**National Reunification Month**

National Reunification Month is a nationwide celebration of the successful reunification of families who have returned to safety and health thanks to CWS interventions and a lot of hard, personal work. Below is the story of Estrella Barnett and her daughter Alexi, one of Hawaii’s successful families, straight from the island of Kauai.

**Reclaiming the Wheel**

By Wilma Friesema

It’s a rainy night in August, 2016, and after a long day Estrella Barnett is driving home with Alexi, her six-year-old daughter, who is asleep in the back seat. It’s a little after 9pm. Soon Estrella will be lifting her sleepy daughter out of the car and tucking her into bed.

Driving on the windy Kuhio Road in Kilauea, Estrella’s car starts to hydroplane. She tries to right it, loses control, and crashes headlong into a tree. Upon impact, it feels like 20 knives stab her in the stomach, but without thinking she jumps out of the car and runs to her daughter. Estrella grabs Alexi and yells for help. She thinks, I’m fine, but in reality, her spleen is ruptured and ribs are cracked. Alexi has bruises, but nothing appears broken. Her serious injuries are hidden as well.

Looking back, Estrella says there are days it all still feels like a dream. She can’t believe she and Alexi are alive and together again. From car crash, to a year of separation, to reunification, their journey has not been an easy one. It has, however, been fueled by determination, commitment, and love.

Prior to that fateful night, Estrella struggled between being a young, creative, singer who partied to fit in with her peers and find love, and being a single parent who took care of her daughter and worked. She absolutely loved her daughter, but being a single mom was hard. Living with her parents, she relied on them more and more to help raise Alexi while she went out with friends. Drinking was a big part of her social scene, but it was also how Estrella coped. During that time, she looked fine on the outside, she said, but internally she was screaming.

The crash brought everything to a head. After the ambulance whisked them to the hospital, Estrella woke up in a neck brace, 50 stitches laced her stomach, and she was told she could not see or talk to her daughter. Because of the circumstances, Child Welfare Services (CWS) stepped in to investigate. For Estrella the physical pain was intense, but the heartache of being separated from Alexi was worse. It felt like everything important had been taken away.

It was in the hospital that Estrella had a spiritual experience, which turned her life around. She knew, from that point on, that she was going to make major changes and that it wouldn’t be easy. Once she was released from the hospital, she went into rehab on the mainland.
Annual Conference 2018:
“Trauma Changes the Brain: Making Sense of Challenging Behaviors”
by April Lum, FPH Program Manager

The children who enter into the child welfare system usually have experienced some type of abuse or neglect and we, as caregivers, may see effects of this trauma in our homes through certain kinds of behaviors. Because of this, our number one requested topic for training at Family Programs Hawaii is on managing challenging behaviors. While learning how to manage the behavior is important, it is also helpful to understand why the behavior exists in the first place.

This year’s 11th Annual Conference for Resource Families set out to do just that. Over 400 resource caregivers, adoptive parents, legal guardians, and service providers attended the conference statewide to learn about trauma’s negative impact on the brain during development and how as a caring adult, they can help the child be successful in spite of the trauma. Kathy Bentley of Kathy’s Parenting Solutions, who has often been referred to as Hawaii’s “super nanny” after the popular TV show, touched on trauma’s impact on development and behavior from a child’s early years through adolescence. She also highlighted what families can do in order to help these children thrive. This included creating routines, structure, and using age appropriate responsibility to help develop a sense of accomplishment.

Families who attended the training also heard from Veronica Lamb, a Victim Specialist with Susannah Wesley Community Center’s Trafficking Victim Assistance Program. Veronica presented on how trauma increases a child’s vulnerability to being trafficked. She also provided information on how families can recognize a youth who has been trafficked, discussing various indicators to look for. Veronica closed her presentation by highlighting how resource families can help to transform a child or youth’s trauma by welcoming them into their home and family. The safe space and nurturing home that resource families provide, present a family model that is able to compete with the pimp/gang model. It can reduce the temptation that trafficking recruiters play upon to lure children and youth. The work you do with the children in your home is so very important!

