

GOOD BEGINNINGS

www.goodbeginnings.org

2011 Annual Report

Hope Fuels Our Vision, Confidence Drives Our Success

We believe that every child deserves a good beginning, and, over the years, we have witnessed both challenges and successes to achieving this vision. Currently in Hawai'i, we are facing many challenges, some that seem insurmountable—a struggling economy, increase in homelessness, prevalent drug abuse—issues that affect our children and impact their chances for success in school and in life.

The recently released *2011 Hawai'i State School Readiness Assessment (HSSRA)* reflected some of these challenges. More than half of the state's kindergarten students come from low-income families and qualify for free or reduced lunches, preschool attendance has decreased, fewer children are prepared for school, and less than a 10th of our kindergarten classes meet benchmarks in all dimensions. The problem is clear yet the solution has become clouded by a lost sense of purpose.

In order to lead the charge we must have hope – even in the face of terrible odds—to build the road towards a future that wholly addresses the needs of our children. If we lack the hope of bringing the change we want

for families, we will never arrive at our destination. If we lack a detailed vision of what we want to achieve, we will not get there either. If we give up, it means that we are not working hard enough to find a solution. And if hope is lost, then the work lacks the passion that fuels us.

This passion must be conveyed to our communities because they are the driving force of this change. The people of Hawai'i can make a difference and our collective voice will be heard. We have started this journey, and the *Be My Voice! Hawai'i* campaign is poised to be a loud and strong force in building public support for issues that will no longer be overlooked by our policymakers. It is our confidence in the people of Hawai'i, the importance of preparing our children for kindergarten, and the knowledge that the investment will pay off exponentially that drives our passion.

We believe that building public awareness, reviewing and recommending public policy, building the capacity of communities and supporting professional development are the key actions that will mobilize our efforts to build statewide partnerships and ensure our children are safe, healthy and ready to succeed. A vision we not just hope to see, but rather one that we are confident we will see.

Elisabeth Chun


Executive Director



Critical Needs in Early Childhood Education and Services

We have many challenges facing our youngest keiki; we are seeing a steady decrease in the number of children who have access to preschool, a shortage of qualified professionals, and a lack of resources for early education staff. This dangerous combination of gaps in resources and support is resulting in a large percentage of children entering kindergarten unprepared.

In 2011, only 23.8 percent of kindergarten classes had most of their students consistently displaying literacy skills, such as knowing the sounds of at least four letters, at the start of the school year. Additionally, only 40 percent of kindergarten classes had most of their students consistently displaying necessary school behaviors, such as the ability to follow classroom routines. These data points paint an alarming picture, and beyond statewide challenges, each island has its own unique set of issues.

Hawai'i

Many infants have been exposed to drugs or alcohol during gestation putting them at risk for developmental delays. Transportation to early childhood programs or medical providers is also an issue because of the rural isolation of communities. Finally, access to professional development degrees is limited, though distance learning programs for early childhood education degrees have become a popular and viable option.

Kaua'i

Kaua'i currently has 32 center-based programs, of which only three are accredited preschools, and an additional 47 licensed Family Child Care (FCC) homes. In an already strained system, preschool and childcare programs are finding themselves understaffed, overpopulated, and without resources. The lack of qualified staff, and a drop in opportunities for current staff to receive extra support, has put a strain on capacity. Consequently, most of the early learning centers have dozens of children on waiting lists. Additionally, limited subsidies and transportation make it hard for families to afford or access the programs.

Maui

One of the main challenges Maui is facing is a shortage of programs offering infant-toddler (IT) care. Currently, seven centers offer care for infants and toddlers between the ages of six weeks and two years, and another two provide care starting at 12 months. There is a shortage of qualified staff for IT programs, with an increased need to provide subsidies for priority families that need infant care. Preschools are seeing shortages in availability of developmental screenings and intervention services, lack of accessible transportation, and shortage of qualified staff.

