

STATEWIDE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Inside this issue:

A Child	in	Foster	- 1
Care			

'Ohana Connections 2 Corner

The Island of	3
HawaiʻiA Rural	
Lifestyle & A Rural	
Challenge	

A	sk ˈ	Tŀ	ne i	W	'arm	Line	4
---	------	----	------	---	------	------	---

		CI	4
(are	ŧΩ	Share	4
Care	w	Julai	

A Fostering	5
Thought: More	
About Mirrors	

'Ohana Rewards 5

A Letter From	6
Joseph Bloom	

Quality Assurance 7 Corner

Hawai'i	lob	Corps	
for Your	-h		

Outstanding	DHS	7
Worker		

Supporting Maltreated Children:
Countering the
Effects of Neglect &
Abuse

Trainings	10
-----------	----

Calendar of Events II

Building Connections

A Newsletter for Resource Families

Volume 5, Issue 1

October 2011

A Child in Foster Care

Written by a 15 year old youth in foster care

When I was younger I remember wishing that I could be taken away from my mother and be placed in foster care. When my mother and I would argue, I would get so mad at her that I wanted to be as far away as possible. When I was 13 years old, I got what I wish for. I was in foster care, and I wished to be with my family again. My sisters and I were placed with CPS for reasons that are too familiar with the State. When it happened, I was so angry with CPS and the home that they had put me in. My sisters and I were always together; never apart but there we were in separate homes. What is there for a 13 year old to do? Well, you guessed right. I cried, I got angry, and tried to find family and friends that would take me (anything would be better than a foster home). But no one did. I was crushed. The foster home that I was placed with helped me with some of the things that I was dealing with. They helped me talk to the worker about doing visits with my grandfather and my sisters that lived down the street. And then it happened again. My sisters were put in a home that was an hour away from me. Once again, I had those feelings of abandonment and not having control of what was going on in my life.



Now I am 15 years old and a lot happened from two years ago: I'm a junior in high school, I get good grades, I am with upward bound, I work in the school store, I play tennis, and I go to church. My sisters and I get to have visits with my mom and sometimes we have visits with just me and my sisters. We also do visits with my grandfather and other family members. Being in foster care has dramatically changed my life. When I look back on the two years I realized how much I've changed. I went from being a person who did not care about anything and getting even with the people that placed me in foster care, to a person who now worries about college and takes school very seriously. I was a person who didn't make the very best choices.

I've been very blessed and privileged to be placed in this home since the first time I've been in foster care. I've also been very lucky that I didn't have to move around from foster home to foster home. They treat all of us kids like we're their own, they make us feel like we're family. Over the two years I've been here we've had our ups and downs, but don't families fight? I feel their home is one of the best homes because they do everything for us. They teach us about being a kid and a teenager and how it is ok. They teach us a lot of skills we will need for adult-

hood like independency and having a job during the summer time to keep us out of trouble and getting us ready for the real world. I've been so fortunate to be in a home that cares about the kids that come through it. Their home is run in a unique way.

When I hear stories from other kids about some of the challenges they've been through, it makes me appreciate this home even more. I have two sisters who are eight and three; I'm separated from them which does suck. My resource caregiver, Aunty J, was going to take my sisters, but she only had one slot. My sisters are in a good home and I do see them often like when we go on visits. My Aunty J helped me keep a strong bond with them and helps me processes all the things I have to go to. For me I've gotten a lot of good things that happen to me while I've been in foster, but like everyone else I've gotten bad news. All I do is I process my emotions and get on with my life.

I have learned that there are a lot of kids in foster care that may be going through the same issues your going through, or their issues may be entirely different from yours. I also learned that you may think you're going through this tough situation alone, but you're not. A lot of foster kids including me come with baggage and scars, but we learn to adapt. I also learned that there are a lot of programs and resources out there for us foster kids—all we have to do is dig deep. Being in foster care has a bunch of benefits like scholarships, financial aid, programs and many more. Along with all the ups in being with CPS, there are downs. If you have a good resource caregiver like mines you are guaranteed everything that is best for you. Being a foster youth doesn't make you different, it just means you're life is a little more interesting than



other youth. I do want to become a mentor for foster youth, which is one of my main goals. I want to show them that there is more to foster care than you think and I want to make an impact on someone's life. I also want to be there for them like how people were there for me and still are.

Foster care changed my life because it made me turn my life around, I realized I was destroying my life, in many more reasons. Foster care has made me realized how grateful I am to have a family like mines and that I need to appreciate and cherish every minute I have with them. Also, I've realized that I shouldn't take anything or anyone for granted. I regret wishing what I said, but everything happens for a reason-that is what my Aunty J tells me all the time.

STATEWIDE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Hui Ho'omalu Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) provides support to the resource family community through identifying ongoing needs, facilitating communication and by sharing resources.

The Building Connections
Newsletter is published four times
a year to provide information
regarding foster and adoptive care
to resource families, service
providers, and to the public.

This newsletter may be viewed on the following websites:

www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/ social_services/child_welfare/ foster

www.pidfoundation.org

Partners in Development Foundation 2040 Bachelot St. Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817-2433

If you would like to receive this newsletter, please call: 441-1125 (Oʻahu), 888-879-8970 (Toll Free) or E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

GO GREEN!

Want to help our environment? Contact us today and request an electronic copy!



