

# SURFRIDER SPIRIT SESSIONS

CATCHING WAVES AND CHANGING LIVES

**Mission:** Surfrider Spirit Sessions' mission is to create and deliver holistic, ocean-based experiential education and mentoring programs and activities that connect, enhance, and fill in the gaps within existing nonprofit programs serving at-risk and adjudicated youth by teaching ocean awareness, environmental sensitivity and Hawaiian culture to youth.

**Background and History:** Surfrider Spirit Sessions (SSS) is a Hawaii based grassroots non-profit 501(c)(3) organization created in 2006 in response to a need expressed by the Hawaii State Family Courts for effective diversion programs and mentoring support for youth in the juvenile justice system. Since its inception, SSS has expanded its reach to serve a wide continuum of at-risk youth on Oahu. We have served over 700 youth through our core program, Spirit Sessions.

**Our Work:** We provide adult mentoring services to youth through, 8-week programs, using ocean-based activities and surfing as a theme for activities and lessons. Spirit Sessions provide evidence-based gender responsive and trauma informed programming. Teens paired with a mentor participate in themed discussions, surfing, journaling, environmental and Hawaiian culture lessons, and participate in beach clean-ups. Nurturing relationships develop as teens learn to trust and accept support, discovering new perspectives and a sense of belonging among mentors and staff.

Additionally, SSS teaches job readiness skills and facilitates access to job opportunities. Select students return as paid Junior Mentors assisting staff on the beach, at events and supporting their peers. Youth also serve as role models at Community Service Days, mentoring younger kids. Here they gain empowerment, leadership skills, enhanced self-esteem and empathy in a supportive `Ohana as they begin to see brighter possibilities for their futures and develop skills and resources to reach higher aspirations.

**Our Youth:** We serve boys and girls aged 10-18 years who are directed to our programs by judges, case workers, school counselors, youth serving programs and parents. We also take kids generally at-risk due to learning disabilities or poverty. If some of these youth do not make serious changes, they stand in danger of ending up with criminal records and entering the adult prison system within 12-24 months. Others suffer from depression, abuse and neglect, out-of-home placements, poverty and other risk factors. We create a safety-net of resiliency factors, resources and support that they would not have otherwise.

**Our Impact:** It Works! According to survey results these outcomes were met in 2018:

- 89% reported a strong positive shift in self-esteem and confidence.
- 73% experienced a positive shift, and 13% experienced a strong positive shift, in their relationships with mentors and in building of trust.
- 89% showed a positive, and 2% a strong positive, increased interest in citizenship.
- 73% reported a positive and 7% reported a strong positive in learning to live a healthier lifestyle

**Cost-Effective and Community Based Model:** SSS is this highly effective award-winning experiential program that leverages hours of dedicated volunteer time to mentor under-served youth, filling critical gaps in the juvenile justice system and community programs that are severely under-resourced. By partnering with other youth serving organizations and community volunteers, SSS can help build a stronger safety net for our high risk youth.

**Contact Us** at (808) 593-1718 or visit us at [www.spiritsessions.org](http://www.spiritsessions.org). For more information call Connie Sizemore, Executive Director at (808) 391-0997 or [connie@surferspirit.org](mailto:connie@surferspirit.org).