If you were unable to attend the Annual Conference and would like to access the training online or have a DVD mailed to you, please contact the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 to request your copy today! We so appreciate all that you do in helping Hawaii’s keiki heal!

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!

Advertise in the Newsletter—Promote Your Business
100% of the proceeds will be used towards supporting Hawaii’s resource families
Display advertisements with borders: business card size = $30; 1/4 page = $50; 1/2 page = $75; full page = $115.
Send information to: Hui Ho’omalu—RAC, 680 Iwiewe Rd., Ste. 500, Honolulu, HI 96817
441-1125 (O’ahu) ★ 888-879-8970 (Toll Free) ★ Fax: 441-1122 ★ Email: RAC@pidfoundation.org
RAC reserves the right to accept, reject or edit advertisements, articles and notices of events based on publication schedule, space limitations, and appropriateness.
for four months to do the personal work of shifting priorities. When she returned to Kauai she could no longer live with her parents who were fostering Alexi, so she had to find a place of her own and a new job. Attending daily AA/NA meetings was required by CWS, as was being tested for drug and alcohol use on a regular basis. Her family distrusted her and didn’t believe she had truly changed. She could only have visits with Alexi under CWS supervision.

It was a difficult and lonely time, but Estrella knew what she wanted – Alexi – so she stayed committed to her path. She dug deep and knew she had to do the opposite of what she had done in the past. Every day she consciously chose to do something that would make her feel good about herself and capable of meeting her responsibilities. She stayed sober. She did all the services that CWS asked of her and worked with her social worker and other service providers instead of resisting their support. She sang and found solace in music. She attended AA/NA meetings, therapy, and practiced yoga. She attempted to prove to her family, over and over again, that her words had meaning, that she could be trusted. She spent as much time as she could with Alexi. She found strength in God.

Her hard work paid off. Though she did relapse twice, she realized drinking no longer felt right; that, in essence, she was betraying herself when she drank. She realized she didn’t need to drink to feel good because she was already naturally feeling that way. What she needed was her faith, her talents, her supporters, and, most of all, her daughter.

Today Estrella stays on a routine and reminds herself that the only things that can mess up your life are the choices you make. Every morning she wakes up and reads daily devotions and motivations. She runs, does yoga, or rollerblades. She also holds onto a wise perspective that she once heard in rehab. The speaker pointed out that every person, rich or poor, has 24 hours in a day. He then asked this question: What are you going to do with your life today to make it great?

There are many things that Estrella is doing to make her life great – she sings with the popular musician Makana, has her own jewelry business, she’s even working as a double on a movie set. But the main thing that Estrella does to make her life better is to be a great mom. Alexi is the light of her life; she absolutely comes first in Estrella’s heart and priorities. They love spending time together doing everyday things like cooking, playing, being creative, and even homework. Alexi, Estrella says, radiates so much love to everyone that she just naturally gets a lot of love in return. She’s a bright, energetic 8-year-old who’s a joy to be around.

Alexi is also perceptive. Estrella has been honest with her about drinking and the problems it can cause. Alexi now recognizes when adults have been drinking and will even point it out to her mom. Estrella once overheard Alexi’s friends talking about their parents’ drinking. Alexi held her head high and said, “My mom doesn’t drink.” She was clearly proud of her mom’s sobriety.

For Estrella, that sobriety still isn’t easy. It’s hard to stand up and do something different from what’s acceptable to so many. Beneath the surface, she battles the pull to fit in and to cope in the old familiar way of numbing herself “just for a day.” But every day, she realizes, she has a choice. She tells herself, today, no matter what, I won’t drink. Don’t do it, for today. When she gets lonely and sad she recognizes those emotions and then moves through them. She just lets them be. As the number of sober days accumulate, she gets stronger. For her, that’s true empowerment because she’s staying awake to what’s truly important to her.

“When going through the process of change you hate it,” she says, “but when you get to the other side then you’re thankful for it. Also, doors open, God gives you opportunities, when you’re doing the right thing. When people see your heart, when you’re doing good, then good things come to you.” For those who struggle with the same challenges she has this advice: Be the first to stand up and create a path no one has walked down before. Be a shining light to remind people of their own inner shining light too.

