

# Workforce development program goes West



ClimbHI hosted its first regionally focused LEI on the West side recently.

COURTESY OF CLIMBHI



By Christina O'Connor – Reporter, Pacific Business News  
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Local workforce development nonprofit ClimbHI now features a West side iteration of its LEI program, which introduces students to the hospitality industry.

The organization launched the new program on Dec. 12. Like the main LEI (Leadership, Exploration, and Inspiration) program, the West side initiative features site tours and a career fair.

The inaugural event attracted about 180 high school students from area public schools, including Campbell, Kapolei, Waianae, Nanakuli, Waipahu and Pearl City. Participating hotels and restaurants included Four Seasons Resort Oahu Ko Olina, Residence Inn by Marriott Oahu Kapolei, Marriott's Ko Olina Beach Club and Monkeypod Kitchen.

“A West Oahu LEI program is important, as it creates awareness for the upcoming workforce of opportunities nearby and it provides businesses the chance to inspire and inform potential employees of their exact needs,” Julie Morikawa, ClimbHI president and CEO, told Pacific Business News.

Morikawa launched LEI on Oahu in 2011 as a way to showcase the various possibilities of a hospitality career to interested students. For participating businesses, meanwhile, it provides a connection to potential future employees.

“This is about bringing high school students from the West side into the Four Seasons and to tell them more about the industry of hospitality and what future possibilities and career paths the industry can provide them,” Charlie Parker, general manager of Four Seasons Resort Oahu, said in a video release. “We all know how important tourism is to the state of Hawaii, and particularly here on the West side.”

With funding from [Hawaii Tourism Authority](#), LEI has grown into a statewide initiative and is now held annually on four islands.

The West side program marks the first regionally focused LEI, and ClimbHI intends to expand the new programming to other regions in the future.

It also marks the latest move in recent growth for the organization. In November, ClimbHI started the [LEI Assembly](#), an on-campus hospitality-focused presentation for high school freshmen. Earlier this year, it also launched the ClimbHI [Opportunity Portal](#), an online platform to connect businesses with students and job seekers.