FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 5, 2025



A SPECIAL VISIT
East O'ahu residents welcome Hōkūle'a at Koko Marina Center.
SEE PAGE 6

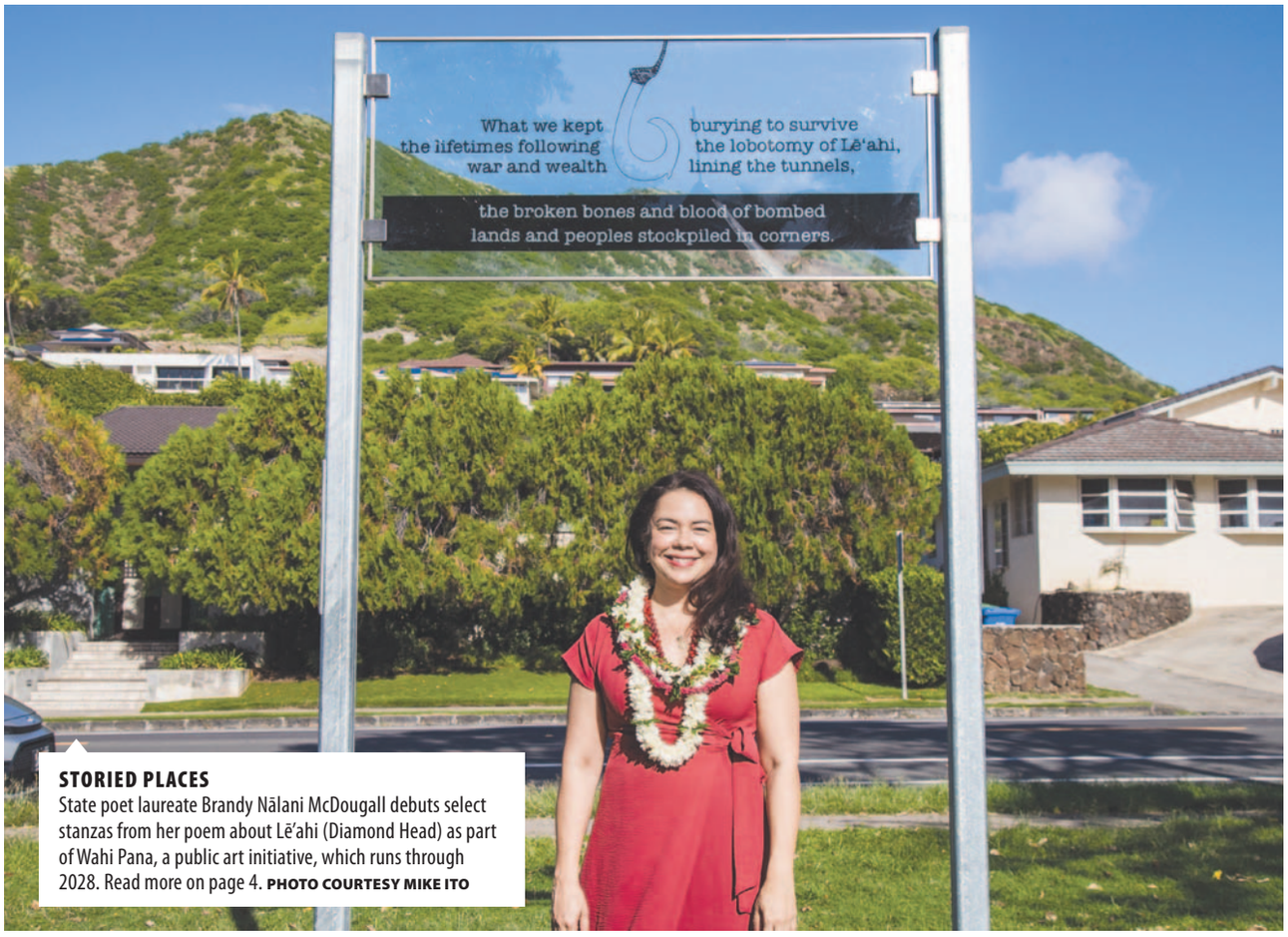
VOICE

• EAST O'AHU COMMUNITY NEWS •

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A HIDDEN GEM
Kaimukī High School's W.O.R.M.S. Club debuts a special gummy candy.
SEE PAGE 10



STORIED PLACES
State poet laureate Brandy Nālani McDougall debuts select stanzas from her poem about Lē'ahi (Diamond Head) as part of Wahi Pana, a public art initiative, which runs through 2028. Read more on page 4. **PHOTO COURTESY MIKE ITO**

La Pietra Students Share The Love

BY EAST O'AHU VOICE STAFF

La Pietra – Hawai'i School for Girls' choir delivered "Singing Valentines" across their campus in celebration of the holiday.

Students, faculty, staff and even parents could surprise someone special in their school community with a song and a rose. Songs like *Love Is an Open Door* from Disney's *Frozen*, Elvis Presley's *Can't Help Falling in Love*, Jason Mraz's *I'm Yours*, One Direction's *That's What Makes You Beautiful* and *Love Grows Where My Rosemary Goes* by Edison Lighthouse, were given to loved ones.

