

Mental Health Kokua

www.mentalhealthkokua.org

Volume 4, Issue 3 Spring 2006

Safe Haven A Decade of Dedication

Never underestimate the power of a few—certainly a lesson learned from the determination and tenacity of a handful of women that led to the opening of our Safe Haven facility in 1995.

Founders included Margaret Copi, MD, and Milly Tanabe with Kalihi Palama Health Center-- Health Care for the Homeless Project, Kathy Hasegawa



Governor Linda Lingle at Safe Haven

from the Affordable Housing Alliance, Lisa Maruyama of the Mental Health Association of Hawaii, Fran Smith of the Oahu Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and Joanne Lundstrom, Mental Health Kokua, with a supporting cast boosted by Gail Kaito of the City, Terry Brooks, of Homeless Solutions, and Sally Erickson, our first Safe Haven Director, among others.

The 2.1 million dollar Federal grant award that set Safe Haven in motion was one of the first such awards in the Country. Mental Health Kokua was the recipient and the sponsor, with Kalihi-Palama Health Center—Health Care for the Homeless, the partner.

In December of 1995, the doors opened

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Hale Ama 'Ohana, (left to right) Tyanna Fontes, Milo Nau, Auntu Ulu, Beverly Ho'okano, Michael Durch

Hale Ama'u Blessing

On an incredibly beautiful morning in Hilo in February, with a pristine view of the snows of Mauna Kea, our newest residence, Hale Ama'u, was blessed.

It was a "chicken skin" moment as Auntu Ulu Kanaka'ole Garmon began the chant, echoed by our East Hawaii 'ohana, in a circle of aloha on the spacious grounds fronting Hale Ama'u. The sense of peace and calm continued as the new residents and staff stepped forward to unravel the flora fronting the threshold before entering the hale. Inside the home looked like a Hawaiian style country inn, with tropical design carpeting and rattan furnishings gracing the spacious living room, sur-

rounded by bedrooms tastefully prepared for the consumers moving in. The presentation was obviously a labor of love under the leadership of Beverly Ho'okano, our East Hawaii Program Manager, and staff members Lori Batino, Michael Durch, Tyanna Fontes, Tanya Hopeau, Joyel Kekua, Milo Nau, and Sara Roberts.

The wonder of this special new place is in the genesis, or roots, that came together for the creation. The 6-bedroom home on .86 acres of land in upper Kaumana was built for

the Hilo Association of Retarded Citizens in 1982. When Hilo Arc no longer needed the resource, we were asked if we were interested in acquiring it. Over a period of 2 years we worked with Hilo Arc, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Housing and Community Development Corporation of Hawaii, and the Adult Mental Health Division to make the dream a reality, and in November 2005, the deed was done.

In the absence of capital funds, *continued on page 5*

Basic Needs, Simple Truths

The good news in this new year for Mental Health Kokua is we celebrated 10 years of offering Safe Haven services on Oahu, opened our newly acquired Hilo residential facility, Hale Ama'u, and completed the renovations to Hale Koho, our new residence in Makiki.

We look forward to starting major renovations to our Maui Market St. property, having gotten through a very complex Maui County land use and variance approval process, and initiating phase one of a major maintenance and repair program for the older of our properties in Hilo, Maui, and Honolulu. Having a roof over your head isn't always a good thing, if the roof is leaking.

The metaphor holds true for the bigger system picture, too. Fixing what's leaking or broken in our Hawaii mental health system requires more than covering up the pukas. While it's great to hear that Hawaii's rating in *Grading the States 2006*, a publication of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), is much improved from prior years, based on the Adult Mental Health Division's response to the self assessment tool provided by NAMI, it's important to continue to speak up and speak out when we notice our mental health system is not working. Why? Not too many years ago people with mental illness in England lived in what were called *Mad Houses*, people with mental illness in the United States lived in institutions described as *Snake Pits*, and the mentally ill in Hawaii were serving lifetime "sentences" in the *Pupule (Crazy) House*, as our Territorial Hospital (now Hawaii State Hospital) was descriptively called.

