

4 nonprofit leaders win \$10,000

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When Leslie Wilcox got a call this month that she had won \$10,000 for her work in leading Hawaii's nonprofit broadcasting station, she wondered if she had heard right.

The president and chief executive officer of PBS Hawaii is one of four Hookele award winners for outstanding leadership in the nonprofit sector and dedication to the community.

"I'm sure everyone who wins wonders if it's a prank call," Wilcox said. "I had never heard of this award before. If I hadn't known Kelvin (Taketa of Hawaii Community Foundation) I would've stopped and checked the person's credentials immediately because it seems so out of this world."

The award is different from other recognition programs since its recipients — who are unaware of their fortuitous circumstance throughout the selection process — are strongly encouraged to spend the money on themselves for professional development and personal renewal.

The program, created in 2002 by the Hawaii Community Foundation and the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, is based on research about nonprofit executive retention and burn-out with a goal to strengthen leadership in the nonprofit sector.

Winners are nominated by a confidential group of community members and previous Hookele award recipients.

Besides Wilcox, the



Leslie Wilcox:
President and CEO, PBS Hawaii



Robert G. Peters:
Head of School, Hana-hauoli School



Lea Hong:
Hawaiian Islands program director, The Trust for Public Land



Tony Krieg:
CEO, Hale Makua Health Services

Hookele award recipients are Tony Krieg, chief executive officer of Hale Makua Health Services; Lea Hong, Hawaiian Islands program director for The Trust for Public Land; and Robert Peters, head of school at Hana-hauoli School. They were recognized Monday at the 10th annual Hookele award ceremony.

"My favorite day of the whole year is when I get to call the four people who have won the award," said Taketa, president and CEO of the Hawaii Community Foundation. "The fact that we get to call with a surprise announcement of something to benefit them is just such a moving experience."

In the past decade, 42 nonprofit leaders have been awarded \$10,000 each, for a combined total of \$420,000.

Of the 42 recipients, 38 are still leading nonprofit organizations or are in positions of leadership in government, Taketa said.

"As a retention strategy it's been great — these people are rejuvenated and still at the helm, leading their organizations," he said. "More importantly if you listen to their stories, these are people who are just remarkable, selfless individuals. This is an act of recognizing them in an unsolicited way. It's life changing for so many of them to be recognized that way with

great appreciation and respect."

Previous recipients have used the money on vastly different things from buying power tools to build a house for a child to taking a family trip to the Amazon.

Wilcox plans to use her award for a wilderness survival training course on a neighbor island.

"It's a little counterintuitive," said Wilcox, who lives on the North Shore in Wai-ialua. "I live in the country and realize if there's a disaster I'm not going to get help right away so I want to learn how to survive in the great outdoors."

Krieg, an amateur photographer, is planning to take a trip to national parks in Utah's canyon lands to take photos.

"I hope I can get prepared for the challenge that's to come with big cuts in federal and state programs for the elderly," he said.

Unlike the for-profit sector where executives are rewarded with perks and bonuses, compensation awards rarely exist in the nonprofit sector, according to the Hawaii Community Foundation.

The awards program hopes that paying for self renewal for nonprofit executives will encourage them to continue working to better Hawaii communities.

"I'm like many people in Hawaii, you grow up lending a hand as a way of life," said Wilcox, who credits her staff and board of directors for PBS' success. "When you enter the nonprofit world it becomes more structured, the scope is larger but it's an organic thing that's in most of us. We just want to try to help."