Aloha

There has been a leadership change for Project Ho‘omohala since the last newsletter. Dr. M. Stanton Michels, the Chief of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (which is the recipient of our federal funding), is now the Principal Investigator with overall responsibility for the project. I became Project Director in February when Carol Matsuoka decided to move on to another systems-change project in the juvenile justice system. I would like to thank Carol for making Project Ho‘omohala such a smooth-running organization with a wonderful staff! Fortunately we will be able to benefit from her continued involvement as a member of our Governing Council.

Since the last newsletter, significant developments have included the creation of a Strategic Plan by the Governing Council through several days of in-depth discussion, and creation of a Social Marketing Plan by our social marketer, Jan Nagano. Our funding agency in Washington let us know that both plans were judged to be excellent. Our new Youth Coordinator, Ian Tapu, joined Project Ho‘omohala in December and is based at our Susannah Wesley Community Center site, where he has already organized numerous activities that help to engage and motivate youth to participate in our transition program.

A variety of social marketing activities have raised community awareness about Project Ho‘omohala. One of these activities has been radio broadcasts of public service announcements about the project. We also had television coverage of one of the youth activities held over Spring break (learning to surf at Waikiki Beach). All of our project staff took part in Children’s Mental Health Awareness Events during May. We now have promotional materials available, including bumper stickers, post-its, and information packets. The project website has been upgraded and is well worth a visit at http://www.projecthoomohala.org. New website features include photos from many of the youth activities, a YouTube link to a poetry slam performance by a project youth, and several youth success stories.

Our four Transition Specialists (Kawika Koch, Rosanne Smollan, Kekoa Tassill, and Sunny Kim) have been proactively using their many community and agency contacts to promote the project and obtain referrals of youth in need of our transition services. These services are meant for youth with mental health diagnoses who also receive services from at least two agencies and who live in the areas served by Farrington, McKinley, and Roosevelt High Schools. If you would like to make a referral, please contact our Clinical Director, Jon Motohiro, at 440-5815.

May 15 was a significant day for Project Ho‘omohala. In the early afternoon, our Governing Council met with a focus on reports from several committees established in its Strategic Plan. This was followed by an open house where a number of youth and parents were recognized with plaques and gifts for their commitment and progress. One of our parents, Maria, volunteered her time to cook up a feast for everyone. Then in the evening there was a “community jam” with fun activities and a dance for youth in the community, including our Project Ho‘omohala participants, many of whom pitched in to help with the preparations that made this event a big success.

Thanks to all the many folks who have supported Project Ho‘omohala since it started up at the end of 2006. It is obvious that our focus on transition to adulthood is helping to meet a big need, and we are starting to work on keeping these services going after federal funding ends in late 2011. Be sure to get in touch if you have any comments or suggestions!

David Leake, Director, Project Ho‘omohala
It was a heartfelt evening of celebration and joy for the youth of Project Ho’omohala. Many of the youth were taken by surprise as their Transition Specialists individually acknowledged each youth for their personal achievements, journey and positive transformation in front of their friends and family at Project Ho’omohala’s first Open House on May 15th at Susannah Wesley Community Center. This was also an opportunity for Project Ho’omohala to showcase their evolution as a community program that serves urban Honolulu and to outreach to youth, families and the community.

Special recognition went to many of the youth who graduated high school, got accepted into community college, have persevered and maintained a positive attitude through tough times. Some of the youth were acknowledged for their scholastic achievements and most were for their personal growth. This was an evening of celebration as each youth was publicly recognized and given a framed certificate, a gift certificate to Jamba Juice and lei for all that they have accomplished in their participation with Project Ho’omohala. Very special shout out to the Transition Specialists, Rosanne Smallan, Kawika Koch, Kekoa Tassill and Sunny Kim who gave such moving recognition of the personal stories of transformation of these youth.

Special acknowledgement also went to some of the families as well who have made great strides in their participation in Project Ho’omohala. Families play an important role in Project Ho’omohala as they help to guide their son or daughter in making positive life decisions. Jonni Adaniya, PH’s Family Specialist, gave special tribute to parents Lisa and Maria for their contribution to the Project.

