

## **AROUND THE CAPITOL**

### **October 17, 2009**

**Legislator-in-Residence.** I am enjoying my new role as Legislator-in-Residence at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. The program was established in 2002 to provide opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between policymakers and the academic community. It allows lawmakers to explore significant issues facing the community and for faculty and students to learn how these issues can be transformed into policy. My goals are to create a West Oahu historical corridor: Pearl Harbor, Ewa Field, Honouliuli Internment Camp, Ewa Villages, and Fort Barrette. I also hope to address re-entry programs and inmate rehabilitation.

**Hale O Ulu.** Child and Family Services operates Hale O Ulu, a private, secondary alternative school for at-risk youth on Fort Weaver Road. These students are recommended from the state public school system. Students receive academic instruction, counseling, and family life education. This fall I am volunteering at Hale O Ulu, instructing students on current events, critical thinking, and government.

**Senate Ad Hoc Committee on the Governor's Layoffs.** Senate President Colleen Hanabusa convened a Senate Ad Hoc committee to review and assess the impact of anticipated layoffs and furloughs of certain state employees and resultant reduction in government services on the public. Hearings have already been held to gather testimony on the impact of the closure of the Kulani Correctional Facility on the Big Island; layoffs of inspectors and other workers in the Department of Agriculture; budget cuts to the State Foundation on Culture & Arts and to the Maui Public Health Services. Another hearing was recently held on the Department of Education's "Furlough Fridays" issue. Many other Senate committees are being convened to look at the issues resulting from the Governor's actions.

**New Chief Judge.** Judge Craig Nakamura was sworn in as the new Chief Judge of the Intermediate Court of Appeals. Judge Nakamura replaced former Chief Judge Mark Recktenwald, who earlier this year was elevated to the position of Hawaii Supreme Court Justice.

**Children & Youth Month.** October is Children & Youth Month. October 4 was the 16<sup>th</sup> annual Children & Youth Day, a five-hour festival highlighting the very many resources available to families and agencies who try to help kids stay on a healthy path while growing up. Hundreds of volunteers helped that day, providing information to families, playing games with children, overseeing rides, and passing out goodie bags. Many other volunteers beforehand helped prepare thousands of goodie bags for the children. Individuals and companies generously donated prizes and snacks for keiki.

Children in Ewa were also treated to a Fun Day at Holomua Elementary School. Keiki had fun in the bouncer rooms, got HPD/Chevron Keiki ID, got close to the animals in the petting zoo, and putted balls on the mini-golf course. They also enjoyed performances by the Ewa Beach Boys & Girls Club, storytelling with Auntie Arlene Eaton, a talk by NASA astronaut Yvonne Cagle, and shows by Mad Science and Mr. Amazing. Joining my office in sponsoring the fun day were corporate and community partners Hawaiian Electric, D.R. Horton, McDonalds, Gentry Homes, Grace Pacific, Ewa Beach Lions Club, Ewa Beach Boys & Girls Club, HPD/Chevron, Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii, and Ewa Weed & Seed.

Another major event in Children & Youth Month was the October 13 Summit, an annual event in which middle and high school students and agencies that help families discuss issues of concern and try to brainstorm ways of dealing with these. Kudos to Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, the originator of Children & Youth Month many moons ago, for coordinating all of these events!

**Secondary Student Conference.** Last week the annual Secondary Student Conference convened in the Senate chambers. Delegates from high schools across the state met to discuss education and other topics affecting teenagers. They got a chance to meet with legislators in small groups and talk about the legislative process and issues of concern. Several legislators participated including Senator Carol Fukunaga, House Education Chair Roy Takumi, and Senator Espero, among others. Seated on the Senate floor, the entire delegation debated and voted on several measures that passed out of their committees, including a uniform school schedule and curricular issues.

**World Space Week.** World Space Week also took place last week, a global celebration of aviation and space exploration, and part of the 2009 International Year of Astronomy. Hawaii's Office of Aerospace Development held "Aerospace Week" here at the State Capitol, from October 4-10. With an aviation / aeronautics focus, the activities began on Children & Youth Day on October 4, with a marathon film festival in the Capitol's Auditorium and other inauguration events at airports across the state. Throughout the week, astronauts spoke to students at selected schools statewide. NASA teacher training for STEM education and information on Smart Skies and the lunar projects LRO and LCROSS were shared at selected schools, the Imiloa Astronomy Center, Pacific Aerospace Museum at Pearl Harbor, Challenger Center, and MEDB/Malcom Center.

Each night at the Capitol, astronauts, researchers, and industry representatives gave presentations. The fascinating daily themes were *Understanding the Cosmos; Global Observation and Monitoring; Commercial Space Development; Lunar Space Exploration; Beyond the Moon: Mars, the Asteroids, and Other Solar System Bodies; and Access to Space: Rockets, Spaceplanes and Other Pathways to the Stars.* The week ended with rocket launches at Windward Community College. Kudos to Office of Aerospace Development Director Jim Crisafulli for putting together Aerospace Week!

**White Cane Safety Walk and March Against Domestic Violence.** Pedestrian safety, especially for the blind, was the reason for the White Cane Safety Walk around the State Capitol. Neighborly consideration and caution by drivers are important to help make our streets safe for pedestrians. Safety in relationships is the subject of the March Against Domestic Violence. I spoke about this very serious community problem as we all need to be involved to help make sure that people get the treatment they need to stop abusing family members and that victims get the care and attention they need to overcome their adversity.