

# HAWAII VETERAN

## STATE OF HAWAII OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES

### Remembering Director Ronald P. Han: A Legacy of Dedication and Love

As we honor and remember Ron, we reflect on a life dedicated to service, love, and community. Ron was more than just a beloved father and husband; he was a man who poured his heart and soul into every project he touched. His passion for helping others was most evident in his work for the veterans' community — a cause that was near and dear to his heart.

One of Ron's most cherished projects was the Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home in Kapolei. He put everything he had into ensuring that this home would be a place of comfort, safety and dignity for those who served our country. His

dedication was unmatched, and he worked tirelessly to see his vision come to life. The veterans home stands as a testament to Ron's unwavering commitment to those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. This was just one of many projects Ron was involved in; he was always busy, working on something that would make a difference.

While we continue to grieve the loss of our father and husband, we take comfort in knowing that his legacy lives on through the work he did and the lives he touched. The pain of his absence will never fully go away, but we know that he would want us

to press forward, to keep living our lives to the fullest, just as he did.

Our family is doing well, and we are incredibly grateful for the outpouring of support we have received from everyone. Your heartfelt words and constant presence have been a source of comfort during this difficult time. We want to thank each and every one of you for checking in on us, for sharing your memories of Ron, and for being there when we needed you most.

Ron's love for veterans and his commitment to serving them was an integral part of who he was. As we move forward, we carry with us the lessons he taught us about dedication, compassion and the importance of giving back to others. While Ron is no longer with us, his spirit and the values he's instilled, continues to guide us in all that we do.

Mahalo for being a part of Ron's life, and for helping us honor his memory.

Mālama pono,



*Han Family Pictured: Terry Han, left, Ronald P Han III, Shondie-Rose Takemoto*



# Remembering Col. Ronald P. Han



My fondest memory of Ron is not about his many accomplishments, of which are legendary, but of who he was. He was someone that no matter the circumstances, no matter how down and out you were feeling, or there was a problem that bothered and brought you down, speaking with him about the matter was helpful. I always felt better after speaking with him. He was the only person that, when I mention

his name to others, they say “I felt better, more invigorated more ready to face the world’s problems, after speaking with him. He was remarkable in lifting your spirit.”

I will always remember Ron as the person who when I met, I felt uplifted and good when I left his presence.

- Caz Ross

One of my fondest memories of Col. Han was when my wife and I flew to Oahu for a serious operation she had to undergo. Needless to say, it was a very difficult day for us. In the days leading up to the operation, Col. Han generously spent his valuable time talking to me after work hours, offering comforting words, and sharing how he and his wife were also dealing with their own medical challenges. On the morning of her operation, he called to check on us. I will never forget the compassion and sincerity in his voice, leaving an indelible impression on me as a truly kind leader and a good decent man.

- Darren Eugenio



## The 1st Col. Ronald P. Han Scholarship recipient Jaeden Ono



*Youth Challenge Graduate Jaeden Ono received the first Col. Ronald P. Han Scholarship at the Youth Challenge Kalaeloa graduation at the Tom Moffatt Waikiki Shell on Jun. 14. Ono will use his \$2,500 scholarship to attend Leeward Community College and major in Information and Computer Science. Han served Hawai‘i as the director of the State Office of Veterans’ Services for over a decade. He passed away in August of 2023.*

*YCA Kalaeloa Director Sina Atanoa, left, Graduate Jaeden Ono and Director of the Civilian Military Program Division, Brig. Gen. (Ret) Bruce Oliveira.*

# Remembering Ron



**Ron and Terry Han having lunch with the OVS staff. Ron was so gracious that he wanted to express his appreciation to all of us by treating us to lunch. Just another example of Ron being such a great leader.**

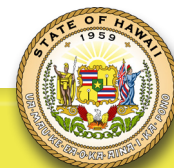
When Ron came on board as the new Director of the Hawai'i Office of Veterans Services in July, 2011, I made it a point to go meet him in his office during his first week on the job. I was Federal Employee working at VAPIHCS at the time, but I had a "bug in my bonnet" that I simply had to share with Ron. During my time as President/CEO, Hawai'i Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) 1997 to 2009, I helped build Hawai'i's first State Veterans Home in Hilo and set it up operationally under the East Hawai'i Region, HHSC. It opened in 2007. As part of my due diligence, I made a commitment to the Governors State Advisory Board on Veterans Services, to build a second State Vet-

erans Home on O'ahu. I wanted to convey that commitment to Ron and asked him to join me in the quest to build the 2nd State Veterans Home on O'ahu.

