

Ke Ala Hou

A New Path Forward

Ke Ke'ena O Ke Kia'aina | Office of the Governor · November 2023

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



Governor Josh Green, M.D.

We began a phased reopening of West Maui on October 8, in conjunction with the County of Maui. While some expressed concerns about the reopening occurring too soon, there were also many who were asking us to help them recover, and recovery required a gentle approach to reopening that could not be delayed.

Now, the county is continuing this gradual reopening in hopes of providing the people of Maui a way to continue moving forward, and we are grateful for everyone's collaboration.

Also in October, our community witnessed several successful events with a strong focus on education and community support for Hawai'i's families. Education is always a critical component of making communities better. My administration is committed to fostering and improving education for our keiki and communities, and are pleased that we were able to reopen the schools on Maui and pay tribute to some of our outstanding educators who support our students.

In addition to the dedicated teachers in our local schools, there are also those who have been working tirelessly to provide relief via programs to those impacted by the Maui wildfires. And while Maui's recovery remains a priority, we are also making strides in other areas to make our communities safer through innovative programs such as the Gun Buyback initiative. I am grateful to see how we can all work together in multiple ways to make Hawai'i a better, safer place for everyone.

We appreciate that at the heart of these successful events are the individuals of our community who are dedicated to working together across organizations, government agencies, and volunteers who continue to embrace our shared kuleana. Together, let's continue to forge a path toward a safer, and healthier Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Leilehua High School's Jackie Freitas Wins HIDEOE's 2024 Teacher of the Year Award



Governor Josh Green and Department of Education (HIDEOE) Superintendent Keith Hayashi had the honor of presenting the HIDEOE 2024 Teacher of the Year Award to Jackie Freitas of Leilehua High School at an event at Washington Place. Freitas was chosen from among 16 dedicated teachers selected by the HIDEOE representing 15 complex areas and public charter schools.

The event celebrated all the finalists for the 2024 Hawai'i Teacher of the Year Award, who stood out from a pool of 13,000 public educators statewide. Freitas devoted her 13-year teaching career to her alma mater, Leilehua High School. She specializes in teaching natural resources and advises the school's Future Farmers of America program.

In her humble response, Freitas said, "I just love what I do... but everything I do is for my students. The students give me the passion, my family is there to back up everything I do. This is a very rewarding experience... This is not what I was expecting at all."

Continued on page 2



2024 Teacher of the Year Award Continued from page 1

Leilehua High School Principal Jason Nakamoto said, “I have been consistently impressed by [Jackie’s] dedication, passion, and effectiveness in the classroom and in the field. She has a deep understanding of good agricultural practices and uses innovative teaching methods to help engage her students... She beams pride and exemplifies the Leilehua way of leadership, humility, and service.”

Freitas has been selected to represent Hawai‘i in the National Teacher of the Year program in Washington, D.C. This prestigious program provides year-long professional development and training to selected educators nationwide. The national winner will be announced in the spring of

2024. To see the full list of finalists, go to <https://www.hawaiiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/MediaRoom/PressReleases/Pages/2024-HSTOY-finalists.aspx>.



Two State Agencies Collaborate to Help Lāhainā Students Return to Their Home Campuses



Photo courtesy: HIDOE

Lāhainā schools witnessed a heartwarming return to normalcy in the middle of October, as school staff and students returned to their home campuses after the Maui wildfires. While there were many agencies, including county and federal partners who helped to make the possibility of returning to school safely, the Department of Education (HIDOE) and the Department of Health (DOH) took the lead to ensure it could happen safely.

On October 16, Lāhaināluna High School faculty and staff welcomed back approximately 700 students. The school had homecoming activities planned throughout the week, increasing school spirit for the Lunas’ first home football game against Baldwin High. Principal Richard Carosso noted the positive energy, and emphasized the significance of returning home, “Today’s the first day of Homecoming Week, and it couldn’t be more fitting that we’ve come home.”

The following day, October 17, Lāhainā Intermediate welcomed 400 students back to its campus. Students expressed their excitement to be on campus with their teachers and peers and conveyed they felt hopeful about the rest of the school year.

“My heart is overflowing seeing the faces of these kids coming in, them hugging each other, and the staff greeting them,” said Lāhainā Intermediate School Principal Stacy Bookland. “It has just been an overjoy for me. This is a long time coming so we’re very happy to see everyone today.”

