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*Laulima Center launches new Web site*

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—April 1, 2011—The Laulima Center is open for business and is prepared to support cooperative business ventures throughout the State of Hawai‘i. Visit its new Web site at <http://www.laulimacenter.org> to learn more about how cooperatives can benefit Hawai‘i’s business community and about the services the center can provide to assist potential cooperatives.

The Laulima Center is headed by Rural Cooperative Development Specialist Melanie Bondera and is housed at The Kohala Center in Waimea on Hawai‘i Island. It is funded by a USDA-Rural Cooperative Development grant and support from the Ulupono Initiative.

“A cooperative is a unique form of business known as user-owned, user-benefited, and user-controlled,” said Bondera. “Benefits from the cooperative are returned to the members based on their use of the cooperative during the year. A cooperative is democratically controlled by its members through a one-member, one-vote policy. Members own the cooperative through their financial investment in the business.”

Cooperatives take many forms—from groups of farmers who process and market together, to food co-ops, credit unions, schools, medical groups, and artists’ collaboratives. Hawai‘i has a long history of cooperatives, and in today’s challenging economic climate cooperatives can provide an attractive alternative to traditional business partnerships.

The Laulima Center provides services that include cooperative business education, group facilitation and organization, strategic project planning, feasibility assessments, business planning, market analysis, grant writing, capitalization strategies, board and member training and conflict resolution.

Groups throughout the State of Hawai‘i that would like to form a cooperative but need some assistance getting organized, writing a business plan, or becoming legally incorporated are invited to visit the Web site to learn more about the Laulima Center.

To arrange a presentation or to request the center’s services, interested groups may contact Bondera at [mbondera@kohalacenter.org](mailto:mbondera@kohalacenter.org) or (808) 640-7076. Learn more about The Kohala Center's work at [www.kohalacenter.org](http://www.kohalacenter.org) or call (808) 887-6411.