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'OHANA CONNECTIONS CORNER

*For this 'Ohana Connections Corner, I interviewed Chassidy Kruse, a young woman I've been working with since 2009.*

*—Wilma Friesema, OES  
 EPIC 'Ohana Conferencing, Inc.*



I Finally Woke Up

*By Chassidy Kruse and Wilma Friesema*

**Wilma:** Chas, thanks for agreeing to this interview. You're 17 now. How old were you when you entered foster care?

**Chas:** I was 17 months old. I've been in foster care nearly all my life. My social worker recently told me I've been in 33 placements, which includes all the times I ran away and all the shelters I've been in.

**Wilma:** It's been a long and, often times, rough journey. We've worked together for 4 years now and I've seen the ups and downs. You've been through so many homes and schools; I think you've lived on almost every part of this island. Recently you've gotten very focused and determined. You're on your way to completing high school, you're working full time, and you're doing well in your foster home – I don't think there's any concern that you're going to run away again. Why the change? What happened?

**Chas:** The last time I ran away I was gone for eight months. I went to Waianae to live with my past boyfriend who's 23. He's also a former foster youth. He and I used to have deep conversations about our life struggles and growing up in foster care. I saw a lot of myself in him: I saw how he fights with everyone, which is something I've done (I used to get angry and have my walls up because I didn't believe people would stick with me). I also saw the good in him – in his own way he was trying to do good and care about others– which helped me to see the good in myself. He took me in and took care of me, but he also abused me so there were the two sides of him that I lived with.

I also spent some time with my parents, which was eye-opening. My mom is mentally ill, and my dad is an alcoholic. They're both dependent on the State, like many of the people my boyfriend knew. Seeing how they lived – what it's really like to be dependent like that as an adult – made me realize I didn't want to live like that. I want to be independent and to take care of myself.

**Wilma:** Is that what motivated you to come back into foster care?

**Chas:** Yes, it was that and the abuse, but also I realized I had many good people in my life, people who really cared and gave a lot. I used to just take all that they gave me and not give back. I used to take without thinking, without recognizing that there's something good in front of me. I was so sure people would give up on me that I kind of blew them off right away. I was pretty heartless some-times.

Being away and experiencing what it's like to be with people who don't have much to give, who are in bad shape themselves, really taught me a lot. My parents, for example, really aren't adults. They're not horrible people, but they can't parent me. They're too caught up in their own issues. Same with

*(Continued on pg. 5)*



Chassidy Kruse

## 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.*

The Building Connections Newsletter is published four times a year to provide information regarding foster and adoptive care to resource families, service providers, and to the public.

This newsletter may be viewed on the following websites:

[www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/social\\_services/child\\_welfare/foster](http://www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/social_services/child_welfare/foster)

[www.pidfoundation.org](http://www.pidfoundation.org)

Partners in Development  
Foundation

2040 Bachelot St.  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817-2433

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](mailto:RAC@pidfoundation.org)

### GO GREEN!

Want to help our environment? Contact us today and request an electronic copy!



## Youth Voices

We often hear of youth running from their homes and we may ask ourselves, "Why did they leave?" or "Could this have been prevented?" Delia Ulima, Statewide Initiative Coordinator for Epic 'Ohana, Inc's Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative, posed questions to several foster youth to get a better idea as to why youth run and what caregivers can do to help decrease their need to run.

Thank you to these youth who took the time to share their thoughts. Our foster youth have so much to offer and through them, we can learn how we can better meet their needs.

### What makes them run?

- Being uncomfortable in the new environment.
- Having very little to no privileges/too restricted.
- Not feeling safe.
- Not feeling respected.
- Not allowed to speak up for ones self.
- Not wanting to create problems for the children of the resource family.
- Being forced to do activities with the resource family.
- Feeling unwanted.
- Feeling like they have no control or input into their own life.



### What helps them stay?

- Being allowed to keep in touch with family and friends.
- Making the youth feel wanted, supported, comfortable and safe in their new environment. As indicated by one youth, he/she believes that the first 48 hours is the most critical time when a youth contemplates whether or not to stay in the new placement or to be with those they know.
- Treating the youth with respect, fairness and allowing him/her to have a say.
- Providing structure and clear expectations. For example, having set times for chores and recreation.

### Do they have a plan for where they run to?

All of the youth responses indicated that sometimes short-term plans were made on where they would be staying, most often with friends or family, but there were also times that they ran on impulse.

