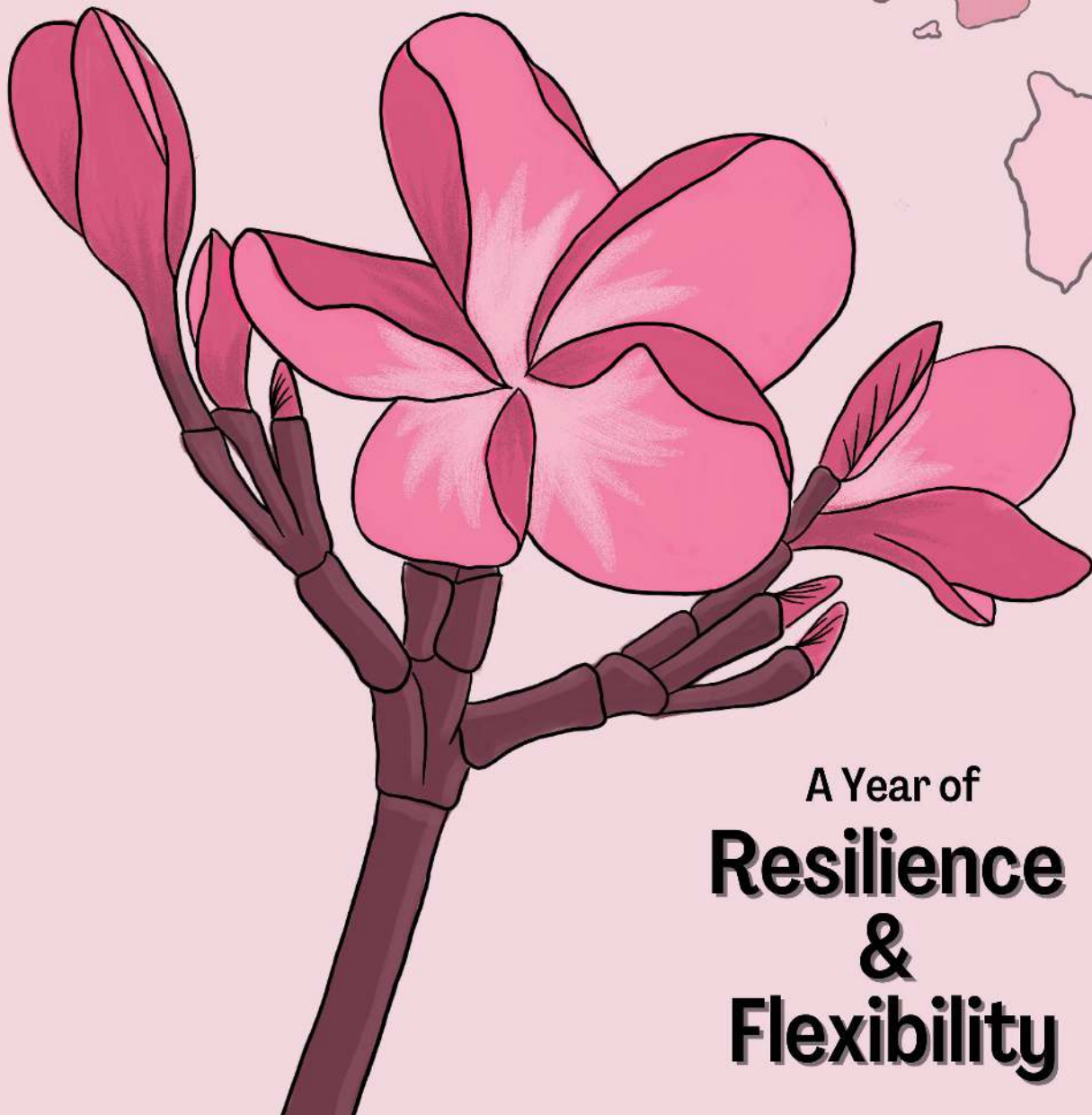




2021 Annual Report



A Year of
**Resilience
&
Flexibility**



‘Helping People. Changing Lives.’ for last 56 years in Maui County

The story of Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc. (MEO) begins on March 22, 1965, when the agency was chartered as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, a part of President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society. MEO is the only designated anti-poverty Community Action Agency (CAA) serving Maui County.

As a Community Action Agency, MEO must ensure low-income citizens play an active role in program design and administration, or “maximum feasible participation.” The Act mandates the board structure requiring tripartite representation. The MEO Board of Directors is comprised of low-income residents, private businesses and public officials.

MEO connects children and families to greater opportunity, transforming their lives and making our community stronger with services located in the areas of greatest need. When a family or an individual faces a crisis, MEO is able to respond quickly with targeted forms of assistance appropriate to the situation. This may include the mobilization of help from our many private sector partners, volunteers and faith-based groups.

When the community faces a crisis, government leaders turn to MEO. One of the agency’s shining moments was getting Maui County funds to emotionally and financially stressed residents in the aftermath of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maui County asked MEO to deliver a lifeline to residents who had suddenly lost their jobs and income. MEO had the program up and running within a couple of weeks with staff working without days off in some cases. Helping People. Changing Lives.

But for MEO, it’s not enough to provide for immediate needs. The goal is to avoid the long-term consequence of costly dependency. MEO also has the capability to sustain long-term involvement in an individual’s or family’s progress to self-sufficiency, as well as in the



MEO Hana driver Karen Redo delivers a food package to Mildred “Mili” Lono Gorbea.

development of the low-income community.

MEO provides tools to help people and change lives through more than 40 programs in five departments: Business Development Center, Community Services, Early Childhood Services, Transportation Services and Youth Services.

Programs provide Maui Bus paratransit and specialized transportation services, including for children needing to get to after-school programs, kupuna to dialysis and health appointments and shopping, and individuals to get to work. Head Start provides needed preschool to low income families.

Other programs offer drug, alcohol, suicide and bullying prevention for youths, business planning and financial literacy classes and microloans, rent/mortgage and utility support, employment training and placement for kupuna and support for inmates recently released from jails and prisons.

It’s difficult to grasp or describe all that MEO does for Maui County. MEO offers a wide ranging set of programs for a diverse population of people in need while “dedicated to helping people help themselves.”

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Cover designed by
Shauna Sibonga

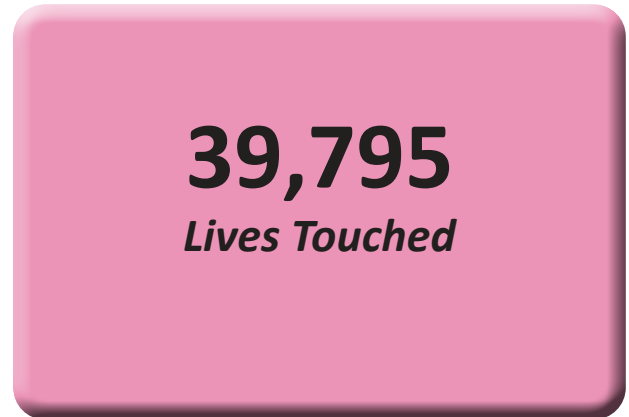


The Mission of MEO is to strengthen the community while helping people in need restore their hope, reach their potential and enrich their lives

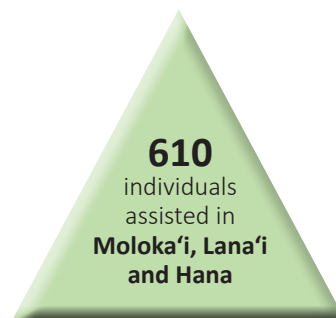
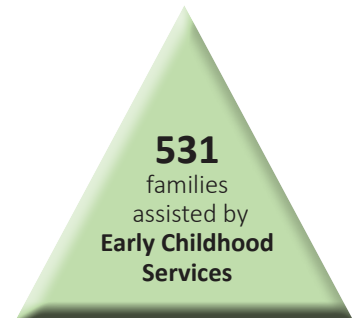
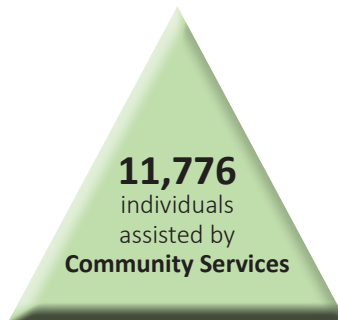


Helping People. Saving Lives.

Fiscal Year 2021 (October 1, 2020-September 30, 2021)



Numbers by Department





CEO's Message: Perseverance amid pandemic

We began this year with hope and optimism. Surely things would get back to “normal.” Little did we know that COVID-19 would manifest itself into the Delta variant, pushing our return to normalcy down the road.

Nonetheless, MEO staff remained strong and flexible, adjusting programs to help low-income individuals and families, persons with disabilities, previously incarcerated persons and immigrants overcome barriers, stabilize their living situations and strengthen families and our communities.



Some notable accomplishments include partnering with the Maui Chamber of Commerce, producing the ‘Imi Pono Challenge. Twenty-one middle and high school Maui County youths submitted art, photography and videos highlighting the Four Ws – Wear Your Mask, Wash Your Hands, Watch Your Distance and Worldwide Vaccination. Cash prizes were issued to the top three middle and high school finalists. The winning video was shown at Consolidated Theatres in

Central and South Maui and art entries were displayed at Maui Medical Group. ‘Imi Pono is the brain child of Maui County Council Chair Alice Lee. Maui County youth are amazing!

To support local farmers and improve food security, MEO Business Development Center administered the county’s Office of Economic Development Micro Ag Grant, assisting more than 100 farmers expand farm yield capacity and production, improve safety and health practices, increase business acumen, adopt or increase utilization of technology and/or business

visibility through marketing efforts.

To support funding gaps, MEO received grant awards from Bayer and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to provide coupons to low-income and Native Hawaiian households for redemption at local farmers markets and funding from the Nuestro Futuro Foundation to expand the MEO Youth Services prevention program to the island of Moloka’i. Funding will support program activities for middle and high school youth and their families. In addition, for the third year in a row, AT&T provided discretionary funding to complete much needed maintenance and repairs to our aging Moloka’i facility.

