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Hawai'i Keiki's Maui Provider Team Receives National G.R.I.T. Award for Outstanding Service during the 2023 Maui Wildfires

Honolulu, Hawai'i (Monday, July 29, 2024) – Twenty Maui residents, who are Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy & Ready to Learn providers on Maui, have received national recognition for their outstanding service during the Maui Wildfires in August 2023 and each received a 2024 G.R.I.T. Award from the School-Based Health Alliance. The inaugural G.R.I.T. Award recognized individuals who made a difference in school-based health care and who demonstrate *Genuine, Resilient, Innovative and Tenacious* qualities.

The School-Based Health Alliance, a national non-profit organization, advocates to grow the number of school-based health clinics and services, expand and diversify the school-based health workforce, disseminate best practices, develop electronic data collection and analysis, and increase the use of telehealth in schools. G.R.I.T. award winners were announced at the national conference in Washington, D.C. on June 26-28, 2024.

2024 G.R.I.T. Awardees

As a surprise recognition, the 20 Maui-based Hawai'i Keiki registered nurses, nurse practitioners (APRNs) and health technicians were informed of their G.R.I.T. Awards at the annual Hawai'i Keiki Back to School meeting held at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa on Monday, July 29, 2024.

- Lisa Alejandro, Health Technician at Kihei Elementary School
- Eva Balagso, Health Technician at Kamehameha III Elementary School
- Janel Branson, Complex Area APRN and Complex Area Lead at Kalama Intermediate School
- Ashley Dent, Complex RN at Paia Elementary School
- Alliyah Dudoit, Health Technician at Baldwin High School
- Zoe Elder, Health Technician at Hana High & Elementary School
- Madison Furlong, Complex Area APRN, Nahienaena Elementary School
- Aprilcarren Failano, Health Technician at Kahului Elementary School
- Cherie Gonzalez, Health Technician at Kilohana Elementary School
- Shaelyn Jardine-Feiteira, Health Technician at Kalama Intermediate School
- Willene Lono, Health Technician at Wailuku Elementary School
- Dana MacDonald, Complex RN and Complex Area Lead at Lahainaluna High School
- Benevee McGee, Health Technician at Maunaloa Elementary School
- Christa Marzitelli, Complex RN at Kahului Elementary School

- Kaberi Mozumder, APRN, Neighbor Island Supervisor
- Kathleen Oliveira, Health Technician at Kekaulike High School
- Melissa Stallbaumer, Complex RN at Baldwin High School
- Melody Taborada, Health Technician at Puu Kukui Elementary School
- Amanda Valdez, Complex RN at Kulanihakoi High School
- Chayanne Angel Vilorio, Health Technician at Lokelani Intermediate School

School nurses and health technicians made a difference in Maui

In August 2023, the historic Maui Wildfires brought businesses, schools and daily life to an abrupt halt. Lives were lost, residents were displaced and schools were closed. Four Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) schools were damaged and one was completely destroyed. Hawai'i Keiki had school-based clinics at two of the damaged schools and one Hawai'i Keiki health technician supported the school that was destroyed.

As families and students were scattered across the island, Hawai'i Keiki's Maui provider team mobilized to ensure access to care for HIDOE students. They assisted in shelters, provided virtual telehealth visits, managed the health hotline and supported the students, each other and the Maui community.

Our team partnered with Federally Qualified Health Centers to provide medical care to students and families in shelters with our dedicated RNs assisting with health histories and patient intakes while our APRNs performed health assessments and refilled prescriptions for those families whose medications were left behind as they urgently evacuated their homes. Additionally, our nursing team worked closely with community partners to increase access to vaccines in areas decimated by the wildfires.

After their shifts, our team played music for the families living at the emergency shelters and facilitated yoga classes. Our team also spent extra time with the keiki, focusing on their mental health and well-being. Our school nurses and health technicians also worked with parents to provide moments of respite for the keiki allowing parents/guardians to attend to matters relating to the disaster.

Moving forward together

More than 3,000 HIDOE students were directly impacted by the loss of homes and schools. But also, many of the 24,448 HIDOE Maui students were indirectly affected due to the impact on the entire island, their family and friends, and the overall economic impact felt by all of Maui. When schools were ready to reopen, our nursing team worked with school administrators and staff to assist with school health requirements, entered health data into computer systems and tracked down missing medical records for students.

So many individuals, businesses, community partners, faith-based organizations, government entities and health centers contributed to the Maui Wildfire response effort. We are especially proud of our Hawai'i Keiki Maui provider team and applaud each of our Maui nurses and health technicians for demonstrating resilience and compassion during this crisis. Many of our Maui team were personally affected by this disaster, but continued to perform first responder work even in the face of personal adversity.

School-based health is an important bridge between education and health. Hawai'i Keiki and the HIDOE have partnered together for the past 10 years to provide safe, quality healthcare to HIDOE students at school. As we approach the 1-year anniversary of the Maui Wildfires, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Hawai'i Keiki team, with a special heartfelt mahalo to our Maui Team.

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About Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy & Ready to Learn

Hawai'i Keiki sits at the intersection of education and health to support Hawai'i public school's achieve student, school and system success. The program is a partnership between multiple State entities: UH Mānoa Nursing, the Hawai'i Department of Education and the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission. The program is designed to improve access and quality of health services in schools by coordinating and expanding existing efforts of community partners and resources. The program enhances and builds school-based health services that screen for treatable health conditions; provide referral to primary health care and patient centered medical home services; prevent and control communicable disease and other health problems; and provide emergency care for illness or injury. Visit us at www.nursing.hawaii.edu/hawaii-keiki.

About the UH Mānoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing

UH Mānoa Nursing, the Nursing Capital of the Pacific, is the leader in nursing education and research in Hawai'i with outreach to Asia and the Pacific Basin. We support the mission of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa: to provide an innovative, caring and multicultural environment in which faculty, students and staff work together to generate and transmit knowledge, wisdom, and values to promote quality of life and health for present and future generations. The school offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. To reflect Hawai'i's unique cultural diversity and heritage, UH Mānoa Nursing is committed to increasing the representation of Native Hawaiian and other underserved people in all nursing programs. Visit us at www.nursing.hawaii.edu.