

Westside Stories

"The Pride of the Westside"

A community newspaper by and for residents of the Leeward Coast of O'ahu, Hawai'i
Direct mailed to over 15,400 residences in the areas of Nānākuli, Mā'ili, Wai'anae, Mākaha and Mākua

FEBRUARY 2026
Volume 29, Number 2

Westside Families Connect with Safe & Sound Westside Career & Community Fair at Wai'anae High

Submitted by Angela Hoppe-Cruz

The 2026 new year kicked off with a powerful surge of opportunities for many at Wai'anae High School on January 9 as the Searider Grub and Market played host to the inaugural "Safe & Sound Westside Public Safety Careers

& Community Fair"—an evening dedicated to empowering local families and charting paths to success. Wai'anae High School, INPEACE and Safe and Sound Westside Hui helped to bridge families to valuable resources.



HPD and Sheriff's Office throwing the shaka that they enjoyed participating in the event



Sheriff Bontog, a WHS Alumni, was on hand to help recruit.

The heart of the event was all about connection. Students and parents had the unique chance to meet face-to-face with first responder professionals, getting a front-row seat to careers in public safety. But the support didn't stop there—the campus was buzzing with providers offering vital resources for education, employment, housing, financial literacy, and health and mental wellness support. Of course, no Westside gathering is complete without some 'ono grinds! Local food trucks kept the energy high as families navigated the resource booths and made meaningful connections.

Mahalo to all of the public safety representatives and community service providers who participated including HPD, HFD, City & County Ocean Safety Department, Nā Kia'i O Ke Kai Wai'anae, The YES Project, WCCHC, 'Elepaio Social Services, WEDC, Kids Hurt Too, Hale

Na'au Pono-Wai'anae Neighborhood Place, INPEACE, Wai'anae Public Library, Teach For America, Read To Me, State Sheriff's Office, Department of

Continued on page 4



Dept. of Ocean Safety shared information on becoming a lifeguard.



HFD shared pathway options to becoming a firefighter.

Happy Valentine's Day - February 14th

Kala DeSoto Named Best Overall Performer at 2026 Da Hui Backdoor Shootout

Submitted by Jacob Aki

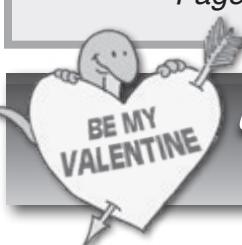
An 18-year-old surfer from Mākaha just etched his name into Hawai'i surf history at Pipeline. Kalānōweo "Kala" DeSoto was named Best Overall Performer and Shootout Champion at the 2026 Da Hui Backdoor Shootout, becoming the youngest surfer ever to win the iconic invitational—and the only competitor in event history to win both longboard and shortboard titles at Banzai Pipeline.

Held in memory of Duke Kahanamoku and regarded as one of Hawai'i's most respected surf events, this year's Shootout unfolded under rare conditions. After weeks of inconsistent swell and shifting sand, organizers shifted from the traditional team format to an open, expression-style session that tested adaptability, patience and respect in the

Continued on page 2



Kala (center) with his parents Mālia Ka'ahue and Duane DeSoto



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From the Publisher

By Steve Olbrich

Please visit our Facebook page for updated events that are happening throughout the month here on our Westside



February is going to be a very busy month here on our Westside. Make sure you check out our "What's Up" on page 9.

The 2026 Legislative session is in full swing. Stay informed on legislative bills that are important to you and your 'ohana as well as those that effect our Westside. If you can't make the various hearings in person, you can submit testimony online. Visit www.capitol.hawaii.gov for information.

'Elepaio Social Services will kick off the "Eat Local Challenge" at the Makeke Wai'anae Farmers Market beginning on February 7. This year's featured food item is kalo and events/recipes/cooking demonstrations will be scheduled each Saturday throughout the month. Make sure you check it out!

Valentine's Day is on February 14. Get your "sweetheart" a special gift or take them out to lunch or dinner. If you forget, you may want to pick up dinner from one of our local restaurants and bring it home on that day.

The Buffalo Big Board Surfing Classic returns to Mākaha Surfing Beach beginning on the President's Day 3-day weekend starting February 14 (surf per-

mitting) and concludes on the following weekend. As always it will include long board, tandem, canoe, supsquatch, bully board, body surfing and more. For more information, visit www.hoomaa.org

Chinese/Lunar New Year begins on February 17. It's the "Year of the Fire Horse" which is supposed to bring intense energy for bold changes, innovation and breaking old patterns with a focus on freedom, passion and transformative growth. Many celebrations are being scheduled in Chinatown, so take the keiki and check them out.

February 17 is also Fat Tuesday; here in Hawai'i we know it as "Malasada Day." Hopefully, you can get yours before the bakeries/food trucks all sell out. If not, reach out to your favorite "Vovo" to make you some. But remember if she can't — you can!

There are many scholarship opportunities available starting in January for those of you with graduating high school seniors. Make sure you have your 'ōpio check with their school counselor for the latest information and applications. Also, check page 12 for some Westside scholarships that are also available.

Sheryl Lynch Retires from Wai'anae Public Library



"The Wai'anae community gave me such a feeling of welcome, so much aloha, it was a joy to go to work every day," she said.

Sheryl raised her family while moving around the world with a military spouse and she came to Hawai'i in 1997 and never left. She attended library school at UH Mānoa and began her career as a substitute librarian at the Pearl City library. "I was meant to be a librarian; sharing my love of reading with the public is my greatest joy. I will miss the people very much, but retirement is the next step in my journey," she said.

