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Keiki need each other to grow, develop

By Edna L. Hussey, Ed.D.

If you're a parent, working or not, with young children at home during the pandemic, you may have already come to this awareness — children need to be with other children and the place for this socialization is in preschool. Our keiki, representing many ethnic cultures in Hawaii, may have the support of immediate and extended family, with whom children benefit from caring relationships.

All of these familial interactions are essential to forming the building blocks of identity, self-confidence and emotional well-being. In addition to these supportive relationships, children must also have the developmental experiences that come from interactions with peers and other adults in settings outside the home, the real world.

The value of preschool has often been associated with long-term educational, social, and economic benefits. In short, our youngest citizens who experience school or receive quality child care have a better chance of growing into responsible adults who contribute positively to the community. Longitudinal research indicates better academic success, higher graduation rates, and lower incarceration rates. While all of these outcomes are good for the whole of society, the social-emotional benefits have the most long-lasting impact on brain development.

But parents and teachers are only part of the network. Kids need other kids to grow and develop. This is a basic principle of learning. In the early 20th century, Russian psycholo-

gist Lev Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development in young children asserted that children thrive on interactions with others — adults, yes, and peers, even more so — in situations where some help is needed from someone to nudge them through this Zone of Proximal Development. Teachers teach, but children learn even faster in the company of their peers.

Ever watch children with each other? They are amazing co-teachers in the broad use of the word "classroom." We see it every day in our preschools. One child observes a peer using blocks to build a structure vertically rather than flat on the floor. The children take turns in discussions on the rug, waiting for one peer to finish the idea then connecting one idea to the next; deciphering the art of asking questions that lead to more complex questions; and learning how to respond empathically to a peer whose block structure has toppled to the floor. An astute teacher steps back to provide opportunities throughout the day for peers to model behaviors while creating an environment that supports resilience, self-reliance, and independence through trial and error, for learning beyond the impasse, for persevering.

This is why preschool is a sound investment. For example, Reggio Emilia, a municipality in Italy, has been investing 10% of its budget since the end of World War II to support its 30-plus early learning centers with some

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Edna L. Hussey, Ed.D., is preschool and elementary school principal at Mid-Pacific Institute.

of the best infant-toddler-preschool educators and facilities. Its inquiry-based project approach is lauded by leading education research centers at Harvard and Stanford. The Reggio-inspired preschool and elementary at Mid-Pacific Institute is modeled after this learning approach. Kamehameha Schools, faithful to the mission and will of Princess Pauahi Bishop, funds nearly 30 preschools statewide.

Preschools were the first education centers to re-open in the state after retrofitting spaces and updating safety procedures amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The issue of quality child care has been on the radar in Hawaii pre-COVID with heightened awareness in previous state administrations that resulted in establishing the Executive Office of Early Learning in 2012. In 2019, the Legislature provided funding to add 10 public pre-kindergartens for 4-year-olds to the existing 26 early learning classrooms.

Across the United States, the need for early learning has been gaining support because the pandemic has increased awareness of finding quality, affordable preschool options. There are many choices of public, private and charter preschools in Hawaii. For the sake of your child's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development, consider a preschool community.

Kids need to be with other kids.



STAR-ADVERTISER

A Biki bike rental station is sited near First Hawaiian Bank in Kaimuki, one of many stations around Oahu.

We should praise, support Biki bikes

By Lori McCarney

In 2014 the city and state committed a total of \$2 million as seed funding to create a bikeshare program to achieve health, affordability, transportation and sustainability goals. They granted that to a new nonprofit, Bikeshare Hawaii, where I became CEO.

Bikeshare Hawaii worked like a lean entrepreneurial start-up over a 30-month period to create the system — to review and select bikes and other equipment and technology, set service standards for operations and customer service, review and select an operator, determine and prepare plans for each bikeshare station location, conduct extensive community and business outreach, develop and execute the system's brand, create a proprietary app, build a website, develop pricing that would be attractive to both residents and visitors, and manage the system launch.

Crucial was finding money for the bikeshare equipment — \$5 million to \$7 million was needed to fund at least 100 bikeshare stations and 1,000 bikes so it would be convenient enough to increase ridership. I knocked on doors of most large local companies seeking a sponsor. Honolulu has local heroes, but none willing or able to underwrite at this level.

I pitched the program to private investors and banks, but they were not interested since virtually all other bike-

share systems in the world were not profitable. Most systems survived because of major subsidies from their municipality or a major sponsor. Or they folded.

So, as we evaluated potential operators, we required them to purchase equipment and assume operating risk while delivering our service standards. We determined that fare and sponsorship revenue would go to fund their equipment financing and system operations. No financial guarantees were made by Bikeshare Hawaii nor the city. (At the time, most cities purchased bikeshare equipment and hired a for-profit operator to run their system through a service contract. Financial risk was totally with a city.)

We reached an agreement with Secure Bike Share who felt positive about the program and thought success here could help them achieve other worldwide goals. If the program failed, they were the losers. They worked hard with us, the city, and the community to make Biki a success.

The city and Bikeshare Hawaii collaborated on Biki Stop locations. We looked at locations for potential use and the need to build a cohesive and convenient network.

