



ISLAND MATTERS Mufi Hannemann

## New Partnership Helps Hawai'i's Homeless

A public-private partnership is more than a handshake and the promise of good things to come. An example of such a cooperation doing great things is the one between Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, Hawai'i Tourism Authority, state and county governments, and nonprofit agencies that serve the homeless.

HTA president and CEO Chris Tatum joined me in personally presenting more than \$360,000 to 44 nonprofits across the state that help the homeless through our HLTA county chapters.

The legislature — thanks to the leadership of tourism committee chairmen state Rep. Richard Onishi and state Sen. Glenn Wakai, as well as budget chairs of both chambers,



Partners from the public and private sectors — (from left) state Rep. Richard Onishi, Hawai'i Tourism Authority president and CEO Chris Tatum, the author, Lt. Gov. Josh Green, state Sen. Glenn Wakai and Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association chairman Glenn Vergara — worked together to give more than \$360,000 to nonprofits that help our homeless populations. PHOTO COURTESY JARED HIGASHI

state Rep. Sylvia Luke and state Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz — appropriated \$1 million in tax revenue for home-

Kudos also go to Gov. David Ige for signing the bill into law, Lt. Gov. Josh Green, who supported the measure when he was in the Senate, and longtime Charity Walk supporter Kaua'i Mayor Derek Kawakami, who joined us at our Garden Isle ceremony.

The 44 beneficiaries — Kaua'i and the Big Island (seven), Maui (nine) and O'ahu (21) — were carefully reviewed at the county level by HLTA chapters, with final approval by the state. For the complete list, visit [hawaiilodging.org](http://hawaiilodging.org).

The recipients were overcome with gratitude and appreciation for the additional matching funds.

"The state matching funds help us to feed the homeless populations, particularly the keiki and kūpuna,

through initiatives such as our Keiki Café Backpack and kūpuna programs," says Kelvin Moniz, executive director of Kaua'i Independent Foodbank.

Monique Yamashita, executive director for Ka Hale A Ke Ola Homeless Resource Center on Maui, echoes the sentiment: "(HTA and HLTA) ... value our communities and want to see us get healthier and better. To help those who are homeless, those who have the least, is amazing."

Oahu-based River of Life Mission executive director Bob Marchant adds, "This additional funding really helped, because expenses are generally growing, and the need is growing. The visitor industry partnering with the government, really

makes a difference."

Meanwhile, over on the Big Island, Brandee Menino, CEO for Hope Services Hawai'i, shares her thoughts: "To receive these matching funds, we are definitely grateful and appreciative of the partnership and generosity of HLTA, HTA and Rep. Onishi, for helping us get these funds. They really help us make an impact."

While it has taken some time to work through the process, it warms my heart to know we are supporting the meaningful work these organizations are doing for the betterment of our communities.

**Hoops Time For Team Aloha**  
Team Aloha, the All-Star

female athletes who represent basketball programs across the state, will be competing in the Elite is Earned Spring Invitational basketball tournament April 26-28 in Walnut Creek, California. As an NCAA-sanctioned tournament, many coaches and scouts will be in attendance.

In 2018, Team Aloha captured its division championship with a sterling 5-0 record. That squad was led by Kalani's Kamalu Kamakawiwo'ole, who is bound for Utah State, and Gatorade Player of the Year Kalina Obrey of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama, who is headed to San Jose State.

Team Aloha was an outgrowth of a basketball jamboree featuring wāhine

hoopsters all the way up to the post-collegiate level. I founded the group in 1994 with attorney Jill Nunokawa, a former Rainbow Wahine homegrown star, and Mike Vasconcellos, the late Chaminade athletic director, who started the popular Maui Classic.

The overarching goal of the jamboree is gender equity, while also demonstrating that the 808 produces some outstanding ballers. The proof in the poi is that Team Aloha has either taken first or second in its division while winning an impressive 85 percent of its games in the 12 years that I have been taking these teams to the mainland.

More importantly, the players have garnered more than

their fair share of college scholarships.

This year's squad will be led by four returnees from last year's championship team: Caiyle Kaupu of Konawaena, Leiah Nacata of Kahuku, Jaylen Tanuvasa from Maryknoll and Waiākea's Kelsie Imai.

Newcomers are the Wāhinekapu-Lefotu sisters from 'Iolani, Lily and Jovi; Punahou's Tama Fonti; Lagi Sua-Godinet from Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and Hanalani Schools' Lishae Scanlan.

They are preparing diligently and can't wait to continue the tradition of excellence of Team Aloha in 2019.

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