Sheryl is credited with bringing many new programs and innovations to Wai'anae library including the "Book Nook," an online book club (due to the pandemic) and a variety of monthly programs for people of all ages. The Friends of Wai'anae Library (FOWL) hosted a farewell party to send her onto the next chapter in her new journey in her life. She will be greatly missed by all, and we wish her well.

Wai'anae Public Library's branch manager Sheryl Lynch retired on December 1 following a twenty-five-year career with Hawai'i Public Library System with the last ten years being branch manager (head librarian) at Wai'anae Public Library. She had previously worked at Liliha and Kapolei Public Libraries before coming to Wai'anae.

Kala DeSoto

Continued from front page

lineup. Against a field of veteran North Shore surfers and rising talents, DeSoto stood out — earning Best Overall Performer and Best Barrel Ride. "This is a dream come true," said DeSoto. "I've been chasing this moment my whole life. To win my second Da Hui Backdoor Shootout, and this time on a shortboard, means everything."

He earned the longboard title last winter with a standout backside performance, a feat that showcased his comfort and confidence at one of the world's most demanding waves.

Born and raised in Mākaha, DeSoto carries a deep waterman lineage as

the son of world champion longboarder Duane DeSoto, but his latest win firmly establishes him on his own terms. Judges cited his consistency, wave selection, and composure throughout the session.

Beyond competition, DeSoto also serves as an ambassador for the Smile Wave Fund, reflecting his commitment to giving back to Hawai'i's youth surf community and honoring the responsibility that comes with success at Pipeline. The philanthropic organization focuses on improving quality of life in coastal communities through education, social integration, and increased awareness of environmental challenges tied to geography and consumption habits.

Congratulations Kala!

Contributors to this Month's Issue:

Jacob Aki, Kelsey Domingo, Germaine Escoto, Sally Ford, Lei'a Haff, Deborah Hoohuli-McKinney, Angela Hoppe-Cruz, Sheryl Lynch, Regina Souza, Kelly Stinefelt, Anuhea Tavares, Karen Young

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who contributed to their community newspaper and we invite everyone to do the same.

Next issue: March 2026 • Story & Advertising Deadline: February 10, 2026

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P.O.Box 4027 • Wai'anae, HI 96792 / Telephone: 808-696-7978

E-mail: wss@hawaii.rr.com / Website: www.wsshawaii.com

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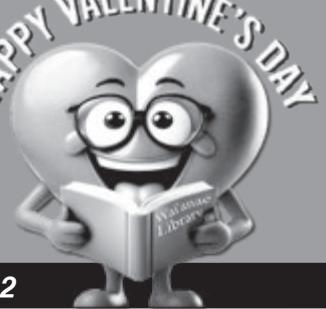


I Love Disney

Inspiration

Black History

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY



LIBRARY SCHEDULES ON PAGE 12

Pua Kaiāulu Summer Program is Recognized by the Hawai'i State Bar Association

Submitted by Germaine Escoto

The Hawaii State Bar Association at its December 2025 annual meeting presented the PLACES and Ka'ala Farm's Pua Kaiāulu (PK) program with its Liberty Bell Award. PK is a five-week summer program that connects Wai'anae Coast high school and college students to their 'āina, and the abundance of creative/critical thinking practitioners within the community. As part of the immersion with practitioners, ancestral knowledge, and community talk stories, PK participants explore current community challenges such as land use, fire mitigation, and water.

PK serves approximately thirty-five youth each summer. The University of Hawaii Law School has participated with PK for three years, under the guidance of Law Professor Richard Wallsgrove. With the guidance of professors and practicing attorneys, PK youth study authentic community environmental challenges through a moot court exercise. The exercise requires the youth to draw upon relevant legal opinions and Hawaii constitution provisions to develop, present, and defend proposed solutions.

"These programs educate young folks about the myriad ways to effect change and empower students to engage with important issues in their communities



Congresswoman Jill Tokuda came out for a lunch-time talk story related to explorations and insights around the theme of beloved community and its relationship to each pathway of the summer.

from multiple angles, including the legal system," commented Professor Lucy Brown. "I had the privilege of helping facilitate PK this past summer and I was very impressed with the quality of the students' participation! They grappled with the very same issues that decision makers are faced with every day, including how to balance the many important, competing needs of the community," said Brown. "PLACES not only helps students find their voices as community advocates but also dispels myths about what types of people can and should become lawyers. This has ripple effects and plays an important role in the functioning of a healthy democracy—where diverse experiences and voices have a seat at the table to make the community a better place for all people."

Ko Olina
Westside Hō'olaule'a
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Announcing the Winner of our Scavenger HUNT!

808

Congratulations to our Scavenger Hunt winner: **Justina Lee Kiaaina Chongtim**

This hunt brought neighbors back to the places, stories, and people that make our community special. It reminded us that pride grows when we show up, explore, and connect.

Congratulations to our winner, and thank you to everyone who helped prove that community pride starts with participation.



Announcing Our Salesperson of the Year 2025!

Shawntae U. Ellis

REALTOR/Broker-in-Charge

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Foster Realty, Inc. is proud to announce that Shawntae U. Ellis has been awarded Salesperson of the Year for 2025 in recognition of her excellent sales performance and professionalism. She consistently provides outstanding service to her clients and customers and has gained the respect of her peers in the real estate industry and as Broker-in-Charge of Foster Realty. Congratulations Shawntae!

