

News Release

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Big Island mayor supports 'Buying Local First' campaign

Hilo, Hawaii—The campaign “Buying Local First” got a big boost of support from Big Island of Hawaii Mayor Billy Kenoi when campaign supporters met with the mayor yesterday.

During a 30 minute courtesy call, Michael Williams, Big Island B2B editor publisher and campaign manager, Tracey Yamane, KTA representative, Abby GG, Island Natural Markets representative, and Lt. Col. Warline Richardson, garrison commander of Pōhakuloa Training Area, shared their idea of encouraging Big Island residents and businesses to network and put their purchasing power on resources available on the island.

“I will make a public commitment to support this campaign and the year 2009 will be our commitment to buying local first,” said Mayor Kenoi. “Hospitality, construction, and agriculture are our island’s three biggest products.”

“We can do community-based projects, partnerships and collaborate with each other,” he added. “This is a good idea to encourage people to buy produce at the local farmers’ markets and support local businesses on the Big Island. “

The concept is to encourage inter-island businesses, local government, and sponsors to partner with each other for the purpose of networking, informing, and promoting local businesses that will help sustain the local economy, especially during these challenging economic times and make Big Island more self-sufficient.

“We know that local businesses create jobs and I’m just a local guy with an idea,” said Williams. “I happened to attend the PTA-hosted seminar on how to do business with the government and realized the reason we want to focus on buying local first is because we want to support local businesses and create jobs. This all goes back into the community.”

The vision of the campaign is to promote community awareness to Big Island residents and invest locally by spending locally.

The campaign’s goals are to seek county and business support, provide public awareness, sustain and improve environmental support through sustainability initiatives, institute business practices by establishing partnerships with private and governmental entities, and improve communications among Big Island businesses.

The campaign has a 3-phase approach to encourage local businesses, government agencies, and consumers to buy local products, produces, and services.

The first phase includes a kick-off campaign through the January-February edition of *B2B* (short for business to business) magazine; a quarterly campaign with government (“Doing Business with Government” seminar was held in January), establish a funding stream through sponsors and businesses, implement a milestone timeline for products, and obtain business and government support.

The second phase has to do with advertising. This would include media coverage in the B2B magazine, television, local newspaper and radio stations; sponsorship from local, county, and state businesses; support from the mayor, politicians, and city officials. Some of the marketing strategies would include distribution of t-shirts, buttons, ribbons, hats, and billboard signs.

The third phase would entail assessment. Tools created to track success, such as a survey for all businesses to track results; county bubble charts to show progress; and county and state employment statistics that would show employment ratings and business closures.

Long term results will impact the Big Island economy in various ways.

County contracts would create more local jobs and increase tax revenue collections, businesses would buy more products and services from other local businesses, and the local economy would be stimulated and unemployment decreased.

“We will give you the leverage to promote this campaign, involve the community, and move forward with it,” Mayor Kenoi said. “I see this as a way to support ourselves. It is what we have to do and purchase what we have here locally. I usually conclude my speech with the phrase ‘Take care, aloha, God bless,’ but see it as a good idea of saying ‘Take care, aloha, buy local’ once in a while.”