### How can we empower youth within the system to have some control, to help offset the impulse to run away?

- Finding a balance so that youth will feel connected in the decision making and case planning for their future. This would include ensuring that the youth can take part in meetings, court hearings, or any other type of decision-making discussions. Resource families can help by allowing youth to have some say in structuring their daily schedules in the home.
- Having former foster youth tell their story, struggles and successes to other youth. As stated by one youth, "Listening to someone speak their story and seeing the emotion in their eyes has a better and different impact than reading something in a book or listening to an adult authority tell you the consequences that may or may not happen if they do decide to run. I believe that preparing the youth with a class or a training on run away prevention will help the youth to realize that running away will only bring themselves more down than they already are. Usually by the time the worker or therapist have the runaway talk with the youth, it is either already too late, or the youth is about to take off."

*The Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative helps youth leaving foster care become successful adults in their communities. We work with youth and community partners to provide access to education, employment, health care, housing, family relationships, social capital and financial capability.*

## Restoring the Grain While Learning About Growth

By Paul Brennan

I've made a lot of furniture, but never has my attachment to a particular piece been so deep . . . and so instructive. This circular form was like a hub in our house where appetites of all kinds were sated. All traffic revolved around it day after day, from breakfast to dinner, never failing to serve us. Its seeds I never planted, nor did I harvest its logs, but I was in the mill soon after the logs were sawn . . . carefully selecting the pieces needed and to visualize their use. The place was Papua New Guinea, the wood was rosewood, and the year 1978. We needed a big, round table for our family of six, as well as the many guests I visualized we would have. The 40 strips of 2 inch stock, when glued together, would make a perfect circle spanning five feet. So the dream became reality.

I well remember the fragrant smell of the rosewood as I assembled it in faraway New Guinea, using the limited tools I had. The waterproof glue was from Australia, and it brought the planks together in a tight union. Each sanding released more of the fragrant oil embedded in the grain, and each finer grit only added to the luster.

The satisfaction of assembling and using the table was reserved for when we moved to Hawaii 32 years ago. There was joy in fitting the pedestal base with lathe-turned legs and lions claw feet onto the top, and then the fun in watching grain patterns—in reds, oranges, yellows—pop out of their hidden past.

What better place exists in our homes for families to come together, to sing, to nurture, to celebrate life? What other podium might our children have for telling their stories of what happened at school, to share their joys and anxieties? Where can we find a confessional that is as safe and affirming, where around the circle eye contact is encouraged and reaching out so natural? Where else can Christmas cookies be so joyfully decorated, or home-made bread fresh from the oven be so deliciously shared? Our family never found an alternative. Conversely, it was also the gathering place for rage to be vented when one of our new arrivals didn't like the green beans on his plate. For one of our other children in an angry outburst, the table became the handiest object to upset, literally! This table, made of fine, rare wood from an exotic forest in the jungle, exuding its pleasant aroma, felt and heard it all. Even when our cat occasionally carried in a dead rat to place beneath the legs its offering, our table never objected. Such was the varied and tolerated experience our table had offered us. Quietly, forgivingly it had accepted whatever came to it.



But three decades of continuous, predictable use, however, can make any piece of furniture drab and worn. So it was with our table. Water stains, scratches, dents, and even burn marks became its new identity under layers of accumulated living. The wear and tear of heavy family service—from our four sons and the twenty other youth we had taken in—eventually took its toll. It needed more than the daily wiping from a dish cloth. The inevitable had to be done, so this past summer, in the context of remodeling our kitchen, I eagerly began to take it apart. I knew what it was made of and longed to restore it to that first luster I knew was concealed. Each leg and foot was gently sanded, but the top needed more aggressive treatment. Rolling it down the hall and through our bedroom, then out the back door, I could begin to take off the layers of unwanted scars. For a full day I sanded, going from coarse to medium to fine—all the way to 600 grit. How it began to shine again! Gone forever were the food particles, the spilled-milk stains, someone's initials, even that corroded penny some young fingers had pushed into a glue crack. Wood is so forgiving, as the sawdust at my feet could attest! It was a well-spent day of TLC; though covered in particles from the past I knew that the rosewood grain could be given a second chance—to shine again as it was intended.

This table is more than a piece of furniture, for it symbolizes where our family has been and the future that awaits. Home is surely where the heart makes up its mind, and the kitchen table must be the altar of that sacred experience. So bring on the birthday cakes, the tempting casseroles, the healthy bowls of oatmeal, the savory pea soup! It's time to dine again and the table is set. The legs have been re-glued, the holes have been filled, and six coats of finish have been applied. Most importantly, the grain has been exposed and it shines like never before! Around this table there is always room for one more!



### OUTSTANDING DHS WORKER!



#### DINA KOYANAGI, CWS Supervisor

It Takes An 'Ohana's Advisory Committee (IAC) would like to thank Dina Koyanagi for the outstanding work that she has done on behalf of resource families and foster children and youth. The positive impact of her work is immeasurable. Dina goes above and beyond the essential and demanding functions of her job. Resource caregivers report that she is always available, a great communicator and works tirelessly in finding resources to meet the needs of children and youth. Dina is now the supervisor of O'ahu Child Welfare Services Unit 1.