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Legislatively Speaking



Representative
**Darius
Kila**

House District 44
Mā'ili, Nānākuli,
Honokai Hale

February at the State Capitol means the work is fully underway!

Committee hearings are moving at full speed, bills are being heard, amended and debated, and conversations that shape the future of our communities are happening daily. For me, that always comes back to one simple question: How does this impact the Wai'anae Coast?

From Mā'ili to Lualualei, Nānākuli to Ko Olina and Honokai Hale, our district has unique needs. Transportation,



Representatives Darius Kila and Chris Muraoka on Opening Day at the Hawai'i State Capitol, committed to bipartisan collaboration this session.

public safety, cost of living and responsible development remain at the forefront of what I am focused on this session. Whether it is advancing roadway safety reforms, strengthening consumer

Continued on page 5

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Representative
**CHRISTOPHER
Muraoka**

House District 45
Wai'anae, Mākaha
Mākua

The 2026 Legislative Session is officially underway at the Hawai'i State Capitol, and once again, the voices of the Westside are part of the conversation. This work is deeply rooted in our community and shaped by the people, families and neighborhoods that make Wai'anae home. Every day, we carry your stories, concerns, and hopes with us as we advocate on your behalf and work to ensure your priorities are reflected in the legislative process.

This year, our office introduced ten bills rooted in the needs and voices of Wai'anae, while also strengthening communities across the state of Hawai'i. These measures reflect what we

consistently hear from Westside families — the need for opportunity, strong support systems and practical solutions that improve everyday life. Although the legislative process can sometimes feel distant or complex, our focus remains clear bringing the priorities of Wai'anae to the Capitol and working together to build a better future for our community and our state.

Community engagement remains essential to this work. When residents stay informed and involved, our collective voice grows stronger and more effective. We encourage you to follow our updates, upcoming events and important information by connecting with us on Instagram, Facebook and through our website throughout the legislative session.

Mahalo to everyone who stopped by the Capitol on Opening Day to show support, share mana'o, or simply say hello. Seeing our community represented in these halls is a powerful reminder of why this work matters. Thank you as well to those who joined us for our first



Opening Day at the Legislature, Representative Muraoka met with students and teachers from Papahana 'o Kaiona

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Wai'anae Intermediate School
April 3 & 4, 2026

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SAFE & SOUND

Continued from front page

Law Enforcement, Office of Wellness & Resilience, Department of Human Service and many more! We couldn't have done it without you!

If you missed this one, don't worry—the momentum is moving down the coast! The Safe & Sound Westside Hui are already gearing up for the next event at Nānākuli High & Intermediate School on February 5. We can't wait to see your 'ohana there to take advantage of these life changing resources, navigate public safety career options and of course, connect with community while enjoying 'ono food!

Talk Story of 2026 at Teapresso Bar. These gatherings center listening, learning, and moving forward together.

We invite you to continue the conversation and join us for our next Talk Story on February 27 at Lilikoi Lounge at Mākaha Valley Country Club. Your presence matters, your voice matters, and together we will continue building a stronger Westside for generations to come. Mahalo for your trust, partnership, and commitment to shaping policies grounded in community values.

Aloha, Uncle Black Hoohuli

Submitted by Deborah Hoohuli-McKinney

The descendants of Josiah Lanakila "Black" Hoohuli Sr. honor our beloved makuakāne, who departed this life on November 9, 2025, in his eighty-sixth year, at Moanalua, O'ahu surrounded by those who loved him.

He was born on December 30, 1938, in Nānākuli, and was the fourth son of Joseph Kahapea Pa'ahao and Kulani (Lima) Hoohuli. Of chiefly, priestly and warrior ancestry, he was the last of his generation, as all of the seven brothers and seven sisters now are gathered to Ke Akua in Heaven. He wed his one true love, Velma Lou Leinaala "Leina" Adams, on August 17, 1963, in Nānākuli and they were together for thirty-nine years. They lovingly raised our 'ohana until her passing in 2002. Today, fifty-seven descendants carry his legacy.

He served as a U.S. Marine and devoted more than five decades to Hawaii Department of Education, retiring in 2024 from his role as Head Custodian at Nānākuli High and Intermediate School. By advising on Native American Graves Protection Act (NAGPRA) matters, he worked to protect iwi kūpuna. Through associations such as the Ahupua'a o Nānākuli Homestead Association, he upheld kuleana to land and community. Involved with places of learning such as Kula Kaiapuni and Ka Waihona o Ka Na'auao Charter School,



he supported the perpetuation of 'ōlelo Hawai'i and 'ike kūpuna. A founder of Ho'ala Kanawai and Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, he was deeply faithful to the lāhui.

He is survived by sons Ivanhoe "Boy" Hoohuli, Josiah "Juna" Hoohuli Jr. (Levina "Noe") and Donald "Macky" Hoohuli (Johnette "Jay") and daughters Rachel "Momi" Conner and Olinda "Nina" Fisher; fifteen grandchildren, twenty-eight great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren.

Services will be held on Friday, February 6 from 5 to 9 pm and Saturday, February 7, from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m., at Mililani Mortuary Park, Mauka Chapel.

Na Iehova e mālama iā 'oe. (Halelu 121:7)

Rep. Kila

Continued from page 4

protections or ensuring that infrastructure investments reach the Westside, I remain committed to delivering practical results that improve everyday life for our families.