Big mahalo goes to Ian Tapu, PH’s Youth Coordinator who presented a slide show of all the youth activities and also help the youth to surprise PH’s four Transition Specialists with certificates of recognition for their hard work and patience in helping them fulfill their dreams. It showed the positive impact from the Transition Specialists who work so hard with their youth day to day to help make their hopes and dreams become a reality.

Lastly, one of the highlights of Impact ’09 was a Success Stories video produced by Kekoa Tassill. This video gave personal accounts by the youth of how they’ve personally been transformed by their participation in Project Ho’omohala. This video gave meaning to why all of us at Project Ho’omohala do what we do.

By all accounts, Project Ho’omohala’s first Open House was a great success!
Empowering Activities by Chelsey Yamamura

The following Empowering Activities are from a PowerPoint presentation by Chelsey Yamamura (PH’s Youth Consultant), at the Portland State University’s 2009 Building on Family Strengths Conference. She represented Project Ho’omohala well and shared with other programs the life lessons the youth learn through fun youth activities.

**Makapu‘u Lighthouse Hike**

The hike is known for whale watching.

- Helps to keep kids interested in the beauty of exercise.
- Teaching kids alternate ways to exercise.

**Surfing**

- Learning valuable water and ocean safety tips.
- Learning to keep environment clean.

Positive Feedback & Shoutouts!

"I don’t know how to express how thankful I am for Project Ho’omohala. I learned about this project through our social worker Rachel. I strongly believe that this project helped my family to better handle crisis situations and family problems. Not only has it been a big help to me but also for my daughter. This project also gives inspiration for my daughter and also me. I hope that this project will continue to be a big help for families that are struggling through their support. It has been a big help and brought great changes in our lives. Changes that brought a closer relationship with our family. We learned how we can improve our relationships with family and also with friends." Danny

"Dear Jonni, (Jonni is the Family Specialist for Project Ho’omohala)

I am writing this so you to let you know how important you’ve become to me. You have made such an impact on my life and truly have become a lifesaver to me. I always believe there is a reason for everything in life whether we like it or not. You have become such a great mentor to me and a true friend as well. Hawai‘i Family as Allies and Project Ho’omohala are very lucky to have you. They would really lose out if you were not there!!

Thanks to you I have become involved with the Children’s Council Parent Support, Governing Council, and that’s just to name a few. Thanks to you I am getting involved again and starting to have some hope again after everything I have been through the last few years. It still hurts but with your help and guidance the pain has lessened some. You have given me laughter and help me regain some self-confidence in myself as well. I am blessed everyday that you have been in my life and for this I will be forever grateful.

There are not enough words to express my thanks to you! I am looking forward to keep working with you and being your friend. Once again thank you for being there for me.

Sincerely, Lisa"
PH Profile - Ian Tapu, Youth Coordinator

One of the great aspects of Project Ho'omohala is the people that serve on PH’s Team. One such person is Ian Tapu, PH’s Youth Coordinator... or the Fun Developer. His role is to create activities for the youth to help engage them plus broaden their horizons to incorporate life lessons through fun activities.

When you meet Ian, one doesn’t realize his vast experience in working with youth because he looks so young. One sees a local boy, born and raised on the North Shore, and a graduate of Kahuku High School. Ian is quite an exceptional person!

After graduating Kahuku High School, Ian went on to Dartmouth College in New Hampshire where he got his BA degree in Native American Studies with a minor in Education and Public Policy in 2008. Ian brings a lot of experience working with youth from mentoring at risk youth in a Dream Mentoring Program in Vermont, organizing workshops for youth to help them learn about the college admission process, volunteering at the Cheyenne River Youth Project in South Dakota. Ian was 1 of 12 American fellows selected to participate in a series of lectures and discussions on topics relating to human rights with a focus on minority rights. In 2008 Ian was a research and development Intern for the Eine Welt der Viievalt in Germany where he gathered data on the effectiveness of diversity education in police training throughout the European Union, as well as research for the GendRace Project implementing anti-discrimination legislation. He also volunteered on a three -week service trip to Lithuania to restore and catalog over 300 graves that were affected by the Holocaust plus an education project working with high school students to learn more about the Holocaust.

