



**Working together to ensure that every individual has the help they need to achieve and maintain a foundation for lasting recovery and well-being**

## Aloha House

We recently had an opportunity to sit down and chat with Aloha House client Diana. During it she received a surprise phone call. It was her son – calling to thank her for everything she does to support him and to tell her that he was proud of her and he loved her. This little gesture meant so much, as it signaled to Diana that she is “finally ending the cycle of addiction and destruction that I witnessed growing up.”

Diana has struggled with drug addiction and mental illness since she was a teenager. Starting in her mid-teens she was in abusive relationships, and the drugs “made the abuse tolerable. They numbed me.” Even though she did receive treatment, it wasn’t until she was in her early thirties that she was diagnosed as bipolar. “I looked at it like it was a curse, like I was crazy.” When medications didn’t help, she turned back to drugs. “I had no long term way to deal with my disorder.” She vividly remembers the tremendous guilt she felt when she missed her son’s opening day of baseball league because he had been removed from her custody and put in foster care. “It hit me that I had lost my kid, and I wanted to die. I felt like I had no value.”

Things finally changed when she started working with a case manager from Aloha House’s Community Based Case Management (CBCM) Program and went through Aloha House’s Co-Occurring Disorders (COD) Program a few years ago. For the first time not only did she receive treatment for her addiction, but she also learned about her bipolar disorder and how to recognize when an emotional change, or “mood episode,” was about to happen and what to do about it. She learned how to change her thinking and perception by using a Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Map, a technique she still uses. While in treatment she worked with Child Protective Services and regained custody of her son. Looking back, she realizes she was in denial about being a good parent. “I thought that because my son had a roof over his head, didn’t have cavities, there was always milk in the fridge and the power was on, that meant I was doing a good job and doing the best I could. But I realized there is more to being a parent than that.”

Diana will celebrate 4 years clean and sober this December.

She is still working with the same case manager. “If something comes up and I need to talk to someone, she is there. For the first time in my life I have had someone to support me unconditionally.” She says that when the urge to use was especially strong during her first year of sobriety, she knew what to do – she turned to counselors from the COD Program, her case manager, called the crisis line when needed and attended NA meetings. “I shared it with someone so it wouldn’t be a secret.” Diana says her case manager also helped her plan for a future (for the first time in her life) by setting short and long term goals.

A little less than a year ago she fulfilled one of those long term goals – getting her GED. She says that that accomplishment was symbolic to her and she wanted to do it not only for herself, but for her son. “Was I going to be the parent that just said, ‘don’t grow up like me and do drugs and drop out of school,’ or was I going to be one of those parents who would show him that no matter how bad and ugly your past is, you can always change your future?” At the beginning of this year Diana began taking classes at University of Hawaii Maui College and is working towards a degree in Human Services. She wants to be a domestic violence educator, especially for women who are incarcerated. “It would be selfish of me to just sit at home when I have the ability to change women’s lives. I know I can give others in similar situations hope for the future.”



Diana, her son and her best friend at Diana’s GED graduation ceremony



Today Diana is enjoying actually being an example for her son. “Without my sobriety and my mental health, I can’t be a parent.” She lives by the mantra, *It’s not what I’m going through, it’s where I’m going to* and encourages others to “never give up hope on someone because you never know when it’s gonna stick, when they will make that breakthrough.”

Diana proudly showing off her Hawaii Adult Community School Diploma

## Maui Youth & Family Services

Alyssa entered the state foster care system as a teenager after her parents passed away. Now 20 years old, she says that transitioning into “the real world” would have been very different without MYFS’ Independent Living Program (ILP) to turn to for help. While in foster care she felt very “alone and like no one could relate” to her. Her MYFS ILP counselor became her “shoulder to cry on and a person to talk to. She is like a mother to me. She checks on me to see how I am doing...no one else does that.”

Alyssa admits that she was surrounded by drug use while growing up (her father died from a drug overdose) and that over time she became angry. “Five years ago my life was hell. I thought I would be a drug dealer and constantly on the run. That was all I knew.” She says that when it came time to leave foster care, if she “had been feeling all those emotions and didn’t have anyone to confide in and talk to, I would have gone backwards.” Alyssa says that MYFS has also made her open to new experiences.

