

Kohala Mountain News

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Wildlife Center Breaks Ground

By Courtney Rader

On June 22 a crowd gathered on a two-acre site behind Kohala Middle School to celebrate the next phase of development for the Hawaii Wildlife Center (HWC). A much-welcomed mist and singing birds provided good omens as Danny Akaka Jr. presided over a traditional Hawaiian blessing ceremony that honored HWC's achievements to date and its goal of creating a place of healing for Hawaii's native wildlife.

State Representative Dwight Takamine, who helped gain state support for the project, shared his thoughts with the crowd... that building a safe haven for native birds "in Kohala is appropriate" because of its profound "cultural and historical significance." HWC's board of directors thanked their pro bono design and engineering teams, adding that their "hearts were full of gratitude." The entire team—board members, staff, architects, engineers and contractors—formally broke ground for what will soon become a special place for wild-

life conservation and education. Site work, to include grading, installation of drainage, wastewater facilities and utilities,

and strong community support, HWC will serve as a destination for school children and others to learn about preserving Hawaii's



The Wildlife Center's groundbreaking was obviously a joyful event, judging by the expressions on everyone's faces.

will begin, followed shortly by building construction.

When completed, the Hawaii Wildlife Center will treat sick or injured birds and respond to emergency calls statewide. Linda Elliott, HWC president and wildlife biologist, has cultivated protocols for avian care as part of her experience in responding to numerous international wildlife emergencies.

The 4,000-square-foot center will include a state-of-the-art treatment facility, open air interpretive courtyard, and educational pavilion to host classes, lectures and training programs. With endorsements from numerous national educational and conservation-based organizations

natural richness as part of the center's educational, volunteer and outreach programs. In a truly community-based effort towards sustainability and land stewardship the center is pursuing Gold LEED Certification which requires independent, third-

party verification that a building project meets the highest green building and performance measures. The site will also include a landscape of native plants to be achieved in part with the help of students from Kohala Middle School and other community supporters.

While a large portion of the money needed to build and equip the wildlife center has been raised, the HWC still needs to raise \$750,000 in construction funds. Contributions can be sent to Hawaii Wildlife Center, PO Box 551752, Kapa'au, HI 96755. Further information about the center and its programs can be found on the internet at www.hawaiiwildlifecenter.org.