December 2022

Her Soul's Roots

By Wilma Friesema, EPIC 'Ohana

Sometimes we don't realize some piece of ourself is missing until we stumble upon it as an adult. Sometimes the journey leading up to that discovery is a rough one, but once we find that missing piece our whole world changes. That's what happened to Kāhealani (Kāhea) Souza when, as a young mom, she learned to speak the Hawaiian language.

Growing up in Kahuluu, Kāhea had an upbringing that was fairly typical of a local country family back in the 70's. Though her family didn't speak Hawaiian, the Hawaiian culture permeated their lives. Her dad worked and also provided for his family by hunting and diving for octopus (He'e). The family wasn't rich, but her dad was very resourceful and taught Kāhea, and her five brothers, how to build and fix things around their house. Her mom was equally busy caring for the children and home.

Kāhea and her brothers had plenty of chores and responsibilities, but they also got to hike in the mountains and swim in the ocean. Often, on weekends, their family would host an Imu roast for family and friends. These gatherings were huge, but sharing food, music, and laughter made all the hard work worth it. The gatherings gave everyone such a strong sense of community and connection. For Kāhea, it taught her the value of sharing, working together, and aloha.



Kahea and her daughters: Hiwa, Kacie, Kahea, and Makamae

As with many families, there were stressors in their home too. Her dad, at times, drank excessively and would turn violent towards her mom. Both parents were also very strict, and the children would get "dirty lickens." While Kāhea learned accountability and respect from the discipline, the resulting hurt and anger also brewed a sense of rebellion inside her. As a young teenager she began to drink and do drugs as a way to cope and act out.

That combination of trauma and drugs led Kāhea down a very dark road. After years of being told by teachers that "you guys" (meaning she, and the other Hawaiian children) wouldn't amount to much because they were "stupid," she started to believe it. Eventually Kāhea dropped out of high school, gave birth to a son at age 18, and heavily turned to cocaine, which became her candy. While the coke gave her tremendous bursts of energy, it also led to intense crashes.

HER SOUL'S ROOTS (continued)

After one such crash, Kāhea bottomed out. Laying on the living room floor, she woke up from her coke-binge hangover to debilitating back pain. Meanwhile, her toddler son was inching his way to a shade-less lamp that had been left on all night. Her pain was so intense she couldn't move, she couldn't distract him from grabbing the bulb, she couldn't stop him from burning his hand. As he touched the light and cried out in pain, she cried out in anguish. She knew she had failed him and, in that moment, vowed to never use drugs again.

While that was a major turning point for Kāhea, several years later, after the birth of her second son, an even greater one occurred. This time it wasn't about stopping a toxic behavior, it was about embracing something old, yet new. She had enrolled her youngest son in Pūnana Leo, a Hawaiian immersion preschool. One of the requirements of the school was for parents to learn the Hawaiian language. Kāhea felt intimidated, but mostly excited. She remembered how one of her father's friends had frequently spoken Hawaiian. As a young child, Kāhea had felt the language deeply resonate inside of her, even though she only understood a few commonly used words.

At age 27, Kāhea would learn not only the language but invaluable truths about herself. When she first entered the Pūnana Leo classroom, she felt very insecure. The other parents seemed so much smarter, so much more together. As was typical, Kāhea stayed on the margins and didn't say much, but over time she realized all the parents were driven by the same purpose: to learn their native language and culture.

Kāhea was so devoted to that purpose she made the hour and a half drive from Haleiwa to Waianae and back, twice a day, so her son could attend the school. After a while, she stayed for the day and began volunteering in the classroom. That's when her Hawaiian language proficiency really began to take hold as only Hawaiian was allowed to be spoken inside the school.

Being immersed in the language and culture fed Kāhea's soul. As her mastery of the language increased, a feeling of having a home within herself grew too. "Being immersed in the culture was so fulfilling," she told me. "It was feeding my mana." Soon she was riding a wave of possibilities and positivity. She became more active in the Pūnana Leo community, and as she shared tasks and stories with other parents, she realized they all had struggles and challenges. They were no better than her, but, likewise, they were awesome so maybe she was awesome too. She began to see herself in a different light.

One day, while driving home to Haleiwa, she heard the familiar song, Kaulana Nā Pua. Seeing the beautiful mountains and the expansive ocean while hearing that song brought tears to her eyes. She finally truly understood what the words meant. The song was a declaration of Hawaiians' love of land and community over money, and the people's support of their queen over the annexing government. In that moment she absolutely knew her worth and the worth of her people, despite all the forces of abuse and oppression they had known.

With her Punana Leo community's encouragement, Kāhea enrolled in college where she received her associates degree. One semester shy of a bachelor's degree, Kāhea had to leave college due to a challenging pregnancy. Education, however, has remained a priority in her and her family's life.

For nearly the past 20 years, Kāhea has worked for Parents and Children Together (PACT), first as a visitation specialist and now as an outreach worker. She also is a resource caregiver who specializes in fostering teenagers and children with special challenges. Kāhea brings her aloha and wisdom of the Hawaiian culture into her work with parents and children. For both, her goal is to help them see and know this truth about themselves: They are so much more than what happened to them or the messages they've received about their worth. It's a truth that she discovered and came to know when, so many years ago, the language of her ancestors spoke to her soul, filled her heart, and transformed her life.

ONGOING TRAINING REQUIREMENT

ONGOING TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Effective January 1, 2023 Child Welfare Services (CWS) will begin requiring <u>each</u> licensed resource caregiver to complete a minimum of 13-hours of ongoing training. This is an increase from current requirement of 6-hours per resource family to 13-hours per licensed resource caregiver.

Resource caregivers who have license renewals due in 2022 can do EITHER option:

- The current requirement of 6-hours per resource family or
- 13-hour training requirement for <u>each</u> licensed resource caregiver.

Beginning in 2023, all resource caregivers will need to meet all renewal requirements which will include the **13-hour training requirements** per licensed resource caregiver.

Child Tax Credit

Children in foster care who have been placed in the license resource caregiver home may claim the child in foster care as long as NO ONE ELSE IS CLAIMING THE CHILD (parents).

To determine a Qualifying Child or Relative for the Earned Income Tax Credit, visit: https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit/qualifying-child-rules

Relationship

To be a qualifying child for the EITC, your child must be your:

- Son, daughter, stepchild, adopted child or foster child
- Brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, stepsister or stepbrother
- Grandchild, niece or nephew

Adopted Child Definition

An adopted child is a child who is lawfully placed with you for legal adoption.

Foster Child Definition

For the EITC, you can only claim a foster child that is placed with you by:

- A State or local government agency
- An Indian tribal government
- A tax-exempt organization licensed by a state or an Indian tribal government
- A court order

SIBLING CONNECTIONS CORNER

Provided by Delia Ulima, EPIC 'Ohana

"Tips for Supporting Foster Children and Youth During the Holiday Season"

The holidays are here and families are preparing to engage in festive traditions and shared time with 'ohana and loved ones. For children and youth in foster care, this can be a difficult and emotional time. Here are some ways for adult caregivers to create a safe and supportive experience for them during the holiday season.

1. Talk story with the keiki about what the holidays are like in your home.

Sit down with the children in your home to discuss what the holidays are like in your home. Let them know what will or won't be expected of them during the season. If you have more than one foster child in your home, speak to them one-on-one so they have the opportunity to ask questions. This can help lessen anxiety and allows your foster child to choose their level of participation and address any questions or concerns.

2. Prepare the keiki for spending time with others.

Spending time with extended family and friends can be an enjoyable part of the holiday season but may be stressful for the foster children in your home. Talk with them about what to expect, where you're going, who you're spending time with and have them meet in advance, if possible, to lessen the anxiety.

3. Discuss holiday arrangements with family and friends.

Talk with family and friends about the additions to your household if you're spending holiday time together and accommodations need to be made. This will help the keiki feel like part of the 'ohana and not an imposition. Confidentiality is important and asking loved ones to be mindful of the keiki's need for privacy and to be treated normally can go a long way to help everyone enjoy their time together.

4. Plan ahead for presents.

If your holiday celebrations include exchanging gifts, be sure to include your foster children. If relatives are purchasing gifts for your biological keiki, you may want to ask them to include your foster children in the gift-giving. You might want to have "back-up" gifts on hand if someone forgets or is unable to provide additional gifts. Right or wrong, children tend to count and compare gift-giving and will likely notice if another child received more or less than them.

5. Make space for their own beliefs and traditions.

Many holidays are deeply tied to religious customs and your foster children may have traditions or beliefs that are different from your own. Learn about and try to incorporate their traditions into your family's celebrations. This will help them feel honored and supported as a member of your 'ohana.

6. Encourage and support visits and communication with family, if at all possible.

Holidays are a busy time for everyone. Making family visits and communications a priority for your foster children during the holidays, especially for siblings, can help ease their anxiety, stress and grief. Work with your team, as needed, to support those connections.

7. Give your foster keiki space, as needed.

The holidays can take a toll on us all, but especially emotional on foster children. They may withdraw or exhibit other difficult behaviors even if you're doing everything to be supportive. Please know that this is not reflective of your parenting skills. Reach out for support and schedule some down time for your foster children and you and your 'ohana, to relax and recharge.

SHARED PARENTING



Celebrating Shared Parenting
OCTOBER 4, 2022



Ho'okahi Ke Aloha "All United in Harmony and Love"

After well over two years of postponing an event, the Nā Kama a Hāloa Hui Hilo were able to host the "Ho'okahi Ke Aloha: All United in Harmony and Love" event celebrating parents, resource caregivers, and keiki on October 4, 2022. The theme of the day was "Shared Parenting" in hopes to inspire and connect with parents, extended 'ohana, resource caregivers, keiki, child welfare services, and service providers of East Hawaii. This event was held at the Fairway Grill at Hilo Municipal Golf Course where 'ohana heard inspiring stories, the notion of shared parenting, and learned about partnering agencies contributing to the work of shared parenting. 'Ohana, child welfare services, and providers had the pleasure of hearing from panelist Joe O'Connell, Melissa Mayo, Kayla Samson and Kristen "Kris" Bachiller who shared their experiences, insight, and inspiration. All shared heartfelt messages from their experiences as resource caregivers, foster youth, and parents involved with child welfare services. Although the panelist had different roles and experiences, they all emphasized the importance of shared parenting and how significant the relationships between parents and resource caregivers are for keiki while they are in foster care. In addition to the panelist, Venus Kau'iokawekiu Rosete-Medeiros (CEO from Hale Kipa) shared mana'o on shared parenting from a

Native Hawaiian lens. During the event, keiki were able to do craft activities coordinated by staff from Liliuokalani Trust Kīpuka Hilo and spend time with their 'ohana. This event was an opportunity for everyone to celebrate, unite, and be transformed by one another in order to strengthen our community for the benefit of our keiki. Mahalo to all of the partners in the Nā Kama a Hāloa Hui Hilo (EPIC 'Ohana, Inc., Lili'uokalani Trust, Kamehameha Schools, PARENTS, Inc., Partners in Development Foundation, East Hawaii Child Welfare Services, and Catholic Charities Hawaii) who coordinated and participated in the event.



WENDY'S WONDERFUL KIDS



Wendy's Wonderful Kids*

MANA

Mana is a 15-year-old boy of Hawaiian, Portuguese, Chinese, Irish and American Indian ancestry, who entered the foster care system when he was a young boy. Mana is very playful in nature, and enjoys discovering all that life has to offer. Mana prides himself on learning as much as he can, and one of his favorite things is reading books. Mana is incredibly skilled in spatial reasoning, and loves seeing things in his mind and then building what he sees.

As confident as he may appear, Mana often times struggles with anxiety when he encounters a situation he is not familiar with, or in the know of. Although Mana can present to be very confident, his trauma and abuse have made him hesitant to trust others, oftentimes leading to maladaptive behaviors that find him sabotaging his placements again and again. Despite some failed placements in his history, Mana is strongly in favor of being adopted. He wants to be a part of a forever home, and sees the benefit of having a family he can always turn to in life.

Mana has had a deep desire to become acquainted with his biological family, and to date has been able to start building a relationship with his grandfather and half-sister. An ideal forever home for Mana would reside on the island of Oahu, and would be agreeable to perpetuating these family relationships while building their own with him as his new family. They would also need to be familiar with the effects that trauma can have on a child, and be flexible in their expectations of what he should be like as a young teen.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids seeks to find good homes for great kids in tough situations.

If you are interested in learning more about Mana and his need for placement and nurturing connections, please contact adoption recruiter: Mindy Chung at 808.540.2560 or by email at mchung@familyprogramshi.org

IMPORTANT NUMBERS:



Department of Human Services reporting: Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect: (808)532-5300 or (toll free) 1-888-380-3088 Suspected Child Trafficking: (808)832-1999 or (toll free) 1-888-398-1188 Toll-free Fax: 1-888-988-6638 All numbers available 24 hours a day 7 days



LICENSING PORTAL

Released on July 23, 2021

The Licensing Portal is LIVE

DHS LAUNCHES NEW ONLINE APPLICATION PORTAL TO MODERNIZE THE FOSTER CARE LICENSING AND APPLICATION PROCESS

The Hawai'i Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Welfare Services (CWS) launched a new online portal this week that will modernize the resource caregiver licensing process from the traditional paper process to a simpler, more efficient, and user-friendly system for applicants. Furthermore, this new system will optimize the matching process by identifying the resource caregiver based on a child's/youth's (infant – 18 years old) unique needs. The link to this portal is **reg.hawaii.gov.**

'Resource caregiver' is the term Hawai'i has embraced. Traditionally, "foster parent" is the term used for people who provide foster care/temporary care to children in foster care. Hawai'i has adopted the term resource caregiver as Child Welfare Services works to develop/strengthen the relationship between parents and resource caregivers.

After an applicant completes the online process and is approved to be licensed, the tools allow for matching of the child to prospective families based on the best fit for the child. Staff will assess what homes are available in the child's community/neighborhood allowing the child to maintain healthy ties to their school and community.

"The health, well-being and safety of the children and families served are at the heart of everything CWS does," shared Daisy Hartsfield, Social Services Division Administrator. "CWS wanted to better serve children in care and this new portal will modernize the entire licensing and application process while increasing the numbers of qualified resource caregivers in Hawaii, who can provide stable, safe and loving homes for children and youth in foster care."

The portal will also be used by DHS' community-based partner agencies that assist CWS with supporting families, through the licensing families. This will enhance collaboration between DHS and partner agencies. DHS is always looking for qualified and committed people who are interested in becoming resource caregivers. For information about CWS please visit humanservices.hawaii.org or to apply visit rcg.hawaii.gov.

Visit https://rcg.hawaii.gov



- Register for On-going Trainings
 - Register for Support Groups
- Find resources on many topics
 (childhood development, safe sleep,
 licensing requirements and other foster care topics)

MAHALO & A HUI HOU WILMA FRIESEMA

Mahalo and A Hui Hou Wilma!

By: Charyl Makanui, Catholic Charities Hawai'i



Upon meeting Wilma Friesema, you would immediately notice her calm, humble, and compassionate demeanor. Wilma grew up in Grand Rapids, MI and is the youngest of seven children. Her parents immigrated from the Netherlands and their experiences during the second World War had significant impacts on their family. Despite some of the adversities that they went through, Wilma felt they were wonderful parents. She shared that at a young age, she knew what she wanted to do when she grew up, "to be a therapist and a writer." She elaborated that she had a moment of intuition that, "to understand life, I have to go into life." Wilma studied transpersonal psychology and ran a private practice as a therapist for almost 18 years before moving to Hawaii and working for EPIC 'Ohana.

Wilma has been with EPIC 'Ohana for the last 15 years and has served as the 'Ohana Connections and Staff Development Manager. Throughout her time at EPIC 'Ohana, she has done connections work, various projects including staff development, trainings, editing, and

grant writing. In addition to her many roles at EPIC 'Ohana, she has also been a valuable contributor for the Nā Leo 'Ohana newsletter (formerly Building Connections.) For those who know Wilma, it is no secret that she loves writing, but more than just writing stories, she has a special gift of really getting to the "heart" of people. She does not take anything for granted and openly shared about how grateful and appreciative she is of being able to capture other's stories in a way that is genuine, compassionate, and respectful. "I've always felt whenever I get to write up somebody's story, I always felt really honored to do that." When asked what motivates her, Wilma first imparted that her hard life experiences motivated her to understand the human heart. But upon deeper reflection, she attributes her own motivation and drive to her mother's compassion and kindheartedness. Her mother studied nursing and while she was not able to continue practicing nursing when she came to the United States, "She was a healer to many." Wilma lost her mother at young age, but despite that, she continued to carry the love, honor, and essence of her mother's kindness with her throughout her life.

Wilma will be retiring from her position at EPIC 'Ohana in January 2023, however her journey will not end here as she is excited about heading into her next chapter. She will take some time to enjoy life at her own pace and will see where her next journey will take her. What she does know is that she will continue to write and may also get more involved in environmental work as that is also something that she really cares about too. Whatever she chooses to do next, we all wish Wilma the best of luck and know that she will continue to touch the lives of many others! Mahalo nui Wilma!

RECRUITMENT

WE NEED MORE FOSTER HOMES.

Do you know someone who could offer a safe home for a young life in Foster Care?



PLEASE SEND THEM OUR WAY!

WE HOST MONTHLY FOSTER CARE INFO SESSIONS ON ZOOM.





STATEWIDE

12/15/22 - 6PM

1/4/23 - 12PM

2/9/23 - 9AM

REGISTER FOR ONE TODAY!









REGISTER AT WWW.RCG.HAWAII.GOV/EVENTS





URGENT NEEDS

Safe Homes For:

Teenagers Sibling Groups



We walk all general license applicants through initial steps to become licensed to foster in Hawai'i.

WWW.PIDF.ORG



THE PARENT LINE





IS OFFERING VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER ON:

SAFE SLEEP

Tuesday, December 6, 2022 @ 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
When babies sleep safe, parents rest easier. Learn some tips on how to ensure safe sleep for your baby.

UNDERSTANDING AND OWNING YOUR FEELINGS

Tuesday, December 13, 2022 @ 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM Learn more about your own feelings and how to acknowledge and ways to express them.

HELPING CHILDREN EXPRESS THEIR ANGER APPROPRIATELY

Thursday, December 22, 2022 @ 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

The objective is to increase parents' ability to teach children healthy ways to recognize and express their anger.

MOTIVATING KEIKI TO KEEP ACTIVE

Thursday, December 29, 2022 @ 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Learn more about keeping your keiki active and join in on some fun activities.



FOR MORE QUESTIONS, WORKSHOPS, OR TO RSVP.

CALL THE PARENT LINE AT (808) 526-1222



The virtual workshops are voluntary and intended for enrichment purposes.

Certifications and/or credits are not offered.

ONLINE LICENSING PORTAL TRAINING



Child Welfare Services along with our provider will be hosting a live event to demonstrate the licensing portal. We will also show you how to update your information and how to add all of your household members to your account.

Some features include:

- Online completion of the initial and re-certification licensing process
- · Access 24 hours a day
- Secure uploading of documents
- Electronic signature on forms
- Reduction of paperwork
- Quick, real-time (live) customer support in English & Spanish

Join Zoom Meeting for January 11th, 2023:

Meeting ID: 865 8300 5429

Passcode: 091348

Link:

https://binti.zoom.us/s/86583005429?pwd=T09

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Join Zoom Meeting for January 14th, 2023:

Meeting ID: 840 9002 0142

Passcode: 609804

Link:

https://binti.zoom.us/s/84090020142?pwd=SEF

2R0FIWjZPWUk3bFQ1L3l1NnMyZz09

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2023

National Human Trafficking Prevention Month #WearBlueDay: January 11

To raise awareness of human trafficking, we invite the public to take photos of themselves, friends, family, and colleagues wearing blue clothing and share them on social media – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram – along with #WearBlueDay hashtag. Anyone can participate, all you need is a piece of blue clothing.

TEENDATING

National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month National Respect Announcement #RESPECTWEEK

On February 10, wear something orange in honor of Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month and promote respect and healthy relationships! People can wear orange shirts, nail polish, hats, scarves, face paint, ribbons, hair ties/bows, jewelry, shoes, rubber bands in their braces or anything else you can think of.







UPCOMING EVENTS

Join us for any of our upcoming events.

To register, visit the

Hawaii Resource Caregiver Licensing Website/Portal at

https://rcg.hawaii.gov or

via the mobile app for resource caregivers

"Hawaii Foster Care Connections"

Download for FREE in the Google Play or Apple App store







DECEMBER 2022 HAPPY HOLIPAYS

ers & Babies December 6	5, 2022 9:00 am - 10:30 am	Training		
Trauma Related Behaviors & Trauma Informed Parenting December 10, 2022				
December 14, 2022	6:00 pm - 7:30 pm	Support Group		
December 15, 2022	6:00 pm - 7:30 pm	Recruitment		
December 28, 2022	12:00 pm - 1:15 pm	Support Group		
December 29, 2022	5:00 pm - 6:15 pm	Support Group		
	& Trauma Informed Parenti December 14, 2022 December 15, 2022 December 28, 2022	December 14, 2022 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm December 15, 2022 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm		

JANUARY 2023 National Human Trafficking Prevention Month

<u>Info Session</u>	January 4, 2023	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Recruitment
Grandparents Support Group	January 11, 2023	12:00 pm - 1:15 pm	Support Group
Statewide Support Group	January 11, 2023	6:00 pm - 7:30 pm	Support Group
Antecedent, Behaviors & Conseq	uences (Part 1) Janua	ary 24, 2023 4:30 pm -	6:30 pm Training
Kinship Support Group	January 18, 2023	5:00 pm - 6:15 pm	Support Group

FEBRUARY 2023 National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month

ı	<u>Info Session</u>	February 9, 2023	9:00 am - 10:00 am	Recruitment
ı	Statewide Support Group	February 8, 2023	6:00 pm - 7:30 pm	Support Group
ı	Grandparents Support Group	February 21, 2023	12:00 pm - 1:15 pm	Support Group
ı	Kinship Support Group	February 23, 2023	5:00 pm - 6:15 pm	Support Group
ı	Training	February 2023	TBA	

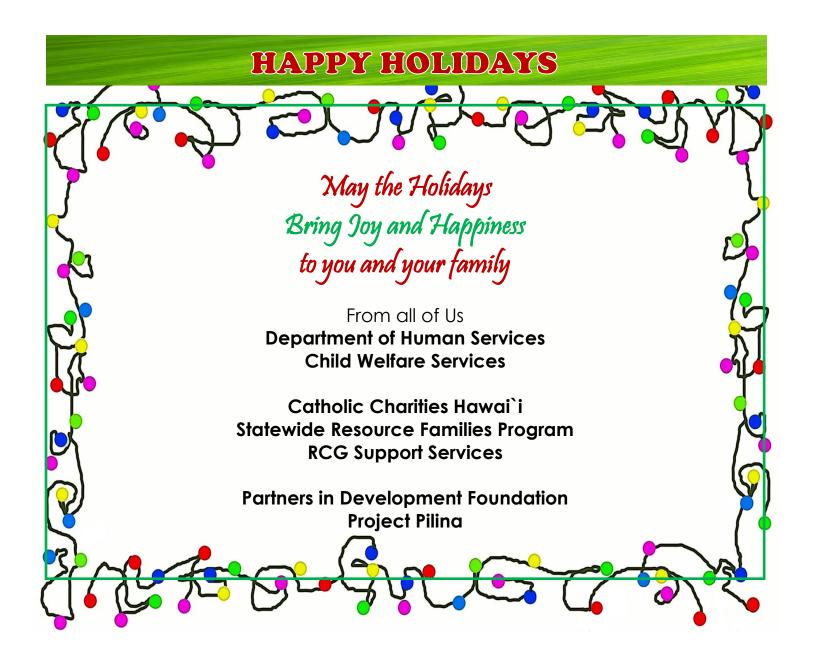
Contact the Resource Caregiver Warm Line at (808) 545-1130 for any questions

January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Every year since 2010, the President has dedicated the month to raise awareness about human trafficking and to educate the public about how to identify and prevent this crime.

February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month (TDVAM)

This is an issue that impacts everyone – not just teens – but their parents, teachers, friends and communities as well. Together, we can raise the nation's awareness about teen dating violence and promote safe, healthy relationships.



The Nā Leo 'Ohana Newsletter is published quarterly by Catholic Charities Hawai'i 1822 Keeaumoku Street Honolulu, HI 96822

Contact information: WarmLine:(808) 545-1130

E-mail: RCGSupportServices@CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org

This newsletter may be viewed on the following:

Website: https://rcg.hawaii.gov
Facebook: Resource Caregiver Support Services







GO GREEN!

Contact us today and request an electronic copy!

The Nā Leo 'Ohana Newsletter

Contributing Writers

State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services, Child Welfare

Services ~ Catholic Charities Hawai'i

Partners In Development Foundation ~ EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.

Resource Caregivers ~ Adoptive Parents ~

Former Youth in Foster Care