

Jimmy Brazell Community Impact Scholarship Award

2017 Essay submission written by Haven Boss

When most people think of Hawaii, tropical images come to mind of white sand beaches with pristine blue water, palm trees swaying in a little beach town, and the most exquisite sunsets. All of these depictions are true; however, actually living in Hawaii differs from this stereotypical scene.

I am 15 years old living in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. My family and I moved here almost four years ago. We felt called by God to spread the gospel and do His work in Hawaii. This would sound like a dream to many, but quickly we began to see a different picture of Hawaii, one that involved people with struggles, poverty, and in need of hope. And although my parents became quickly involved serving in the community and church and I served with them, finding my place in this took time.

Then I heard the story about a group of people called the Marshallese. Forced unfairly from their homeland, these people have suffered greatly. From the Marshall Islands located in the South Pacific, their land was wrongly taken by the U.S. government to use as nuclear testing grounds during WWII. Moving them to other islands and then offering them passage to the U.S. for a so called "better life," these powerless people flooded into housing projects in Hawaii and a few other places on the mainland. Now completely broken, living off government funds, and struggling with a new language and culture, the children are failing in school, teenage pregnancy is high, and the suicide rate is 100 percent higher than that of Americans. Returning to their homeland is an option, but much of the land is still in shambles and contaminated by radiation poisoning.

Five minutes from my house is a Marshallese housing project. With my mom, dad, and little sister, we began tutoring elementary school age kids every Monday afternoon at their housing project near Kahalu'u Beach. Inviting families from our church and some of my friends from youth group to join us, the outreach grew. The kids just kept on coming and coming! Soon we had fifteen teenagers and eight adults tutoring, playing games, and sharing Jesus with these precious kids. We decided to name our group KKO (Kona Kids Outreach).

Five months ago God provided a neighborhood recreation center in another poverty and crime infested neighborhood called Queen Liliuokalani Village. We were asked to bring KKO to the students living in this area, so every Wednesday we take two vans full of Kahalu'u kids, who are joined by the Queen Liliuokalani kids, to help with homework, play basketball, soccer, and volleyball. Most importantly, they learn Bible verses and praise songs, and we take time to honor one student each week. Kids of all ages come for these impactful two hours, from little ones of three years to high

school students. Right now we have about 50 kids coming on a weekly basis and have volunteers from our church, other churches, and from YWAM Ships; just a few weeks ago, the YWAM helpers taught everyone “Jesus Loves Me” in sign language. It was such a powerful thing to behold hearing and seeing all of God’s precious children coming together and praising Him!

Luke 12:31 says, “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.” God will always provide for those who do His work. A local coffee shop called San Francisco Bay Gourmet Coffee Co. currently sponsors KKO through their One Cup Program. The store manager/daughter of the owner witnessed first hand the influence we are having in the community and wanted to support us! Additionally, Paul Mitchell, came to Kahalu’u for a Give Back program and professionally cut and braided the kids’ hair. All of the boys were showing off their new haircuts for us! At our church, ladies with Dress A Girl Around The World made Easter dresses for the little girls. Living Stones Church also did a backpack drive for the kids, so each was able to receive a new backpack, necessary school supplies, and a Bible. In addition to all of these blessings, the schools here in Kona now want to partner with KKO and have asked us to work with them on a summer program. They see the difference we have made with the kids and with their homework and are even paying a teacher to teach us the Common Core Math so we can better assist the kids. God is increasingly providing for our group all the time! He is blessing us and showing favor on this work!

Every week is a mission trip for me. People spend thousands of dollars going to far away foreign countries to do the work of God, but I get to just drive five minutes from my house to serve Him. I get to hold little ones with big brown eyes and runny noses and tell them Jesus loves them. Beginning with the Marshallese at Kahalu’u and spreading to Queen Liliuokalani recreation center, God has begun an amazing work. God is continuing to change my desires through these kids I work with. He is giving me His servant heart and letting me see these children and teenagers through His eyes. When I see them playing and singing to Jesus I realize this is my eternity. Right now I am the hands and feet of Jesus! A verse that has inspired me and spoken to KKO is Micah 6:8. It states, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” When I first came to Hawaii I had no idea what my purpose here was or how to work for Christ, until now. Serving Christ means that my life is not my own. It’s His.