On October 18, both of Lāhainā’s elementary schools reopened. King Kamehameha III Elementary, which lost its campus to the fires on Front Street, is temporarily sharing the Princess Nāhi’ena’ena Elementary campus. A combination of air-conditioned tent structures and traditional classrooms have been utilized to accommodate the additional students. Portable toilets with individual air conditioning units and chilled water stations were also added to the temporary shared site. This setup allows for a secure and comfortable learning environment.

“We have really been working toward this day for a whole quarter and it’s finally arrived,” said Hāna-Lāhaināluna-Lāna’i-Moloka’i Complex Area Superintendent Rebecca Winkie. “Now we’re going to get back to a sense of normalcy. The kids can learn and have their support on campus and just the socialization and being with their peers, I think, is going to make all the difference.”

Continued on page 3





Photo courtesy: HIDEO

About a dozen staff and community members, some dressed as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, lined the entrance of the campus with signs and cheered on parents during drop-offs. Both principals also welcomed students by directing traffic and assisting them with check-in.

Throughout the process, the safety and well-being of students and staff have been of the utmost concern. The HIDEO and DOH implemented extensive measures to ensure safety, including comprehensive environmental testing of soil and drinking water, which have come back safe; professional cleaning of

interior and exterior spaces; access to a network of air quality monitors installed by the DOH and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and bi-weekly wipe tests in classrooms have been carried out to monitor particles settling on surfaces. A progress report of reopening efforts, including test results, is posted at bit.ly/LahainaSchoolsProgressReport.

Furthermore, the HIDEO developed health and safety guidance with the DOH that outlines actions the schools will take whenever there are changes in the air quality. The health and safety guidance can be viewed at bit.ly/ReopeningSafetyGuidance.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors: The American Red Cross' Vital Role in Maui's Recovery

When disaster strikes, it's likely that one will see a familiar symbol on the shirts of many of those responding to the emergency. A red shirt with a white cross represents the American Red Cross, whose primary mission is to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies.

When the tragic August 8 wildfires happened on Maui, the Red Cross and its partners immediately sprung into action and thus far have provided 390,309 overnight shelter stays for displaced residents.

As of October 19, more than 6,800 people and 156 pets were being cared for in 36 hotels, which represents just over 2,700 households.

"As we continue to mark key milestones in this disaster response, we must remain mindful of this being a long-term effort to rebuild a community. It is a priority in the wake of this disaster to let Lāhainā lead," said Director of American Red Cross Maui Relief Operations Dave Gutierrez. "Our Maui Temporary Disaster Employee program is an amazing opportunity to hire local community members and engage them to work in the Red Cross Non-Congregate Sheltering (NCS) Program. This program not only provides financial support but also an emotional investment, giving a chance for the community to heal with neighbors helping neighbors."

"We realize that the people of Maui have been traumatized by the wildfires, that they may not speak English, that they may have questions about trusting the government -- so we're offering our full support to help keep eligible kama'āina in the NCS program," the Governor said. "This lodging is a vital part of the safety net, and we're pleased the Red Cross has made



Photo courtesy: American Red Cross

the extra effort to help all of those in our community who are eligible but had difficulties with the process."

To date, the Red Cross has hired more than 100 temporary employees, and they will continue to grow this workforce with the understanding that recovering community members are best suited to understand the unique cultural and economic challenges of Maui.

In addition to hiring temporary employees to assist with recovery, the Red Cross has provided more than \$11.3 million in immediate financial assistance to help more than 128,000 community members with immediate needs including essentials like food, medication, transportation, replacement of durable medical equipment like CPAP machines, housing needs, and clothing.

It also recently launched the Bridge Financial Assistance Program, which offers a second round of financial assistance for individuals and families who were affected by the wildfires and who continue to experience roadblocks in their recovery. Bridge Assistance became available to eligible households on October 16. This program is the next step on the residents' recovery journey, addressing unique needs following the conclusion of the Red Cross Immediate Financial Assistance Program.