MYFS introduced her to the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition (HFYC) last summer and she is now the Maui chapter’s Treasurer. The HFYC is “a youth-led statewide organization that advocates for improvements in the foster care system, provides education on the needs of foster children and resources for transitioning foster youth, and supports youth in and from care, ages 14 – 26, through state and local youth board meetings and community service projects.” Alyssa enjoys “having other people who are in a similar situation to talk to” and says that she and her fellow HFYC members are “our own little family.”

Alyssa really stepped out of her “comfort zone” at the 2013 ‘Ohana is Forever’ conference in Oahu when she represented Maui’s foster youth by delivering a speech to the hundreds of conference attendees. She talked about her experience in the foster care system and its impact on her. Speaking in front of such a large audience is something she

never imagined herself being able to do. “A few years ago I would not have been willing or able to take on such a leadership position, but sharing my life story is something I just felt I needed to do. I wanted to show others that people in foster care can succeed and that there can be good outcomes.”

When Alyssa began working with MYFS she did not have her driver’s license. She had never taken the test to get her license because she didn’t feel confident she would pass, and she could not afford the necessary lessons. Financial assistance from donors covered the cost of the lessons and the state road test, and last fall Alyssa received her license. For her, having a driver’s license represents “security” and the fact that she is able to take care of herself and does not have to rely on others. She was recently able to buy her own car and is making the monthly payments with money she is saving from working. She is proud to “have something that I can call mine and know I worked hard to get.” Alyssa says that buying the car was “one of the biggest steps in my life” and is excited that she is building up her financial credit so that she can buy a house one day.

Alyssa works as a counselor at Kamaaina Kids, which provides childcare to preschool and school-age kids. She coordinates outdoor games and activities for elementary-school age children and at any one time is in charge of almost 30 kids. She loves seeing them smile. “These kids should have fun in their lives and get a chance to play outside and be active. I never had that opportunity when I was young.” She is doing so well that in August she was named *Employee of the Month*. She enjoys the “responsibility of having a job because it makes me feel like I am doing something right.”

Alyssa says she is grateful because “MYFS gave me opportunities and resources that I can actually use and take advantage of. Because of that my life has changed in so many ways. I’m the happiest I have ever been.”

## Malama Family Recovery Center

In our last newsletter we introduced you to Sharel and her son Rylan. The two had recently been reunited and were enjoying bonding during playtime on the new Therapeutic Living Program (TLP) playground. We are excited to let you know that Sharel is doing so well that she and her other child, Misha, are also now together again.

Sharel entered treatment after an abusive long-term relationship led to drug use. She wanted help because “even though I could tell myself I could stop, I just couldn’t.” She also knew that she was close to losing custody of her two young children and that Malama could not only help her get healthy, but could also help her keep her kids. Malama’s services extend far beyond just treatment, as dedicated staff members provide intensive case management to clients both in our residential and outpatient programs. Family reunification is a priority, as we know that mothers are better able to focus on recovery when they have a goal of regaining their families. Malama staff members coordinate visitations and provide transport when necessary. They accompany clients to court and provide advice and guidance during supervised visits. Staff members also take detailed notes during the visits and help identify areas where the mother or child may need extra support.

When Sharel began living in the TLP, her son Rylan was 15 months old and her daughter Misha, who was living with Sharel’s mother at the time, was 4 months. Rylan’s visits and overnight stays began soon after she arrived at Malama, and they were officially reunified earlier this year. She described how happy she felt when he began “to really recognize me. Now he calls me ‘mom’ and ‘mommy’ and follows me around. Before, he was hesitant to even kiss me, but now he runs to me when he sees me.” Misha began visiting Sharel on a regular basis soon after and moved in to the TLP a couple months ago. Sharel says that Rylan and Misha have grown much closer. “There were times that they didn’t seem to recognize each other, but now they play together and laugh.”



