



**HUI HO'OMALU
STATEWIDE
RESOURCE
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

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Building Connections

A Newsletter for Resource Families



Volume 3, Issue 1

October 2009

'OHANA CONNECTIONS CORNER

For this 'Ohana Connections Corner I spoke with Misty Watkins, a former foster youth who transitioned out of the system in 2008. I first met Misty when she was seventeen.

Misty believed her father was dead. Why wouldn't he be? Her mother and grandmother had both died within six months of each other when she was just fourteen years old. When Misty did a Mormon Church registry search for her father, David Watkins, and she read "Deceased" she didn't question it. She hadn't seen him since she was two years old; it wasn't hard to think of him as gone.

For legal purposes, EPIC was enlisted to locate her father's death certificate. After extensive searching, nothing was found so we began looking to see if her father was alive after all. Fortunately, while making cold calls, I stumbled upon his step-mother, who excitedly passed on my contact information to David.

Below are highlights of a conversation I had with Misty about her reconnection with her father.

*—Wilma Friesema, OES
EPIC 'Ohana Conferencing, Inc.*

By Misty Watkins & Wilma Friesema

Taking New Steps

Wilma: Misty, do you remember what it was like when you first heard that your father was alive?

Misty: My social worker, Catherine, called and said she wanted to meet me after school. I was the editor of the school paper and was supposed to meet with a teacher and the rest of the paper's staff. I told the teacher I'd be a few minutes late -- she knew I was in foster care and had to meet with my social worker sometimes.

When Catherine said, "We found your dad" I was stunned. I didn't know what to do. She asked if I wanted to call him while she was there, but I was in too much shock. I couldn't call him, I was just trying to absorb that he was alive!

I went to my school paper meeting, but as soon as I walked in my friends asked me what was wrong. I didn't answer, I just tried to do the work, but I couldn't focus. I had to call my dad.

It felt awkward and weird to say, "This is your daughter." I remember him saying, "Finally." He had been searching for me too.

Wilma: What happened after that first phone call? How did you get to know each other?

Misty: After that first call we talked on the phone every so often and emailed letters and pictures. My dad lives in Utah with my step-mother, Karen. My grandfather lives there too.

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The Hui Ho‘omalua 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

To be placed on the mailing list or if you would like to receive an electronic copy, please call 441-1125 (O‘ahu), 888-879-8970 (Toll Free) or E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

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

‘OHANA CONNECTIONS CORNER (cont.)

Misty (cont.): Prior to contacting my dad, I was planning on attending Brigham Young University on O‘ahu, and I left Kaua‘i that fall. I didn't do so well and my financial aid was cut. Meanwhile, I aged out of the system and had nowhere to go. My dad had said I could live with him when I first called; though we barely knew each other I decided to take him up on his offer.

Wilma: That was a big step. How did it feel to see him in person?

Misty: He didn't really need to hold up a sign at the airport – we recognized each other immediately. We hugged, but I didn't cry. To tell the truth, it was all so overwhelming I felt pretty numb. It reminded me of meeting a new foster parent; you don't really know each other yet you're automatically in this pretty intimate family relationship.

Moving in felt like entering a new foster home too, it had that same awkwardness and uncertainty. We didn't know what to say to each other at first, but eventually we started talking more. We also brought out the photo albums and that helped a lot. It helped me to get a sense of my dad's life and family, and the history that I missed.

I've learned more about my mom too, and that's helped to fill in the blanks. Some of the information has been hard, but overall I feel like I have a better understanding of why things were the way they were and why I am the way I am sometimes. I feel more empowered to not repeat some of the mistakes both my parents made.

Wilma: How are the two of you doing now?

Misty: One of my favorite sayings is, "Nobody said it would be easy, but it will be worth it." That's how I feel about reconnecting with my dad. It wasn't easy moving away from Hawai'i, the only home I had known. I left behind friends, my brothers, all that was familiar. I had to take a risk and get to know the dad I never had. I had to stretch out of my comfort zone, but it *has* been worth it. I now know my family and that I have the strength to try new things.

This Christmas I will be traveling to visit a friend in Panamá. My dad is protective and supportive, both at the same time. I'm eighteen now and he says I have the right to make my own decisions, but he wants me to be very, very careful. He's insistent that I stay in school too. I'm glad he's that way.

