



Susie News

Spring 2011

The Official Newsletter of the Susannah Wesley Community Center

SPECIAL VISITORS TO "SUSIE"



Senator & Mrs. Inouye with members of a Filipino dance group

In February, Senator Daniel Inouye and his wife Irene Hirano Inouye made time in a very packed schedule to stop by SWCC for a tour of the facility. Senator Inouye has been a long time supporter of the mission of SWCC. In fact, our Youth Recreation Room was named in honor of his mother Kame Imanaga Inouye who was actually a "Susie Girl" for a brief time when the Center was a home for girls at the turn of the century. At the end of their visit, the Senator and his wife made a generous donation of \$5,000 in memory of Kame Imanaga Inouye to support the SWCC programs and services. Their personal gift was matched by the Kresge Foundation and Ford Foundation through their respective Trustee/Employee Matching Gift Program. Mrs. Inouye is a Trustee on both foundation boards. As such, the matching gifts to SWCC from the foundations will total \$30,000. We are truly honored and deeply grateful for these special gifts.

Mahalo nui loa, Senator and Mrs. Inouye, for your sustaining leadership and commitment to the Susannah Wesley Community Center.



Senator & Mrs. Inouye with SWCC board members Adele Lum and Lorrin Hirano

ESL CELEBRATION

Last December SWCC hosted a celebration for over 30 Chuukese students enrolled in our English as a Second Language (ESL) class in recognition of their hard work and commitment to learning a new language and culture. The students ranged in age from 22 to 62 years, some were young mothers, others grandmothers. All were dedicated students who very rarely missed a class. Several SWCC board members came out to lend their support and Lorrin Hirano, Board President, handed out certificates of accomplishment to the students. Afterwards everyone enjoyed a feast comprised of ono Chuukese food. The following is an excerpt from the speech given by one of the students, Ms. Wackina Alphios, on behalf of her classmates. (She is seated in the wheelchair in the photo.)



Ran Annim ami meinisin. That means Aloha to you all. So I'll say it again the Hawaiian way - Alooooooha!

It is indeed an honor for me to have this privilege to say something on behalf of my fellow classmates. I wish there is no language barrier so I can speak in Chuukese, but for the benefit of all I speak in my second language.

I would like to first of all express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Susannah Wesley Community Center, the staff and honorable board members for the ESL Program offered here. The program has really benefited us in many ways that I can't express enough in words.

This program has been very accommodating to us. When most of the other ESL programs in the community have a limited time for registration, "Susie" has room to accommodate us when we turn to her. We feel a warm welcome at the Center everyday with the smiling faces of the staff and feel very much at home. A home is what we all need and "Susie" is home away from home for us the ESL class.

We have gained knowledge and understanding of the English language through the material taught to us. This is evident in the many certificates that will be given out today. It's hard to believe we have gained this much but we have gained. For these and more other good things that "Susie" has done I would like to say, "Fakkun Kinisou Chapur" and a "very very much Mahalo."

ESL class is one of the many services we need as new immigrants. And again we thank "Susie" for providing that. There are other needs that we as immigrants face and struggle with every day here in our new home such as health insurance, housing, employment and others. I hope and I wish that there may be something that "Susie" would consider helping us with in the future. Thank you very much.

Now I would like to invite my classmates to come and join me to sing a song. Our song is called "Kinisou Chapur Pwan Kinisou Chok, Ren Ei Oukukun Chen Ka Ngeniei." This means "Thank you, thank you so much for the caring and love you have given me."

The following is an excerpt from an article on Human Trafficking published in the *UMW News*, print and online editions, written by Catherine Heggarty, UMWOnline Community Manager and Web Content Help Source for United Methodist Women. SWCC staff Sonya Chung-Hirano and Dominic Inocelda also contributed to the article. To read the complete text, go to <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umw/news/articles/item/index.cfm?id=356>.

SUSANNAH WESLEY COMMUNITY CENTER PLAYS KEY ROLE IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE

You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

—Exodus 22:21

January 7, 2011 - The biggest human trafficking case in U.S. history is currently in federal court in Honolulu, Hawaii. A United Methodist Women-affiliated mission, the Susannah Wesley Community Center played a major role in helping the victims find legal support and the center continues services with ongoing aid.

The U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 estimates that 12.3 million people are trafficked around the world. Human trafficking generates more than \$32 billion worldwide each year, making it second only to the drug trade. "Human trafficking" is used as an umbrella term for activities involved when one person obtains or holds another person in compelled service. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 describes this with a number of different terms: involuntary servitude, slavery, debt bondage and forced labor. Human trafficking is more than sex trafficking. For every victim of sex trafficking worldwide there are nine forced labor and/or domestic servitude cases. In 2009, Hawaii had approximately 10 percent of all human trafficking cases certified by the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the United States, mostly as seasonal farm workers.