Do you know a DHS-CWS worker(s) that you would like to acknowledge for his/her exceptional work?  
Share their name(s) with us and what makes them so special so we can let others know how wonderful they are!

441-1125 (O'ahu) ★ 1-888-879-8970 (Toll Free) ★ [RAC@pidfoundation.org](mailto:RAC@pidfoundation.org)

# Welcome to FPH's Resource Family Support Services Corner

By Lorie Naftel, RFSS Family Resource Specialist

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



FAMILY PROGRAMS HAWAII

## Ask the Warm Line



Lorie Naftel

Occasionally, the Warm Line receives a call from a resource family regarding an allegation against them. Unfortunately, allegations do occur and more than half of them are found to be false. It is, however, the job of CWS to take action when an allegation could compromise child safety. Every resource caregiver should be aware of the risk and potential of it happening to you so it's best to be proactive. The following questions and answers might be helpful if a child is removed due to an allegation.

Q. My foster child was removed due to an allegation and I don't know what the allegation is. How can I find out and how long does it take?

A. An assessment (investigation) worker, not your active case worker, will inform you of the concern/ allegation when they meet with you. The assessment worker has a specific time frame to meet with all the parties involved and it can take up to ten business days. The assessment worker has up to sixty days to report their findings from the date the report was accepted for assessment.

Q. Wasn't DHS supposed to tell me what the allegation is when they picked the child up?

A. No, the worker transporting the child might not know or is not privileged to divulge the information so the investigation is not compromised.

Q. I'm really emotional, frustrated and stressed because I know I didn't do anything wrong, what do I do now?

A. First, try to take care of yourself and stay positive. This is a very stressful time for you and your family because of the abruptness of having the child removed. The only thing to do now is to be patient with the process.

There are some resources available to help guide you through the investigation process as listed below:

- Foster Parent College – "Allegations" online training. Call Michelle Sajona, Training Coordinator at 521-9531 ext. 247 or email [msjona@familyprogramshi.org](mailto:msjona@familyprogramshi.org) for more information.
- It Takes An Ohana (ITAO) has an advisory committee made up of resource caregivers and DHS to support resource families and children in foster care while providing responsible advocacy. For more information on ITAO visit <http://ittakesanohana.org/>

In summary, experiencing an allegation will not erase the emotional turmoil and self doubt it may cause you while you and your family are in the trenches during the investigation process. Resource caregivers should be prepared for worst case scenarios. Online trainings, trainings, and attending support groups to find a group of resource caregivers that can be your support system are all ways that can educate and help you when times are difficult. Also, review your H.A.N.A.I. training manual from time to time. A fear of allegations should not deter a resource caregiver from providing care but rather allow you to continue building personal skills in patience, resiliency, team work and cooperation.

## Care to Share

Would you like to share furniture items with kinship and general resource families?

Often times, resource families who are going through the licensing process to care for a relative or non-relative do not have the financial means to purchase a bunk bed, twin bed, crib or dresser to accommodate the child in foster care. To support these wonderful resource caregivers it would be nice to share our resources (furniture items that we might just give away to Goodwill or Salvation Army) with these caregivers who are already opening their homes and hearts.

If you or someone you know wants to donate a bed, crib, dresser, or bunk bed to a resource caregiver, please call the Warm Line at 545-1130 and for neighbor islands call toll free at 1-866-545-0882.

Care to Share has been fortunate to be a recipient of generous donations from Hawai'i, nationally and internationally so we thank them for helping our resource caregiver community.

Thank you to **Together We Rise**, an organization in California that helps children in foster care Nationwide for their donation of shoes, children's clothing and sweet cases.

Thank you to **Dave Wild** who travelled from Australia and brought over a hundred soccer shirts with him to Hawai'i for children in foster care.

Thank you to **Mr. & Mrs. Cole**, owners of Coronet, who gave us some money to assist Wai'anae families with furniture items for foster youth.

And thank you to the **Sheraton Waikiki hotel** for their donation of portable cribs which helped 3 resource caregivers be able to prepare for infants they would be caring for.

# Mahalo!

This program, brought to you by FPH's Resource Family Support Services (RFSS), is funded by the Department of Human Services

# I Finally Woke Up (cont.)

**Chas (cont.):** my ex-boyfriend; his anger was out of control. Though he had a good side, the bad side was too much. One day I finally woke up. I realized there had been a lot of good people in my life that I just hadn't paid attention to or appreciated. I wanted to change that.