Page 2

'OHANA CONNECTIONS CORNER

For this 'Ohana Connections Corner I interviewed a father, Marcus*, who is reconnecting with his three children. Two sons, Jimmy and Matt, are in their early twenties and have aged out of foster care. One daughter, Stephanie, is sixteen and was taken into foster custody, along with her brothers, when she was an infant. She is the child who requested help to find family.

Marcus grew up poor and tough. He began using drugs as a teen and continued until age forty. Marcus has been clean and sober for the past fourteen years; he talks openly about his addiction and the faith that sustains his sobriety. He's known the hard life of prison, but also the pride and satisfaction of managing a clean and sober transition program for men exiting prison. He's committed to helping others and leaving his old ways behind.

Historically, fathers' connections with their children have often been overlooked or considered secondary. Fortunately, this is changing, but a fear of being marginalized or powerless is often still present. In our interview Marcus spoke openly about his initial distrust with the "system" and what is helpful on this journey of reconnection.

[*For confidentiality reasons, the father and children's names have been changed.]

-Wilma Friesema, OCS EPIC 'Ohana Conferencing, Inc.

Wilma: Marcus, what was your reaction when you heard you might be able to have contact with your children again?

Marcus: Shock—no happiness, no sadness—just total shock. The next day I found myself wishing I had a million dollars to split three ways between my kids. I abandoned them because of my addiction, but I never stopped loving them

I was both nervous and thrilled. I kept thinking: I've been clean and sober for fourteen years. Why now? Why so late? DHS had told me "No Contact" – why now suddenly I can have contact?

Wilma: Can you share what it's meant to you to reconnect with your children?

Marcus: Seeing them, talking with them, makes me feel alive again. You might not believe what I'm about to say because I was so caught up in my addiction, but when they were taken into foster care part of me died.

They are the three most important people in the world to me. No matter what, I love them and I want to be there for them. While I can't make up for the lost years, I will not repeat them. As long as I am here, I'll do my best to love my children and support them as best I can.

Wilma: To start this process, you first met with me, then the team of service providers who work with Stephanie. What were those meetings like for you?

Marcus: I came in thinking, that's the enemy.

Wilma: All your defenses were up?

Marcus: Of course. I was sure you guys would be looking at me as the druggy, the guy who failed his kids. I did fail my kids, but I'm different now and I was afraid you wouldn't see that. I didn't trust anyone. I dealt with DHS before and believed all you professionals were in cahoots, so I saw you all as the enemy.

I wanted to see my kids, so I felt I just had to do what I had to do. You're the leaders so you could do what you want

No one likes to be powerless, but I accepted I had to play it your way. You wanted me to go to team meetings; I went to team meetings. You wanted me to write a letter; I wrote a letter. If I didn't do those things it might look like I didn't care. I understand you were protecting my kids, which is good, but on my end, at first, it was all about getting past you to get to my kids.

It's not just me that feels that way. I know plenty people who don't fight for their children because they have to deal with the system. Families know they have to jump through hoops and show a certain face in order to contact their kids. Some have the strength to do it, others don't.

Wilma: Do you feel differently now?

(continued on page 3)

Volume 5, Issue I Page 3

'OHANA CONNECTIONS CORNER (cont.)

Marcus: Yes, though my distrust still flairs up, it's a short, small flame now. I know there are a lot of caring people supporting me and my kids. I feel like we work together now.

Wilma: What helped build that trust?

Marcus: A lot of things, but the turning point was when you gave me some hard news I didn't take very well. I was very upset and angry, I vented and was ready to storm out of your office, but you calmly asked me to sit down and talk about it. That was hard. I felt exposed, and I was afraid you would use whatever I said against me and keep my children away from me. You told me you weren't going to do that; you were just concerned about how I was doing. I know I gave you a hard time that day -- I think most people would have been glad to see me go and the sooner the better!

Later, when I thought about it, it sunk in -- you didn't just see me as a former druggy who messed up. I felt you understood my past mistakes and really cared. That's what made a difference. I know you care about my children, but now I also know you care about me.

I have since felt that from other team members too. I see how much heart goes into this work, and how challenging it is.

Wilma: If you were to give advice to service providers on how to build trust with families, what would you say?

Marcus: Be open and let the families know you care about them. We might not believe it at first, but keep giving us that message and let us know you want this family connection to happen. Let us know you are there for us too.

A lot of parents and family don't know what to expect when the children are brought back into their lives. They have insecurities, guilt, and distrust. In my case I have the support of my therapist, a strong belief in God, the backing of my church – plus all my years of experience as a program leader – and I'm still fearful and insecure. I'm sure a lot of parents back down or mess up when they try to reconnect with their kids because it's so hard. They're used to living with the pain of not having their kids; they don't know how to step back into being parents or even just how to be in their children's lives.

All of us – the children and families – need the strength of the team to help us through this life-changing, intense, process. We need to know we're all in this together and everyone is supporting the family connection. We need your help.

EPIC 'Ohana Conferencing is funded through the Department of Human Services
For more information about 'Ohana Connections work
contact Wilma Friesema at EPIC 'Ohana Conferencing, Inc. at 748-7921

The Island of Hawai'i...A Rural Lifestyle & A Rural Challenge

By Michele Carvalho, Resource Caregiver and PIDF-HH East Hawai'i Community Liaison

The island of Hawai'i reflects a rural lifestyle. While the island is a tropical paradise, it presents challenges for individuals and families to access services and community resources. Geographic access is further limited because public transportation is inadequate on the Big Island. Residents in rural communities, such as Pahoa or Honoka'a, need an automobile to get to services and resources. Because of the mountainous nature of the island, road networks in some area are limited to a single highway near the coast.

