

PROJECT HO'OKU'I NEWSLETTER



SPRING EDITION | 2026



WAIKALUA LOKO I'A LOCATED IN KĀNE'OHE, O'AHU, HAWAII
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WELINA MAI KĀKOU!

CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS THROUGH 'ĀINA AND COMMUNITY

This Spring edition of the Project Ho'oku'i Newsletter celebrates the growth, resilience, and achievements of our Ho'oku'i haumāna and community partners. Rooted in 'ike (knowledge), kuleana (responsibility), and a deep connection to 'āina (the land), this issue highlights meaningful learning that extends beyond the classroom. From academic milestones to hands-on 'āina-based education, our students embody the spirit of Ho'oku'i by bridging culture, community, and education. Featured stories uplift our graduating seniors as they step into their next chapter, alongside experiences that deepen their understanding of place and stewardship.

As we close the Spring semester, we are reminded that education is rooted in connection – to 'āina, to community, and to one another.



GRADUATING PROJECT HO'OKU'I A.A. DEGREE HOLDER NUMBERS INCREASE:

STUDENTS TAKE A GIANT STEP TOWARD COMPLETING THEIR COLLEGE JOURNEYS!

BY LISA UYEHARA

The idea occurred to Principal Investigator, Lisa Uyehara, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Project Ho'oku'i staff noticed that students were suffering from too much screen time and burnout. All learning (high school and early college) had switched to online.

To keep students motivated and provide incentive, the project agreed to pay for students who wished to attain their associates degree prior to high school graduation. Kudos goes to the tremendous support provided by our project school faculty and administration. The program started out rather modestly, but as of Spring 2026, we anticipate 26 Project Ho'oku'i A.A. degree holders statewide. These students will be eligible to enter a four year university degree program as a junior saving thousands of dollars in tuition and housing costs.

The project staff is incredibly proud of the following students:

O'ahu

Farrington High School

Angela Kate Arana

Aleah Asis

Erin Layelle Campos

Riyane Corpuz

Wanqiu He

Sayuri Diamond Holt

Jashua Lasconia

Princess Vinze Martinez

Clark Jestoni Palting

Glemarie Pearl Rosete

Baby Ashley Vesido

Daniella Villarta

Kamakea Wright

Kaua'i

Kapa'a High School

Khloe Grove

Colten Nagahisa

Moloka'i

Moloka'i High School

Malie Kaahanui

Tierra Kaai

Olana Kaai-Phifer

Lāna'i

Lāna'i High School

Kimora Agliam

Spencer Chew

Myah Jayde Doolin

Micah Kahihikolo

Hannah Mae Lee

Kelly Kinsey Raqueno

Jake Ropa

Hawai'i

Kanu o ka 'Āina (Ka 'Ōha)

Keahi Lingaton (Double A.A.
degree in Liberal Arts
and Hawaiian Studies)

2026





A NEW CHAPTER AWAITS! OUR 2026 GRADUATING SENIORS



JOSALYN NAKAYAMA-YOGI

Josalyn Nakayama-Yogi, Castle High School senior in the Running Start Program and a intern at the Waikalua Loko I'a, has been awarded the First Year Scholarship at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo! Working with Josalyn is never dull. Her quick wit, fierce intelligence, and dedication to craft ensure that our internship days fly by. Josalyn will pursue her Bachelors degree in Hawai'ian Studies from UH Hilo. Her love for Hawai'i's culture and desire to teach others grounds this pursuit; especially with keiki who do not get an opportunity to experience their own culture. Like so many, Josalyn was one of those keiki. She grew up disconnected from her Hawai'ian roots and wants to ensure that others do not suffer the same feeling as they grow up. By going into Hawai'ian Immersion Education, Josalyn can give a helping hand to ensure keiki grow up connected and confident in their culture.

When asked about what Project Ho'oku'i and the Internship mean to her, Josalyn responded: "The Loko I'a internship that the Ho'oku'i program offered me has opened up my connections and my eyes to the bigger problems within the Hawai'ian community. It centered my views on both my future and my plans post-grad. While I was once on the fence about my career, the internship showed me my reason to stay off that fence. Besides that, it has funded my education in early college and running start classes. Ho'oku'i, to me, means helping out Native Hawai'ians in their educational endeavors and preserving the natural knowledge of Hawai'i." How lucky we are to have a soaring star lift off to Hilo and land back in purpose and community. Please help me wish Josalyn all the best and health of a future worth 'staying off the fence' for.

Kimora Agliam, a senior at Lāna'i High and Elementary School who has been a participating student of Project Ho'oku'i since her freshman year. She was recently awarded the First Year Scholarship from Project Ho'oku'i to attend the University of Hawai'i, reflecting Kimora's determination in her academic journey and Ho'oku'i's lasting impact. Throughout high school, Kimora has worked diligently to earn her Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts, completing an impressive 76 college credits along the way.