We have come a long way in de-stigmatizing mental illness nationally and locally, and in building a community based system that allows for normalizing experiences,

and an ethos of recovery. Still it's important to remember that normalizing doesn't mean we must be all alike. Rather, it means that we have the opportunity to live what Jay Neugeboren describes in an article



Staying the course with someone can have a profound impact on his or her ability to lead a gloriously imperfect life.

about his brother, as *gloriously imperfect lives*. (Meds Alone Couldn't Bring Robert Back, Newsweek Magazine, Feb. 8, 2006). Neugeboren recounts the turning point in his brothers' recovery from mental illness, like the hundreds of others he interviewed who had recovered into lives of meaning in the community, was in every instance not the right pill formula, but the presence in their lives of individuals, be it a friend, clergy member, a doctor, or a social worker, who said, in effect "I believe in your ability to recover and I am going to stay with you until you do." The same message rang true in a recently published autobiography called "Divided Minds: Twin Sisters and Their Journey Through Schizophrenia", by co-authors Pamela Spiro Wagner, the twin with schizophrenia, and her sister, Carolyn Spiro, a psychiatrist who stayed the course through her sister's long and wrenching journey towards wellness. Staying the course with someone can have a profound impact on his or her ability to lead a *gloriously imperfect life*.

As we create ever more complicated mazes for providers and consumers to wend their way through to the start point of a real life, let's not lose sight of the simple truth—relationships matter most. Whether you are the parent, the child, a friend, the social

worker, the psychiatrist, the case manager, the gatekeeper to services, the provider, the peer coach, you must be prepared to do battle for a sane system, stay the course, and champion the cause—which is for systems that best address the community recovery interests of mental health consumers. But of course ...

Advocacy is a practice, a practical necessity, and an ethical imperative if we are to realize social betterment and social justice on behalf of people with mental illness.

That's the truth,

Joanne Lundstrom
Joanne Lundstrom
Chief Executive Officer

Dim SUM

- What do newswoman Jane Pauley, country music singer Charlie Pride, television news producer Bill Lichtenstein, and CNN founder Ted Turner all have in common? They all have bipolar disorders.
- Hawaii State Hospital (HSH) is opening 16 beds for consumers suitable for conditional release in the cottages on the HSH campus.
- The Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) served approximately 10,686 people in fiscal year 2005 through public and privately contracted services.
- Untreated and mistreated mental illness costs the United States \$150 billion in lost productivity and \$8 billion in crime and welfare expenditures each year. A 5.5 percent increase in spending by businesses and government on mental health treatment could cut these costs by half. (Center for Health Policy, 2004)
- May is mental health awareness month. The theme for this year's observance is **mind your health**, which focuses on the mind-body connection. For more information about events in Hawaii, call the Mental Health Association in Hawaii at 521-1846.



Safe Haven

Continued from page 1

to offer outreach, clinical care, crises management and residential placement services to Honolulu's homeless mentally ill population.

How affirming it was 10 years later to celebrate our success in addressing the clinical and recovery needs of this most isolated and vulnerable of the mentally ill population—those that have been hiding in our alleyways, living on “mean streets”, or moving from park to

park seeking shelter. Governor Linda Lingle was the special guest at our anniversary party in January, commenting on the needs of the mentally ill, and complementing Safe Haven for the exemplary services offered on behalf of the homeless.

We have a solid ground of Safe Haven success to offer the State as they look for ways to address the needs of the homeless mentally ill folks. We're just an outreach call away...

All Aboard

Mental Health Kokua welcomed three new Board members and honored two staff members at the 2006 annual meeting held at the Waikiki Yacht Club. New Board members are

Cindy McMillan, Mardi L. Maione, and Elisa Yadao.

Ms. McMillan is the Senior Vice President of Communications Pacific (CommPac), heading the company's civic affairs and community building practice. As a former lobbyist and legislative aide, she brings considerable experience in strategic legislative and grass-roots outreach. Ms. Maione is the Supervisor of Baby-Safe Program of Child and Family Services on Kauai. Ms. Maione is a co-founder of the Kauai Drug Free Coalition, is a Certified Substance Abuse Counselor, and serves as a volunteer with numerous Kauai human service organizations, including

the Kauai Mental Health and Substance Abuse Service Area Board. Ms. Yadao is a communications consultant who formerly worked as the Executive Director of Polynesian Voyaging Society, and as Director of Communications at Kamehameha School Bishop Estate. Ms. Yadao has been a newsroom reporter at KGMB and KITV and served as the Managing Director at KHNL.



Melby Albano

Staff honorees at the event were **Melby Albano** and **John Morita**. Melby began

working with us in 1998 as the HUD project bookkeeper, with just one house to keep track of. Her position has evolved into the HUD Housing Development and Management Coordinator, with 12 projects at present. John has been with the agency for 12 years and has been a positive role model for many residents. He also doubles as our in-house photographer. Mahalo Melby and John for everything you do!



