News Release
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KPD honors 93rd Police Recruit Class graduates

LĪHU’E – The Kaua‘i Police Department held a small, socially distanced ceremony on Tuesday for its 93rd Police Recruit Class graduates.

Maria Gabi Esaki, Jon Garcia Jr., Christian Haegg, Winford LaRue, Derek Leyendeckers, Zachariah Smith and Desmond Thain were announced as the department’s 93rd Recruit Class in the company of their immediate household family members, a few of KPD’s commanders, as well as special guests including Mayor Derek S. K. Kawakami, who was a guest speaker, Kaua‘i County Council Chair Arry Kaneshiro, Kaua‘i County Council Public Safety Chair Felicia Cowden and Kaua‘i Police Commission Chair Roy Morita.

“Mahalo and congratulations to the 93rd KPD Recruit Class,” said Mayor Kawakami.

“Choosing to put yourself before others is essential for the safety and well-being of our island. I commend the graduates and their families for their commitment and sacrifice to serve and protect our residents and visitors.”

Lieutenant Kenneth P. K. Cummings served as the Master of Ceremonies, and Chief of Police Todd G. Raybuck expressed congratulatory remarks at Tuesday’s outdoor ceremony at KPD headquarters in Līhu‘e.

“Today is an exciting day, not just for you because you are being sworn in as police officers, but also for your families and for me as the Police Chief. One of the greatest honors bestowed upon me is to present you with your badge and swear you in. The badge you receive today is a symbol of honor, pride and authority,” said Chief Raybuck. “Being a police officer is a
commitment to serve others, to strengthen relationships with those we work alongside and those we serve, and to focus our efforts toward enhancing the quality of life for the community we serve. It is your duty to earn and maintain the respect of our community.”

Special awards were presented to four recruits during the ceremony. Esaki and Thain were tied and both received the Physical Fitness Award for demonstrating a high level of physical abilities on a consistent basis during their training. Haegg received the Marksmanship Award for an outstanding skill level in firearms proficiency and safe handling. LaRue was honored as the Most Outstanding Recruit for excelling in all areas of the rigorous training while building camaraderie in the group.

The graduation began with an invocation by Police Chaplain Kevin Cram and concluded with the ceremonial pinning of badges by household family members, followed by the recruits taking a police officer oath in front of the audience.

During the ceremony, the recruits expressed gratitude toward their families and fellow classmates for their support, as well as their training cadre, including retired Lieutenant Todd Tanaka, Sergeant Alan Santella and Sergeant Len Nitta, for their wealth of knowledge and expertise.

The ceremony was made possible by the collective efforts of several individuals within the department, such as Lieutenant Cummings, Sergeant Darla Nonaka, Sergeant Lance Okasaki and Officer Morris Unutoa.

The police recruit graduation ceremony is the culmination of six months of classroom and reality-based training. Following graduation, each police services officer was assigned a field training officer to shadow for the next four months. Upon successful completion of the 16-week program, the officers will be released from training to assume patrol assignments.
For more information on becoming a Kaua‘i police officer, visit KPD’s website at www.kauai.gov/police or call 241-1646.
Photos courtesy of KPD: 93rd Police Recruit Class graduation ceremony photos.

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