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HTA Release (24-20)

Hawai'i Tourism Authority Work Wise Program Provides Jobs for Public High School Graduates and Students

HONOLULU – Fifty-three Maui and O'ahu public high school graduates and students have received invaluable exposure to potential jobs and career pathways in Hawai'i's diverse visitor industry through the Hawai'i Tourism Authority's inaugural "HTA Work Wise" program in partnership with ClimbHI. Of the participants, twenty-three students are currently working and 17 are in the interviewing and hiring process with participating companies.

"HTA Work Wise is all about our emphasis on workforce development by recruiting local public high school students and recent graduates, and providing them with real work experience and opportunities for summer employment here at home," said Mufi Hannemann, HTA board chair. "It's to ensure that our students have viable career pathways so they can remain in Hawai'i and become our next generation of visitor industry leaders."

The inaugural program held in June was a resounding success as students' perceptions toward careers in the visitor industry and the viability of remaining in Hawai'i improved greatly over the two-day span. The percentage of students considering a career in the hospitality or culinary industry leapt from 55 to 90 percent, while students considering a career in Hawai'i increased from 89 to 98 percent.

"Supporting our students and graduates as they seek employment while exposing them to a visitor industry eager to train homegrown talent is a win-win, and we are happy to be a part of connecting the two," said Daniel Nāho'opi'i, HTA's Interim President and CEO.

When initially asked if they feel they can live in Hawai'i and be economically self-sufficient following high school, less than half (47 percent) said yes. Following the program, that percentage jumped to nearly all (98 percent) of the students who participated.

"Our goal for this program is to expedite the hiring process for recent graduates," said Julie Morikawa, president of ClimbHI. "We are exposing them to real-world scenarios and expanding their understanding of available career pathways that allow them to not just survive but more importantly thrive in Hawai'i."

The HTA Work Wise program was created for recent high school graduates and current students from 16 to 18 years of age interested in part-time or seasonal work. Participants included 13 students on Maui, primarily from Lahainaluna and Baldwin High Schools; 22 students from West O'ahu schools, and 18 students from Honolulu.

On June 3 and 4, the students received exposure to potential part- or full-time jobs, as well as career paths available at 29 Hawai'i businesses through in-person experiences, such as being a customer, job shadowing, mentorship, site visits, guest speakers, and other activities. Students also received expedited application processes for current job openings based on their interests.

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Link to download images and footage:

<https://finnpartners.box.com/s/7uq5jwgxhs55k7mnnxcuebw1dgdd8dp80>

Photo credit: Hawai'i Tourism Authority / ClimbHI

About the Hawai'i Tourism Authority

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority is the state agency responsible for representing The Hawaiian Islands around the world, and for holistically managing tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with community desires, economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, and visitor industry needs. HTA works with the community and industry to Mālama Hawai'i – care for our beloved home. For more information about HTA, visit hawaiitourismauthority.org or follow @HawaiiHTA on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#) and [X](#).

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