Aloha!

Project Ho’omohala has made steady progress since the last newsletter. Our number of youth served has grown and all four of our Transition Specialists have full case loads. We feel well prepared to showcase our accomplishments when we host a site visit by representatives of our funding agency, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), at the end of March.

There have been a few personnel changes since our last newsletter. Many of you have worked with or know Jon Motohiro, our “founding” Clinical Director, who has moved on to other endeavors. We wish him well! His position involved two basic functions, clinical supervision and program administration. I am pleased to welcome two highly experienced and dynamic individuals who are each taking on one of those functions on a part-time basis. Gail Tice holds a doctorate in clinical psychology and is handling clinical supervision. Carol Imanaka is taking on program administration for Project Ho’omohala, including the intake of new youth. In addition, we are fortunate to have found Gina Tana, who grew up in Kalihi-Palama, to serve as a Transition Specialist. You’ll want to get to know Carol and Gina better through profiles about them elsewhere in this newsletter. Gina is filling the Transition Specialist position that opened up when Kekoa Tassill moved to Susannah Wesley’s competency-based high school diploma program, which is a good fit with his strong background in education. Kekoa served as a Transition Specialist for nearly a year and maintains a connection with Project Ho’omohala since a number of our youth attend his competency-based diploma classes.

We continue to welcome new referrals of youth between the ages of 15 and 21. Our services are meant for youth with mental health diagnoses who get services from at least two agencies and live in the areas served by Farrington, McKinley, or Roosevelt high schools. If you would like to make a referral, please contact Carol Imanaka at 440-5815.

David Leake, Director, Project Ho’omohala
Meet CAROL

Carol Imanaka’s career path recently came “full circle” when she assumed the position of Youth Service Center Administrator at the Susannah Wesley Community Center as well as Project Ho’omohala Administrative Coordinator. Carol first worked at Susannah Wesley as a social work practicum student working on her Masters degree at the University of Hawai‘i. She also helped to write a successful grant application that funded a program at Susannah Wesley where she worked part time after receiving her Masters. For a period spanning 10 years she assumed various positions at the agency and also served on the Board of Directors for two terms.

Carol then moved on to gain extensive experience in the public as well as private sectors, in direct services, federal grants management, contract management, program planning and development, coordination and networking. Her state government experience includes the Department of the Attorney General, Department of Health, and Office of the Lieutenant Governor. In her last state job at the Office of Youth Services, she worked actively with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and 56 states and territories as the state’s Juvenile Justice Specialist administering federal grant programs under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The focus of this work was to improve Hawai‘i’s juvenile justice system, and to this end she collaborated with county as well as state government agencies, including the police, prosecutor’s offices, Family Courts, Department of the Attorney General, and others.

She has worked in communities from Waimanalo to Kalihi-Palama, Pearl City, Waipahu, Ewa Beach, and the Leeward Coast.

Meet GINA

Gina Tana is Project Ho’omohala’s newest Transition Specialist and one wonders if she ever gets any rest. Not only is she working at PH, she is married with three children all under the age of 6 years old, working on her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, an instructor at the University of Phoenix, and is a therapy practicum student at the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Center. Multi-tasking must be her specialty! Her background with a Master’s degree in Counseling Psychology and a degree in Secondary Education makes Gina a great asset to the program.

Born and raised in Kalihi by a single mother, Gina knows the value of hard work. Having worked since she was young helping her mother, she understands the daily struggles of what families in the community go through in trying to balance the every day challenges of life.

Meeting Gina, you really get a sense of her deep commitment and drive to help people. When asked where does this come from? Gina responds with, “I want to make a difference in these young people’s lives, I want to be able to show youth that there are lots of opportunities out there and provide them learning tools for life. I can relate to these youths. When I was young, I had a learning disability, and I felt that I was not going to be successful. But what I had was this internal drive to learn, to strive, to make my life better.”

When Gina was asked what she thought of Project Ho’omohala, she said, “Project Ho’omohala is an awesome program! It gives the youth so many opportunities that I wish they had this kind of program when I was growing up in Kalihi. I am so happy to be able to work here.”
YOUTH ACTIVITIES by Ian Tapu, PH Youth Coordinator

Over the last couple of months, Project Ho`omohala youth have kept busy participating in a variety of activities. In September, Project Ho`omohala went to the University of Hawai`i in Manoa for a campus tour, as well as learned more about and worked at the Hawaiian Studies Department Lo`i. PH youth were also given the opportunity to take part in two different excursions.

One opportunity was to attend a special viewing at the Hawai`i International Film Festival as well as take a tour around the Honolulu Advertiser. Youth were also able to take a tour of KHON News studios as well as stargaze at Mokuleia with the Hawaiian Astronomical Society. In November, more than 250 youth and community members came together for the second annual Hip Hop Competition at Susannah Wesley Community Center. The Bragging Rights Project included an individual all style hip hop competition (with styles of dance ranging from Krumping to Pop and Locking) as well as a break dance crew battle with more than 8 different break dance crews from across the State. A group of youth were also taken to the Polynesian Cultural Center in Laie as a cultural awareness field trip. There the youth were able to take a tour around the different Polynesian Islands as well as watch the new and award winning night show. In December, the youth took part in a table etiquette class as well as attended a special workshop put on by Planned Parenthood which culminated to a semi-formal Winter Ball at Dave and Busters.

If you would like to do a particular activity or organize a group of youth based on interests such as a sport, hobby, or culture, please feel free to contact me. Any and all PH youth are more than welcome to any activity or event that is put on.