In September 2010 a federal grand jury in Honolulu indicted Los Angeles-based contractor Global Horizons Manpower, an employment agency, on human trafficking charges. Approximately 100 Thai nationals were hired to work on Hawaii farms as well as in the mainland United States. Migrating workers entered the U.S. legally with temporary work visas, paying fees as high as \$21,000. Many of them mortgaged homes and land that had been in their possession for generations. The promised salaries far exceeded what they could hope to make in Thailand. The salaries would allow quick repayment of their loans and would change their lives dramatically for the better. In reality, the promised wages were just bait, and many workers were paid far below the contract expectations. The men were sometimes housed in shipping containers that were crowded and lacking toilets, electricity or running water, and with no support network they couldn't easily ask for help. When they arrived to work on Hawaiian farms, the workers were stripped of their visas and passports and threatened with deportation.

One of the Honolulu lawyers representing the more than 60 forced laborers in this federal case says that identifying and labeling human trafficking isn't easy. This recognition and naming by the Susannah Wesley Community Center were the first steps toward aid for the workers. The center employee who interviewed the men had experience with female sex trafficking victims and found similarities in the farm workers' case. SWCC wasn't the first place the men went for help; they first approached the U.S. Department of Labor as well as Immigration and Customs Enforcement, where several victims were deported while filing reports. It took this independent, nonprofit community center to take them seriously and recognize their situation as human trafficking. The center began legal action and facilitated much of what happened between lawyers, the FBI and victims. The center was instrumental in helping two potential trafficking victims share their stories with attorneys and an FBI agent in a neutral setting. SWCC Executive Director Ronald Higashi stated, "It is important to emphasize that these workers were in the United States legally. They were victimized here, in our country, on our watch. We need to help as much as we can."

The center is especially positioned to help persecuted migrant workers because of their multilingual capacity, providing bilingual case management services for adults through their Bilingual Care Coordination & Support Services Program. This enabled the center to contract with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2007 to provide case management services for victims of human trafficking.

Now categorized by the government as victims of human trafficking, many of the Thai workers have been issued temporary visas that can lead to permanent resident status. This allows the men to bring their families to the United States and seek safe, legal employment. However, as many await the arrival of their families, expenses have become an immense burden. The cost of living in Hawaii is high, with the lowest price for a gallon of milk being \$4.99. One of the men will become a single parent as his wife chose to send two children unaccompanied. Each family faces not only the difficulty of reuniting after years apart but vast cultural differences to adjust to in the United States, which proves especially difficult for many of the women. One farm charged with enacting forced labor, Aloun Farms, pleaded guilty to 44 counts of human trafficking and agreed to pay each victim \$8,000 (for starters) but at sentencing withdrew their guilty pleas and demanded a jury trial. The case is still in court, and workers are still awaiting payment.

After news broke of their role in this case, the center received countless trafficking stories and help requests. Though the center currently does not have the resources to help everyone, correspondence was filed and a directory of names was created. Attorneys can now cross-reference names and letters can be retrieved as evidence. This work crossed state lines and went through many agencies working in tandem. Many of the men now live in other states, and the center continues to act as a clearinghouse for information and mail forwarding. It also coordinates with agencies in other states to track the whereabouts and stories of these witnesses to stay proactive with prosecution of these modern-day slaveholders. The UMW Mission Giving supports National Mission Institutions like the Susannah Wesley Community Center. The project number to support this important work by SWCC is **3019239**. Donations can be made securely online at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/programs/NMI.

SWCC HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROJECT *By Michael Dickson, SWCC Case Worker*

In April 2009 Dominic Inocelda, Clinical Administrator at SWCC, asked if I would be interested in serving as an interpreter for Thai clients who had been designated as victims of human trafficking. I agreed knowing little at the time what this job would require. I said that I would enjoy interpreting, putting my Thai language skill to use, but that I didn't want to be a case worker. Two years and twenty clients later, I have learned a lot about accessing and delivering services to this population and, in the process, have become that case worker I thought I didn't want to be, encountering situations I couldn't have imagined.

SWCC has been able to serve victims of human trafficking through a grant from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which in turn receives funding for their human trafficking program from the federal government. It has become clear, however, that the two (formerly four) months funding period to provide victims with transitional services is not nearly enough time to help them integrate into the local culture. A more reasonable time frame is about one year. This is what typically happens to a newly arrived or newly certified victim of human trafficking.

