

# Hawaii Tribune Herald

## Venerable Keaukaha market unveils mural

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"Our vision was to give the community a store that they were proud to call theirs," Lee said.

The entire building was remodeled. New appliances were brought in, and a new walk-in installed. A space that was a laundromat was converted into Coffee Cove.

Lee had never worked in retail before, and had no management experience.

"It's like a puzzle," she said. "You have to figure out where the pieces go."

On Saturday, the latest puzzle piece will be put in place. The general store's eastern wall has new life as a vivid 16-foot-tall mural depicting Mauna Kea, completed by John "Prime" Hina and fellow members of the 808 Urban community arts organization, with considerable help from Hilo and Keaukaha families and kids.

A presentation of the Keaukaha General Store mural takes place at 5:30 p.m. today. The public is invited.

"I feel like our store is more of an ohana-based place," Lee said. "Most people we know on a first-name basis, people come here two, three times a day for their regular things ... (this) was an opportunity to get the community to come together."

"Through this mural, we've created so many relationships," she added.

More than 50 kids came by for a "paint day" Wednesday, adding their handprints to the center of the mural. On Friday, groups from summer school sessions dropped by to

help the 808 Urban team with the bright blues of the ocean.

“It’s challenging, but it’s always fun,” said painter Kanoa Castro of Waimea. “(The kids) understand that it’s theirs; they’ll always come back and say, ‘I did that.’”

“Everyone here seems very invested,” painter Beethoven Sausal said.

Kiheii Seto, who grew up in Keaukaha and now lives on Oahu, first reached out to Lee about creating a mural after driving by the store one day and seeing not a blank wall but an opportunity. She was researching Mauna Kea’s origin story, and thought the store would be an ideal spot for a visual representation.

“Being at the coastline every summer, Mauna Kea is ever-present,” Seto said.

When you went off to school in the morning, the mountain welcomed you along the drive. And on the way home, she said, it was there at your back.

The mural tells a story from the birthing chant of Kamehameha III. Seven lines from the mele explain how Mauna Kea came to be, and it’s these events that form the mural’s visuals. Lee said she plans to establish a “Call the Wall” phone number that passers-by can call to have the various symbols explained.

Seto hopes the mural will inspire people to learn more about the mele, as well as Hawaiian language and culture.

“It’s the connection and relationship between people and place,” she said.

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