Dear Friends,

The past eighteen months has been a full agenda for Project Ho‘omohala and its partners. This newsletter represents positive and noteworthy events with both local and national impact. It highlights the accomplishments of our young people who have benefited from the support and commitment of project staff.

We continue to focus significant attention on four core areas:

» Developing the workforce and professionals in the evidence-informed Transition to Independence Process (TIP) model
» Youth leadership
» Developing pathways to empower youth and their families to be equal partners in the Project
» Governance and quality assurance

Here are some of the highlights of our accomplishments:

» Kick off conference to inform the community and stakeholders on the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) model
» Trained staff in the TIP model
» Created a Young Adult Support Organization for the young people with serious emotional and behavioral difficulties
» Developed a Young Adult Advisory Committee
» Developed a curriculum for caregivers to help guide their child as they transition to adulthood
» Developed a project guidebook for caregivers
» Established a Governing Council comprised of stakeholders, advocacy groups and consumers
» Implemented a progress tracker for youth in transition in four domains (education, employment/career, living situation, and community life adjustment) of the TIP
» Applied and received additional funding to develop employment and economic opportunities for Project youth

Many young people and their families are working hard to reach their goals and achieve their dreams. For those who focus on young people, we invite you to participate in defining the strategies and actions needed to construct a system that offers all young people with serious emotional or behavioral challenges the support and services they need to move toward adulthood.

We deeply appreciate the support of our partners and members of the Governing Council for making this project a model in helping young people successfully transition into adulthood roles.

Aloha,

Project Director

Carol Matsuoka
Hawaii Receives Accolade for Social Marketing Strategies

Washington D.C. – Project Ho’omohala was awarded additional federal funds to enhance the current transition to adulthood service array being developed by the project. In April 2007, Project Ho’omohala submitted a competitive proposal for additional funding. The proposal focused on enhancing employment and economic development opportunities for young people being served by the project.

Project Ho’omohala Receives Federal Funds for Job Developer

Young people with serious emotional and behavioral challenges face even greater unemployment or underemployment difficulties when they enter the workforce. The fact is they have the lowest rates of employment than any other disability group. The goal of Project Ho’omohala is to ease the transition into the workforce for these young people by establishing employment opportunities and building employment models for young people.

These new funds are being allocated to subdivide a part-time job developer for the Project Community for and for micro-enterprise projects. Susannah Wesley Community Center (SWCC) will oversee the work of the Job Developer and Ali Aka is working with young people on the development of the micro-enterprise projects.

Project Ho’omohala is happy to announce the appointment of Jann Ca Bacungan to the position of Job Developer. Jann grew up in the Chinatown and Alii-Palama community attending Princess Nauiani Elementary School. His experience living in the Kalihi-Palama-Chinatown environment makes him very tuned into the needs of Project Ho’omohala’s youth. Jann holds a master’s degree in social work and has devoted much of his younger career to working with youth.

Jann will work closely with employers in the area, specifically the Kaili-Palama Business Association to develop opportunities for Project Ho’omohala’s youth. Jann’s involvement in the Project is an important and pivotal role in creating employment for the youth as well as enhances and expands the service care that Project Ho’omohala provides for the youth.

The success of Project Ho’omohala is only as successful as our youth. In this issue we feature three youths that have transformed themselves positively through determination and support. We applaud their personal achievements! (Note: the names have been changed at the request of the youth).

“Jenny” by Kate Keener, Transition Specialist @ Susannah Wesley Community Center

“Jenny” has faced a difficult life of sexual abuse, drug addictions and abusive relationships. She has maintained domestic violence in her home and came here rather than persist to poverty. “Jenny” was a resident of a drug treatment facility and was involved in multiple residential facilities for her behavior.

She has been employed by Project Ho’omohala since July 2007. In the beginning she did not want anything to do with the transition specialist because she felt she didn’t belong anywhere and had been rejected from society. One day she recognized the value of the C-Base teacher calling and didn’t have a session. She came to the agency to meet the C-Base teacher called and she was hooked. She continued to go to the session and opened her life to her mentor. She started to recover and was sober for over a year. She is attending school at SWCC and attends on her free days. She is working on acting classes with the money she earns.

In between school and help, she advocates for herself and she is determined to take her place in society. She is determined to make her progress.

“Chris” by Abraham Hernandez, Transition Specialist @ Susannah Wesley Community Center

“Chris”, a fourth grader that has been working with the part-time couple of months has shown significant improvements since the very first time that I read a book. Chris came in with Project Ho’omohala quite an individual who didn’t have any interest or the attention that he needed to go to school. He’s very new and came with a book and never once did he ask me for help. His work was extremely motivating. I have a student that does the exact same thing and comes to Project Ho’omohala.

