

Shared Vision

September 2004
Volume 13 Issue 2

President's Message



Filo Tu

Greetings to all of you! I hope that all of you were able to enjoy our tenth year anniversary. Let me tell you, I really had a good time. I can't say enough about how proud I am to be the President of Blind Vendors Ohana, Inc. Who is Blind Vendors Ohana, Inc.? You are! All of us!

I also would like to thank all of you for the beautiful cake that was brought into our tenth year anniversary. Also, for the lovely aloha shirts that were presented to the three of us. And most of all, thank you for recognizing me as President

of Blind Vendors Ohana, Inc. Thank you very much for everything. I will keep these memories forever! I am not Bob Hope, but I will say thanks for the memories!

I would also like to thank God for the strength he gave us that helped us make it through ten years.

Now, let's go my friends. Please fasten your seat belts because we are going for another ten years.

God bless all of you and your families. God bless our great country and also the men and women out there giving their lives to protect our freedom.



OPERATIONS MANAGER'S MESSAGE



Garret Suzuki

Congratulations, Blind Vendors Ohana, Inc. on your 10th anniversary! These past ten years have been most exciting, challenging, and rewarding. Together, we all helped bring Ohana to where it is today, a successful business enterprise at the Honolulu International Airport.

The owners and managers have been working very hard to create an atmosphere of warmth and camaraderie which would permeate throughout the company. All employees, (office, warehouse, janitors,

and sales associates) please help us by maintaining this kind of atmosphere by doing the following:

1. Help and support each other.
2. Be kind and courteous to each other.
3. Have respect for each other.
4. Carry out your responsibilities and do not expect others to perform your tasks.
5. Treat each other as you would want them to treat you.
6. Accept your fellow employees for whom they are, handicapped or not.
7. Be grateful that you have a job at Ohana, which gives you great benefits and is concerned about your personal well-being.

Remember, if you can display all of the characteristics listed above, I know all of you will be outstanding employees. Furthermore, outstanding employees will lead to greater success for Ohana. Let us all work with ALOHA!



Pa'ahana Award Winners



Our first Pa'ahana Award winner is **Beatrice Miyasato**, a Sales Associate at the Honolulu International Terminal. This gracious, humble, and personable woman became a full-time employee of BVO in 2003. She was employed at the Social Security office before joining Ohana.

Beatrice is a busy woman who never hesitates to lend a helping hand to her friends and relatives. Whenever she has a moment to herself, she enjoys watching TV—any program is fine with her. She also is an avid reader, especially of non-fiction books.

Our second Pa'ahana Award winner is **Mikaela Encher**, a Sales Associate at the Honolulu International Terminal. This energetic, ambitious, and pleasant young lady is married and a mother

of three, 2 sons, ages 2 and 6, and a daughter, age 4.



Mikaela spends as much time as possible with her children. During those rare moments when she finds time for herself, she enjoys reading, especially books authored by Nicholas Stark, and Danielle Steel. Mikaela finds Ron Uchida's baked goods most delectable, in particular his apple bread. Ron has been gracious enough to give her his recipes and Mikaela enjoys trying to produce the baked goods as delicious as Ron's.

Edwin Billena is our third Pa'ahana Award winner. This industrious, diligent, and dependable young man works in Ohana's warehouse. He is married and has a 9 year old son.

Edwin is a man of many interests. He enjoys fishing, singing, and Filipino music. We hear, he is an

outstanding cook. Many of Ohana's employees have had the opportunity of tasting his delicious food. His specialty dishes to prepare are various Filipino food.



Our final Pa'ahana Award winner is Corey Ma'ae. This industrious, friendly, and responsible young man is a worker in Ohana's warehouse.



Corey is married to Linda, Victor and Sa's daughter. They are proud parents of two sons, 3 year old Mikey and 9 months old Thia Victorino.

Corey is a great dad who helps take care of the two boys and spends a lot of time playing with them. Occasionally, it becomes necessary for him to prepare the family's dinner. He is considered an excellent cook.

CONGRATULATIONS!



Erika Flormata, daughter of Ronald and Elizabeth Flormata graduated from Leilehua High School in June 2004. Erika received a certificate for participating in the school chorus and achievement certificates in physics and a class in democracy. She will be attending Leeward Community College and majoring in Architecture.

Kyle Beck, son of Kalani and Paulette Beck is a 2004 graduate of Nanakuli High School. He graduated with honors, Summa Cum Laude. Kyle was also named Scholar Athlete of the year. Kyle will be attending

Western Oregon College, and majoring in Nutrition.



Baby on Board!

Mr. and Mrs. Jan Llana became proud parents of their first born on June 27, 2004. Little Keanu Cedrick weighed in at 7 pounds and 4 ounces. He was born in Kapiolani Medical Center.

How Would You Handle Co-Worker Conflicts?



Jim Kahue
Jim Kahue, HR Manager

If someone asked you this question would you say, "I'd ignore them and mind my own business," or would you

say, "I'd tell them how they upset me and ask them to stop it." Some employees may answer, "I'll smile and skill them with kindness," while others may say, "I'll wait and get even with them later." As you can see some ways are more positive while others are more negative.

Here are some positive ways to deal with co-worker conflicts: 1) Discuss the problem with the co-worker in a private place to see if you can help him/her see how they are bothering you and ways each of you can resolve the problem; 2) Talk to your supervisor or lead for assistance in resolving any conflicts; or 3) Try to get to know the person better and see if the conflict goes away on its own before you discuss it with the person or a supervisor. By using these options, you can let the other person know what's bothering you and create opportunities for settling the conflict or misunderstanding.

