

Building Connections

A Newsletter for Resource Families

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The Power of Words

By Wilma Friesema, Epic 'Ohana, Inc.



In a small apartment filled with two parents, eight children, two in-laws, and two grandchildren you would think communication of any kind would be difficult. Yet for Pii and Preston Himalaya-Kutzen good communication is at the heart of their relationship and their family life. Today, it's what makes their lively and loving household work.

For much of their history that wasn't the case. Just a few years ago theirs was a family on the brink. Though Pii and Preston had been together for nearly 25 years, the death of Pii's sister, deep depression, domestic violence, and overwhelming stress all took their toll. During their darkest hours both Pii and Preston lashed out at each other, disappeared through drug use, or, as in Preston's case, physically left for days. The children, of course, were both witnesses and recipients of the fallout. Child Welfare Services stepped in, and in April of 2015 the six underage children were taken into foster care.

After the children were taken away, Pii went into a residential drug treatment program and Preston went to jail. For both it was a low point, but also a turning point. Pii thrived in the treatment program as she gained insight into the depression and emotions that fueled her addiction. During his seven month incarceration, Preston read the bible and did some genuine soul searching.

As Pii gained knowledge and tools she became more empowered and hopeful. It wasn't long before she was a star resident. Preston, meanwhile, realized that all along he had pushed Pii to handle everything. His past attitude had been: *What I say goes. I tell you. I'm the boss.* In his cell, Preston began to see that a boss is not the same as a husband or father, and that his family was more important to him than false power. He knew he had to make significant changes.

By that time the trust between Pii and Preston was so thin it was like a cord frayed down to a single strand. When Preston called from prison, Pii would immediately hang up. Preston, undeterred, kept calling. During those lonely seven months he clung to this thread of hope: every month Pii put money on his phone card.

Upon his release Preston entered My Brother's Keeper clean and sober house. Meanwhile, Pii started a job, began leading a Narcotics Anonymous meeting called *No Matter What* at Pokai Bay, and was engaged in therapy related to domestic violence, trauma, and parenting. Preston relapsed, but got back on track quickly. Both Preston and Pii were doing all their required services, but, according to Pii, "we weren't working on us." Communication was still an issue.

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HUI HO'OMALU STATEWIDE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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.

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www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/social_services/child_welfare/foster

www.pidfoundation.org

If you would like to receive this newsletter, please call:

441-1125 (O'ahu),

888-879-8970 (Toll Free) or

E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

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The Importance of Sibling Connections

By Dr. Shoko Burkett

Mrs. Lily Brown, an experienced resource caregiver, once said this about the sibling relations of children in foster care: "It is a special bond they have with their siblings [that needs] to be continued, for when that is gone from their life, there is something emotionally missing. Having a strong bond with siblings is an important, normal part of childhood. If they lose their parents, at least they will have their siblings."

We tend to take the relationship we have with our siblings for granted; however, there are many foster children and youth living separately from their siblings. In 2015, there were 427,910 children in foster care in the United States. As we know, regardless of the circumstances, separation from their family of origin is considered especially disruptive in children's lives, and has negative effects on various areas of a child's development. Nearly two-thirds of children have a sibling in foster care and many of those, whether separated at an early age or at a later time, lose contact with one another. Often, foster youth have described separation from their sibling(s) as an extra punishment, a separate loss, another unnecessary pain, a punishment by God, and heartbreaking.

Another experienced resource caregiver, Kauai Keola stated, "Ohana means family, and nobody gets left behind." It is often overlooked, but relationships with siblings, generally, last longer than any other relationships in one's lifetime. Sibling relationships are emotionally powerful and significantly important, not only in childhood, but throughout one's life span because siblings provide emotional support, comfort, and a sense of stability, belonging, and continuity. Especially, in families involved with child welfare, sibling relationships often take on even more importance because they can provide the support and nurturing that is not consistently provided for by the parents. Furthermore, siblings can serve as a protective factor against the worst effects of adverse childhood experiences and sibling relationships promote resilience, especially when there is a secure attachment between them. Children entering the foster care system commonly report experiencing a great deal of pain, anxiety, guilt, grief, and "lost identity" due to the traumatic consequence of separation, but being with their siblings can enhance their sense of safety, continuity, and well-being, providing natural and mutual support. Siblings have a shared history, and maintaining their bond provides a continuity of identity and belonging.

Maintaining sibling relationships is recognized as important in helping children better adjust to the trauma of placement, to supporting their time in foster care, and into their adulthood. It is true that sibling visitation seems to be a very small part of foster youths' lives at present, but it can be very meaningful later in their adulthood. "Having their siblings in their adult life means that you have someone to share holidays, accomplishments, even loss," the resource caregiver, Mrs. Brown said.

Maintaining sibling connections is actually foster children's and youths' right. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, a Federal law that addresses the importance of keeping siblings together, requires States to make reasonable efforts to maintain sibling connections in order to receive Federal funding. The law suggests providing frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between the siblings if they are placed in different homes, unless any evidence suggests interaction between the siblings would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings.

In Hawai'i we are lucky to have the Project Visitation (PV), created through a collaboration between Family Court, First Circuit and the Department of Human Services (DHS), with the mission to provide foster children and youth the opportunity for maintaining sibling connections when they are placed in different homes. PV is crucial not only to ensure the right of children entering foster care to maintain their family connections, but also to facilitate their healthy growth while minimizing the trauma of family separation. Healthy connections with close biological relatives can help preserve a sense of identity and history, reducing feelings of loss and abandonment, while potentially enhancing self-esteem. Moreover, maintaining and/or reconnecting with siblings after shared traumatic experiences would likely help smooth their transition to new homes and promote further success in their lives.