This month marks a critical stage in the legislative process. Bills that do not move forward soon will not advance this year. That makes community input especially important right now. If there is an issue affecting you, your business or your 'ohana, now is the time to speak up.

Beyond policy, February is also about presence. I continue meeting with community organizations, schools, kūpuna

groups and small business owners to ensure our decisions at the Capitol reflect real experiences at home. Good legislation does not happen in isolation. It happens when government listens.

Serving this community remains one of the greatest honors of my life. The work is demanding, but the purpose is clear. Every hearing, every late night and every difficult conversation is grounded in the same mission: to ensure the Wai'anae Coast is heard, respected and invested in.

If you would like to share your thoughts or need assistance, please contact my office at (808) 586-9480 or email repkila@capitol.hawaii.gov

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NEWSLETTER

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FEBRUARY 2026 | RICHARD BETTINI, PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER | DR. DONALD SIMPSON, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER | GINGER FUATA, CHAIRPERSON

WCCHC'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

WCCHC Legislative Priorities:

Advocating for a Healthier West Oahu



As Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center prepares for the 2026 legislative session, our advocacy focuses on protecting access to care and strengthening the systems our community relies on. WCCHC supports policies and investments that address the following issues impacting patients and community health centers statewide:

- Mitigate the Impacts of the Upcoming Medicaid Changes to preserve coverage & continuity of care
- Support Healthcare Workforce Development
- Support Subsidy Increase for WCCHC Emergency Department (12 am - 8 am)
- Expansion of Telehealth Modalities
- Promote Healthcare Technology and Innovation
- Rural Healthcare Transformation (RHT) Program

At the heart of WCCHC's 2026 priorities is an Operating Grant-in-Aid to support its Medicaid Readiness Plan. Funding will expand Medicaid enrollment and redetermination support by hiring

additional Eligibility Workers, establishing a West O'ahu Social Services Resource Hub at the Wai'anae Mall, implementing enrollment and tracking software to better support hard-to-reach patients, and strengthening outreach through materials and community events across West O'ahu.

WCCHC is also requesting funding for a Capital Improvement Project to expand the Waipahu Family Health Center at the Filipino Community Center. Capital funding will allow WCCHC to convert and retrofit newly leased office space into clinical space adjacent to the existing primary care clinic, increasing exam room capacity, improving patient flow and accessibility, and creating dedicated space for an on-site social services resource hub and health and wellness training center. Together, these investments will help ensure patients remain insured, reduce uncompensated care, and expand access to comprehensive, coordinated care for families across West O'ahu.

HONORING OUR LEGACY NURSE PRACTITIONERS

On December 4, Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center gathered at the Dodge & Claggett Lānai at our main campus to honor four Legacy Nurse Practitioners whose leadership and dedication helped shape the foundation of care at our Health Center. Staff and community came together for a blessing and recognition of these exceptional providers, along with the blessing of a new recognition display created in their honor:

- Karen Young
- Kathy Terada
- Patricia "Pat" McKenzie
- Lisa Zick-Mariteragi

These remarkable Nurse Practitioners have been part of WCCHC since the early days, helping to pave the way

for Nurse Practitioners across our organization. From establishing our Women's Health Department to growing our Adult Medicine Clinic and developing our Nurse Practitioner Residency Program, their impact continues to be felt throughout our Health Center and the community.

Beyond their clinical care, their mentorship has influenced generations of Nurse Practitioners who continue this important work today. Their legacy lives on through the providers they mentored, the programs they helped build, and the patients and families they cared for over decades.

The community is invited to visit the Dodge & Claggett Lānai to view the recognition display honoring WCCHC's Legacy Nurse Practitioners and their enduring impact on our Health Center.



2026 CHUCK WOTHKE HEALTH CAREER SCHOLARSHIP

OVER
\$5,000
SCHOLARSHIP
FUNDS
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Chuck Wothke was one of the original founders of the Health Center over 50 years ago and a longtime WCCHC board member until he passed away in 2005. Chuck was a firm believer in education and advocated for health care and training opportunities for Leeward community residents. Well over 125 college-bound residents have benefits from the Chuck Wothke scholarship award that offers financial support to students pursuing secondary education in health career programs in Hawaii and on the mainland.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

Applications must be postmarked no later than April 3, 2026 or delivered in person by 4:30pm on April 3, 2026. For an application, visit: wcchc.com/Scholarships

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WAIANAE COAST
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FEATURED TOPIC:
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WCCHC NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026 | RICHARD BETTINI, PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER | DR. DONALD SIMPSON, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER | GINGER FUATA, CHAIRPERSON

WELCOME DR. DONALD SIMPSON, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER



On January 1, 2026, Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC) proudly welcomed Dr. Donald Simpson as Chief Medical Officer.

Dr. Simpson is well known to the Waianae Coast community through his service at WCCHC. He joined the Health Center in 2020 as a Psychiatrist serving both adults and keiki and has served since 2023 as Senior Behavioral Health Clinical Director.

In his leadership roles at WCCHC, Dr. Simpson has overseen Behavioral Health, Addiction Medicine, and Chronic Pain Management services. His work has helped reduce wait times, expand the provider workforce, and strengthen the integration of behavioral health into primary and specialty care. Through these efforts, he has enhanced care coordination across the Health Center while supporting staff and advancing whole-person, community-based models of care.

