



GENERAL

A journey of hope for homeless children reminds us all that our past need not define our future

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BY IHS DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS KIMO CARVALHO--This summer, IHS teamed up with several partners, including **Southwest Airlines, Enterprise Holdings, Disney Aulani, aio Foundation**, and many other generous friends to provide a group of homeless and newly housed children with a truly life changing experience. The goal was to transform these children's view of their future and awaken them to possibilities if they are willing to work toward their dreams.

The trip included visits to Discovery Cube, Disneyland, California Adventure Park, Universal Studios, Griffith Observatory, The Broad Art Museum, and a profoundly inspiring visit to the University of Southern California. Every destination offered powerful learning experiences.

I think this week-long trip to California could become a model for IHS and other organizations. We can end the cycle of homelessness for families by addressing the issue of generational poverty and its effect upon children. The idea for this trip began, like many of our programs have, from reflection upon the personal experiences of members of our own IHS staff. In this case, those experiences were my own.

I had a dream when I was young to become a basketball player. I was a poor kid from Keeau. My biological mother loved me but suffered from meth addiction. My biological father was abusive and violent. I wanted to play basketball so badly that one day I asked my father how I could reach my goal. I was told that I couldn't.

I was told: **"People like us don't get there, manage your expectations because you're not good enough for that."** In his view, the most our family could ever expect was to continue to live in poverty, barely pay bills and sell drugs for extra cash.

Like many troubled kids in dysfunctional families, **I rebelled against my circumstances negatively.** I started stealing. I didn't own good clothes like other kids in school. I was the poor kid who was picked on. I stole a sweater and I got caught.

That event changed my life.

A juvenile court assigned me to perform community service and was subsequently introduced to a social service worker from Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center. He opened my mind to options and opportunities that I could pursue. I took these ideas to heart. **I began to believe that it was possible to achieve something more for myself. I even allowed myself to dream again of who I could become.** After leaving my biological father's home, I turned my grades around and was able to attend college. After graduation, I pursued a career path that has ultimately led me to IHS, where I now have the opportunity to help children and families escape the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

Make an investment in Hawaii's keiki



We see so many bright and talented kids come through the doors of IHS. These are keiki who work hard to get good grades. They possess good values and are helpful with their siblings, parents and peers. Despite their circumstances, they are so loving and kind. **Many still believe that they will never make it to college and that they will never be capable of reaching higher than their current circumstances.**

This trip to California was about far more than fun and Disneyland. **The goal was to inject hope into the consciousness of these homeless children.** I learned that Jordan Iosefa (56), Inside/Outside Linebacker for University of Southern California, once passed through Honolulu's emergency homeless shelter system. Life gave him chances. He graduated from St. Louis School on a scholarship and is now a star college football player. USC faculty, staff and administrators from Hawaii came together during this California trip to

coordinate a visit for the kids to support and encourage them to believe that it is possible to pursue their dreams. Touring the college and playing on the field with the Hawaii athletes was transformational. The kids heard from the assistant athletics director that he wants to see them win. **All these magical moments inspired each child to pause, think and dream.**

Since the trip to California, these kids have been doing a lot of thinking and dreaming. **We need to nurture these dreams.** I am deeply grateful to those people in my life who inspired confidence in me and helped me to rise above my childhood. I am honored to have the opportunity through my work with IHS to be a part of providing that type of encouragement and support to other children facing challenges.

Mahalo for continuing to support the work that we do. You can support our family programs today to ensure that kids get the support, resources, care, guidance and skills to overcome their circumstances. [Make your most generous gift here.](#)



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