

Aloha Friends,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I'm looking forward to my new role as the Chair of the Senate Energy & Environment Committee (see below). Please contact me if you have any ideas for legislation or if I can help you in any way.

My phone number is 586-6830 and email is sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov. Mahalo for the privilege of serving you!

Listen-Story

I'll be hosting my next "Listen-Story" meeting at the Kapolei Starbucks (next to Chevron Station) at 9 a.m. on Saturday, December 13, 2008. I hope to see you there!

Senate Energy and Environment Chairmanship

I'm pleased to announce that I've been named the Chair of the Senate Energy & Environment Committee. I'm excited to take the reins of this important committee, as we continue focusing on the protection of our natural environment, while moving away from our dependence on fossil fuels and increasing our reliance on renewable energy. Hopefully, we can bring together environmentalists, developers, industry, and the community to come up with ideas to make our island state truly sustainable. Mahalo to former Senator Ron Menor who headed up the committee for the last two years. I will also serve as the Vice Chair of the Transportation, International Affairs & Intergovernmental Affairs Committee and as a member of the Judiciary & Government Operations and Public Safety & Military Affairs committees.

Kamokila Boulevard Extension Close to Being a Reality

You know that little road between our new Costco and Judiciary Complex that will connect Kamokila Blvd. to Roosevelt Blvd?

I vividly remember my first Villages of Kapolei Board of Directors meeting back in 2003 when someone said, "Mike, if there's only one thing you accomplish as our City Councilman, please get the Kamokila Extension done." Well, here we are 5 years later, and I'm still plugging away at it! We've been communicating with Kapolei Property Development, Delta Construction Co., and the City on how to expedite this crucial road so that it can be operational in time for the opening of Costco and Target in Spring 2009.

As it stands, Kapolei Property Development has completed its section of the road. I was there recently and it's beautiful. According to the latest info I've received, the contractor, Delta Construction Co., is scheduled to complete the remaining 150 ft. portion by mid-March. Costco is trying to coordinate its opening with the completion of the Extension. I know Target will open its doors on March 4, 2009 at 9am. The ideal scenario is for the road to open as soon as possible, because otherwise our friends in Ewa will be driving up Fort Barrette to shop at Costco/Target and the traffic will be even worse.

Barbers Point Bowling Alley to Reopen Soon

I hosted a meeting on October 23rd at the State Capitol which brought together the Navy, Hunt Development Group, Rep. Sharon Har's Office, Bev Brennan, and Linda Painter in the hopes of reaching an agreement to get the Barbers Point Bowling Alley reopened. The bowling alley closed on October 1st after the Navy signed its agreement with Hunt to convey 499-acres of land in Kalaeloa to them. Since that time, the Navy has been negotiating with Bev and Linda, Makakilo residents and Kalaeloa Subway owners/managers, to take over operations. I'm happy to announce that it looks like they've worked out an agreement and the bowling alley should be reopening very soon.

Making Aahualii Street Hillside Safer for Residents

Back in 2007, I was contacted by a Makakilo resident who was concerned about the boulders that were on the hillside above his house on Uhiuala Street. We contacted the landowner, Kapolei Property Development (KPD), to see if they could look into the situation. They ended up doing an engineering survey and determined that remedial work was necessary for the near-by area of Aahualii Street. I learned on November 21st that KPD has contracted Hi-Tech Rockfall Construction to build 750 feet of heavy gauge fences along the hillside on Aahualii Street to make it safer for residents. The work will take place over the next two months from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on weekdays.

Volunteer Opportunities in the Community

Real Property Tax Review Board

Makakilo resident, Stan Jones, asked that I help get the word out about how the Real Property Tax Review Board #3 is in need of two additional volunteers to serve. The Board meets at Kapolei Hale usually every Tuesday at 1:00pm for about 1-3 hours. In order to be eligible, you need to be a registered voter and be a resident of Hawaii. The Board's main duty is reviewing property tax appeals filed by Honolulu homeowners. If you're interested, please contact Jay Ishibashi, of the Mayor's Office, at 527-5823. You can also contact Mr. Jones, who happens to be the Chair of the Board, at hstanjones@aol.com to get a better feel for what's involved.

Sony Open Golf Tournament

Makakilo resident, Bev Brennan, wanted me to let you know that the Sony Open Golf Tournament is looking for volunteers to work as standard bearers. As part of the standards team, you would walk 18 holes of golf each day and carry a sign bearing the names of each golfer with his score. The tournament will take place at the Waialae Country Club from January 12-18, 2009. The Sony Open happens to be the largest charity event in the state and has raised over \$8 million for non-profits since 1999. All volunteers will receive a tournament shirt, hat or visor, breakfast, and lunch for their participation. If you're interested in volunteering, please email Bev at aliikoa52@aol.com and put "Sony Open" in the subject line.

Godspeed to Waikele Soldier JJ Willis

It was a privilege to attend the going-away barbecue dinner for the 25th Infantry Division Engineers in Kapolei on November 8th. Waikele's own, JJ Willis, is one of the soldiers who deployed to Iraq with his division the week of November 17th. This happens to be JJ's third tour of duty in the Middle East. JJ and his wife, Julie, have taken an active role in improving the community. I ask you to please keep JJ and all of our soldiers and their families in your prayers.

Kunia Farm Hosts "Boun That Luang" Celebration

I thoroughly enjoyed being apart of the "Boun That Luang" celebration and presenting a certificate from the State Senate to the leadership of the newly formed Lao-American Association of Hawaii at Kunia Farm on November 8th.

Boun That Luang is a harvest festival that is celebrated by Lowland Lao, or those who live along rivers and flatlands, on the full moon of the twelfth lunar month (November). It's a week-long event centered around the Laos' greatest national monument, That Luang Stupa, which is a tower built in Vientiane in 1566. The festival includes a candlelit procession circling the tower, a grand fireworks display, and an international trade fair near the temple that lasts for one week. The members of the newly established Lao-American Association of Hawaii desire to teach others about the significance and rare splendor of their homeland. The association will help preserve the country's heritage by promoting Lao art, culture, and tradition. They also hope to motivate Laotians in the area to take interest in education and self-improvement, both inside and outside of school. By participating in other cultural events, The Lao-American Association will work on developing mutual understanding and respect of diverse groups.

I wish Hawaii's Lao-American community many years of success as they share the traditions and beauty of Laos with the diverse people of our state.

Kapolei's Stacie Kanno Named 2008 Public Librarian of the Year

I was on hand to congratulate Kapolei Public Library Branch Manager, Stacie Kanno, at the Friends of the Library of Hawaii Awards Ceremony at the Hawaii State Library on November 13th. Ms. Kanno was recognized for being named the 2008 Public Librarian of the Year.

For twelve years, the Friends of the Library of Hawaii have acknowledged extraordinary librarians with this honor. Their criteria for the nomination of the Librarian of the Year is someone with outstanding customer service to the public, strong promotion of enjoyable library experiences, as well as support for public libraries and their place in the community. Ms. Kanno's dedication reaches far beyond the walls of the Kapolei Library. Although it is the newest and third busiest library in the state, she has also made time to volunteer for important causes. She has taken the lead in developing effective collaborative relationships with groups as varied as the University of Hawaii, Kapolei area businesses, and the Smithsonian Institution.

The Kapolei Public Library staff, community, and the entire Ewa plain are fortunate to have Stacie Kanno as branch manager. We thank her for sharing her love of books, her enthusiasm for her job, her positive attitude, and her enchanting smile.