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COURT

# Kaua'i Teen Court highlighted for Youth Court Month

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Dennis Fujimoto - The Garden Island

Individuals involved in Kauai Teen Court, including Laverne Bishop of Hale O'pio, Arleen Kuwamura, David Klemer, Deana Shelby, Judge Max Graham, Kelly Racca and Judge Nancy Budd listen as Mayor Bernard Carvalho Jr. announces the month of September as National Youth Court Month during a proclamation presented to Hale O'pio, Monday at the Moikeha Building.

September 18, 2012 12:30 am • Dennis Fujimoto - The Garden Island

LIHUE — Youth courts address offenses which might otherwise go unaddressed until the offending behavior escalates, and it reduces caseloads for the juvenile justice system, states a mayoral proclamation presented to Hale O'pio Monday at the Moikeha Building atrium.

Mayor Bernard Carvalho Jr., in presenting the proclamation to individuals involved in the Kaua'i Youth Court system, announced September as National Youth Court Month, acknowledging the work being done by the Kaua'i system for the past 17 years.

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National Youth Court Month celebrates the outstanding achievements of youth court programs around the county with more than 117,000 youth volunteering to hear more than 129,500 juvenile cases in 2011.

Supplementing the efforts of the youth volunteers, more than 16,500 adults volunteered to facilitate peer justice and appropriate disposition in youth court programs, the proclamation states.

Youth, who admit their guilt for a first-time law violation, and their families are given a hearing within 45 days of the offense and sentenced by their peers to make things "pono" through serving on juries, performing community service, attending classes, asking for forgiveness and making restitution, said LaVerne Bishop, director of Hale 'Opio.

Youth are trained as court officers, defense and prosecuting attorneys, jurors and jury forepersons while learning about the laws in the community.

An average of 90 percent of youth are not re-arrested within a year of completing Kaua'i Teen Court, Bishop said.

Kaua'i Teen Court started with Kaua'i Police Department's Lt. Kelly Ito and Chief Judge Gerald Masujoka, recommending attorneys to volunteer as judges in this youth-led court, the director of

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The ranks of individuals who served as judges at Kaua'i Teen Court include Max Graham, Walton Hong, Frank Rothschild, Kathleen Watanabe, Edmund Acoba, Joseph Kobayashi, Al Castillo and Nancy Budd.

Those who joined these ranks recently include Laurel Loo, Sara Silverman, Ian Jung, Laura Anderson and Greg Meyers, who joined Kaua'i Teen Court as judges, Bishop said.

"The success of Kaua'i Teen Court is due to the strong partnership between the county, the volunteer attorneys and the kids and families who work together to repair the harm done to the community," Bishop said.

A fundamental correlation exists between youth service and lifelong community involvement, the proclamation states. Volunteer service and related service learning opportunities enable young people to build character and develop and enhance life skills such as responsibility, decision making, time management, teamwork, public speaking and leadership while encouraging positive behavior and empowering youth to be active in their communities.

Kaua'i Teen Court was awarded grants totaling \$14,000 from the Rev. Takie Okumura Family Fund and \$7,500 from the Annie Sinclair Knudsen Fund, both awards coming through the Hawaii Community Foundation.

Visit [www.haleopio.org](http://www.haleopio.org) for more information.

**Tags** Teen Court, Hale Opio, Court Month, Bernard Carvalho Jr.

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