

Children and Youth Summit
October 20, 2006

The Summit is held every year in October which is designated in Hawaii as Children and Youth Month. Hawaii is the only State to have done such a designation. The Summit is organized by the Keiki Caucus and sponsored by numerous public and private departments and organizations, for profit and non-profit. Different themes are taken each year. This year's theme is:

Many Voices, One Dream...., Building a Healthy Sustainable Future for Hawaii

School-aged children are the chief participants in the Summit. They were present in substantial numbers from middle and high schools on Oahu and also from the Neighbor Islands. At the beginning of the session, students performed hip-hop dances of extreme intensity. At the end of the day there was a drama presentation by the students. There were three formal presentations.

Keiki Caucus Accomplishments - Sen. Chun-Oakland, Sen. Kanno and Rep. Arakaki

The Keiki Caucus was organized in 1991 by Sen. Chun Oakland, Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee and Rep. Arakaki, Chair of the House Health Committee. The goals of the Caucus are:

- Give voice to those who have none.
- Elevate children and youth issues to the top of the legislative agenda.
- Allow advocates to develop priorities and coordinate efforts.

Accomplishments are listed under the following categories:

- Economy and Employment
- Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Health and Human Services
- Housing
- Safety
- Substance and Alcohol Abuse

Some of the accomplishments mentioned under Health and Human Services are:

- Provided funding for the uninsured at Community Health Centers
- Provide funding for Early Intervention programs
- Provided funding for respite for families caring for children with developmental disabilities
- Established and funded the CARE program for evaluation of children suspected of sustaining child abuse or neglect.

These are accomplishments in the area of Safety:

- Legislation to establish graduated student driver's licensing
- Allowed permanent funding for the Poison Center
- Legislation to mandate the use of booster seats for young children

The Keiki Caucus will prioritize the issues for the 2007 Session. Key supporters and opponents will be identified. Funding issues will be identified and lobbying strategies developed. The key to Keiki Caucus success has been multiple stake-holders working

together to further the legislation. The work starts in June and runs through the year to the end of the Session in May. Often it takes up to five years or longer to get a specific law passed.

2050 Sustainability Presentation

In the 1970's Hawaii undertook a statewide planning process to define what we would like our State to be like in the year 2000. It looked at all aspects of our lives including our health and the health care delivery system. Many of the goals accomplished in 2000 were based on planning started in the 1970's.

Now the State is undertaking a similar process aimed at defining our situation in the year 2050, 44 years from now. It is particularly appropriate for today's children to have input into this process since they are the ones who will be living it out.

There is a State agency responsible for developing the plan. They are asking three questions. Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How do we get there? The State should become sustainable in the cultural, environmental and economic areas. We need to imagine what we want Hawaii to be like in 2050. The planning process will be broad and deep going down to the grassroots.

The State agency has prepared a power point presentation which reviews a large number of aspects of life in Hawaii today using pictures with very little language. We saw this presentation.

The Role of Culture as a Support for the Environment and the Economy

Ramsay Taum, the presenter of this subject, is Director of Oahu Operations for the Hawaii Nature Center in Makiki valley, Honolulu. The Nature Center provides nature educational opportunities for 25,000 children every year through its statewide facilities. Ramsay Taum talked about developing a sustainable society with the culture underpinning the environment and the economy. He believes what we do with our environment and our economy depends on our cultural perspective. He suggests that the Hawaiian traditional culture has the elements in it to lead us to a sustainable future. He demonstrated this by use of the Hawaiian language. The examples were too numerous for me to record but the presentation was very impressive. It put us in the right frame of mind for the afternoon's work.

The Afternoon

In the afternoon we broke into 4 groups. Each group was given an imaginary scenario describing the situation in Hawaii in the year 2050. One scenario describes complete self-sufficiency which has lead to an idyllic state, the envy of the rest of the world. Trade is by barter. Education is informal, interactive and out of doors. Local values and skills for living in an island environment are taught.

The groups recorded their perceived pros and cons for each scenario. These recordings will be analyzed and discussed at a future follow-up meeting in November. At that time issues requiring legislative action will be identified.