O'ahu

O'ahu's early education programs and childcare centers have seen a decrease in enrollment over the past year. Most likely, a major reason for this decrease is the economic challenges facing families and the cutbacks in Department of Human Services childcare subsidies for low-income families. When more families are able to afford the cost of childcare and preschool, the center-based programs will hire additional staff needed to accommodate the increased demand and surge their programs closer to their licensed capacities.

Recommendations

The subsidy guidelines for low-income families must be reviewed, and we must dedicate a percentage of state funding to ensure these families have the support they need. Without adequate subsidies, families miss out on opportunities for early learning, and preschools are impacted by a decrease in enrollment. Additionally, we must promote funding opportunities for facility renovations and infrastructure upgrades. These improvements will help maintain smoother operations and lower overhead costs, passing on savings to families. The shortage of infant-toddler programs must be addressed, and we urge a dedicated percentage of state funding to expand availability and affordability.

In order to sustain and improve the level of quality teachers and instructors, we must increase access to higher degree and professional development programs. One solution could be a decentralized community-based hub, where professionals can learn and share with one another. Also, access to online learning opportunities will help support teachers seeking to improve their knowledge and performance, especially in rural communities.

GBA 2011 MILESTONES

Jan

Hosted presentation by Dr. Matthew Melmed, President of "Zero to Three"