**Wilma:** How are things different, now that you're back?

**Chas:** I'm back living with a family I've lived with in the past and they're really good to me – and this time I see it! They don't yell, but they do talk firmly with me. My foster dad, I swear, when I've done something wrong he sits down and talks to me and I cry every time. Both of my foster parents don't beat around the bush with me; they're straight up and they're consistent. That's how they show me they love me.

I've changed inside too. I used to think I was always right, that I didn't need to listen to anybody. Now I'm more flexible. I'll listen to what adults are telling me and weigh out for myself if it's something I want to do or not. I'm often willing to try what they suggest. My social worker, Pat Spencer, told me the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting a different result. I'm realizing if I want my life to be different I have to be willing to grow and change – to do things differently too.

**Wilma:** That's great, Chas! What are you most proud of these days?

**Chas:** Being still alive! Making it so far and doing so well. Having many good people around and appreciating them. Finding a job on my own, working, being drug free, child free, and getting my high school education – I'm proud of all of that. I plan to go on to college. I'll be the first in my family to do so.

**Wilma:** Speaking of family, do you regret reconnecting with your parents, given they have such serious limitations?

**Chas:** I'm glad to have met my parents. If I hadn't I wouldn't be where I am today. I wouldn't be able to let it go.

I didn't want my social worker to just tell me the reason why I wasn't with my parents; I had to see for myself. Now that I have I can see their limitations. I'll admit it, I still struggle with feeling hurt that they don't ever call or reach out to me, but I'm seeing I need to let that go. I really don't feel a bond with them, and if I keep longing for that it's just going to hurt me. I've got my own life to live.

**Wilma:** Before we end, do you have any advice you'd like to give other foster youth?

**Chas:** Don't give up! Stick it out as long as you can, even if your situation is difficult. It will be worth it in the end.

Also, even if you have to hit rock bottom like I did, don't give up on yourself. Don't do for anyone else but you. Don't play sports just because your cousins are good; do it because you want to, do it for yourself. Don't smoke or drink because your friends are doing it, make your own choices for yourself.

Like my foster mom says: don't lie, because you're only lying to yourself.

Oh, and one more thing, don't live out others' dreams and wishes, live out your own. This is really your life and nobody else's. You get to choose.

**Wilma:** Thanks, Chas. I know you're proud of yourself, but there are a lot of people around you who are proud of you too. You really are claiming your life and your dreams!

*EPIC 'Ohana Conferencing is funded through the Department of Human Services  
For more information about 'Ohana Connections work  
contact Wilma Friesema at EPIC 'Ohana Conferencing, Inc. at 748-7921*

## Quality Assurance Corner

### Annual Questionnaire for Resource Families 2013

A big MAHALO to all the resource caregivers who have participated in the Annual Questionnaire for Resource Families 2013. We greatly appreciate your important feedback as we continue efforts to improving our services for resource caregivers statewide. We would like to congratulate this year's six lucky winners of the gift card drawings.

**Congratulations**
  
**to the Winners of this Year's Gift Card Drawings!**
  
**Winners of \$50 Gift Card Drawing:**
  
 Kim & John Jr. Rodrigues - Kamuela, Hawai'i
   
 Colin Fukami - Honolulu, O'ahu
   
 Joann Yukimura - Līhu'e, Kauai
   
 Maile & Johnathan Davis - Haiku, Maui
   
 Jerrick & Dudoit Domingo - Kaunakakai, Moloka'i
   
 Pamela & Rocco Keola - 'Aiea, O'ahu (online survey drawing)

## ***FOSTER FAMILY SURVIVAL: DEFENSIVE PARENTING\****

*The following information from The Casey Family Program can help to educate resource caregivers on abuse allegations and provide preventive tips on how to reduce their liability. Please note that although this article refers to “foster families” and “foster parents”, Hawai‘i currently refers to them as “resource families” and “resource caregivers.”*

### Allegations of Abuse:

- A higher percentage of foster families are likely to be involved in allegations of abuse than are natural families.
- The foster child is more likely the target of the alleged abuse.
- Although there will always be a number of foster parents in any system who are abusive or neglectful, most are not.
- The message to prudent foster parents is to be “defensive” in order to limit the possibility of a costly error.

### Defensive Parenting:

- The goal is to reduce the incidence of abuse allegations against foster parents and to raise the quality of foster care through an informed relationship between the agency and the foster parents.
- It is important to understand the position of the agency and its mandate in order to be most effective as advocates for your foster children.
- It is also important to protect yourselves from allegations of abuse or neglect.

