



Foster Care Conference Set for April 27th and 28th

You can register now for the 11th Annual HFWA Foster Care Conference. Join the several hundred other foster parents, social workers, and service providers who take this time to learn, network, and be taken care of for two special days, April 27 and 28 at the Pacific Beach Hotel in Waikiki.



Workshops include topics such as "Sibling Relationships and Transitions," "Grandparents Rock!," "Helping Sexually Abused Children Heal," "Lessons from the Bench," "Permanency Options," "The Real Deal about Foster Parenting," and "What is

Attachment and Why Is It So Important?" And these titles are just a sampling.

INSTITUTES

A special set of workshops will be offered on Friday afternoon. So often, conference attendees say they need more time in the workshop to go into more depth and discussion. These afternoon institutes will meet that need. The institutes will address topics that have an impact on foster care and the broader community. Topics include Influencing Public Policy, Implications of Homelessness on Hawaii's Foster Families, Raising Children in a Multi-ethnic Community, A Close Look at Adolescent Substance Abuse, and several other topics. Community members can register just for lunch and the Friday institute.

CHILD CARE

Thanks to foundation support, we are offering, for the first time, free child care for children ages 5-12. This service is available to registered attendees who pre-register their children. Childcare services are being provided by Kama'aina Kids. Activities include outings to Hawaiian Waters Adventure Park, Bishop Museum, and a catamaran ride. Children must be registered prior to the conference. Drop off and pick up of children will be at the Pacific Beach Hotel.



FOSTER YOUTH CONFERENCE ON SATURDAY

With support from the Department of Human Services and in collaboration with the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition, we will be hosting the Foster Youth Conference on



Saturday, April 28, for foster youth ages 13-24. There are numerous activities planned in the morning in a conference room reserved just for the youth. In the afternoon, several of the youth will speak at a workshop on "The Essentials for Success and Survival After Foster Care."

REGISTRATION

DHS will pay the registration fee for DHS foster parents, DHS relative caregivers and DHS social workers. Other foster parents should contact their agencies. There are also limited scholarships available for adoptive parents, legal guardians, and volunteer guardians *ad litem*.



Call HFWA at 808-263-0920 or 1-877-775-4400 to request a conference brochure.

Or go on-line at www.hawaiiosterparent.org to download the brochure, adult registration form, youth conference registration form, and child care forms. Due to limited space, we recommend you register as soon as possible.

Thanks to the Victoria S. and Bradley L. Geist Foundation and the James & Abigail Campbell Family Foundation for their support of training opportunities for foster and adoptive families and service providers. This support has enabled us to take several trainings to the neighbor islands, as well as to provide the wonderful training opportunities at the HFWA Conference.

IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Federal Adoption Tax Credit for Special Needs Adoption

Beginning in 2003, families adopting a child with special needs from foster care were able to access a federal adoption tax credit without needing to document expenses. For tax year 2006, the tax credit is \$10,960 per child and parents have this year and up to the next five years in which to claim the credit. Note: Families who finalized an adoption of a child with special needs between 2003 and 2005 who did not claim the adoption tax credit should read *Amending a Tax Return from a Previous Year* found at http://www.nacac.org/pub/pub_taxcredit.html. This information can also be found at www.hawaiifosterparent.org, *Articles, Financial Information, Federal Adoption Tax Credit for Special Needs Adoption.*

Tax Issues Related to Adoption Assistance and Adoption

Adoptive parents often ask whether adoption assistance (adoption subsidy) payments are taxable. Many also wonder about claiming their child as a dependent and using the child tax credit. The North American Council on Adoptable Children

(NACAC) reviewed related IRS publications and offers its interpretation of these issues.

