

Westside Stories

A community newspaper by and for residents of the Leeward Coast of O'ahu, Hawai'i
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Wai'anae Health Center Wins Prestigious Award

The Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC) won the "Leadership Award for Non-Profit Corporations in Hawaii" at the annual awards dinner sponsored by Pacific Business News (PBN) held at the Hilton Hawaiian Village on November 4. Over 900 business leaders, as well as Governor Lingle, attended the dinner.

WCCHC is now one of Hawaii's Top 250 corporations and is among the fastest growing Hawaii companies with an 18% growth rate. They served 24,000 patients through 125,000 clinical visits in 2003. In addition, WCCHC was cited for maintaining a positive financial position for many years by continuously increasing productivity, developing revenue generating services, initiating technological innovations and promoting community involvement.

Board President Joseph Lapilio acknowledged after the ceremony that recognition of WCCHC has been a long time coming and expressed appreciation for the efforts made by so many in the community to make this award possible.

WCCHC now employs over 400 residents — and is the largest employer on the Wai'anae Coast.

In addition to providing millions of dollars of free and discounted care to patients (in the past year, it provided \$1.5 million in free services) WCCHC was recognized for its technological innovations by installing an Electronic Health Record System in 2003/04 and will digitize its 45,000 patient records. In addition, they have formed a regional training team that has trained staff on this system at Bay Clinic on the Big Island, Hana Community Health Center on Maui, and Waimanalo Health Center. They trained more than 175 individuals in 2003/04 and since fewer than 5% of all health centers in the U.S. have this electronic system, they are prepared to travel regionally.

WCCHC's impact has also been felt outside of Wai'anae. In 2003/04, staff helped develop community health center models in Kona, the North Shore and the Northern Mariana Islands. Members of the Board were leaders in conducting community leadership training with 15 health centers in Hawaii, California and Pennsylvania (among others). For the second straight year WCCHC was funded by the U.S. Public Health Services to conduct board leadership training regionally.

The WCCHC's team of Board and staff became the chief facilitators of a national conference on Health Center leadership held in December 2003 at the Ko'Olina Resort. Approximately 200 Health Center representatives attended from across the continental U.S. and Pacific Islands.

PBN's "evaluators" were also impressed by new services available such as an in-house pharmacy and being the first health center in Hawaii to participate in the Federal 340B Drug Pricing Program. This allowed them to use \$250,000 in revenues generated for deep discounts or free prescription drugs for Medicare patients, the uninsured and those patients whose insurance does not provide drug coverage.

Judges were impressed that WCCHC's "Model of Care" requires that the "whole person" be treated. In 2003/04 the Center teamed up with the Tripler Army Medical Center and Argosy University's Doctorate of Psychology residency program to expand behavioral health by adding several psychology residents to clinic teams at its main campus. Along those lines, WCCHC developed and participated in a pilot program with AlohaCare earlier this year that leads all other health centers for traditional Hawaiian healing services and for wellness programs ad-



Board members and staff pose proudly after receiving the Leadership Award at the PBN Awards dinner at Hilton Hawaiian Village.

dress obesity and chronic diseases in the Hawaiian community. More than 1,500 encounters were generated in a six-month period and the project is expected to lead to more permanent funding for these services, and the creation of an economic infrastructure that will support traditional practices.

Many recent visitors to WCCHC have spoken highly of the improvements to the gardens and grounds. The 5,000 square foot Dining Pavilion was completed in 2003 and opened to the public in March. In addition to serving healthy meals, the Pavilion offers conference and training facilities and is an important component of the center's additional wellness and Waianae Diet programs. Later this year WCCHC will add wellness facilities including an exercise program and gym to the downstairs area of the Dining Pavilion.

Two of the unique programs at WCCHC that work well together are the Waianae Health Academy (WHA) and Adult Day Care (ADC). WHA is a joint venture between the WCCHC and

two community colleges (Kapiolani and Leeward) and has trained 900 students. Approximately 50% of these students are currently employed or pursuing additional education.

WCCHC is not resting on its accomplishments! The Board of Directors raised \$8 million dollars through 2003/04 and recently learned that the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation will make a \$2.4 million dollar donation to help fund a new 3-story medical center slated to begin construction in mid 2005. In addition, the U.S. Department of Commerce made a \$1.75 million contribution.

WCCHC's Chief Executive Officer Richard Bettini stated, "We still have a lot to do. Along with putting up new facilities and installing the latest technology we want to improve services. With the design of the new buildings comes a redesign of healthcare — with a focus on improved patient satisfaction. We hope our community recognizes these improvements in the coming years."