



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

A 'STEP' Toward Small-business Success

Small business in Hawai'i — those with under 500 employees, according to the U.S. Small Business Association — accounts for about 126,600 enterprises and employs 268,000 residents.

While the SBA's definitions of a small business can seem generous to many, it's safe to say that small business accounts for a huge share of the state's economy.

Interest in starting a small business continues to boom. Many of these fledgling entrepreneurs want to tap into overseas markets, but aren't familiar with conditions like regulations, customs, insurance and cultural differences, and this failure can lead to disaster.

In one real-world example, a local candy company didn't properly fill out the customs forms for exporting to Japan. Instead of selling their goods, the candy sat on a dock and melted.

Helping businesses succeed in new marketplaces is why the Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism is joining with the Hawai'i Pacific Export Council and SBA to offer small businesses advice and assistance in competing in foreign markets through HiSTEP (Hawai'i State Expansion Program).

HiSTEP, assisted by some of the state's most successful small businesses, will offer important, practical knowledge to businesses eager to build their markets during a statewide series of seminars beginning Dec. 5 on Kaua'i, Dec. 6 on O'a-



The author visits the Punalu'u Sweet Bread Bake Shop & Visitor Center, which has flourished under owner Duane Kurisu. PHOTO COURTESY OF L. BALBERDE

hu, Dec. 7 on the Big Island (Kona and Hilo), and Dec. 8 on Maui. The deadline for registration is Dec. 1 at invest.hawaii.gov/exporting/histep/. Attendance is free of charge, but pre-registration is required.

Companies from all industries are welcome to participate. Experts will explain the many different areas covered by HiSTEP and offer opportunities for one-on-one training. Funded in part through an SBA grant, HiSTEP has three key components: training and mentoring in export readiness, company assistance with awards up to \$7,500, and

support at Hawai'i pavilions at major international trade shows.

I can attest to the importance of having government assist small businesses in entering foreign markets. When I was head of the Governor's Office of International Relations, our office promoted architectural and engineering services to our sister states, all of which had developing tourism markets and resort growth.

We promoted agriculture, another key small business in the islands, at trade shows in Europe. Then, while I served as director of the Depart-

ment of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, we promoted a combination of Hawai'i-made goods and services, farm products, Hawai'i Regional Cuisine, and tourism through our "Aloha on Tour" trade missions to promising markets in Asia, Europe, Canada and the Mainland U.S.

Agriculture, in particular, constitutes a small business — many just a few people strong — that is vital to putting food on our tables and keeping our economy going. Just a few days ago, in my capacity as head of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, I spoke at the 70th anniversary luncheon of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation on Kaua'i and reaffirmed the strong link between tourism and agriculture, citing much of the aforementioned work.

One of the newest committees of the HLTA is agriculture, which was formed to explore how the tourism and agriculture industries can do more to collaborate and support one another, and I believe this is a very promising arena for inter-industry cooperation in the pursuit of common goals.

My prior experience in working for the late visionary Doc Buyers at C. Brewer & Co. in the '80s and '90s gave me a profound appreciation of the importance of diversified agriculture to Hawai'i's economy and the pivotal role that small businesses plays in its success.

One of the best projects that I worked on during my stint on the Big Island was the

establishment of the Punalu'u Sweet Bread Bake Shop and Visitor Center at the plantation manager's house that I resided in while living in Na'alehu. (Talk about working your way out of a house, and I don't even bake — ouch!)

We took a local recipe that was the basis of the 'ono-licious Punalu'u sweet bread and parlayed it into a successful small-business enterprise synonymous with the district of Kaua'u. Today the business has expanded and flourished under the ownership of Duane Kurisu, and is frequented by locals and visitors alike. Sweet bread

and the other baked products are marketed throughout the state, and they have become a popular omiyage item.

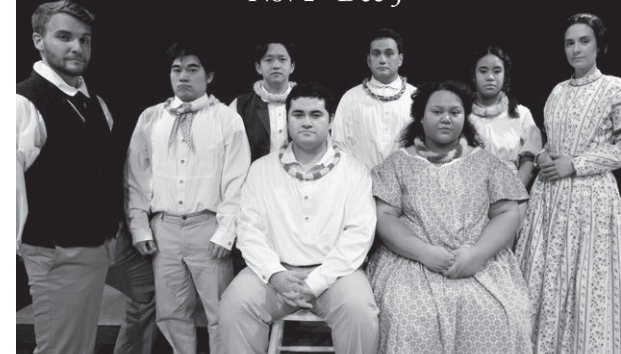
It goes without saying — small business is the core of our economy. They often vie in a global marketplace against sophisticated competitors. Likewise, more local businesses should take advantage of opportunities to carry the Hawai'i brand to countries far from these shores, and the HiSTEP seminars will prove helpful to those seeking new markets for their goods and services.

mufi@
mufihannemann.com

KUMU KAHUA
THEATRE

808-536-4441
KumuKahua.org

Wild Birds
A Historical Drama by Eric Anderson
Nov 2 - Dec 3



When is education a form of imperialism?

Kumu Kahua productions are supported in part by The Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and Arts through appropriations from the Legislature of the State of Hawai'i and by the National Endowment for the Arts. Also paid for in part by The Hawai'i Tourism Authority, The Hawai'i Community Foundation, The Richard Aaland and Robert Emens Black Funds of the Hawai'i Community Foundation, McInerney Foundation (Bank of Hawai'i, Trustee); Hawaiian Electric Industries (HEI) Charitable Foundation and Hawaiian Electric Company; ABC Stores, The Honolulu Star-Advertiser and other Foundations, Businesses and Patrons.

Sponsored by
Hawaiian Electric

Star Advertiser