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Tribune Aloha Big Island Herald

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Photos: HOLLYN JOHNSON/Tribune-Herald

From left, mentor Heather Kaluna of the University of Hawaii at Hilo smiles at her intern, Maria Daniella Douglas, Thursday during the Akamai Workforce Initiative Hilo Symposium at the Grand Naniloa Hotel.

Reaching new heights

Program gives students hands-on experience in STEM fields

BY STEPHANIE
SALMONS
Hawaii Tribune-Herald

It was almost like show-and-tell Thursday at Grand Naniloa Hotel. There, 16 of the Akamai Workforce Initiative's 38 summer interns made presentations about their summer work during one of four symposiums that conclude the program. Projects varied across multiple disciplines, but the passion and knowledge was evident with each speaker. The Akamai Workforce Initiative is a program that aims to advance Hawaii college students into science and technology careers.



Intern Makena Wagner smiles Thursday during the Akamai Workforce Initiative Hilo Symposium.

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Bad blood in Puna

Ousted councilwoman cries foul

By JOHN BURNETT
Hawaii Tribune-Herald

When the dust settled on the Hawaii County Council District 4 primary election race, the final returns showed a political newcomer winning a 20-point landslide as a result of what she called an "aloha-driven, clean, positive campaign" and the ousted incumbent saying it "was anything but that."

In a non-partisan tilt, Ashley Kierkiewicz, a 32-year-old Hawaiian Paradise Park resident won the seat representing a portion of Puna over one-term Councilwoman Eileen O'Hara. The margin of victory was 2,545 votes to 1,674 votes, or 60.3 percent to 39.7 percent of the valid ballots cast.

"Right now, I'm a little exhausted, but I feel incredible, I mean, I'm still kind of pinching myself that this is real," Kierkiewicz said Sunday.



O'HARA



KIERKIEWICZ

See PUNA Page A3

District 7 council race to be decided in November

By MAX DIBLE
West Hawaii Today

KAILUA-KONA — Hawaii's primary elections were over as of today, but the race for Hawaii County Council District 7 is far from the finish line.

Rebecca Villegas won the night Saturday in a four-person, non-partisan race for the council position vacated by Dru Kanuha, now the Democratic nominee and substantial favorite to assume West Hawaii's 3rd District seat in the state Senate.

Villegas edged out her nearest competitor, Kelly Drysdale, by a tally of 1,238 votes to 1,031 votes. However, Villegas fell far short of claiming a 50 percent



VILLEGAS



DRYSDALE

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CAPT. BRIAN HUGHES

Procession honors fallen firefighter

Hilo native Brian Hughes died while battling California blaze

By JOHN BURNETT
Hawaii Tribune-Herald

Dozens of local and federal firefighters and other emergency responders gathered Sunday on the Hilo Bayfront to pay respect to a fallen brother — Brian Hughes, a Hilo

native and captain of the Arrowhead Interagency Hotshots based in Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks. Hughes died on the fire line July 29, two days shy of his 34th birthday. A procession of mostly fire-related vehicles traveled with a police

escort from the King Kamehameha statue to the Hilo Yacht Club, where a private memorial service was held. "We're incredibly honored to see the turnout. Emergency responders are a very tight-knit community, and I think this is a testament to that," said Cindy Orlando, superintendent of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. "Brian

certainly was a colleague in the National Park Service (and) worked in one of our sister parks in California in Sequoia. So it's our honor to be here on his behalf and his family's." Federal firefighters from Northern California brought in to fight the Keauhou Ranch Fire, which as of Sunday had taken almost 3,739 acres, lined a portion of

the procession route on Kamehameha Avenue between Bishop Street and Hilo Iron Works. "We got the containment lines in, and the rain helped out with it, and that allowed the firefighters to come down off the hill and take part in Brian's procession," said Jason Schroeder, supervisor

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FROM THE FRONT PAGE



JOHN BURNETT/Tribune-Herald

A National Park Service fire truck passes NPS firefighters from Northern California lining the procession route on Kamehameha Avenue Sunday to pay respects for fallen NPS firefighter Brian Hughes.

HUGHES From the front page

of the Folsom Lake Veterans’ Fire Crew. “There is definitely a fire still up there on the hill, but in the grand scheme of things, showing our respect for Brian is the important thing to do.”

Hughes and his crew were engaged in firefighting operations on the east side of the Ferguson Fire when he was struck by a falling tree. He was treated on scene, but died before he could be taken to a hospital.

