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Contact: Janis Wong, media relations
The Kohala Center
jwong@kohalacenter.org
direct: 808-325-1114, office: 808-887-6411

New Laulima Center offers assistance for cooperatives

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—February 4, 2011—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 have a new resource—the Laulima Center.

Established by The Kohala Center and funded by a USDA-Rural Cooperative Development grant and the Ulupono Initiative, the Laulima Center will serve all sectors of our rural economy by providing organizational support to cooperative ventures statewide.

The new center grows out of The Kohala Center’s interests in food self-reliance, energy self-reliance, and ecosystem health. It is headed by Rural Cooperative Development Specialist Melanie Bondera and housed at The Kohala Center in Kamuela on Hawai‘i Island.

“We’ve been successful at creating greater employment and educational opportunities by caring for and celebrating our natural and cultural landscape here on Hawai‘i Island. By supporting the development of rural cooperatives, the Laulima Center gives us the further opportunity to respectfully engage island assets and to move toward a future of sustained abundance for all. This is an exciting time for us,” said Matt Hamabata, The Kohala Center executive director.

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.

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