



GENERAL

Summer Newsletter 2019: Keiki Dream Big

2019-08-20

Do you remember the dreams that you had as a child? No matter what youthful ambitions you held, whether you wanted to be an astronaut, veterinarian, business owner or a movie star, the common thread of every childhood dream is a desire to succeed.

For homeless children, dreams and ambitions can be extremely hard to come by. It's **hard to see a future beyond the immediate struggles their family's face**; to believe that life can be different. With no control over their current circumstances, it is even more difficult for them to believe that they could personally have the ability to make a better future happen.

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 own future and awaken them to the possibilities that exist if they are willing to work toward their dreams.

Arriving at the airport, the kids were restless with anticipation. **Most had never been on an airplane before.** Reaching their destination in the evening, IHS staff transported everyone to the location that would be their home during a week-long adventure in California.

One of the most exciting aspects of this trip for the kids was the beautiful, spacious house they got to stay in. With comfortable beds, nice furnishings, and plenty of room to play hide and seek, **the kids came to treat the house as if it was their own home,** and all worked together to care for it with enthusiasm. They made their beds each morning, washed dishes, set the table, and greatly enjoyed assisting IHS staff in the kitchen preparing meals. Those routines of the household that we might tend to see as tedious became something truly special for these kids. Daily chores were a thing to look forward to, for what they represented; living in a home and working together as a family to care for it, and for one another.

Make an investment in Hawaii's keiki



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.** Each child received a small amount of personal spending money from a sponsor. It enabled them to purchase lunches, snacks and souvenirs. With cash in hand, a first for most of the kids, it taught them valuable lessons in money management. Each child was coached in planning and budgeting; adding daily expenditures and figuring out how much money they had left, assisting them to determine their spending priorities to make their money last the duration of the trip.

Despite the excitement of the opportunity to make purchases on their own, the kids were quite cautious in their spending choices, reviewing their priorities and contemplating purchases. But child or adult, most of us could probably agree with the kids first purchase choice – ice cream!

IHS staff also had the opportunity to learn a great deal from this adventure. This chance to spend extensive time and individualized interaction with the kids provided our Family Program staff with valuable insights into the many things these kids need to continue to overcome obstacles and thrive. By learning more about the emotional and psychological challenges they face, and the intervention required to support both children and parents, IHS can continue to improve our services to best meet the needs of the families we serve.

Our goal in working with homeless families is not just getting them into housing, it's preventing them from ever becoming homeless again.

IHS is grateful to have been provided with this incredible opportunity to not only inspire our children to dream big; to think differently about what is possible in their lives, but to also learn ourselves how we can

continue to best serve any family facing a housing crisis. By offering the support and skills our keiki and their parents need to become stable and successful, we can end family homelessness in Hawaii.

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