You can download the fact sheet at <http://www.nacac.org/subsidyfactsheets/taxes.html> or go to www.hawaiifosterparent.org, *Articles, Financial, Tax Issues Related to Adoption Assistance and Adoption.*

Important IRS publications for foster and adoptive parents:

[Exemptions, Standard Deductions, and Filing Information \(Pub. 501\)](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p501.pdf)
<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p501.pdf>

[Child and Dependent Care Expenses \(Pub. 503\)](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p503.pdf)
<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p503.pdf>

[Instructions for Adoption Credit \(Pub. 8839\)](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i8839.pdf)
<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i8839.pdf>

[Form for Pub. 8839](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8839.pdf)
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[Child Tax Credit \(Pub. 972\)](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p972.pdf)
<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p972.pdf>



Scholarship Opportunities for Foster or Former Foster Youth

Victoria S. and Bradley L. Geist Foundation scholarships are available for students currently or formerly in the foster care system. The application deadline for the Geist Foundation Scholarship Program is **June 1, 2007** for Fall and Spring semester scholarships, **October 1, 2007** for Spring semester scholarships.

To download the 2007-2008 Geist Foundation Scholarship Program application, go to http://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/doc_bin/scholar_app/2007/Geist_2007.pdf or you can download from www.hawaiifosterparent.org, Resources, Youth, Scholarships.

Hawaii Community Vocational Education scholarships are for programs that include (but are not limited to) culinary arts, auto repair, diesel mechanics, cosmetology, computer graphics and assistive medical technology. The application deadline for the Vocational Education Scholarship Program is **July 2, 2007** for Fall and Spring semester scholarships, **October 1, 2007** for Spring semester scholarships.

To download the 2007-2008 Vocational Education Scholarship Program application, go to http://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/doc_bin/scholar_app/2007/Voced_2007.pdf You can also email: scholarships@hcf-hawaii.org or call 808-566-5570 or toll-free 1-888-731-3863.

The Hawaii Foster Parent Association nurtures, educates, and supports foster and adoptive families, while providing responsible advocacy for improvements in the foster care system.

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Sarah T. Casken, *Editor*

The comments of individuals are not necessarily those of HFFA.

HFFA is a non-profit organization registered with the Hawaii State Dept. of Commerce and Consumer Affairs.

HFPA Looks to the Future by Daniel Ziegler, Board President

When an organization is so closely identified with its Executive Director, the news can come as a shock: one day the two must part company. That time has come for HFPA. For the past 14 years, HFPA founding director Sarah Casken has led the organization, advocating for and providing quality services to families and children, and serving Hawaii's foster care system with dedication, wisdom and passion.



Much as we'll miss her, we are excited for her. Sarah will be attending the University of Hawaii Richardson School of Law this fall, fulfilling a dream she has had for many years to earn her law degree. We wish her the very best and look forward to her contributions to Hawaii in the future.

As part of the transition process, and with funding from the Yang Fund, Tai Up of the Hawaii Community Foundation, HFPA contracted with Robin Johnson of Social Currency to conduct a series of confidential interviews with key stakeholders in the foster care community. We appreciate the thoughtful contributions and the time people spent in the interviews.

The interview report indicates general consensus that HFPA should continue to advocate for families and

children and educate and disseminate information to parents and service providers. As an intermediary organization, HFPA should create strong partnerships with others in the field. The survey responders told us that our new Executive Director should play a central role in building bridges among the various groups in the foster care system.

Much of what we will be doing in the next 12 to 18 months will reflect the insights we've gained from this important study. For example, our discussions have led to a decision to move the office to town to give better access to the various organizations we work with and the families we serve. Look for an announcement in the coming months about our new location in Chinatown.

With so much changing, it's important to remember what stays the same: HFPA's commitment to youth and families in the foster care system—the foster parents that heroically provide homes, the biological families that want the best for their children, and the foster youth who count on all of us to look out for their best interests.

HFPA has created an executive search committee to find the best candidates for the position of Executive Director. Please call HFPA at 263-0920 for more information.

Foster Parents Respond to Survey about Training

Over 285 foster parents responded to a recent survey sent out on behalf of the Oahu Foster Care Training Committee. According to the survey, Saturday is the most popular training day and Sunday is the least popular. Tuesday and Thursday nights are other popular choices. Just over half the respondents thought providing child care was important or very important. Well over half of the respondents indicated that the workshop topic is important or very important in making their decision about whether to attend.

