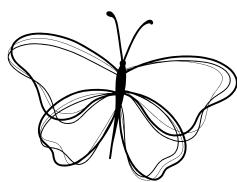
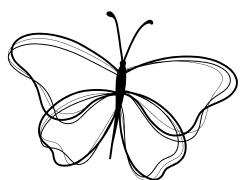
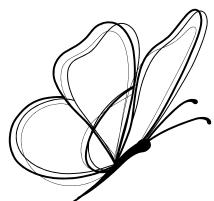


SURVIVORS

Transformation

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Domestic Violence Action Center

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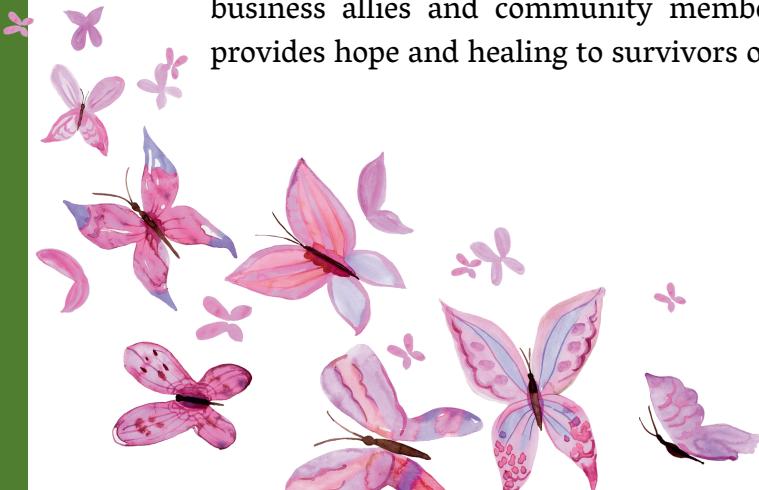
www.domesticviolenceactioncenter.org

E KOMO MAI

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY



Established in 1991, the Domestic Violence Action Center continues to make a difference in the lives of island families, children, and marginalized communities throughout Hawaii. DVAC provides support to survivors, educates the community about domestic violence, and encourages youth to learn about healthy relationships. Working with business allies and community members to reform the system, DVAC provides hope and healing to survivors of domestic abuse.



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Aloha beloved community.

Throughout our lives, change is inevitable. Experiencing a period of change or metamorphosis often leads to renewal. But the process itself can be challenging, marked by hardship and extreme discomfort before we emerge on the other side, transformed into a stronger version of ourselves.

The clients we serve here at the Domestic Violence Action Center are in a state of metamorphosis, transitioning from abusive situations to lives free of coercion, control, violence, and pain.

DVAC is incredibly proud of these survivors who dare to seek help and embark on a path to transformation. We are honored to walk alongside them as they navigate stressful situations.

Our work, which allows survivors of domestic violence and their families to live more peaceful lives, would not be possible without supportive community members. These dedicated champions are always willing to come to the aid of our clients and our organization, playing a crucial role in our mission to end domestic violence on Oahu and throughout the state. Sadly, DVAC's services have never been more needed.

To meet our community's urgent imperative, we will continue to evolve, change, and elevate our reach. Looking ahead to 2025, we hope to increase housing for our clients and their families, expand legal services throughout the islands, and increase awareness and prevention projects. We will very much need your support to fulfill our mission and will strive to inform you about the wonderful things happening here.

As we move through the changes and challenges, we will continue to hope that one day the ultimate metamorphosis we see is fewer incidences of domestic violence both here in Hawaii and throughout the United States and the world.

Thank you for your continued support.

Monique R. Ibarra
Chief Executive Officer
Domestic Violence Action Center



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



Aloha fellow supporters,

As the DVAC board president for the last two years, I have watched with pride as our organization moved effectively through changes and challenges. Strong relationships, one of DVAC's greatest assets, are among our most effective tools in weathering times of transition.

Since she joined DVAC in September 2023, Executive Director Monique Ibarra has developed robust ties with our staff and the community.

She cares deeply about those we serve and our organization as a whole, and consistently demonstrates professionalism and dedication, ensuring our organization furthers its mission of ending domestic violence in our community.

In addition to our committed leadership and staff, we are extremely grateful for the support from the federal government, the State of Hawai'i, the City and County of Honolulu, and the foundations, businesses, and community members who help fund our life-saving services. As you know, if we are going to end domestic violence, it's going to take all of us.

