



MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani was published in MidWeek's **West Oahu VOICE** section on Wednesday, January 6, 2016.

School/Community Project

Congratulations to students, parents and staff at Kanoelani Elementary School in our Waipio! Dozens and dozens of volunteers spent several weeks on campus this fall alongside employees from the Hawaii real estate company Locations to complete a major beautification "Legacy Project" that was officially dedicated in mid-November. The Locations Foundation provided a \$25,000 grant that funded a new science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) lab, improvements around several classrooms and a mural created by famed artist Hilton Alves. Benches have been added for teachers to use for outdoor classes, garden boxes were constructed for each class, storage containers were decorated with student art, and the school's map mural stage was given a fresh coat of paint.

Under the leadership of **Principal Stacie Kunihisa**, Kanoelani has been a leader in involving families in school programs. At the ceremonial unveiling, we were joined by **Governor David Ige, First Lady Dawn Amano Ige** and several fellow lawmakers for a memorable "portrait" (*below*) fronting the spectacular mural that will be an inspiration for Kanoelani students and their families, along with teachers, staff and campus visitors for years to come.

Kanoelani Elementary's extended `ohana ~ fronting the spectacular campus mural that will inspire for years to come.



Proud Graduates

The 2015 winter commencement ceremony at UH West Oahu was special in many ways. I was so impressed when Central Oahu resident **Marissa Pagud** spoke on behalf of the graduating class. Marissa is a Kamehameha Schools alum and one of more than 260 West Oahu graduates this semester – the largest ever graduating class at our UH campus. She received her bachelor's degree in English – reaffirming her love of literature that she rediscovered in her classes at UHWO.

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The campus also said aloha and mahalo to retiring **Chancellor Rockne Freitas**, who has guided the campus since 2013. “Rock” leaves after more than two decades of service to the University and the State of Hawaii. I was pleased to represent my colleagues in the Senate in presenting a congratulatory certificate to Chancellor Freitas. UHWO is now under the capable leadership of **Dr. Doris Ching**, a distinguished longtime University administrator who will head the campus while the search for a permanent Chancellor proceeds.



Retiring UH West Oahu Chancellor Rockne Freitas and Fall Class of 2015 Student commencement speaker Marissa Pagud of Mililani.

Join us in January

Finally, let me wish all of you a Happy New Year with the hope that you have a healthy, happy and productive 2016. In just a month or so, we will welcome the Year of the Monkey in the Asian lunar tradition. The monkey is seen as clever, intelligent and quick to act. People born in the Year of the Monkey are said to be free from inhibitions, and ready to think outside the box. “What is difficult, the monkey can do right away; what is impossible may take a little longer,” says one commentary. Definitely something to keep in mind as we lawmakers convene our 60-working day session.

You are, of course, invited to opening day of the session on Wednesday morning, January 20 – just two weeks away! I hope you will stop by my office in room 228 to meet and greet me and my staff. And please do not hesitate to contact me at any time at my State Capitol office, telephone 586-7100, or by email senkidani@capitol.hawaii.gov.



Year of the Monkey ~ 2016



The next regular session of the Legislature will begin on Wednesday morning, January 20, 2016.

Please join us at the State Capitol, and stop by my office in room 228 to say hello!