Gradually, I found that student to want to do more and started to plan for this every week. He is starting to work in school and was a very shy youth who started with only 10 no longer shy and she could see the emotional resilience and personal happiness at school and home. I can see that he is not only growing and transitioning to adulthood.
Emmett Dennis
NFFCMH Newly Elected to the
(National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health)

Emmett is the Co-Executive Director and founder of Wai Aka, Inc., an organization that provides Technical Assistance, training, leadership and mentoring for the youth in transition. Wai Aka is a partner with Project Ho’omohala and commits to serve as an incubator and support in the development of a Youth Adult Support Organization called HELE. On Helping Every Leader Envision Our Needs. Wai Aka continues to serve the at-risk and underserved populations to provide opportunities for success. Project Ho’omohala is very proud to have Emmett on the FFCMH Board.

Moevao Petelo On Board of YouthMOVE!

Heartfelt congratulations to Moevao Petelo for his recent appointment to the Youth MOVE! Washington, D.C. through Voices of Experience National Board. Youth MOVE! is a spirited group whose purpose is to unite the voices and create a cultural alliance of young people to network with other young people across the country. The group envisioned their “brand name” for young people interested in participating or leading leadership. One of the goals of the organization Cultural Alliance of Young Adults in Transition, Transforming Their Communities (CAYATTC) is to foster cultural leadership among young people. While most adults attended presentations targeting adults, you could find the rest of the adults in the audience gathered around the “youth friendly” presentation entitled, “Got CHAOS.” This youth friendly presentation was appealing to both young people and adults. Youth presenters skillfully engaged the audience in their dreams of young people training and mentoring their peers through the establishment of a Cultural Leadership Academy. Young people and adults were truly inspired by the youth presenters as evidenced by the vivid conversations among the participants during and after the presentation. This is the first big step toward realizing a dream.

“Got CHAOS? Get CAYATTC!” was presented by Ernest Santos (youth), Moevao Petelo & Alofa Taei, Project Ho'omohala Youth Involvement/Resource Coordinators; Tammy Holschuh, Program Director; Emmett Dennis and Deborah Ruth Dennis, Co-Executive Directors, Wai Aka, Inc.

For more information on Youth MOVE go to www.tapartnership.org/youth/YouthMOVE.asp

Emmett Dennis and Santos, Youth; Ornelas, TA Officer; Becky Ornelas, TA Coordinator; Emrett Santos, Youth; Emnett Boews and Monaca Puhuma

WANTED: Project Ho’omohala seeks more referrals for transition age youth. If you know of any young people who are 15-21 years old residing in the Kalihi-Palama area, experiencing serious emotional or behavioral challenges, please call Jon Motohiro at 440-5815.

Heartfelt congratulations to Emmett Dennis for being elected to the Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health (NFFCMH) National Board at the 2008 Annual Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health Conference in December. The elected position recognizes Emmett for his contributions and commitment in furthering the cause of helping children with mental health needs and their families achieve a better quality of life. Emmett’s position on the Board gives Hawaii a connection to a national organization that serves to provide advocacy for the rights of children and youth with emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges, leadership and technical assistance to a national wide network of family run organizations, and collaborations with other family and child-serving organizations to transform mental health care in America.

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The Kalihi-Palama community is home to the second-largest population of Pacific Islanders in the state. Nearly 40 percent of the community is of Asian and Pacific Islander ancestry with 20% being foreign born immigrants. As seen in Table 1, the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the youth being served reflect these community characteristics. More specifically, the two largest single ethnic/racial groups served by Project Ho’omohala are Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. This finding further demonstrates that the project is targeting its racial/ethnic efforts.

In addition to the age and residency requirements noted above, youth also must have a qualifying Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 4th Edition (DSM-IV) diagnosis and be involved with two or more human service agencies at the time of intake in order to qualify for services. The diagnostic data are presented in Table 2.

The histories of the youth and their families shed some light on these percentages, although the results presented in Table 3 should be interpreted with caution given the small sample size. With regard to Mood Disorders, almost half of the youths served come from families with a history of depression. Given the familial pattern of Major Depressive Disorder, family history may at least partially explain the unusually large percentage of youth diagnosed with a Mood Disorder. As for PTSD and Acute Stress Disorder, more than half of the youth served have witnessed an act of domestic violence, more than one in four have been physically abused, and finally, almost 3 in 5 has been sexually abused. The prevalence of such experiences within this group may again partially explain the diagnostic data.

Given the age range, the percentages of youth diagnosed with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (17.9%), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (15.4%), and Conduct Disorder (23.1%) is perhaps not surprising. What is alarming, however, is in light that over half of the youth served are diagnosed with Mood Disorders (51.3%) and 20.5% with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Acute Stress Disorder. These percentages are much higher than expected given the historical data from this initiative.

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