For youth in foster care, these present bigger challenges. Youth on the Big Island do not have the ability to access resources that they may have on O'ahu. There is no Sea Life Park, Water Park, Bishop Museum, Aquarium or mini-golf on the Big Island. And, the activities that are available here may be hard to access due to financial limitations.

While working on this article, I came across a program called *Project Hawai'i with the Cultural Institute of America*. This



program, according to its website, brings in teens from the mainland and allows them to "have a feel for island life" and experience Big Island adventures "and to meet our homeless keiki (children in Hawaiian)." Their Adventures Abound Day Camp includes the 'Imiloa Astronomy Center, the Pana'ewa Rain Forest Zoo where they get to feed the white tiger, laser tag, volcano hikes, and they complete their tour with a dolphin cruise, where they can actually swim with the dolphins and of course, and let's not forget the 9 course zip line. Wouldn't this be an awesome program for our foster youth that live on the Big Island? That our youth could get a "feel for island life"?

But adventure costs money. Although there is Friends of Children's Justice Center East Hawai'i that help to provide funds and resources to support the needs of children who have been sexually, physically, emotionally, abused and neglected, funds are limited.

(continued on page 6)

Welcome to FPH's Resource Family Support Services Corner

By Chiyomi Chow, MSW, FPH RFSS Family Resource Specialist Resource Family Support Services (RFSS) is funded by the Department of Human Services





I've heard that we can get help with respite. Can you explain more about it to me?

If you are providing foster care and need a break or are going on vacation, respite funds may be available to you as a reimbursement. You would need to arrange for someone to provide the care, be willing to pay them for the time of care, and provide DHS the respite provider's full name, date of birth and social security number for a background check. DHS has a limited amount of funds per fiscal year, which are available on a first come first serve basis. Each resource caregiver is allotted 10 days per child per year and reimbursement payments are \$25.00 per day per child. All respite reimbursements must be pre-approved. You should contact the foster child's social worker or social service assistant to utilize the respite funds.

In addition, Family Programs Hawai'i has a Respite Program to assist resource families on O'ahu. The program can help connect families to a general respite provider, or work with a respite provider of your choice, and provide reimbursement for respite care once DHS respite funds are used or are not available. Payments may be able to cover an additional 10 days per child per year at the same rate of \$25.00 per day per child. For more information, call the Respite Program Coordinator, Salome Bala, at 521-9531 ext. 225.

lf you have any other questions, please call the Warm Line: 545-1130 on O'ahu or 1-866-545-0882 on neighbor islands.



Do you have something that a family could use? Do you care to share? Then here's a great opportunity to help children in foster care and their generous resource, adoptive or guardianship families.



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAI'I

"Care to Share" is a way for people to share their gently used items with resource, adoptive or guardianship families who need your support.

Examples of items requested include: smoke detectors, dressers, bunk bed, diapers, shoe shelf, toys, high chair, baby safety gate.



For an up-to-date list of items by island, check out Care to Share at www.FamilyProgramsHawaii.org, under "Resources"

Do you have a question??? Contact the Warm Line! 545-1130 (O'ahu) * 1-866-545-0882 (Toll-free for Neighbor Islands) E-mail: WarmLine@FamilyProgramsHi.org Monday-Friday 8:30 am-5 pm



This program, brought to you by Family Program's Hawai'i's Resource Family Support Services (RFSS). is funded by the Department of Human Services

Advertise in the Newsletter—Promote Your Business

100% of the proceeds will be used towards supporting our resource families

Display advertisements with borders; business card size = \$30: 1/4 page = \$50: 1/2 page = \$75: full page = \$115.

Send information to: Hui Ho'omalu-RAC, 680 Iwilei Rd., Ste. 500, Honolulu, HI 96817

Phone: 441-1125 (O'ahu) ★ 888-879-8970 (Toll Free) ★ Fax: 441-1122 ★ E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

Hui Ho'omalu RAC reserves the right to accept, reject or edit advertisements, articles and notices of events based on publication schedule, space limitations, and appropriateness.

A.F.T. (A Fostering Thought) By Dr. Paul Brennan

MORE ABOUT MIRRORS

Recently at an amusement park with six of our grandchildren, my wife and I had the grand experience of being invited to become kids again. The rides began innocently with the merrygo-round, the "Zipper", the "Octopus", the bumper cars, the "Volcano", and others whose names I can't remember. You can guess who had the most fun! Even the relatively "tame" experience of that old-fashioned experience of the trick mirrors added its own nostalgic but unreal delight. The convex mirror stretches everyone out grotesquely. The concave mirror showed us short and round. What fun!

In my previous column I expressed that a world without mirrors is a world without identity. As resource caregivers we have the potential to be holders of valuable, realistic mirrors, photographers in possession of magical tools that communicate who others are and what they may become. The



Dr. Paul Brennan

most useful self-discovery portrait takes place when our children are young, impressionable souls in the process of becoming. In the security of our homes, protected by walls of strength, security, and honesty, the mirror of their development is hopefully always accurate, always full of promise.