The top requests for topics are: *Managing Difficult Behaviors, Disciplining Youth, Legal Information, Community Resources, and Attachment & Bonding*. Several of these topics will be offered at the upcoming **Foster Care Conference on April 27 & 28, 2007** at the Pacific Beach Hotel. The foster care agencies often pay for all or part of the registration fee for its foster parent. DHS, in addition to paying the registration fee for DHS foster parents, also has funds available to assist DHS foster parents to fly in from the neighbor islands. The brochure and registration forms are on the website at www.hawaiifosterparent.org under *Events* on the home page.

Watch for trainings throughout the year sponsored by the Oahu Foster Care Training Committee. Hats off to foster parents for valuing the opportunity to learn more about helping the children in their homes. Trainings also give foster parents a wonderful opportunity to meet other foster parents and share ideas.



DHS Opens Up Adoption Assistance to Additional Population of Adopted Children

Information provided by Department of Human Services



Children in foster care often have specialized needs due to the neglect and abuse they experienced in their early lives. A child who meets the state's definition of "special needs" is eligible for financial and medical assistance as they exit foster care and enter an adoptive placement. This assistance enables families to meet their children's basic and extraordinary needs.

Federal statute (42 U.S.C. 673) allows each state to set its own definition of a child with special needs. The federal statute lists the following characteristics that tend to make it harder to find a permanent family for a child: ethnic background, age, membership in a minority or sibling group, presence of factors such as medical conditions or physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. Hawaii's statute defines a child with special needs as having at least one of the following needs or circumstances: 1) age, 2) race or ethnic background, 3) member of a sibling group of two or more children adopted together, 4) physical or mental disability, 5) emotional disturbance, and/or 6) high risk of developing a physical or mental disease.



Hawaii recently (January 1, 2007) implemented a procedure to allow a child at high risk of a medical, physical, behavioral/emotional condition or handicap to qualify as a "child with special needs." This means the child will qualify for adoption assistance as long as other eligibility requirements are met. According to DHS, a child at "high risk" is defined as a foster child with harm and/or threatened harm confirmed by DHS and who is under DHS placement responsibility at the time of adoption.

This change will apply to all new adoptions and for adopted children with a "deferred Adoption Assistance agreement" in place who is still under age 18 on January 1, 2007. Adoption Assistance payments may continue until the child reaches age 18 or until age 21 if the child is determined by DHS to have a mental or physical handicap that warrants continued assistance pursuant to HAR §17-944.1-13.



If you believe your child meets the definition of a high risk child (a child with harm or threatened harm confirmed by DHS and is under DHS placement responsibility at the time of adoption) and you would like to obtain Adoption Assistance payments for your child, DHS asks that you complete the Adoption Assistance Agreement application for each qualified child. You may obtain a copy of the form from the social worker who assisted you with your adoption or the permanency social worker assigned to your case.

For more detailed information about Hawaii's adoption assistance program, visit the state profile at <http://www.nacac.org/stateprofiles/hawaii.html>.

Mahalo to our Donors, Sponsors, and Supporters!

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Maui Celebrates Its Foster Parents

Lisa Belongie, DHS

Maui Child Welfare Services celebrated the 8th Annual Foster Parent Appreciation Luncheon on January 19, 2007 at the Maui Tropical Plantation restaurant in Waikapu. One hundred people attended, including Maui County's Mayor Charmaine Tavares, foster parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians, therapeutic foster parents, and representatives from numerous government and community organizations.



Maui Mayor Charmaine Tavares presents a certificate of appreciation to Jessica Isagawa.

Welfare Services 2006 Foster Parents of the Year. Doreen and Preston Baisa were the grand prize winners of a \$100 Costco gift card and all the foster families who attended departed with an appreciation gift and donated pieces of luggage through a drive sponsored by Keiki Kokua.

