

## School receives game-changing donation

*Namahana School receives \$1 million*

**Wyatt Haupt Jr.**

### THE GARDEN ISLAND

**KILAUEA** — An ongoing effort to establish a new public charter school on the North Shore of Kaua‘i received a \$1 million anonymous donation that brings the educational institution one giant step closer to becoming a reality.

The donation was announced on Sunday, Oct. 23, during a community event for Namahana School at Anaina Hou Community Park in Kilauea. The donation, which is unrestricted, will be used to pay for a number of tasks associated with getting the charter school up and running.

“We are so grateful for this amazing gift, and for the vote of confidence it represents from the donor,” said Pam Murphy, chair of the Namahana School Governing Board in a statement.

“Namahana has been, from the start, a community-driven endeavor to meet the real need of North Shore families for a tuition-free middle and high school closer to home. This extraordinary gift is a testament to the strength of that vision, and to the commitment of our community to help make it a reality.”

The campus, which is expected to open in fall 2025, will be situated on 8 acres at Wai Koa Plantation in Kalihiwai. The land was donated by philanthropist Joan Porter in 2018 for the sole purpose of establishing a public charter middle and high school. “This gift is a gamechanger. Each time we wonder if we can really make this dream come true, someone steps forth with an

the task of building facilities in time for the school’s opening. In 2020, the school team initiated work with Hawai‘i architectural firm Group 70 to develop a conceptual design program for the campus. Plans currently call for opening with temporary facilities, while permanent structures are constructed.

School Leader Dr. Kapua Chandler said the gift is a symbol of the faith the community has in the undertaking. She made the announcement about the anonymous donation on Sunday at the community event, which was attended by approximately 200 people.

“I am humbled that so many people have chosen to place their trust in our vision for the future of our keiki. We always believed in the importance of a school like this, where children can develop a strong connection to place, culture and community while gaining the personal and professional skills to become responsible stewards of their world,” said Chandler in a statement.

“But to see others embrace this vision with such enthusiasm reminds me of how transformative our work will truly be for the North Shore.”

Lorri Mull, Education Chair of the Kaua‘i North Shore Community Foundation, echoed those sentiments. The foundation served as an incubator for Namahana School from 2015-21.

“The North Shore is such a unique place, and we are incredibly gratified that we were able to successfully spearhead the initiative for Namahana School,” said Mull in a statement. “We believe the educational model developed for Namahana will inspire our students and allow our community to flourish for generations to come.”

act of astonishing generosity, bringing us one step closer to our aspirations,” said Melanie Parker, Executive Director of Namahana Education Foundation, in a statement.

“Now that we face the momentous task of building a campus that befits Namahana’s educational vision, we are trusting in our community’s support more than ever.”

Namahana Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization founded in 2021 for the purpose of advancing the school’s mission, including managing fundraising and campus construction.

“The individual who made this remarkable gift believes that Namahana School will be critical to life on the North Shore — a community for which they have great aloha,” said Parker in a statement. “They believe that the money could not be better spent than in supporting public education on the North Shore and helping Namahana achieve its highest potential.”

The public charter school received conditional approval from the Hawai‘i State Public Charter School Commission in June. The school will initially open with grades seven and eight, eventually broadening to include grades nine through 12.

Existing operational planning is centered on meeting a set of preopening conditions, as well as

•••

*Wyatt Haupt Jr., editor, can be reached at 808-245-0457 or [whaupt@thegardenisland.com](mailto:whaupt@thegardenisland.com).*



**The Namahana Education Foundation received an anonymous \$1 million donation that will propel the effort to build a new public charter school on North Shore. The donation was announced at a community event on Sunday, Oct. 23, 2022, at Anaina Hou Community Park in Kilauea.**

**COURTESY OF FRANZ SCHMUTZER OF MODESTA MEDIA**

---

[Copyright \(c\) 2022 The Garden Island, Edition 10/25/2022](#)  
[Powered by TECNAVIA](#)

---