As a child of a single-parent mother, growing up within the nurturance of our loving but realistic grandparents, I never believed that I could become anything I wanted to. They communicated that my gifts were finite, limited as they were by my mind and body and spirit. No matter how hard I might try I could never run a four-minute mile, be a ballet star, play professional football, become a nuclear physicist, be a tight-rope walker. It was my responsibility to discover what strengths I might possess, to develop them and use them for the benefit of myself, for my neighbors, and maybe even a broader community. They recognized among my gifts music and speaking, but could not comprehend writing, the social sciences, my careers of choice, world travel, because that was beyond their world view. If somebody would have told me as an 8-yearold, "You can be anything you want to be", their response would have been (using that day's jargon), "What a bunch of baloney"! They started me in the right direction, and then my own mirrors took over.

The oldest of our own grandchildren is now soon to be 15, and we thrill at the thought of her vast potential . . . maybe in the arts, maybe in literature, but not in "whatever she wants to be". It would be irresponsible for us to suggest that.



Forrest Gump knew he was different from the start. But it was an acceptable difference, a limitation made into a strength, a minus turned into a plus. How else could he learn to run so fast, hit the ping pong ball so well, carry his wounded buddies so courageously, remain so faithful to Jenny. I love his confidence and candor, his innocent assessment of reality when he proposes: "But I would make a good husband." His mother had given him a good mirror, a useful mirror, a reflection of what was shockingly true yet full of grace and love.

William Glasser said, "Children will find in the eyes of parents . . . who raise them, mirrors in which they discover themselves." Happy reflecting!

Help! Looking For Stories!

Would you like to share some helpful tips? Got an inspirational story to tell? Know of some useful resources in your community?

These are just some of the many possibilities that you can contribute to this newsletter. Please send them over so we can all benefit from each other's wisdom!

We would also appreciate any feedback, comments and suggestions on ways that we can improve this newsletter so that it is useful to you. What would you like to see in it? Topics of interest? We look forward to hearing from you!

Want to know how you could receive a \$200.00 gift card? Would you like your name to appear in a future RAC newsletter?

All you need to do is help us find more homes for Hawai'i's keiki in foster care! If you can refer, help, cheer, and see your referral to the finish line to become licensed, you could earn a \$200 gift card of your choice and join this list of folks who have received their 'Ohana Rewards:



Wendy Cortez Abi Brillinger



Call Hui Ho'omalu today at 441-1117 or 1-888-879-8970 (toll free) for more information!

A Letter From Joseph Bloom, LSW, QCSW

Family Programs Hawai'i, in collaboration with Department of Human Services, Hui Ho'omalu, and Children's Alliance of Hawai'i, presented a training titled, "Creating a Healing Environment in Your Home: Supporting a Child Who Has Been Abused by Sex Assault." Joseph R. Bloom, LSW, QCSW, Director of Programs for Children's Alliance of Hawai'i, openly spoke about the effects of sexual abuse on children and how resource caregivers can help a child heal. Below is a letter from Joe to those who attended, as he reflects upon the trainings.

Aloha Families.

My name is Joe Bloom and I'm with the Children's Alliance of Hawai'i. Since July of this year, I have been traveling around the islands meeting with resource families doing a training for Family Programs Hawai'i. The name of the presentation was Creating Healing Environments (for sexually abused children). I wanted to share with you my Mahalo for the reception you gave me. But mostly I want to share what I have learned from so many of you.

I've learned that communities care about our keiki. While sexual abuse is a difficult subject for most to discuss, especially parents, you have gathered in your community and not only listened, but engaged in a discussion that most adults would avoid. You allowed me to share my mana'o and you have shared yours with me and others. Each one of you pledged to continue, whenever possible, to continue talking until our keiki are safe. I've learned that our communities now know that it is our kuleana, not our children's, to keep them safe from abuse of all kinds.

I've learned that in spite of your own hardships, as resource families you not only opened your homes, but opened your hearts to children from all kinds of backgrounds and difficulties. I felt your pain, as many of you shared your struggles with kids who may be difficult to have around because of their behaviors. Kids who test your patience and commitment on a daily basis. I've learned too, that it is just a test; a test to see if you will abandon them. You have not. You believe that there is no such thing as a bad kid, just some with more trauma than others, some with more reasons not to trust than others, some with greater need.

I've learned that many of the adults I've met, have histories of trauma themselves. I've learned that you are all unique and at the same time, share some of the same difficulties faced by those keiki who, for some reason, have been sent to you. They say that the wounded make the best healers. Maybe that is why they found their way to your door. I've learned that when we direct our hearts in the right direction, we heal others, and maybe even a bit of ourselves.

Finally, I've learned that we are all in this together. It takes each one of us, regardless of background, education, history or current state of affairs. It takes each of us to make a difference. I know these are not my words, but I believe them just the same: "It takes a village".

Thank you for inviting me, and engaging with me about keiki and child sexual abuse. I have learned so much about you, your wonderful work, and the great work of Family Programs Hawai'i. Thank you for reminding me why any of us do this work. Mahalo Nui Loa!

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Bloom, LSW, QCSW Director of Programs Children's Alliance of Hawai'i

The Island of Hawai'i...A Rural Lifestyle & A Rural Challenge (cont.)