I am humbled and proud of the work we have done. The Domestic Violence Action Center continues to transform and evolve - ever responsive to the changing needs of our community. I am confident that DVAC is steadfast in its mission and has the resilience to withstand any obstacles ahead.

Vera Wright
President
DVAC's Board of Directors

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Domestic Violence Action Center is committed to addressing domestic violence and other forms of harm through leadership, unique services, legal representation, housing, survivor and system advocacy, community education and social change work.

We believe all persons should be treated with equality, dignity and fairness. With high quality and culturally sensitive programs, delivered with integrity and compassion we are creating safety and self-sufficiency for survivors and their children.

DVAC SERVICES

Alaka'i Advocacy

The Alaka'i Advocacy team collaborates closely with our legal team to support domestic violence survivors as they navigate the often-overwhelming legal and welfare systems, social service agencies, schools, immigration, and more. Advocates are well-versed in both linguistic and cultural aspects, enabling them to effectively support survivors from diverse communities, including Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Spanish, COFA, and LGBTQ+. DVAC's advocates provide this individualized, specialized assistance, and emotional support on a long-term basis, often for longer than a year.

ExPO Court Outreach Team

The prospect of testifying against an abuser can be traumatic and heartbreakingly for survivors of domestic violence. Staff of the ExPO Court Outreach program work at Circuit Court in Downtown and Family Court in Kapolei, providing information and emotional support before or during court proceedings. Their assistance spans both stages of the Temporary Restraining Order process – Ex Parte and Order to Show Cause hearing. Their comprehensive approach, from explaining the court process, connecting with legal representation to creating individualized safety plans/risk assessments ensures that survivors are not alone and have the necessary resources and support.

Supportive Housing

Hale Maluhia, a 20-unit living facility for survivors of domestic violence and their children, opened in 2020 to address a critical shortage of housing for this population. Residents pay 30% of their income in rent. DVAC's staff attorneys assist residents with legal concerns, and advocates equip them with the tools, skills, and confidence to move forward and become independent and self-sufficient. In addition to Hale Maluhia, there is also Hale Wahine, another housing program for survivors. Another partnership with a local church provides additional housing options, ensuring that more survivors have access to safe and supportive living environments.

Ho'oikaika 'Ohana (Ho'o)

Ho'o is a 9-month support group program for Native Hawaiian domestic violence survivors and their families. The program, developed in response to the large number of Native Hawaiians who have experienced domestic violence and seek DVAC services, honors the need for programs and services that are built on Native Hawaiian values to better support domestic violence survivors and their families toward healing and rebuilding. Survivors, their keiki (children) and 'ohana attend group sessions where they mend (or strengthen) relationships through mo'oleo (talk story), lei-making, planting and pounding kalo (taro), chanting, and hula dancing.

Helpline

Clients often make their first contact with DVAC through its helpline, which is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Callers can seek help for themselves or someone they know. DVAC's dedicated staff conducts client intakes, provides initial counseling and agency referrals if needed, pairs survivors with an advocate, develops safety plans, and evaluates their risk of being in lethal situations.

Legal Services

DVAC's staff attorneys deliver comprehensive legal support through a trauma-informed and culturally responsive lens. They provide expert consultations and representation for divorce, paternity, post-divorce/paternity, Child Welfare Services (CWS), and Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) cases. The legal team practices procedural justice by ensuring survivors fully understand their rights and options while maintaining transparency throughout each step of the legal process. Their client-centered approach empowers survivors by amplifying their voices, validating their experiences, and advocating for their needs within the legal system.

Pulama I Ka 'Ohana (PIKO)

PIKO support groups create a nurturing space for domestic violence survivors and their children to heal and strengthen. PIKO offers both general and culturally-specific support groups honoring diverse healing traditions and practices facilitated by someone from the same ethnic group. The participants learn essential skills in positive parenting, healthy communication, and self-care practices, as children engage in age-appropriate activities that promote social connection and emotional expression. These structured yet welcoming groups empower families to break cycles of trauma while fostering healthy development through play, friendship, and culturally meaningful engagement, recognizing that healing happens.