Prior to the accident there was so much that Estrella didn’t know how to let go of: the partying life, the need to fit in, numbing as a way to cope with emotions. It wasn’t until she was confronted with making a choice – either let go of all of that or let go of her daughter – that she was able to embrace being a mom and all the responsibility that goes with it. Now, she wouldn’t have it any other way. She may have lost control of the wheel that night in August, but the jolt of the accident helped her reclaim control of her life.
More than thirty years ago President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the month of May as National Foster Care Month. While the diligent and untiring contributions of our resource parents go on for 365 days a year, these 31 days in May are a distinct time to recognize the needs of our resilient youth in care, and the commitment and aloha of the families and communities that support them.

OAHU: This year, the 7th annual Resource Family Appreciation Day on Oahu was celebrated during the early evening of April 29th 2018 at the Ice Palace skating rink in Halawa. The cool and tranquil freshly gleaming ice, along with banners and signs of appreciation, greeted more than 300 children and family members. Both children and adults quickly donned their blades and excitedly made a beeline for the rink. The venue offered something for everyone—the practiced skaters gliding confidently, the newbies venturing carefully, and the spectators just enjoying family time while munching on pizza and popcorn.

The Foster Care Training Committee who planned the event would like to acknowledge and thank the Glue Committee, Walmart Pearl City, Duane Tanaka of Popcorn Express, and many other individuals for their donations and support.

KAUA‘I: Kaua‘i celebrated National Foster Care Month with public awareness events. At the Lihue Civic Center resource caregivers and social workers were on hand when Mayor Bernard Carvalho made his presentation proclaiming May as National Foster Care Month. The Kaua‘i Lions Club helped us sign wave at busy intersections so people could see us on their way home and on their way to the Farmers Market. Fun and suntans were had by all! Also, in honor of NFCM, the Kaua‘i Lions Club made a challenge to all the other Lions Clubs on Kaua‘i to donate duffel bags and rolling backpacks filled with personal essentials for children in foster care with a goal of 100 bags.
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 children/young people who are in foster care allowed to participate on Facebook or other age-appropriate social media?

**Answer:** Yes. Children/young people can participate in social media, including Facebook (13+) with the permission of the Resource Caregiver and depending on the age of the child, supervision of their Resource Caregiver; this includes young people placed in Child Caring Institutions.

Some common forms of social media are Facebook, and messaging services such as Kix, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, video-sharing services such as YouTube and photo sharing services such as Flickr.

Social media can be used to socialize and communicate and help you do things, for example, get a message to many people at once, or find a job, but you may not have thought about some of the problems it can cause for you.

What can Resource Caregivers and Child Caring Institution staff do to help the child/young person who are using various forms of social media? Educate them about some of the unintended consequences of posting information.

Share with the child/young person that they need to think before posting information, including photos or videos online, or sending them to friends. Explain to the young person that their privacy is important. There may be negative consequences for the child/young person now as well as in the future as once it is out there it can be in many places that you don’t even think about. Their friends can copy what the child/young person post and send it to people that they don’t know who can then send it to even more people. This information, videos and photos that the child/young person sends to their friends could be sent on to other people without the child/young person’s knowledge or permission.

For more information go to: https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/smtips-youth/

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?”

School is almost back in session and at times issues arise that need to be addressed. Be sure to contact the child’s Social Worker. Other sources of support may include the child’s therapist, teacher, GAL, surrogate parent, or the “Who Ya Gonna Call” list that was in the January 2017 Building Connections Newsletter. Go to the DHS web page for a link to past versions of the RAC newsletter: humanservices.hawaii.gov

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**MAHALO**

Mahalo to Seafarer Child of Maui for their heartfelt support of foster care in Hawaii. Seafarer Child created the Hānai Project in partnership with Partners In Development Foundation. Their goal was to sell the Hānai hats in time for Foster Care Awareness Month. Seafarer Child has committed to donating 50% of all profits from the Hānai hats to PIDF for events that directly support Hawaii’s foster keiki and their resource families who care for them. To date they have donated more than $1,200.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT PEOPLE ARE TEXTING YOUR CHILD?

Do you know what people are texting to your child?

