

GUEST COMMENTARY

Parks and Recreation Department gains focus

Tim Bynum

Focused on children and the child within each of us, Kaua'i's parks and public facilities are our most precious collective possession. Neighborhood parks, sports parks, beach parks, neighborhood centers — they are all great and thousands of us use them everyday.

In the last election we voted to create a Parks and Recreation Department for our county. To me, this is a clear statement that we want an expansion of our recreational opportunities and expect an improved quality of care in our parks and public facilities. The administration has responded by moving quickly to form the new department and has named one of our top administrators, Bernard Carvalho, to the director's position. Bernard's heart, roots and training are in Parks and Recreation.

After Hurricane 'Iniki, some were clamoring, "When will they fix and open the parks?" Many of us understand that "we" are "they."

The parks are ours and deserve our care and attention. Thousands of people on Kaua'i have demonstrated their ownership for many years by volunteering and partnering with government to care for our parks and public spaces. The county has now created the Adopt-a-Park program that promises to organize, assist and expand these efforts.

My own volunteer efforts have been focused on working in partnership with the county through the Friends of Kamalani and Lydgate Park. I believe our collaboration with the county is one

model of what can be accomplished by working together. With the community-driven Kamalani Playground as the impetus, we have persevered creating a consensus master plan that has seen the steady expansion and improvement of the park. We honored the vision for a coastal path system and built the first phase in the park, including the Kamalani Kai Bridge. A family and group camping facility has been completed (still begging to be opened and used for its intended purpose). As we speak, the creation of three sorely needed sports fields in the mauka section of the park is progressing.

Sadly, the wonderful Kamalani Art Pavilion has tragically been lost, but plans to rebuild are already in the works.

County government has many serious responsibilities and challenges — dealing with public safety, roads, planning, housing, and solid waste to name a few. I often hear discussion about which area is the highest priority and

most deserves our attention, but our job is to address each concern well and not to focus on one to the detriment of another. No area of government does more to give back and improve the quality of life for local families than Parks and Recreation. I am pleased that our community has reaffirmed our commitment to our parks, recreation programs and other public facilities.

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► **Tim Bynum** is a Kaua'i County Council member and the Parks and Recreation Committee chair. He lives in Kapa'a.