### Tips to Reducing Foster Parent’s Liabilities

- Recognize your stress. Parenting other people’s children makes many more demands on the family. When you don’t recognize your own stress levels, it is more likely that you will react in more frustrated ways to the children. Learning to say no to foster children who are beyond your abilities is sometimes the most difficult task facing foster parents but is a necessary step.
- Establish clear role definitions and guidelines. Know the agency’s policy on discipline. Physical discipline is illegal for foster children and can lead to allegations of abuse. Also know what the agency’s expectations are of you as foster parents. It is best if you ask for the specific policy and the worker’s interpretation of the policy so that you know the boundaries.
- Placement agreements and information sheets on the child. Know what the placement agreement says. Be sure they are specific and clear as to the procedures, goals, and plans for the placement.
- Case specific information. Ask questions of the placing worker before placement, such as: was the child abused, type of abuse, situations surrounding the abuse, etc.? Establishing what happened to the child, where it happened and what was used, can alert you to high risk situations where allegations could arise.
- Adequate financial support. Financial stress is known to play a significant role in family breakups. Know your financial limits and don’t exceed them. Having a sound financial support system will also fend off allegations that the family is using foster board payments for its own support, rather than to meet the needs of the foster child.
- Document! Document! Document! Keep a log of any occurrence with the foster children which could result in allegations of abuse. Accidents, bruises, cuts, burns, abrasions, etc. may be used by the foster child and/or the natural parents or any others against you. Immediate care to the child’s injuries, a swift report to the agency and accurate documentation which includes the date, time, and a description of the event could be your defense.

\*Barnhart, Marty, MSW, Social Worker formerly with Foster Home Certification Unit I.

This report is based on a seminar entitled “FOSTER FAMILY SURVIVAL: DEFENSIVE PARENTING”, given by Jacob R. Sprouse, Jr. of the American Foster Care Resources, Inc.



## **Adoptive Families Needed Through Wendy’s Wonderful Kids**

Richard is a 9-year old boy in need of an adoptive home that can love, accept, and support him with unconditional love.

Richard is of Caucasian and Japanese descent. He enjoys drawing, coloring, and other artistic pursuits. Richard also enjoys playing with Lego toys and constructing different designs and structures. Richard loves all types of video games and his favorite game is Minecraft. Richard also loves being outdoors and enjoys riding his scooter on the sidewalk. Richard likes animals and has become attached to pets in the past.

Richard thrives when he receives one-on-one attention from his caregivers and is not placed in an environment with excess stimulation. Richard needs extra attention at school and is currently in a specialized classroom for children with special needs.

Richard can be affectionate to his caregivers and can be very fun-loving. To be successful, Richard will need a forever family that can provide structure, boundaries, discipline, and consistency. Richard has some behavioral and mental health issues that need support and attention by his caregivers and will do better in a family that has older children.

Richard is a special boy that dreams of having a family to call his own. If you are interested in learning more about Richard, please contact Teresa Berg at Family Programs Hawai‘i at 808-540-2552.

## Celebrating Holidays with Children You Foster

Conflicting loyalties and lost dreams often make the holidays a difficult time for children in foster care. Just as studies show that holidays are stressful times for most of us, these reactions are compounded for children and youth placed in your home. Here are some suggestions for managing the holidays.

How can my family make it easier for the children in foster care while they are in our home?

- Talk about the season ahead of time. Talk about how your family celebrates the holidays. Tell children which of the traditional holidays your house recognizes. Is it Thanksgiving? St. Nick's Day? Kwanzaa? Hanukah? Christmas? New Year? Or all of the above? Talking about the holidays gives children time to anticipate the upcoming activities and ask questions.
- Help children in foster care imagine what to expect in your home. Much of what we assume to be commonplace can be new to the children you foster.
- Share the religious meanings the holidays may have for your family. Talk about your family's specific customs and activities.
- Use this time of sharing to learn especially about the religious beliefs, customs, and activities of the children you foster.
- Try to incorporate at least some of their traditions into your traditions.
- Some parents try to keep the holidays low key in order to help minimize some of the stress.



How can we work with birth families during the holidays?

- Again, ask children about their experiences and try to incorporate some of their traditions. The children placed in your home may miss some activities that they experienced with their family or in a previous placement.
- If possible, ask your child's family members about their holiday traditions and customs. Ask about their beliefs and observances. Although you may feel stretched at the holidays, try to coordinate schedules with the birth families. This gives the children a chance to share what is familiar while experiencing new traditions.
- This is a good time for the youth in your home to make small gifts and send cards to their birth families or old neighbors and friends.
- This is a time when many children feel conflicted feelings about their birth families and worry about them. It is a good time to let the young person know that it is okay for them to be safe and cared for even if their family struggles. Reassure them if you can, about the safety and care of their birth family.

What are some of the ways I can help the children who I foster get through the holidays? What are some signs of grief or sadness that I can look for?