Although "drinking from a fire hose" with info flow in his first week as Director at OVS, he jumped on this idea with both hands and feet. This was the beginning of a close personal friendship between Ron and me that lasted until he most unfortunately passed away in 2023. There are too many stories of overcoming unsurmountable challenges for me to relate here, but suffice to say that our second State Veterans Home for O'ahu was dead in the water multiple times over the next 10 years, but

every time it was being closed out, Ron took aggressive personal action to deal with and overcome each challenge. He simply refused to allow this project to fail. Yes, he had a great team and yes everyone on the team worked very hard to promote this project, but only Ron was able to accomplish the impossible time after time and finally made it a reality. I am both privileged and honored to have served with Ron in pursuit of this dream and I feel qualified to say I have never worked with nor know a finer person or greater leader than Ron Han!!! He always gave of himself for everyone else and never asked for anything in return. He was a Military Leader, Veterans Leader, Husband, and Father for us all. He truly was the one person we should all attempt to emulate. He will always be sorely missed, but never forgotten.

**- Thomas M Driskill Jr.  
COL, USA, MSC (Ret)**



## STATE OF HAWAII OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES

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Editor**



**Yam Yi Lee, left, DOD Chief Engineering Officer Shaoyu Lee, Thomas M. Driskill Jr., DAGS Public Works Engineer/Project Manager Brad Leveen, DOD Engineer Wade Ishii and Ronald P. Han visiting the Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home in Kapolei on May 4, 2022.**



# Remembering Ron



I got to know Ron as a fellow veteran for nearly a decade while I have been on the Governor's Advisory Board on Veterans Affairs. Ron is an American hero and patriot who dedicated his life to serving our veteran community. He was smart, personable, hard-working, and above all, caring. Ron left the world a better place and his exceptional and successful service in the Office of Veterans' Services is but one of his many achievements. I miss him every day. Above is a photo of our board on January 9, 2016 with Ron on the right (I'm on the left).

- Michael Lilly

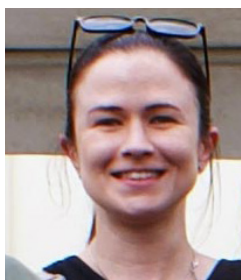
In the short time that I worked with Ron Han, he treated me like I had always been a part of the OVS Ohana and he made me feel welcome from day one. Ron had a genuine interest for the wellbeing of others, and he treated everyone with a true sense of compassion. He cared deeply for others, giving his time generously without ever making anyone feel like a burden. Ron would always pause to say hello, or ask us how we are doing, and he truly listened and cared about what we had to say. He took the best care of his team and made sure that everyone felt valued, appreciated, and supported. Ron will forever be remembered for the incredible leader and compassionate person that he was, and for the unwavering love and kindness that he shared with us all.

Mahalo,

- Carolyn Visoria



*Ron and Terry Han and OVS staff Debbie Harada and Violet Lee at the Korean War Ceremony in Hilo.*



I remember the first day I started at OVS, I was sent to O'ahu from the Big Island to meet with staff and fill out human resource paperwork. When I entered the OVS office I had a warm greeting from the staff especially Ron. It meant so much to me because it was my first week moving to Hawai'i from Boston. I really didn't know what to expect from my move and starting my new job. Ron sat down with me as we enjoyed a Bento box (I had no idea what one was or what I was eating). We talked about the department and what my role would be as a VSO. The meeting helped to reassure me that I had made the right move to Hawai'i and start my journey as a VSO. Thru the years to follow, working as a VSO, Ron was always there to reassure me I was headed in the right direction and that the important part in our mission was to service the veteran with courtesy, understanding, and compassion. I can't believe a year has passed since we lost him, He is missed by all.

