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Anahola Hawaiians travel to New York for tech training

By Paul C. Curtis - The Garden Island
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For Erik Danner, Keoki Cummings and Maile Tomacder, all of Anahola, their first trip to New York City would have been memorable without the unexpected perk.

Their co-workers at the Anahola Hawaiian Homestead Technology (AHHT) site, where they work to convert paper documents into digital form, and those at the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA), pitched in to provide them tickets for a Broadway show.

They went to see "The Souvenir" and had a great time, they said. They were there for 10 days, and had a solid week of training in translating documents from rich text format (rtf) form to xml form, Tomacder said.

They recently returned, and are back at work at the AHHT site on state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands property in Anahola, armed with new skills in document-conversion software acquired during their trip to the Big Apple.

They are awaiting the arrival of new software and hardware necessary for implementing the new offering, she said.

Danner asked for volunteers to accompany him to New York, and Tomacder and Cummings stepped up, Tomacder said.

It was the first time to New York City for all of them, and the first time out of Hawai'i for Tomacder.

"This was my first trip to the Mainland, and it was amazing to be able to visit such well-known places as Times Square and Broadway," Tomacder said.

"It was actually cool, interesting, much different than Kaua'i," said Tomacder, who said she would like to return to New York City for pleasure purposes at another time, but "not when it's cold, though. I would like to go back for pleasure." Tomacder was able to squeeze some shopping in during the trip earlier this month.

Cummings loved the 20-degree weather, he said. "It's like A/C (air conditioning) all day. It was fun. The degrees was perfect."

Like Tomacder, Cummings also plans a return trip to New York. "I definitely will be back, for vacation or something. It's unlike anywhere else in Hawai'i.

"I'll go back for pleasure," Cummings said. "I'm definitely going back."

The scene in Times Square is one that he will long remember, he said, "people walking 20 miles an hour."

The trip was made possible because of a \$50,000 grant CNHA obtained from leaders of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to provide specialized computer-graphics training for the three and six other AHHT employees, explained Lilia Kapunia, CNHA vice president.



On the economic side, this training will allow the site leaders to get contracts for not only text digitization, but graphic digitization, broadening their capacity to compete with other, larger firms, she said.

Although Anahola has a small staff, they have accomplished a lot, putting themselves on the map across the country for text digitization, Kapunia said.

The first activity of the grant provided training for the three Anahola residents in New York City.

This story will "bring huge smiles to this little Hawaiian community, build their sense of pride, and it would help OHA and the community see that their funds are changing lives," Kapunia said.

The OHA funds are providing Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) training to Anahola-area residents employed at CNHA's initiative, Hawaiian Homestead Technology, she explained.

Employment opportunities for CAD are growing, and these new skills will allow HHT leaders to expand the service options at the Anahola technology center, Kapunia explained.

Currently, nine Anahola-area residents are employed at the Anahola technology center, where they are focused on converting paper manuals from equipment manufacturers such as Northrop Grumman and General Electric into digital manuals.

HHT officials have provided the first employment opportunities on DHHL properties across the state, adding another 10 positions in Waimanalo on O'ahu, where their main focus is conversion of paper documents such as blueprints, large-format diagrams, and schematics into CAD formats, she said.

"Our hard-working staff has created assets for our clients that give them quick and reliable access to important information," said Myron Thompson, HHT president.

Tomacder, Danner and Cummings' training was delivered by officials at Data Conversion Laboratories, whose staff are HHT leaders' partners and mentors in document-conversion software.

"I am excited every day to hear the stories from our staff about the opportunities and experiences that HHT has helped them to achieve," Thompson said.

HHT is an information-technology firm whose employees convert documents, including text and graphics, to sophisticated electronic versions, for government and commercial clients.

Partnered with those at national software firms and more than a dozen federally-recognized Indian tribes across the country, HHT leaders and employees deliver on-task orders generated under the Native American Document Conversion Project, supported by U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, D-Hawai'i, to promote technology industries in Native communities, Kapunia explained.

A social enterprise founded by leaders of the CNHA, the HHT's mission is to sustain a viable technology industry in DHHL communities, and build local economic capacities and partnerships, Kapunia explained.

For more information, please contact CNHA toll-free at 1-800-709-2642, via e-mail at infor@hawaiiancouncil.org, or visit our Web site at www.hawaiiancouncil.org.

- *Paul C. Curtis, associate editor, may be reached at 245-3681 (ext. 224) or pcurtis@kauaipubco.com.*

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