Of course, we have some barriers to facilitate sibling visitation:

- Size of sibling group - large groups are often split
- Age gap - wide age span leads to splitting
- Differences in the needs of siblings
- Type of placement
- Caregivers', Social Workers', and GALs' perspectives

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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!

We would also 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!



The Power of Words (con't)

In March of 2016 Family Wrap Hawaii, a voluntary collaborative planning process, began. Participation in Wrap meant that Pii and Preston attended monthly meetings with supporters and service providers to address underlying needs and barriers to reunification with their children. To Pii and Preston, Wrap seemed slow going at first, but little did they realize the stage was being set for a big change.

Communication and transparency were key components of their Wrap process. According to Pii, the Wrap facilitator addressed sensitive issues with a matter-of-fact, here's a problem let's talk about it, attitude. There was no blaming or shaming of anyone. In each meeting the family's strengths were highlighted, which helped Pii and Preston see themselves differently. It helped the professionals see them differently too.



In addition to Wrap, they continued other on-going services. It was in couple's counseling that they learned to "shut up and listen" (Preston's words), have empathy for the other's feelings, and use "I" statements. Preston took domestic violence prevention classes and encouraged his older sons to do so as well. Both parents engaged in parent support services. Their lives were a whirlwind of learning and growing. To top it off, Preston got a job and returned home.

Despite all their progress, visits with the children were proceeding at a slow and cautious pace. During one powerful Wrap session Pii finally voiced her hurt and frustration. She felt distrusted, she said. No matter how hard she worked, it didn't seem to matter. In response, a service provider claimed Pii was defensive and emotionally distant, which was also frustrating and felt distrustful. The ensuing conversation was painful, with tears shed on both sides, but it also cleared the air. An emotional stalemate was finally broken.

By May of 2017, after two years of separation, Pii and Preston were finally reunified with all six children. During the family's time apart, Pii and Preston had learned much about healthy communication. "We don't cuss and scream anymore," Preston said, "not at the kids or at each other." Instead, they take the time to talk and find better solutions. With the children, they still dole out consequences for bad behavior, but they also try to understand what motivated the behavior in the first place. With each other they vent in texts, but then always end the text with a sweet, "thank you for listening," acknowledgement. They give each other a high five to signal they need a break, and prioritize giving each other comfort when distressed.

Pii used to say to Preston, "You home, but not home." She doesn't say that anymore. Instead, they're true partners raising their children in their very full household. Though life is challenging, they now talk out their struggles rather than act out their distress. They're committed to modeling better communication to their children too, knowing it will take time for the children to trust the changes they've made. But Pii and Preston are patient. They understand that while their past words have been painful, it's their new words that can change their world.

Both resource caregivers, Kaui and Lily, pointed out that working with other resource caregivers and adoptive parents who have limited understanding about the importance of sibling connections can be challenging. Facilitating sibling visitation requires a lot of coordination because of various reasons. For instance, responsible adults in their lives tend to become overly protective or sensitive about sibling relationships. It is "normal" that siblings have conflicts and/or arguments, but some adults perceive this as negative.

On several occasions, as I was facilitating visits, I had to remind myself that it is natural for siblings to have some problems and remembered the many times I have fought with my own brother. We need to remember all the trauma the foster youth have experienced that led to separation from their family and siblings. Some behaviors are a result of that trauma. What we, as adults involved in their lives, need to do is to help them rebuild a healthier sibling relationship. Separation or infrequent visiting can cause their relationships to wither, sometimes to the point of permanent estrangement. Therefore, it is important that all parties involved with foster children and youth work together in achieving a goal of maintaining sibling connections. Lily said, "It (helping sibling visitation) is one little thing we can do as caregivers today that can make a big difference to them later." This is so true.

What's unique about PV is the involvement of community volunteers. Monthly sibling visitation is facilitated by trained PV volunteers. Special events are sponsored by community organizations and businesses. By bringing siblings together in a fun and safe environment, our PV volunteers and sponsors give children the opportunity to create family memories they otherwise would not have. Their involvement is also critical in creating a safe and harmonious environment and strengthening our community, which is optimal for children's healthy growth.

Luckily, I have worked with both Lily and Kaui through PV. They are great experienced caregivers, and we are so grateful to have them as resource caregivers for foster children and youth. As Lily shared, "an extra hour seems to be little, but it means a lot to foster children and youth." Any efforts the caregivers and volunteers have put into helping foster children and youth to maintain sibling connections is an investment for their healthy and successful future. You are helping them to have "the one thing" in their lives that they can go to for "support" and "love."

WHY ARE SIBLING VISITS IMPORTANT?

- Facilitating regular contact is critical in maintaining sibling relationships, especially when they cannot be placed together.
- Sibling visits have a significant association with permanency outcomes and well-being.
- Healthy connections with close biological relatives preserve a sense of identity and history, reduce feelings of loss and abandonment, and can enhance self-esteem.
- Interactions with siblings enhance children's social, emotional, moral, and cognitive development.
- Reconnecting and bonding after shared traumatic experiences is beneficial and can help in moving forward successfully.
- Many foster children run away from their foster placements to find siblings. Having a consistent sibling visit schedule may improve the child's adjustment into a new home and other changes in his/her life.
- Sibling visits may help to provide a smoother transition if the siblings are ever reunited in a future placement.
- The healthier the relationships a foster child maintains, the better chances he/she will have for a successful transition into independent adulthood.
- Children genuinely value spending time with their siblings and catching up with each other.
- Sibling visits also provide extra respite time for the resource caregivers.

If you would like to view the full article with citations, please visit www.ittakesanohana.org.

Dear Reader,

Holidays are a time of sharing and festivities, but for some foster youth the holidays can be extra challenging because it's not the "normal" they grew up with. That was the experience of Shining Goose, as he so poignantly describes in the following article. His experiences and recommendation are important reminders to always take into account a child's history and comfort level.

