons
Hawaii Flower Lei
GWIZ Promotions
Honolulu Sign Company
Kirk Hovious
Islander Group
Market City Shopping Center
Jordan and Cara Odo Scholarship
Foundation
Pacific Home and Appliance Distribution
Soderholm Bus and Mobility
Soldat Construction
Vim and Vigor

Partnerships with Volunteers, Service Clubs & Non-Profit Organizations

Arcadia Retirement Residence
Habilitat, Inc.
Hands in Helping Out
Harris United Methodist Church
Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Assn.
Hawaii Youth Services Network
Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority
Deborah Leimomi Kondo
Luke Center for Public Service
Bruce McEwan
Nanakuli Housing Corporation
Rotary Club of Honolulu
Mary Shimizu, MBA, RA
Seymour Kazimirski-Global Consulting Co.
Waikiki Community Center Seniors
Winners Camp Foundation



Harry and Jeanette Weinberg
Kukui Center

A gathering place for those who serve vulnerable children and families

245 North Kukui Street - #103
 Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817

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OUR FAMILY OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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If you would like to receive our newsletter electronically, send your email address to mamong@kukuicenter.org

FAMILY PROMISE OF HAWAII

Preventing and ending homelessness for families with children
 808-300-0560
 www.familypromisehawaii.org

HALE KPA

Outreach, residential and therapeutic services for youth and young adults in crisis and those transitioning from the foster care system into adulthood
 808-589-1829
 www.halekipa.org

HAWAII LITERACY

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

HAWAII IMMIGRANT JUSTICE CENTER AT LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF HAWAII

Civil legal services for low income families and immigrant victims of crime, including domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking
 808-536-4302
 www.legalaidhawaii.org

HEALTHY MOTHERS HEALTHY BABIES

COALITION OF HAWAII

Advocacy and direct services for pregnant and birthing people so that babies can be born healthy and raised in a safe and nurturing environment
 808-737-5805
 www.hmhb-hawaii.org

KIDS HURT TOO HAWAII

Support for grieving and traumatized children
 808-545-5683
 www.kidshurttoo.org

LEADERSHIP IN DISABILITIES AND ACHIEVEMENT OF HAWAII

Training and screening center for parents of children with or at risk of disabilities and the professionals that serve them
 808-536-9684
 www.ldahawaii.org



Gift Cards are needed for Keiki Meals. Please kōkua. MAHALO