MEO was recognized by Pacific Business News as a Nonprofit Leader Honoree, a Hawaii Business Magazine Book of Lists Top 250 Businesses and a Better Business Bureau Torch Awards Ethics finalist. Community Services Director Cassi Yamashita was recognized as a Pacific Business News 40 Under 40 Honoree and Early Childhood Director Debbi Amaral was recognized as an Early Learning Champion by the Children’s Action Network. None of this would be possible without the hard work of those MEO heroes working behind the scene and the front-line staff who provide that hand-up that makes a difference. We are truly an ‘Ohana.

We are humbled by the support we receive from our funders, donors and elected officials. We are grateful for the commitment and dedication of our board of directors, volunteers and partners.

Collectively, we are Helping People. Changing Lives.

With aloha,

Debbie Cabebe, SHRM-SCP, NCRT

MEO LEADERSHIP TEAM

Debbie Cabebe Chief Executive Officer	Patty Copperfield Transportation Director
Gay Sibonga Chief Operating Officer	Dane Ka’ae Youth Services Director
Debbie Lorenzo Chief Financial Officer	Yolanda Reyes Moloka’i Branch Director
Cliff Caesar Chief Human Resources Officer	Kaena Doolin Lana’i Branch Director
Cassi Yamashita Community Services Director	Jonnie Oliveira Hana Branch Manager
Debbi Amaral Early Childhood Services Director	Mark Hammer Facilities Manager
David Daly Business Development Center Director	Lee Imada Executive Assistant
	Kris Padin IT Manager





President's Message: Teamwork got us through

As I reflect back on all of the challenges we faced during the past year, it has been incredibly gratifying to see the way teamwork and collaboration have thrived within our community and within MEO. Leadership has come from all areas of the organization and so many of the MEO 'ohana showed tremendous character, quietly making individual sacrifices and going above and beyond to support MEO and its clients.



The results of these efforts are apparent in so many ways. The accomplishments during the last fiscal year included MEO assisting 18,917 individuals and families in Maui County with critical support during this

challenging time. MEO added 18 new buses to the transportation fleet and installed an onsite fueling station with assistance of Hawaii Fueling Network, and MEO started the process for developing an affordable housing project at Waiehu, Maui, a partnership with MEO, Hale Mahaolu and Highridge Costa.

MEO also launched a new and improved website with added Quick Links, Events, Information and News, and MEO continued its focus on achieving clean audits and demonstrating fiscal responsibility. MEO was also successful with grants and fundraising

with numerous accomplishments, including a virtual gala in August, grants that supported the 'Ohana Farmers' Market Nutrition Program for low-income families, an expansion of MEO Youth Services Prevention program to Moloka'i, and MEO secured another year of funding for the Business Development Center's Micro Ag Grant program.

As a long-time volunteer at MEO, I am thankful for all of those who donate their time, money and skills to support the organization. Our volunteers give the most important gifts you can give – their kindness, valuable time and unconditional support. In the past year, 211 MEO volunteers performed 1,070 volunteer hours, which saved MEO more than \$46,000. This support is vital to MEO's ability to continue to help the community it serves.

I am encouraged for our community as we emerge from the pandemic and return to normalcy, and it is comforting to know that MEO will continue to provide critical services to our community members who are in need of assistance. I am proud to say that MEO's leadership, employees, volunteers, and programs make Maui County a better place to live. It is an honor to serve as board president of an organization that is so vital to our community, and I look forward to MEO's continued efforts to help our community recover from the economic effects of the pandemic.

Me ke aloha pumehana.

Bard Peterson

Members of the Maui Economic Opportunity Board of Directors pose for a photo at the annual Board Installation held on June 24, 2021. It was a hybrid in-person/livestreamed event. The keynote speaker (at right) was retired 2nd Circuit Judge Rhonda Loo. The in-person part of the installation was held in the MEO Classrooms in Wailuku.



MEO Tripartite Board

The 21-member Board of Directors represents Resident, Private and Government sectors with 1/3 representation for each.

Clifford Alakai, *Treasurer*,
Rep. Troy Hashimoto

Joseph Aquino, ILWU

Leilani Aquino, Head Start
Policy Council

Dawn Bicoy, Molokai Filipino
Community Council

Stacy Crivello,
Mayor Michael Victorino

Ned Davis, Sen. Roz Baker

Frank De Rego Jr., Maui
Native Hawaiian Chamber
of Commerce

Cindy Figuerres,
Lana'i Area Council

Arleen Gerbig,
West Maui Seniors

Peter Horovitz, Maui County
Bar Association

Reuben Ignacio,
Hale Mahaolu

Tasha Kama,
Maui County Council

Gemma Medina, Hawai'i
Association for the Education
of Young Children – Maui
Chapter

Michael Nobriga,
Rep. Kyle Yamashita

Scott Okada,
Rep. Angus McKelvey

Bard Peterson, *President*,
Rep. Justin Woodson

Carol Reimann, *Vice
President*, A&B Properties

Adele Rugg, *Secretary*,
Kula AARP Seniors

Sandy Ryan, Maui Economic
Development Board

Tessie Segui, Kahului Seniors

Desiree Ting,
Central Pacific Bank



The Programs

BEST (Being Empowered and Safe Together)

- **Goals.** Addresses the challenges that individuals face as they return to the Maui County community from incarceration.
- **Services.** Substance abuse assessments and referral, tuition support, fees and other financial assistance to obtain a driver's license and identification, work clothing, food, bus passes and personal hygiene items.
- **Contact.** (808) 243-4356, bishop.pahia@meoinc.org

Enlace Hispano

- **Goals.** To improve the quality of life for the Hispanic community and foster opportunities for inter-cultural experiences.
- **Services.** Interpretation, translation, supportive services and case management.
- **Contact.** (808) 249-2970

Maui Independent Living Center

- **Goals.** To ensure that persons with disabilities are full social, civic and economic partners within their families and in a fully accessible community, and to create access and choice.
- **Services.** Assessment to identify needs, development of Personal Independence Plan, assist with applications and program enrollment.
- **Contact.** (808) 243-4328, evalina.watanabe@meoinc.org.

National Farmworker Jobs Program

- **Goals.** Nationally-directed program of job training and employment assistance for migrant and seasonal farmworkers.
- **Services.** Skills training, supportive services to stabilize employment in agriculture, facilitates coordination with American Jobs Center system. Employment Service Plan or Individual Service Plan developed, implemented and maintained by staff with timely follow-ups and reviews.
- **Contact.** (808) 243-4368, dennise.kahuhu@meoinc.org.

Maui Planning and Coordinating Council

- **Goals.** To enhance the quality of life and independence for seniors through education, companionship, and better health.
- **Services.** Assists senior clubs with recruitment and membership enrollment, advocacy, education and



MEO photo

MEO Youth Services and Big Brothers Big Sisters joined together for a beach cleanup at Sugar Beach in South Maui in July.

social activities and events.

- **Contact.** (808) 243-4313 zilpah.kaimiola@meoinc.org.

Cares Act Reentry Program

- **Goals.** Collaborates with Maui Reentry Partners to deliver targeted services designed to keep present and formerly incarcerated individuals impacted by COVID-19 from reoffending.
- **Services.** Provides access to mental health and substance abuse assessments, treatment, career pathways, employment training and housing assistance opportunities.
- **Contact.** (808) 249-2970.

Senior Discount Red Card

- **Goals.** To reduce food costs for seniors.
- **Services.** Merchants solicited for program that offers senior citizens 60 years of age or older and residents of Maui County discounts on food and merchandise when showing the MEO Red Card.
- **Contact.** (808) 243-4313, zilpah.kaimiola@meoinc.org.

Senior Community Service Employment Program

- **Goals.** To foster and promote part-time employment opportunities in community service activities for low income senior citizens 55 years or older.
- **Services.** Compile an individual Employment Plan and be assigned to host agency for work experience with follow-ups.
- **Contact.** (808) 243-4355, carmelei.

leano@meoinc.org.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Energy Crisis Intervention (ECI)

- **Goals/Services.** Provides assistance to households on the verge of utility termination or terminated within 60 days from application.
- **Contact.** (808) 249-2970.

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)

- **Goals.** Provides help to increase energy efficiency for low-income families, elderly, persons with disabilities and children.
- **Services.** Assists with purchase of cost-saving home energy efficiency improvements. An in-home energy audit is conducted that evaluates and recommends specific energy-saving measures.
- **Contact.** (808) 249-2970.

Maui County Rental Assistance Program

- **Goals/Services.** Provides assistance for rental and utility deposits and rent subsidy at a declining schedule based on income and contingent on the applicant's circumstances. All assistance is paid directly to the landlord of the rental or the utility company. This program is part of a homelessness prevention initiative.
- **Contact.** (808) 243-4358, kathy.jimenez@meoinc.org.

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

- **Goals.** Provides seniors with

nutrition education and access to unprocessed locally grown produce.

- **Services.** Participants receive \$50 in coupons to be redeemed with participating farmers, farmers markets, or roadside stands for fruits, vegetables, herbs and honey. Seasonal program runs from April 1 to October 31.
- **Contact.** (808) 249-2990, gay.sibonga@meoinc.org.

Employment Services for Low-Income Persons and Legal Permanent Residents

- **Goals.** To improve opportunities for low-income persons and legal permanent residents by enhancing their employment skills and helping them overcome barriers on Maui and Moloka'i. The goal is to help clients find jobs earning a living wage.
- **Services.** Participants will learn skills, behaviors and methods of obtaining and keeping gainful employment.
- **Contact.** (808) 243-4371, janeth.cerizo@meoinc.org.

Head Start Preschool

- **Goals.** Federally funded, national program promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through provisions of education, health, nutrition, social and other services to eligible children and their families.
- **Services.** Preschool for 3 and 4 year olds in low-income families on Maui and Moloka'i.
- **Contact.** (808) 249-2988, debbi.amaral@meoinc.org.

Head Start After-School and Summer

- **Goals/Services.** Extended-day and summer quality education services so parents or guardians can be employed, attend school to obtain a degree or credential, or participate in employment training for job placement.
- **Contact.** (808) 249-2988, debbi.amaral@meoinc.org.