There are other monies out there that may help. Family Programs Hawai'i Hilo has the Theresa Hughes Enhancement Fund used to improve and enhance the lives of children in foster care or those who have been abused or neglected. Funds are limited to \$500 per child per year.

But, there must be more out there to help our foster youth "get a feel for island life". Organizations could help by sponsoring fun days. Businesses could donate time or money to take youths out on a submarine ride or zip line. While O'ahu gets the Water Park days and Bishop Museum activities, we could also provide fun days and services to our youths here on the Big Island if people, businesses, and organizations work together. We have all heard that it takes a village, in our case, it takes an island....After all, isn't that what Aloha is all about?

If you are an individual or represent a business and would like to help our rural foster youth, please contact the Family Programs Hawai'i Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 (toll free on neighbor islands) or 545-1130 (O'ahu).

Volume 5, Issue | Page 7

☆

~~~~~

## **Quality Assurance Corner**



**\*\*\*** 

#### **Annual Questionnaire for Resource Families 2011**

A big mahalo to all the resource caregivers who have participated in the Annual Questionnaire for Resource Families 2011. We greatly appreciate your important feedback as we continue efforts to improve our services for resource caregivers statewide. Participants who completed the survey online were eligible for a \$100 gift card drawing. We would like to congratulate this year's seven lucky winners of the gift card drawings!

Congratulations to the Winners of this Year's Gift Card Drawings!

#### Winners of \$50 Gift Card Drawing:

Donna Souza - Lāwa'i, Kaua'i

Monica & Walter Chihara - Lāhainā, Maui

Melveena Starkey - Kaunakakai, Moloka'i

Margaret Blount - Kualapu'u, Moloka'i

Ernesto & Maxine Derige - Mililani, O'ahu

Cathy Wisler - Honokaa, Hawai'i

#### Winner of \$100 Gift Card Drawing:

Kaye Hagerdorn - Kea'au, Hawai'i (online survey drawing) Sandra Correa—Honolulu, O'ahu (telephone interview drawing)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Telephone Interview Survey**

A telephone interview survey is being conducted statewide for resource caregivers who have completed the licensing process with Hui Hoʻomalu. Participants are randomly selected and are contacted to gather feedback on the areas of staff interaction, training, the home study process, support services, and communication with social workers. A \$25 gift card incentive is given to those resource caregivers who complete a telephone interview and they are also entered in a \$100 gift card drawing as well. Thanks again to all the resource caregivers who have participated. Your feedback will help ensure that we are providing quality services!

For further information, contact Jason Badua, Quality Assurance and Improvement Specialist at: (808) 441-1126

## Hawai'i Job Corps for Youth

Hawaiʻi Job Corps is a wonderful program for youth, 16-24 years of age who need vocational training. They can also get their High School diploma or GED while learning a trade. Our trades are: Automotive Repair, Finance/Business, Culinary Arts, Facility Maintenance, Health Occupations, Landscaping, and Painting. Everything is FREE! You can live on campus or be a non-resident. We also have transportation available for non-residents. Have any questions? Call Mike at 536-0695.

## **OUTSTANDING DHS WORKER!**

..........



#### **Gwenson Yuen (CWS worker)**



Gwenson is caring and provided all the support that I needed. He did his job to the "t". If I needed any help or had any questions, Gwenson was always there.

Manuel Sy (Resource Caregiver & Adoptive Parent)

Do you know a DHS-CWS worker(s) that you would like to acknowledge for his/her exceptional work?

Share their name(s) with us and what makes them so special so we can let others know how wonderful they are!

441-1125 (O'ahu) ★ 1-888-879-8970 (Toll Free) ★ RAC@pidfoundation.org

# Happy Anniversary!

How long have you been a resource caregiver? We would like to honor you by printing your name and current years of service in our newsletter. We know you are out there but we need your help. Please send your name and years of service to:

> RAC@pidfoundation.org (Oʻahu) 441-1125 (Toll Free) 1-888-879-8970

#### Supporting Maltreated Children: Countering the Effects of Neglect and Abuse

Submitted by Judith Wilhoite, Family Advocate for Family Programs Hawai'i's It Takes an 'Ohana Program

This article was adapted from articles by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D. It is from Adoptalk, published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, St. Paul, Minnesota; 651-644-3036; www.nacac.org.

The most important property of humankind is the capacity to form and maintain relationships. These relationships are absolutely necessary for any of us to survive, learn, work, love, and procreate.

The ability and desire to form emotional relationships is related to the organization and functioning of specific parts of the human brain—systems that develop during infancy and the first years of life. Experiences during this early vulnerable period affect a child's core attachment capabilities. A child's ability to feel empathy, be caring, inhibit aggression, love, and acquire other characteristics typical of a healthy, happy, and productive person are tied to the child's care at the beginning of life.

#### **How Early Neglect and Abuse Affect Attachment**

Impaired childhood bonding affects people differently. Severe emotional neglect in early childhood can have devastating consequences. Children without touch, stimulation, and nurturing can literally lose the capacity to form meaningful relationships. Fortunately, most children do not suffer this degree of neglect, but millions do experience some degree of impaired bonding and attachment during early childhood. Resulting problems can range from mild interpersonal discomfort to profound social and emotional problems. In general, the level of impairment is related to how early in life the emotional neglect began as well as its severity and duration.

