



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAII

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Vol. IV No. 4 | Winter 2011

Making Smart Choices

by Jennifer Cilfone

Teens in foster care are at greater risk for substance abuse and other risky behavior which can seriously impede their chances of continuing their education or finding employment.

To help foster youth make healthier decisions in their lives, FPH has adapted a proven program called Street Smart, to help meet the needs of "at risk" foster youth in Hawai'i. Research has shown that youth who participate in the six week long program decrease risky behaviors and improve upon making healthier choices.

With recent funding from the Downtown Exchange Club and NFL Charities, a series of Street Smart groups will be held for youth in Honolulu. Teenagers

participating in the program learn about substance abuse prevention, STD and pregnancy prevention, practicing abstinence and safer sex, building healthy peer relationships, and developing positive coping skills in a fun, interactive environment.

Street Smart groups will be expanded to East Hawai'i next year, thanks to a contract from the Office of Youth Services. Approximately 70 boys and girls will be participating in a series of six groups, helping them make sound personal choices. "This will be the first time the new and innovative Street Smart program will be offered to youth on Hawai'i Island," claims Keith Kuboyama, Clinical Director and program supervisor.



Listen to what these youth have to say about their involvement in the program.

"It is a place where I can comfortably share and express my feelings and problems."

"It is a place where my experiences are similar to others' in the group."

"I am learning to have self-confidence and be proud of myself."

"I am able to talk about my problems and learn from others' mistakes."

Aloha.

It is all about Kids!
Raising happy healthy children is not an easy job, especially in economically challenging times.



Current understanding of the needs of children emphasize that children should be raised within their own families, whenever possible. They need permanency and stability, and they need protection.

While some of our programs like Ho'omalū O Na Kamali'i, our receiving home, and Project Visitation work directly with children, much of our efforts are to council, train and support families so they can raise happy, healthy children. These families may be birth parents, family members caring for the children or resource caregivers.

Family Programs Hawai'i takes its role in assisting families in this all important process, very seriously. We need all of you in the community to help us with this huge task. Thank you for your valuable contributions to the children.

Remember: It is all about Kids!

Mahalo,

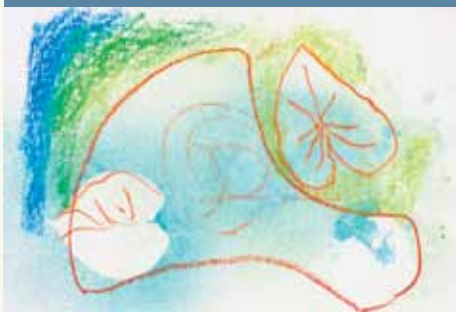
Linda Santos,
President & CEO



Family Programs Hawai'i believes that every child deserves to build childhood memories with their siblings.

Stories Behind the Pictures

The HeART of Our Keiki exhibit has come to a close after being on display for over two months at the Bank of Hawaii Honolulu Branch, Arts at Marks Garage and The Plaza Club. FPH hopes to have brought increased awareness and insight to the community regarding the daily struggles, challenges, dreams and aspirations of kids in foster care. What moved the viewers the most were the stories and quotes from the artists, which provided them with a more intimate glimpse into their lives.



"I am a foster kid and I am good...do not forget me." ~ A.G.

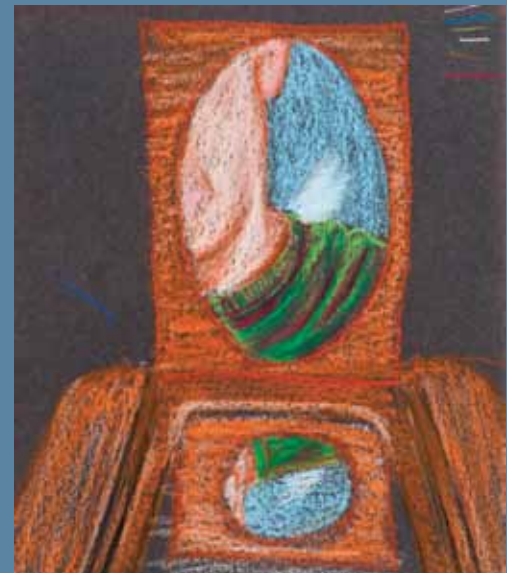
These words ring true for many kids in the foster care system. And while some are unable to express their feelings through words, many were able to express themselves with color.



"What makes me weak, and I deal with it, makes me stronger. Every foster kid should know this." ~ L.S.

UNFINISHED

Troy arrived at Ho'omalū O Na Kamali'i as a 17 year old boy with only 3 months

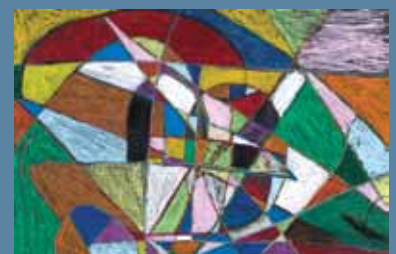


before he would turn 18 and "age out" of the Child Welfare System. He came from a family background of abuse and neglect, homelessness and drug use. Troy struggled to find a place where he could feel like he truly belonged. He had lived in several different foster homes and drug and alcohol use was a feeble attempt to escape the pain of abandonment and hurt.