- Be prepared for the sadness and grief. Talk about your child's feelings throughout the season.
- Give your children time and space to grieve. Grief takes many forms and may be exhibited in lots of ways, including:
  - ◆ Reverting back to younger behaviors developmentally
  - ◆ Soiling themselves or bedwetting
  - ◆ Becoming withdrawn and isolated
  - ◆ Having temper tantrums
  - ◆ Being rebellious
  - ◆ Complaining more than usual
- Try to remember the developmental age of the children you foster. It will also help you to stay patient if you keep in mind the challenges of the season for your child before you react.

What are some things we can do to make family get-togethers easier?

- Talk about upcoming events and the people who will be there. If you cannot get together before the big event, introduce your children to family and friends who will be at the celebration by going through pictures.
- Prepare them for the "characters" in your family and also tell them about other children who might be there.

### Religious Differences & the Holidays

*The holidays can be tough for foster families. Children in care miss their families and their traditions, while at the same time they may want to be part of the activities of the foster family. When there's a religious difference between the child's family and the foster family, things can become even more complicated.*

*Religion can be a sensitive issue. Legally, birth parents have the right to choose their children's religion or lack of religion. Placement of their child in foster care does not take away this right.*

*Of course, most foster parents try to respect the culture and religious customs of the children in their care. But what does this mean when it comes to religion?*

*The answer lies in establishing open lines of communication among foster parents, DHS, and the birth family. If your agency knows how you feel about religious issues (for example, if prayer makes you feel uncomfortable, or if you feel compelled to convert children and their families), it will make informed placement decisions. If you haven't already done so, consider talking with your social worker about how religion affects your role as a resource caregiver.*

*This communication works both ways. The more you know about the religion, traditions, and preferences of birth families, the easier it will be for you to act in a way that honors their beliefs.*

(Continued on pg. 8)

## Celebrating Holidays with Children You Foster (cont.)

- Tell them if your celebrations are quiet or loud, sacred or silly, big or small.
- Describe the home or place where the event will be held, and tell how it usually proceeds.
- Be realistic about it—do not make your celebrations seem perfect, but do not stress the challenges that are part of all family events.
- Give your children a camera so that they can record the celebration, and also give them one for holiday visits with their birth families.

### What can I do to help my children learn what is expected of them at family celebrations?

- This is an opportunity to teach the behaviors and manners that you would like the youth you foster to learn. Go over basic manners such as “please” and “thank you.”
- Explain the expectations of children prior to family get-togethers, and practice those behaviors ahead of time.
- Use role playing at home so that they can practice.
- Make sure you and your family/friends are on the same page regarding gifts from and to your children. Perhaps try to have your child bring a small hostess gift to the get together: baked goods, nuts, candles, ornament, etc.
- Tell family and friends about your children, and try to introduce them before the holidays. It’s a good time to remind others about the confidentiality you honor concerning the children you foster, and it might be a good time to practice some polite but firm answers to some questions.
- Remember especially to ask your children what they would like to have shared about themselves.

Information used with permission from Coalition for Children, Youth & Families ([www.wifostercareandadoption.org](http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org))



## Holiday Traditions

By Brigitte Tokuda, FPH RFSS Program Coordinator



Some of the best memories made during childhood are around holiday traditions. Here are some personal traditions that our resource caregivers share with the children in their home!

“One tradition that we have is to go to Haelakala to bring in the New Year. We bring hot chocolate and talk about our News Year Resolutions. We also write on paper the things that we need to let go of and burn them in the fire.” –Antoinette, Maui

“The weekend after thanksgiving we hike a trail in Volcano to pick `ōhelo berries. Then as a family we make jam to give away for Christmas.” –Michele, Hilo

“Before my husband passed away he made up a game with clues for the kids to find their Christmas gifts. With each clue they would find a gift. It was so fun for the kids and they enjoyed running all over the house and property to find their gifts. After my husband passed away I didn’t know if I could continue the tradition. When my former foster daughter found out that I wasn’t going to do it she took it upon herself to continue it. For the past three years no matter where she is, even outer island, she comes to the house to write clues and hide gifts for the kids in the home. It was so much fun for her that she wanted to make sure that the other kids were also enjoying the tradition.” –Allene, O’ahu

“We have a lot of traditions that we have done for the children in our home. A special one that we do every year for Christmas is we go through our belongings and wrap gently used and clean items that we think people would want or need. Then we take those gifts and go to the beaches and into the mountains to give to those who may not have as much as us. We teach the children to give back even if its small.” –Sandy, O’ahu

### 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



### 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!





## LAW UPDATES

By Judith Wilboite, FPH It Takes An 'Ohana

### New Child Welfare Law Update

A new act that will go into effect on July 1, 2014, will extend foster care from age 18 to age 21 in Hawai'i. This new law is designed to help former foster youth achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

The program is completely voluntarily. Young person may be eligible if:

- Emancipated out of the foster care system at age 18.
- Placed in legal guardianship after age 16.
- Adopted after age 16.