Kahi Kamali'i Infant Toddler Center

- **Goals.** To provide quality early childhood services for children to 3 years of age.
- **Services.** Four qualified caregivers promote continuity of care. Services are offered year round. County of Maui provides funding to keep costs affordable for income-eligible families, teen families and families with children receiving early intervention support through Imua Family Services.

Continued on the next page

Continued from Page 6

● **Contact.** (808) 249-2988, debbi.amaral@meoinc.org.

Temporary Emergency Food Assistance

● **Goals/Services.** Individuals and families receive U.S. Department of Agriculture food commodities monthly on Moloka'i and Lana'i.
● **Contact.** (808) 565-6665 on Lana'i, (808) 553-3216 Moloka'i.

Human Services Transportation

■ **Senior Services.** Allows seniors to participate in activities and events at Kaunoa Senior Center and communitywide, senior club meetings, leisure and nutrition excursions. Provides house-to-house or site pickups.

■ **Senior Nutrition.** Transports seniors and persons with disabilities from home or designated pickup sites to congregate dining sites throughout Maui County, including Hana, Lana'i, and Moloka'i.

■ **Ka Lima O Maui and Easter Seals.** Transports clients with special needs to participate in programs at Ka Lima O Maui and Easter Seals. Most clients require house-to-house pickup and return.

■ **Employment Transportation.** Provides transportation to adults with special needs and low income or disadvantaged clients to and from their jobs. Service area includes Central, South, West and Upcountry. Normal service is on weekdays, excluding holidays.

■ **Rural Shopping Shuttle.** To meet the needs of the outlying rural communities, shuttle provides curb-to-curb transportation from residence to locations primarily within the central corridor of the islands of Maui and Moloka'i, as well as within Hana and Lana'i City and the Upcountry area. Service is by reservation.

■ **Youth Transportation.** Provides transportation for Maui County youth with emphasis on public programs and facility locations that are important to youth. This includes youth centers, paddling practices and regattas.

■ **Community Transportation.** Provides transportation to the seniors, residents in medical need, and other disadvantaged people in the community, to attend the Maui County Special Fair and other community events.

■ **Ala Hou Transportation.** Provides transportation to persons with disabilities who need accessible

transportation in areas of Maui County not serviced by ADA Paratransit Services.

■ **Dialysis Treatment Transportation.** Provides nonemergency medical transportation for kidney dialysis patients in Maui County to and from Liberty and Rainbow Dialysis Centers.

● **Contact.** (808) 877-7651 Maui, (808) 553-3218 Moloka'i, (808) 565-6665 Lana'i.

Maui Bus Paratransit Transportation

● **Goals/Services.** Advance reservation, curb-to-curb service for persons with disabilities who are unable to use the regular fixed route Maui Bus. Service is available within corridors whose boundaries extend three-fourths of a mile on each side of each fixed Maui Bus route.

● **Contact.** (808) 877-7651 Maui.

Youth Services

● **Goals.** To develop life, career, leadership skills and cultural awareness to give intermediate and high school youths the confidence and awareness to make good decisions.

● **Services.** After school and out of school youth development program for 6th to 12th grade students from Maui High and Maui Waena Intermediate, though no student is turned away. Typical participants come from low income or high risk families.

● **Contact.** (808) 243-4315, dane.kaae@meoinc.org.

Underage Drinking Prevention

● **Goals.** To delay the age when youths begin drinking and to reduce use among youths who have consumed alcohol.

● **Services.** Evidence-based in-school curriculum for youths ages 12-17 offered in middle and high school classrooms. Program is peer led and age-appropriate with service learning projects after school and during school breaks.

● **Contact.** (808) 243-4315, dane.kaae@meoinc.org.

Business Development Center

● **Goals.** Providing microenterprise financing and offering educational programs and technical assistance to those interested in starting, expanding or purchasing a business.

● **Services.** Core Four Business Planning Course that is offered on Maui, Lana'i and Moloka'i, Credit Repairs and Technical Assistance (TA) for applicants of the OHA Malama Loan Program, Teen and Adult Financial Literacy and seminars for Maui County Business Resource Center on Credit Readiness, How to



Jacob Hara manned the tech at the livestreamed 'Ohana Night: Cooking Edition with chefs Justin Horne and Cory Wells. Dustin Kalei-opu takes a close up of Horne in May 2021.

Obtain Business Loans and Starting a Business.

● **Contact.** (808) 243-4318, david.daly@meoinc.org

Agape Lana'i Loan Fund

● **Goals/Services.** Loans are for Lana'i small businesses in the amount of up to \$30,000 with an interest rate of 5 percent.

● **Contact.** (808) 243-4318, david.daly@meoinc.org.

Maui County Micro-Agriculture Grants

● **Goals.** Providing funds to small Maui County farms that will have a direct impact on increasing availability of local produce, livestock, poultry and products by increasing the farm's capacity, productivity, name recognition and income.

● **Services.** Grants of up to \$25,000 provided to qualifying farms. Funds provided by Maui County grant with MEO administering program.

● **Contact.** (808) 243-4318, david.daly@meoinc.org.



Above: MEO's Community Services Director Cassi Yamashita with certified interpreter Kate Eifler taught a CPR class to deaf individuals in May 2021 at MEO.

Below: A new fuel pump station, put in by the Hawaii Fueling Network at the Puunene base yard was blessed in March 2021.





The Business Development Center assists small business entrepreneurs with business plan training, credit assessment and microloans for startup and expansion. A key component is the Core Four Business Planning course, offered several times a year on Maui, Moloka'i and Lāna'i. Designed for entrepreneurs, this 6-week course spans 36 hours of engagement, offers opportunities for networking and

helps participants to develop a business plan. Another popular offering is the adult and teen Financial Literacy class, which teaches basic budgeting. In the 2020-21 fiscal year, BDC also administered the first Maui County Agricultural Micro-grants Program, which offered up to \$25,000 in grants to Maui County farmers. A second grant was awarded with planning beginning in the fiscal year.

Small farmers awarded \$25,000

Published March 22, 2021

Maui County's \$2.5 million Agricultural Micro Grants Program, administered by Maui Economic Opportunity, purchased tractors, chippers and other supplies; put up fencing and sheds; and established an online presence for 105 small farms in the county.

With the program winding to a close, MEO Business Center Director David Daly said March 22 that his team was working on putting the finishing touches on the last couple of grants.

The Agricultural Micro Grants Program was established to allow small Maui County farms to receive grants – up to \$25,000 – that directly increase the availability of local produce, livestock, poultry and farm products while increasing agricultural capacity, productivity, name recognition and income.

Qualifications included possessing a state General Excise Tax number, and owners residing in Maui County. Preference was given to socially disadvantaged applicants, such as women and



Katie Romanchuk of Ohialani Gardens in Haiku drives a new Kubota backhoe that was purchased with a Maui County micro-agricultural grant, administered by Maui Economic Opportunity. Agricultural Micro Grant Program 2.0 planning began late in the fiscal year.

that's our biggest drawback," Voss said, adding that the pandemic did not really affect their business because their distributor, LocalHarvest, kept accepting their fruit.

Her husband, David, is the mechanic for the 4-acre farm, keeping the old and hand-me-down machinery going. He recently learned that he had cancer, and the treatment sapped his energy and his ability to care for the equipment.

They learned about the grant from the Maui County Farm Bureau.

"I feel very lucky to have gotten this grant," said Voss, whose farm produces about 5,000 pounds of lemons, limes, oranges, peaches and nectarines annually. "It was great, very thankful."

Her husband is on his way to recovery.

"I appreciate the county and whoever put this together for small farmers," said Voss. "Usually, everything's big grants, you gotta make \$50,000 to get something. This was nice that it was small . . . I assume it benefited a lot of small farmers on this island."

Native Hawaiians, and food-producing farm businesses that operate on less than 12 acres.

Payments were made directly to vendors. Daly noted at the time that vendors have been paid but that some farmers had not yet received equipment or materials due to manufacturing shortages and weather issues.

The money was used for farming equipment and machinery; processing and storage equipment; farm expansion, such as fencing and sheds; supplies, including

fertilizers, soil amendments, seeds, plants and small tools; packing and packaging materials; technology equipment; marketing supplies and services, including website development; health and safety upgrades; and professional development and education.

Carol Voss of citrus fruit farm Laoa Farms in Kula received a \$14,000 grant and used the money to buy farm equipment, including a chipper/shredder, lawnmowers and weed wackers.

"We needed equipment;

By The Numbers: 936 entrepreneurs received training and technical assistance

● 306 individuals improved their financial literacy



MEO Early Childhood Services offers two programs for children and families and provides continuous training and technical assistance for staff.

The Kahi Kamali'i Infant and Toddler Center at the J. Walter Cameron Center in Wailuku provides quality early childhood services year round for children 1 to 3 years of age. Qualified caregivers are assigned to the same children each day to promote continuity of care. The County of Maui provides funding to keep costs affordable for income-eligible families, teen families, and families with children receiving early intervention support through Imua Family Services.

Head Start supports the entire family to achieve stability and promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children ages 3 to 5 by providing education, health, nutrition, social and other services to eligible children and their families. The core program is federally funded with funding from the County to offer an after-school and summer program. Services are offered at no cost.

The year was affected by the pandemic. Class sizes were reduced, and sites were forced to shutdown and follow health/safety protocols when a positive case was reported, but staff and families persevered

Head Start goes full circle with child, teacher

Published June 7, 2021

Said Akaou and Evelyn Del Valle have a Head Start connection.

Said, 76, is a longtime assistant teacher at Head Start. Evelyn, 22, a Head Start youth, joined the early childhood learning program last October as a teacher aide. When the Head Start site at UH-Maui College, where Evelyn works, needed an extra teacher, Said, agreed to go over there from his regular Wailuku Elementary site to help.

There was a reunion.

"Uncle Said, you don't remember me?" Evelyn asked. "You were my teacher at Luana Gardens (Head Start site)."

"All I remember is your face ... and your name," he replied at the reunion on March 12, 2021.