Feb

Supported release of the Early Learning Council Framework

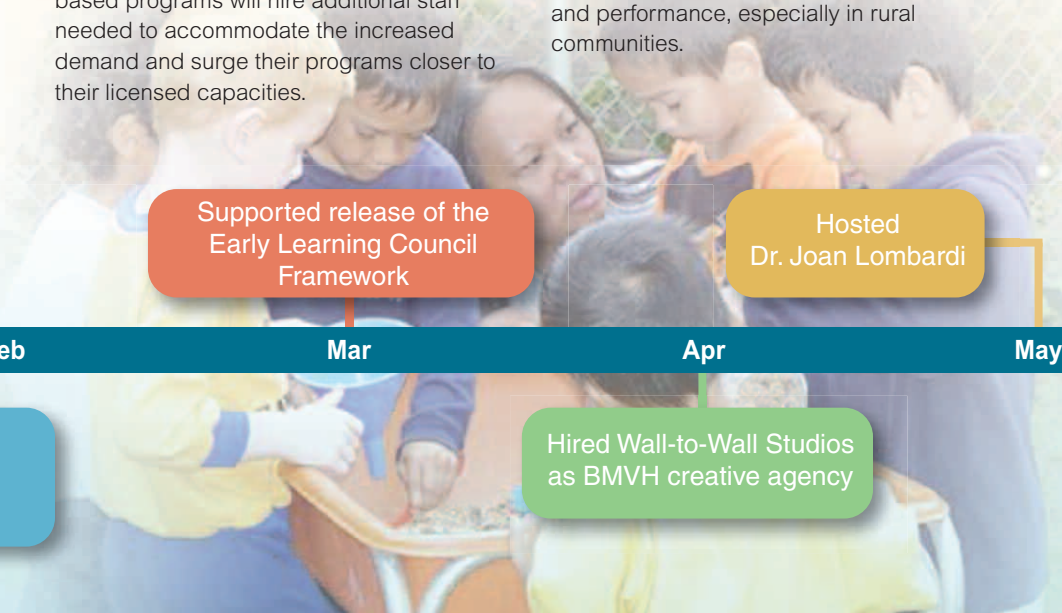
Mar

Apr

Hired Wall-to-Wall Studios as BMVH creative agency

Hosted Dr. Joan Lombardi

May



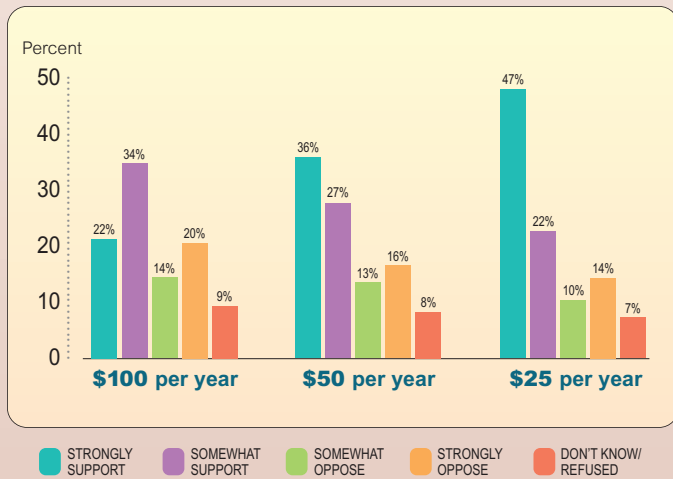
Does the public value early childhood education and services?

The answer is “Yes!”

In preparation for the *Be My Voice! Hawai'i (BMVH)* public will-building campaign, Good Beginnings Alliance hired Ward Research to conduct a statewide telephone poll and measure levels of registered voter support or opposition to a dedicated funding stream that would support early childhood education and family strengthening services.

The results showed that greater proportions of respondents would “strongly support” a proposal that would increase taxes to fund early childhood services than would “strongly oppose it.” After hearing the arguments for and against creating a fund to provide children’s services through a tax increase, the proportions of respondents who said they would “strongly support” the proposal were greater than at the beginning of the survey. Additionally, education was mentioned by one-third (32%) of all respondents as one of the top three issues facing our state.

Support for Funding for Services to Benefit Children

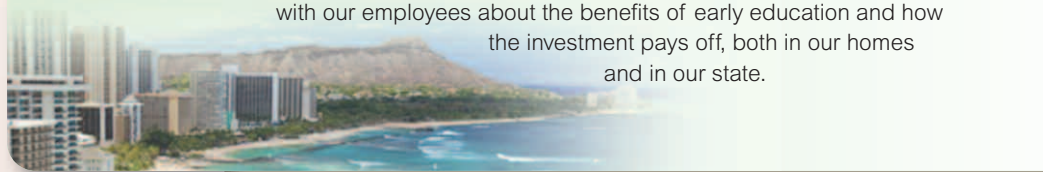


Keys to Success

By Keith Vieira, Senior Vice President and Director of Operations, Starwood Hotels & Resorts in Hawai'i and French Polynesia

As a businessman, I have witnessed failure and success, an experience that has made me evaluate the elements that build a strong educational foundation leading to a skilled workforce and a thriving economy. The key to success starts early with our youngest keiki, from the time they are born through their first year in kindergarten. This key unlocks a child’s potential, but we must arm our children with a full set accessing quality early learning programs, providing developmental screening, and opening the door to services that strengthen families. Preparing our children with the emotional and developmental skills they need in school is crucial to their future success, and if they aren’t prepared on that first day of kindergarten they are already behind.

Many educational institutions have done studies analyzing the return on investing in our youngest keiki and their conclusion: investing in children between the ages of birth and five makes dollars and sense. This investment reduces unnecessary spending in remedial services, and supports higher education learning which in turn builds a stronger economy. It’s clear to me that an investment in quality early education programs needs to be made, and our workforce in Hawai'i would greatly benefit by learning more about these issues. I am committed to being a part of the solution and talking with our employees about the benefits of early education and how the investment pays off, both in our homes and in our state.