Dr. Simpson completed his residency training at Griffin Memorial Hospital and Rush University Medical Center, where he served as both Chief Resident and Chief Fellow. He is board certified in Psychiatry and Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and holds an MBA in Healthcare Management from Davenport University. He also serves as an Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine, WCCHC's on-campus medical school partner, and remains deeply committed to teaching and mentoring the next generation of physicians.

In His Own Words

"I am honored to step into the role of Chief Medical Officer at WCCHC. This is a kuleana I accept with deep respect for this community, our history, and the dedicated staff who serve our patients every day."

My journey in healthcare began more than 26 years ago as a receptionist in my hometown emergency department. Since then, I've had the opportunity to serve in many roles across the healthcare system. These experiences shaped my belief that the best care is grounded in relationships, trust, and respect for all involved—no matter their title or job description.

Over the past 5.5 years, I've been grateful to serve this community as a Psychiatrist focused on whole-person care for patients of all ages, and for the past 2.5 years, to help expand access to care to meet our community's growing healthcare needs.

My vision is rooted in mālama, laulima, and always striving to act with pono. I am committed to strengthening and expanding safe, high-quality care; advancing whole-person care; ensuring those who care for our community are supported; and fostering a culture of continuous improvement while reducing burnout. I come committed to listening first, learning together, and building solutions in partnership with staff and community alike. I am grateful for the trust placed in me and look forward to walking this path together in service of our mission."

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WAIANAE COAST
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IN OBSERVANCE OF PRESIDENTS' DAY

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2026

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Out and About with Lei'a



Leeward Kai Canoe Club stands as one of Leeward O'ahu's enduring pillars of wa'a culture. Based in Nānākuli, the club's roots reach back to 1967, when Henry "Baldy" Van Gieson and Edith Van Gieson, affectionately known as "Auntie Edie," helped establish an organization that would grow far beyond a paddling program. From the start, Leeward Kai represented more than competitive canoe racing, it became a home for families, a pathway for youth, and a living expression of community pride anchored in the traditions of Hawaiian canoe paddling.

In the late 1960s, organized canoe racing was gaining momentum as a



Leeward Kai crew locked in proudly posing with the canoe

way to strengthen connections to 'ike kūpuna (ancestral knowledge) and to nurture healthy, disciplined lifestyles. In Nānākuli, that momentum met a community ready for a unifying force, one that could bring people together around the shoreline, the canoe and the shared responsibility of learning to move as one. Leeward Kai's founders helped shape that vision: a club that would wel-

By Lei'a Haff
Leia.vhaff@gmail.com

come keiki, parents, and kūpuna, creating a multi-generational space where the lessons of the water carried into daily life.

Over time, Leeward Kai became known not only for the crews it produced but for the values it reinforced. The club emphasizes excellence, cultural perpetuation and stewardship, principles that align with the deep-

friendly competition, shared meals, and the presence of extended 'ohana from across the island paddling community. It is also a reminder that canoe racing thrives when it is rooted in place, people, and purpose.

Today, Leeward Kai continues as an active member club within the O'ahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association (OHCRA), welcoming new generations into the sport while remaining grounded in the leadership and legacy that shaped its early years. Whether on the beach rigging canoes, on the water finding rhythm, or in the community lifting one another up, Leeward Kai carries forward a simple truth: wa'a is not only

about speed. It is about unity. In Nānākuli, Leeward Kai Canoe Club is a living reminder that when culture is honored, discipline is practiced, and community is loved, a canoe becomes more than a vessel, it becomes a place where people find purpose, belonging, and pride together.

For more information or to sign up, visit <https://leewardkaicanoeclub.org/>

Editor's Note — Lei'a Haff will be writing a monthly column in "Westside Stories" called "Out and About with Lei'a" which will feature interesting places, events, clubs and people on our Westside. If you would like to "talk story" or share your group, place or activity with Lei'a, please e-mail her at leia.vhaff@gmail.com

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er purpose of wa'a. Paddling teaches commitment through early mornings, repetitive drills, and the discipline of listening closely to the caller and the rhythm of the crew. It teaches accountability as well. Each paddler's effort matters, and the canoe only moves when everyone pulls together. For many families, these lessons have served as a foundation, helping young people build confidence, resilience, and a strong sense of belonging.

A signature part of Leeward Kai's legacy is its long relationship with the annual Father's Day Regatta at Nānākuli Beach, hosted by the club since 1968. Year after year, the regatta has offered more than a race schedule. It has provided a gathering point for the community and a way to honor traditions through



The Leeward Kai keiki canoe paddlers pushing strong together out on the water

WAI'ANAE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1974



Yearly Gathering “Days of Our Youth”

Friday, March 13, 2026

Mākaha Valley Golf Course, 84-627 Mākaha Valley Rd.
Join us for golf. Check in is 8 am and tee time is 9 am. \$25 + golf cart for 9 holes with a 2 hour limit then lunch at 12 noon. Everyone pays for their own. The raffle proceeds will go towards scholarships for 2026 graduating seniors from the class of 1974.

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Wai'anae High School Alumni & Community Foundation (WHSACF) meeting followed by social at the Wai'anae High School cafeteria. The meeting starts at 6:00 pm and the social is after. The class of 1976 will be honored for their 50th year. All graduating classes are invited.

RSVP to Regina or Jackery. Bring your pupus and drinks. Everyone pays \$5 at the door except for the class of 1976 honorees. WHSACF will have a raffle. The proceeds are for scholarships for the graduating seniors from the class of 2026.

Sunday, March 15, 2026

—“I'll Remember You”— 1974 Classmates Celebration of Life

12:00 noon Nani Kai Beach Park at Mā'ili Point, 87-891 Farrington Hwy.
Honoring classmates that are no longer with us.