Said later would remember more about the child, who spoke mostly Spanish, and her dad, an immigrant from Guatemala, who served as a Head Start officer with the center's parent committee and would help out at the Luana Gardens MEO Head Start



Said Akaou and Evelyn Del Valle had a reunion on March 12, 2021, at the Maui Economic Opportunity Head Start site at UH-Maui College. Said was Evelyn's teacher at Head Start in 2003-04. Both are now on the Head Start teaching staff.

Kahului B site.

Evelyn was among Said's first students. He joined Head Start in 2002 after moving to Maui from France with his wife in 2000. His plan was to retire, but he got bored. The retired vocational school instructor decided to give Head Start a try.

Evelyn's father, Max, stood out because there were not too many men taking leadership roles at Head Start at the time, Said said. Max spoke only a little English, so Said, who spoke Spanish, helped him.

Said also helped Evelyn, who did not speak English



very well. "I speak Spanish," Said said. "That is why she trusted me a little, that's how I got to communicate with her."

After a year, Evelyn was proficient in English.

Evelyn fondly remembered a few details of her days at Head Start as a youth. She recalled Said putting raisins on celery, "ants on a log," he called them. "That is the only way I would eat celery," she said.

Other highlights of her 2003-04 school year included a Halloween celebration, a visit to a Christmas tree farm and Santa.

Evelyn attended Lihikai Elementary, Maui Waena Intermediate and Maui High schools and is taking classes at UH-Maui College in early childhood education. Her father wanted her to become a flight attendant, which could offer travel benefits for the family, or to work for Head Start.

He wanted her to give back to the community.

After losing her restaurant job due to the pandemic, Evelyn saw the opening for a teacher aide at Head Start and decided to give it a try.

"It was kind of cool. It was a happy feeling," Evelyn recalled when seeing "Uncle" Said. "I am giving what I got. Uncle Said and Head Start had a big impact on my life."

For Said, it was a proud moment, meeting his former student, now a teacher aide at Head Start. When he took the position, it was not about career but keeping busy and giving back to the community. He added that next school year likely will be his last.

"I think I make a difference," he said. "It's very rewarding."

By The Numbers: 159 demonstrated skills for school readiness • 159 children improved emergent literacy skills
• 166 parents/caregivers improved their home environments



Community Services programs assist individuals and families to achieve stability and economic security, strengthen the community and engage individuals with low incomes in building opportunities in the community. This department is the largest by number of programs, including Maui Independent Living Center, which aids persons with disabilities; Planning and Coordinating Council that supports

kupuna and clubs countywide, Enlace Hispano that offers translation and acculturation assistance to the Hispanic community, BEST Reintegration that supports recently released inmates. The department administers 3 rental/mortgage programs – Maui County Rental Assistance Program, CDBG and Maui Emergency Rental Assistance through Hawaii Catholic Charities – and utility assistance programs.

Deaf clients get CPR credentials

Published May 21, 2021

Deaf and hard of hearing members and supporters of Maui Economic Opportunity's Maui Independent Living Center (MILC) received CPR, automated external defibrillator and first aid training on May 6 at MEO in Wailuku.

MEO Community Services Director Cassi Yamashita, a certified CPR/AED/First Aid instructor, taught the class with the help of certified American Sign Language interpreters Kate Eifler and Torrey Ho-Ching.



Kate Eifler, a certified sign language interpreter, assisted at a CPR class for deaf individuals.

The dozen attendees received CPR, AED and first-aid training, including working with the CPR mannequins and practicing wound wraps. All were expected to be certified. MILC provides access to resources, education and training to support independence.

A Success Story

Aka and her husband Sio were released from federal prison on the Mainland without a job and home. Today, with MEO's help, both are employed and living in a new home.

Search for utility assistance leads to help with rent, too

Published August 13, 2021

Chase Taiseni and his girlfriend visited a Maui Economic Opportunity housing/energy assistance outreach event in Kihei.

Chase had lost his job due to the COVID-19 pandemic and came to the event looking for help with utility bills. He had received a payment reminder.

At the outreach event, Chase learned that he qualified for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) annual credit and the monthly LIHEAP Energy Crisis Intervention.

LIHEAP was signed into law on Aug. 13, 1981, and celebrated its 40-year birthday on Friday, Aug. 13.

Chase and his girlfriend, who had a toddler son together, also received rental assistance through Catholic Charities' Maui Emergency Rental Assistance program, which took care of their back rent and payments through October.

On the day he visited the event, Chase had a job interview. It turns out he got the job and is working again.

Things are looking up for Chase and his family. He is

grateful and feels blessed to have been able to receive help through MEO.

The nonprofit agency administers LIHEAP services that provide eligible households help with their natural gas and electric bills.

If residents have received a disconnection notice or past due payment reminder letter, MEO can assist them through emergency Energy Crisis Intervention. This service is offered year round, and MEO can serve 15 households a month. So far this year, 155 households (365 individuals)

have received a total of \$100,612 in assistance.

Energy Credit is the other LIHEAP service administered by MEO. Eligible applicants receive a line of credit from the utility that can last six months or longer. The amount of assistance is based on a needs scale determined by the state. Applicants for the program only are accepted in June.

This year, MEO was able to assist 957 households – 1,686 individuals in total, including 194 on Moloka'i and 35 on Lana'i.

By The Numbers: 2,379 individuals received utility subsidies • 1,353 seniors improved access to fresh fruits and vegetables • 138 individuals raised income and earned a living wage • 181 individuals secured and maintained safe/affordable housing



Established in 1969, MEO Transportation eliminates mobility barriers for low income and disadvantaged individuals, persons with disabilities, seniors and youths. This vital service improves quality of life, eliminates barriers to employment, prevents youths from participating in risk-taking behaviors and leads to economic security for individuals and families.

MEO operates the specialized Human Services Transportation and Maui Bus Paratransit, both Maui County funded.

Human Services provides door-through-door service

to most vulnerable clients and those who live outside Paratransit routes.

Paratransit is the Maui Bus Americans with Disabilities Act service, providing curb-to-curb service for persons with disabilities who live within three-quarters of a mile from the fixed route. MEO operates everyday from 4 a.m. to 11 p.m. with a fleet of more than 100 vehicles and is a part of the county's Emergency Response Disaster Recovery Team.

In June 2021, Patty Copperfield took over as director of MEO Transportation.

18 new buses

A total of 18 new buses were blessed during the fiscal year in three blessings. Four 29-passenger buses to be used primarily for Head Start were blessed in October 2020. One of those buses were shipped to Molokai. Another four 29-passengers buses for Human Services transport were blessed in January 2021. And in August 2021, 10 new paratransit buses, which can carry 10 passengers (two wheelchairs) were blessed. The Rev. Hau'oli Tomoso performed the August blessing with (from left) Michael DuPont, Gay Sibonga, Patty Copperfield, Debbie Cabebe, Kamaka Freitas and Marc Takamori.



Patty Copperfield named new director

Published May 27, 2021

Patty-Ann Copperfield has been named director of Maui Economic Opportunity Transportation and will be managing MEO's Maui Bus paratransit and Human Services bus systems.



Copperfield

Copperfield rose through the ranks at MEO Transportation, beginning as a dispatcher in 2013 and rising to Operations Manager, the No. 2 position in the department, in August 2020.

In between, she was a scheduler/

planner, from November 2014 to September 2017, and customer service and community relations supervisor from September 2017 to August 2020.

A graduate of Molokai High School, Copperfield studied business technology at UH-Maui College from 2008-2010.

She became MEO Transportation director in early May.

"Patty runs the largest department with more than 100 vehicles in the MEO fleet," said MEO CEO Debbie Cabebe. "Having worked her way up through MEO Transportation, Patty is well aware, from the bottom up, how the system runs. She will do a great job."

Hana team stranded by storm, spends night on 9th Floor

Published March 17, 2021

MEO Human Services Transportation division was asked to transport nine youths and one coach, part of a flag football team, from Hana to Central Maui on March 12.

After bringing the team to Central Maui, the drivers, Bethlen "Lani" Kawaiaea and Earle "Tuks" Medeiros Jr. were returning them to Hana, when dispatchers caught them in Paia and told them to turn back due to unsafe road and weather conditions.

Medeiros knew Zeke Kalua, office operations assistant for Mayor Michael Victorino, and contacted him. Zeke, Managing Director Sandy Baz and Bill Medeiros took care of the rest, setting up accommodations and food for the team.

The group was transported back to Hana safely the next day.

"We want to thank Zeke and the Mayor's Office for their quick response and putting them up in 'Hotel 9th Floor,'" said MEO CEO Debbie Cabebe. "It was an adventure I am sure the youths will never forget. Safety is our No. 1 priority and having a safe place for the team to go was a relief for us."

By The Numbers: 3,989 individuals utilized specialized transportation, receiving more than 148,120 rides throughout Maui County • 1,049 seniors and persons with disabilities utilized MEO Transportation



Youth Services provides an evidence-based educational curriculum, programs, practices and strategies for prevention of substance abuse and underage drinking, cyberbullying, youth suicide and tobacco use. Services also offer life and career skills training and gender specific programming to compliment the in-school curriculum. The training

and evidence-based prevention program works with youths, ages 11 to 17 in middle and high schools (6th - 12th grade), as well as teachers, parents, families and the community in Maui. Programs evolved during the pandemic and fiscal year from livestreaming to in-person with pandemic protocols. Staff returned to the classrooms as well.

Youth Services back in the classroom

Published May 27, 2021

Maui Economic Opportunity Youth Services instructors got back into the classroom for the first time this school year on May 17 at Kalama Intermediate to teach the Slick Tracy Underage Drinking Prevention Program.

Normally, Youth Services runs the anti-drinking program in a total of four public intermediate and high schools. But the COVID-19 pandemic had limited the program to virtual presentations at Kamehameha Schools Maui, Maui High and Aka'ula School on Molokai.

Up against the last days of school for the year, the Youth Services team was able to meet students in-person and offer the curriculum to about 50 6th-graders at Kalama Intermediate in Makawao



from May 17 to 28.

