

August 4, 2009

Hamabata honored with Ho'okele leadership award

Reader Submitted

Matt Hamabata, executive director of The Kohala Center, has been recognized as a nonprofit leader in Hawai'i who is making a difference in our community and has been honored with a 2009 Ho'okele award by the Hawai'i Community Foundation and Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation.

"Just as a steersman, ho'okele, is key to guiding a canoe successfully to its destination, this award recognizes the significant and often less visible role that a nonprofit leader plays in improving the quality of life for Hawai'i's people," said Christine Van Bergeijk, vice president of programs for the Hawai'i Community Foundation.

Hamabata has guided The Kohala Center from its bare-bones founding in January 2001 to a \$4.1 million organization in eight short years, based on the vision of building research and educational programs that help communities on the island and around the world to thrive-ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially.

"We are blessed with doing meaningful work. For us, doing well comes from doing good," Hamabata said. For The Kohala Center, doing well means nearly doubling its operating budget in the last year. And doing good means focusing on the basics of life-food, water, energy, and ecosystem health. "It feels very rewarding to us at The Kohala Center that we are creating jobs by working with others to foster the well-being of our natural and human communities," he said.

The Kohala Center is an independent, community-based center for research and education that respectfully engages Hawai'i Island as an extraordinary and vibrant learning laboratory for humanity. The Kohala Center builds research and teaching programs about and for the environment, partnering with island experts and experts from universities and research agencies that operate in the national and international arena, such as the University of Hawai'i, Cornell University, Yale University, the Institute for Social Ecology in Vienna, Austria, and the Institute for Advanced Studies at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan. To learn more about The Kohala Center and its programs, visit www.kohalacenter.org.

Hamabata was born and raised in Hanapepe, Kauai. After completing his secondary education at Mid-Pacific Institute in Honolulu, he received his undergraduate degree at Cornell University and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He first taught at Yale University, served as the Dean of Haverford College, and was the Director of Learning at the California Endowment. He is Professor Emeritus at the Fielding Graduate University, a former Fulbright-Hays Fellow, and a recipient of the Literary Award of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Hamabata was one of four nonprofit leaders honored at the 8th Annual Ho'okele Award: A Celebration of Hawai'i's Nonprofit Leaders luncheon on August 4. Hamabata receives a \$10,000 grant to be used for his professional development and renewal.