Safe, Strong, and Sober (SSS)

SSS trains substance abuse treatment providers, healthcare practitioners, and other organizations that also provide domestic violence services to better understand and address the link between domestic violence and substance use. DVAC also offers support for new procedures, expert consultation for high-risk cases, referrals to local resources, and materials for providers to display or distribute. DVAC advocates are specially equipped to work with survivors who have experienced both domestic violence and substance abuse, making it crucial for their recovery and long-term well-being.

Teen Alert (TAP 808)

TAP 808 team members provide education and workshops to teens, parents, and other community members to promote and celebrate healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence. TAP also provides one-on-one advocacy support for teens and young adults experiencing dating violence.

Giving Back with Strength and Beauty

Former DVAC Client shares her story



Six years ago, Liza Neginskaya, a former DVAC client, had a newborn and was struggling to extricate herself from an abusive relationship with a controlling partner. To move through her fear, she'd imagine the life she wanted for herself and her young son until she believed it was possible.

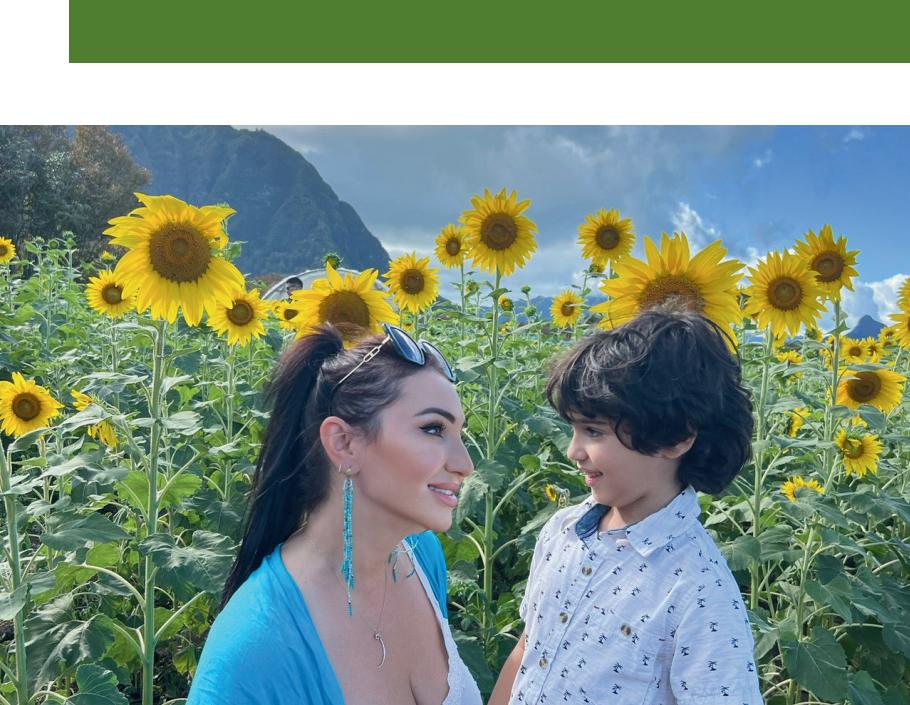
"I would envision my ideal situation where I wasn't faced with these horrible situations throughout the day that were brought on by someone who just wanted to mentally destroy me," Neginskaya said.

It has been an arduous journey, but today, Neginskaya and her son, Leon, 6, are thriving. She has continued to build her very successful business, EN Signature Beauty, and donates services to other domestic violence survivors. Through this gift, the experienced aesthetician hopes to help other women feel beautiful and regain their confidence. "These women just feel lost," she said. "Like they have no voice. They're mentally and physically drained."

Neginskaya was born in Crimea and raised in Dallas, TX from the age of 10. She fell in love with Hawaii after winning a trip to Maui. When an opportunity arose for her to move to the Aloha State, she jumped at the chance and has now been here for 16 years. Neginskaya has 20 years of experience in aesthetics and established her business 10 years ago.

Before meeting her future partner, Neginskaya was briefly involved in a toxic relationship in Dallas. In Hawaii, she was employed by a man who was manipulative and dishonest. It eventually became intolerable, and with the help of friends and her very supportive parents, she got out.

Soon after, she met Leon's father. "It started amazing," she said. "It was just so magical. I thought, 'This is the person I've been looking for.'"