HHFDC's Hawai'i Housing Fire Relief Program – Transitioning into Long-term Housing

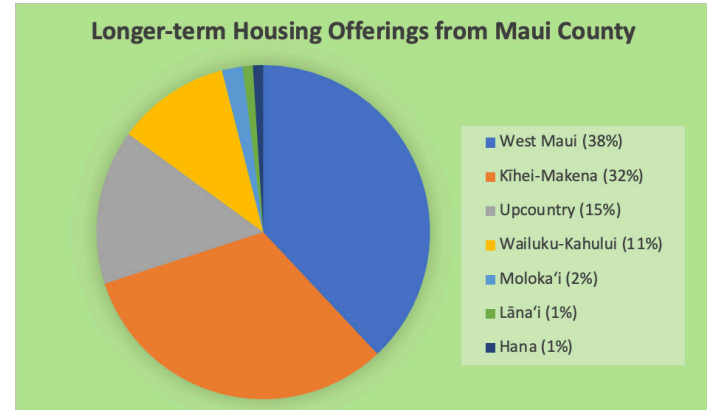
As the state plans the next phase of recovery for Maui residents, Governor Green and the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) continue to urge Hawai'i residents to consider participating in the Hawai'i Fire Relief Housing Program.

The HHFDC program asks property owners, management companies, and homeowners to make their vacant units and spare rooms available to those whose homes were either lost or rendered unlivable. While the program imposes no limit on how much can be charged, the Governor is asking that owners consider renting these units at reasonable rates.

HHFDC Interim Executive Director Dean Minakami said there is now a greater need from displaced residents who need to move into longer-term situations – where they can stay for a minimum of 18 months – as they work to map out their more permanent next steps.

As of October 30, the program had received offers for 1,379 units in total. Of those, approximately 486 units are deemed filled or occupied. The current list online shows approximately 924 verified listings.

Of the offerings, approximately 787 are for Maui County properties, and roughly 373 units are on O'ahu.



“We certainly anticipate that there will be a growing demand for long-term housing as we enter the next phase of recovery,” Minakami said. “Our goal is to meet this demand as quickly and efficiently as possible.” For more information about the Hawai'i Housing Fire Relief Program visit: <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hhfdc/hawaii-fire-relief-housing-program/>.

Successful Gun Buyback Program Collects Almost 500 Firearms



The Department of Public Safety (PSD) and Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) partnered with the Office of the Governor, the Department of the Attorney General, the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Honolulu Police Department to host a community gun buyback event recently on O'ahu. This was the state's first such program, staged in an effort to encourage people who own unwanted guns to turn them in for a gift card with no questions asked, and no identification required.

“Firearm violence is a public health concern and is the leading cause of death for children nationally. While Hawai'i has a low rate of firearm injuries and deaths, one out of 10 homes has a gun,” said State Director of Health Dr. Kenneth Fink. “Safe storage of firearms at home

involves storing guns unloaded and separate from ammunition; securing them in a locked gun vault, safe, or case; and using locking devices such as cable-based and trigger locks – all of which can reduce the risk of firearm-related assault, suicide, and unintentional harm to children.”

A \$100 gift card was provided by PSD for each handgun, rifle, shotgun, bump stock, and Glock switch, and a \$200 gift card, for each automatic firearm of any type, semi-automatic rifle, or ghost gun. A person could turn in as many firearms as they wanted, but the gift cards were limited to a maximum of three per person. The department also provided free gun locks. This one-day initiative featured two simultaneous gun buyback locations: DOH Parking Lot and the DOT Wai'anae Corporate Base Yard.

“This initiative is part of a larger effort to combat gun violence and promote safe neighborhoods across Hawai'i,” said Governor Josh Green, M.D. “I am proud to be working with our law enforcement agencies to expand this program state-wide and provide people a way to take

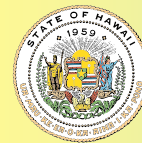
guns not in use off our streets so they don't fall into the wrong hands.”

The DLE contributed \$45,000 and the Federal Housing and Urban Development – Project Safe Neighborhoods grant provided another \$45,000 to fund the O'ahu Gun Buyback Initiative.

Police and state officials recovered almost 500 firearms altogether and gave out 82 gun locks. The program was so successful that they had to extend the collection period an additional two hours to 5 p.m. vs. the original time from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Ke Ala Hou is a monthly publication of the Office of Governor Josh Green, M.D.

We invite you to stay connected with us!



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