With help, neglected children can learn to navigate normal relationships. Clinical experiences and a number of studies suggest, though, that the path to improvement is a long, difficult, and frustrating process for families and children.

#### **How Abuse Affects Brain Development**

During childhood, the human brain matures and brain-related capabilities develop in a sequential fashion. With optimal experiences, the brain develops healthy, flexible, and diverse capabilities.

Disruptions in the timing, intensity, quality, or quantity of normal development, however, can adversely affect neurodevelopment and function. Traumatic experiences trigger a state of fear-related activation in abused and neglected children's brains. Chronic activation of the adaptive fear response can cause a persistent fear state that in turn causes hyper-vigilance, increased muscle tone, a focus on threat-related cues, anxiety, and behavioral impulsivity. These attributes are helpful during a threatening event but counter-productive when the threat has passed.

The very process of proper adaptive neural response during a threat underlies the neural pathology that causes so much distress and pain through the child's life. The chronically traumatized child will develop a host of physical signs (altered cardiovascular regulation) and symptoms (attention, sleep, and mood problems) that make life more difficult.

There is hope. The brain is very plastic and can change in response to experiences, especially those that are repetitive and patterned.

#### Specific Problems in Maltreated Children with Attachment Problems

Specific problems vary depending upon the nature, intensity, duration, and timing of neglect and abuse. Some children will have profound and obvious problems; others will have very subtle problems that do not seem to relate to early life neglect. Below are some clues that experienced clinicians consider when working with maltreated children.

- Developmental delays: The bond between a young child and her caregivers provides the major vehicle for physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Lack of consistent and enriched experiences in early childhood can cause delays in motor, language, social, and cognitive development.
- Eating: Odd eating behaviors are common, especially in children with severe neglect and attachment problems. They will hoard and hide food, or eat as if the food will disappear any moment. They may fail to thrive, ruminate (throw up food), and have swallowing problems.
- Soothing behavior: These children may use primitive and bizarre soothing behaviors, especially when stressed. They may bang their heads, rock, chant, scratch, or bite/cut themselves.
- Emotional functioning: A range of emotional issues—including depression and anxiety—is common in maltreated children. Another common trait is "indiscriminate attachment," affectionate behaviors with relatively unknown people to secure safety rather than develop an emotional bond.
- Inappropriate modeling: Children model adult behavior. Maltreated children who learn that abusive behavior is the "right" way to interact with others have problems in social situations. Children who have been sexually abused are at-risk of being further victimized or perpetrating on younger children.

(continued on page 9)

Volume 5, Issue I Page 9

#### Supporting Maltreated Children: Countering the Effects of Neglect and Abuse (cont.)

• Aggression: Childhood aggression and cruelty often result from a lack of empathy and poor impulse control. These children really do not understand or feel what it is like for others when they do or say something hurtful.

#### Helping Maltreated Children

Responsive adults—parents, teachers, and other caregivers—make all the difference for children. They can:

Nurture these children. They need to be held, rocked, and cuddled. But be aware that, for many children, touch has been associated with pain, torture, or sexual abuse. Observe how your child responds to nurturing and act accordingly. In many ways, you are providing experiences that should have taken place during infancy.

Try to understand the behaviors before punishing. The more you can learn about attachment problems, bonding, and development, the more you will be able to develop useful interventions. If your child hoards for a problem of the plant and the problem of the plant and th

food, for example, do not accuse him of stealing. A punitive approach may increase the child's sense of insecurity and need to hoard food.

Interact with children at their emotional age. Abused and neglected children are often emotionally and socially delayed. When they are frustrated or fearful, they will regress, and as much as you want the children to "act their age," they simply cannot. Interact at their emotional level. If they are tearful, frustrated, or overwhelmed (emotionally age two), use soothing non-verbal interactions. Hold them. Rock them. Sing quietly.

Be consistent, predictable, and repetitive. Maltreated children with attachment problems are very sensitive to new situations. Social events (parties, sleepovers, trips) can overwhelm them, even if they are pleasant. Efforts to make life consistent, predictable, and repetitive are very important. When children feel safe, they can benefit from the nurturing and enriching experiences you provide.

Model and teach appropriate social behaviors. Many abused and neglected children do not know how to interact with others. To teach them, model behaviors and narrate for the child what you are doing and why: "I am going to the sink to wash my hands before dinner because..." or "I take the soap and put it on my hands like this...."

You can even coach maltreated children as they play with other children. Use play-by-play: "Well, when you take that from someone, they probably feel pretty upset; so if you want them to have fun when you play this game, then you should try...." Over time, success with other children will make the child less socially awkward and aggressive.