But just before she became pregnant, something changed. While her partner wasn't physically violent, he was extremely controlling and would disappear for days, not calling or answering his phone. Neginskaya would lose sleep, and frantically call the police and hospitals searching for him.

"Psychological abuse, in my experience, has a unique power — it can steal your identity, make you feel lost, and take away your confidence," she said. "There were times I didn't understand why people who claimed to care for me could be so deceitful and hurtful. I would rationalize their behavior, often learning about their own pain and hoping I could help. But I soon realized that these explanations weren't helping me—they were draining me and keeping me stuck in a cycle of abuse."

To protect her baby's future, Neginskaya made the difficult decision to leave her partner. It was heartbreak because she loved him, but she knew staying would be damaging to her and her child.

The new mom went to court to get a protective order but was told it wasn't possible without evidence of physical abuse. That is when she sought help from DVAC, which provided a court advocate and an attorney and helped her get the protective order.

"DVAC's support allowed me to focus on rebuilding my life, my business, and on being the mother I want to be," she said. "Now, as an aesthetic professional, I'm able to help others feel confident and empowered in their own skin, just as I had to find my confidence."

Neginskaya urges other domestic violence survivors to reach out for the help they need through organizations like DVAC. Its support has been vital for this single mom.

"My dream had always been to build a family with a partner who would be loving and supportive," Neginskaya said. "That dream shifted, but I came to realize that I had everything I needed within me to create a safe, loving environment for my child."



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Building Community in Temporary Housing

DVAC Housing Manager Mariko Ono is creating a nurturing, supportive environment for residents and their children

Domestic violence rarely affects the singular survivor. The trauma often reverberates through entire families. DVAC housing manager Mariko Ono – a domestic violence survivor and one-time DVAC client – knows firsthand about these far-reaching effects.

“Because of my experience, it’s easy to connect with clients very deeply,” Ono said. “They appreciate that I have a good understanding of what they’re going through.”

DVAC’s three housing facilities for domestic violence survivors – Hale Maluhia, Hale Wahine, and transitional housing (a collaboration with a local church) – are unique in that they serve entire families. Most domestic survivors come to DVAC’s temporary residences with at least one child, who range from infants to high schoolers.

There is no limit to the length of their stay, but the goal is for each resident to transition with their children into permanent housing so they can live the stable, peaceful lives they deserve.

Many of the residents are immigrants or their extended family is thousands of miles away on the mainland. Ono, who first worked as an advocate for DVAC, is creating programs to deepen the sense of community, so the clients and their families have emotional support, as well as a safe place to live.





NEW HOMES NEW BEGINNINGS

"My vision is to get all of them involved and connected to each other through activities. Our clients are living in our housing program because of the domestic violence situation. We support not just the client, but the whole family, and because we interact with the family daily in this unique living situation, we see clients with their families. So, I want the community to feel that they are all one family," Ono said.

Residents have enjoyed a summer keiki fun day with craft activities, a fishing game, and cold treats from a loaned shaved ice machine; a Halloween contest with prizes; and a Christmas party. In a recent listening session, residents requested a movie night and cooking class, so Ono is seeking volunteers to provide these programs. She also holds support groups for residents.

"Life is busy," Ono said. "They never really have time to sit and talk, but providing those times to introduce each other and share helps them to connect."

The efforts are paying off, she said. "I've started to see moms sitting together on a bench chit-chatting or their kids playing together," she said. "Some clients are actually helping others move out or watching each other's children."

When it comes to meeting the needs of the residents, Ono's approach is to listen first so she can understand their struggles, then provide encouragement and resources. And due to her empathetic nature, this comes easily.

Many clients are overwhelmed. Some are suffering from PTSD or anxiety and need counseling. Others require logistical support, such as an advocate to liaise with the school if their child has special needs or if they need after-school care, or help identifying Section 8 housing vouchers, legal assistance, or other community resources.

Housing (continued)



Ono and her staff, Julie, the DVAC advocate for its housing facilities, are also “aunties” to the children, teaching them about healthy relationships. They are trusted confidantes for teenagers who can have tribulations and frustrations they’d rather not share with a parent.

Ono said that caring for clients as deeply as she does can make it difficult to disconnect from her job. But many positive and rewarding experiences make it all worthwhile.