At the start of the day, there was a special performance in the fountain courtyard where the choir surprised head of school Jennifer Grems with a song. Then, Singing Valentines were delivered throughout the day in classrooms, offices and outdoor spaces.

"This new tradition is such a beautiful way to celebrate the love and friendship that define our La Pietra community," states Tomas Ramos, La Pietra's music teacher. "Hearing our students lift each other up through music is a reminder of the strong sisterhood they share."

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Lē'ahi Poetry Installation Kicks Off Public Art Initiative

BY ALLYSON PANG

Lē'ahi, more commonly referred to as Diamond Head, is known for its iconic ridgeline and for being a popular tourist destination. But, it has a much deeper importance for Native Hawaiians.

State poet laureate Brandy Nālani McDougall culminates the varying perspectives to capture the full story of Lē'ahi in a poem that can be viewed in several art installations surrounding the landmark.

"Because of all of the many different competing stories and ways in which they reflect different values and perspectives at different moments in time — there's such a rich history of Lē'ahi and of O'ahu," she says. "I think many of us aren't necessarily taught all aspects of it, or are able to kind of dive deep into it.

"Lē'ahi was hollowed out and turned into a major military installation that they continue to run tours on. It also has become a site that's well recognized for tourism. And, hotel rooms are sold with Diamond Head views as well.

"So, trying to kind of incorporate all of that together, but still remain true to my perspective as a Kanaka 'Ōiwi woman who's a mother and who has always felt this struggle to connect with 'āina for various reasons that were often colonially related. And so, I'm grappling with all of that in this poem."

The installation is part of the first phase of Wahi Pana (Storied Places), a temporary public art project led by the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts in collaboration with Bloomberg Philanthropies. Honolulu was one of just eight U.S. cities to be selected for this opportunity. More than 150 cities had applied.

At the opening ceremony of the Lē'ahi installation on Feb. 21, Stephanie Dockery of Bloomberg Philanthropies explained, "We launched this program in 2014, and today 17 cities have participated and developed public art projects around the country that have addressed significant civic issues, including climate change, public health, (and) of course, reclaiming history."

As part of the Lē'ahi installation, there is a sign posted at Mākālei Beach Park and at Diamond Head/Lē'ahi Beach Park, and two signs posted at Operation Red Wings Medal Of Hon-



State poet laureate Brandy Nālani McDougall speaks about her poetry art installation in Operation Red Wings Medal of Honor Park near Lē'ahi. "It felt really horrific to me to understand how this beautiful pu'u that was once this image of abundance for our people was transformed into a space of storing horrific weapons that are used against other people and against even our own other parts of our 'āina," she says. PHOTO COURTESY MIKE ITO

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or Park. Each sign includes a stanza printed over a sheet of glass with Lē‘ahi viewable in the background.

“I chose stanzas that I thought could help people to reflect … (and) that definitely didn’t hold back any punches,” McDougall explains. For example, when taking the horror she felt toward the military installation at Lē‘ahi, she described it as a “lobotomy” in her poem.

“I am a page poet, which means that I’m not used to performing my work,” she adds. “So thinking of a project like this, where I have to kind of really think outside — literally outside the page — and try to envision how it might come to light and how people might interact with it, what are the best ways in which people would interact with it, was really different.”



McDougall took the outlines of Lē‘ahi from different maps to shape her poem with each stanza following the slopes. *Lē‘ahi* is a 40-stanza section of *Aloha Ka‘apuni*, a larger work inspired by how aloha ‘āina circulates and revolutionizes in and beyond Hawai‘i, highlighting specific historical sites. **PHOTO COURTESY MIKE ITO**

McDougall was drawn to references of Lē‘ahi being a place where “many winds congregated together.” She also references lei koko‘ula, which translates to “blood-red” or “red blood,” but also refers to the low-lying rainbow that comes with a light rain. The redness of the rainbow forms a lei around Lē‘ahi at different points in the day.

Her main goal was to share the mo‘olelo (stories) behind the power and beauty of ‘āina and Lē‘ahi.

“(McDougall’s) poetry reminds us that our stories are not static,” says Ka‘ili Trask O’Connell, MOCA executive director and Wahi Pana project lead. “They move, adapt and are now continually redefined, just as our relationship to place evolves over time.

“As Hawai‘i’s current poet laureate, Brandy’s voice is a powerful one, speaking to the ways literature, history and activism intersect to keep our culture and our kuleana alive.”

She adds, “Most importantly, carry these stories forward. Talk about them, reflect on them and share them with others.”

Wahi Pana art installations will be open to the public through 2028. During the second phase, two more installations in East O‘ahu will be unveiled in May.

To learn more about the installation at Lē‘ahi, visit wahipana.com/art/leahi. To stay up-to-date on upcoming art installations, visit wahipana.com.

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