BMVH Scouts New Partnership

The Girl Scouts’ longstanding tradition of making a difference in communities by serving as a voice for young girls parallels many of the values of the *Be My Voice! Hawai'i* campaign. We also strive to give keiki a voice so that their best interests can be represented, and so a natural partnership has developed between the campaign and the organization. The campaign strives to build public awareness and support for the health, safety and education of our youngest children, especially those in the most vulnerable communities. These goals align with the priorities of the Girl Scouts, including advocating for healthy living, emotional and physical safety, and giving a voice to girls in underserved communities. Chief Executive Officer of the Girl Scouts of Hawai'i Gail Mukaihata Hannemann (who also serves on the BMVH Leadership Council) is overseeing the collaboration, and we will be working together with troop leaders to inspire supporters while encouraging the Girl Scouts to become leaders of their generation.



Hawai'i Business Roundtable collaboration and BMVH event

Jun

Announced receipt of W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation grants for BMVH Campaign

Supported Children’s Oral Health Summit

Jul

Formation of the BMVH Leadership Council

Aug

Conducted BMVH Focus Groups

Sept

Mobilizing Efforts to Improve Outcomes

As an organization, GBA focuses on four areas of action in order to improve outcomes for our keiki. These areas include advocacy and building public awareness, recommending public policy, building community capacity and supporting professional development. Over the past year, we have worked hard in each of these areas to mobilize efforts for Hawai'i's young children and strengthen community and statewide partnerships.

As part of our advocacy efforts, GBA develops messages and documents to make a compelling case for young children. **The 2011 Fact Sheet: Children, Families and Early Childhood Education in Hawai'i** (www.goodbeginnings.org/images/uploads/GBA_Fact_Sheet_July_2011.pdf) will enable early childhood (EC) supporters to use critical information to support their advocacy and public engagement. GBA also worked closely with the Department of Education (DOE) on the **2011 Hawai'i State School Readiness Assessment (HSSRA) Report** that assesses kindergarten (K) students' readiness for elementary schools. Statewide, complex-area, and individual school results can be found at <http://arch.k12.hi.us/school/hssra/hssra.html>.

GBA continues to upgrade our website (www.goodbeginnings.org) and use it as an effective tool of communication.

Additionally, e-communication strategies improved and expanded GBA's policy and advocacy work through the *Keiki Focus* "eBlasts" (up-to-date early childhood alerts), *Connections* (monthly resource directory), *Connections Updates* (weekly updates to resource directory), and *BeMyVoice! Hawai'i* (host site for grassroots advocacy).

To increase funders' awareness as to the needs of Hawai'i's children, GBA facilitated a presentation by Dr. Matthew Melmed, President of Zero to Three, to the Keiki Funders Network. Melmed discussed the critical importance of including our very youngest children in both public and private

funding initiatives. He presented valuable materials for our consideration and created a relationship for future support from his organization to Hawai'i's work.

GBA supported the **Early Learning Council Framework for a Comprehensive Early Childhood System** release to the Legislature and the broader community. This collaboration included donating staff and consultant time to help develop the message, creating posters, securing and facilitating media, distributing information to legislators and the broader community, as well as assisting to welcome guests the morning of the event.

To continue informing the community, GBA hosted two meetings in May with Dr. Joan Lombardi, then Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development for the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Lombardi discussed what is happening at the national level regarding early childhood and how Hawai'i can move forward for our young children. Her insights proved to be very valuable when DHHS subsequently announced its application for the Race-to-the-Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant.

GBA supports opportunities at the state, county, and local communities to create more effective systems of care and support for Hawai'i's young children, and our County Coordinators have established strong networks with early childhood advocates and professionals in their counties. In order to address a lack of professional development opportunities, GBA provides scholarships to early childhood practitioners in pursuit of their Associate's or Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood. GBA is also the fiscal agent for Hawai'i Careers with Young Children, funding to facilitate development of Hawai'i's professional development system.

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Who is GBA?

GBA is a 501 (c) (3) organization that is a leading independent voice for a comprehensive quality early childhood system. GBA advocates for the rights of the whole child—safety, health, and education—so that all of Hawai'i's young children will have the opportunity to grow into thriving, successful adults.



Transforming the Lives of Hawai'i's Young Children

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