Gentle offerings and encouragement of inclusion can plant seeds of connection, but it may take years for those seeds to come to fruition. While it's always important to encourage connection, it's equally important to respect a child's capacity for closeness. During this holiday season, Shining Goose's story is a powerful reminder for us to do both.

Here's wishing you very happy holidays,

The RAC Newsletter staff

Handling the Holidays

By Shining Goose

I have always been on the outside looking in.

The holidays have never been a good time for me. As a youth living with my birth mother, I never experienced holiday celebration. I never knew what holidays meant. It was only TV shows, festivities at school, and the social worker bringing charity toys to us that clued me in that the holidays were a special time.

Holidays with my Foster Family

My second foster home had a large family. My foster parents' kids were all over the mainland, but some of them would visit for the holidays and some would bring their kids too. Although my foster parents and my foster brother always told me that I was a part of the family, I never could truly feel that way. I actually hated attending their family celebrations and wished I could have hid in my room. It's not that they my foster family weren't good people, but rather, I had no social skills, did not feel comfortable at a family gather, and wanted to avoid all the discomfort and awkwardness. I have a feeling that some foster children feel the same as I did.

After 18

When I turned 18, I began spending holidays alone. I would receive invites here and there to holiday celebrations, mostly from my foster parents. However, I felt most comfortable spending the holidays by myself. In fact, being around another family during their family celebration actually made me feel worse, like a homeless man setting up his tent next to a massive mansion. The holidays were difficult because it reminded me of how I had no one. There really was no better solution for me. The best thing I could do was to accept my situation and hope that things would get better. I eventually became comfortable spending holidays alone. The holidays eventually became an ordinary time.

The Lesson

Foster parents have a tricky situation: they know their foster children may feel like outsiders in the family gatherings and feel bad that they do not have a family to spend the holidays with, but the foster parents also want their foster children to feel like a part of the family. I believe that asking them to attend family gatherings is appropriate. Though I also feel offering them an exit would be nice, in case they do not feel comfortable (e.g. they can leave after finishing the meal). It is important for foster children from broken homes to see how functional families interact during the holidays. Modeling, a psychology term for imitating behavior, is essential for people who grew up in dysfunction, as they can learn what it means to be "normal." I will be spending this upcoming holiday alone probably. However, in the future, I plan to have a big family, and I will take all the lessons I learned from those uncomfortable holidays with my foster family. They tried their best to include me and that was all I could ask for.

Foster HOPE Hawai'i: A FREE New App for Foster Youth and Their Supporters



Have you ever felt overwhelmed trying to figure out what supports and services are available to foster youth? Did you ever wish up-to-date information about services, financial supports, and community events for foster youth was easily and immediately accessible?

Well, wish no more! In July of this year, the Independent Living Collaborative -- with the support of Child Welfare Service, the Hawai'i Women's Legal Foundation, and the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative -- launched the **Foster HOPE Hawai'i** app. It's **FREE** and has island specific information about Health, Housing, Education, Finances, Employment, and Community services. If you want to learn about the *Entrepreneurial Job Training Project*, for example, just go to the Employment section. Or, if you want to learn about the *Step-Up Housing Program*, go to the housing section. The list could go on and on.

If you're a foster youth, resource caregivers, social worker, or service provider this app will make your life easier. The app is regularly updated so you know you're getting the most accurate information. In the near future, the app will also be sending alerts of up-coming events and new resources so you won't miss out on those fun events or important opportunities.

So gone are the days of trying to track down services and phone numbers! Gone are the days when you have to search the web and wade through multiple sites to find the right resource! All that you need is organized and easily accessible in this app. Just go to the app store, sign up, and see for yourself!

(The **Foster HOPE Hawai'i** app is one way the state of Hawai'i is working to empower youth who are in the foster care system and the many adults who support them. The Independent Living Collaborative, which implemented and maintains the app, is led by EPIC 'Ohana and includes Hale 'Opio, the Salvation Army, Hale Kipa and Maui Youth and Family Services. Since the app's launch date of July 21st through August 31st, the app has been visited 536 times and was downloaded by 39 new visitors. Users are reporting that it's easy and helpful. Download it for yourself and let us know what you think. Just go to the Connect tab on the app, then Contact ILC to give us your opinion. You can also let us know if you have new information to be shared.)

We just had the opportunity to hear from a former foster youth about his experiences in foster care during the holidays. The following story is a reprint of an article about a Resource Caregiver's perspective about the holidays that appeared in Foster Focus, the nation's only monthly magazine devoted to Foster Care, with permission from the author, Dr. John N. DeGarmo, Ed.D. Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for 11 years, now, and he and his wife have had over 40 children come through their home. He is a speaker and trainer on many topics about the foster care system, and travels around the nation delivering passionate, dynamic, energetic, and informative presentations. Dr. DeGarmo is the author of several books, including The Foster Parenting Manual: A Practical Guide to Creating a Loving, Safe and Stable Home, and the foster care children's book A Different Home: A New Foster Child's Story. Dr. DeGarmo is the host of the weekly radio program Foster Talk with Dr. John, heard each Monday at 8 PM Eastern. He also writes for a number of publications and newsletters, both here in the United States, and overseas. He can be contacted at drjohndegarmo@gmail.com, through his Facebook page, Dr. John DeGarmo, or at his website, drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com



Foster Care & The Holidays

The stockings are hung, by the chimney with care, in hopes that...In hopes of what? For many children who have been placed into the foster care system, they have come from homes where there was no Christmas, there was no hope. They have come from families that did not celebrate a holiday. They have come from environments where there were no presents, no tree. They have come from homes where there was not holiday joy or love.

