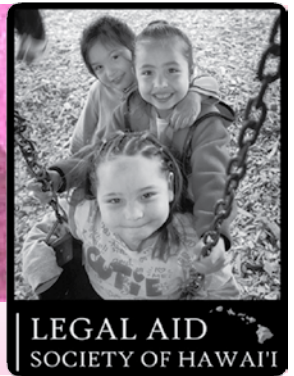


Ka Leo Kaulike

Newsletter

Summer 2009



LEGAL AID
SOCIETY OF HAWAII

New Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii has appointed M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina to the position of Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii.



Board President George Zweibel with Legal Aid's New Executive Director, Nalani Fujimori Kaina

The economic downturn has deeply affected and challenged non-profit organizations throughout the country, and the Legal Aid Society is no exception. However, the daunting challenge of guiding Legal Aid through these tough economic times was one which Nalani eagerly accepted. She brings over 10 years of experience with Legal Aid to the position of Executive Director in one of

the firm's most challenging times. Board President George Zweibel states, "Legal Aid and the community it serves could not be more fortunate. Nalani has proven time and time again, through her leadership, dedication, and tireless efforts – in and out of the program – that she is the right person to assume the reins at Legal Aid today and to lead the program into the future."

"Legal Aid and the community it serves could not be more fortunate." - George Zweibel

Board Member and past President David Reber adds, "She is an exceptionally talented lawyer and leader with many years of valuable experience that have prepared her perfectly for this position. I know she will work tirelessly to retain our program's reputation as one of the best in the country."

"I thank the Board of Directors for putting their trust in me as the Executive Director." Nalani says, "While the next few years will be difficult, I am up for the challenge and the opportunity to help shape Legal Aid into an organization which will be even more client oriented and in touch with the needs of the community." ♦♦♦

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Executive Director

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina

Legislature Cuts GIA Ending Over 35 years of General Support

As the 2008 legislative session came to a close this past May, legal service organizations received the final word that there would be no available Grant-In-Aid (GIA) funding for the next fiscal year. This left the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii with a \$800,000 loss in general funding, which forced the firm to cut back on much needed services amidst a near 30% rise in inquires for aid compared to last year.

The legislature did provide Legal Aid with some restricted funding from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) federal funds, but the effects of the loss in unrestricted general funding from GIA will mean that the disabled, those without children, seniors, and those who live just above the poverty line will not be serviced. In light of these drastic cuts, Legal Aid has reluctantly out of necessity, furloughed staff, cut hours for its Center for Equal Justice, cut hours for walk-in intake, and reduced its services to Family Court.

Previous to these turn of events, the state legislature had a long legacy of supporting the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, which originally opened its doors in 1950, preceding the federal Legal Services Corporation by 24 years. The state funded Hawaii's oldest and largest public interest law firm for over 35 years. This cut in support not only cripples Legal Aid's ability to help Hawaii's people access the justice they deserve but also hampers Legal Aid's ability to help some clients out of poverty.

With the additional recent legislative cuts to all social

services and the forced cut in services from Legal Aid, the poor population suffers losses from all angles, exposing this community to injustices without legal help while making it even more difficult for them to become viable contributors to our economy.

Legal Aid predicts that the repercussions of such legislative cuts will play out visibly and socially in the near future, as our economy will find itself at the center of the shadow of increasing homelessness, hunger, domestic violence, and child abuse.

For nearly 60 years, Legal Aid has made it a priority to invest in the interests of the poor, not only in upholding equal protection through access to justice, but also in maintaining the health of the overall community. Though the firm is utterly committed to its mission, it nevertheless is dependent upon state and community support to carry its mission out in perpetuity. Therefore, supporting Legal Aid is not just a philanthropic cause, it is a socio-economic necessity. "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." - John F. Kennedy ♦♦♦

"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." - John F. Kennedy

Legal Aid is Hawaii's oldest and largest non-profit law firm dedicated to assisting the low- to moderate-income community. Our mission is to achieve fairness and justice for Hawaii's people through quality legal representation, advocacy, advice, community partnerships, education and outreach.

Established in 1950, Legal Aid has 9 offices statewide, and over 80 attorneys, paralegals, and administrative staff all dedicated to achieving Legal Aid's vision of "Building a Just Society."

www.legalaidhawaii.org

In the News About Foreclosures

On April 23rd and again on May 8th 2009, Legal Aid's Ryker Wada, managing attorney of the Consumer Unit and Russ Awakuni, managing attorney of the Waiānae Office, we're interviewed on KITV's Eye on the Economy with regard to the spike in foreclosure scams in Hawaii.



Managing Attorney Ryker Wada

In a case that made national headlines, Legal Aid currently represents the Aurelio family who fell victim to Mortgage Alliance's foreclosure scam. Legal Aid managed to prevent eviction of the family twice and has represented the Aurelios at Circuit Court to reclaim title to their home, alleging deception, misrepresentation, fraud, conspiracy, negligence, unauthorized practice as a mortgage broker and violations of notary public law.