Flowers and ashes will be scattered for our senior class president Henry (Cook) Ahlo. Any monetary gifts received will be donated to 2026 graduating senior(s).

Please bring your pupus, coolers and chairs. 'Ohana and friends are invited.

Please RSVP by March 1, 2026 for all the gatherings to Regina: 808-358-0404 or Jackery: 808-721-3676

Kokua is appreciated for raffle gifts for Wai'anae High School 2026 Scholarships for March 13th and 15th.

Mahalo!



"What's Up" on the Westside

** Please visit our Facebook page for updated events that are happening throughout the month here on our Westside**

FEBRUARY 2026 Calendar of Events

February 2

5 to 7 pm — Mākaha Canoe Club Sign Up at Pōka'i Bay

February 5

5 to 8 pm — Public Safety Career & Community Fair at Nānākuli High & Intermediate School

February 7, 14, 21 and 28

8 am to 12 noon — "Eat Local Challenge" at Mākeke Wai'anae Farmers Market at Wai'anae Mall

February 7

8 am to 12 noon - Mauna Lahilahi Beach Park Clean Up

February 9

6 pm — Republican Party District 45-Precinct & District Election Meeting at Waianae Assembly of God Church

February 13

5 to 8 pm — Searider Grub at Wai'anae High School

February 14 - 16

Buffalo 49th Annual Surfing Classic at Mākaha Surfing Beach

February 14**Valentine's Day** ❤**February 15**

5 to 8 pm - Women Of Wai'anae Kanikapila & Kindness Scholarship Fundraiser at LCC-Wai'anae Moku

February 16**President's Day Holiday****February 17**

Chinese/Lunar New Year - YEAR OF THE FIRE HORSE

February 18**Ash Wednesday****February 21-22**

Buffalo 49th Annual Surfing Classic at Mākaha Surfing Beach

February 27

6 pm — NHIS Songfest at Nānākuli High & Intermediate School

7 pm — "Talk Story" with Rep. Muraoka at Lilikoi Lounge

February 28

4 to 9 pm — Ko Olina's Westside Ho'olaule'a

CLUBS, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS**AARP Chapter 4936 of Wai'anae**

9:30 am on the first Friday of each month at the Wai'anae Community Center (Satellite City Hall).

Call Patrick Maher at 808-545-6003.

Aerobics (Low Impact)

4 to 5 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at Wai'anae District Park. For more information, contact Flo Pell at 808-696-2776.

Aikido

Daily classes, morning, afternoon and evening for children, teens and adults. Call 808.202.6171 or 808.462-1118.

B&G Club Hawai'i

— Wai'anae Clubhouse

Afterschool programs for youth & teens Grades 2nd thru 12th. Register at: membership.bgch.com or call 808-696-2754.**La Kōkua Ka'ala Farm**9 am to 12 noon on the 2nd Saturday of each month to mālama 'āina, lo'i and weeding. All are welcomed! Call 808.696.4954 or check our website www.kaalafarm.org**Lualualei Hawaiian Civic Club**3rd Thursday of every month at 6 pm and held both in-person and virtually via zoom at KS Learning Center in Mā'ili. For more information, Email: lualualeihcc808@gmail.com or visit our Instagram: [@lualualeihcc808](https://www.instagram.com/lualualeihcc808) or Facebook: Lualualei Hawaiian Civic Club**Mākaha Bridge Club**

10 am on Wednesdays and Saturdays at Lilikoi Lounge (Mākaha Valley Country Club). Call Kay Smith at 808-695-7844 for more information.

Mākaha Red Hatters

2nd Monday of each month at various restaurants along the Westside. If you would like to join this club, call "Queen" Gerry Ottinger at 808-399-2594.

Maj Jongg (American style)Tuesdays at 11 am at "Beach House by 604" (Army Rest Camp) Call Coco at 808-330-4765 for more information. *Beginners welcomed!***Nānākuli-Mā'ili Neighborhood Board #36**7 pm on the third Tuesday of the month at Nānākuli Public Library's meeting room. Call Neighborhood Commission Office at 808-768-3710 for more information or visit honolulu.gov/nco**St John the Baptist Church Thrift Shop**Wednesdays from 9am-1pm
Thursday 1pm-5pm Stop by for great*Continued >*bargains! To volunteer, please email revjazzybostock@gmail.com**Veterans of Foreign Wars**

VFW Post 849 (Leeward Coast) monthly membership meetings at 6:30 pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at "Beach House by 604" (Pililaau Army Rest Camp). Our mission is to serve our veterans, the military, and our community. For more information, contact Steve Mayoral at 310-365-7048.

Wai'anae Coast Neighborhood Board #246:30 pm on the 1st Tuesday of each month at Wai'anae Public Library. For more information, contact Neighborhood Commission Office at 808-768-3710 or visit honolulu.gov/nco**Waianae Coast Rotary Club**12 noon on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month at "Beach House by 604" (PARC) Pililaau Army Rec. Center (Rest Camp). For more information, contact: waianaeastrotary.org or Craig Alvarado at craig@bhshawaii.com**Wai'anae Farmer's Market***Mākeke 'Iki* 9 am to 12 Noon every Tuesday at WCCHC Main Campus.*Mākeke Wai'anae* 8 am to 12 noon every Saturday at Wai'anae Mall. Formore information call 808-697-3709.**Wai'anae Hawaiian Civic Club**6 to 8pm on the 2nd Tuesdays of each month. Come learn about our culture and civic kuleana. Contact waianaehawaiiancivicclub.org for more information.**Women of Wai'anae**For more information visit womenofwaianae.org or call Karen Young at 808-388-8828. Focus is on fundraisers for non-traditional college scholarships.

SECOND ANNUAL
KANIKAPILA & KINDNESS
Scholarship Fundraiser Dinner

WOMEN OF WAI'ANAE

February 15, 2026
5:00 to 8:00 pm
at Leeward Community College
—Wai'anae Moku

TICKETS:
VIP Table (for 6) \$1,000
Standard Table (for 6) \$550
Individual Tickets \$100

Purchase tickets by e-mail dellm@womenofwaianae.org



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Shanna's Sunset — Aloha Shanna Kalehuaokalani La'a



In loving memory of Shanna Kalehuaokalani La'a | September 21, 1975 - October 24, 2025

Submitted by Anuhea Tavares

The truth of life is that one day we will all die— that our light in this world will someday set. In that moment of deep grief, our loved ones will watch the light of who we were reflect on the dust and particles that we left behind, holding on to as much as they can. How do you capture the full beauty of a vast, colorful sunset dancing in the clouds? That's how I feel writing about my late mom, Shanna Kalehuaokalani La'a. While her story, like a stunning sunset, is difficult to capture, it's worth trying.

Like the setting sun, Shanna called the westside "home," having been raised in Nānākuli by my late grand-

parents, Valerie and Claude La'a, with her siblings Shannon, Noelani, Brandon and Jared-David. Eventually, she raised my brothers (Gregory, Travis, Jameson, Kaulana), cousins, and me in Mākaha.

As her name suggests, Kalehuaokalani, the colors of my mom's sunset are like lehua: brilliant shades of red, pink, orange, yellow, and cream. The sky is filled with many high clouds reflecting her light, as she was a skilled educator for over twenty years at Mākaha Elementary School and had a gift for uplifting others. Her presence, especially her smile, shined through the rays of light reaching out to hug the clouds in every corner. She gave people a sense

of peace and confidence that everything was going to be okay.

When my mom's time came, I witnessed the most beautiful sunset filled with a community abundant in kindness and generosity. On January 3, hundreds of people gathered at Pōka'i Bay Beach Park to celebrate her life by sharing stories, eating "ono" food, listening to live

Hawaiian music, dancing hula and playing games. My mom was truly a light in this world, and aloha is her legacy. While my heartache feels as deep as the ocean wishing I could meet her at the horizon, I follow the diamonds of our memories glistening on the surface and feel the warmth of her love.

Love you, Ma!



JOIN US AS THIS FEBRUARY AS WE CELEBRATE THE KALO!
MĀKEKE WAI'ANAE
at Wai'anae Mall

86-120 Farr. Hwy., Wai'anae, HI 96792

February 7, 14, 21 & 28
8:00am to 12 Noon

Register any Saturday during the Challenge, at the Makeke Wai'anae Information Booth to get:

(While supplies last)

- WELC reusable tote
- Spatula and spoon
- Whisk
- WELC "finisher" hat

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E ola mau ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i

After once being banned in schools, in 1978, 'ōlelo Hawai'i was recognized as an official state language. Today, our approach to Hawaiian culture-based education is steeped in this connection to our ancestors. Our haumāna learn and explore the Hawaiian language, ensuring it will live on through our lāhui for generations to come.

Celebrate Mahina 'Ōlelo Hawai'i with us and discover resources, events and activities by visiting kaiaulu.ksbe.edu/calendar or following us on social media.



Ke Kula 'o Kamehameha

35th NHIS Songfest set for last week in February

Nānākuli High & Intermediate School will present Songfest 2026 on Friday, February 27, at 6 p.m. in the school's gym. Admission is free.

PVT supported the school's Class of 2026 for the past two years, and we're doing it again this year. This time, the senior class will be joined by the junior Class of 2027, which will be performing in Songfest for the first time.

Their performance will bring to life *Laieikawai*, which tells the story of an ancient, magical courtship. The classes will be coached by Shanna Nahulu, Analu Rabanes, and Melissa Kaapana.



Pitch Perfect — Shanna Nahulu, Analu Rabanes, and Melissa Kaapana will coach the combined Classes of '26 and '27.

Support for Leeward Kai Canoe Club

PVT supports athletics programs that represent our community, including those that perpetuate Hawaiian culture. Recently, PVT contributed to Leeward Kai Canoe Club to assist the club in its mission to train young paddlers to compete in local and international races.



59 Years of Paddling — Since 1967, Leeward Kai Canoe Club has created opportunities for Wai'anae Coast youth to participate in outrigger canoe racing.

PVT scholarship recipient teaching math at NHIS

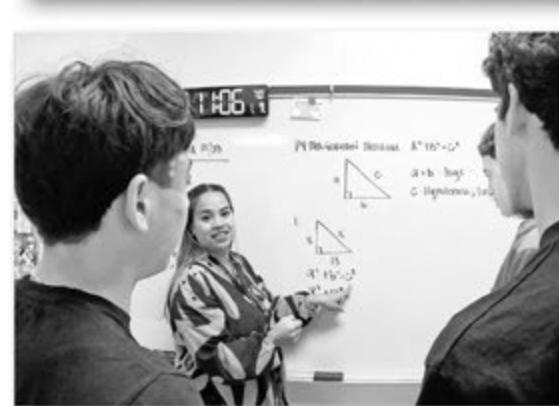
In 2013, Mercy Puni earned a PVT college scholarship at Nānākuli High and Intermediate School.

