

December 2008

Community Resource Center Moving to New Office

After seven years in the tiny office on the front corner of Luke's Place, the North Kohala Community Resource Center is moving to the building recently occupied by Island Realty located on the makai side of Akoni Pule Highway at the gateway to Hawi, adjacent to the Welcome To Historic Kohala sign. The move will be accomplished in late December, and the Center will be open for business on January 5 at the new location.

The postal address and the telephone numbers will remain the same. Work on the building began in December with a fresh paint job inside and new signage outside. Painting the outside of the building during the year is planned as funding becomes available.

The Resource Center, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, provides training, support and fiscal sponsorship to local projects serving the community. It has raised over \$6 million for the community since its February 2002 incorporation.

"We have many, many cherished memories of our current office", Christine Richardson, the Executive Director of the Center, said in a recent interview. "All of our training has occurred here, all of our work, the fun, laughter, and yes, sometimes tears, all happened in this space, and we have filled it with a lot of love for our community. It will be hard to let go." On the other hand, she pointed out that the work of the Center has grown from three projects at the end of 2002 to 63 at the end of 2008. "We are so cramped here with meetings, interviews, consultations, walk-in visitors; it's like grand Central Station in a shoe box."

Richardson explained that all of the Center's archived records, which are voluminous due to legal requirements for nonprofits, are stored off premises, and that they converted a closet into an office two years ago to provide a relatively quiet space for bookkeeping and other activities. "We were just totally out of room. We could hardly have a meeting without multiple interruptions. And we won't miss the loud truck traffic on Hawi Road, nor the gasoline and propane fumes, all of which were standard day-in-the-life experiences in our office."

The Center's new location has been a retail center for most of its existence. Beginning in 1938, the building, owned by four generations of the Fukada family, served as the Fukada General Store for many years. Then a company called Route Van occupied the space and sold dry goods. Later it became Dawn's, another landmark general store, and was then operated as the Filipino General Store by Warren Vignato and his wife for several years before becoming the home of Island Realty in late 2000.

Chris Helmuth, the Center's President, acknowledged that the new location provides more space than the Center currently needs. "It will give us room to grow, and to display and highlight some of the community projects we serve, and also offer an opportunity to provide a showcase about the community, our history, our culture, and what we are all about." Helmuth explained that the Center's Board of Directors will tackle the job of nailing down future plans for using the extra space sometime early in 2009. "We want to increase our service to the community in ways that will bring us all together and help us prosper and sustain in the coming years," he added.

Asked if the additional space would cost more money, Treasurer Bob Martin pointed out that the increase was relatively small compared to all the advantages of the new space. "The total increase in our 2009 budget for this entire move was nominal and we almost tripled our space, he explained." Martin suggested that there might be ways to gain new income from the location, especially since this gateway landmark has been a popular stop for many visitors and newcomers over the years. "Perhaps we can encourage these folks to support the community. The more visitors know about us, and the more at home they feel, the more they may be interested in helping. If there is a way to do this, I'm sure our Board will find it," Martin concluded.