The Holiday season is upon us. Christmas, Hanukkah, New Years, Kwanzaa; these are times that can be extremely difficult for many foster children. During this time of Holiday Cheer, many foster children are faced with the realization that they will not be "home for the holidays," so to speak, with their biological family members. When they wake up Christmas morning, and are surrounded by people who just may be strangers to them, strangers who are laughing and having fun, it can be a very difficult time for them, indeed. To be sure, it is a day that is a stark reminder to these children that they are not with their own family. It is during the holidays when families are supposed to be together, yet these children in care are not. They are not with their families, and they may not know when they will see them next.

Along with this, foster children also struggle with trying to remain loyal to their birth parents while enjoying the holiday season with their foster family. There are those moments when a child from foster care may feel guilty for experiencing joy and laughter with their foster family, they may feel that they are not only letting their birth mother or father down, they might even be betraying their birth parents and members of their biological family, causing even more grief, guilt, and anxiety within the child during this season of holiday joy. Indeed, this can be a very emotionally stressful time for all involved.

As one who has fostered many children, myself, during the holiday time, I have found that it is important to address these issues beforehand. Before Thanksgiving, before Christmas, before Hanukkah; even before family members and friends come to visit, foster parents need to prepare their foster child ahead of time.

To begin with, foster parents can best help their foster child by spending some time and talking about the holiday. Perhaps the holiday being celebrated in their new home is one that their birth family never celebrated, or is a holiday that is unfamiliar with them. Let the foster child know how your family celebrates the holiday, what traditions your family celebrate, and include the child in it.

Ask your foster child about some of the traditions that his family had, and try to include some of them into your own home during the holiday. This will help him not only feel more comfortable in your own home during this time, but also remind him that he is important, and that his birth family is important, as well. Even if his traditions are ones that you do not celebrate in your own home, try to include some of his into your own holiday celebration, in some way and some fashion. Far too many children have come to my own home and have never celebrated their birthday, have never sung a Christmas carol, have never opened up a present. Perhaps you have had similar experiences, as well. Sadly, this is not uncommon for children in foster care. It is important to keep in mind that many foster children may come from a home where they did not celebrate a particular season, nor have any traditions in their own home. What might be common in your own home may be completely new and even strange to your foster child. This often includes religious meanings for the holiday you celebrate. Again, take time to discuss the meaning about your beliefs to your foster child beforehand.

More than likely, your foster child will have feelings of sadness and grief, as he is separated from his own family during this time of family celebration.

After all, he is separated from his family during a time that is supposed to be centered AROUND family. However much you provide for him, however much love you give to him, you are still not his family.

Like so many children in foster care, they want to go home, to live with their family members, despite the abuse and trauma they may have suffered from them, and despite all that you can and do offer and provide for him. Therefore, this time of holiday joy is especially difficult.

You can help him by allowing him to talk about his feelings during the holidays. Ask him how he is doing, and recognize that he may not be happy, nor enjoy this special time.

Look for signs of depression, sadness, and other emotions related to these. Allow him space to privately grieve, if he needs to, and be prepared if he reverts back to some behavior difficulties he had when he first arrived into your home. You may find that he becomes upset, rebellious, or complains a lot. Along with this, he may simply act younger than he is during this time. After all, he is trying to cope with not being with his own family during this time when families get together. These feelings and these actions are normal, and should be expected. You can also help your foster child by sending some cards and/or small gifts and presents to their own parents and birth family members. A card or small gift to his family members can provide hope and healing for both child and parent, and help spread some of the holiday cheer that is supposed to be shared with all.

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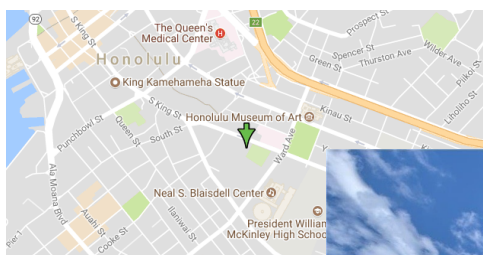
FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAII HAS MOVED!

Did you know that the Family Programs Hawaii office on Oahu has moved?

Our phone number has remained the same, however we are no longer at our Vineyard Street office. Our new office is located at:

801 S. King St., Honolulu, HI 96813

We are in the same building as KITV 4 news, One Archer Lane. It's pink so you can't miss us!



If you need to pay us a visit at the new office, please call ahead as we are now in a



secure building. We look forward to serving Hawaii's families in our new space!

November is National Adoption Month

It's time to celebrate!

Who's Invited: ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

(no friends or extended family members please)

Where: ICE PALACE HAWAII

4510 Salt Lake Blvd. B6 Honolulu, HI 96818

When: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Time: 6:30pm-9:00pm

Cost: FREE!!!

Check the flyer or call Mindy

at 540-2552 for more information.

Space is limited and you must be registered to attend.



Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard: Common Question

The following is an excerpt from the *Don't Say "NO" Until You "Know"* guide, created by the State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services. The guide presents common questions and answers for Resource Caregivers on providing normalcy for children/young people in foster care to participate equally in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, social, and cultural activities as their classmates and peers. These Q & A's can be found within the Normalcy Guidelines provided by your DHS licensing worker.

Question: Are birth parents allowed to come to their child/young person's school functions, sports activities, cultural and religious functions?

Answer: Yes. Birth parent involvement in their child/young person's daily life is encouraged, however Resource Caregivers shall first consult with the child/young person's CWS worker and/or GAL prior to allowing any type of contact.

Hawaii Administrative Rules 17-1625-47 Preservation of Family (a) A primary function of resource families will be to ensure contact with siblings, biological parents, relative, kith and kin. (b) With the exception of relationships explicitly prohibited by a family court, resource families shall encourage foster children to maintain these pre-existing family relations.