Thirteen years and two degrees later, Mercy Watson teaches mathematics at Nanakuli and coaches the school's varsity boys' volleyball team.

Higher education opens doors to new opportunities—some you choose and others that choose you.

PVT scholarships have helped hundreds of Wai'anae Coast students pursue their dreams.

For Mercy, it was a formula for success.



By the Numbers — Thirteen years ago Mercy Puni earned a PVT college scholarship. Today, Mercy Watson teaches mathematics and coaches the boys' varsity volleyball team at NHIS.

Buffalo's 49th Annual Surfing Classic

Presented by Smile Wave Fund

HO'OMĀ'A FOUNDATION



2026 BUFFALO & SONS KEEP THE WATERMAN SPIRIT ALIVE

FEB 14, 15, 16, 21, 22

MAKAHA SURFING BEACH

Featured events: 10ft and over longboard / Tandem / Canoe / Sup-Squatch / Aliaia / Paipo / Team Stand-up Paddle / 250 lb. Plus longboard & Bully Board / Bully Board Tandem / Handboard Bodysurfing

ALOHA BEAL OHANA BOMBER DUKE'S DAFIN WAKOON EARTH DAY SAMS WORLD SINCE 1984

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Photo credit: County and Peter Barron

LOOKING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS?

Lualualei Hawaiian Civic Club Scholarships

Lualualei Hawaiian Civic Club has announced that they are planning to reward four \$500 scholarships to graduating high school seniors who reside in the zip code 96792. For more information, visit lualualeihcc.org/scholarship/

The Women of Wai'anae (WOW) Scholarship

Women of Wai'anae (WOW) are accepting scholarship applications for non-traditional students through their website at womenofwaianae.org

Paper applications are available at the

Wai'anae Public Library and at Leeward Community College – Wai'anae Moku.

The deadline to apply for these scholarships is March 13, 2026.

Waianae Coast Rotary Club Scholarship Program

The Waianae Coast Rotary Club (WCRC) 2026 scholarships applications for graduating high school seniors who live in or attend school within zip code 96792 and plan to pursue higher education or vocational training full time are now available via e-mail at contact@waianaeacoastrotary.org or at the school's college and career offices. They include:

• \$2,500 one-year award for a student attending an in-state Hawai'i four-year

college or university.

• \$2,500 one-year award for a student attending an accredited vocational or trade school, in-state or out-of-state.

• \$1,250 one-year award for a student attending an in-state Hawai'i two-year community college.

For questions or additional information about the 2026 Waianae Coast Rotary Scholarships, please visit waianaeacoastrotary.org

Application Deadline: April 6, 2026

Waianae High School Alumni & Community Foundation Scholarships

Wai'anae High School Alumni & Community Foundation (WHSACF) is offering student scholarship applications to all WHS Seniors and Graduating Juniors at the school's College & Career Center. Deadline is March 13, 2026

Would you like to donate a schol-

arship? WHSACF welcomes any and all classes or individuals to start a new scholarship. Commitment deadline is April 3, 2026, and funds/selection deadline is April 17, 2026. For more information or application form, please e-mail Kat Cadirao at katcadirao2@gmail.com

Mahalo.

NĀNĀKULI PUBLIC LIBRARY FEBRUARY 2026 PROGRAMS

 KEIKI STORYTIME EVERY FRIDAY 11:30AM	 LIBRARY CLOSED: PRESIDENTS' DAY WEEKEND
 HUI LEI 5:30PM-7PM	 'OHANA GAME NIGHT 5PM-7PM
 MESSY PLAYTIME 10AM-11AM	 PERLER PARTY 2:30PM-3:30PM
 MOVIE NIGHT: FREAKIER FRIDAY 5PM-7PM	 LEGO TIME 2:30PM-3:30PM



For more info visit librarieshawaii.org/events

Wai'anae Public Library

Hawai'i State Public Library System

February 2026

The library will be closed Saturday, February 14 through Monday, February 16 for President's Day.

Book Club



3rd Wednesdays, Feb 18 @ 6:00

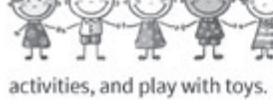
Join us for our **in-person** book club on the 3rd Wednesday of each month! The book that we will be discussing in this meeting is **Hot Honey** by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finley Boylan.

Family Storytime Saturdays @ 10:00



Keiki and their ohana are invited for a fun-filled storytime where we read books, sing and dance, and make crafts. This story-time is aimed at ages 3-5, but all ages are welcome. We will not have storytime on February 14 due to the President's Day holiday.

Toddler Time Tuesdays @ 9:30

 Toddler Time helps keiki learn important pre-reading skills. Keiki ages 0-3 can listen to books being read aloud, sing songs, do fingerplays, participate in flannel board activities, and play with toys. All children must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver.



AARP Free Tax Prep

Wednesdays @ 9:00

AARP is offering their free tax services for people who need help with their taxes. It's first come, first served, so come bright and early with your required materials.

Get 1-On-1 Tech Help with a **Digital Navigator**. Book your appointment for Monday morning or Saturday afternoon. Call the library for more information.



Wai'anae Public Library is located at 85-625 Farrington Hwy. 96792 808-697-7868
 Email: owncirc@librarieshawaii.org