My dad and I can't make up for the lost years, but we are building a relationship that will carry us into the future. It hasn't always been easy, but it's definitely worth it. My major in school is international studies. I hope to travel a lot in my life; stepping into this relationship and getting to know my dad has helped me to feel more confident as I step out into the world.



*For more information about ‘Ohana Connections work
contact Wilma Friesema at EPIC ‘Ohana Conferencing, Inc. at 748-7921*

Cycling For a Cause

By Carol Morimoto,
Partners in Development Foundation-Hui Ho'omalua

"How can I help Hawai'i's keiki in foster care?" is the question that Dianna Hand asked herself as she prepared for a two month, cross country, cycling adventure in the southern United States. As a veteran cyclist, she has done many of these rides, meeting numerous people along the way. Oftentimes, she is asked if she is riding for a cause or representing a charity and this year she will answer, "Yes." Dianna decided to spread the word about foster care in Hawai'i as she would like to one day become a resource caregiver herself. After calling Hui Ho'omalua to gather more information, she was off to the mainland with brochures in hand.

She hopes to obtain donations for Hawai'i's resource families and keiki in foster care although she recognizes the amounts, if any, may vary. Regardless of what she receives, it is wonderful that Dianna has incorporated her love of cycling with her desire to help our families and keiki.

We wish her a safe ride across the states and a big MAHALO for her support!



Mama Kazama's Mantra Moments...

By Lynne Kazama,
DHS Program Development Staff



SHAKA MAMA KAZAMA

"During these very challenging economic times, there are high emotions and fears. At the same time, I have seen grace, kindness, support for each other, creativity, steadfastness in work & in caring for our children & families. Let's take care of ourselves--- and help each other and our children & families & communities to get through these tough times. Mālama! Kōkua!"



HELP EXISTING RESOURCE FAMILIES AND THOSE GOING THROUGH THE LICENSING PROCESS!

Kōkua 'Ohana will be selling \$5 tickets for Windward Mall's Festival of Giving. The tickets are valuable for all sorts of discounts, free samples, and door prizes on November 14th & 15th! 100% of the proceeds will go to the Kōkua 'Ohana program in their efforts to recruit and support resource families!

Please visit the Kōkua 'Ohana page on the website www.pidfoundation.org

Advertise in the Newsletter—Promote Your Business

100% of the proceeds will be used towards supporting our foster/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'omalua—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'omalua RAC reserves the right to accept, reject or edit advertisements, articles and notices of events based on publication schedule, space limitations, and appropriateness.

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
(O'ahu) 441-1125
(Toll Free) 888-879-8970



ANNOUNCING NEW POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

PEER SUPPORT AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

Kids Hurt Too, a non-profit organization located in Honolulu, creates a safe and loving environment where children, teens, and caregivers engage in learning healthy and safe ways to cope with parent separation and loss. Through *Kids Hurt Too*, children and teens develop positive connections with trained adult mentors and have opportunities to participate in culturally based mentoring programs; tutoring and free computer classes are also available. **Groups are limited to 12 children and 12 teens.**

Every 1st and 3rd Monday of the month from 6 PM to 8PM

Resource families are invited to participate in a peer support group for children and teens that are in care between the ages of 3 and 19 years old. Group night's start with dinner at 6:00 PM and then from 6:30 to 8:00 PM groups for children, teens, and caregivers meet in separate areas. Children can work through struggles with their transitions in positive ways, participating in a talking circle, doing arts and crafts, or releasing frustrations on the playground or in the volcano room. Guidelines help create and teach safe and positive behaviors for coping with and managing the difficulties associated with out-of-home placements. Resource families are supported and can gain knowledge and skills in helping children cope with children's grief and trauma. An adult must accompany children.

INTERACT CLUB FOR YOUTH IN CARE (SPONSORED BY PAU HANA ROTARY CLUB)

The Interact Club under the Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition is organizing now! It will meet monthly (day to be determined) and is for youth, ages 14-18. It provides opportunities for leadership, community service, and access to educational resources.

FBI JUNIOR SPECIAL AGENT PROGRAM

For youth in care in 5th, 6th, 7th, & 8th grades. Program meets on Wednesdays from 2:30-3:30 pm twice a month.

To sign up **or** for more information contact Kids Hurt Too at kidshurttoo@hawaiiintel.net; call **545-5683**; visit our website at www.kidshurttoo.org/whatsnew.php or call Cynthia at **256-3176**.

Please don't let transportation be an obstacle. We are working on transportation resources.



