

MidWeek

Hauula's Homegrown Recovery Group Wins Nonprofit Status

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By Rasa Fournier



Ola Kuo'o volunteers like Joseph Pouha (left) and Shon Kaanaana help Hauula addicts get back on their feet. Photo by Leah Friel, lfriel@midweek.com.

A Hauula drug addict recovery group, functioning unofficially for about three years, has been granted nonprofit status, signaling a big step for its programs.

Ola Kuo'o volunteer Shon Kaanaana, who humbly describes himself as "someone who is in there all the way to the end," said that he's doing his best to address the area drug problem and to help addicts get back on their feet.

"Shon is the person who started this program - he is the leader in the community," said Dotty Kelly-Paddock, recording secretary for Hauula Community Association.

"He came to HCA for support, and he was involved in **our town meeting with state Rep. Jessica Wooley**. We

support Ola Kuo'o, and we said 'Yes, we agree that there are many drug issues in Hauula,' and we actually had some workshops."

Wooley brought the Meth Project and other drug-recovery resources to the workshops, which both Kaanaana and Kelly-Paddock call a start. Hauula's lack of permanent resources means that addicts already disadvantaged and in a fragile recovery period need to overcome major transportation hurdles to get help.

"There really is nothing in the area," said Kelly-Paddock, adding that Wooley has offered to try to obtain some funding for the program.

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Meanwhile, Kaanaana continues to push on with a core group of steady supporters. "A lot of guys came bouncing in," he said. "When they found out we had no money and we were just volunteers, they just bounced right back out. A few of us stayed, and we continue to keep our hopes up high and keep going because we really need something in our community. We have the passion to keep struggling, and finally something is happening for us.

"Our district is so huge, but there's nothing for substance abuse in our community, except for Bobby Benson, but that's for (adolescents), not for adults. It's so sad, the families are just falling apart. One time I was one drug addict too, for years. It took me the school of hard knocks to learn my lesson."

Kaanaana is in it for the long haul, along with "Uncle Joe"

Pouha, Makaio Hee and his wife Kamaileula. They organize community service projects, like yard cleaning for area kupuna, to build self-worth in their members and help them become functioning members of society.

"If the community needs us to do anything, we just go," explained Kaanaana. "It's to show my guys that they're not bad people. I know plenty people, they go, 'These guys, they're no good, they're just drug addicts,' so we keep trying to pick ourselves up.

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"There's a lot of this 'not in my backyard' stuff, but it's happening right in our front yards. So we're trying to get them back into society and say 'Hey, you're not a bad person. You are a very beautiful person, you just made some stupid mistakes in your life. Don't give up, we can fix that.'

"But we need all the help we can get. Some of us, we're not educated people and we don't know how to do things. Uncle Joe, he doesn't know about the life of drugs and crime, but he's been sticking it out with us. You're rarely going to find that kind of people that we can hold onto, and we're going to hold on as much as we can."

For more information, or to offer support, call Kaanaana at 699-1334.

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