Born in Hilo on Aug. 1, 1984, Hughes grew up near Akaka Falls and attended Hilo Union, Hilo Intermediate, and Hilo High schools. He enjoyed swimming and surfing, and was most at peace in the ocean. He loved outdoor adventures, and learned to be self-reliant in the wilderness. In high school, he excelled in varsity soccer, track and cross country.

Hughes became a firefighter in 2004 with the Larimer County Yellow Jackets, an emergency fire and rescue unit in Fort Collins, Colo. After two years, he was hired as a seasonal hotshot on the Midnight Suns crew in

Born in Hilo on Aug. 1, 1984, Hughes grew up near Akaka Falls and attended Hilo Union, Hilo Intermediate, and Hilo High schools. He enjoyed swimming and surfing, and was most at peace in the ocean.

Alaska. The next year he joined the Roosevelt hotshots, where he worked from 2007-2009. It was there that he met Joe Suarez, who would later recruit Hughes for the Arrowhead crew.

In 2010, Hughes joined the Monterey hand crew in the Los Padres National Forest. After four years with the hand crew, he joined the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska as a specialist.

Hughes moved to Squaw Valley, Calif., in March 2015, as captain of the Arrowhead Interagency Hotshots. According to a written Sequoia Parks Conservancy statement, his crew looked up to him and

loved him as a brother. Fighting forest fires is a dangerous business, one that engenders a sense of family among those who do it, Schoeder said.

“I imagine Brian did it for the same reason we do it — just the love of outdoors, the love of working closely with like-minded people, the camaraderie,” he noted. Everything about it is pretty unique, and it’s definitely not for everybody. But it seems the people who do it enjoy it for what it is.”

Hughes is survived by his parents, Peter and Suen Hughes of Hilo, sister, Merial Hughes, and fiancée, Paige Miller, who’s expecting their child in February 2019.

A Go Fund Me page for Miller and the couple’s unborn child has so far raised more than \$159,000. A link to that page and condolences to Hughes’ family can be found at <https://www.sequoiaparksconservancy.org/captainbrianhughes.html>.

Email John Burnett at jburnett@hawaiitribune-herald.com.



Big Island Report

Citizens arrested and charged

Big Island police arrested and charged the following individuals:

- Aaron Michael Baker, 34, of Kealahou with contempt of court.
- Valentina Consuelo Godoy, 29, of Hilo with violating terms of release.
- Claudette Huebner, 65, Kailua-Kona with contempt of court.
- Kelly Kapualani Oshiro, 36, of Hilo with two counts of promoting a dangerous drug plus drug paraphernalia.
- Flint Vonn William Lindersmith, 44, of Kailua-Kona with burglary, property damage and theft.
- Hanaalii Ross, 32, of Hilo with violating terms of release and contempt of court.
- Ignacio Joseph Andres, 50, of Hilo with inattention to driving.
- Claude V. Carvalho, 33, of Pahoa with contempt of court.
- Nicholas Zellalem Addis, 32, of Waikoloa with failure to appear.
- Denton Edmund Lee Freitas, 45, of Mountain View with contempt of court and two counts of violating terms of release.
- Maria Xochil Castro, 49, of Kailua-Kona with failure to appear.
- Stacey Nicole Fujisaka, 40, of Kailua-Kona with two counts of contempt of court.
- Bonnie I. Mitchell-Fox, 62, of Keauhou with contempt of court.
- Gilbert DeSa, 60, of Pahoa with failure to maintain bail or bond, promoting a dangerous drug and drug paraphernalia.
- Ashley Aileen Maile Lum, 35, of Hilo with disorderly conduct and harassment.
- Dylan Joseph Brehaut, 29, of Kailua-Kona with violating probation and contempt of court.
- Dean Aaron Hess, 25, of Mountain View with DUI and driving without a license and insurance.
- Sarah Amber Fulkerson, 30, of Kona with contempt of court.
- Paul Anthony Robinson, 33, of Hilo with contempt of court.
- Jeffrey Omeliakle Thome, 42, no address listed, with promoting a dangerous drug and drug paraphernalia.
- Lawrence Eli Modde, 45, of Kailua-Kona with contempt of court.

Contempt of court typically means failing to comply with a judge’s order, such as paying a fine or appearing at a court proceeding. Failure to appear means not showing up in court on the date written on a traffic citation.

