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BRAD BALLE

Fun fest to raise money for Ka'u health center

BY CAROLYN LUCAS-ZENK
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Ka'u Family Health Center in Naalehu opened 15 years ago, when the sugar plantation and its health clinic closed. Bay Clinic Inc., a nonprofit health care provider that runs the center, recognized the need to provide high-quality, affordable health care services to all, particularly the uninsured and medically underserved in the island's southernmost region, said Monica Adams,

Bay Clinic's director of development.

Since, Bay Clinic's staff has used a roughly 80-year-old former plantation house on Mammalahoa Highway, across from the Punahou Bake Shop, to provide medical, dental, behavioral health and social support services. However, the house is poorly equipped for medical purposes and serving the approximately 2,500 patient visits annually, Adams said.

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North Kohala doctor being sued for negligence, medical malpractice

BY ERIN MILLER
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The children of a retired NFL player are suing a North Kohala doctor, claiming the doctor's actions led to their father's death.

William "Billy" Parks, 61, died in 2009 of metastatic melanoma in his liver, two years after Dr. Robert Watkins removed a suspicious mole from Parks' back, according to the lawsuit filed last month in the U.S. District Court.

Parks' children, Bogart "Bo" Mumford Parks and Chiya Nichole Parks, filed their lawsuit, seeking an unspecified amount of monetary damages, last month. They allege Watkins was

negligent and his actions prior to William Parks' death constituted medical malpractice. Hamakua Health Center, doing business as Kohala Family Health Center, was also named in the lawsuit, because William Parks believed Watkins was working with the health center.

"We're just trying to do this so hopefully no one else has to go through this," Bo Parks said Monday.

According to the lawsuit, Watkins told Bo Parks and William Parks' wife, Rebecca, in July 2009 he felt responsible for William Parks' death. Watkins also told Bo Parks he hadn't sent the suspicious mole to be biopsied because

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Adams said.

O'Kalu Kakou, a community organization that strives to foster health and prosperity for all in Kālu, hopes to push Bay Clinic even closer to its goal, by raising \$50,000 at the

details, call Adams at 961-4080 or Race Director Raylene Moses at 265-8251. Event information and updates can be found at okaukakou.com, bayclinic.org and race360.com/15811.

Barbour appointed as NELHA director

BY ERIN MILLER
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A long-time state worker and former interim NELHA director takes over next week as the new executive director at the energy laboratory.

Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii Authority Board of Directors appointed Gregory Barbour as the agency's new director, the state Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism said Monday.

Ron Baird left the executive director position in February, NELHA Operations Manager Jan War said. War declined to comment on the reasons behind Baird's departure. A message left for Baird was not returned Monday evening.

Barbour has spent 27 years working for the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, including stints as the state's tourism strategic planner, as an assistant to a former department director and, most recently, as the state's Foreign Trade Zone administrator. He was an

interim director at NELHA for six months, prior to Baird's taking on the position.

"I really kind of fell in love with the project and the community," Barbour said of NELHA. "It's one of the best economic projects in the state."

He said he didn't expect to make immediate, large changes to the program. His first day on the job is June 15, and he plans to let NELHA officials complete the master planning process they've already undertaken.

Aging infrastructure is a problem NELHA faces, he said. Barbour plans to help convince the state and businesses of the importance of investing in infrastructure upgrades.

Barbour said he wants to expand on the renewable energy research NELHA tenants are doing.

"I don't know of any other economic development project that just focuses on green things," he said, referring to environmentally sustainable projects. "It's a great kind of project that fits in with the community."

► MALPRACTICE: Lawsuit alleges Watkins and health center failed to diagnose Parks

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of the cost, the lawsuit said. William Parks wasn't diagnosed with melanoma until June 2009.

Bo Parks said he was astonished by Watkins' comments.

"He admitted several times he was wrong," Bo Parks said, adding he also felt "a lot of anger."

William Parks, who played for the Dallas Cowboys, San Diego Chargers and Houston Oilers, was an outgoing, generous man, Bo Parks said.

Attempts to reach Watkins on Monday were unsuccessful. An attorney for the Hanalei Health Center did not respond to a message seeking comment.

The state's Medical Claims Conciliation Panel, which is part of the Department of Commerce and

Consumer Affairs' Office of Administrative Hearings, ruled in January some of Watkins' actions, and inaction, constituted negligence.

Specifically, the ruling said, when Watkins did not fully inform William Parks on the advisability of a biopsy before performing the removal,

when Watkins did not order a biopsy or take "the necessary steps to ensure that meaningful laboratory findings were obtained," and

when Watkins failed to keep medical records, "his medical care fell below the community standard of care."

The panel ruled Watkins was "actionably negligent," but panel members did not have enough evidence to rule on Parks' estate's monetary loss or his family's emotional losses.

Watkins and William Parks were friends, the lawsuit said, and Watkins had

provided William Parks' medical care for 20 years.

"As part of their friendship, Dr. Watkins and Mr. Parks traded for their respective services to each other," the lawsuit said. "Mr. Parks, who was a skilled master carpenter, performed carpentry services for Dr. Watkins at little or no cost for his labor. In exchange for this, Dr. Watkins was supposed to provide Mr. Parks

with complete medical care, the cost of which was to be funded out of Dr. Watkins' own pocket."

The lawsuit alleges Watkins and the health center failed to diagnose Parks, treat him, refer him to specialists and create property medical records for him from June 2007 until his death. In June 2007, William Parks complained to Watkins about a "prominent, itchy mole" on his

back. Watkins came to the Parks' home to examine the mole and removed it, "without first referring Mr. Parks to a dermatologist or other specialist," the lawsuit said.

Chiya Parks asked Watkins whether he intended to have the mole biopsied. Watkins chose not to do so, and did not create any medical record of the mole or its removal.

At the time, the Parks family believed Watkins was affiliated with Kohala Family Health Center, which was to maintain his medical records. Family members later learned Watkins never kept any medical records for William Parks, nor had he noted that William Parks was at high risk for cancer, based on a number of immediate relatives who had died of cancer.

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