

## CASE FOR SUPPORT

### NAME

Common Grace

### MEANING

“Common” in the sense of ordinary, easily experienced and available

“Grace” is love in action—a sitting dancer may be lovely, but it’s only in movement that she is considered graceful

“Common Grace” is about every-day acts of kindness

### MISSION

To bring kindness to lonely<sup>1</sup> children in Hawai‘i’s public elementary schools by connecting them with caring adults, teenagers and *kupuna* (Hawaiian for “elder”).

Classic Common Grace partners neighborhood churches with nearby schools.  
Mālama Mentors positively influences elementary school children through life-changing connections with high school mentors.  
GrandGrace creates relationships between kupuna, mentors and kids.

### VISION

To connect 3,000 additional children with compassionate mentors by 2025.

### HISTORY

The seed of Common Grace was planted in 1999, the day after two teenagers shot and killed their fellow students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Jay Jarman, founder of Common Grace, approached the principal of a local high school in Aiea, Hawai‘i, asking, “What would it take to prevent a similar tragedy from happening here?” “Adults who care enough to come on campus and befriend our kids,” the principal answered. “Neither of the Columbine shooters had even one adult friend that cared about them—whether they lived or died.” Jay heard the same appeal from an elementary school principal a short time later. She told him and Ron Arnold, who was a pastor at Kaimuki Christian Church, “We have lonely kids on this campus. Would anyone in your church family have time to just come, sit beside, talk story and be friends with some of our lonely kids?” Retirees, business people, and college students responded. Eventually, the realization hit. How many people with a little time to spare would enjoy loving and serving these kids? And how many schools would benefit from having the best team of volunteers Hawai‘i could offer? Since 2003, Common Grace has helped over 3,000 children and families in an effort to provide friendship for lonely kids.

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<sup>1</sup> Children’s loneliness is a major source of distress, and also a noteworthy developmental problem that can predispose them to immediate and long-term negative consequences.” Malka Margalit, p.1 *Loneliness in Children and Adolescents*

In 2015, we connected with a few high schools to send out the best of their juniors and seniors to mentor elementary school students. We called this initiative, Mālama Mentors. Not only do the elementary school kids receive a friend and a mentor, but high school kids learn a lot: compassion, the importance of consistency and responsibility, self-confidence and integrity. Helps the big kids as much as the little kids!

We began experimenting with an intergenerational way of including a kupuna, an adult or teen and a child in one mentoring session, in collaboration with Palolo Chinese Home. During a GrandGrace visit, our core values still apply. Many residents in senior homes are lonely because they live apart from family or have no family at all. According to M.J. Tremethick who published an article analyzing social networks in assisted living homes, "assisted living residents are at high risk for loneliness and social isolation," which is "linked with depression and impaired mental health." GrandGrace allows mentor and mentee pairs to build their friendship and connect with a lonely older adult. Kupuna enjoy a fun and friendly visit; mentors and kids are lifted by their success in "making an old man's day." According to Generations United, intergenerational programs also promote more positive attitudes toward older people and the aging process.

### COMMUNITY NEED

Many students in Hawai'i are remote risk children<sup>2</sup>: children who are more vulnerable to drug involvement, teen pregnancy, participation in violence and other problems because of their low economic status, poor access to good education and poor economic opportunity. *Teaching with Poverty in Mind* by Eric Jensen finds that students that come from low-income households are less likely to graduate high school, apply for college and more likely to be victims of drugs, alcohol and teen pregnancy. They are at risk for displaying anti-social behavior and poor academic performance.

On O'ahu alone, there were 68 Title 1 elementary schools in the 2018-2019 school year. **Title 1 public schools** are given federal financial assistance because 40% or more children are from low-income families. Many of the students we work with come from unsupportive or discouraging households. Some parents simply don't have the time to give their children any attention. *A child that seeks attention needs attention*. Common Grace mentors spend an hour each week with a child they are specially matched with--30 minutes playing, 20 minutes reading and homework boosting and 10 minutes listening. Through this relationship, a child gets special one-on-one attention with an adult who genuinely cares for his or her heart and well-being.

Common Grace is about prevention. We mentor at the elementary level because we believe the sooner the child receives guidance, affection and support through mentorship—the earlier his chances of success in life are. We hope to pave a way out of despair, a way out of the bad situation these children were handed in life.

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<sup>2</sup> "The demographic characteristics of low socioeconomic status, poor economic opportunity, poor access to good education, and membership in an ethnic minority group are associated with greater dropout rates, teen pregnancy, vulnerability, participation in violence and/or other problems." Jefferies McWhirter, Benedict T. McWhirter, Ellen Hawley McWhirter. *At Risk Youth: 6<sup>th</sup> Edition* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2017), 10.

## HOW WE MEET THIS NEED

### **Common Grace**

Common Grace creates partnerships between elementary schools and neighborhood churches. Mentors from churches are trained and background checked before they are carefully matched with a child and spend at least an hour a week giving their special undivided attention to them.