Hawaii Administrative Rules 17-1627-33 Social life and leisure time. (a) The program shall provide appropriate age and developmental socialization opportunities for the child. (b) Visit with legal custodians, relatives, or friends shall be encouraged and opportunities shall be provided for the visits when the visits are in the best interest of the child. (c) Visitation shall not be used as a means of discipline or reward.



There may be times when you, as a resource caregiver, have a question or concern and are not sure where to go for help. We will be presenting scenarios in each newsletter as a way to highlight different situations and suggestions on "Who Ya Gonna Call?"

Who Ya Gonna Call?

You realize you can't find your Foster Home Certificate of Approval. Who Ya Gonna Call? Pull out your handy dandy "Who Ya Gonna Call" list that was also in the January 2017 Building Connections Newsletter. Look under Certificate of Approval and find some direction by contacting your Licensing Social Worker!



PARENTING TIPS: HELPING PARENTS AND FAMILIES TO PROVIDE SAFETY AND SUPPORT for LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, and TRANSGENDER (LGBT) CHILDREN

by Jo Chang, ocsjosie@hotmail.com

The following parenting tips are for **all** parents, grandparents, and foster parents, as **anyone** may have an LGBT child in their family. Basically, parenting an LGBT child is no different than parenting any other child: with a commitment to love them, protect them, assist and support them through any difficulties they may face. However, LGBT children are likely to face many challenges, due to lack of understanding about LGBT people, and prejudice and discrimination against them, still widespread today.

1. **Love and acceptance is most important:** Like all other children, LGBT children want and need to be loved and accepted for who they are, especially by their parents and families.
2. **A positive view of your child is essential:** Your positive view and outlook for your LGBT child can help give your child a positive outlook and self image despite the negative views they face in the world around them. Help LGBT children to see themselves as the whole person they are, and to focus on developing their strengths, skills, interests, and dreams.
3. **Learning about sexual orientation and gender identity is necessary to understand your child:** Briefly, **sexual orientation** and **gender identity** are two parts of a person's sexual identity. Variations in sexual orientation and gender identity are a natural and normal development in people. **Sexual orientation** is who we are attracted to – emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually. Some basic sexual orientations are: **heterosexual** or **straight** (attracted to the opposite sex); **lesbian** and **gay** (attracted to the same sex), and **bisexual** (attracted to both sexes). **Gender identity** refers to a person's sense of self as a male or female, somewhere in-between, both or other. Some basic gender identities are: **cisgender** (those whose gender identity matches their anatomical sex); **transgender** (those whose gender identity does not match their anatomical sex, and may match with the opposite sex as male, female, or other). Children may naturally express themselves differently from society's expectations on how boys or girls "should" look and behave.
4. **Understand the internal stresses for children who are part of this often silent and invisible minority:** As sexual minorities, LGBT children often do not know others like themselves, may feel alone, anxious, and fearful of even their birth parents who likely are straight and cis gender. Children that are uncertain about their developing sexuality, may have heard only negative things about LGBT people, do not have information to understand themselves, and do not know who they can trust to help them.
5. **Understand the external risks and dangers for an LGBT child:** An LGBT child, or child who appears to be different in sexual orientation or gender non-conforming, is likely to face discrimination in school and the community, such as name calling, ridicule, bullying, harassment, rejection, isolation, threats and actual physical assault. This may result in signs of distress such as lack of friends, reluctance to go to school, being afraid of others, or depression.
6. **Keep communication lines open:** Be interested in the little and big happenings in your LGBT child's life to keep up with how they are feeling, the difficulties they are encountering, how they are coping, and their needs. Be a good listener, do not criticize and blame your child for his/her difficulties, and be a safe place for your child.
7. **Build family support:** Educate family members about the risks, dangers, and harm that an LGBT child faces, and the need for the family's love and support. Involve the family in building a safe home where name calling, "gay" jokes and putdowns are not allowed. Help them to learn that negative ideas and stereotypes about LGBT people are not true, and result in prejudice and a hostile and dangerous environment for children who appear to be different in sexual orientation or gender non-conforming.

Continued on pg. 10

'OHANA REWARDS

Want to know how you could receive a \$200.00 gift card?

Would you like your name to appear in a future RAC newsletter?

All you need to do is help us find more homes for Hawai'i's keiki in foster care!

If you can refer, help, cheer, and see your referral to the finish line to become licensed, you could earn a **\$200 gift card** of your choice

Congratulations!
Amparo Alvarez-Parker

Call Hui Ho'omalua today at 441-1117 or 1-888-879-8970 (toll free) for more information!

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) 1-888-879-8970

*Mahalo for all you do for
Hawai'i's keiki and families!*

Resource Caregivers had the pleasure of a training by Jo Chang last quarter and she shares on page 7 how we can be supportive of any LGBT child. Here is a story of Brandy's experience.

NOBODY'S HERE

by Brandy Lee

I'm sure you've heard the expression "I'm Queer and I'm here." To me, it may not be the best expression of the present times, but it says a lot.

My stage name is Brandy Lee, and I started singing and performing in 1963 at the popular Glades Cabaret, back when it first presented the Drag Revue known as "Boys will Be Girls" or Le Femme Mimic. I celebrated my 75th birthday this year. So, yes, I have been around a while and have seen a lot of changes.

In the beginning of my life, with my exposure to the light of life, I was acknowledged as a baby, a child, a brother, a cousin, a pest, a spoiled brat, a classmate, a friend, a playmate, smart, stupid, and all of the labels put on a child growing up.