Located at 245 North Kukui Street, Suite 203, Honolulu, HI

A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

By Michelle Sajona, Parent to Parent Mentoring Program Coordinator
Resource Families Support Services, Family Programs Hawai'i

Since Parent to Parent Mentoring began in 2007, 26 Resource Families have been matched together in a mentoring partnership. In these partnerships, Resource Families have shared their best and worst experiences with each other, they have encouraged and supported one another to stay strong, and they have inspired each other to become even better Resource Families. This encouragement, support, and inspiration unfolded in the pairing of Margarita and Jennifer.



Margarita, a single mother of one, was called upon to be a child-specific resource caregiver and agreed to care for two more. New to the foster care system and the intricacies of being a resource caregiver, she turned to Parent to Parent Mentoring for some help. She was paired with Jennifer, who was caring for 6 children (one biological, 2 adopted, and 3 foster). Jennifer was very willing to help Margarita learn about the foster care system and where to go for the right information.

With their busy schedules, they found it easiest to communicate via email. Their mentoring relationship developed even when communicating through email. At the end of their 6 month match commitment, here is what Margarita had to say about Jennifer:

“Jennifer truly has been very supportive! She has provided many *detailed* resources and then followed up with me to ensure I successfully achieved what I needed. There were many resources I was not aware of and even when I asked her a question—and I asked many—she was very willing to help. When she did not know the answer to my question she would find the individual who could help me. The websites she provided were also valuable; we obtained funding for the teens under the enhancement program, food supplies for Thanksgiving, school supplies, parenting classes to increase my knowledge, and “free” activities for the whole family. This was by far the most helpful because it provided me with a financial resource which I did not have before. Also through her assistance I was able to obtain educational benefits for my teens—a great and much needed resource.

Her emails brought inspiration and her shared experiences helped keep me sane. The caring of teens is by far the most difficult and challenging journey any foster parent can encounter and Jennifer provided me with guidance. Even if most of our conversations were via email, she truly inspired me and helped me get through some very tiring and difficult times.

I would love to continue participating in your program as it has been very helpful and has provided me not only with resources but emotional support and inspiration. Jennifer was a grand help and a valuable source of information. Thank you so very much for this program and for the individuals who take the time and commitment to help us new foster parents.”

Margarita continues to be active and involved in caring for youth in foster care. Since Margarita’s match ended, she has taken in 2 more foster youth for a total of 5 teenagers. She has benefited greatly from the information Jennifer has shared with her.

**Parent to Parent Mentoring is looking for more Resource Families to support.
If you would like to participate in our program, please call 521-9531 ext. 247.**

MAHALO TO...

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 & what makes them so special so we can let others know how wonderful they are!

Thank them today!

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

Family Programs Hawai'i's 11th Annual Holiday Party



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAII

Family Programs Hawai'i is pleased to present our 11th Annual Holiday Party on Saturday, December 5th, 2009 at the Neil S. Blaisdell Center Exhibition Hall from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Staff and volunteers of Family Programs Hawai'i and the Department of Human Services will be providing over 2,000 foster children and their families with a wonderful day filled with music, dance, activities, gifts, and a traditional holiday feast. This year's entertainment will include Jake Shimabukuro, Po'okela, and the UH Trombone Choir. The event is free to all Resource, Guardianship, and Adoptive families. Look for your invitation in the mail in late October or call the Warm Line for more information at 545-1130. See you there!



YMCA & Furlough Day Fun

The YMCA of Honolulu will be offering one-day programs on the public schools' scheduled furlough days, beginning on October 23 (Fri). All-day programs will include homework time and guidance, enrichment projects, recreational and sports-related activities.

Registration will open on September 29 (Tues). You can register on their website or in person at your local YMCA.

Confirmed locations include the following YMCA branches: Central, Kaimuki-Waialae, Kalihi, Leeward, Mililani, Nuuanu, Windward and YMCA Camp Erdman on the North Shore. Rates and hours will vary by branches. The YMCA is currently working with the DOE to expand programming to school site facilities.

Visit their website at: www.ymcahonolulu.org or call 531-YMCA (9622) for more information.

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!

Suggestions? Feedback?

We would 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!

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

"Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD): What is it? And, how does it affect learning?"

Presented by: Learning Disabilities Association of Hawai'i

This **FREE** training is open to all resource, adoptive, guardianship & kinship families

For more information or to RSVP, contact the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 (Toll Free) ★ 545-1130 (O'ahu)

Dinner will be provided!