### **Mālama Mentors**

Mālama Mentors partners exceptional juniors and seniors in local high schools with disadvantaged kids in a nearby elementary school. High school mentors who are chosen for Mālama Mentors demonstrate excellence academically, socially and in the community. Students are interviewed and handpicked by teachers and counselors. Once they are trained to become mentors, they are carefully matched with a child in an elementary school and spend an hour a week with them giving their undivided attention.

### **GrandGrace**

GrandGrace is an intergenerational program bringing together teen or adult mentors, their mentees and an older adult. The three-way interaction is a wonderful way for each generation to learn from and appreciate each other.

## STATISTICS

### ***Local surveys***

In a 2020 survey of our own Common Grace and Mālama Mentors, we found that after mentoring, over 75% of **mentors** felt strongly that they:

- learned the importance of being dependable and making commitments
- became better at listening carefully and responding with empathy
- would recommend becoming a mentor to someone else
- gained personal satisfaction from mentoring
- felt like mentoring allowed them to be a good representative of their community

We also found that after getting mentored, over 90% of our **mentees**:

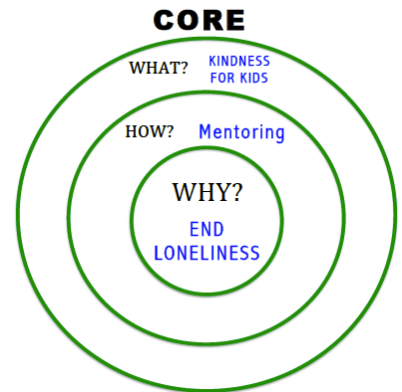
- wanted to spend time with their mentor next school year
- look up to their mentors
- believes their mentor cares about them
- would say their mentor is their friend
- trust their mentor

### ***National Surveys***

#### **Common Grace**

According to *Mentoring.org*, it is shown that children who are mentored are:

- 52% less likely to skip school
- 37% less likely to miss a class
- 46% less likely than peers to start using illegal drugs
- 27% less likely to start drinking
- 55% more likely to enroll in college
- 78% more likely to volunteer regularly
- 90% interested in becoming a mentor
- 130% more likely to hold leadership positions



#### **Mālama Mentors**

Mālama Mentors will most likely improve and grow in the following areas according to research done by Generations United:

- self-esteem
- self-confidence
- teamwork
- selflessness
- compassion
- leadership
- integrity
- sense of responsibility
- sense of accomplishment
- problem-solving skills
- understanding socio-economic differences

#### **GrandGrace**

Below are some statistics found by reputable organizations that have studied the effects of genuine interaction with older adults in care homes:

- In a four-year study done by researchers at Southern California Kaiser Permanente Medical Group, it was found that elderly women who had a larger social network were 26% less likely to develop dementia than those with a smaller social group.
- The University of Rochester Medical Center found that increased social interaction could possibly lower blood pressure, reduce arthritis and risk of cardiovascular issues.
- Older adults who are more engaged socially or who have someone to engage with have a more positive outlook on life than those who don't. The Alzheimer's Society noted that it also might improve their quality of sleep.
- The Alzheimer's Society also stated that when people don't have the opportunity to express their feelings and emotions to others, it results in frustration that may cause further alienation from friends and family. Being surrounded by friends and individuals they can trust increases self-confidence and sense of purpose.

- The nonprofit, Age UK, implemented a program for socializing elders. Volunteers helped elders who were at high risk of being admitted to a hospital, get involved in community activities. Out of 106 elders, local admissions of hospitals reduced by 30%, acute admissions for long-term conditions decreased by 40%, and adult social care costs decreased by 5%.
- An intergenerational gardening program in a care home in Australia found that helping children decreased depression, agitation and improved quality of life scores among residents. (McDonnell & Merl, n.d.)
- Intergenerational programs enhance life satisfaction, decrease isolation, improve physical health and well-being, expand new learning and skills according to Generations United.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

Our organization is mostly sustained by an individual donor base that has been growing since 2003. We also send appeals for donations through our quarterly newsletters and by continuously applying for local outreach grants through the state, city and county, churches, foundations, organizations and corporations. As our organization continues to grow our goal is to partner with corporate and business sponsors that share our passion for helping Hawai'i's youth. Common Grace will exist as long as there is one lonely child that needs a friend.

### **Funding Breakdown:**

- 85% Individual Contributors
- 10% churches
- 5% Foundation or Businesses

## **A UNIQUE PROGRAM**

We are distinctive from other mentoring programs through our:

### **Selection Process**

Unlike other mentoring programs that accept mentees based on referrals from a caring adult (usually a family member), we especially look for the children who have no apparent support system. Teachers and/or counselors know exactly which children in their class could benefit from a one-on-one relationship with a mentor.

### **Intensive Training**

We make sure to personally meet with mentors in our training classes. We demonstrate what a mentoring session looks like and help them understand the circumstances these children are coming from. We guarantee mentors understand the high stakes for these kids and ensure they have the passion and willingness to build a vital relationship with a lonely child.