Modifications have had to be made to the program that usually is offered to hundreds of students each school year. The curriculum typically has been rolled out over four-class sessions, but at Kalama, the Youth Services team had only one class due to the

Noel Ramirez attends MEO's Youth Services Slick Tracy Underage Drinking Prevention Program at Kalama Intermediate on May 19. Since the pandemic struck, this was the first time Youth Services instructors were able to interact with students in-person.

are so happy to be back in the classroom," said Dane Ka'ae, Youth Services director. "Through our program, we hope to leave an impression on the youths about the dangers of alcohol on their own health and safety as well as the community as a whole."

The Tracy Underage Drinking Prevention Program uses comic books to bring awareness to false facts that youth might have heard about alcohol, show ways that alcohol companies target children with their advertisements and the dangers of peer pressure, and the consequences of underage drinking.

The curriculum also gets parents involved and has activities that are meant to start a conversation between the child and their parents about the dangers of alcohol.

school's hybrid schedule. Adaptations involved Youth Services instructors creating and sharing videos with the students to guide them through the lessons.

Safety protocols were followed including social distancing and mask wearing.

"We missed the youths and

Families get together to cook Alfredo pasta livestream

Published April 16, 2021

About a dozen Maui Economic Opportunity Youth Services families chopped garlic, boiled pasta and reduced cream on their

stove tops at home – under the livestreamed guidance of two local chefs – to whip up some Alfredo pasta and quality 'ohana time.

"Dinner is all about family,"

Montage Kapalua Bay chef Justin Horne told the families while being livestreamed. "A lot of times, nowadays, people have hectic schedules going on, work evenings, work

nights. They got homework, practices, whatever.

"But dinner time is a nice time for everybody to gather around as a family, talk about

Continued on the next page

By The Numbers: 435 youths avoided risk-taking behaviors • 435 youths improved their social/emotional development
• 398 youths improved physical health and well-being



Continued from Page 12

your day, whatever you have on your mind. It’s a good time to do those things.”

Thirteen families and almost 70 people joined the Zoom presentation of ‘Ohana Night: Cooking Edition on April 14. Horne and Cory Wells, former chef at Mama’s Fish House, guided the families through the process of preparing Alfredo pasta and a Caesar salad from a kitchen set up at MEO offices in Wailuku.

The families were sent a packet of ingredients and followed the step-by-step instructions from the chefs as the classroom filled with the sweet aroma of cream sauce.

The format allowed for two-way interaction with the families from their homes. At the end of the hour-long prep period, all the families gave their dishes – and the ‘Ohana Night: Cooking Edition – a thumbs up.

“Me and my family really enjoyed the ‘ohana cooking night because when we got together we made a meal for all of us, and during that time, we were talking about positive stuff,” said Xavier Arcangel.

“Me and my family enjoyed the ‘ohana cooking night a lot,” said Kaikea Barona. “The food at the end was really delicious.”

Kahlen Boteilho-Dougherty said: “It was super fun and a good experience for all the families.”

The chefs both have ties to MEO and in the euphemism of the nonprofit agency were “volun-told.” Horne is the brother and Wells, the husband, of Kristin Wells in Youth Services.

“We wanted to do a family strengthening event, where the families spend quality time and cook together,” said Dane Ka’ae, director of MEO Youth Services. “You know, locals love getting together, sharing food and memories.

“Studies have shown regular family dinners are associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety, substance abuse, eating disorders, tobacco use and early teenage pregnancy, as well as higher rates of resilience and self-esteem.”

“We are trying to increase youths’ protective factors and reduce their risk factors,” he said.

‘Ohana Night is a series of events designed to improve and strengthen the family unit by engaging in positive activities. Past activities have included game nights, including Bingo and Scattergories, and jigsaw puzzles and gingerbread-house making.

‘Imi Pono Challenge winners announced

Mikaela Tirona of Baldwin High, Angie Pustelnik of St. Anthony School and Shalev Sabag of Lahaina Intermediate each took home the top prize of \$1,000 in the 2021 ‘Imi Pono: The Greatest Challenge media contest.

A virtual ceremony was held Sept. 30, to announce the winners in the youth media contest, which centered on the theme “The Four Ws — Wear Your Mask, Wash Your Hands, Watch Your Distance and Worldwide Vaccination.” Twenty-one high school and intermediate finalists submitted art, photography and video public awareness campaign entries.

Awards were presented to the top three winners in the High School, Middle School Art & Photography and Middle School Art & Videography categories. First place winners in each category received \$1,000; second place, \$500; and third place, \$250. All other finalists received \$20 gift cards from Zippy’s.

Prizes were sponsored by Hawaii USA Federal Credit Union.

In the High School category, Tirona, a junior, created a public service video highlighting “The Four Ws” to capture first place. Jasmyne Imamoto, a senior at Lahainaluna High, took second place with a photography entry and Maria King, a senior at St. Anthony School, took third place with an art entry.

Pustelnik, a 7th grader, won the Middle School Art & Photography category with a poster showing the Earth, wearing a mask and showered by water and with an injection in the planet and people social distancing. Mahie Miyagawa, 8th grader at Kamehameha Schools Maui, took second place with an art entry, and Lincoln Livermore, 7th grader at



Angie Pustelnik captured the Middle School Art & Photography category in the ‘Imi Pono: The Greatest Challenge contest.

Lahaina Intermediate School, took third with an art entry.

Sabag, a 7th grader, was judged the top entrant in the Art & Videography category for a video featuring a rubber ducky boy going to get his vaccination. Kalena Mariana and Allie Kennedy, Kamehameha Schools Maui 8th graders, finished in second place and Myla Tuitele and Braelyn Hong, Kamehameha Schools Maui 8th graders, took third place.

“I am proud of our students who have once again demonstrated through the ‘Imi Pono Challenge that they are the problem-solving and decision-making leaders of tomorrow,” said Maui County Chair Alice Lee, the creator of the first ‘Imi Pono contest last year. “Each student who participated in this public awareness campaign is a winner.

“Thank you for your hard work and commitment to help us fight this deadly virus!”

The second annual ‘Imi Pono challenge was sponsored by the Maui County Council and Maui County Office of Economic Development and produced by MEO’s Youth Services and Business Development Center and the Maui Chamber of Commerce. ‘Imi Pono means “to search for the right way.”



Moloka'i

When post office closed, MEO was there to help

Published March 9, 2021

The temporary closure of the Maunaloa Post Office prompted Maui Economic Opportunity to establish bus runs to help Molokai West End residents collect their mail from the Hoolehua Post Office.

The U.S. Postal Service announced the temporary closure of the post office at 2 Maunaloa Road, Building 2, due to structural and vector control issues on Feb. 24. The leased structure, which had been open weekdays, houses post office boxes for about 240 customers; the post office does not offer street mail delivery, USPS said in a news release.

Maunaloa Post Office mail can be picked up at the back door of the Hoolehua Post

Office, 69-2 Puupeeua Ave. The Hoolehua Post Office, which had been closed from Feb. 3 to 9 due to structural concerns, is open weekdays, 8:30 a.m. to noon and 12:30 to 4 p.m., USPS said.

On March 1, MEO began a special route to help West End residents get their mail in Hoolehua. A bus runs Mondays and Thursdays, leaving Misaki's in Kaunakakai at 10:30 a.m. The bus travels to the Hoolehua Post Office then to Maunaloa and Kaluakoi.

Yolanda Reyes, Molokai Branch manager, said that the route was set up for West End residents to do their shopping in town and pick up their mail on their way home. So far, there have been eight bus riders, mostly seniors.



MEO on Moloka'i and Lana'i work with the Maui Food Bank to distribute surplus food once a month. This photo was taken at the Moloka'i food distribution in September 2021 in Kaunakakai.

Hana

Manager
Jonnie Oliveira
interviewed
by HPR

Published August 18, 2021

Maui Economic Opportunity Hana Branch Manager Jonnie Oliveira talked story with Hawaii Public Radio's Noe Tanigawa about MEO bus services and life in Hana in a report that aired Aug. 13.

Part of HPR's The Aloha Friday Conversation, Tanigawa's report lasted nearly 7 minutes and covered MEO's bus services in town and trips to Central Maui for shopping and other appointments. Jonnie also talked about life during the pandemic and changes in East Maui, where her parents are from and she grew up and raised her family.

A synopsis of the story, headlined "Keeping Hana Connected, One Shuttle at a Time," can be found on the HPR website at <https://bit.ly/2W3P3Ev>. There are links to the radio report on the page.

Lana'i

Shopping trips across channel resume

Published May 14, 2021

Maui Economic Opportunity's Lana'i Shopping Shuttle to Maui resumed May 11 after a hiatus caused by the pandemic.

Funded through Maui County grants, MEO buses pick up residents, mostly seniors, from their homes, take them to Manele harbor to board the Expeditions ferry to Lahaina. MEO buses meet them at Lahaina Small Boat Harbor and take them shopping on the west side before returning them to the harbor for the return trip.

The Lana'i Shopping Shuttle runs once a week on

Tuesdays, leaving on the ferry at 8:15 a.m. and returning at 1 p.m. The May 11 shopping shuttle was at full capacity of 10 travelers, as was the next trip on May 18.

MEO buses take the group to Lahaina, including the Outlets of Maui; Lahaina Gateway, which includes Foodland Farms, Ross Stores and Ace Hardware; the Lahaina Cannery Mall, which has Safeway and Longs Drugs; Tamura's Fine Wine & Liquors and Island Grocery Depot.

The shuttle expansion is the brainchild of former Council Member Riki Hokama, who held the Lana'i residency seat.



Oliveira



Cassi Yamashita: A 40 Under 40

Published July 1, 2021
Mau Economic Opportunity's Director of Community Services, Cassi Yamashita, has been selected as a Pacific Business News 40 Under 40: Class of 2021.

Cassi's name appears alongside some of the state's top young leaders under age 40 including doctors, nonprofit executive directors and government and business officials. PBN noted: "The competition was fierce this year."

Cassi, 36, runs the largest department by programs (13) in one of Maui County's largest nonprofit organizations. Programs under her management offer assistance for basic necessities, including housing (rental and mortgage) and utilities, and employment and other services to low income residents, recently released inmates, persons with disabilities, immigrants and kupuna. Community Services programs provide assistance and social activities for kupuna, training in first aid/CPR for the hearing im-



This is a screenshot of Cassi Yamashita's page in Pacific Business News.

paired, translation and other necessary services for the Hispanic community and training and subsidies for immigrant farm workers.