What makes Ian so unique to Project Ho'omohala is not only what he brings to the project, but the activities that Ian has put together thus far to engage the youth and make it fun to learn about life and about themselves. Some of the great activities you will see on pages 3 and 4.

Ian is passionate about his work at PH. “I love what I am doing at Project Ho’omohala. It helps me keep grounded and connected to Hawai'i with real issues that face our youth. I feel that the work that we do at Project Ho’omohala really matters because it changes lives. It is so fulfilling for me to work here. I just hope I can be that resource and mentor for our youth because this helps me to not take anything for granted. My hope for the program is to be a prototype for not just Kailihi Palama, but to serve other communities in Hawai'i as well. My goal for Project Ho’omohala is to develop the Youth Council so that the youth can determine for themselves what activities they want to do. I love community work and social justice issues and I hope by working with the youth that they have a voice.”

Community Jam

On May 15th, Project Ho’omohala and Boshen Entertainment presented Rep Respect Community Jam at Susannah Wesley Community Center. There was a Dance Crew, Open Mic, Rock band, graffiti art, plus prizes and food. This event was open to all youth in the community.

I’ve Got the Power

by Carol Matsuoka

Carol Matsuoka, past Project Director of Project Ho’omohala presented at the Building Upon Family Strengths Conference in Portland along with other representatives of the project.

For some, speaking in front of a crowd of strangers is a talent that takes time to skillfully master. Unfortunately I belong to the group that has to invest a significant amount of time “working through my fear” of speaking in front a crowd. Then, there are those gifted and talented presenters who can captivate an audience from the first word they speak. Project Ho’omohala’s Teen Consultant Chelsey Yamamura belongs to the group of gifted and talented presenters as evidenced by her performance at the Portland State University’s 2009 Building on Family Strengths Conference.

With over forty people in the audience, Chelsey was the lead presenter of a symposium entitled, “I’ve Got the Power.” Co-presenting with Chelsey were Rosanne Smollan, Linda Machado, Jazmin Boots, and me. The focus of the conference was on youth empowerment through participation in designing, delivering, and evaluating services and supports in systems of care. Chelsey skillfully integrated her “real life” experiences as she spoke about how an ethnically diverse community created innovative approaches to support young people as they mature into adulthood roles. The audience was undoubtedly curious with her presentation on how empowering a process that focused on her wants, needs, hopes and dreams can be.

As a teen consultant to the project, Chelsey shared about how empowering it is to be respected in truly meaningful ways. The audience asked questions about her role in the project and they were quite impressed to hear that she was one of several youth who were instrumental in interviewing and hiring new project staff, and how she influenced and developed culturally relevant peer to peer supports. In addition, it was quite obvious how well she worked with her transition specialist, Rosanne Smollan. Rosanne followed Chelsey with a presentation on how young people are progressing in the project based on progress tracker data and on outcome measures from the National evaluation protocol.

Project Ho’omohala supports young people only in urban Honolulu. Jazmin Boots, Hawai’i Youth Helping Youth (HYHY), presented on how the organization empowers young people throughout the State. Jazmin is the current and past president of HYHY. She is a single mother studying to be a nurse at the University of Hawai’i at Hilo. Hawai’i can be proud of these two brilliant, sharp witted young women who have courageously overcome their challenges.

Empowered Transition by Kekoa Tassill, Transition Specialist

No words can express how proud I am of James. Our journey started in mid April 2009 when James showed up asking about our CRASE program here at the center. From there I have found myself struggling to keep up with his progress. He not only enrolled in the CRASE program but, after being out of school for nearly a year and a half, passed his first book on the first try!! He has since learned how to write resumes, apply for jobs and effectively interview for positions. Using some of those skills he was able to gain a position for summer employment working with our summer program learning new skills and even TEACHING his own ukulele classes in the morning. Because of his efforts he was recognized in our first annual open house with a “vision award” recognizing James extraordinary drive to draw his own line in the sand. He is a truly remarkable youth who, if asked, will smile and give you a look like it’s no big deal but he truly keeps me motivated to find that vision which comes so effortlessly to James in all my youth.