

# Media business 'an incubator' for youth

By KHALIDA DUBOSE

**MAKAHA** — More than 100 of the area's businessmen and educators recently turned out for the grand opening of Makaha Studios LLC, eager to see just how this for-profit spin-off of the well-known Searider Production program at Waianae High School could benefit the community.

What they saw in the media production company apparently pleased them. Makaha Studios, which settled into 1,200 square feet of office space at the old Comet building earlier this year, pledged to donate a percentage of its profits to the soon-to-be-established Searider Productions Foundation, which will be dedicated to making the highest quality of media education available to all Leeward Coast youth.

"We've been taking clients since about January," explained business director Ric Gresia. "But we painted the office and officially opened it for the community and some of our supporters to come in and take tours. It gave us the opportunity to explain our mission and goals and introduce some of the things we've been working on."

An instructor in the Searider program for several years, Gresia says that opening Makaha Studios was a logical and strategic step that will ultimately help future Waianae High graduates who worked in the school's production program, as well as other students along the Leeward Coast.

The SP Foundation is currently being formed by Makaha Studios, Gresia explained, and will benefit media educators who are not with the Department of Education. One of the foundation's goals is also to establish a fund that will help staff Leeward Coast schools with educators who have specific knowledge in the media.

L. Candy Suiso, program director for Searider Productions, admits she is excited about what prospects the company will offer youth in the future.

"What we are finding now is that students are graduating from college and wanting to come back (to Waianae). Now, we'll have these jobs in place for them," she said. "That's what makes this studio so exciting. It's the next step for our Searider



Keoni Fernandez, at left, Ric Gresia and Bill Evangelista listen as their new business, Makaha Studios LLC, is blessed by a kahu. The media production company is located at the old Comet store in Makaha.

Courtesy of Makaha Studios

Productions alumni."

After watching the success of

than a decade, Gresia says he is confident in the type of talent the program produces. He added

that he hopes the studio will be "an incubator" for students who want to open future media busi-

nesses in the area.

For the time being, however, the group is focusing on creating a strong client base while managing multiple projects — and they appear to be doing a good job so far.

Recently, the group helped create a promotional DVD on University of Hawaii quarterback Colt Brennan and his candidacy for the Heisman Trophy. The group also produced a 30-second GameStop commercial, which is slated to run in the next few weeks. And the company worked with TV personality Emme Tomimbang to produce "Mabuhay with Aloha," a DVD that celebrates 100 years of the Hawaii-Filipino experience.

To date, however, the studio's biggest account has been in producing 26 episodes of a show called "Building Blocks for Tots." The 30-minute segments — which were written by a Hawaii couple who now lives in California — are designed to help new parents learn how to care for their children.