She joined MEO in 2011 as a youth program specialist and rose through the ranks, becoming director of Youth Services in 2015, Assistant Director of Community Services in 2017 and Director of Community Services in 2019.

"I have known Cassi since her days as an MEO Youth

Services program specialist where she worked with youth to prevent under-age drinking – a major focus of my time as a council member," said Council Member Yuki Lei Sugimura, who wrote a letter of support. "Cassi exhibited a wonderful rapport with youths and community leaders. Today, I know there are young adults on the island who are abstaining from alcohol and driving under the influence because of Cassi's work."

Cassi serves as Maui

chairwoman of Hawaii's Partners to Prevent Underage Drinking, vice chairwoman of the Maui County Commission on Children and Youth and as a member of Maui County Coalition for Underage Drinking Prevention, Coalition for Tobacco-Free Hawaii, Prevent Suicide Maui County Task Force and Maui County Reentry Council.

"A person like Cassi, dedicated to her work, committed to the community, and a leader to many, is a worthy 40 Under 40 candidate," the council member said. "Cassi will only grow brighter as she accumulates experiences and knowledge. Her future growth as a leader will be led . . . by her caring heart for those in need and less fortunate."

Debbie Cabebe, CEO of MEO, said that "the MEO family is so proud of Cassi, of her accomplishments to date and into the future."

"The work she does with conviction and dedication

Continued on the next page

MEO has a Champion for Children



Debbi Amaral

Published April 8, 2021
Debbi Amaral, Maui Economic Opportunity director of Early Childhood Services, accepted her Champions for Children for Early Learning as an individual award in a virtual ceremony on April 7.

Amaral was one of 11 Champions for Children, presented by Hawai'i Children's Action Network, to receive

awards in the ceremony streamed from Oahu. There were nearly 90 nominees for 11 awards in various categories.

For the last 26 years, Debbi has managed operations and supervised staff at MEO's Head Start pre-kindergarten program for low income families on two islands in Maui County. She began with MEO in 1996 as education/disability specialist,

working her way up to director of Early Childhood Services in 2005.

She currently directs 13 in-person/virtual Head Start sites, serving as many as 250 children and their families, and Kahi Kamali'i Infant/Toddler and 'Ohana Strengthening programs.

Prior to joining MEO as an educational specialist in 1995,

Continued on the next page



MEO PBN nonprofit finalist

MPublished November 15, 2021
 Maui Economic Opportunity was selected as a finalist in the Cades Schutte/The Cades Foundation Nonprofit Leadership Award, part of Pacific Business News' 2021 Business Leadership Hawaii awards.

The 56-year-old agency established to help people in need in Maui County was one of nine 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in Hawaii named as finalists for the award, and the only Maui-based agency.

Keiki Education Living Independent Institute (KELII) was announced the winner of the Cades Schutte/The Cades Foundation Nonprofit Leadership Award on Nov. 4 and the \$5,000 donation.

CEO Debbie Cabebe and MEO were featured in Pacific Business News' special section on the Business Leadership Hawaii awards in its Nov. 5 edition.

In a letter of recommendation in support of MEO, Maui County Mayor Michael Victorino commended MEO "for easing the burden on fellow county residents" by operating the \$10 million Hawai'i Emergency Laulima Partnership (HELP), a financial relief program for residents impacted by COVID-19. The mayor said he turned to MEO because of its track record of running programs to help low income individuals, persons with disabilities,



Na Koa performed at the Kupuna Aloha Luncheon held virtually on July 30.

immigrants, kupuna and youth.

MEO ended up offering a lifeline to more than 12,500 households and 33,700 residents from April to November 2020 with HELP being the single largest short-term program ever administered by the agency. The monumental job required Cabebe to mobilize most of the agency's 200-member staff with some working seven-day weeks to get the financial assistance for food, rent and other bills to desperate residents.

Victorino lauded MEO's "heroic work during the pandemic while continuing its everyday mission to identify obstacles to prosperity for those in poverty and finding solutions."

MEO BBB Torch Charity of the Year finalist

Published September 1, 2021

MMaui Economic Opportunity has been selected as a Charity of the Year finalist in the Better Business Bureau Torch Award for the Great West and Pacific region, which recognizes integrity and ethical business practices.

The Charity of the Year winner for the region was announced Oct. 28.

There were 19 finalists in the charity division with registered 501(c)(3) organizations – including Maui nonprofits MEO and Maui United Way.

"A Torch Award is the most prestigious honor BBB can present to exceptional organizations for their dedication to integrity and ethical business practices," said the BBB in the Torch Award announcement released.

"MEO is honored to be in the running for the Charity of the Year Torch Award," said MEO CEO Debbie Cabebe. "MEO strictly follows financial best practices and is regularly audited by government funders as part of receiving funds. Integrity and transparency are cornerstones of the fiscal operation of MEO."

Debbi: Continued from Page 15

Amaral got experience as a teacher and teacher's aide at Kahului Union, Wailuku Union, Iao and Kahului Baptist preschool programs. She earned her associate's degree in human services with an emphasis in early childhood from Maui Community College, now UH-Maui College.

Adjusting on the fly to the COVID-19 pandemic just showed why Debbi is a Champions for Children. Using her experience and creativity, she quickly kept her programs running, setting up health and safety protocols, developing virtual learning sites while maintaining in-person access for some working families, secured computer tablets for families without them and created a virtual curriculum.

She also organized drive-thru food giveaways and weekend meals through Maui Food Bank's Aloha Backpack Buddies for her programs' families.

"Debbi represents the best of MEO," said CEO Debbie Cabebe. "Helping our young families, who would otherwise not be able to afford early childhood education, and changing the course of their lives.

"We have always considered Debbi a champion for children in Maui County. Now, she has the title. We thank the Hawai'i Children's Action Network for recognizing Debbi."

Cassi: Continued from Page 15

directly impacts the lives of the people she serves," she continued.

Helping inmates released from incarceration is a special cause for Cassi, who has had family members behind bars and visited them at a young age. She is treasurer of her church, My Brothers Keeper, Maui, which has a prison reintegration ministry, and goes into Maui Community Correctional Center regularly to offer help to inmates, including as a public notary.

A showcase of the 40 Under 40 winners for 2021 can be found at <https://www.bizjournals.com/pacific/news/2021/07/01/40-under-40-honorees-2021.html>.



Bringing Awareness to Suicide

Seventh-grader Rylen Muray (right), who attends Iao Intermediate School, and Jaden Takushi, an 11th-grader at King Kekaulike High School, participate in a suicide prevention sign waving event on Sept. 8, 2021, along Kaahumanu Avenue fronting the Queen Ka'ahumanu Center. Youth Services joined the sign waving, which was part of events marking Suicide Prevention Week, Sept. 5-11. The event was organized by the E Ola Hou Prevent Suicide Maui County Task Force.

Meals for kupuna made, delivered

MEO volunteers prepared hundreds of meals for Hale Mahaolu residents

Twenty-two MEO staff and family, aka the “voluntolds,” made about 400 plate lunches that were delivered to Hale Mahaolu Kahului and Wailuku on March 28, 2021.

Led by Melen Agcolicol of Binhi at Ani and MEO Team Captain Cassi Yamashita, the crew helped prepare, pack and deliver the meals as part of the Bayanihan Feeding Program at Binhi at Ani Filipino Community Center.

The Feeding Program was done in cooperation with the Maui Food Bank. Preparing the plate lunches on a weekend day helps fill a need; Maui County's Meals on Wheels does not operate on weekends.

The Feeding Program had



A group of volunteers from Maui Economic Opportunity took time on a Sunday morning to join the Bayanihan Feeding Program. About 400 plate lunches were prepared at the Binhi At Ani Filipino Community Center in Kahului and delivered to seniors at Hale Mahaolu sites.

been seeking community groups, like MEO, to step up and help with the program. Thanks to all the volunteers

for spending their morning helping to provide brunch to seniors and other Hale Mahaolu residents.

HELP Help

Maui Economic Opportunity assisted private Maui donors to disburse funds to help residents pay their bills during the pandemic.

The Montage Kapalua Bay Pono Project provided \$157,950 in assistance for essential needs to 127 workers who were laid off in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 related shutdown of the resort.

The Pono Project, which ran from May 2020 to early January 2021, was funded by donations from the Montage Kapalua Bay condominium owners in partnership with the Hawai'i Community Foundation and the Montage Kapalua Bay Associate Support Fund.

The \$400,000 Maui Malama Project, administered by MEO, assisted 94 households of Grand Wailea Maui workers with rent/mortgage, utility, child care and other expenses.

Dr. John W. and Patricia Canzano funded the grant to help workers impacted by the closure of the resort due to the pandemic. Residents of South Carolina, the Canzanos are regulars at the Grand Wailea.

The Kent & Polli Smith Family Fund of the Hawai'i Community Foundation provided a \$10,000 grant to MEO for rental and utility assistance to people impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The grant went to first-time applicants for rent and utility assistance.

A total of 21 households and 54 people received help through the grant.



Volunteers of the Year

Peter Horovitz offers invaluable legal advice

Peter Horovitz is a vital member of the Maui Economic Opportunity Board of Directors, who has provided free legal research and advice on critical issues facing the agency.

Peter is the principal in the law firm Merchant Horovitz, LLC, and joined the MEO board in 2016 representing the Maui Bar Association. He is a member of the Executive and Personnel committees and has sat on the Program and Evaluation Committee and served one term as Vice President.

His countless hours of service to support the agency's mission have saved more than \$20,000 in legal fees. He offers legal support when allowable, mindful of not creating a conflict of interest. His expertise and experience in complicated property issues has been especially valuable



in a land dispute and recordation of a lease for the MEO Transportation Shop.

Peter is professional, reassuring, logical, kind and humble.

He is always willing to support the agency in any way he can.

In addition to his position on the MEO Board, Peter is a current director of Haleakala Waldorf School, Pacific Cancer Foundation and Na Keiki O Emalia, a nonprofit that helps children and families deal with a death.