In her early days as a DVAC advocate, her first client didn’t have a work permit or a place to live. She left her home with her child, a stroller, and a few clothing items, and moved into one of DVAC’s housing facilities. Three years later, the client has graduated from school, has a job, and is living in permanent housing.

“I’m so proud of her, you know? What a transformation,” Ono said.

One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn’t as individuals.

-- Jean Vanier



A Resident Shares Her Story

Today, I stand before you to share my story of resilience, hope and the power of community.

I am a survivor of domestic violence. I have 4 beautiful children, 2 in high school, 1 in middle school and a 3-year-old.

A few years ago, I removed myself and my kids from an abusive relationship. We went into a shelter as recommended by the police. We stayed there for a year with the challenge of being told that we must move out but with the help of my DVAC advocate, Genia, (a beautiful and loving soul) she was able to convince the shelter for our extended stay. It was difficult. But I drew strength from my faith that somehow things will get better instead of going back to my abuser.

True enough, in the year 2020, my advocate told me Hale Maluhia opened and I was happy that we finally had a roof over our heads. My children were and still are happy that we get to stay in a safe place where help is always available for us. We are safe, we have activities to participate in like yoga, financial literacy, budgeting, help in rent, donations of hygiene stuff, laundry soap, dishwashing liquid as those are not covered by our SNAP. We had free haircut, free eye checkup, cooking lessons, support group, tie dye, among other things. The children are also referred to activities like the YMCA, their school needs are donated, their necessities in school and with all of these I will forever be grateful to DVAC and the City and County which subsidize our rent at Hale Maluhia.

I am pushing through my goals with the guidance of DVAC and I am beyond blessed that my children are in school, hoping someday they will be able to go to college.

If not with DVAC and other community resources, I may still be in that abusive relationship or maybe am dead.

So, there is help for survivors like me.

Just be strong and believe that after the rain comes the rainbow.

Thank you so much.

- A Survivor



SNAPSHOT OF SERVICES

DVAC'S IMPACT

HELPLINE: 4,550 CALLS

HELPLINE, answered by dedicated staff members, is often the first point of contact for those in abusive relationships. The call is completely confidential.



LEGAL SERVICES: 599 ASSISTED

From legal representation to court appearances by attorneys and advocates, DVAC can help a survivor navigate the complex legal process.



SAFETY PLANS: 2,403 CREATED

Leaving an abuser can be the most dangerous time for a survivor. DVAC advocates create safety plans to help clients prepare for the a safer outcome.



YOUTH PARTICIPANTS: 4,860 STUDENTS

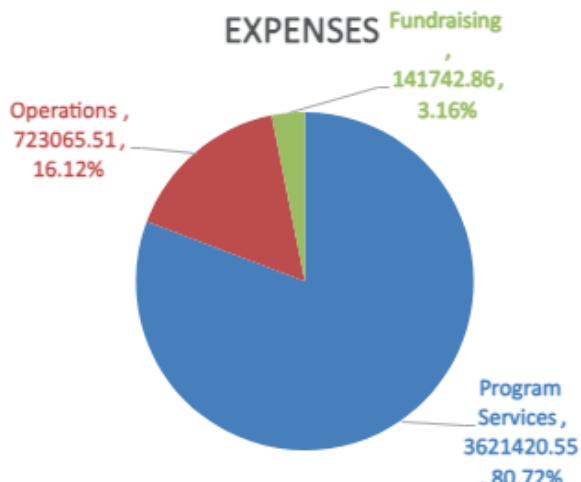
DVAC's TAP808, Teen Alert Program visited over 100 schools and delivered 613 presentations, teaching students about healthy vs. unhealthy relationships.



The demand for DVAC's services have never been greater. It should be no surprise that the increase in domestic violence soared on the island of Maui, where local residents were faced with unimaginable challenges. DVAC offered support for Maui survivors and is finding new ways to help women and children on the neighboring islands.

