



PRESS RELEASE
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HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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HawaiiCommunityFoundation.org

2021 HCF HO'OKELE AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Five Nonprofit Leaders Each Receive \$10,000 for Personal Renewal

HONOLULU, HAWAI'I—Five Hawai'i nonprofit executives were announced as recipients of the 19th annual Ho'okele Award, a special recognition given to exceptional leaders in Hawai'i's nonprofit sector by the Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF).

The Ho'okele Award pays tribute to leaders from the nonprofit sector—the guiding forces in the community who strive to make Hawai'i a better place. Named for the ho'okele, or steersman, the award recognizes the significant role that a nonprofit leader plays in improving the quality of life for Hawai'i's people.

“These hardworking and inspiring individuals have devoted years of service to our communities,” said Micah Kāne, CEO and president of the Hawai'i Community Foundation. “All of our awardees deserve recognition for their extraordinary leadership, and we hope the Ho'okele Award provides an opportunity for rejuvenation given the demanding nature of working in the nonprofit sector.”

Each Ho'okele Award recipient receives \$10,000 to be used for their professional development and personal renewal. Past recipients have used the funds for travel, retreats, home renovation projects, or other pursuits. Since 2002, \$760,000 has been awarded to 79 nonprofit leaders statewide, the majority of whom remain in the nonprofit sector.

“Receiving the Ho'okele award was a remarkable opportunity to reflect on my leadership as a nonprofit executive and to find creative ways to focus on self-care,” said Deborah Zysman, a 2019 Ho'okele award winner and executive director of Hawai'i Children's Action Network. “The past 18 months have challenged our sector more than we could have imagined and highlighted the need both for adaptable leaders and strong community support. I am so grateful that Hawai'i Community Foundation and its donors continue to invest in nonprofit leadership.”

In 2017, HCF's Board of Governors created the Kelvin Taketa Ho'okele Leadership Award Fund in honor of Taketa's visionary leadership as former CEO of HCF. The Fund ensures that the Ho'okele Award will continue in perpetuity.

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The following five 2021 HCF Ho'okele Award recipients were selected based on community nominations and their ability to think strategically and get results, bring different groups of people together, inspire others, make a difference in Hawai'i, and enthusiastically share their knowledge:

Kristin Frost Albrecht, The Food Basket Inc.

Albrecht is the executive director of The Food Basket Inc. (TFB), Hawai'i Island's Food Bank with offices and warehouses in Hilo and Kona, and a mission to end hunger on Hawai'i Island. TFB focuses on ending hunger at its roots through the development and administration of innovative anti-hunger programs that provide nutrition security and increased affordable healthy access for food insecure residents. Through her leadership, Hawai'i has successfully applied and received funding through the federal Double Up Food Bucks program which doubles electronic transfer (EBT) benefits when participants purchase locally grown produce. The program continues to grow and benefits low-income households around the state. In the last couple of years the program has expanded to more retailers, and benefits now include locally raised proteins.

Twinkle Borge, Leader, Pu'uhoonua O Wai'anae

The Pu'uhoonua O Wai'anae (POW) village consists of 250 people living unhoused on State land adjacent to the Wai'anae Boat Harbor. As its leader, Borge has organized the village into a powerful asset for the wider community that offers safety, healing, and purpose. POW residents serve Wai'anae in a variety of ways, including conducting cleanups across the Wai'anae Coast, feeding and clothing residents of other houseless encampments, and distributing back-to-school supplies to both houseless and housed families in need. In 2018, Borge and others led an effort to defend the village from the threat of State eviction, then raised funds to purchase land to relocate the village. In 2020, Borge and the village purchased 20 acres in Wai'anae Valley for their permanent home that is now under construction.

Jeff Gilbreath, Executive Director, Hawaiian Community Assets

Gilbreath is executive director of Hawaiian Community Assets (HCA), a local community development nonprofit that administers Hawai'i's largest nonprofit HUD-approved housing counseling program and the nation's first-and-only statewide network of Financial Opportunity Centers. In addition to his executive role at HCA, Gilbreath also serves as executive director of the organization's nonprofit social enterprise, Hawai'i Community Lending (HCL), a U.S. Department of Treasury-certified community development financial institution that is located together with HCA at Financial Opportunity Centers across state and provides consumer, affordable housing, and social enterprise loans with a focus on unbanked and underbanked populations. He has over 20 years of experience in community development and affordable housing, a background in Federal and State policy promoting sustainable communities, and experience in community lending services, product development, portfolio management, investor relations, and capital deployment.

Sandy Ma, Executive Director, Common Cause Hawai'i

Common Cause Hawai'i is a nonpartisan grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. Ma leads campaigns, fundraising, and engages local, state, and national organizations in building coalitions around Hawai'i, focusing on ethics and accountability, money and influence, and voting and elections by promoting equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all. During the 2020 Census effort, she was a tireless partner in working to get the word out to the community about the importance of the census. When the legislature transitioned to a remote format during the pandemic, Sandy teamed up with Hawai'i's libraries to get tablets in order for people to submit testimony and participate in the legislative process.

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Darryl J. Vincent, Chief Operating Officer, U.S. VETS

U.S. VETS works towards ending homelessness for veterans and providing comprehensive care services including housing, workforce development, mental health and wellness, and individualized support. Vincent supervises all executive directors across the organization's 11 service areas and oversees overall operations of U.S. VETS nationally. Earlier in his career at U.S. VETS, Vincent led the expansion of the U.S. Vets - Barber's Point and opened U.S. Vets – Wai'anae. As head of the U.S. VETS programs nationally, his attention to quality and measurable outcomes led the organization to achieve Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) accreditation and to be recognized as a national leader in service delivery to homeless veterans.

To view past Ho'okele Award recipients, [click here](#).

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About Hawai'i Community Foundation

With 105 years of community service, HCF is one of the leading philanthropic institutions in the state. HCF is a steward of more than 1,000 funds, including more than 300 scholarship funds, created by donors who desire to transform lives and improve communities. In 2020, HCF distributed \$142.4 million in grants and contracts statewide, including \$9.2 million in scholarships. HCF also serves as a resource on community issues and trends in the nonprofit sector.