

High Tech Training For Waimanalo

By *MELISSA MONIZ*

Hawaiian Homestead Technologies recently opened quarters in Waimanalo where eight people from the community were selected for five months of intensive, paid training to ready them for the workplace.

"After starting with the eight, we anticipate to grow," said Olin Lagon, CEO of the technology firm. "We need to grow. What's unknown is how fast and how much."

The Waimanalo Technology Center, located in the complex with the Kamehameha Schools preschool, is the HHT's first site on Oahu and its second in the

state. The original site was opened in the Anahola Hawaiian Homestead community on Kauai.

HHT is an initiative of the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement with a mission to create jobs in economically challenged Native Hawaiian communities. Waimanalo's eight employees began their training a few weeks ago, starting with computer classes at Windward Community College.

"We operate in Hawaiian homestead communities because jobs are not plentiful there, but there's no requirement to be Hawaiian," Lagon added. "We look at this as a job-creation program rather than job relocation, and there's a big difference."

As a job creation and community-building program, HHT is entirely owned by non-profit agencies. Lagon said HHT is grateful to have support in Waimanalo from the Harold K. Castle Foundation, American Savings Bank, state Department of Hawaii Homes Lands, Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Windward Community College.

"They are very generous with their support, and it is because of that support that we are able to pay for training," Lagon explained. "because, really, there is no productivity during training."

HHT is in the process of planning a third center for Papakolea, but the dates have not yet been finalized.