This event was made possible with the support and contributions from the Roling Foundation and the Maui

A great presentation on "Parenting with Value" was delivered by Greg Delacruz and Luana Kawa'a from the Neighborhood Place of Wailuku. Ramon Garcia captivated the audience with his karaoke serenades. Mayor Charmaine Tavares presented certificates of appreciation to current licensed Maui DHS foster parents. Luana and Chad Abilay were honored as Maui's Child

Friends of the Children Justice Center. Special thanks to Scott Yoshida, Kelli Haaff, Michelle Tanno, Scott Seto, and Lisa Belongie of the Maui Child Welfare Services Special Services Unit who contributed with the facilitation and coordination of this year's event.

News from East Hawaii

Diane Kubo, DHS



The "Children Who Witness Domestic Violence" workshop held recently was well attended and well received. There were 52 attendees during the 1/2 day training. Diane Blanchard and Emily Barber kept the attention of everyone. Twenty were foster parents from various agencies, four VGALs (one from Oahu) and the remainder were staff and interested community parties. It was a good "teachable moment" for the community regarding the far reaching effects of domestic violence.

Magazine Resource for Foster and Adoptive Families

FOSTERING FAMILIES TODAY is a magazine about you---the parents, children and dedicated professionals in the child welfare system providing foster care and domestic adoption to children.

Foster care is often the subject of sensationalized media attention. What is working is easily buried by headlines of what is not. FOSTERING FAMILIES TODAY is a bimonthly magazine where both sides of an issue are explored and debated and questions are raised and discussed on matters that contribute to the nurturing and well-being of the children entrusted to your care.

FOSTERING FAMILIES TODAY is dedicated to those children who wait for forever families--whether reunited or redefined.

To subscribe to the magazine, go to: <http://www.fosteringfamilies.com>.

Kinship Care Deserves Thoughtful Discussion

The board of the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) adopted the following policy in 2006 regarding kinship care. NACAC's board consists of adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, judges, and service providers. This thoughtful discussion provides some food for thought as agencies and families struggle with the competing interests in a very complicated issue.

Philosophy

NACAC recognizes that children and youth have a right to be connected to kin and to other significant family and community members. NACAC encourages kinship foster care as a preferred alternative placement when the kinship care provider is able to ensure the child or youth's safety and well-being.

NACAC also supports placing children or youth with relatives as an alternative to placement in foster care, and believes that relative caregivers in such placements deserve support to help them ensure the safety and stability of the children or youth in their care. Too often, relative caregivers are told that they must accept responsibility for their kin or else the child or youth will be placed in foster care. These caregivers often need support, and should not be forced to choose between raising a child or youth with no support or having their kin enter the foster care system. Placement decisions should be made on an individual case-by-case basis based on the child or youth's best interests.

NACAC recognizes that even if relatives are not able to provide care for a child or youth, they may have a positive role to play in the child or youth's life.

Practice and Policy Recommendations

Kinship Care

Diligent searches must occur for maternal and paternal relatives or others with established relationships with the child or youth in a timely and effective manner prior to or immediately when a child or youth enters care. A diligent search must include identifying, locating, contacting, recruiting, and supporting relatives and others with significant connections to the child or youth, and then exploring with them their interest and capacity to provide a temporary or permanent placement for the child or youth. Children and youth should be actively involved in

identifying those connections.

If a diligent, culturally appropriate search has been completed and no kin placement resource has been identified, and the child or youth is in an approved permanent placement, any further searches, if conducted, should not be allowed to disrupt the permanent placement. Any searches after this point should be

conducted solely to provide the new permanent family with relative or kin connections that can enhance the child's or youth's life.



Kinship foster families should be reimbursed at standard foster care rates, and adoption or guardianship should be

options when they protect the best interests of the child or youth. When adoption or guardianship is considered the best option, the federal, state, or provincial government should also provide subsidies when they are in the best interests of the child or youth or when required by law.