Henrietta Chong gives joy to Head Start families

Henrietta Chong, who brings cheer during Thanksgiving and the holiday season, is the Early Childhood Services Volunteer of the Year nominee for 2021.

She has organized donation drives through the Kula Catholic Community for Head Start families for about the last 15 years. She works with Lani Koki, ERSEA manager, who helps identify families that would benefit from her efforts in consultation with Head Start Family Case Managers.

For Thanksgiving this year, Henrietta put together food boxes for 12 families with the Kula Catholic Communities underwriting the cost. She bought nonperishable food items, such as Spam, tuna, canned vegetables, 20 pound bags of rice, in bulk from Costco and divvied them



up.

For Christmas, Henrietta rustled up 200 "angels" from the Kula Catholic Community to purchase two gifts for 100 individuals

affiliated with Head Start – a want and a need.

The Angel Tree gifts go to families that may not have the financial means to provide Christmas presents for their children.

Henrietta volunteers her time to pull resources together to make this annual gift-giving happen.

Young entrepreneur donates to MEO

Published March 12, 2021

A 7 1/2 year old entrepreneur chose the Maui Economic Opportunity Head Start program to receive \$150 from the proceeds of her handmade bracelet sales.

"I wanted to help people," said Mila Diaz of Wailuku. "It makes you feel good ... because I am giving to other people, not me."

Her father, Aaron, said his daughter really wanted to help children on the island. MEO was the only one he could find "that spoke about giving back specifically to the children in need on the island."

"That's the biggest reason why" MEO was selected as Mila's benefactor, he said.

For the past 56 years, the nonprofit MEO has run the Head Start pre-kindergarten program for children from low income families in Maui County.

Aaron and wife, Kaitlin, and Mila and her siblings, Tevita, 6, and Samson, 4, stopped by MEO's Wailuku office on March 10 to present the gift to Debbi Amaral, the director of MEO's Early Childhood Services.

The bracelet-making venture was the result of a coalescence of Mila's attraction to jewelry, her entrepreneurial spirit sparked by the family business and her parent's desire to teach their daughter about the rewards of giving back to the community.

"Honestly, that's our only goal as parents,"

Continued on the next page



Mila Diaz sold bracelets she made at a stand in the family's kava bar, Haleakava, in Kihei. She donated some of the proceeds to MEO.

Photo courtesy of Diaz family

By The Numbers: 211 volunteers performed 1,070 hours on Maui, Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi, saving MEO \$46,000 • 745 individuals improved their knowledge, skills and abilities to improve their conditions and enhance their ability to advocate



Benefactor of the Year

AT&T generosity helps Moloka'i office with critical maintenance needs

Given all the needs of our clients and the cost of operations, maintenance of infrastructure can fall by the wayside, especially for our branches in East Maui, Moloka'i and Lana'i.

It can be easy to put off repairs until later and live with inconveniences. Problem is that kicking that can down the road can lead to greater costs in the end.

Our Benefactor of the Year has helped us perform important maintenance at our Moloka'i facilities.

AT&T has donated a total of \$17,000 over the past three years in steadily increasing increments. The telecommunications company donated \$2,000 in 2019, \$5,000 in 2020 and \$10,000 in 2021.



Elizabeth Songvilay (center) accepted the Benefactor of the Year award for AT&T. She is flanked by CFO Debbie Lorenzo (left) and CEO Debbie Cabebe.

MEO was able to install new doors, including an exit door with a push bar; treat the facility for ground termites; trim trees and perform other maintenance work.

AT&T has a history of giving back to the community

with a commitment to invest company "resources and knowledge to advance access to education and training, improve lives, and strengthen communities in which we live and work."

In Hawaii, AT&T and its

foundation and employees have donated about a half million dollars in recent years with employees putting in more than a thousand hours of personal time to community causes annually.

When the Kilauea eruption wiped out homes, AT&T contributed \$35,000 and set up a text-to-donate option to aid residents who lost their homes.

The telecommunications company donated phone cards and cellphones to soldiers in the Mideast to communicate with families at home in Hawaii.

And when COVID-19 hit, AT&T delivered free mobile hotspots and wireless service to vulnerable students across the state.

Continued from Page 18

said Aaron about instilling the value of altruism. "We do our best to give back to the community."

The family runs Haleakava, a kava bar, at 1794 S. Kihei Road. The business caters to a mostly local clientele and has been doing OK amid the pandemic, Aaron said.

When they opened Haleakava, it sparked the entrepreneurial spirit in Mila. She put an "open" sign on the door to her room, said her dad.

"I could tell she was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug," he said.

"I told her, 'yeah if this is something you want to do I will help you,' " Aaron recalled. "But we are going to have to give back. So you will have to pick the charity you would like to give back to."

The charity ended up being MEO. Aaron went on Facebook to the Maui Mommies and Maui Bulletin Board pages and asked the communities for ideas on organizations that give back to youths. Someone reached out and suggested MEO Head Start.

The business idea stemmed from Mila being "very much into jewelry and glittery things," said Aaron.

"She's making them for other people and giving them out," he said. "We thought this would go hand in hand with what she is used to."

Mila used twine and pineapple and wave charms to create her bracelets in multiple colors. She began selling them at the beginning of February for \$3 each or two for \$5.

She sold 100 bracelets and donated \$100 from the sales to MEO. One donor gave her \$50 for the cause, so her donation to MEO totaled \$150. The rest of the revenues were used for materials and her hula activities, said Aaron.

She plans to make donations to a special cause each month.

When asked if Mila needed some business advice, Aaron laughed and said his daughter is "a really good negotiator." They set up a stand in the kava shop for Mila to sell her bracelets and posted the bracelet sale on Facebook.

"It sells itself," Aaron said. "People are eager to help."



Gerbig, Sugimura named Kupuna Advocates

Maui Economic Opportunity Kupuna Advocates of the Year Arleen Gerbig and Yuki Lei Sugimura were honored at the 49th Kupuna Aloha Celebration on July 30, 2021, in a virtual event streamed from MEO classrooms in Wailuku.

The event with the theme “Remembering the Plantation Days” featured music from Na Koa, a talk by Civil Beat columnist Lee Cataluna, and speeches by political leaders.

In announcing the Advocates of the Year, CEO Debbie Cabebe noted that an advocate helps others speak to express their needs and makes sure their rights are understood and problems, resolved.

Yuki Lei Sugimura:

Kupuna Legislative Advocate

Yuki Lei Sugimura has advocated for Maui County kupuna as a Maui County Council member, businesswoman, member of state and county boards and commissions, community organizer and representative



Kupuna Advocates of the Year Arleen Gerbig (left) and Yuki Lei Sugimura (right) pose with CEO Debbie Cabebe.

for U.S. Sens. Daniel Akaka and Mazie Hirono.

Maui County is truly her home, the place where she grew up and raised her family. Yuki Lei graduated from Baldwin High and is a 20-year resident of Kula.

Bringing the community together is a theme of Yuki Lei’s work, and many of her events involve Maui County’s kupuna. She has coordinated the Makawao Fourth of July

Parade, jumping in when there was a leadership void; Festivals of Aloha; Wailuku First Friday; Maui Matsuri; Maui Sugar Plantation Festival with the Alexander & Baldwin Sugar Museum; Seabury Hall Craft Fair; Maui Chinese New Year’s Festival and NFL Football and Cheerleading Clinic.

She also led U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye’s Hawaii 3R’s Project for Maui County

and continues to run the Ready to Learn Back to School Supplies for children in need.

Her involvement in the community is extensive, serving as board member of the Japanese Cultural Society of Maui, Maui Filipino Chamber of Commerce, Nisei Veterans Memorial Center and Maui Memorial Medical Center.

Yuki Lei also served as vice chairwoman of the Maui County Democratic Party State Central Committee and member of the previous Maui County Charter Commission.

Arleen Gerbig:

Kupuna Community Advocate

Arleen Gerbig has been a member of the Lahaina-Honolua Senior Citizens Club for 18 years. She has been the President since 2016. She immediately took over as President after the sudden passing of their president, May Fujiwara.

2020 would have been Lahaina-Honolua Senior Club’s 50th year, and they were planning a grand

Continued on the next page

Pandemic forces 2020-21 Gala to go virtual



The on again, off again 2020-21 MEO “... Do What Is Right” Gala ended up as a virtual event from MEO with patrons picking up their food in a drive-thru at the King Kamehameha Golf Club on Aug. 30, 2021. The event, which was rescheduled multiple times, honored Mayor Michael Victorino, who is shown with his wife, Joycelyn. Nevah Too Late provided music that was taped earlier, and Rod Antone served as emcee. The event raised more than \$20,000.





Grants That Fund MEO

County of Maui

- Transportation – Human Services
- Transportation – ADA Paratransit
- Transportation – Vehicle Replacement
- Head Start Afterschool and Summer Programs
- Kahi Kamalii Infant Toddler Center
- Youth Services
- Being Empowered and Safe Together Reintegration (BEST)
- Underage Drinking Prevention Services
- Rental Assistance Program (RAP)
- Enlace Hispano
- Planning and Coordinating Council Senior Coordinator
- Maui Independent Living Center Program
- Senior Fair
- Project Graduation
- Business Development Center Microenterprise Program
- Agricultural Micro Grants Program
- Business Development Center Core Four Scholarships

State of Hawai'i

- CIP Transit Maintenance Shop
- Vehicle Purchases
- Impact Grant for Community Based Profiles
- Employment Services for Low Income Persons and Legally Permanent Residents

Federal

(Includes State, County, Foundation Pass Thru)

- Head Start – Federal
- Head Start – Federal COVID CRRSA
- Head Start – Federal American Rescue Plan
- Community Services Block Grant
- Community Services Block Grant – CARES Act
- Community Services Regional Performance and Innovation Consortium
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Weatherization Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)
- USDA Child Nutrition Program
- Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- National Farmworker Jobs Program
- Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)
- Corporation for National Community Services – AmeriCorps
- Maui Emergency Rental Assistance Program (Catholic Charities CARES Act)
- Childcare Stimulus Funds (Hawaii Community Foundation)
- Hawaii Emergency Laulima Program (HELP) – CARES Act
- County of Maui Recovery & Resilience Program Adaptability Fund – CARES Act

- County of Maui Core Four and Literacy – CARES Act
- County of Maui Rental Assistance Program – CARES Act

Private Foundations

- Hawaii Community Foundation Medication Reconciliation Program
- Hawaii Community Foundation Montage Kapalua Bay Assistance
- Agape Lanai Microloan Fund
- Atherton Family Foundation
- Weinberg Foundation – COVID-19
- Bayer Ohana Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- AT&T Foundation

Other

- Grand Wailea Malama Project Assistance
- Construction Industry of Maui
- Kihei Wailea Rotary Fund
- Head Start Federal – In-kind
- AmeriCorps Host Agency Cash Match and In-kind
- Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) In-kind
- Maui Senior Planning & Coordinating Council
- Maui Homeless Alliance
- MEO Transportation

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celebration. Unfortunately, COVID-19 prevented them from celebrating in the way they wished, but we all hope to celebrate the club's decades of existence as soon as possible, and you can guarantee Arleen will be leading the way in that celebration.

