

### Left and Never Came Back

Clarence T. C. Ching was an extraordinary man who contributed many great things to the State of Hawaii. He built Kukui Gardens, an affordable housing project, and donated money to many schools, including Sacred Hearts Academy and Saint Louis School. He helped to resolve many problems that growing and expanding communities throughout Oahu encountered. One example was building a hospital for the people living on the Leeward side of the island so that they could have a hospital nearby.

One problem in Hawaii that needs a solution is the increasing number of high school drop-outs. According to the latest information released by the U. S. State Department of Education in 2008, Hawaii state graduation rates were about 7 out of 10 on Oahu and 5 out of 10 on the neighbor islands. Hawaii has about 33 high school students dropping out each school day. Of the total number of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who enrolled in Hawaii's high schools in the 2004-2005 school year, 5, 836 did not graduate. In July of 2009, the unemployment rate for high school drop-outs was 15.4 percent, compared to 9.4 percent for high school graduates.

Something that could help to alleviate this problem would be having a team of mentors come to the high schools twice a year to talk to them about the consequences of dropping out of high school. The group would circulate in local private and public high schools and talk about the many reasons to stay in school. These teams of counselors would visit twice a year, on Mondays and Fridays for two weeks. It would be a reminder to students that dropping out of high has some seriously bad consequences.

Two of the consequences that could be discussed are the facts that job opportunities are very slim without a high school diploma and that wages for those without a diploma are usually lower. In a 2009 study by the Alliance for Excellent Education, it was reported that there is a big earnings gap between high school graduates and drop-outs, a difference of almost \$10,000 per year.

The Clarence T. C. Ching Foundation is a non-profit organization that has funded many schools to help them construct buildings and create scholarships for students. The Foundation has helped schools such as Sacred Hearts Academy, the University of Hawaii, Punahou, Maryknoll, and many more.

Clarence T. C. Ching was a hard-working student who was class president twice and later became the president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. He would probably support this idea to help students become better citizens by helping them finish high school.

This enormous problem of the high school drop-out rate needs to be solved and the addition of a counseling program to the high school curriculum would be extremely helpful.