KIMORA AGLIAM

Inspired in part by her older sister, Talia Agliam, who is also a former Ho'oku'i participant, Kimora found both motivation and confidence in following a similar path. Seeing her sister's achievements reinforced her belief in her own potential and in the strength of the program as a support system. For Kimora, Ho'oku'i has been more than an academic opportunity; it has been a transformative community that nurtured her growth and aspirations. She credits the program as a cornerstone of her success and a guiding force in helping her reach her educational goals.

COMPASSION IN ACTION

FIRST YEAR SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE: LEILA PEREIRA

BY JORAH VAR

I met Leila Pereira two years ago when I began working as a mentor for Project Ho'oku'i at Moloka'i High School. During this time, I have had the honor and privilege of forging many meaningful relationships with students as I support their early college high school journeys.



LEILA PEREIRA

Leila is the kind of young woman I feel truly blessed to know. A tendency to be shy and reserved at first, soon gives way to a bright, kind, and thoughtful personality. The depth of her compassion for others, especially those who cannot speak up for themselves is stunning. During her time at MHS she translated her passion for service into action through volunteer work with animals and as a council member with the MHS Equity Club. These are just two examples of Leila's enthusiasm for giving voice to the voiceless. Many of us talk about the things we'd like to change in our lives and world, but not so many take action to do so.

Leila has been awarded a First Year Scholarship from Project Ho'oku'i and plans to study veterinary science at Windward Community College. She then hopes to continue on to earn a doctorate in veterinary medicine. Her goal, to become a mixed practice veterinarian and return to Moloka'i to serve her community, is a beautiful manifestation of her compassion for all other living beings. In her words, "I want to be someone who can provide care to those who need it most." Her strong sense of aloha for others and kuleana (care) for her Moloka'i community provides the foundation for her to continue to translate compassion into action. Please join me in congratulating Leila. We wish her all the best as she launches into this next great life adventure...

We will wait patiently (but with much anticipation) for the grand opening of her new animal hospital on Moloka'i.

A'OLE PILIKIA!

EVERY PROBLEM HAS A SOLUTION IF ONE LOOKS HARD ENOUGH AND HOW HO'OKU'I NA HAUMANA ARE HELPING!

BY LISA UYEHARA

March was a tough month for those living in this treasured 'āina. We had the worst storm in over 20 years which caused tremendous damage to our 'āina and many of those who call Hawai'i nei home. The governor projected \$1B in damage. Our project interns and partner, PAF, could not work in the loko due to run-off and biohazards from 21st century modernity. BUT! We were able to keep our intern na haumana going by raising huli. Na haumana were given huli and now have kuleana to plant the huli and give it the love and caring that is necessary for growth.

Hawai'i nei is a unique place because we all hana together. We find solutions! Expert Makahiapo Cashman not only successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation but provided huli for his audience. He gladly gave me enough huli for all of our interns. Project Ho'oku'i na kumu, Justice Kanaulu and Matthew Myers, will be leading the huli project with our Puohala and Castle High School interns. Truly, "All Hawai'i Stands Together!"



PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR LISA UYEHARA AND DR. MAKAHIAPO CASHMAN OF KA PAPA LO'I O KĀNEWAI



DR. MAKAHIAPO CASHMAN SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDING HIS RESEARCH

AHUPUA'A O ANAHOLA: NURTURING 'ĀINA EDUCATION AT KAPA'A HIGH SCHOOL

BY DR. KAHELE KEAWE

On January 7th, 2026, eight out of twelve Ho'oku'i haumāna took part in a meaningful day filled with 'āina-based learning in the ahupua'a of Anahola. A total of 43 Kapa'a High School students from the Chaminade Early College, Hawai'ian Language, and Ho'oku'i programs participated in a day centered on community service and place-based education.



STUDENTS ARE GATHERED FOR THE OPENING OLI BEFORE ENTERING THE AHUPUA'A O ANAHOLA



LEFT IMAGE: STUDENTS ARE REMOVING INVASIVE WEEDS
RIGHT IMAGE: VIEW FROM KAHALA POINT LOOKING TOWARDS MOLOA'A

The day began with an opening protocol where students gathered to introduce themselves and establish connections. From there, the students rotated through three interactive learning stations: clearing invasive weeds at Anahola Hawai'ian Homes Beach Park, exploring the historical and cultural significance of the Anahola ahupua'a, and doing a short hike along the coast. Through these activities, students strengthened their understanding of Anahola as a vital and living community within the Kapa'a High School complex area, while building kuleana to place. Ho'akea Kaua'i Coordinator Kahanu Keawe and Kahele Keawe of Kapa'a High School collaborated on the planning and facilitation of the event. Additional community partners, who joined us for the day, included Chaminade University and 'Aina Alliance, an Anahola Native Hawai'ian community organization seeking to restore and steward coastal Hawai'ian Homes conservation land.



LEFT IMAGE: KAHANU KEAWE FACILITATING A SMALL GROUP SESSION
RIGHT IMAGE: DR. KAHELE KEAWE FACILITATING A SMALL GROUP SESSION