First, the documents necessary for the employment authorization card must be completed and returned to the client's lawyer. If there is a request to waive the fee for this process, or if there is a discrepancy in the spelling of the client's name, additional time and documents are required. The spelling of Thai names in English is somewhat arbitrary and is often a problem. Once the employment authorization is granted, the client may apply for a social security card. In some cases it has taken many months for a client to receive his/her social security card, requiring multiple visits to the social security office. With a social security card and employment authorization, the client may then apply for a State of Hawaii ID card, another lengthy process. Some clients are able to get a driver's license. Many clients are paid as self-employed laborers and are required to pay excise tax on their earnings as well as state and federal income taxes. Most of us who have prepared our own taxes know how intimidating this can be. Imagine having to do this if you could not speak or read English.

Clients are also eligible for financial, general and medical assistance. Because this category of client is new for state agencies, obtaining these benefits has often been a lengthy process. Most agencies have been very kind and helpful once they understood that the client is qualified. However, even clients with emergency medical conditions have had to wait many months for their applications to be approved. Children of clients have needed to meet the physical health requirements to register for school, often being eligible to receive low or no cost meals and transportation. After less than a year in public school, the kids are beginning to be able to converse in English and, hopefully, are on their way to a better future. As clients get close to the end of their visas a new task faces them and us. Most will apply for permanent residency ("green cards") and another round of obtaining legal documents begins, with me as the go-between for the clients and their lawyer.

Once we have accepted a human trafficking victim as a client at SWCC, it is nearly impossible to cut them off from help just because the two months transitional funding period by the USCCB has ended. Unfortunately, although several agencies work in this field, there is almost no service network to pick up the uncompleted tasks, including interpretation. It's almost a year since the last family members arrived and most of the above tasks are just beginning to reach completion. Phone calls from clients are less frequent as they are becoming more self-reliant. But many issues remain to be dealt with. Besides our former clients, new applications for "derivative family visas" are being processed, some children are applying for additional educational opportunities and others are waiting for approval of Medicaid and other services.

It has been rewarding to be able to help people and to learn to navigate some very complicated social and administrative situations. But if clients are not to be cut off at two months, additional awareness and support from the community will be crucial.

OUR UMC TIES: Aloha Visitors!

In the last few months, we have been blessed to have several UMC members visit "Susie" while in Hawaii and learn more about our mission. Terry and Jackie Euper from Michigan stopped by in February (left photo); also in February, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson and members of the conference mission cabinet visited during a break in their meetings (middle photo); and Mary Smalley from Minnesota and her daughter Julie Heimkes from Arizona made a special trip to our Center during their stay here in March (right photo).



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1117 Kaili Street, Honolulu, HI 96819 ♦ (808) 847-1535 ♦ www.susannahwesley.org



VALENTINE'S DAY PARTY

Friendship and laughter was in the air as the Kupuna Group and SWCC staff celebrated Valentine's Day 2011 at the Center. There were games to play, lots of dancing and of course much food shared by all. It was also an opportunity to say farewell and good luck to one of our staff, David Koch, who will be moving back to the mainland. He will be especially missed by our Kupuna for his wonderful dancing skills!



ADOPT-A-FAMILY

Guided by SWCC Care Coordinator, Mr. Oscar Balayan, three of the clients in SWCC's *Bilingual Care Coordination & Support Services Program (BCCSSP)*, enjoyed a brighter holiday season last year when they were "adopted" by the **Adopt-A-Family Program**. Coordinated by Helping Hands Hawaii in partnership with the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, this program highlighted stories of people struggling with social and economic difficulties who were able to have some of their Christmas wishes fulfilled because of the special generosity of companies and individuals who supported this program. The three "adopted" clients had very simple wishes: some new pants, shirts and shoes. But due to their disability and limited income, they were having difficulty just trying to make ends meet for their basic needs. Through the Adopt-A-Family Program, their wishes came true and then some. Along with the latter items, the clients also received gift cards to Times Super Market, Safeway and Foodland to purchase groceries.

Mr. Balayan and the other Care Coordinators at SWCC are firmly committed to partnering with Helping Hands Hawaii and other social service agencies to effectively utilize all available resource to address the special needs of the clients, most of whom are limited-English speaking immigrants struggling with mental illness. Despite the deep cuts in mental health services and programs, the Care Coordinators continue to work closely with the clients' psychiatrists, psychotherapist and primary care physicians to care for their mental health and other medical needs. The goal of the program has been and continues to be to help stabilize and enable the clients to live their daily lives with dignity and eventually join the mainstream of society to the best of their abilities. For information about how you can help support this important program, call Dominic Inocelda at 440-5818.

