



Pacific Newsbytes

Pacific Partners News Briefs

Telecom News from the Pacific Islands

Hawaii Healthcare Organizations Receive National Attention

by Mile Takaaze, Hawaii Health Systems Corporation

Good things are happening with telehealth and telemedicine in Hawaii! The Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) and the State of Hawaii Telehealth Access Network (STAN) was recognized this year for its commitment to better health care for the citizens of Hawaii. HHSC was first runner-up for the Partnership in Technology Award[®] given by the Henry Ford Health System at the annual Healthcare Informatics Expo and Conference in late May of this year. The award was presented for "creative use of new or emerging technology to improve the quality of patient care" in the large inpatient facility category.

"We have made a commitment to the people of Hawaii to stay at the forefront of technology, and to offer the best possible treatment, diagnostic and consultation capabilities," said Tom Driskill Jr., HHSC president and chief executive officer. "This recognition is just one indication of that commitment, and it is gratifying to be recognized by our peers for the outstanding work that our people are doing."

HHSC's is a Managing Partner of the State of Hawaii Telehealth Access Network (STAN). Other partners to the network include the Telecommunications and Information Policy Group and Pan-Pacific Education and Communication Experiments by Satellite (PEACESAT) Program of the University of Hawaii, the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), the UH Telemedicine Project, and the VA Medical and Regional Program Office.

The STAN is a partnership with healthcare providers, academic institutions, and government agencies. It extends delivery of healthcare and education into rural communities. STAN allows healthcare providers to use the network for consultations, medical imagery transfers, distance learning, teleconferences, and access to financial and clinical information. HHSC and STAN received an honorable mention award by the National Association of Public Hospitals (NAPH) in 1999. Most recently, the STAN was recognized by the Hawaii Technology Trade Association (HTTA) at its annual meeting on October 11, 2000.

HHSC receives telemedicine grant

The Hawaii Health Systems Foundation (HHSF) received a \$350,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. As explained by Dennis M. Sato, vice president and chief information officer of the HHSC, "The USDA grant will enable the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) to expand its present telemedicine services to provide greater support to the communities served by HHSC. HHSF was among 94 proposals that competed for over \$18 million in funding."

Since a majority of HHSC facilities are located on the Neighbor Islands serving many of Hawaii's rural communities, telemedicine technology is a critical link in providing increased access to emergency and non-emergency medical consultation services. In addition to administrative and clinical services, the grant will also enhance health education opportunities for both hospital staff and the communities the facilities serve. The importance of the grant, according to Thomas Driskill Jr., the HHSC president and chief executive officer, is that "telemedicine is especially important to rural communities because it allows patients to receive quality healthcare without having to travel further than they normally would have in the past. This grant takes us a step closer to improving our services in rural and remote communities in Hawaii, and also in the Pacific Islands region."

Established in 1996, Hawaii Health Systems Corporation is a public benefit corporation of the State of Hawaii. It was created to unify and organize Hawaii's State hospitals into an integrated system providing quality healthcare while preserving the individual, historical character of each facility and relationships with the communities it serves. The HHSC is the fifth largest public hospital system in the country and one of the largest employers in Hawaii. HHSC is made up of 12 hospitals on five different islands. HHSF was formed in August 1999 as a non-profit entity to raise funds and accept gifts for the benefit of the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation.