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MAKING CONNECTIONS

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Naomi Hamamura sees the human being as the most fascinating person in the world.

Strength lies in being together, not one person doing it alone, she tells her staff. Her goal for staff is to

Connecting with people and listening to their stories of triumph and tribulation make her job as supervisor for the Kauai Adult and Community Care Services Branch (ACCSB) that much more worthwhile, she says. She has been lending her ear and opening her heart for almost 24 years, working in ACCSB, Child Welfare Services and the Benefit, Employment Support Services Division.



Naomi Hamamura
Kauai ACCSB Supervisor

"I liked working with the clients because many of the clients you met, you would hear stories of how they got there," said Hamamura. "To me that was very fascinating and I identified with them because we all can be in that kind of situation."

continually learn from their experiences and look for ways to improve.

Personal contact is one of her mantras. When someone cries for help, it's important that someone be there to answer, she stresses.

"She is a problem solver and teacher," said ACCSB Administrator Patricia Johnson. "When Naomi presents concerns to me, she is able to fully articulate the work that she has done with her staff and offer several possible sce-

Naomi puts emphasis on teamwork and respect in the office.

narios to address the concerns."

Growing up, she never lacked anything. While she didn't come from a wealthy family - her dad was a farmer - her needs were always met. The words "welfare" and "public housing" were foreign words.

"We were sheltered," she said of herself and her siblings.

Years later, after graduating from the University of Hawaii at Manoa with degrees in sociology and psychology, she worked as an income maintenance worker for BESSD.

While there, she was thrust into the reality that there were people who needed help, lots of it. Coming across individuals and families who didn't have enough money to buy food and had to scramble for shelter touched her, she said, and she knew that helping people was her life's calling.

"You don't know where you'll end up, but you are kind of called to it," she said. "Serving others, that to me, is spiritually rewarding."

DHS RECEIVES FOOD STAMP HIGH PERFORMANCE AWARD

The Department of Human Services (DHS) received a \$507,892 high performance bonus from the U.S. Department of Agriculture this past January for Hawaii's efforts to ensure Hawaii residents who qualify for Food Stamps actually receive the benefits.



Governor Lingle, Director Koller, Deputy Undersecretary Coler and BESSD staff

Deputy Undersecretary for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, Kate Coler, presented the check to Governor Linda Lingle and DHS

Director Lillian Koller January 20 at a ceremony at the Governor's Office

at the Hawaii State Capitol. The Department achieved a 92.4 percent access rate to the Federal Food Stamp Program for the federal 2004 fiscal year.

The Food Stamp Program in Hawaii serves an estimated 91,000 individuals per month, which is about 46,000 households statewide.

The program pays about \$13.07 million in nutrition assistance per month.

Announcements

- STEPHANIE AVEIRO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NEWLY FORMED HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY (HPHA) RETIRED AUGUST 1. EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT PAMELA DODSON IS RUNNING THE AGENCY TILL AUGUST 17. THE HPHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL MEET AUGUST 17 TO APPOINT AN INTERIM DIRECTOR.
- MED-QUEST ACTING ADMINISTRATOR ANGIE PAYNE'S LAST DAY WAS JULY 14. ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR STEVE KAWADA AND FINANCE OFFICER BRIAN PANG ARE RETIRING THIS AUGUST. THE NEW ACTING ADMINISTRATOR IS WES MUN.
- DHS ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY AUGUST 30TH AT STATE CAPITOL AUDITORIUM

APPRECIATIVE OF THE LITTLE THINGS

In a world of big dreams and even bigger dreamers, Violeta “Violet” Pak takes time to appreciate the simple pleasures of life, like plucking a mango from a tree in her backyard.

“If you don’t appreciate anything you have, you can never be happy,” she said.

“Violet,” a nickname given to her by co-workers who couldn’t quite pronounce her first name (pronounced VEE – O – LETA), is described by co-workers as hard-working and dedicated to her job and family. This August she will celebrate 10 years at the Office of Youth Services (OYS) as an account clerk.

She came to Hawaii after working in Los Angeles for nine years as a general accountant for an investment firm.

While working at the same company, she met her husband, Warren Pak.

They have a 16-year-old daughter, Bernadette.



**Violeta “Violet” Pak
OYS Account Clerk**

“Violet is a doer,” said OYS Executive Director Sharon Agnew. “Not only does she work hard at her job daily, but she’s a good gardener, mother and wife.”

Her passion for gardening is shared with the office every time there is an in-house event at OYS. Violet will often bring plants, flowers and table decorations.

As with gardening, Violet takes great care in tending to her tasks at work, which include keeping track of how much money is being spent at OYS and ensuring that providers for the agency are being paid in accordance with their contract. She also prepares a quarterly report of expenditures that the agency sends to the U.S. Department of Justice.

In an agency often beleaguered by criticism, Violet said she takes time to appreciate the company of co-workers.

“I really enjoy the people,” she said. “We are like family. To have good people around you is something to look forward to.”

FIRST ANNUAL FATHERHOOD CONFERENCE



Fatherhood Conference

“Inspiring Fathers,” the first-ever statewide conference on fatherhood, was held on Thurs-

day, April 6, in Waikiki.

Guest speakers included Lt. Governor James R. “Duke” Aiona, Jr., a father of four and a former Family Court judge; and George Williams, National Center on Fatherhood executive director.

The conference talked about the impact a father’s presence and parenting style has on their children,

“Studies have shown that children who grow up with the attention and influence of a father have a better chance at leading more healthy and productive lives.”

**-Greg Farstrup—Chairman
Hawaii State Commission
on Fatherhood**

cultural influences on fathering and the changing role of fathers.

The conference also featured awards presentations for “Hawaii’s Outstanding Father” and “Hawaii’s Outstanding Father Program,” along with breakout groups that focus on creating successful father programs and garnering federal, state, county and private-sector support for these services.

Since 2004, the Hawaii State Commission on Fatherhood has developed best practices information on fatherhood services, identified effective fatherhood services and recognized those who make a concerted effort to facilitate father involvement.

DHS Med-QUEST Receives First-Ever “Outstanding Government Program” Award from the Mental Health Association of Hawaii

The Mental Health Association of Hawaii awarded DHS the first-ever “Outstanding Government Program” award for the Med-QUEST Carve-Out-For-Children with Serious Emotional and Behavioral Disturbances and Adults with Serious Mental Illness.

The award was given to Director Lillian Koller at a luncheon May 18 at the Japanese Cultural Center.

QUEST, the managed care insurance coverage for individuals on

Medicaid was initiated in 1994.

“I accept this award on behalf of all my Med-QUEST staff, past and present, who work exceptionally hard because they care so much about improving access to quality healthcare for the neediest people in Hawaii,” said Director Koller.

DHS recognized that adults with serious mental illnesses and children and adolescents with severe emotional disturbances needed additional, specialized care coordination. As a result, Hawaii’s QUEST program incorporated a carve-out for both of these Medicaid populations.

Today the Department of Health’s Children and

Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) administers the severe emotional disturbances carve-out and HMSA’s Community Care Service (CCS) administers the severe mental illness carve-out.

“It’s not just a good idea that counts,” Koller said. “It’s how you execute that idea, how you put it into action. I want to thank Winnie Odo, who was the Med-QUEST administrator 10 years ago for her fine leadership. On that score the Department of Health’s CAMHD, led by Tina Donkervoet, and HMSA’s CCS, led by Dr. Tom Leland, and Dr. Tom Hester of the Department of Health’s Adult Mental Health Division have also done a great job.”

Volunteers Beautify Child Welfare Services Office in Waiakamilo



Thanks to the generosity and efforts of 12 volunteers from the Bridge Church, the Child Welfare Services Waiakamilo Office has a bit more color these days. The walls were livened with

splashes of ocean blue and sun yellow populated with red striped fishes, green palm trees and purple geckos.

Department of Human Services (DHS) Complaints Officer Owen McCabe read a letter from DHS Director Lillian Koller thanking volunteers for their help.



“The magical transformation of these rooms are a reflection of your members’ hard work and kindness and the success of these partnerships in addressing the needs of

our children,” Koller said.

Volunteers painted the walls, cleaned and sorted through old toys and hand painted the walls of lobby and visiting rooms.



Volunteers from Bridge Church who helped to renovate the lobby and visiting rooms

VR Division Recognizes Outstanding Employer and Rehabilitant for 2005

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Division of DHS recognized Continental Paper Company as the 2005 Outstanding Employer of the Year and Stephen Kelley, as Rehabilitant of the Year at a ceremony June 28 at Campbell Industrial Park.

Continental is a company specializing in packaging and shipping needs. Stephen, who has been a

warehouse worker since April 19, 2004, is deaf and was diagnosed with traumatic brain injury after an accident in 1987.

He is responsible for collating, folding and stacking rolls of paper.

“Remember the key to looking at disability is focusing on the other half of that word – ability.”

Deputy Director Henry Oliva

Deputy Director Henry Oliva joined VR Administrator Joe Cordova, Continental Paper Manager Ron Cook, other company and VR officials and State Senator Brian Kanno for the ceremony.

“We congratulate Stephen for being named outstanding rehabilitant and commend Continental for being awarded employer of the year,” Oliva said. “Remember the key to looking at disability is focusing on the other half of that word — ability.”

DHS and Heart Gallery Hawaii host photo presentation at Washington Place to help find children permanent homes

DHS and Heart Gallery Hawaii presented on March 17 at Washington Place a photo gallery of children in foster care waiting for adoptive families.

Heart Gallery, a nonprofit organization, brings the community closer to the faces of Hawaii’s foster children waiting for a permanent family, especially those who are older or have special emotional, physical and developmental needs. Professional photographers volunteer their time to take the images,



Director Koller at the Heart Gallery Hawaii presentation at Washington Place

showing children in natural settings that capture their spirit and emotions.

In 2004, 354 children were adopted from state foster care. Currently there are about 200 children whose parents’ rights have been terminated by the Family Court and are ready and waiting for adoptive families to come forward.

“All children, whether they are infants or teenagers with special needs, deserve to have a permanent family who love and protect them,” said DHS Director Lillian Koller. “We are excited to work with Heart Gallery Hawaii to help share what is unique and beautiful about these children.”

For more information about Heart Gallery Hawaii, call 422-9579 or 295-1929.