John Morita with Joanne

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Board Profile-Welcome Aboard

Cindy McMillan



Cindy McMillan, Senior Vice President, Communications Pacific joined our Board in February 2006. Lucky us!

• Why did you become a Mental Health Kokua Board member?

We live in Downtown Honolulu and Safe Haven is a neighbor. When Sean Tadaki contacted Communications Pacific to see if someone could help MHK with communications, I thought it would be a good fit.

• What would you like to see accomplished while you are an MHK Board member?

I would like to help raise general awareness of the programs MHK offers and the vital role that it plays in our communities. This should translate into growing the donor base.

• Tell us about your personal life...what do you do for fun or what do you do on the weekends? (Family, hobbies, background, etc)

I love to read, swim, sail, hike and challenge myself by entering difficult athletic events. I've completed six marathons, and this year two of my much-younger colleagues have talked me into training for the Tinman Triathlon. My husband and I are policy wonks and we love talking politics. But we also love going to UH baseball games and other sports events.

• What did you want to do when you grew up? Did your dream help you get to where you are now?

When I was in the third grade, I dreamed of going to Africa – and I spent a year in Kenya while I was in college. When I was in the fourth grade, I longed to visit Hawaii – we've lived here for 10 years and plan to be here for many more. There is one childhood dream that I have yet to realize, however. I wanted to be a marine biologist working for Jacques Cousteau. There's still time!



Mental Health Kokua

Mental Health Kokua's newsletter is the official publication of Mental Health Kokua, whose address is:

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This newsletter is published quarterly. Special thanks to all who contributed to this edition of Mental Health Kokua. We believe that all citizens should have an opportunity to live and participate in and contribute to their communities. Through specially designed services and settings, Mental Health Kokua helps those in Hawai'i who are in mental distress, emotional crisis or recovering from serious mental illness achieve their optimum level of recovery and ability to function in the community.



Hana hou – thar she blows

MHK's Annual Whale Watch

By Janet Long
Maui Office Coordinator

Mental Health Kokua hosts a Whale Watch fundraising event on Maui annually. Janet Long, our Maui Office Coordinator, shares her perspective of this wondrous event.

On February 26, 2006, I arrive at Maalaea Harbor at 2:00 p.m. The sky is overcast and the day promises to be cool and windy. I've heard that whales like this kind of weather and are more apt to be active. So we will see what kind of a whale watch it will be.

This is my sixth year coordinating Mental Health Kokua's Whale Watch for Maui. All the hard work and frustration in planning an event fades when the day arrives and

the excitement begins. Not only do I enjoy whale watching but I also love the water. I think my father, who loved to fish and would go to the beach whenever he had the day off, passed on his love of the ocean to me. Our family would go to the beach and wait for him while he searched for tako. He would also throw net and catch reef fish. So I grew up knowing how to clean tako and fish. To be out on the water is really refreshing.

We tie up the Mental Health Kokua banner to the posts at the end of the pier as the harbor comes alive with cars driving in to drop off our guests. There are a variety of people. One man read about

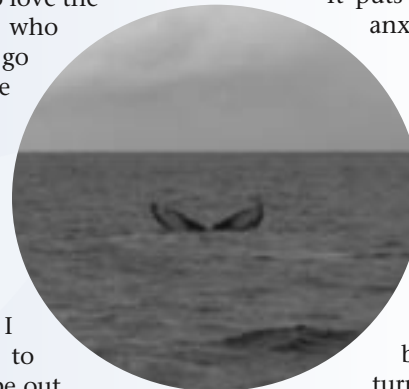
our whale watch in the newspaper. Another guest heard about it on the radio and brings eight in her group. Other guests include Mental Health Kokua staff, family and friends, the Advisory Board members, and 20 consumers of Mental Health Kokua.

After the guests are checked in, we line up to board the vessel, the Prince Kuhio, with tickets in hand. You could tell by the smiles on everyone's face that they are eager to get started.

The captain maneuvers the Prince Kuhio towards Lahaina and we come upon a mother and her calf. The mother is slicing through the waves following its' baby. The baby whale is the size of a small VW bug and it is happily bouncing in and out of the water, as though it is trying to catch the waves. At first, I thought it is the mother but then we saw the back of the mother and she was three times the size of the baby. It is incredible how huge these creatures are. As we watch, the wind whips through our hair and chills our faces. It is invigorating.