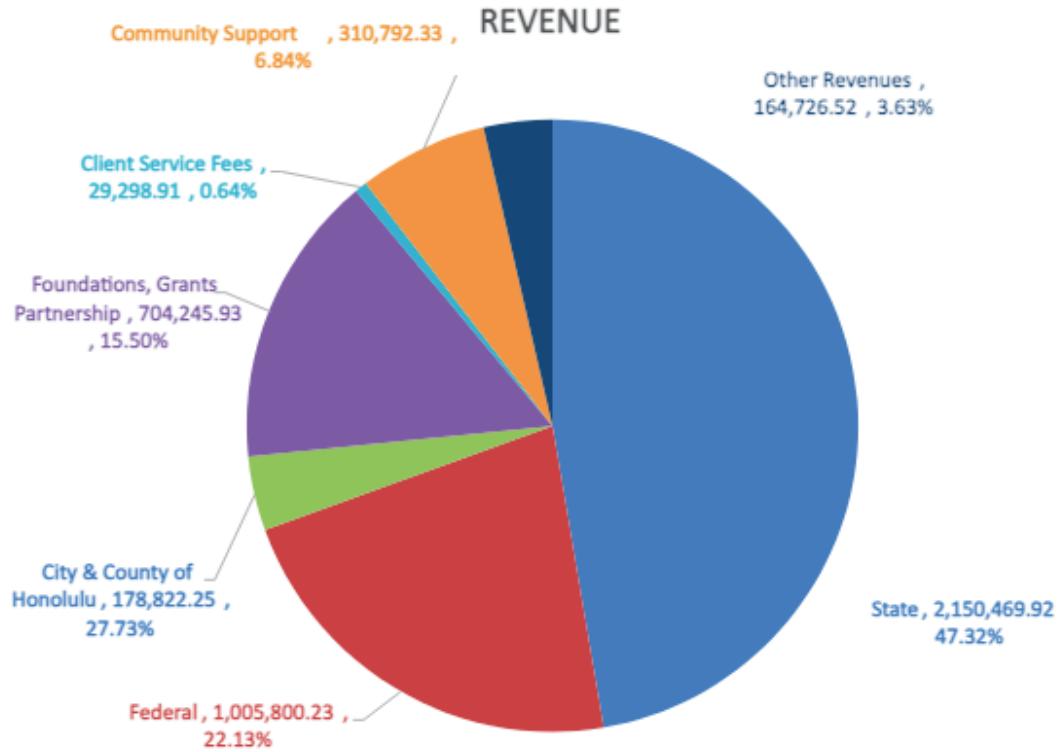


GROWTH SUSTAINABILITY



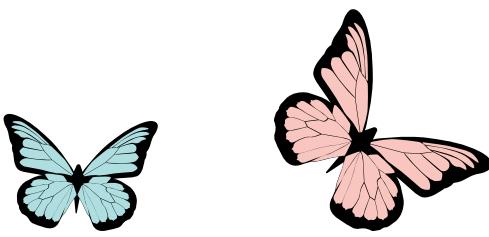
In the 2024 fiscal year, the Domestic Violence Action Center had a total combined income of **\$4,544,156.09**, funded largely by State and Federal grants. DVAC's total expenses were **\$4,486,228.93**.

Like many other non-profits in the State of Hawaii, DVAC deeply felt the financial effects resulting from the Maui wildfires, where much relief funds were dedicated to supporting Lahaina's community in 2023 and 2024.

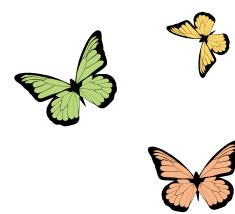


Community Initiatives

DVAC's 15th Annual Golf Tournament Chipping Away at Domestic Violence



The 15th Annual Golf Tournament was a swinging success with over 124 participants, raising over \$30,000 for the agency. The tournament took place on Friday, April 19, 2024, at Ewa Beach Golf Club.



Thank you to these sponsors: **Matson, Pape Machinery, John H. Connors, HEMIC, Bronster Fujichaku Robbins, and CW Associates**

Over 800 men participated in the 29th Annual Men's March Against Violence, which was held on the beautiful 'Iolani Palace grounds. Hundreds of businessmen and supporters turned out for this event to march for peace in our island families, as well as HPD, HFD, students from **Damien High School, St. Louis High School** and **St. Andrew's** middle school.



Special mahalo for support from: **Central Pacific Bank Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, Verizon and the Department of Health**



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The Domestic Violence Action Center is
grateful for your contributions and humbled
by your generosity.

We recognize that we cannot do this
work alone. We must enlist the
help of our **entire** community
if we are going to stop
violence in relationships.

Your support is greatly appreciated
and reminds us that the services
and resources that we provide
for domestic abuse survivors
is essential to maintaining
a healthy community.



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