Kin foster families should be evaluated to assure that the child or youth will be safe and nurtured in the care of the family. These families should also be provided support and services to ensure that the child or youth's needs are continuing to be met.

Recognizing the unique value to children and youth of placing them with kin, NACAC opposes federal regulations mandating that all kinship foster parents be subject to the same licensing requirements as non-kin foster parents in order for states to be reimbursed through Title IV-E for payments made to kinship foster parents. Notwithstanding the exemption from licensing requirements, the safety of the child should be assured in any placement.



(Continued on page 7)

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Yes, I want to support quality foster care for Hawaii's children. Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of:

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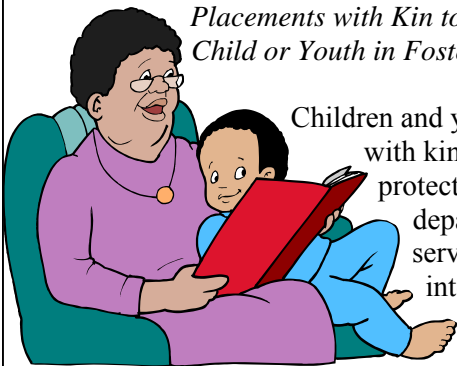
❖ **This gift will be acknowledged in the HFPA Bulletin unless requested otherwise.**

In accordance with IRS regulations, your gift to the Hawaii Foster Parent Association is fully tax-deductible.



(Kinship Deserves Discussion, continued from page 6)

Placements with Kin to Avoid Placing a Child or Youth in Foster Care



Children and youth who are placed with kin through the child protection system or by the department of social services to avoid entry into foster care should be eligible for relative assistance

payments equal to the foster care rate the child would have received if in care.

The department of social services should evaluate these kin caregivers to assure that the child or youth will be safe and nurtured in the care of the family. These kinship families should not, however, be subject to the same licensing requirements as foster care providers.

To review this and other public policy position statements from NACAC, go to www.nacac.org. NACAC staff will be presenting at this year's HFPA Foster Care Conference on April 27 and 28, 2007.

Training Event

Foster parents on Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and East Hawaii had the opportunity to participate in the HFPA "mini-conferences" offered this fall. Pictured to the left are foster parents, social workers, and foster youth from the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition who participated in an advocacy workshop presented in September by Joe Kroll of the North American Council on Adoptable Children. These training opportunities were supported by funding from the Victoria S. and Bradley L. Geist Foundation.





Hawaii Foster Parent Association

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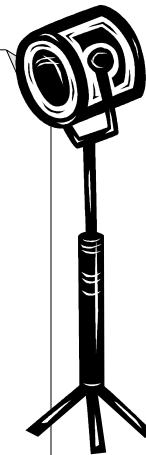
Lisa C. Oshiro is the Senior Policy Analyst for the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement. After law school, Lisa worked for the California Indian Legal Services, becoming very familiar with the Indian Child Welfare Act. She also has public policy experience on the state and national level. Lisa is excited to be home after nineteen years away and looks forward to family time, dancing with a halau hula, bicycling, paddling, hiking and playing volleyball.



Elizabeth Aulsebrook is a program specialist for strategic planning and implementation at Kamehameha Schools. Besides serving on the HFPA board, Elizabeth is the recording secretary for Ke Kula `o Samuel M. Kamakau Native Hawaiian Charter School. She says of HFPA, "The HFPA has an outstanding record in its numerous contributions to Hawaii's foster families; it's exciting to be a part of this great work!"



One of our newest board member, **A. Lee Totten**, served in the past as an HFPA foster parent support group leader in Kahaluu. In addition to caring for the seven children she and her husband adopted, Lee is a contributing columnist for the Honolulu Advertiser's Ohana Page and teaches an adult education course at Windward Community College. Lee shares this quote from Ghandi, "Be the change you wish to see in your world." Lee believes that if we are to change the world we live in, we need to begin with the children in foster care.



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