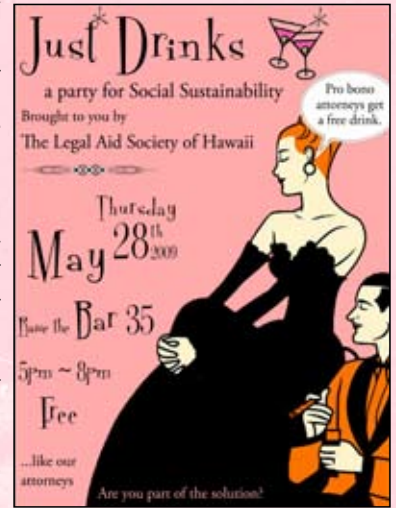
John Dimitrion and his wife, both founders of Mortgage Alliance, pled guilty to fraud and money laundering earlier this year. Before news broke about the scamming practices of the Dimitrions and their company, Mortgage Alliance was ranked fourth among the best small businesses for which to work, by Hawaii Business Magazine. ♦♦♦

Legal Aid Hosts "Just Drinks"

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii hosted its first in a series of socials called "Just Drinks;" aimed at bringing the young, and young-at-heart, legal community together in the name of social sustainability.

This socially conscious networking party was a grand success, attracting dozens of Hawaii's brightest young attorneys with a heart for giving back to the community.

If you missed that last party, don't worry, the next Just Drinks event is planned for Thursday, August 20th 2009 at Bar 35 from 5pm to 8pm. Are you part of the solution? ♦♦♦



The Pro Bono Corner ~ Brown Bags Packs 'Em In

Once again Legal Aid hosted a packed house of attorneys and paralegals interested in learning more about adult guardianships; currently an unacknowledged growing need for the children and caretakers of the aging baby boomer generation.



Visiting Lecturer Scott Suzuki conducting a training on guardianships

As a part of our Partnership in Pro Bono program, we offer monthly training on various topics of law pertaining to our pro bono needs. These trainings serve to expand attorneys' experience and refresh the expertise of those who have focused in other areas of law. Upcoming trainings include:

- Eviction Defense07/14/09
- Divorce08/11/09
- Pwr. Of Attorney/Adv. Health Care Directives ...08/27/09
- Child Support09/15/09
- General Assistance Denials09/24/09



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES & TRAININGS, PLEASE CONTACT:

Clara Javier, Pro Bono Coordinator
at 808-527-8005 or email: cljavie@lashaw.org

Or visit our website: www.legalaidhawaii.org
for an online application and training schedule

Please note:
Training dates subject to change. Confirm your dates.

- Adoptions/Guardianships 10/13/09
- Adult Guardianships 10/29/09
- Paternity 11/10/09
- Eviction Defense..... 11/19/09
- Guardian Ad Litem *12/12/09 at 9am

*Saturday trainings begin at 9am and end at 5pm.

Protecting the Abused

TESTIMONY OF MONICA BREWER OF MAUI

My name is Monica Brewer and I am the foster mother of "Dee Dee" (name withheld). Dee Dee was placed in my home on February 9th 2007. She was malnourished and labeled "a failure to thrive" by her doctor. She also wasn't able to walk due to her malformed legs and feet. She couldn't talk and could only babble. She had head lice and didn't want to be touched. She was a very angry child. At one and a half years old, she wore the clothes of a nine month old baby.

"It is so important that every child in the system have someone to fight for them."

Needless to say, Dee Dee needed a safe place to live, to be taken care of and to be loved. My heart sank when she was placed in my arms. I couldn't imagine a child going through what she went through.

As adults we can take care of ourselves, but as babies, we cannot. That is why it is so important that every child in the system have someone to fight for them. Kristina Toshikiyo of Legal Aid on Maui did just that! She made sure that Dee Dee's needs were met and was there to ensure that her rights were not violated. This is so important for a child who has been through so much. We can't change what has happened to her, but we can make sure it doesn't happen again.

That's what Kristina did. She was at all of Dee Dee's meetings, listened carefully, and made sure that all Dee Dee's needs were met.

Every foster child needs a Guardian Ad Litem like Kristina from Legal Aid! Thank you for helping Dee Dee. She is home where she is loved and she has a bright future thanks to you!

Be a Part of Justice! Be a Part of Change!



You can help us continue our services to Hawaii's people and ensure access to justice for all. Please consider making a donation so that we can maintain our ability to service Hawaii's poor and elderly.

To donate, please fill out the **Pledge Form** as a part of the **LEGAL AID JUSTICE CAMPAIGN** on the back of this Newsletter and mail it back to us with your tax-deductible donation. Mahalo!

To make a secure online donation, visit: www.legalaidhawaii.org

Pro Bono Changes People's Lives

FROM MARY LUCASSE LEGAL AID PRO BONO CASE

Mary Lucasse was a pro bono attorney who handled several cases for Legal Aid, none more rewarding than the following case, which positively changed a young mother's life and the life of her child, forever. Without Mary's contribution to ensuring access to justice for Hawaii's less fortunate, the preventable injustices that her client and the client's child endured for years, would have continued unchecked by the justice system.

