



From left to right: Jodie Burgess, executive administrative assistant; Erica Yamauchi, director of communications and engagement; Tia Hartsock, director; Naomi Leipold, project manager; Kev Thompson, project manager; Keala Kaopuiki-Santos, project manager

## Staff Celebrations

- Tia received recognition from Mental Health America Hawai'i as an Outstanding Government Leader at their 2024 Mental Health Awareness & Awards Celebration (above photo).
- Kev, our Hilo-based project manager, is now a SAMHSA-certified GAINS Center trainer.
- Our graduate research assistant, Shugufa Basij-Rasikh, earned her Ph.D. in public health. Her dissertation focused on Afghan refugee mental health (below).



## Lending Library Launch

In celebration of Mental Health Month, we're launching the OWR Lending Library of books on wellness, resilience and mental well-being! Swing by the 4th Floor Governor's Office and/or email us to schedule time to check out our collection for both adults and keiki, including Breathe Like A Bear, What Happened to You?, What My Bones Know, The Body Keeps The Score and The Deepest Well.



## 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 physical, social and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people - from keiki to kūpuna.

## Maui Updates

In partnership with the Dept. of Health and statewide service providers, we are helping to coordinate mental health and wellness activities for survivors at the Royal Lahaina Resort.

Activities include lomilomi and kūkākūkā with Hui Ho'omalua and Laukanaka, 'ukulele lessons with the Kanikapila Project, arts and crafts with EPIC 'Ohana and the Dept. of Education's Office of Student Support Services, and individual and group therapy and workshops.

Disaster case managers with the Dept. of Human Services will also soon have access to SigBee, an innovative (yet optional) app that provides updates on workforce wellness, connection, job confidence and resilience.



# Director's Message - Climate, Trauma & Healing: Lessons from Kaho'olawe



Tia L. R. Hartsock,  
Director

In April, I was honored to be invited to attend a huaka'i (voyage) to Kaho'olawe by the 'Ahahui o nā Kauka (Association of Native Hawaiian Physicians). I was invited to share the impacts of natural disasters on mental health, and specifically, OWR's response to the Maui wildfires. All that I learned from this huaka'i can never be fully put into words. However, reflecting on my five-day experience with the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana and the kauka, here are a few lessons learned from this place – a place that has experienced so much trauma and yet continues to light a pathway for future generations.

**Resilience & Healing** – against all odds, this island thrives. The true essence of resilience is in the wisdom and healing this place holds. To know true resilience is to stand on this 'āina (land), to know the people, or kahu o ka 'āina, who have dedicated their lives to the healing and revitalization effort, the mo'olelo embedded in the cultural practices and rebuilding the knowledge that once flowed freely.

**Ceremony, Kilo & Intentional Labor** – the importance of moving through our daily lives with intention, observation and humility is critical to being present. Presence is the best gift we can give each other. Understanding the importance of the present needs to be informed by lessons from the past and provides hope for the future.

**Distractions** – disconnection from the noise of our modern-day lives and its constant information flowing at and into us is the only way to really connect. When we remove the noise, we finally hear what needs to be heard, see what needs to be seen and learn what is waiting to be taught in this life. This time allowed me to savor moments like watching butterflies dancing in the koa trees, listening to the waves greeting the shore at sunrise and watching the stars share their stories in the night sky. Now that I'm home, it can be simply scheduling time during the day to sit alone outdoors in nature to reset mind and body, or connecting with a loved one for five minutes first thing in the morning and/or before bed.



*Dr. Susan Asam, Emily Makini and Tia Hartsock  
present about climate and resiliency during the  
'Ahahui o nā Kauka gathering on Kaho'olawe*

When I returned home and watched the red dirt run off, I immediately longed to return to this place, where I was reminded that there is a different way to live—and I have choices in how I spend my time and what I give my attention to.

My sore muscles healed, but my heart is forever imprinted by this 'āina. As our kua (guide) so wisely shared: "You may leave Kaho'olawe, but Kaho'olawe will never leave you." What an honor to be touched by this place, and share space and time with those who have been stewards of Kanaloa's healing for generations.