Eligible youth must participate in at least one of the following activities:

- Employed for at least eighty hours per month.
- Completing secondary education or a program leading to equivalent credential.
- Enrolled in an institution that provides post- secondary or vocational education.
- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment.
- If a youth is not able to meet one of the above requirements, they must have a medical condition that prevents them from participating. It must be supported by regularly updated information in the case plan of the young adult.

A young person may also be eligible if they decide to not immediately participate in program but change their mind after a period of time prior to his/her 20th birthday.

Between now and July 1, 2014, the details of this new law will be planned and implemented. Please help spread the word to current and former foster youth who are eligible and who could benefit from this program.

### Foster Care Reimbursement Rate

The \$529 per month reimbursement rate that Hawai'i's resource caregivers receive to cover their foster children's costs has not been changed since 1990. Resource caregivers advocate for their foster children in court, supervise visitations with the foster children's birth families, and intervene to assure their foster children obtain appropriate special education services at public school.

We are especially pleased that the Department of Human Services (DHS) has contracted with Dr. Susan Chandler of the UH Mānoa School of Social Work to develop a plan for increasing the foster care reimbursement rate through House Bill 986.

Lend your voice to those already helping DHS refine and push House Bill 986 through the legislature this year! Currently the bill is in conference, meaning that it will not have to go through hearings on both sides of the legislature; it can be quickly convened and sent to the floor for approval, then onto the Governor's desk, hopefully early in the 2014 session! But we will need your help – even with the DHS and Governor supporting this effort, we will need to advocate with legislators. Go to [www.ittakesanohana.org](http://www.ittakesanohana.org) for updates and/or to sign up for ITAO's legislative action emails.



## '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 and join this list of folks who have received their 'Ohana Rewards:



Sherri & JR Andrade  
Carolina Levering  
Samantha Lorenzo  
Susan Moloney  
Ailene Schwartzlow



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

### Advertise in the Newsletter—

#### Promote Your Business

*100% of the proceeds will be used towards supporting our 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'omalua—RAC, 680 Iwilei Rd., Ste. 500, Honolulu, HI 96817

Phone: 441-1125 (O'ahu) ★ 888-879-8970 (Toll Free)

Fax: 441-1122 ★ E-mail: [RAC@pidfoundation.org](mailto: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.



## “Stress, It's Not as Bad as You Think”

By Kathy Bentley

We have all heard that stress is bad for us. However, not all stress is bad. Stress is a fact of life. Without stress we wouldn't be motivated to go to work to support our family, or go to school to get a better job. The downside of stress is when it overwhelms us. Too much stress can make us forgetful, kids act out, make parents less patient.

Stress affects our brain. In-utero if mom is under a great deal of stress her cortisol levels stay high which means that the baby's developing brain is also getting higher levels of cortisol. This affects the wiring in the brain.

If a child is in a high stress environment their brain is releasing high levels of cortisol so they can stay alert for danger. If their cortisol levels stay high long enough and often enough their brain will stay on high alert at all times. Brains that are constantly on alert for danger have a difficult time managing behavior, having healthy relationships, and learning.

Unmanaged stress can negatively affect our health, change our sleep, and kill off brain cells.

We process stress differently, depending on our sex, age, and how well we manage stressors. When we are under stress our body releases hormones, two of the primary ones being cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones put our bodies into one of two categories. Males tend to go into “flight or fight” which means they respond in some physical way, striking out, yelling or retreating into silence. Females on the other hand tend to “freeze”, whereby they can't move forward.

What does that mean in your home? Often it means that members of your family slam doors and books, yell, throw things, punch things or otherwise act physical when they are stressed. Other members shut down and don't talk. And, for some, they can't seem to move forward in their lives.

Everyone needs to learn to manage stress. It's our job as parents and caregivers to model good stress management and to teach it to our children. One of the easiest things to do is to make sure that everyone drinks plenty of water. Water dilutes the amount of cortisol and adrenaline in our bodies and helps our brain calm down. Most kids and many adults rarely drink water instead they drink juice, soda, and energy drinks, all of which can make stress reactions even stronger.

Get enough sleep. One of the things that happens when we sleep is the cortisol levels go down. The majority of Americans don't get enough sleep. Preschoolers and kindergarteners need an average of 11 hours of sleep a night, elementary school children need an average of 10 hours, adolescents and teens need an average of 9 hours and adults need 7-8 hours. We need to teach our children and ourselves to get enough sleep. Going to bed at the same time every night, turning all screens off at least one hour before bed, and removing all technology from bedrooms all help with getting enough sleep.