Sharel, Rylan and Misha

Sharel says she “learned how to be a mom at Malama” and how to take care of two young children on her own. At the end of August Sharel, Rylan and Misha moved into one of Malama’s Sober Living Program (SLP) homes. “Because of the SLP I am not on my own. I am still learning how to deal with my addiction and actually have a chance to take care of all the things that need to be done – like finding a job and childcare – before we move out and find a place of our own to call home.” She says she “loves the sober life and can actually pay attention to what matters now. My mind is set to sticking with the kids and raising them and being there for them.”

Sharel, Rylan and Misha are just one example of a family that has been reunified because of Malama Family Recovery Center. With your support we can make this a reality for so many more broken families in the community.

## Other News...

We are thrilled to announce that Tri-Agency Board Member Helen McCord is the recipient of the 2014 Michael H. Lyons II Palaka Award! The award recognizes outstanding long-term and substantial volunteer service to Maui County nonprofits. Created in honor of Lyons’ tireless community support, it is named for the signature Palaka shirts he wore and was presented at the Rotary Club of Kahului’s annual Palaka Award luncheon last month.

McCord was honored for her longtime service to Maui Youth & Family Services (MYFS), where she has been a Board Member since 1997. During that time she has served as Board President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, was one of the founding members of MYFS’ signature fundraiser – *Growing Dreams* – and played a major role in MYFS’ merger with Aloha House and Malama Family Recovery Center in 2008. Over the years she and her husband Warren have donated hundreds of Christmas trees from Kula Botanical Garden, which they established in 1971 and still own and operate, to community service organizations, local schools and churches. Their trees also decorate the homes of MYFS foster families caring for at-risk youth. Through Helen’s gifts of time, talent and treasure, she has made significant and enduring contributions



Board Member  
Helen McCord

that have resulted in a strong and critical community resource for Maui that has improved, and in many instances, saved the lives of countless youth and their families.

Tri-agency Board Member Jerry Welch received the Palaka Award in 2007 in honor of his hard work for Aloha House and Malama Family Recovery Center. He has been on the Board since 1995.

Mahalo to Helen, Jerry and all of our dedicated Board Members for their tireless efforts to help thousands of Maui individuals and families!

## Purchase tickets to the 2015 and support us at the same time!



Plantation Course at Kapalua  
January 8 -12



2015 HTOC PGA Golf for Maui Charities Ticket Option	Price
Good Any Day Grounds Ticket	\$20
Weekly Grounds Ticket (5 individual tickets to the 4 competitive rounds)	\$50

\*18 and younger admitted free with ticketed adult  
\*Complimentary parking at Honua Kai Resort

**100% of the proceeds from each ticket sale supports us!**

Contact Frances Duberstein (808-579-8414, ext. 8102, [fduberstein@aloha-house.org](mailto:fduberstein@aloha-house.org)) to order tickets and indicate which agency you would like your donation to go to

This September we are celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual *National Recovery Month!*

*National Recovery Month* promotes the societal benefits of prevention, treatment, and recovery for mental and substance use disorders. This year's theme, "Join the Voices for Recovery: Speak Up, Reach Out," encourages people to openly speak up about mental and substance use disorders and the reality of recovery, and promotes ways individuals can recognize behavioral health issues and reach out for help.

THANK YOU for making recovery possible

As a result of your support, within the past year...

In helping more than 300 adolescents affected by substance abuse, MYFS staff provided more than 8,000 individual treatment sessions and approximately 15,000 hours of counseling

MFRC provided nearly 100 women with the opportunity to change not only their own lives, but that of their families

Aloha House's Community Based Case Management program provided life-changing help to more than 600 adults with serious, persistent mental illness

These are just a few ways you have made a difference

Please visit our websites to learn more about how **you** can help

[MYFS.ORG](http://MYFS.ORG)

[ALOHA-HOUSE.ORG](http://ALOHA-HOUSE.ORG)

[MALAMAFAMILYRECOVERY.ORG](http://MALAMAFAMILYRECOVERY.ORG)

**MAHALO for helping us save lives, restore families and help people turn their lives around!**