### **One-on-one Mentoring**

Most importantly, we stress *one-on-one mentoring*. Many mentoring programs choose to mentor children in group settings. We find that the relationship between one child and one caring adult or young adult is much more special and beneficial for a child. The fact

there is a person enthusiastic to spend time with them every week shows the child they are important, loved, and special to someone—especially since they may not experience these feelings in their social or home lives.

### **Elementary School Level Mentoring**

We mentor children from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade until they graduate from elementary school. We chose this age range because it is the age that children are the most receptive to a relationship with an adult<sup>3</sup>. At this age, children are just learning how to make good decisions, exercise self-discipline, and cope with difficult situations. As children struggle through learning these concepts, it is crucial for adults to encourage their kids as well as help them accept their strengths and weaknesses—at this age, children learn to internalize a moral code. It is our hope that a Common Grace mentor can help instill good character for children that do not have a positive influencing adult in their life.

### **Exceptional Mentors**

Our **Common Grace mentors** are supplied from upstanding churches in the neighborhood, although we do have a strict respect and understanding of the separation between church and state and emphasize this during mentor training. Before mentors are approved, they must have a pastor reference endorsing their character and suitability in mentoring a child. **Mālama Mentors** are promising students displaying social and academic excellence and are recommended to the program by teachers and counselors. All Common Grace and Mālama Mentors are background checked with Honolulu Police Department databases and federal online vetting services.

### **WHAT DO WE NEED**

We need funds and mentors. 97% of our organization is made up of mentors who volunteer to spend an hour a week with their child. We plan to expand our program on the Westside of O‘ahu as well as on other islands. It takes \$180,000 to operate Common Grace programs per year and approximately \$450 to create and support one mentor/mentee relationship.

A Mālama Mentors teen-keiki pair costs \$1,007 during a calendar school year while a school partnership between a high school and elementary school costs \$10,743 per year, with an average of 12 mentors per school.

### **SIDEBAR**

“It is difficult for me to talk about Mālama Mentors without crying tears of gratitude. We moved to Hawaii from Washington in June 2016. My daughter was new to the school...it was during the resolution of this issue that my daughter was recommended for Mālama Mentors. Taylor [a Mālama Mentor] was a blessing to her at a time when she felt alone. The weekly visits lifted her spirits and boosted her self-esteem. We are forever

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<sup>3</sup> Peeler, Rob, and Kendra Hepler. *"Children and the Development of Ethical Decision-Making."* The Rock Ethics Institute. (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Penn State, 2015). [rockethics.psu.edu/this-is-the-rock/news/children-and-the-development-of-ethical-decision-making](http://rockethics.psu.edu/this-is-the-rock/news/children-and-the-development-of-ethical-decision-making).

grateful for Taylor and the program...A lot of improvements with her reading and familiarities with the alphabet and math.”

Anonymous, Parent of Aiea Elementary School Student

“I have had the privilege of seeing a troubled little boy, ridiculed and shunned by classmates, grow into a young man who serves at our church, joined our worship team, and has now been trained to serve as a Common Grace Uncle himself, befriending a child going through challenges similar to those he faced years ago...Common Grace gives hope to a child growing up in an unforgiving atmosphere. Common Grace provides the opportunity for ordinary people to change lives, and to make our world a better place.”

Ron Arnold, Senior Pastor at Kaimuki Christian Church

“I have been a Common Grace mentor for the past 10 years...Jay Jarman has built the Common Grace experience through his passion, commitment, and determination. The program provides direct interactions between adults and youth, in a loving and caring relationship. The results are improved student performance, strengthened core values, and a life changing experience for both the mentor and student. I fully support his Common Grace program.”

Bub Wo, Executive Team and Owner C.S. Wo & Sons, Ltd.

“I hope you can share with your students and let them know that they have really made a huge impact in their ‘littles’ life.”

Cindy Schrock, Aiea High School Counselor

“...the children love being with their adult mentors. Almost every day they come up to me at school and excitedly ask: ‘When is my mentor coming back?’ They look forward to their special time every week. The effect of this aloha-laden relationship on the children has been remarkable. The children, all of whom are going through tremendous stress in their lives, have seemed to be much happier. One girl in particular, her teacher noted, has undergone a dramatic transformation. Whereas she was once rather clingy and was continually seeking out attention, she now seems to be much more at ease and, so, better able to focus during school. She has, it is quite apparent, found the attention and aloha that she so desperately craved from her Common Grace mentor.”

Toby Yos, Waikiki Elementary School Counselor

## **THE CAMPAIGN FOR COMMON GRACE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **Does Common Grace truly need my support?**

Yes, your support is crucial to Common Grace. Although we are continuously seeking funds through corporate sponsors, as well as grants through foundations, businesses, and federal/state resources, individuals who believe in our cause give 85% of donations. We have celebrated 14 years of helping lonely children with supporters like you.



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