The city evaluated each location to ensure it met strict traffic and safety

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Lori McCarney is founding CEO of Bikeshare Hawaii.

requirements, and provided no-cost permits to support the project.

Biki launched June 28, 2017. After seeing Biki through its first 18 months of operations, I retired. I left gratified, watching Biki become more and more popular.

I was proud to see the city, state, federal government, local companies, small businesses, private enterprise, other nonprofits, visitors and residents come together — each supporting the program in their own way: Somewhat like a public private partnership (P3) on steroids.

I understand people might equate lots of Biki riders with lots of profit. But Biki is a capital-intensive start up. And as with any similar new venture, financial projections did not show fare and sponsorship revenue covering financing and operating expenses for several years. Even with high levels of ridership.

I am glad to see the current interest in Biki. I'm hoping that as it is further examined, the city will consider any loss of parking revenue a small contribution to a program that is achieving all goals set out for it. And, that it will further support Biki with the funding it requires to expand and deliver a proven transportation mode to more and more people in our community.

Performance review: How I was wrong about Trump



KATHLEEN PARKER

It is customary this time of year for opinion columnists to review their performance and offer a mea culpa where appropriate. My list is long enough that I thought I'd get an early start.

My biggest mistake is actually four years old, which can be explained but not, as it turns out, justified. On the eve of Election 2016, I wrote that we'd survive as a nation no matter who won, Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton. I did not say we'd be fine. Mere survival seemed a fairly safe bet and, so, I gambled all my chips on our system of checks and balances.

Writers often say they write the books — or columns — they need to read. Though I had been consistently critical of candidate Trump since the first rumor surfaced that he might run for president, I had become convinced six weeks before Election Day in 2016 that he was going to win. This insight was based upon my familiarity with his base — the folks Clinton fatefully called "deplorables." But I thought we'd get through it OK. That proved to be a mistake.

Every time President Trump did something objectionable, which was more or less daily, Twitter would remind me of my earlier error. The checks and balances conceived by the creators of our republic and in which I had placed my faith weren't nearly as strong as I had believed. They've only eroded further under Trump, leaving us at the end of his term, literally, *not* surviving.

No one could have predicted the coronavirus pandemic, which has taken nearly 295,000 American lives so far. In retrospect, it's not surprising that Trump mishandled matters during the early stages of the virus when swift, decisive actions might have made a difference. We now know that he is that bad a human being and that lousy a leader. We've come not to expect just worse from him but *the* worst. If once I thought that he'd be at least rational — or I viewed his rallies as harmless sideshows — I've been thoroughly disabused of such notions.

Not much could be worse than hosting superspreader events and refusing to wear a mask or urging people not to fear the virus because, after all, he caught it and was treated by the best doctors in the world. It isn't much of a leap from that kind of behavior to 49% of Americans saying they would not get the coronavirus vaccine if it were available today. This

doesn't necessarily mean that all who are vaccine-resistant are Trump supporters. But I wouldn't be surprised if a Venn diagram showed a significant overlap. Trump's only modest shot for redemption for his performance on the virus is to get the vaccine in a very public way and encourage others to do the same. It's not too late to change minds and save lives.

In the meantime, as the physical health of the nation worsens, the bonds of trust between leaders and citizens are nearing an irrevocable breaking point. Trump's call to overthrow the 2020 election, which gained traction through a lawsuit filed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, R, against four swing states, has exposed the underbelly of the GOP. There's nothing some Republicans won't do to hold onto power, even at the expense of the country's dwindling chances to unite in common cause.

If once I thought that Donald Trump would be at least rational — or I viewed his rallies as harmless sideshows — I've been thoroughly disabused of such notions.

Seventeen additional Republican attorneys general joined Paxton's suit, while 126 Republican House members signed an amicus brief supporting Paxton's request that the Supreme Court overturn President-elect Joe Biden's victory. The court dismissed the request Friday night. (The suit filed by Paxton, by the way, came just weeks after learning he was the subject of a federal investigation into allegations that he improperly used his office to help a political donor.)

It is utterly mind-boggling that we've reached this point. Republicans continue to stall essential COVID-19 relief funding, while the amicus-brief signatories apparently would rather cling to a possible Trump run in 2024 than act with character and courage. Worst of all, people whose minds have been warped by lies, conspiracy theories and disinformation would rather risk death and/or harm to others and themselves than wear a mask for a few more weeks.

For Pete's sake, people: What is wrong with you?

What's wrong is Trump, was Trump, forever-will-be Trump. His overthrow-campaign is almost certainly doomed because there simply is no evidence to support his claims of voter fraud. Facts still matter. But the mess he'll leave behind in less than 40 days won't be tidied up soon, if ever. I'd like to un-write that column. To anyone who may have read it and found solace in my words, I apologize.

Kathleen Parker writes for *The Washington Post*.

THE LAST WORD

It is really sad, especially for the seniors. ... Whether they are going to play again or not play again, we don't know. I feel for them."

Robyn Ah Mow

University of Hawaii Rainbow Wahine volleyball coach, after the Big West Conference announced the cancellation of the 2020-21 fall season sports of Wahine volleyball, soccer and cross-country