In addition to her duties with the Lahaina Honolua Seniors, Arleen is a Commissioner on the Council on Aging and a previous Advisory Board Member for Kaunoa RSVP. She is also an MEO Board Member where she has served

as Secretary and on many different committees during her tenure at MEO.

Prior to COVID-19 halting in-person meetings, Arleen would make the drive from Lahaina to Wailuku for every meeting and rarely missed one. Since pandemic restrictions have led to virtual meetings, Arleen has tackled becoming "Zoom literate" and still takes part in all meetings.

And if that's not enough, she is also the president of The Senior Planning and Coordinating Council.

Arleen and the Honolua

Seniors stepped up in 2020, volunteering to assist with monthly food distributions. She has personally delivered food boxes to seniors who were too afraid to leave their homes or could not get to the site to pick up a food box.

Prior to COVID-19 Arleen handled all bookings for Na Kupuna Serenades and dancers. The group performed at both Hale Makua facilities, under the banyan tree, The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua, and Cannery Mall.

During budget hearings, Arleen organizes club mem-

bers to testify and provides food for her group and others. She advocates for seniors by attending public hearings that pertain to the well-being of seniors. She also encourages her members to attend the West Maui Taxpayers Association meetings.

Arleen and the Lahaina-Honolua Senior Club provides scholarships to support Lahaina HOSA students through lei making and sales.

Arleen is a wonderful human, wife, mother, grandmother, friend, and an inspiration to us all.



Fiscal Summary

October 1, 2020 - September 30, 2021

Revenue by Source

County of Maui grants	64.82%	\$14,212,769
Federal grants	26.31%	10,646,827
State of Hawaii grants	2.53%	245,665
Private foundation grants and other contributions	2.26%	591,900
In-kind contributions	1.92%	365,763
Program Income	0.48%	130,088
Fundraising	0.43%	76,763
Rent Revenue	0.26%	25,749
Other income	0.99%	266,231
Total	100.00%	<u><u>\$26,561,755</u></u>

Expenditure by Service

Transportation	46.24%	\$ 9,295,525
Crisis and Emergency Assistance	22.03%	7,675,442
Early Childhood Services	12.89%	3,052,435
Other Federal Programs	2.67%	705,321
Employment and Training	1.85%	493,329
Youth Programs	1.35%	256,245
Economic Development	1.26%	2,772,692
Other County Programs	0.80%	171,658
Reintegration	0.56%	311,891
Special Projects	0.38%	78,846
Enlace Hispano Program	0.38%	64,128
Weatherization Assistance Program	0.30%	103,364
Management and General	9.24%	1,989,986
Fundraising	0.05%	15,574
Total	100.00%	<u><u>\$26,986,436</u></u>

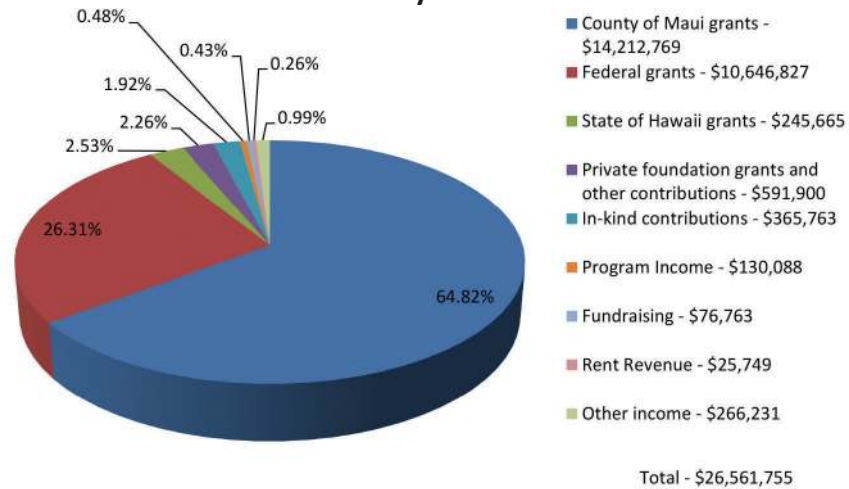
Expenditure by Function

Program Services	90.72%	\$24,980,876
Fundraising	0.05%	15,574
Management and General	9.23%	1,989,986
Total	100.00%	<u><u>\$26,986,436</u></u>

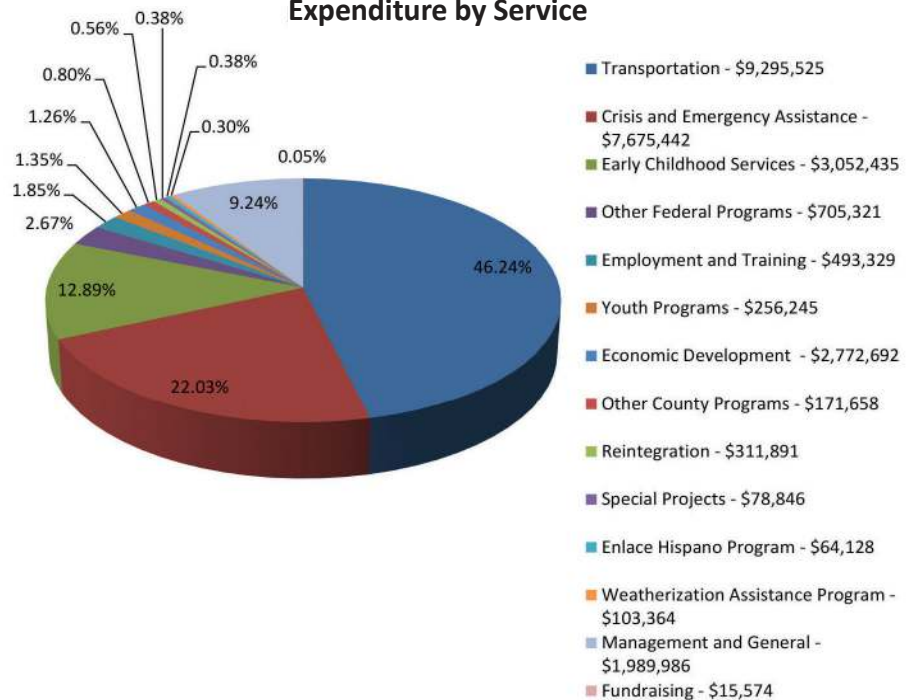
Summary:

Revenue	\$26,561,755
Expenditures	<u>(26,355,961)</u>
Expenditures - Grant Purchased Assets	(630,475)
Increase(Decrease) in Net Assets	<u>(424,681)</u>
Net Assets, October 1, 2020	<u>28,621,245</u>
Net Assets, September 30, 2021	<u><u>\$28,196,564</u></u>

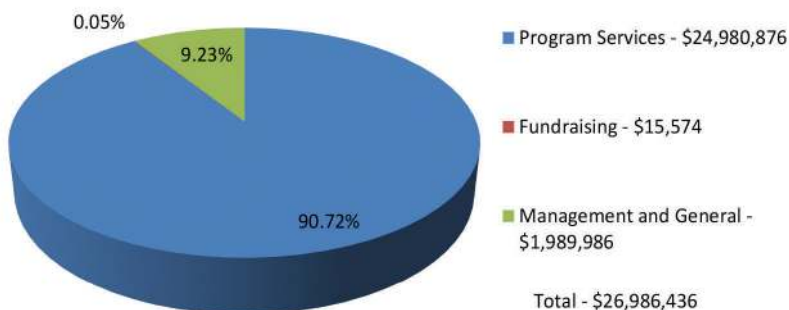
Revenue by Source



Expenditure by Service



Expenditure by Function



THE SPIRIT OF MEO



Dee Kahuhu on Spirit Day



A festive Nani Watanabe



Head Start on Sports Day

PHONE NUMBERS

MEO Family Center (808) 249-2990
 Business Development Center (808) 243-4318
 Community Services (808) 249-2970
 Early Childhood Services (808) 249-2988
 Human Resources (808) 249-2990
 Fiscal (808) 249-2980

Youth Services (808) 243-4315
 Hana Office (808) 248-8282
 Kahi Kamali'i (808) 249-2001
 Lana'i Office (808) 565-6665
 Moloka'i Office (808) 553-3216
 Transportation (808) 877-7651

LOCATIONS AND MAILING ADDRESSES

MEO Family Center

99 Mahalani St.
 Wailuku, HI 96793
 Mailing:
 P.O. Box 2122
 Kahului, HI 96733

Kahi Kamali'i Infant Toddler Center

97 Mahalani St.
 Wailuku, HI 96793

Transportation Department

3957 Hansen Road
 Puunene, HI 96784

Lana'i Office

1144 Ilima Ave., #102
 Lanai City, HI 96763
 Mailing:
 PO Box 630068
 Lanai City, HI 96763

Moloka'i Office

380 Kolapa Place
 Kaunakakai, HI 96748
 Mailing:
 P.O. Box 667
 Kaunakakai, HI 96748

Hana Office

1501 Uakea Road
 Hana, HI 96713



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