



THE HARBOR

Hannah: ‘I Know They Need Help’

Hannah has other places she could move to. She stays in The Harbor because she wants to make sure the rest of her family is OK.

NOVEMBER 17, 2015 • By Jessica Terrell  

The first time her family moved to the beach, Hannah refused to go with them.

Hannah was 12, and she’d heard terrible things about living at Keaau Beach Park. Drug dealers roam the park, relatives warned her. Rapists.

She stayed with a relative for the first month that her parents and three brothers were at Keaau. Then Hannah found out that her mother was forking over most of the family’s food stamps to that relative in order to keep her there. So she agreed to go to the beach.



Cory Lum/Civil Beat

Hannah says it would be hard to move to another state and leave her family behind.

Hannah is 19 now, and has a baby of her own. She moved to The Harbor with her family a few months ago, setting up a tent not far from the shoreline. Her parents, two of her three brothers, a sister-in-law, and three nephews live in nearby tents.

The camp in Waianae is safer than she thought it would be. Cleaner too.

It's hot, though, in the summer. Her toddler gets heat rashes, angry welts and bumps. She tries to keep the child cool by filling a blue plastic bucket with a few inches of water and letting the child spend hours splashing about.

Hannah and her boyfriend have other places they could go: family on the Big Island and in California who want to take them in.

She's never lived anywhere but Oahu though, never been on an airplane before.

More than that, the girl who once refused to follow her family into homelessness now finds it hard to leave them behind.

Hannah and her boyfriend are the only people in the entire family with steady jobs right now. She commutes by bus five days a week into Waikiki, making a two-hour journey each way to clean hotel rooms. Her boyfriend works two under-the-table jobs in construction and landscaping.

Two of the adults in her family get welfare, but the money doesn't stretch far with so many people to feed. She can't leave, until she knows they will be OK.

"I know they need help," she says. "Right now, we are just helping each other out, getting by day by day."

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