143 - I love you  
182 - I hate you  
420 - Marijuana  
459 - I love you  
ADR - Address  
ASL - Age / Sex / Location  
CD9 - Parents are around  
F2F - Face To Face (either Facetime or Skype)  
GNOC - Get naked on camera  
ILU - I love you  
IWSN - I want sex now  
KOTL - Kiss on the lips  
KPC - Keeping parents clueless  
LMIRL - Lets meet in real life  
MOS - Mum over shoulder  
NIFOC - Nude in front of the camera  
P999 - Parent alert  
PAL - Parents are listening  
PAW - Parents are watching  
PIR - Parents in room  
RU/18 - Are you over 18?  
TDTM - Talk dirty to me  
WYRN - What's your real name

Keeping Children Safe

In follow-up to the presentation at this year’s Annual Conference by Veronica Lamb of Susannah Wesley Community Center’s Trafficking Victim Assistance Program, here is some information that Resource Caregivers should know. If you suspect that your child may being trafficked or vulnerable to trafficking, contact your Social Worker immediately.

(Note: CSE=Child Sexual Exploitation)

If you were unable to attend the Annual Conference and would like to access the training online or have a DVD mailed to you, please contact the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 to request your copy today!

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

McKinley Rich

Call Hui Ho’omalu 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!
As we embark on a new school year, whether you’re a brand new Resource Caregiver or a seasoned veteran, it’s never too late to start preparing the children in your care for the new school year. This time of the year is an especially challenging one because it signals another transition in the lives of children who have already been through many transitions in their young lives. What can you do as a Resource Caregiver during this challenging time?

1) Set a routine for the children even before the school year starts. Yes it is summer, and you find yourself letting the children stay up a little later, and waking up in the morning a little later. However, in order to help make the transition to the new school year, it’s always best to keep some kind of routine. It could be as simple as, having the children do the same things, such as brush their teeth, have their breakfast, etc. right when they get up, and the same things right before they go to bed. Remember, pick your battles WISELY! As a Resource Caregiver, ask yourselves which battles are worth winning or even fighting.

2) Rely on your support network for help. The saying, “it takes a village to raise a child” applies here. As a Resource Caregiver, identify your support network if you haven’t done so already. And one step further, identify what type of support each person in your support network can provide. For example, if your sister-in-law is part of your support network, what can she support you with? Dropping and picking up the children? A shoulder to cry on when life gets a little overwhelming? Make sure you have that support network all set up and ready to support you, and more importantly USE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK!

3) Seek out professional resources. Sometimes, the challenges are beyond the scope of what your identified support network can provide, and this is when you need to seek out other resources. This might include calling a child’s social worker, or seeking out therapy for your children or even for yourself as their caregiver. To learn more tools or tips on facing various challenges, you can seek out training options such as quarterly trainings, annual conferences, online training or the vast lending library available through the Warm Line. Also, it may be helpful to talk with someone who understands or has lived through a similar situation, such as the Warm Line staff or other resource caregivers whom you can meet at a support group, training, or other community events. All of these resources are at your disposal, so use them. The only stupid question is the one not asked!

The Warm Line not only provides support and information to help you meet your child’s emotional and mental health needs, it also assists in meeting your child’s physical needs. Do you need assistance in getting school supplies for your youth in foster care this upcoming school year? Family Programs Hawaii may be able to assist in providing basic school supplies for your keiki in foster care on the island of Oahu. If interested, or on a neighbor island and looking for options and assistance with school supplies, please contact the Warm Line.

Also, if you just need someone to bounce ideas off of, or need additional resources, please call the Warm Line on Oahu at 545-1130 or toll free for the neighbor islands at 1-866-545-0882. You can also text the Warm Line at 808-348-1255, or email us at WarmLine@FamilyProgramsHi.org. Also please follow us on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/FPH.RFSS/ as we put on our page our events as well as additional resources out in the community. And here’s to a successful 2018-2019 School Year!
Adoptive Families Needed Through Wendy’s Wonderful Kids

Ricky is a six and a half-year-old boy who is easy to fall in love with. He has a sweet smile, dark brown hair and warm brown eyes. Ricky was born with multiple medically fragile conditions that result in him requiring extensive care and support at this time. He currently requires a tracheotomy ventilator support twenty four hours a day, and a G-tube to improve his nutritional intake. Developmentally, Ricky functions as a six-month-old, and prognosis for his future development is guarded at this time.