Despite his hard life Troy has so much compassion and talent. He showed a softer side of himself when he was around the younger children in the home and when he volunteered in the community. He also tried to do positive things to help himself towards independent living. Unfortunately he ran away just before he turned 18.

Troy has a special gift in drawing and painting. His artwork provided a therapeutic expression of his inner feelings. One particular landscape on canvas clearly demonstrated his talent but it remains unfinished. The painting is like a depiction of Troy's life story... great potential but unfinished in so many areas.

Today Troy is an 18 year old adult. He recently resurfaced and has entered a drug



rehabilitation program. For Troy and many foster children like him, their story continues even after they turn 18, with hope for a new beginning and a picture of life that speaks a thousand words of happiness and success.

~ Yvonne Samia

THE BIG PICTURE

I ran into Jean Creadick, an old friend I had not seen for a while, at the HeART exhibit. We talked about our favorite pieces and Jean described a diptych that, seen together, represented a beautiful scene. Jean commented that the story was about two brothers who were separated (one was on the mainland) and she loved that one of the pieces

was smaller than the other, and it almost seemed like the smaller one was looking up to the bigger one. I didn't recall seeing the diptych even though I had looked at all the art and so I asked Jean to help me locate it, and that's when we had a big surprise. Have you ever looked directly at something and not really seen it? That's what happened to me. I had focused so much attention on one of the pieces that I hadn't noticed that it went hand in hand with the piece next to it, making a diptych. But Jean had seen the whole picture. Ironically, the smaller piece had caught my eye and that was the one that I bought!

Jean decided that she had to buy the larger one and we agreed that we wanted to keep the pieces together. We hope the art will provide inspiration for keeping siblings together because even when parents can't care for them, the siblings still care about and love each other. Jean and I are looking for great suggestions for the perfect home for these beautiful works of art!

~ Elizabeth Kent



Reaching Their Dreams

Family Programs Hawai'i ensures that children in foster care have access to positive relationships, educational resources, and support services that help them achieve their dreams and aspirations. Your support has been an important factor in their success.



My 10-year-old foster daughter once told me "you don't know what it feels like to be a foster child". I concurred with her that I really didn't know what it felt to be a foster child. Thankfully, we found support groups to be a place where our kids could see that they are not alone, and from conversations with their peers, discover that some kids are adjusting well, and that they can heal from hurts. ~ Foster Mom

When we first entered foster care, I couldn't see my sister and brothers. I used to have huge meltdowns in school and during sports. Now we have a close connection. Through Project Visitation, we have gotten a lot closer and our family bond is strong. After everything we have been through, now we know how much we mean to each other. I appreciate all of the volunteers and people making this happen for us. It means a lot to me. ~ Foster Youth

See how these transitioning foster youth are reaching their dreams:

- Judy, a junior at U.H., plans to be a social worker. She currently works at the Kapiolani Peer Mentoring Program and is becoming a resource caregiver to her younger brother.
- Ariel will graduate Heald College with her Associates Degree in Medical Assisting and is applying to nursing school in the fall.
- Chloe will graduate from Leeward Community College with her Associates Degree in Botany this year and is applying to attend a four year college next year.



Plant Therapy

University Lab School students recently created a sustainable Aquaponics garden for children at Ho'omalulu O Na Kamili'i as part

of their school's service learning project. Additionally they developed an interactive workshop for children at the Resource Family Support Groups to teach them about plants and sustainability.

The children were taught how to identify plantings, the different ways to plant a garden and care for single container gardening. A small aquaponic system was also donated to Ho'omalulu. Field books were created for the children to track the progress of their different plants.

One Ho'omalulu client would invite the volunteers to see his garden. He pointed out every plant and was very proud of their progress. One volunteer commented, "He knew every plant. He said that he cares for them every day. Maybe that's what he needed. I can see that this is very therapeutic for him."

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Mahalo

Mahalo from the kids whose lives you have touched. We believe that our donors are making a difference in the lives of our children in foster care. The children recognize and appreciate the investment you make in their lives.

“Thank you so much for everything you’ve done for me. Prom would not have been half as amazing without your kindness. Keep doing what you are doing because you are making a great impact on many foster teens, including myself.” ~ EMM

“I’m thankful that I could get what I needed to help me with school. With the new clothes and shoes

that I bought, I feel really great and confident. It has raised my self esteem a lot. Having these things will release some of the stress from everything.” ~ BB

“Before I got the bus pass it was difficult getting to school because my mom and sister were too busy to give me rides. If I could not get to school, I just stayed home. But now that I have a pass, catching the bus is a lot easier and I don’t have to depend on other people.” ~ B

“Thank you for your generous gifts for our three sons. It has been a big help for us in the time of our hardship. As parents we see the joy in our sons faces.” ~ B&C

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