



Welcoming Telesia, our new executive administrative assistant, and our wellness and resilience coordinators (WRCs): Tikki (on Maui), Nannie (on Kaua'i), Ana and Leilani (on O'ahu)!

Left to right, top row: Keala Kaopuiki-Santos, project manager; Ana Kia, wellness and resilience coordinator (WRC); Jodie L.H. Burgess, procurement and contracts specialist; Tikki Bisbee, WRC; Kev Thompson, project manager; Aunty Kū Kahakalau, cultural advisor and executive director of Kū-A-Kānāka; Telesia Pasese, executive administrative assistant; Leilani Willing, WRC. Front row: Nannie Apalla, WRC; Rachel Aquino-Nunies, graduate research assistant; Naomi Leipold, project manager; Trina Orimoto, deputy director; Erica Yamauchi, director of communications and engagement; Tia L.R. Hartssock, director

Mahalo, Aunty Kū!

Our team had the incredible opportunity to work with Aunty Kū Kahakalau of Hilo several times these last few months for cultural education and training, as well as consultation regarding cultural grounding for our Office. This effort is part of our pursuit of modeling trauma-informed care that accounts for cultural and historical traumas. Below, Nannie, our wellness and resilience coordinator on Kaua'i, offers a special makana (Ōlelo Hawai'i: gift) of local pa'akai (sea salt) from Kaua'i to Aunty Kū in gratitude for her teachings.



Arbor Day Planting

As part of our efforts to support the Wai'anae Coast community in mitigating violence, Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) staff volunteered time planting trees and beautifying the campus of Nānākuli High School alongside Department of Education and community members on Sat., Nov. 2 during their Arbor Day celebration.



Maui Updates

Several members of our team presented at a special symposium, in partnership with the University of Hawai'i's Wildfire Exposure Study (MauiWES) team in a session titled *Trauma-Informed Approaches to Understanding Wellness and Resilience in Hawai'i Following the Maui Wildfires* at the American Public Health Association conference in October. Our collaborative work with the Maui mental health community, as well as our statewide survey partnership with UH re: well-being (including disaster preparedness), was highlighted. Below, OWR's Keala Kaopuiki-Santos, Trina Orimoto and Tia Hartssock.



About the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR)

Our goal is to strengthen our state systems and services, using healing-centered principles as strategies to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. We break down the barriers that impact the well-being of Hawai'i's people - from keiki to kūpuna.

Director's Message



Tia L. R. Hartsock,
Director

As we enter the holiday season and reflect on this past year, I am reminded of the resilience of our collective community. I have so much gratitude for those who have come before us to pave the pathway for us to continue their work. This is the best kind of passion work—to work towards equity, healthier workplaces and well-being in communities filled with hope.

There were several local living treasures we lost this year who now live in our hearts. One whom impacted me immensely, and worked tirelessly to create beloved communities in Hawai'i for decades, often spoke of hope. Auntie Puanani Burgess shared her vision of how each and every one of us has a gift. And when we recognize each person's unique gift, it allows what might be difficult conversations to flow from the right place, from the na'au (gut; core). As we enter this new year, which will inevitably bring new challenges both locally and on a greater scale, how can we continue to come from a place of hope?

Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono: The life of this land is perpetuated in righteousness. This is Hawai'i's state motto and Auntie Pua would often remind me how important these words are for this work. My hope for this coming year is to continue to embrace our gifts, recognize others' gifts, and be curious about how all of us can deeply live its meaning—to perpetuate what is righteous for this place.

Mālama pono,

Policy Updates

- The State of Well-Being Project ([Act 106](#)) expanded OWR with staff to assess and enhance existing well-being supports in key stakeholder communities statewide. We are now finished with the hiring and onboarding process, and have begun work on strategic planning and the landscape analysis.
- The Peer Support Specialist Working Group ([Act 88](#)), convened by OWR, is meeting monthly. The working group is developing policy recommendations for a framework for state peer support specialists. For more information, visit owr.hawaii.gov/peersupport or email gov.peers@hawaii.gov.
- The Mālama 'Ohana Working Group's final report is out. To review the report and the working group's recommendations for the child welfare system, visit the group's website at malamaohana.net.



NGA Center Youth Mental Health Policy Academy

Hawai'i is one of six states to participate in the [National Governors Association Center for Best Practices](#) (NGA Center) Policy Academy to Drive Thriving Youth Mental Health and Well-Being. Our Office convened 50+ child and youth mental health leaders in November (below) as part of a collaborative, year-long commitment to build on and advance holistic efforts supporting youth mental health and emotional well-being across state agencies, including strategies encompassing prevention, awareness, treatment, and community and youth engagement—with youth peer support advisors guiding the work.



This newsletter is a publication of the Office of Wellness & Resilience (OWR), within the Office of Governor Josh Green, M.D.

Let's talk story!

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