The vessel then turns in search of another pod of whales. The wind dies down as we motor beside the West Maui Mountains. At this point, the clouds part and our panoramic view is of blue sky and sunlight on the skyline near the Island of Kahoolawe. It is so beautiful.

It puts you at peace as life's anxieties melt away.



A whale of a tale

More humpback whales are spotted as they wave their dorsal fins, jump out of the water, give a glimpse of their tails, and spout water. They are all around the boat, near and far. It

turns out to be a great whale watch not only for seeing a lot of whales but it gives everyone a fresh perspective on life. I know it did me as I give thanks to our Creator for such a beautiful day to enjoy with my family and friends.



Our eager elves

Remembering the warmth of the holidays

Once again, with the help of some new elves, Mental Health Kokua residents were feted with Christmas gifts.

After six years of faithfully orchestrating the Shoebox Project Gayle Ozawa handed the torch to Ms. Laurieann Seu and her special education class at Kalani High School. This year students were in charge of the entire project, with assistance provided by Laurieann and fellow teachers.

Students who participated in the project were Caren, Julie, Stephanie, Christine, Jon, Shanelle, Renisha, Ryan, and Rebecca. Teachers involved in the project were Laurieann, Dale, Katherine, Mary, Jenna, and Juli. Mahalo to the students and teachers from Ms. Seus' Special Education Class at Kalani High School for taking on the Shoebox Project and making our residents feel special once again during the holiday season.

Aloha Abigail Kerisano

by JessieAnn Yokoyama

On Saturday, March 11, 2006 at The Church of Latter-day Saints (Waipahu First Samoan Ward) we gathered to bid farewell to our friend and co-worker, Abigail Kerisano. Abby joined our Safe Haven Project in the year 2000, bringing enthusiasm and aloha to her job as a Residential Assistant working with our special Safe Haven clients. Last year Abby began a long and tena-



cious struggle with cancer – fighting the good fight in her ever-gracious way, until February 28, 2006 when it was time to say goodbye.

The sun shone brightly on March 11th, as we remembered Abby's shining smile and infectious personality. The church was filled beyond capacity, a testament of how much Abby was loved.

We ended the service with Aloha O'e to Abby, our co-worker and friend – God speed to you, Abby-girl...

Board Profile-Welcome Aboard

Sean Tadaki



Sean Tadaki joined the MHK Board in January 2005, and continues to bring fresh eyes and ideas to the agency. He is a Vice President at Colliers Monroe Friedlander.

• Why did you become a Mental Health Kokua Board member?

I was introduced to MHK 4-5 years ago through working with Joanne on finding new office space, first into the Pan Am Building and subsequently into our current location in 1221 Kapiolani.

• What was your previous experience with mental health or people with mental illness?

None, this has been an eye opening and gratifying experience.

• What would you like to see accomplished while you are a MHK Board member?

1) Acquisition of more properties to serve a greater number of those in need. 2) A greater awareness of the public for what MHK strives to accomplish and how the public can contribute to help MHK attain their goals.

• Tell us about your personal life...what do you do for fun or what do you do on the weekends?

I was born on the east coast near Washington DC, but spent my formative years in Tokyo Japan where I learned to speak fluent Japanese. I later attended Boston University starting my career in real estate over 12 years ago. Since moving to Hawaii in 1999, I have enjoyed every moment here and feel extremely fortunate to be a part of this community. With my little free time, I love cycling and wish I had more time to dedicate to it. I also enjoy cooking and eating great food!

• As a child what did you want to do when you grew up?

I hope to never feel that I have grown up. I am always looking for new endeavors, learning about new cultures and meeting new people. I never knew commercial real estate would be my calling (especially with a Biology and Environmental Science Degree) but I relish the thought of waking up in the morning and tackling each day.

Hale Ama'u Blessing

Continued from page 1

furnishing residential facilities is always a challenge. Wonder of wonders, with the support of a community volunteer, we were offered "gently used" furnishings from The Hilton Waikoloa Hotel, and the Mauna Lani Resort on the Big Island. We have been able, too, with support from the community, to acquire a much needed van for Hale Ama'u use.

How sweet it is for our residents to have a home they can be proud to live in, as they move on in their recovery from mental illness. Aloha kakou, Auntie Ulu, and all who made Hale Ama'u a reality, for your mana'olana.



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Thanks for Giving

Our apologies if we have omitted your name.
Please call 737-2523 so that we can correct our records.

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