The following are viewed as negative ways to deal with a co-worker such as: 1) Talk to other co-workers to take sides against the other person; 2) Spread rumors about the other person; 3) Set the other

person up so that they can get in trouble, and 4) Get into a verbal argument or physical confrontation with the co-worker. There is never a good thing that can happen when you use negative ways to solve a problem. The negative ways can increase the conflict and can cause you to lose a job.

Remember, that there are at least two sides to every conflict and more than two ways to solve them. Finding the right way is always the best way to fix a problem.

A HISTORY OF BLIND VENDORS, INC.

What is **Blind Vendors Ohana, Inc.**? Ohana is a corporation that operates the newsstand concession at the Honolulu International Airport. There are three corporate owners; Walter S. Ishikawa (Secretary / Treasurer), Tommy M. Morikami (Vice-President), and Filo K. Tu (President/CEO). Presently Ohana operates eight retail outlets and employs approximately eighty people, more than half of whom are disabled.

It was very difficult in the beginning. Ohana took control of the Newsstand Concession on June 1, 1994. The first order of business was two fold; 1) to employ as many disabled employees from the previous concessionaire (Maka'ala) as possible, and 2) arrange for a bank loan of \$2.1 million in order to remodel all of the retail outlets. This was the first time that blind vendors remodeled their own facilities and furnished their own inventories in the history of the Hawaii Business Enterprise Program. The bank loan was made possible through the timely cooperation of Mr. Curtis Tom, Manager of Bank of Hawaii's International Airport Branch. He believed that we would succeed. To Curtis Tom, thank you very, very much for your great faith in us.

We also pause to thank Mr. John Reed, then President of DFS Hawaii, who worked closely with us and assigned his well trained staff to assist us in arranging for the remodeling of our retail outlets.

The first high ranking State official to publicly support the efforts of Blind

Vendors in this endeavor was Mr. Owen Miyamoto, then Chief of the Airports Division, State Department of Transportation. At a time when, within State Government, there existed doubts that blind people could manage the business operation at the Honolulu International Airport. Mr. Owen Miyamoto is quoted as saying, "I really don't know what is the problem. The blind were running the airport stands in the sixties." Thank you very much Mr. Miyamoto for believing in the capabilities of the blind.

The Newsstand Concession was abruptly and improperly taken away from the blind in 1970 by the Department of Transportation with the concurrence of the Department of Human Services. The blind were not properly organized to fight back at that time. Neither were there sufficient experience or financial resources to combat this situation. As a result, the State put together Maka'ala Inc., a non-profit corporation to operate the Newsstand Concession.

In late January, 1984 ten Hawaii blind vendors filed suit against the State

Department of Human Services and the State Department of Transportation in the Circuit Court in order to return the Newsstand Concession to its rightful place within the Blind Vending Facility Program. Warren Toyama and Filo Tu spearheaded the long and difficult ten year battle. Numerous fund raising, frequent meetings with attorneys, and keeping the vendors motivated to continue the fight was a tremendous task. Warren and Filo displayed outstanding leadership qualities throughout the entire ten year period.

Many thanks go out to the blind vendors who signed as plaintiffs in our lawsuit; Charlotte (Lois) Kauhane, Miriam Onomura, Yoshiko Nishihara, Clyde Ota, Walter Ishikawa, Alice Schaar (deceased), Isram Nihoa (deceased), Warren Toyama, Filo Tu, and Jeanette Tu.

Our attorneys handling our case demonstrated a high degree of ability and creativity in winning the lawsuit. Stanley Levin, Esq. and Evan Shirley, Esq. deserve our heartfelt thanks for the wonderful work they did for us. Also deserving

our thanks is one Durward McDaniel, Esq. who worked with our attorneys to help steer them in the right direction. Mr. McDaniel, now deceased, resided in Austin, Texas at the time. Robert Humphreys, Esq. from Washington D.C., also came to our aid with his expertise in Federal Law.

A special thanks go to every member of the Hawaii Association of the Blind, an organization of consumers that advocates for the blind. The Hawaii Association of the Blind contributed over \$130,000.00 to help cover legal fees. Many thanks also go out to the Hawaii Blind Vendors Association and its individual members for their donations of over \$35,000.00, also for legal fees.

Concerning the \$2.1 million loan from Bank of Hawaii – You can imagine the reluctance that Bank of Hawaii officials felt when dealing with the loan application from the blind owners. You can also imagine the great fear that the blind owners felt when they were asked to sign over their residences as collateral for the loan! As a matter of fact one of the owners had second thoughts about signing the

loan document. Many thanks to Warren and Julie Toyama who were willing to put up their home as collateral.

During the course of the past ten years Blind Vendors Ohana has been directly responsible for training and placing six of its employees into individual vending facilities in the State's Blind Vending Facility Program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dee Dee Letts (*Mediator*), David Fairbanks (*Mediator*), Reynaldo Grauly (*State Senator*), Tony Chang (*State Senator*), Ron Tang (*DFS Hawaii*), Rex Johnson (*DOT Director*), Winona Rubin (*DHS Director*), Albert Matsubara (*DHS Deputy Director*), Robert Marks (*State Attorney General*), Norman Mizuguchi (*State Senator*), Donald Thomson (*Professor, Leeward Community College*), Jeanette Tu, Julie Toyama

A Look at "OHANA"