One way to reduce stress is to stop the cycle of negative thoughts. **Think only pleasant thoughts before you go to sleep.** We tend to think of all the things we didn't get done, or that went wrong, or what we have to do tomorrow. When we go to sleep thinking those thoughts, our brains keep processing those negative thoughts and it's harder for your cortisol levels to go down. Think about the good things that happened that day. Did you see a rainbow on the way home? Remember how good the flowers in your yard smelled. When we go to sleep thinking pleasant thoughts, we are more likely to wake up feeling good. When your daughter is caught up in the cycle of negative thoughts help her find something good that happened and to focus on the positive. When we think positive thoughts it's very difficult to think negative thoughts.

When you feel stress building up, try **stretching your arms over your head.** It's difficult to think negative thoughts when your arms are above your head. Don't believe me? Try it.

Make sure that you **breathe.** When we are under stress we tend to take shallow breaths. This decreases the amount of oxygen going to our brain and slows down our thinking skills. When you feel yourself getting stressed, take in a couple of deep breaths through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. This has a calming affect.



The last one is one you can pass on to everyone. **Smile.** Smiling lowers your blood pressure. Again, it's hard to think negative thoughts when you are smiling. When things start to feel like they are out of control, smile. It'll help you manage the stuff you have to deal with.

When people are in high stress it's difficult to try new things so try these techniques yourself and teach them to your children during moments of calm. It takes about three weeks to learn a new behavior so keep practicing and see if it helps calm your household over time. A calm home is one of the best defenses for managing stress.





**O'AHU**

- Oct 25 (Fri): Central O'ahu Resource Families Support Group: 5:30pm-8:00pm. O'ahu Veterans Center. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245.
- Nov 1 (Fri): Honolulu Training—Follow-Up on Pathways to Healing: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Shriners Hospital. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245 by 10/25/13.
- Nov 8 (Fri): Windward Resource Families Support Group: 6:00pm-8:30pm. Location TBA. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245. \*This group will not meet again until 2/14/14.
- Nov 17 (Sun): National Adoption Day Celebration at Ice Palace. A fun evening for families that have adopted. 6:30pm-9:00pm. On-line registration will begin on 10/7/13. To register on-line, go to [www.familyprogramshi.org](http://www.familyprogramshi.org) or call 521-0531 ext. 227.
- Dec 13 (Fri): Central O'ahu Resource Families Support Group Holiday Get Together: 5:30pm-8:00pm. O'ahu Veterans Center. RSVP to FPH at 521-9531 ext. 245
- Dec 15 (Sun): 2013 Holiday Party. Neal Blaisdell Center. On-line registration will begin Friday, 11/1/13. To register on-line, go to [www.familyprogramshi.org](http://www.familyprogramshi.org). Call the Warm Line at 545-1130 for more information.

**WEST HAWAI'I**

- Oct 23 (Wed): Kona Resource Families Support Group and Training—Follow-Up on Pathways to Healing: 4:30pm-7:30pm. Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Kona. Call the Warm Line toll free at 1-866-545-0882 to register by 10/16/13.



**EAST HAWAI'I**

- Oct 25 (Fri): Training—Follow-Up on Pathways to Healing: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Location TBA. Call the Warm Line toll free at 1-866-545-0882 to RSVP.
- Nov 9 (Sat): Hilo Resource Families Support Group: 12:00pm-2:30pm. Haili Congregational Church. RSVP to Michele Carvalho at 987-5988.

**MAUI COUNTY**

- Oct 25 (Fri): Training—Follow-Up on Pathways to Healing: 5:00pm-7:30pm. Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center-Annex. Call the Warm Line toll free at 1-866-545-0882 to RSVP.

**KAUA'I**

- Oct 30 (Wed): Kaua'i Talk Story and Training—Follow-Up on Pathways to Healing: 5:30pm-8:00pm. Location TBA. Call the Warm Line toll free at 1-866-545-0882 to RSVP.



*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](http://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



**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

Part-time/On-call Co-trainer and childcare provider wanted to assist PIDF with HANAI trainings. Trainings generally done on weekday evenings and Saturdays, approximately 11 hours for the full training. Current and previous resource caregivers or former foster youth may apply.

**HUI HO'OMALU**

A Program of Partners in Development Foundation

See [www.pidfoundation.org/about/careers](http://www.pidfoundation.org/about/careers)

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

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Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817-2433

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## Statewide Resource Advisory Committee

2040 Bachelot St.  
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441-1125 (O'ahu)  
888-879-8970 (Toll Free)

Fax: 441-1122

E-mail:

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*