

ClimbHI Bridge steers students toward careers

Star-Advertiser staff

Public school students are getting a leg up on career opportunities through an online portal known as ClimbHI Bridge, which links educators with local businesses and nonprofits.

The effort is a partnership between the Department of Education and the nonprofit organization ClimbHI, with backing from the Hawaii Executive Collaborative, which is funding the program for five years.

"We're pleased to be able to support this innovative platform that will help to give students the opportunity to learn directly from professionals in our community," said Duane Kurisu, chairman of the board for the collaborative. "Our hope is that by connecting with local businesses, nonprofits and individuals, our youth will discover the potential and their ability to build successful careers in Hawaii."

ClimbHI Bridge is a two-way street that brings together educators seeking career, internship and mentoring opportunities for their students, while also giving businesses and organizations an easy way to reach out to schools.

The portal has already been forging connections locally and is expected to reach all Department of Education high schools by the end of 2021.

"ClimbHI has been a game changer," Matt Ramsey, director of Conservation International, Hawaii, said in a video posted online at ClimbHI Bridge. "I mean, you just put your information out there and then you have people contact you that are interested."

"And the school we talked with today, I didn't even know (it) existed," he said. "So I would have never reached out to them. But with ClimbHI that kind of communication and that kind of interaction happened immediately and automatically."

Categories of activities on ClimbHI Bridge include guest speaking/guest teaching, judging and coaching, men-



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Duane Kurisu

toring, job shadowing, teacher "externships," project-based learning, internships, site visits, career fairs and job readiness activities.

Career and technical education program coordinator Fern White recently used the ClimbHI Bridge portal to host a virtual career fair for students on Hawaii island. She lined up many more speakers than her original goal and about 200 students registered.

"Educators can now easily access business and nonprofit leaders throughout the state, all in a seamless virtual format," White said. "This new tool represents a huge step forward for what we can accomplish together in preparing our students for their continued education and career success."

So far, more than 200 businesses and nonprofits are offering opportunities to schools taking part in ClimbHI Bridge.

"It demonstrates what's possible when dedicated business and industry partners are truly invested in the future talent produced by our public schools," said Superintendent Christina Kishimoto.

Companies and organizations create free accounts where they can post opportunities for students and collaborate with teachers.

"Creating awareness around viable career paths in Hawaii is of critical importance to helping the next generation thrive right here at home," ClimbHI President Julie Morikawa said.

To learn more, visit climbhi.org/portals or e-mail info@climbhi.org.