Ricky is enrolled in pre-school through the Department of Education. His morning school routine is a favorite time of the day for Ricky. His teachers report he is improving his muscle strength and coordination, increasing his flexibility, and stimulating his senses. His favorite forms of stimulation are visual and audio.

Ricky’s Forever Family must be comfortable in a medical setting and be willing to learn about the many conditions that impact his health and wellbeing. Besides providing Ricky with a stable source of love and affection, a Forever Family must be willing to make important medical decisions about Ricky’s care and lean on the expertise of the staff of the medical facility he resides at, to ensure his ultimate care. In order to do this, they must accompany him to his medical appointments and participate in care team meetings.

Although he is currently residing in a medical care home, Ricky may one day become strong enough to live in the community. A Forever Family must be willing and able to provide daily care to him in a home setting with the support of a home health agency. A Forever Family does not need to have an extensive medical background but must be able to understand and follow medical instructions in regards to medications, equipment, infection control and other matters related to Ricky’s health and wellbeing. Comprehensive care training will be provided by his current team of doctors and nurses. While he progresses from his current medical care facility to a loving home, Ricky will benefit from visits to the care facility.

Wendy’s Wonderful Kids seeks to find good homes for great kids in tough situations. If you are interested in learning more about Ricky and his need for permanent, nurturing connections, please contact Mindy Chung, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids Recruiter, at 540-2552 or by email at mindy@familyprogramshawaii.org.
O’AHU

July 20 (Fri)  Ohana is Forever: My Story, My Life: 8:30am-4:00pm at Ko’olau Ballrooms. Email OIF@sasserviceshawaii.com for more information.

July 20 (Fri)  Waianae Resource Families Support Group: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Maili Learning Center. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 7/13.

Aug 10 (Fri)  Windward Resource Families Support Group: 6:00pm-8:30pm. Kailua District Park. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 8/03.

Aug 23 (Thurs)  Central Oahu Resource Families Support Group: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Aiea United Methodist Church. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 8/16.

Sept 21 (Fri)  Waianae Resource Families Support Group: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Maili Learning Center. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 7/14.

EAST HAWAI’I

July 21 (Sat)  Hilo Resource Families Support Group: 12:00pm-2:30pm. Christ Lutheran Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 7/13.

Sept 15 (Sat)  Hilo Resource Families Support Group: 12:00pm-2:30pm. Christ Lutheran Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 9/7.

WEST HAWAI’I

July 30 (Mon)  Kona Resource Families Support Group: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Kealakehe High School. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 7/23.

KAUA’I

Aug 09 (Thurs)  Kauai Talk Story: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Lihue United Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 8/2.

MAUI COUNTY

Aug 16 (Thurs)  Maui Resource Families Support Group: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Kahului Union Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 8/9.

STATEWIDE


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

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Part-time Co-trainers Needed. Resource Caregivers/Former Foster Youth in Kaua’i and Maui 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 East Hawai’i, West Hawai’i, Maui, Oahu and Kaua’i to provide child care (i.e., during trainings), in the evenings and weekends on an occasional basis. 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
The concept for the Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) was created by the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a means to support the resource family community. Hui Ho’omalu facilitates this committee comprised of adoptive parents, resource caregivers and various community agencies, all dedicated to providing services and support to Hawai‘i’s keiki and the resource families who care for them. The purpose of the RAC is to identify ongoing needs, facilitate communication, share resources, provide information through a statewide calendar of events and a quarterly newsletter and report on local projects and other topics of interest to benefit Hawai‘i’s resource families.

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’omalu
Department of Human Services
EPIC, Inc. ‘Ohana Conferencing
Family Court
Family Programs Hawai‘i—Hui Ho’omalu & It Takes An ‘Ohana
Resource Caregivers
Adoptive Parents
Hawai‘i Foster Youth Coalition
Partners in Development Foundation—Hui Ho’omalu