Maltreated children can have problems modulating physical contact. They don't know when to hug, how close to stand, when to make/break eye contact, or at what times they can wipe their nose, touch their genitals, or do grooming tasks. Do not lecture the child about "appropriate behavior;" gently suggest how she can interact differently with adults and children ("Why don't you sit over here?"). Make lessons clear using as few words as possible, and explain in a way that will not make the child feel bad or guilty.

Listen to and talk with children. Whenever you can, sit, listen, and play with your children. When you are quiet and interactive with them, they often will begin to show and tell you what is really inside them. Practice this—slow down, quit worrying about the next task, and really relax into the moment with a child.

At these moments, teach children about their feelings. Use these principles:

(1) All feelings (sad, glad, mad, etc.) are okay to feel; (2) Children should know healthy ways to act when sad, glad, or mad; (3) Other people feel and show feelings—"How do you think Bobby feels when you push him?" (4) When you sense that the child is clearly happy, sad, or mad, ask them how they are feeling.

Have realistic expectations. Abused and neglected children have a lot to overcome. We cannot predict potential, but we do know how to measure a child's emotional, behavioral, social, and physical strengths and weaknesses. Skilled clinicians can help to define a child's skill areas and areas where progress will be slower.

Be patient with the child's progress and with yourself. Progress will be slow and frustrating. Many adults, especially adoptive parents, will feel inadequate because all the love, time, and effort they exert on their child's behalf may not seem to work. But it does. It just takes time.

Take care of yourself. Caring for maltreated children can be exhausting and demoralizing. Adults cannot provide the consistent, predictable, enriching, and nurturing care these children need if they are depleted; they must get rest and support. Respite care can be crucial for parents, who should also rely on friends, family, and community resources.

Investigate other resources. Many communities have support groups for adoptive or foster families. Professionals who specialize in attachment problems can also help. Remember, the earlier and more aggressive the interventions, the better children will be able to heal and thrive.



#### FPH 2<sup>™</sup> Quarter Training "Trauma and Anger Management for the Family"





**Childcare provided for** 

registered keiki ages 3-12!

(Space is limited)

Dr. Rhoades is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and an expert in anger management and in the treatment of trauma. He is the Director of numerous organizations involving trauma work including Clinical Director and founder of Ola Hou Clinic in Aiea, Executive Director of Roads to Hope (an international humanitarian nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers of trauma), and Director of ALERT-Psychological and Trauma Training for Global Aid Network—Canada (GAIN—Canada).

This **FREE** training is open to all resource, adoptive, guardianship & kinship families This training will help you to:

- ★ Understand anger and trauma
- ★ Understand the effects of trauma on children, teens, and adults
  - ★ Learn about the types of trauma experienced by families
    - ★ Explore coping skills for children, teens, and adults

Dinner will be provided during the first 1/2 hour. Training and childcare will begin after dinner.

Kapolei - Oct 24 (Mon) - Island Pacific Academy - 6pm to 8:30pm (RSVP by 10/17/11) Dinner is provided! Honolulu – Nov 18 (Fri) – Shinnyo-en Temple – 5:30pm to 8pm (RSVP by 11/11/11)

#### **BIG ISLAND**

East Hawai'i – Oct 14 (Fri) - Church of the Holy Cross, Hilo – 5:30pm to 8pm West Hawaiii – Oct 17 (Mon) – Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Kailua-Kona – 5pm to 7:30pm

#### **MAUI**

Nov 21 (Mon) - QLCC - 5:30pm to 8pm **KAUA'I** 

Oct 10 (Mon) - Līhu'e Lutheran Church - 5pm to 8pm

To RSVP or for more information please contact the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 (toll-free) or 521-9531 x245 (Oʻahu)

This training is put on by Family Programs Hawai'i RFSS & DHS ◆ Funding is provided by the Department of Human Services

## "Employment and Career Preparation for Your Teen"

Speaker: Jennifer O'Donnell

This FREE training is open to all Resource, **Adoptive, Guardianship & Kinship Families** 

(This training is provided simultaneously with the Better Start Workshop)

Childcare provided for registered keiki ages 3-12! (Space is limited)

November 10, 2011 (Thursday) 5:30 pm—8 pm Leeward Community College

For more information or to RSVP by November 4 (Fri) Call Jennifer Cilfone at 352-0826

This training is put on by Family Programs Hawai'i RFSS & DHS ◆ Funding is provided by the Department of Human Services



#### T.H.E. Collaboration Presents: Better Start Workshop

A FREE training geared for Current and Former Foster, Guardianship, and Adopted Youth ages 14 and up

(This workshop is provided simultaneously with the "Employment & Career Preparation for Your Teen" Training)

November 10, 2011 (Thursday) 5:30 pm—8 pm Leeward Community College

Find out what careers are right for you!

Learn from local professionals!

- Search volunteer opportunities!
- Build your resume!
- Access resources!

RSVP by November 4 (Fri) to Jennifer Cilfone at 352-0826

Dinner is provided!

Dinner is provided!

Raffle Prizes!

Childcare provided for

registered keiki ages 3-12!

# **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

#### O'AHU:

- ★ Central O'ahu Resource Families Support Group. 5:30 pm—8 pm. O'ahu Verterans Center. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 x245. ♦ Oct 21 (Fri) ♦ Dec 9 (Fri)
- ★ Waianae Resource Families Support Group. 5:30 pm—8 pm. 'Ohana Ola O Kahumana. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 x245.
