

## Press Release

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### **Children Excited to Become Published Authors**

HONOLULU, HI– Over 70 child authors will show off their own published hardcover books at the Hawaii Book and Music Festival to be held on May 19-20 in downtown Honolulu on the grounds of historic Honolulu Hale (City Hall).

“We will celebrate children as authors and creative entrepreneurs,” said Mark Loughridge, President of Aloha Island Inc., the lead sponsor of the event. “They will sign their own hardcover books, read selections from their works, and sell their books as young entrepreneurs — just like the distinguished adult authors at the festival.” The ultimate goal is to help children connect writing with their passions, so they become passionate about writing. “We want children to realize, ‘Yes, I can *do* this! I am creative and smart enough to write and publish my own books. I am taking strides right here and now into a future creative career.’ ”

The authors range in age from kindergarten to high school students. Some authors wrote fictional stories, some non-fiction, but most of the books reflect the children’s own lives, past and present, and express visualizations of their futures. Some profile their heroes, some deal with environmental and other issues we face here in Hawaii.

Thanks to the generosity of several businesses, each child author at the festival will have their first book bound for free with two Powis Parker hardcover binding machines. The FujiFilm Company will provide binding supplies. And Xerox Hawaii will provide printing services. “We hope the public will join us to see how the books are printed and bound, and to meet the young authors who will be speaking about their works,” said Loughridge.

Aloha Island Inc. marks its debut at the Honolulu Book and Music Festival. The company creates literacy materials for young children in kindergarten through third grade. The locally-themed products include books, songs, software, and hands-on activities for learning to read and write. Aloha Island will sponsor the books published by elementary school children at the festival.

In addition, the Aloha Island team will make it possible for the local non-profit organization Learning for a Lifetime, and its project, “Kids Talk Story,” to appear at the Festival. Margaret South, Executive Director of Learning for a Lifetime, makes it her life’s work to help writers tell their stories.

After a successful stint in Hollywood producing major motion pictures, including the beloved “Beaches,” South has settled in Hawaii with her husband Frank, an author. Together they do what they love – write and teach.

“At ‘Kids Talk Story’ we help teenagers in Hawaii tell their own stories, and provide each author with a hard cover version of that story to keep and treasure forever,” said South. “We use the principles of storytelling to show our student authors that they can act as the heroes of their own life stories. We teach them the empowering message, ‘If you can write your own story, you can write your own happy ending.’ ”

South went on to explain that some students struggle with parental neglect, truancy, or substance abuse issues. For example, when asked to envision her life ten years from now, one of her students replied that she didn’t expect to be alive. After a few weeks of South’s program, she was asked again to visualize her life when all her dreams have come true:

“I’m twenty-five years old. I have two kids, a boy Kainalu and girl, Kailynn. My husband Gus works two jobs.... I work one. I take my two kids to school. I drop them at their class. I tell them I love them. I get to Champs where I am a sales manager. Later Gus calls... to make sure I have the kids and we’re all okay. He tells me he’ll be home for dinner tonight and why don’t we all go out for some pizza? The kids all yell, ‘Yay.’ I feel happy. Things have turned out better than I ever expected.”

When another student was abandoned by her family and found herself homeless, she wrote about her job and being welcomed into the family of her Vietnamese boss:

“A short lady with black, Japanese-looking hair and glasses comes up to my register. ‘Are you Mary Anne?’ she asks. ‘Yes, how may I help you?’ She holds out a lei and says, ‘Welcome to my family.’ I look around. My boss is standing behind me with his two sons. They’re all smiling.”

“The people of Hawaii want literacy programs for their children,” South said. “We receive invitations every day from schools and organizations who want to provide the best education for their students. I only wish we could serve them all. Legislators, teachers, and parents as well, show support and encouragement for ‘Kids Talk Story.’ It makes it fun to do our job!”

The team at Aloha Island also will sponsor books by students of Ala Wai Elementary, Iolani School and the Hawaii Nature Center.

## **More about Aloha Island and its mission...**

### **Entrepreneurship and Giving Back**

When the children sell copies of their books at the festival, the hope is that they will learn that writing and other creative efforts can lead to profitable careers. “We feel this is important so that they start growing lifelong entrepreneurial skills to complement their growing literacy and creativity,” Loughridge said.

“While they develop their creative and entrepreneurial skills, we will encourage the children to share some of their good fortune with their communities by donating a portion of their profits to the charity of their choice — which, in most cases, is likely to be their respective schools!” said Loughridge. This donation process will hopefully encourage lifelong habits of the kids giving back to their communities while they pursue their creative careers.

### **Future Plans**

This festival is to be the first in a long line of projects. “We plan to expand our children’s book writing and binding project to school book fairs, where we would like to see the works of local child authors sold to benefit both the schools and the authors,” Loughridge said.

“The entire community benefits from this sort of innovation at book fairs,” said Loughridge. “It is a way to celebrate the writing achievements of the young authors and it is a chance for young authors to give back to their communities. When parents and friends purchase a child’s book they know, a large chunk of money is *not* shipped out of state, as is the case with other books sold at school book fairs run through big publishers from the mainland,” Loughridge said.

### **On to Multiple Media**

“Literacy now encompasses multiple media, and there are so many interesting career paths available today,” Loughridge said. “Our goal is to provide children with the tools and techniques they will need to sustain their own creative careers in the future.” In the future, Loughridge plans to help empower children with the ability to design and produce their own games, animations, music and other creations — as well as books. “We want to educate and inspire children to create original works in a wide variety of media from an early age,” he said.

### **Importance of Writing**

The reason Loughridge is starting with empowering children with writing is simple: “Writing is one of the most important keys to a great education. It is a key to being able to communicate and thrive in our society.

“The benefit of this project is that it helps children to write something creative, where they can express themselves, choose their own topics, and have ownership of the book that results,” continued Loughridge. “We want to help them connect with and write about the topics that excite and fascinate them, whether it’s about themselves, sports, fiction, pets — wherever their passions are.” Most anybody

would feel good about themselves if they were published authors, Loughridge went on to say, but this is especially true for the youngest authors. Even if only families and friends order copies of their books, it gives them a little taste of 'fame.' "It makes a lasting impression on them, and it can change their concept of themselves. It gives them an opportunity to look deeply into themselves and ask important questions. When a child publishes a book, the whole family celebrates, and the child's self-confidence gets a big boost," said Loughridge.

### **Memories for Lifetimes**

"We all know that nostalgic feeling we get when we leaf through a book we loved in our childhood," said Loughridge. "Our dream is to make it possible for every child in Hawaii — in fact, every child around the world — to grow up with an entire shelf in their bookcase filled with books that they themselves authored." When bound as hardcover books, these original stories can be cherished in their families for generations. The hope is that they will inspire the next generation of children to add their own stories to the family bookshelves.

"As far as we know, this is the first time anywhere that so many child authors will be publishing in hardcover and greeting the public," Loughridge said.

To learn more, head to the Web site [www.alohaislandkids.com](http://www.alohaislandkids.com).

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