

Philanthropy: Helping Foster Kids Find Their Way

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HI HOPES youth leadership board members celebrate their success of getting laws passed to provide more support to kids in foster care.



For many island kids, their 18th birthday is a time of celebration, a launch into the world. But for the 75+ kids living in the foster system, that birthday was a day of reckoning. For years, they were officially “aged out” of the system, often on their own without the skills, financial resources, or support to find their way.

The Hawai'i Community Foundation, in partnership with the Department of Human Services and other funders, knew they could do better. “These are our kids, our future,” said Kelvin Taketa, HCF Chief Executive Officer, “And this is a problem we can fix.”

Started six years ago, the Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative (HYOI) creates that support system, offering everything from financial literacy classes to matching funds to job training. A youth leadership board, Hawai'i Helping Our People Envision Success (HI HOPES), was also formed to bring together young people who've successfully aged out with teens still in the system.

“The program taught me how to manage money and get a housing deposit,” said Tiffany Tuilata, HI HOPES board member and former foster child. “Now, thanks to the program, we're not homeless anymore and I come home and my kids are at the door calling ‘Mommy!’ I know we're safe.”

Together, the advocacy efforts of HYOI and HI HOPES have led to the remarkable achievement of extending foster care support until age 21 and health coverage to age 26 if they attend school.

Creating a village, thanks to HCF and its partners, where our keiki can get the life start they deserve—that's the power of giving.

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