Contact me with more information about upcoming events or activities.

YOUTH SHOUT OUTS!

Rimos and Revals both graduated from McKinley High School and are now applying to Honolulu Community College. They both will be officially in the graduation program in June.

Christian and Marcus both got shout outs for making a commitment to education and have entered the C-Base Program. They know that their education is important and are making effort to focus on their education!

Congrats to Brittany who passed four of her C-Base books in her first try! Way to go Brittany! She has one more to go and she’ll be done!

Abby gets major congratulations for really being empowered to challenge herself in every way. She is currently attending Honolulu Community College and making all A’s and B’s. Abby wants to be an engineer and with her perseverance, she’ll have no problem succeeding!

On a field trip to visit KHON News.

Pinkney has discovered the power within herself! She is committed to her education and is working volunteer work toward building her resume by doing volunteer work, active in school and is self-motivated to pursue higher education. She even went on her own to check out some colleges. She has become a positive role model with her friends! Pinkney you are awesome!

Malama knows what she wants and she is going after it! Currently working and going to transfer to Kapi`olani Community College next semester to pursue the nursing program there.

Very proud of Ricky who is working hard at his security position with Securitas!

Recognition goes to Alia whose dream was to get into acting. She took it upon herself to take up acting classes and she completed it. Shout out for her personal growth and courage to pursue her dreams!

Lyle is in his second semester at Honolulu Community College (HCC). He has made a commitment to HCC and is studying hard to get his pre-requisites out of the way.

Recognition goes to Gernani who made Phi Theta Kappa, an honor society at Honolulu Community College (HCC). He has taken off on his academic journey with enrichment and personal development. His GPA is a 3.5 and he is now applying for multiple scholarships! Way to go Gernani!

Congrats to James who just graduated from the C-Base program!

Congrats to Brittany who passed four of her C-Base books in her first try! Way to go Brittan! She has one more to go and she’ll be done!

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FAMILY FUN
One of the coolest things that the parents are doing is meeting once a month at Susannah Wesley Community Center for a jewelry making class/support group. It gives the parents a chance to be away from the house, talk story, make new friends, laugh and share their every day concerns with other parents. And, best of all they can be creative and make pretty jewelry! If you’re interested to find out when they meet contact PH’s Family Specialist Jonni Adaniya @ 487-8785.

FAMILY SHOUT OUT!
Plenty mahalo goes to Lisa for assisting Project Ho’omohala in helping other families. Lisa has first hand experience of being a parent of a youth at PH and the parental challenges. Although her child is no longer participating with PH, Lisa still is a strong supporter of PH. So, inspired that she works side by side with Jonni, PH’s Family Specialist, to present workshops, participates in outreach activities, and helps out with the family support groups. She is an inspiration to all! Lisa, you are a gift to the project.

MORE FAMILY NEWS
Hawai‘i Families As Allies (HFAA) and ‘Ohana Care partnered this past Christmas to adopt eleven families statewide. One lucky family came from Project Ho’omohala, whose family was chosen to receive Christmas gifts. For Susie and Pepe who are raising seven children between the ages of 4 and 16, this was a great blessing to receive those wonderful Christmas presents to make their holiday even sweeter. Thanks to the generosity and support of HFAA and ‘Ohana Care, Susie, Pepe and their children felt the true giving of Christmas.

Evaluation Shorts by Lead Evaluator Ranilo Laygo, PhD.
The on-going evaluation of Project Ho’omohala has revealed several positive findings. Between intake and 6 months, youth reported:
• decrease in arrests
• decrease in illegal and delinquent behaviors
• decrease in substance use
• decrease of symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Getting Ready for Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day May 6th!
The Children’s Mental Health Matters Campaign Committee is a group of organizations and individuals committed to improving the lives of Hawaii’s children by educating the public about mental illness and mental wellness.

This year they are actively working towards promoting Children’s Mental Health Awareness day on May 6th. Plans are underway to get as much as exposure around children’s mental wellness. Some of the events planned will be sign waving at the State Capitol, a Lei of Friendship at the Capitol, and a public awareness radio campaign. For more information or would like to come out and support us, please call Project Ho’omohala at 381-8100 or Hawai‘i Families As Allies at 487-8785.

Save The Date!
The International Pacific Rim Conference (Pac Rim) on Disabilities is having their annual conference called “Synergy: Together We Act, at the Hawai‘i Convention Center on April 12th and 13th. There will be many workshops: Autism Spectrum, Culturally Responsive Response to Intervention, Disability Studies and Disability Culture, Hidden Disabilities, Transition to Postsecondary Education, Youth Advocacy, and Children’s Rights and more. Go to www.pacrim.hawaii.edu for more information.

Stayin’ Alive with SPIN (Special Parent Information Network), Saturday, April 24, 2010 at UH Campus Center Ballroom. This one-day conference will give families of children with disabilities an opportunity to gain information and meet and network with other parents and professionals. For more information on SPIN’S ‘Stayin’ Alive’ conference go to www.spinhawaii.org.

We’d like to hear from more Project Ho’omohala youth and families. Feedback from youth and families in the form of the evaluation data lets us know how well Project Ho’omohala is serving the needs of the youth and families. If you’re already enrolled in the evaluation, thank you for your continued involvement. If you’re receiving or about to receive Project Ho’omohala services, we invite you to participate in this important component of the project. Please call the Evaluation Team @ 956-0775.