Mahalo nui loa to the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, Kim Ku'ulei Birney, Dr. Marcus Iwane, Dr. Davianna McGregor, Craig Neff, the kua, the kauka, and of course, Dr. Emmett Aluli, for sharing your 'ike (knowledge) yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Eō Kanaloa!

*Tia*





### **"We have a bill!" Senate Bill 3279 passes its final committee.**

*From left to right: Naomi Leipold, project manager and policy lead for OWR; Rep. Lisa Marten; Tia Hartsock, OWR director; Sen. Joy San Buenaventura; Sen. Sharon Moriwaki; Rep. Jenna Takenouchi*

## **2024 Legislative Session Highlights**

OWR testified on 16 total measures that included bills and resolutions that addressed mental health, state workforce well-being and economic supports for families. Five of those bills, below, passed conference and are waiting Governor Green's signature to become law.

- SB3094 re: Peer Support Specialists Working Group
- SB3279 re: State of Well-Being Project
- SB2305 re: Silver Alert Program
- HB1830 re: Provisional/Associate Licensure
- HB2042 re: Youth Mental Health Fund

Mahalo to everyone who testified in support of these important measures! We are particularly excited about two bills that have a more direct impact on our work, as outlined below.

### **Senate Bill 3094: Peer Support Specialists Working Group**

S.B. 3094 establishes a Peer Support Specialist Working Group within OWR. The Working Group will develop and make recommendations for a framework for peer support specialists in the State. Working Group members consist of several state departments, community partners, and peers support specialists. In addition to looking at best practices to certifying and credentialing peers, the framework will look at trauma-informed supervision and sustainable funding to support the work of peer support specialists.

### **Senate Bill 3279: State of Well-Being Project**

S.B. 3279 expands our Office of Wellness and Resilience with additional staff to assess and enhance existing well-being supports in our communities statewide. The State of Well-Being Project aims to strengthen mental health and well-being supports by building upon existing programs and establishing services when they are non-existent and/or there are significant gaps. The Project is built upon the approach that well-being services are healing when they are culturally grounded and community-informed.

## **Mālama 'Ohana Community Meetings Announced**

Eleven listening sessions (below) will be held in person and virtually beginning at the end of May, with a culminating virtual statewide meeting on Tuesday, July 2. For more information and to register, visit [malamaohana.net](http://malamaohana.net).

- May 29, 5:30-8 p.m., Kalaniho'okaha Learning Center, Wai'anae, O'ahu
- May 31, 5:30-8 p.m., Keaukaha Elementary Cafeteria, Hilo, Hawai'i Island
- June 6, 5:30-8 p.m., Kulana 'Ōiwi Halau, Kalama'ula, Moloka'i
- June 10, 5:30-8 p.m., University of Hawai'i at Maui College, Kahului
- Friday, June 14, 6-8 p.m., Virtual Meeting for Hāna Community, Maui
- June 18, 5:30-8 p.m., Lili'uokalani Trust, Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i Island
- June 25, 5:30-8 p.m., War Memorial Convention Hall, Līhu'e, Kaua'i
- June 27, 6-8 p.m., Virtual Meeting for Lāna'i Community, Lāna'i
- June 28, 5:30-8 p.m., Blanche Pope Elementary School, Waimānalo, O'ahu
- July 1, 5:30-8 p.m., Wahiawā Elementary, O'ahu
- July 2, 6-8 p.m., Statewide Virtual Meeting

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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Aimee Chung, Tia Hartsock and Sharon Simms at the Mental Health America Awards Luncheon on May 21



The State Capitol lit up green for mental health awareness

# More Photos from the Last Few Months!



The bell stone and lele at Pu'u 'O Moa'ula Iki on Kaho'olawe



Above from left: OWR interns Mia Ogata, Sara Thorn, Leah Delos Santos with project manager Naomi Leipold, her daughter Gigi and superheroes at HCAN Speaks! Keiki Strong Rally on March 22



Above, preparing to chant E Ala E, the sunrise chant for Kaho'olawe. Right, Roman Corpuz, Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana kua, carrying the Hawaiian flag to the summit of Kaho'olawe



OWR staff and mental health community members at the Mental Health Day resource fair at the Capitol on May 1



Mental Health America of Hawaii executive director Bryan Talisayan with OWR staff at the Mental Health Awards Luncheon on May 21