

HAWAII VETERAN

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Lei of Aloha - Girl Scouts help honor Veterans

By Marissa Lum
Girl Scout Troop 1018

Last year, when I organized the Lei of Aloha for my Gold Award Project, over 9,000 Veterans were interred at the Hawaii Veteran's Cemetery in Kaneohe. In just a single year, the number has grown to over 10,000 veteran graves and there are not nearly enough leis to honor each one of our fallen heroes on Memorial Day. Just as the Boy Scouts honor the veterans with flags and lei at the Punchbowl Cemetery, the Girl Scouts do the same at the graves at the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe.

Some years ago, our troop, Troop 1018, started a small Lei of Aloha at one of our troop member's home. When we started doing the Lei of Aloha as a troop, our goal was to contribute leis to the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery to honor and remember as many veterans as we could for Memorial Day. We did the event as a troop for a few years and each year, the number of leis we produced continuously increased. Last year, I decided to try and help the event



grow on a larger scale. I did this by involving the community and bringing the event to Windward Mall. During planning, we decided that the Center Court area in Windward Mall was the perfect location because it is situated near the Hawaii Veteran's Cemetery. It is a spacious and air conditioned venue where local residents could gather to make leis. Kristin Smith and the management staff have been so gracious to allow the Girl Scouts and the community to hold the event there these past

two years. They provided not only the venue, but have also provided the tables and chairs to work on, the sound system so people can hear our messages and call for kokua to invite the shoppers to sew a lei for a hero. The goal for the Lei of Aloha remained the same. Involving the community gave the event a much more significant and meaningful purpose – we united together to remember our fallen heroes, to give heartfelt thanks for their ultimate sacrifice and patriotism.



Photos by the Lum Family

Memorial Day at Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery



Photos by Jayme Nagamine



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Congresswoman Gabbard visits veterans in Kona



Photos by Carolle Brulee-Wilson

Candlelight Ceremony at Punchbowl Cemetery



Photos by Jerry Kringel and Rona Adams
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Lei for Legacies - A Community Service Program

By Brian Leong, Lt Col
Hawaii Air National Guard

How Lei for Legacies began:

Back in April 2010, Mrs. Jessie Higa and I were talking about her involvement as a historian with Hickam Air Force Base. Among the few stories she mentioned about Hickam and Pearl Harbor, I made a comment on how many plumeria trees we have on base. She then relayed the story of why these trees were planted in some of the cemeteries on the island (to reduce the smell of buried corpses).

Thereafter, I recalled my experience of visiting several overseas cemeteries in Europe. I was awestruck and moved, seeing the miles of tombstones of US service members who gave their lives in WWII. These countries were forever thankful to their "American Liberators" who paid the ultimate sacrifice for their freedom. Keeping these cemeteries in pristine condition was a small token of appreciation from these countries.

Suddenly the light bulb went on! We both recalled how the veteran's cemeteries have made radio and TV requests for lei. As our idea took hold, Jessie sought permission from the base commander, and I organized the project for volunteers and its logistics. It became the first community service project for its members.

What is this event about:

It's about bringing people together to share talents, energy, fellowship, and to remember and honor our fallen heroes for their ultimate sacrifice in securing our freedom. With minimal funds needed to conduct this event, making lei for veteran's cemeteries have been rewarding to the many who have participated. Those who have volunteered their time on the third Wednesday or Thursday of May, for the past four years are able to witness their efforts on Memorial Day.

Upon giving our lei to the Office of Veterans Services, they in turn refrigerate these lei which are laid by Boy and Girl Scouts on the Sunday prior. The process of picking flowers, and making a fresh lei is simplistic. The outcome of giving a lei is appreciated. The effect on both givers and receivers is priceless.

Who has helped our project:

First year- 109 AOG and 154 Wing



members,
families and friends,
and Youth Challenge cadets
Second year- 109 AOG members,
families and friends,
and 'Iolani School Girl Scout troop 276
&
Third &
Fourth years- 109 AOG members,

families and friends

Why we continue:

It's about giving back. Sometimes we seek a reminder of why we wear the uniform. Each generation of military members have experienced different challenges. What we have in common is the dedication to the values, commitment, and honor that our country bestows and trusts us with. Being a member of Hawaii National Guard has given many the common bond and traditions of Hawaii. A flower lei is given on special occasions. A flower lei is given in remembrance. It has drawn us together with the unique traditions of Hawaii - presented to men and women who have served our state and country.

Where we hold this event:

We pick the flowers from the many trees on Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam and sew the flowers at the 154 Wing Dining Facility. 'Iolani School has also supported this event by conducting a flower and ti leaf lei making in their student center.

When we hold this event:

Our lei sewing event is held the Wednesday and Thursday prior to Memorial Day, 1530-2030.



Gov. Neil Abercrombie
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Maj. Gen. Darryll D.M. Wong
The Adjutant General

Col.-R Ronald P. Han, Jr.
OVS Director

Jayne Nagamine
Editor/Layout

<http://dod.hawaii.gov/ovs>
Email: ovs@ovs.hawaii.gov

433-0420 (OVS)
433-0385 (OVS fax)

733-4258 (DoD)
733-4236 (DoD fax)



Office of Veterans Services
State of Hawaii
459 Patterson Road
E-Wing, Room 1-A103
Honolulu, HI 96819-1522

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Memorial Day Weekend at Hilo Veterans Cemetery I



Each year prior to the Memorial Day Weekend, members of the Korean War Veterans, Big Island Chapter #231, clean off all headstones at the Veterans Cemetery I and II in Hilo, HI. This year on May 15th and 16th this group spent many hardworking hours powerwashing and cleaning all of the headstones!

Pictured above: Emile Wery, Hiroshi Shima, Bill Yoeman Sr., Melton Gamayo Sr., Jerry Veloria, Zack Abregano, Tatsu Kimoto, Al Churchill, Paul Eyr, Kawaikea Daniel, Glenn Aoki, Clayton Tremaine, Robert Karp, Rankin Gossert, James Turner and James Santos.



Photos by Kii Hursey
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