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Lokelani 'Ohana seeks to build 'inspired' community

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WAIHEE — A key organizer of the nonprofit Lokelani 'Ohana, inspired by her and her daughter's experiences at a Camphill program in Pennsylvania, wants to set up a community along similar philosophical lines for people with disabilities on Maui.

Christina Chang began laying the ground work for Lokelani 'Ohana a few years before her daughter, Angelica, 25, graduated from Pennsylvania Camphill Beaver Run in Glenmore, Pa., in 2004.

Angelica Chang, who spent nearly a decade at Beaver Run, has a form of autism with some social, repetitive behavior and verbal issues. She requires assistance with bathing and going to the bathroom.

Because her daughter lacked independent life skills, Chang could not get her daughter enrolled in adult Camphill programs. Coupled with her daughter's desire to be near her ailing grandmother, the Changs decided to return to Maui.

"It was time for her to bring back the goods," said Chang. "It was time for her to give back to the island we love and community we love, and Maui really needs it."

"We are continuing to follow these steps that are lit by this Camphill light," Chang said.

Since the fall, Lokelani 'Ohana has been operating a farm and saori weaving program for about 70 people with disabilities.

The farm program on 1.2 acres in Waihee is run by Chang and serves Ka Lima O Maui, Easter Seals and Alternative Care Services. The program has received a three-year \$12,500 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop the farm.

The site already had bananas, coconuts, tangerines, figs, star fruit and avocados, and they planted vegetables and herbs. The farm sells its certified organically grown produce to Down to Earth.

Dana Allen, an artist, is on the staff of Lokelani 'Ohana and runs the saori weaving program. He bring his looms to Ka Lima O Maui and Easter Seals to run the program for clients there.

The group has two life-sharing homes, one with Chang and her daughter; and the other in Maka-wao with Tony Leone, the president of Lokelani 'Ohana, and his son, Chris Leone. The Changs and Leones receive staff help, funded through Medicaid waivers.

On the horizon, Lokelani 'Oha-na plans to offer a course on Rudolph Steiner's theory of anthroposophy, a bedrock of the Camphill program. Keith McCary, a retired Waldorf School teacher and head of Lokelani 'Ohana's educational program, is developing the course that will help people better understand how to support people with special needs. In the area of recreation, Ron Bass is offering a kayaking program.

Board members of Lokelani 'Ohana listened closely to the advice of Coleman Lyles, the North American president of Camphill, when he visited Maui last week.

Chang became acquainted with Lyles during her daughter's time at Camphill Beaver Run, where he was an administrator of the program.

"Figure out who you are and where you are and begin where you are, doing things that make sense," he told the group.

Grandiose visions and ideas "can become a burden," he said.

Article Photos



Coleman Lyles, North American president of the Camphill Association, visited Maui last week on a trip organized by Lokelani 'Ohana, which is trying to create a Camphill-inspired community on Maui. Christina Chang (left) is vice president of Lokelani 'Ohana, and Gerlinde Morris is a Lokelani 'Ohana board member.

The Maui News / ILIMA LOOMIS photo

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Lokelani 'Ohana had focused on setting up a Camphill-inspired community on about 40 acres on Maui. The goal was to have life-sharing homes with house parents, co-workers living in the community and additional staff that rotate in and out of the community, Chang said. They wanted to create an "open door," where people in the community could volunteer and agencies that support people with disabilities could come for activities.

That could come in time, but for now, Lokelani 'Ohana is adopting a philosophy that Lyles' group in California had.

"We started saying, 'Our mission is not to have a mission' but to be responsive to what comes toward us, not to have a fixed idea of what we are trying to do," he told the Lokelani 'Ohana board.

Still, if someone had 40 acres to donate, the group gladly would accept the land. They also could use vehicles for transportation and farm equipment, said Chang.

For more information, contact Chang at 249-0254 or go to the Web site lokelaniohana.org.

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