- Diane Ramsay







# Office of Veterans' Services New Kapolei Location at the Daniel K. Akaka CBOC

Story by Jayme Nagamine

Col. Ronald P. Han was instrumental in getting this office space in the new Daniel Kahikina Akaka Veterans Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) on Franklin D Roosevelt Ave in Kapolei.

Getting to the Tripler Army Medical Center (TAMC) can be stressful because it is so big and parking can be an issue. It was Ron's goal to find space on the west side of the island to service veterans.

This project/goal came to fruition when the Akaka VA CBOC opened on April 8. The Office of Veterans' Services (OVS) has three counselor offices in the new Akaka VA CBOC. These counselors help with filing

disability claims to the VA (initial, new, supplemental, increase, higher level review and appeals) advocate veterans concerns, counsel benefits, provide informational referrals and claims submission, and offer VA forms and appeals assistance.

To make an appointment with a counselor, please call 808-433-0420. Once assigned a counselor, they will contact you to schedule an appointment.

The Office Assistant Lawrence Ilustre can take care of the motor vehicle exemptions and provides the property tax forms, a program through the City & County.

Office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and we are closed from

12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. for lunch.

The counselors are accepting walk-ins Tuesday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Before working for OVS, senior counselor Melegalenuu "Mele" Sene-Whitehead worked at U.S. VETS as a case manager for Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), assisting veterans at risk of losing their homes and dealing with homelessness. She was born and raised in American Samoa and graduated from the University of Hawai'i in Hilo in Psychology. Her passion is helping people, especially veterans and their families as she is from a military family herself. Mele is the daughter of a Viet-  
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nam War veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Corps and is a spouse of a retired U.S. Army Veteran.

Prior to working for OVS, Veterans Services Counselor Carolyn Visoria spent four years at U.S. VETS Barber’s Point working as a Case Manager and Team Lead for SSVF. She graduated from the University of Hawai’i at Manoa in Public Health in 2016 and spent seven years working at local non-profits before joining the OVS team in 2023. As the daughter of an Army veteran, Carolyn is dedicated to serving veterans,

their families and the local community.

Veterans Services Counselor Sabrina Kepa’a has worked within state, federal and non-profit organizations for over 20 years, helping individuals and families become self-sufficient. During her previous role, she was an advocate assisting veterans with obtaining benefits, employment and permanent housing. Both of Sabrina’s grandfathers were veterans. She believes every interaction — whether positive or negative — teaches valuable lessons. These lessons focus on spread-

ing kindness, as you never know what others are going through. Sabrina is deeply rooted by her faith and Hawaiian values, and believes cherishing moments with loved ones is what truly matters.

The Daniel Kahikina Akaka VA CBOC was completed on budget and on time. The \$130 million, 88,675 square-foot multi-specialty outpatient clinic will provide primary, mental and specialty health care; x-ray, laboratory and diagnostic services; and a pharmacy for Veterans on O’ahu. There are an estimated 15,000 Veterans living on the west side of O’ahu, for which this new clinic means easier access to VA care.

The new facility is part of a larger plan to expand services in the Pacific Islands. The Kona CBOC will also move to a larger location, and other clinics are seeing renovations or expansions across the islands.

If you would like to transfer your care from the Spark Matsunaga Clinic located at Tripler to the new Akaka VA CBOC in Kapolei, please call 1-800-214-1306.

**MELEGALENUU  
“MELE”  
SENE-WHITEHEAD**  
Veterans Services  
Counselor



**CAROLYN  
VISORIA**  
Veterans Services  
Counselor



**SABRINA  
KEPA’A**  
Veterans Services  
Counselor



**LAWRENCE  
ILUSTRE**  
Office Assistant



**HAWAI’I  
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NEWSLETTER**

If you would like to receive an emailed copy of the Hawai’i Veteran Newsletter, please contact us at [ovs@hawaii.gov](mailto:ovs@hawaii.gov).

Please feel free to pass along this newsletter to your friends and family. Mahalo for your continued participation.