   ♦ Nov 17 (Thurs)
- ★ Windward Resource Families Support Group. 6 pm—8:30 pm. Faith Baptist Church. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 x245. ♦ Nov 4 (Fri)
- ★ "Trauma and Anger Management for the Family" Training. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 x245. See page 10 for details.
   ♦ Oct 24 (Mon), 6 pm-8:30 pm. Island Pacific Academy, Kapolei
   ♦ Nov 18 (Fri), 5:30 pm-8 pm. Shinnyo-en Temple, Honolulu
- ★ FREE Sailing Classes for Foster Youth (ages 10-16). For more information, call Alessandra Jann-Jordan at 218-6878 or Rich Marshall (456-5103). ◆ Oct 23 (Sun) ◆ Nov 27 (Sun)
- ★ "Cyber Bullying & Suicide Prevention" Training. 5:30 pm—8 pm. Consuelo Family Center. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 x245.
   ♦ Part 1: Oct 18 (Tues)
   ♦ Part 2: Nov 15 (Tues)
- **\*** "Children with Attachment Difficulties and Strategies that Work" HAPA Training. Speaker: Keith Kuboyama. 9 am—11:30 am. Kalihi Union Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 545-1130. See below for details. ♦ Nov 5 (Sat)
- ★ Better Start (for teens 14 and up) & "Employment and Career Preparation for Your Teen" Training. 5:30 pm-8 pm. Leeward Community College. RSVP to Jennifer Cilfone: 352-0826. See page 10 for details. ♦ Nov 10 (Thurs)
- ★ 2011 Holiday Party.10 am-2:30 pm. Neal Blaisdell Center Exhibition Hall. For more information, call the Warm Line at 545-1130.
   ♦ Dec 3 (Sat)

#### MAUI

- ★ Maui Resource Families Support Group. 5:30 pm—8 pm. Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center, Wailuku. RSVP to Kim Bowlin at 250-4457. ♦ Dec 15 (Thurs): Holiday Party
- **\*** <u>"Trauma and Anger Management for the Family" Training.</u> RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 (toll-free). See page 10 for details. ♦ Nov 21 (Mon), 5:30 pm-8 pm, Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center

#### WEST HAWAI'I:

- ★ West Hawai'i Resource Families Support Group. 5 pm—7:30 pm. Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Kailua-Kona. We're making Life Books! RSVP to Susan at 885-5043. ♦ Nov 7 (Mon)
- **\*** <u>"Trauma and Anger Management for the Family" Training.</u> RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 (toll-free). See page 10 for details. ◆ Oct 17 (Mon), 5 pm-7:30 pm, Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Kailua-Kona

#### **EAST HAWAI'I:**

- ★ East Hawai'i Resource Caregiver Support Group. 12 pm—2:30 pm. Haili Congregational Church, Hilo. RSVP to Michele Carvalho at 987-5988. ♦ Nov 12 (Sat)
- **★** "Trauma and Anger Management for the Family" Training. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 (toll-free). See page 10 for details. ♦ Oct 14 (Fri), 5:30 pm-8 pm, Church of the Holy Cross, Hilo

#### KAUA'I:

**★** "Trauma and Anger Management for the Family" Training. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 (toll-free). See page 10 for details. ◆ Oct 10 (Mon), 5 pm-8 pm, Līhu'e Lutheran Church

# Hawai'i Adoption & Permanency Alliance (HAPA) Training Children with Attachment Difficulties and Strategies that Work

Speaker: Keith Kuboyama, Clinical Director of Family Programs Hawai'i

At this <u>FREE</u> training, attendees will learn how stress and trauma experienced early in life affects a child's ability to regulate behaviors and how trauma compromises a child's ability to respond and develop loving relationships. Participants will: 1) Understand how attachment normally develops; 2) Understand the impact of stress and trauma in a family; 3) Identify why children with trauma histories struggle in relationships; 4) Understand how attachment and bonding is affected by fear; 5) Learn what parenting strategies and techniques are needed in creating a home conducive to change and healing.

Fun, interactive activities for youth ages 13-18 in foster, guardianship or adoptive homes!

Kalihi Union Church (2214 N. King St.) November 5, 2011 (Sat) 9 AM—9:30 AM: Registration/Breakfast 9:30 AM—11:30 AM: Training FREE childcare provided for resource, guardianship & adoptive families for keiki ages 3-12!

(Pre-registration required;

Space is limited)

REGISTRATION: Online registration available at www.FamilyProgramsHawaii.org. Go to the calendar and click on the event.

For more information or to register by phone, call the Warm Line at: 545-1130.

PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION 2040 Bachelot St. Honolulu, Hawaiʻi 96817-2433

NONPROFIT ORG. U.S. POSTAGE PAID HONOLULU, HI PERMIT NO. 1554

#### STATEWIDE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2040 Bachelot St. Honolulu, HI 96817-2433 441-1125 (Oʻahu) 888-879-8970 (Toll Free) Fax: 441-1122 E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org The concept for the Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) was created by the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a means to support the resource family community. Hui Ho'omalu facilitates this committee comprised of adoptive parents, resource caregivers and various community agencies, all dedicated to providing services and support to Hawai'i's keiki and the resource families who care for them. The purpose of the RAC is to identify ongoing needs, facilitate communication, share resources, provide information through a statewide calendar of events and a quarterly newsletter and report on local projects and other topics of interest to benefit Hawai'i's resource families.

This committee, the newsletter and many of the represented agencies are supported and funded by Department of Human Services contracts.

#### **RAC Committee Members:**

Catholic Charities Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalu
Department of Human Services
EPIC, Inc. 'Ohana Conferencing
Family Court
Family Programs Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalu & It Takes An 'Ohana
Resource Caregivers
Adoptive Parents
Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition
Heart Gallery Hawai'i
HOPE INC, Inc.
Partners in Development Foundation—Hui Ho'omalu
University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work