In 1961, at the age of 19, when I revealed who I *really* was I suddenly disappeared to the world around me. I was turned into an object to be feared, hated, and ridiculed. In religion, I existed as a living demon with not one iota of goodness to be seen, lower than a rapist, murderer, or criminal. Among family and friends, I was someone not to be associated with and of suspicious character. I was an object of ridicule and scorn to the point of physical abuse, and was often the target of hate handed down from parents to children. The police saw me as nothing but trash to be trodden underfoot. The degradation and humiliation were nearly unbearable. For a long time I walked through life without any mirrors which reflected my worth.

So I was at the bottom and there was no one else below me. What was I to do? I wondered: *How do I live or do I live? What is there to live for? Why was I even born?* These were the questions that ignited my questions to God. *Why was I created by You? Was it to be the object of hate, the common enemy, so everyone else could feel good about themselves?*

Trying to find an answer to those questions was so very difficult, but in the end I had to answer them myself. God never did talk to me directly, but through my soul searching I came to this conclusion: *He loves me and would not create me if He didn't. So no matter what happens, I am going to be the Best Me that He created.*

From that moment on I became liberated spiritually, mentally and emotionally as I moved forward and upward, taking life head on with a passion. I had found, deep within myself, the courage to not feel sorry for myself. I had claimed my own worth and held onto it fiercely.

At the same time, I was very careful to not compensate lingering insecurities with arrogance, as I never wanted to make anyone feel less than. Instead, I staked my claim to be present in any place or situation I found myself. No matter who I was with – whether they be rich, poor, church goers, or criminals – I knew I was no better or worse than any of them. I was just part of them, as they were a part of me, because we are all part of the human family.

In reflection, I have been able to find my place in this world because of love. After traversing the hills and valleys of pain, suffering and joy that have been my life, I did reach my Mt. Everest -- the power of God's love. Through that love, I discovered love and acceptance of my complete self – my goodness, badness, lightness and dark -- and a love for others, which includes their vulnerabilities and strengths too.

For the young reading this I have this message: though you have come into a world that is different than the world I came into, you are still the same, life is still the same. Do not lose sight of *you*. You have to be the best you that you can be. And only you can discover who that person is. But let love be the light that guides you through the ups and downs of your life so you will know that you are truly **SOMEBODY**. On my journey, that has been the most precious discovery of all.

Let's hear it for this year's 'Ohana is Forever conference!

Elizabeth Rodriguez: "This year's OIF was a memorable experience for me. I've attended the conference before as a youth participant, but this year I was able to attend as a new HI HOPES board member. I was very excited but at the same time a little nervous because I wasn't sure what to expect. I'm very grateful for the opportunity that I got speaking in front of the group about Permanency and my personal experiences. I think it's important for my foster brothers and sisters to hear that good outcomes and forever families can come out of being in foster care. I have to say that I mostly enjoyed Wendy and Pashyn, they were awesome and definitely contributed to making it an even more special experience for everyone."

Patricia Duh: "Hiki Nō, or Can Do. That was this year's theme of Ohana is Forever. How amazed I was, as I normally am, at the end of every Ohana is Forever conference. But this year, it felt different. This year, you could really feel everyone understanding what they can do. This year, the focus was on making sure the youth knew that they can do anything they've dreamt of. We focused on making sure that the adults understood what they could do to help these youth. . . my brothers and sisters continuously strive for their full potential, goals, dreams, and aspirations. This year, I took a step back and really analyzed the different, yet so similar, situations that we have all faced in some way, and felt proud to be a former foster youth. I had the amazing opportunity to soak in the stories of those who came before me and realize that I need to push forward with whatever happened in my life too. I left this year's Ohana is Forever conference with a better understanding of what it meant to be a former foster child and how to wear that name proudly. Yet in the end, I realized that no matter what name I am given, if I remember I can do anything as long as I don't give up and have the unconditional support around me of my Ohana. . . nothing is impossible."





Welcome to FPH's Resource Family Support Services Corner

By Salome Bala, RFSS Warm Line Family Resource Specialist

Resource Family Support Services (RFSS) is funded by the Department of Human Services



Salome Bala

Ask the Warm Line

I often get calls to the Warm Line from caregivers who are at their wit's end when it comes to their children's challenging and difficult behaviors. I have been there myself as a former Resource Caregiver and Adoptive Parent of two teenage girls. On September 30, 2017 HAPA had a conference featuring Dr. Steven J. Choy and "How to Choose Your Battles and Win Some Too." It talked about enhancing the parent-child relationship and improving compliant behaviors through positive interactions. If you are one of those caregivers who just do not know what to do, here are some tips for you that came out of that training:

- 1. Give Specific Positive Praise, Immediately After the Child Has Done What You Wanted Them To Do** - We as caregivers are aware that giving positive praise can go a long way, but giving specific positive praise can go even longer! For example, when you want your child to follow your instructions, and they actually do it, saying "good job" is great, but saying "good job for brushing your teeth when I asked" is even better. No matter what age your child is, if they know exactly what they've done right, and getting praised for it immediately after, will help that child better understand what to do in future situations.
- 2. Ignore the Negative Behavior** - This may be one of the most difficult things for a caregiver to do, but as long as the child is not doing something that would harm themselves or others and is in a safe space, just ignore the behavior. Children crave attention, even negative attention, so when they are doing everything and anything to get that negative attention, don't give it to them.
- 3. Know Your Limits** - Everyone has a limit, so don't feel bad at all when some days, you feel like you've had enough and you need someone to step in and care for the child for a little bit. We as adults need to take our time outs as well. Even if you don't have someone right at the moment you may need to take a time out, make sure your child is in a safe space and you go have a time out in your own private space, whether it's the bathroom, the bedroom or wherever that may be, TAKE IT!
- 4. Make Sure You Have Some Sort Of Support Network That You Can Rely On** - Whether it's your spouse, partner, friends, or service professionals (i.e. therapist, SW, Family Programs Hawaii Warm Line), know who they are and what they can offer and most importantly-UTILIZE THEM! It's of no use to anyone if you have a support network that's not being used. It's like the treadmill sitting in the garage with all the clothes hanging on it. It's not being used for what it's meant to be used for so it's not doing anyone, any good, especially the person who's trying to be more active who bought the treadmill!

