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KEA`AU MIDDLE COLLEGE WINS THREE AWARDS IN MARCH 2008

Hawai`i Community College's innovative collaboration with Kea`au High School called Kea`au Middle College High School (KMCHS) in which at-risk high school seniors earn dual credit—high school and college—raked in three state-wide awards during the past month of March.

In early March, the program received the community college system-wide Wo Community Building Award. Louise Pagotto, Wo Learning Champions Coordinator, in her congratulatory letter to Middle College Coordinator, Trina Nahm-Mijo said: "The reviewers were most impressed by the transformative power of the project—clearly, students' lives are being changed by the academic and other activities in which they are engaged through Kea`au Middle College High School. The scope of this transformation will have a truly broad impact on the students and on their communities. As one reviewer commented: 'Save a youth, impact a generation'. The Wo Learning Champions were also impressed with the partnerships that have been developed through your work, bringing together community, DOE and cultural resources. Kea`au Middle College High School was seen as a model that other community colleges could emulate."

In mid-March, Lance Garner, a 2006 graduate of the first cohort of KMCHS and a current mentor in the Middle College culinary arts curriculum received word that he had been selected as the state-wide winner of the "Hawaii Spirit of Youth Award." This award, as described by sponsoring agency Hawaii Youth Committee (HYC), "aims to recognize and celebrate a young adult who has made great strides despite involvement with the juvenile justice system and is currently making significant contributions to the State of Hawaii." A week later, Lance was informed by the HYC that he had won the national level 2008 Coalition for Juvenile Justice Spirit of Youth Award. He will travel to Washington D.C, from April 23 -30 to accept his award as well as to attend the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) Conference as the Hawai`i youth representative. Lance had a 1.0 GPA throughout his high school career, until he joined KMCHS in 2005, where he earned a 3.6 GPA in his senior year. He is currently a Liberal Arts major earning a 4.0 GPA at HawCC. He was prominently featured in the October 2007 national HUD publication entitled: "Empowering Local Communities Through Leadership Deve-lopment and Capacity Building" available at: www.oup.org/files/pubs/empowerment.pdf.

With barely enough time to take another breath, KMCHS was informed that they had won the state-wide video competition, high school level, for their PSA on "What is a Pono School?" sponsored by the Hawai`i Civil Rights Commission and PBS. This video was shown on PBS on March 27, 2008.

With such successes, other schools and communities are looking to reproduce or to adapt the Middle College hands-on, integrated, dual credit curriculum to their students' educational needs. HawCC Project Coordinator, Trina Nahm-Mijo, sees KMCHS as the first of many new efforts that will begin to develop in Hawai`i following on the heels of the "early college high school" movement well into its second generation on the mainland and championed by Bill and Melinda Gates. The core principles of this movement stress the new 3 R's—Rigorous instruction, Relevant curriculum, and supportive Relationships. This kind of innovation is necessary to change Hawai`i's poor standing in the nation as 48th out of 50 states in education pipeline success—students completing high school and college in a timely fashion.

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