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Hawaii Business names Hamabata up-and-coming leader

Janis Wong
Reader Submitted

Matt Hamabata, executive director of The Kohala Center, has been selected by Hawaii Business magazine as one of Hawaii's next generation of movers and shakers.

Hamabata is profiled in the magazine's March issue, "20 For The Next 20," as one of 20 up-and-coming leaders.

"Hawaii Business magazine was looking for up-and-coming leaders, people who will have a major impact on Hawaii over the next two decades. Matt Hamabata certainly belongs in that group," said Editor Steve Petranik.

"I am truly honored and truly surprised by this award," Hamabata said. "But I feel the honor should go to the residents and community leaders of Hawai'i Island—all I am doing is listening first to the needs of island residents and then making sure that I listen to the guidance of island leaders about how to meet those needs. This award is a testament to the pragmatic, creative, optimistic, and ambitious people of Hawai'i Island. They are leading, and I am following."

The Kohala Center was founded with a mandate to create greater employment and educational opportunities by caring for and celebrating Hawai'i Island's spectacular natural and cultural landscape. Hamabata has guided the growth of the organization from its bare-bones founding in January 2001 to a \$4.1 million organization in eight years. Under his leadership, The Kohala Center has built local, regional, national and international partnerships that focus on global

challenges in a locally relevant and internationally valuable way. The Center's work in energy self-reliance, food self-reliance, and ecosystem health involve not only the County of Hawai'i and the University of Hawai'i but also institutions like the Edith Kanaka'ole Foundation, Yale, MIT, Tokyo's Waseda University and Vienna's Institute for Social Ecology, among many others.

Energy-related systems analysis and policy recommendations developed with The Kohala Center's academic and local government partners are resulting in positive community and Hawai'i County Council action, including adoption of the 2006 International Energy Conservation Code (March 2007 Edition as amended). The island nation of Bermuda contacted The Kohala Center to say that the 2007 Hawai'i County Energy Sustainability Plan would serve as a model for its own work.

Committed to enhancing ecosystem health, Hamabata and The Kohala Center have partnered in the following ecosystem health projects:

The Kohala Watershed Partnership and the Pelekane Bay Watershed Restoration Project;

The Kahalu'u Bay Project, master plan, citizen

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science program, and an ecosystem health research program, which involves the Center for Conservation Research and Training at UH-Manoa, the Hawai'i Institute for Marine Biology, Redlands Institute, Stanford University, and Cornell University;

Long-Term Industrial Ecosystem Model—Hawai'i Island (LIEM-Hawai'i) Project with the Hawai'i County Department of Research and Development in collaboration with the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Redlands Institute, the Institute for Advanced Studies at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan, and the Institute for Social Ecology in Vienna, Austria;

Cornell-Hawai'i Graduate Field Research Laboratory, involving Cornell University, the University of Hawai'i at Hilo's Kipuka Native Hawaiian Student Center and the UHH program in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Sciences. A UHH NSF Center for Research Excellence in Science Technology grant also provided funding.

Hamabata believes that flourishing minds mean flourishing communities. Given the knowledge-rich employment opportunities that The Center is creating, Hamabata insists island youth become qualified for careers in the new knowledge-based economy that The Center is helping to create. Thus, The Center has become a strong supporter of K-12 educational programs, which annually reach more than 3,000 island students, including:

The Hawai'i Island School Garden Network;

Hidden Jewels at Kohala Elementary School;

Frameworks for Success in Science Project in the Hilo school complex;

Hawai'i Meaningful Outdoor Education and Science Program;

Brown Environmental Leadership Laboratory in

Hawai'i and Rhode Island;

Student Sustainability Conference at Hawai'i Preparatory Academy;

Summer youth program scholarships for Hawai'i Island youth to study at Brown and Cornell in the fields of engineering and environmental studies.

Hamabata also believes that a knowledge-based economy needs kama'aina leadership to head Hawai'i's educational and research institutions. In an important effort to support the development of intellectual leadership from Hawai'i for Hawai'i and the world, Hamabata worked with The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Kamehameha Schools, and the Kahiau Foundation to establish the Mellon-Hawai'i Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program for Native Hawaiian scholars.

Hamabata was born and raised in Hanapepe, Kauai, and is a graduate of Mid-Pacific Institute in Honolulu. He received his undergraduate degree at Cornell University and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He first taught at Yale University, served as the Dean of Haverford College, and was the Director of Learning at the California Endowment. He is Professor Emeritus at the Fielding Graduate University, a former Fulbright-Hays Fellow, and a recipient of the

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Literary Award of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. Hamabata received the Ho'okele Award in 2009 from the Hawai'i Community Foundation and Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, which recognizes nonprofit leaders in Hawai'i who are making a difference in our community.

To learn more about The Kohala Center programs, see www.kohalacenter.org.

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