If you are in need of ideas on how to build up that support network or would like to find others who could become a part of your support network, please feel free to call the Family Programs Hawaii Warm Line at 808-545-1130 or toll free at 1-866-545-0882. We can provide ideas or referrals to community resources and assist you in registering for one of our Support Groups or Trainings. This information can also be found on our FPH website as well as our Resource Families Support Services Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FPH.RFSS.

THE HOLIDAYS ARE RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER...



RESOURCE FAMILY BASICS FYI...

With the holidays quickly approaching, we want to remind families of the Department's policy regarding traveling with children in care: Parental consent is required for children in foster care to travel off-island with their resource caregivers.

Voluntary cases: If the parents do not consent, the child cannot travel.

Court cases: If the parents and the GAL/CASA consent, the Court must be informed that the parents and the GAL/CASA do not object. If the parents or the GAL/CASA object, a motion must be filed with the Court and the Court will

render a decision on whether the child can travel. In situations where the parents cannot be located but the DHS & the GAL/CASA do not object, the Court must be informed of the Dept.'s efforts to locate the parents & that there are no objections by DHS & the GAL/CASA.



19TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY!

It's getting close to that time of year...presents, lit up trees, holiday cheer, and, of course, the Annual Holiday Party for Keiki in Foster Care! The Neil S. Blaisdell Center will be decked out in a festive Hawaiian Holiday theme on **December 3, 2017**.

We will be offering a meal, catered by Lanakila Pacific, and entertainment on stage. This year's entertainment will feature dancers from Iolani School, cosplayers dressed up as your favorite characters, and, local artist Dhevhan Keith who will be singing island music to fit the party's Hawaiian theme. We will also have our Hawaiian Santa for photos, and many other fun activities and treats for the whole family!

And, finally, we will be giving out a present to each child who comes to the event! Each gift is wrapped and personally labeled by Santa's elves for the keiki on Santa's list. To help Santa's elves get the list right, please don't forget to RSVP and let us know who will be coming! We will soon be sending out invitation letters with attendee information and how to RSVP, so please check your mail!

Our keiki have the best chances of growing up to be healthy adults when a community comes together and takes an active interest in raising them. Because we know that it takes a village to raise a child, we wanted to give a big mahalo to the new and returning volunteers for this year's Annual Holiday Party for Children in Foster Care. If you or someone you know would like to be a volunteer for our upcoming event, please contact our volunteer coordinator MiChelle Chavis by phone at (808) 540-2562 or by e-mail at mchavis@familyprogramshi.org.

Foster Care & the Holidays (con't)

Each family has that crazy old Aunt Ethel, loud and obnoxious Uncle Fred, and the ever hard of hearing and over whelming Grandma Lucy. Your family is used to these relatives and their personalities, your child in foster care is not.

If you have family members visit your home, prepare your foster child for this beforehand. Let him know that the normal routine in your home may become a little "crazy" during this time, that it may become loud, and describe some of the "characters" from your own family that may be coming over to visit. Remind him of the importance of using good behavior and manners throughout this period. Along with this, remind your own family members that your foster child is a member of your family, and should be treated as such.

Remind them that he is to be treated as a member of the family, and not to judge him or his biological family members, or fire questions at him. This also includes gift giving. If your own children should be receiving gifts from some of your family members, your foster child should, as well. Otherwise, your foster child is going to feel left out, and his sadness and grief will only increase.

Be prepared, though, for some in your family not to have presents and gifts for him. Have some extra ones already wrapped, and hidden away somewhere, ready to be brought out, just in case.

With a little preparation beforehand from you, this season of joy can be a wonderful time for your foster child, one that may last in his memory for a life time, as well as in your memory, too. After all, the gift of love is one that can be shared, not only during the holidays, but all year long.

Adoptive Families Needed Through Wendy's Wonderful Kids

Rochelle is a 13 year old Hawaiian, Chinese, Portuguese female who has been in foster care since 3 years old. She was born and raised on O'ahu and currently resides in the Waipahu area.

She has a history and currently faces the challenges of Rhet Syndrome. This syndrome causes her cognitive, sensory and emotional motors to dysfunction. Another challenge of Rhet Syndrome is that Rochelle is a non-verbal child. Although non-verbal, she has no problem making her needs known and has a positive attitude that is contagious.

Even though Rochelle faces these challenges on a daily basis, she continues to smile! She loves to attend New Hope Church on Sundays and enjoys reading the book, "Curious George".

A forever family for Rochelle must be patient and understand the challenges Rochelle faces through her everyday physical capabilities. The ideal family would have experience with youth who are non-verbal and would be able to think outside the box that can demonstrate compassion and flexibility.



**Forever
Family**

Wendy's Wonderful Kids seeks to find good homes for great kids in tough situations. If you are interested in learning more about Rochelle and her need for permanent, nurturing connections, please contact Mindy Chung, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter, at (808) 540-2552 or by email at mchung@familyprogramshi.org.

