

# 'Project Happiness' highlights benefit

<http://www.hawaiitribune-herald.com/sections/news/community/project-happiness-highlights-benefit.html>

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Connections Public Charter School will celebrate its 12th birthday as a self-described "Community, Business & Education Learning Ohana" at a fundraiser party from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday, May 5, at 'Imiloa Astronomy Center. Tickets are \$25, available at the Kress Building at 174 Kamehameha Ave. in downtown Hilo.

In tribute to Mental Health Awareness Month in May, coordinators are preparing a program that addresses the basis of mental health — happiness.

"The public is cordially invited to an educational birthday extravaganza celebration featuring the humor and blessings of Hawaiian Kahu M. Kalani Souza," said spokeswoman Elizabeth Jenkins of the Connections Parent Teacher Student Organization.

"Join us for the premiere of a hilarious new 'edutainment' show written especially for this event," said Jenkins.

The celebration will also feature a brief history of the school by Principal John Thatcher, and the screening of the movie "Project Happiness" with filmmaker and producer Randy Taran. It will be the first public screening of the film on the Big Island.

"Project Happiness" began as one mom's proactive response to depression in her own teenage daughters, said Jenkins.

According to the World Health Organization, depression is the leading disability worldwide. Suicides relating to depression are the third leading cause of death in youth. A group of high school students from three continents, a teacher and mother (Taran) decided to go on a quest searching for an answer to the question: What is lasting happiness?

Happiness is a universal quest. But what does it really mean?

In this award-winning documentary, youths from three continents interview George Lucas, Richard Gere and neuroscientist Richard Davidson on the nature of lasting happiness. Then, they travel to India for an unforgettable private audience with the Dalai Lama.

The community is invited, through their eyes, to "gain a new perspective on how to expand your happiness and live a meaningful life. Greater happiness is possible now." For further info, please call Jenkins at 430-3448.