Childcare for ages 3-12 will be provided!



See Calendar of Events on pg 7 for dates & times

Sponsored by the Department of Human Services, Family Programs Hawai'i, and Foster Care Training Committee

Quality Assurance Corner

Annual Questionnaire For Resource Families

The surveys are in! Thank you to all the resource caregivers who have completed the Annual Questionnaire For Resource Families 2009. We greatly appreciate your important feedback as we continue efforts in improving our services for resource caregivers statewide. Also, we would like to congratulate the ten lucky winners of the \$50 gift card drawing.



Focus Groups

Earlier this year we completed the resource caregiver focus groups on O'ahu. For the neighbor islands, feedback from resource caregivers are currently gathered via telephone interview. Resource caregivers for these QA activities are randomly selected and contacted if they are interested in participating. The purpose of these focus groups and telephone interviews is to gather feedback from resource caregivers who have gone through the licensing process with Hui Ho'omalua. A \$25 gift card incentive is given to those resource caregivers who attend a focus group or complete a telephone interview. Thanks again to all the resource caregivers who have participated so far; your input will help ensure that we are providing quality services!



- Congratulations To The Winners of this Year's \$50 Gift Card Drawing!**
- Amparo Alvarez-Parker - Kurtistown, Hawai'i
 - Elizabeth Luuloo - Kaunakakai, Moloka'i
 - James Wada - Kailua, O'ahu
 - Janice Bond - Līhu'e, Kaua'i
 - Leticia Okino - Lawai, Kaua'i
 - Norma Estrada-Favela - Pukalani, Maui
 - Oscar Friels - Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i
 - Roberta Habon - Kaunakakai, Moloka'i
 - Rod Quam - Lahaina, Maui

For further information about the surveys or focus groups, contact Jason Badua, Quality Assurance and Improvement Specialist at: (808) 441-1126.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER:

- 20 Hilo, Hawaii Training: "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD): What is it? And, how does it affect learning?"** 5:30 pm—8 pm. Church of the Holy Cross. RSVP required. (See pg. 6 for more info)
- 23 Halawa Resource Families Support Group.** Dinner provided at 5:30 pm. Support Group & childcare (for registered children ages 3-12): 6-8pm. Halawa District Park. RSVP to Family Programs Hawai'i (FPH) at 521-9531, ext. 245 by 10/16/09.
- 30 Waianae, Oahu Training: "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD): What is it? And, how does it affect learning?"** 5:30 pm—8 pm. Waianae District Park. RSVP required by 10/23/09. (See pg. 6 for more info)

NOVEMBER:

- 4 Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i Training: "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD): What is it? And, how does it affect learning?"** 5:30pm—8 pm. Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center. RSVP required by 10/28/09. (See pg. 6 for more info)
- 7 "Stress, Burnout and Bouncing Back in Adoption and Permanency Conference".** HAPA Conference. 8:30am-2:30pm. Kalihi Union Church. For more information, contact 535-0110. For scholarship information, call the Warm Line at 545-1130.
- 12 Līhu'e, Kauai Training: "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD): What is it? And, how does it affect learning?"** 5:30pm—8 pm. Līhu'e Lutheran Church. RSVP required by 11/5/09. (See pg. 6 for more info)
- 13 Windward Resource Families Support Group.** Details to follow.
- 14 Hilo Resource Families Support Group.** Details to follow.
- 17 'Aiea, Oahu Training: "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD): What is it? And, how does it affect learning?"** 5:30pm—8 pm. Halawa District Park. RSVP required by 11/10/09. (See pg. 6 for more info)
- 19 Maui Resource Families Support Group.** Details to follow.
- 20 Waianae Resource Families Support Group.** Details to follow.

DECEMBER:

- 5 Family Programs Hawai'i's 11th Annual Holiday Party.** 10am-3pm. Neil S. Blaisdell Exhibition Hall—Free to all Resource, Guardianship, and Adoptive Families. Look for your invitation in the mail or call the Warm Line 545-1130. (See pg. 6 for more info)
- 11 Halawa Resource Families Support Group.** Details to follow.

JANUARY:

- 8 (Tentative Date) FREE Better Start College Prep Workshop.** Childcare provided. Dinner is at 5:30pm. Workshops for caregivers & teens: 6pm-8pm. Leeward Community College. Targeted to help High School seniors fill out financial aide forms for college. For more information contact Jennifer at 521-9531 ext. 297.



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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.

RAC Committee Members:

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

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