Parenting Tips (con't)

8. **Build a support network outside of the family for your child:** Seek support for your child from medical and mental health practitioners, teachers, counselors, and/or social workers. Assure that support persons are positive and affirming of LGBT children, and are checked out by you for safety and reliability, including internet resources. Partner with your schools to help them to understand your LGBT child, provide a safe environment, including an LGBT student support group, and to monitor your child's progress.
9. **Build a support network for yourself:** Parents also feel stress from the prejudice and discrimination towards LGBT people, may also fear disapproval, conflict with spiritual, cultural, or family beliefs, and feel overwhelmed, confused, uncertain, and alone. Parents may find assistance from a supportive medical doctor, counselor or therapist, or a parent support resource in the community or online, and through other resources such as books, DVDs, and informational websites.
10. **Unique challenges face transgender and gender different children:** Parents with transgender or gender different children may face even greater confusion, emotional challenges, and discrimination, as they, and others, may know less about transgender and gender different people, and may be less accepting of them. These children face greater health risks, yet it is more difficult to find appropriate medical and mental health support, and experienced and supportive community resources. Parental help is essential to help these children have the support they need. However, with parental and family love and assistance, transgender and gender different children may also lead healthy, successful and happy lives.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Part-time Co-trainers Needed. Resource Caregivers/Former Foster Youth in Kaua'i and O'ahu are needed to co-train new Resource Caregivers in the HANAI curriculum. Your experience is invaluable to a new family just learning about providing foster care. Come and share what you've learned/experienced over the years with others!!! Trainings are generally held intermittently on some weekday evenings and some Saturdays. Training and compensation provided.

Part-time Child Care Providers needed in West Hawai'i and Kaua'i to provide child care (i.e., during trainings), in the evenings and weekends on an occasional basis. Training and compensation provided.

Part-time Recruitment Assistants needed in West Hawai'i and Kaua'i to staff various recruitment booths and share information with potential applicants about the need for additional Resource Caregivers. Training and compensation provided.

HUI HO'OMALU ~ A Program of Partners in Development Foundation

See www.pidfoundation.org/about/careers

Email resume & application w/cover letter to: HR@pidfoundation.org or fax to 440-6619

PIDF is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer

Calendar of Events

O'AHU

- Nov 19 (Sun)** **National Adoption Month Celebration at Ice Palace:** 6:30pm-9:00pm. A fun evening of ice skating for adoptive families. For more information, call the Warm Line: 545-1130.
- Dec 3 (Sun)** **2017 Holiday Party:** 10:00am-2:30pm. Special party for resource, guardianship, and adoptive families at Neal Blaisdell Center Exhibition Hall. For more information, call the Warm Line: 545-1130.
- Dec 15 (Thurs)** **Central O'ahu Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Aiea United Methodist Church. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 12/8.
- Dec 22 (Fri)** **Teen Day XVI. Dream4Real.** An event to lend a guiding hand to current and former foster youth ages 14 and older. 11:00am-4:00pm. Ronald T.Y. Moon Kapolei Courthouse. Call ITAO at 540-2543 for more information.

MAUI COUNTY

- Dec 14 (Thur)** **Maui Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Kahului Union Church. RSVP toll free to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 12/7.

If you have access to the internet please check the calendar for any additional or updated events at www.familyprogramshawaii.org

Funding for FPH support groups, trainings, and annual conferences is provided by the Department of Human Services

MAHALO AUDREY LARIOSA AND ALISA IMAKYURE!



It Takes An `Ohana's Advisory Committee and Oahu resource caregivers are excited to thank two of Oahu Special Services Unit 2 staff for going above and beyond in helping resource families and those they care for.

Audrey Lariosa, SSA IV aide, makes it her priority to meet the needs of the resource families. If asked about something she is not sure about, she takes the initiative to find the answer and gets that information to the families ASAP. This has helped the families in many ways. When asked for a referral for a therapist for a foster child, she will set up the appointment. When a referral is needed for a program, she makes sure the application gets filled out, signed and submitted in time for kids to participate in the program/activity. For special occasions and holidays, she is somehow able to find extra gifts for the children and, best of all, she makes sure that they get what they asked for.

Also in this unit, social worker **Alisa Imakyure** has been called "one-of-a-kind" by several families. One of her many positive attributes is her listening skills. One family described a foster youth who was in depression and what a big difference it made to that youth to have a supportive worker who listened to her needs. She gives youth her cell phone number so they can text her to ask for help or for clarification. She has asked for a Youth Circle for a youth turning 18. She also secured a cell phone for a year for a youth whose family lived on the mainland so the youth could stay in touch until she was able to move. If she has children in a home where the resource caregivers cannot take the children to an event, she and her husband will transport the children to and from, even on weekends!

Both Audrey and Alisa go above and beyond of what is expected, making it possible for families to bring better outcomes to the children and youth in their care. We send a big Mahalo to these great partners on the child welfare team!



PATCH publishes a quarterly newsletter -- Training Tracks, to inform the community of our upcoming trainings around town, and provide the latest child care news and information to professionals and the public. PATCH offers over 100 FREE child care workshops open to all caregivers such as family child care, preschool and infant and toddler staff, before and after school care programs, parents, resource caregivers, medical professionals, babysitters and informal child care. Please visit our website for the latest news and training schedule:

www.PatchHawaii.org or contact your local PATCH office

O'ahu: 808-839-1988 ♦ Maui: 808-242-9232

Lāna'i & Moloka'i: 1-800-498-4145

Kaua'i: 808-246-0622 ♦ Hilo: 808-961-3169 ♦ Kona: 808-322-3500



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Statewide Resource Advisory Committee

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RAC@pidfoundation.org

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'omalua 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.

This committee, the newsletter and many of the represented agencies are supported and funded by Department of Human Services contracts.

RAC Committee Members:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalua

Department of Human Services

EPIC, Inc. 'Ohana Conferencing

Family Court

Family Programs Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalua & It Takes An 'Ohana

Resource Caregivers

Adoptive Parents

Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition

Partners in Development Foundation—Hui Ho'omalua