Mary's Pro Bono Case (Closed): Silvia was a young immigrant from South America, living in D.C., working at a fast food restaurant, when she met her future husband. "Norm"



was more than 30 years older than Silvia. After they were married, Norm became more and more controlling; taking Silvia's wages from the fast food restaurant. He refused to share information about his finances with Silvia and began isolating her from her family by monitoring emails and phone calls and discouraging visits. After their child was born, Silvia stopped working and her isolation worsened.

When her child was a toddler, Norm took his family to China for over 3 years while he worked for an international corporation. Despite being paid well and receiving an allowance for food and shelter, he saved most of his income for himself, housing his family away from the international community in a rundown walk up apartment where the rent was very cheap. He would leave Silvia there with the small child for days without money or food while he socialized with other women.

Silvia agreed to move because Norm told her this was an opportunity for the family to save enough money to return to D.C. and buy a house. However, when they moved from China, Norm took his family to Hawaii where he rented a cheap Waikiki studio infested with

bedbugs. He continued to belittle Silvia verbally and also physically abused her. Silvia was ashamed and scared to go to the police because she did not know what would happen to her child.

After eight years, Silvia finally gained the strength to reach out for help. She, with the help of a counselor at a domestic violence shelter, realized that getting a divorce from Norm would not be easy. So, she approached Legal Aid to help get a divorce and custody of her child.

"I have been inspired by her common sense, her love for her child, and her willingness to take on challenges."

She provided documents showing that Norm had accumulated assets of over \$721,000 while she was living on food stamps. Silvia had been receiving support from the State of Hawaii. Her aid had been terminated because it appeared that she and her child were "receiving" social security retirement benefits based on Norm's contributions to social security. In fact, Silvia did not receive the funds because Norm received the benefits on their behalf, and despite never receiving funds from social security, Silvia was required to pay back the state.

However, at the hearing, the court ordered Norm to reimburse Silvia for the social security payments he had taken. The court also entered a financial restraining order.

Silvia also received sole legal and physical custody of the minor child with visitations continued at P.A.C.T. She received child support and alimony to support her while she gets her A.A. degree. I have been inspired by her common sense, her love for her child, and her willingness to take on challenges, such as returning to school, in an attempt to secure her future.

Legal Aid applauds Mary Lucasse's noble efforts to strive for justice through our Partnership in Pro Bono Program. (Above artwork by Michelle Bassler) ♦♦♦

Cy Pres Awarded to Legal Aid



Marjorie Bronster and Nalani Fujimori Kaina

On July 9th 2009, the law firm of BRONSTER & HOSHIBATA held a press conference to deliver a Cy Pres Award to the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii in the amount of \$25,000. Legal Aid is grateful to BRONSTER & HOSHIBATA in keeping our need for funding in mind and for their faith in us to provide access to justice for Hawaii's less fortunate.

As generous as gifts like these are, Legal Aid still has a far way to go to maintain its annual budget needed to continue to help Hawaii's poor and elderly. We encourage other justice-minded firms like BRONSTER & HOSHIBATA, for thinking of us when deliberating Cy Pres.

To make a secure online donation
visit: www.legalaidhawaii.org

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF HAWAII

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George J. Zweifel, Esq.
President, Board of Directors

Nalani Fujimori, Esq.
Executive Director

Legal Aid Justice Campaign Pledge Form

Thank you for your support of this important campaign! Your gift will help ensure that the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii will be able to continue to address its mission of achieving fairness and justice for Hawaii's people through quality representation, advocacy, community partnerships, education and outreach. Mahalo nui loa!

Name/Organization _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

E-mail _____

PLEDGE AMOUNT AND METHOD OF PAYMENT

SINGLE DONATION: My firm/I pledge to give the following amount by June 30th, 2009:

\$ _____ . OR

3-YEAR PLEDGE: My firm/I pledge to give the following amount by **June 30 of each year**

for the next 3 years: \$ _____.

I/We would like to make payment of our pledge as follows:

Check enclosed for \$ _____
Please charge \$ _____ to my Visa MasterCard (Check one)

Card holder name: _____

Card Number _____ Exp. date: _____

Authorized Signature _____

Please send me a reminder of my pledge at least 15 days before June 30th, 2009.

If you do not wish Legal Aid to recognize your contributions in its various program publications and in its Annual Report, please check the following box:

If sending a check, please make payable to Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, or LASH. Legal Aid Society of Hawaii is a charitable organization under IRS Section 501(c). All gifts to Legal Aid Society of Hawaii are tax deductible to the full extent provided by the law. Contributions will be used to fund activities permitted by LSC Law & Regulation.



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"There's no better way to thank
God for your sight than by
giving a helping hand to
someone in the dark."
~ Helen Keller

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