

Neglected and abused in every sense of the word; surrounded by violence and drugs until the age of three; seven foster homes in three years; abused in two of those homes. This describes the life of one Hawaiian child...

Alarming Statistics

Since 1999, child abuse cases across the nation **decreased by 8.6%**. That's good news! **Hawaii** on the other hand has seen a **40% increase** in its number of child abuse cases.

A Historical Time for our Nation

On July 15, 2004, over **1,000 people from all 50 states** gathered in Washington DC for a historical event. Through a federal grant initiative, the first annual, "**Answering the Call; Partnering with Communities of Faith Summit**," was held to discuss faith-based organizations' involvement in recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive homes. The statistics are staggering with **530,000 abused** and neglected children across the nation being "**parented**" by **state child welfare agencies**. In Hawaii alone, nearly 13,000 cases of possible abuse are under investigation and well over 3,000 children are living in foster homes and emergency shelters. Nationwide 126,000 are waiting for adoptive homes because their own homes were declared unsafe. **In Hawaii**, approximately 40% of all foster kids may never return home and **currently over 500 children are waiting for permanent homes**.

Three state child welfare social workers from Hawaii were offered federal funds to attend the July summit in Washington DC, but only **one** attended. Thank the Lord for providing for **three** faith-based representatives from Hawaii to attend this summit.

"I was moved to tears", shared DeannaMarie Wallace of HOPE INC, "to be present as history was being made in our nation's capital was such a privilege."

Government Leaders Honoring the Lord

Tommy Thompson, Secretary of the US Health and Human Services, opened his address to the audience by quoting **Matthew 19:13-15**. Susan Orr, PhD, Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau, who oversees 530,000 children in foster care nationwide, publicly thanked God for making the summit possible. **This was the first time in national history that public child welfare workers and faith based organizations met to collaborate on their shared vision from different perspectives**. Rev. Gary Frost, Director of Metro New York Baptist Association closed the summit with a powerful message saying that "*If nothing else, we as Christians can provide a normal family, as a reference point, for abused and neglected children, who might never have experienced one before.*" Both groups discussed efforts needed to bring permanency to the lives of thousands of the "**least of these.**"

Leaders Urge that People of Faith Have a Vital Role

Dave Donaldson, President of We Care America and author of *A Revolution of Compassion*, urged listeners to **follow God** and **help find forever homes** for our youth by 'tearing down the wall' that stands between the public child welfare systems and churches. Bob Woodson, President of National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, spoke about the **vital role that people of faith have in meeting the needs of children in foster care**. He said, "*Our true worth as a society is measured by the way we treat our weakest members.*" He urged, "Look for new solutions to this old problem. **If you keep doing what you are doing you keep getting what you've got!**"

Father George Clements, a Catholic priest and founder of the *One Church One Child Adoption Recruitment Program*, has adopted four teen-age boys himself. He posed the question to the audience in his keynote address, "*How can we worship a homeless man on Sunday and ignore the homeless on Monday?*"

Roles of Church and Government in History

Until 1930, Americans of faith cared for the widows and orphans as outlined in **James 1:27**. As a response to the depression, the New Deal was created to provide government assistance to those in need. This paved the way for the church to be replaced by government as the center of gravity for social assistance. The help was intended to be temporary, but unfortunately most churches relinquished their responsibility and the government slowly developed an ineffective foster care system. **As a whole, our entire nation recognizes that the current state foster care systems are broken.**

Another Compelling Statistic

Do you know that nearly 80% of people in prisons have been in foster care at some time during their childhood? Bob Woodson urged that we stop “*incubating tomorrow criminals in our broken system*”.

Government IS Looking to People of Faith

Our government is asking people of faith to **come to the table** and help find loving, compassionate, stable families to care for the “least of these.” At the DC summit, faith-based child welfare representatives gathered from every state. Many of these states have numerous Christian ministries helping families provide temporary foster homes and permanent adoptive homes.

Faith-based Organizations from Hawaii at the DC Summit

How many faith-based organizations represented Hawaii’s programs for abused and neglected children?

“ONE” **Praise God, Hawaii has one!** HOPE INC (In the Name of Christ) founded by Randy and DeeannaMarie Wallace, is an inter-denominational Christian non-profit social service ministry for at-risk children and their families, as well as single-mothers and their children.

HOPE INC is a grass roots ministry that is run by volunteers. As Jesus was moved with compassion for the multitudes in Matthew 9:36, HOPE INC takes action to assist at-risk families and single parents in hopes of preventing the involvement of the state child welfare in their lives. If children must be separated from their birth family, whether it is temporary or permanent, HOPE INC will provide foster and adoptive homes as necessary. Will your church family join these efforts to make a difference in our community?

How can Hawaii’s People of Faith Help?

Perhaps there are individuals or families in your church who the Lord has touched and spoken to their hearts to minister and care for these children and families in need. Please consider calling HOPE INC to come and share its services with your church. If you currently know of anyone who would like to become involved, please have them contact HOPE INC.

Another Way the Local Church Can Help

Please include the children of Hawaii as a part of your church’s home mission outreach. Commit to prayer for these thousands of children and their families, and join with HOPE INC to make the motto, “Every Church Every Child” a reality in Hawaii!

“Every Church Every Child:” Every church is called to care for “the least of these.” Every child deserves to be cared for and loved “forever.” IF churches come together by collaborating and joining hands with determination, **a difference can be made in the lives of thousands of foster children in need of healing and safe, loving homes.** Every foster child unable to return to their biological family, can be adopted by a stable, secure and loving “forever family”. We are called to participate in a “Revolution of Compassion.” It is occurring within the government, in church basements, in synagogues, in corporate offices and in people’s hearts. **Will you answer this call?**

Please contact HOPE INC at HOPEINC12@aol.com or call 808-230-CHILD (2445)