PROGRAM From the front page

With lead funding from the Thirty Meter Telescope, the program offers community college and undergraduate students the opportunity to complete projects at observatories and high-tech companies in Hawaii. Students are from Hawaii or enrolled at a University of Hawaii campus.

Maria Daniella Douglas was one intern who addressed the crowd. In simple terms, she spent her summer working to determine whether certain asteroids in a near-Earth orbit were related to a family of asteroids in the main asteroid belt, located between Mars and Jupiter.

“For me, it’s just very interesting that we can take something near Earth and trace its history back to the main belt,” she said, adding that that knowledge is important for understanding “how things work in our solar system,” and how things can move from the main asteroid belt.

Douglas, who is originally from the Philippines but grew up in San Francisco, is studying astronomy at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, where she will be a senior.

She worked at UH-Hilo this summer with mentor and Akamai alum Heather Kaluna, an associate professor

in the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

“It was really amazing,” Douglas said of the internship experience. “So I’m an astronomy student. We do a lot of theory and learning in class, but this was actually like my first real application of what I’ve been learning in class.”

It was “definitely cool” to see what was learned in class finally put to use, she said.

The summer also was a chance to scope out future career fields.

While Douglas said she’s not quite sure what she wants to do yet, graduate school is an option. But the summer has “definitely molded what I think of astronomy jobs. I also learned about outreach jobs this summer, and now I know what research is like and what outreach can be like.”

Kaluna, who went through the Akamai program in 2007, echoed those sentiments. The benefits of her experience was “getting a real taste for research and getting a sense of, ‘Is this really what I want to do for a career?’” she said. “Because when you’re going through your studies and classes and stuff, you’re learning a lot of the theoretical sides of things.”

Being able to put that to use is a “really good way to just help figure what you want



HOLLYN JOHNSON/Tribune-Herald

Akamai Workforce Initiative intern Maria Daniella Douglas gives a presentation of her internship project Thursday at the Grand Naniloa Hotel.

to do,” Kaluna continued. “That was the huge thing for me.”

Kaluna was a mentor for the first time this year, which she said was an “amazing experience.”

“One of the things this program tries to do, is they take information from the students — their interest, backgrounds, and they try to pair them with the most appropriate mentor,” she explained.

That leads to productivity.

The results she and Douglas got are “very exciting ... something we’re going to publish together,” Kaluna said. “... This is actually a nice product coming out of it. So it’s really nice to be able to give that opportunity to a student who’s still at the undergraduate level because

if she does choose to get into a graduate program, she’ll be so much more prepared having this kind of experience under her belt.”

Intern and Hilo native Makena Wagner is heading into her junior year at Smith College in Massachusetts, where she studies engineering.

She spent the summer interning at Gemini Observatory, where she worked to create testing rigs to determine whether replacement linear encoders will work as intended without having to install them on the telescope.

Wagner also was thankful for the work experience provided by the internship.

“Working for Gemini, I learned how to do basically all the steps it takes to actually design something and then actually

have a part in front of you that you made from scratch,” she said. “I think that was the highlight of my internship — actually going through all of these precise steps, doing all these calculations and finally seeing the end product, because that’s how it is when you design something for an observatory or in the workforce. Those are the steps you need to take.”

And while the work experience is important so students can see what field they like, there are other benefits, too.

“I feel like Akamai is a really good opportunity for college students to really get to know your community and make connections and grow your network,” Wagner said, the importance of which isn’t always recognized by new college students.

Wagner said she loved working at Gemini, but next summer she hopes to find another internship that will allow for more field work.

Akamai is led by the Institute for Scientists and Engineering Educators at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

ISEE Director Lisa Hunter said there’s a need for a local workforce, and local students who are interested in staying in the state and working a scientific or technology-related job. “So the program

really is aimed at matching that up, providing that connection between local workforce needs and students (who wish to) move into technical jobs,” she said following the completion of student presentations.

Now wrapping up its 16th year, Hunter said nearly 400 students have gone through the program.

According to Hunter, only about 40 percent of students who start off and are interested in a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) degree, graduate with degrees in those areas. But of those who go through the Akamai program, 87 percent stay in a STEM field.

“The program really focuses on giving students an authentic experience in a technology workplace, and we work with mentors on how to create, how to provide an authentic experience, and the students really rise to that,” she said.

“They’re challenged, but they come up, achieve the challenge, and they learn how to interact in the work environment. They learn how to talk like an engineer and work like an engineer. Those are the things I think that have really made the program work.”

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