

Kekoa Kamuela Namohala

A True Inspiration

Kekoa Kamuela Namohala, age 29, is a blocksetter with Affiliated Construction LLC whose owners are Karl Kamada, Francis Pascual, Anthony Tomas and James Furukawa. They are members of Local #1 Masons Union of HI, International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (IUBAC) and the Mason Contractors Association of Hawaii (MCAH).



Kekoa recently came into the limelight as the proud winner of the brick/block division at the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC) union Western Region Apprentice Contest on June 11, 2022 at the Bricklayers Local #4 training center in Laverne, CA, near Los Angeles. The western region encompasses 13 western states and drew 36 contestants vying for the prestigious awards and a chance to compete in the nationals. Apprentices competed in one of four categories: Brick, Tile, Marble, and Pointer/Caulker/Cleaners

The winners of the various U.S. national regions and Canada from the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers will vie for the title of International Champion in their craft at the 2022 BAC/IMI (International Masonry Institute) International Apprentice Contest on September 23 - 24 at the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center in Boston, Massachusetts. The championship is held every three years.

It is not an easy task by any means. The apprentices must show their talents through written tests and building challenges with hands-on and technical skills and precision.

But what else makes Kekoa's story so newsworthy? The journey to his recent success. As Kekoa stated, "I met Francis Pascual at the roughest time in my life." His daughter, Kailea had recently been born and Kekoa had to make ends meet to give her the best life possible. That meant working multiple jobs as a lifeguard at the Pearl Harbor Hickam, HI - Moral Welfare and Recreation (MWR), a rain gutter installer as well as a fisherman.

Fishing led him to Affiliated Construction LLC. In 2018, while at one of his favorite fishing spot at Kahe Power Plant in Nanakuli, he met the Tanele brothers - Tyran, Thomas and Terrence. The akule was running so the Tanele brothers were there to catch some of this tasty, sought-after fish. Thomas noticed Kekoa who stands 6' 5" and started talking to him.. Thomas soon realized that Kekoa was a special individual.

He had a humble personality but was intelligent and his priority was being a good father to Kailea. He also learned that Kekoa was having a difficult time making ends meet so fishing was one way to earn some extra cash.

Unbeknownst to Kekoa, Thomas was working for Affiliated Construction LLC as a Mason Foreman. All three brothers saw much potential in Kekoa and had the instinct that he could work for a successful masonry company. Being a bricklayer is not an easy task. It takes physical strength, good work ethics and intelligence to make it in this industry. The brothers felt he would be an excellent candidate and introduced him to Francis Pascual while fishing. Francis took the time to “talk story” with Kekoa and told him to visit his business in Waipahu. Thomas took Kekoa to meet Francis where they had a heart-to-heart discussion about Kekoa’s future with the company. He was instructed to clean up by staying off the marijuana to take the mandatory drug test. Francis made a commitment to Kekoa - “If you give me 100% of yourself, I will give you my 100%.” This was July 2018.

After Kailea was born, Kekoa and his daughter’s mother experienced some rough times. Being young with a newborn was not easy financially and emotionally. At times, Kekoa would live out of his truck to take some time off and not let Kailea experience the tension amongst her parents. He was not focused on what to do and lived life one day at a time with no long term plan but had the huge responsibility to take the best care of his daughter. Kekoa knew the way out and to better his life was to work for Affiliated Construction LLC. He started living a clean, healthy life and in December 2018, he passed the drug test and was hired.

He listened to the wise words from Francis telling him to put his dedication towards turning his life around. Francis wrote a letter to the Local #1 Masons Union of HI, International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (IUBAC) on Kekoa’s behalf and they generously waived the initiation fee of \$500.00 to join the union. Ikaika Castillo, a trainer from Local #1 also saw the potential in this young man.



After working one year at Affiliated Construction LLC, Kekoa was able to get a permanent roof over his head. He shares Kailea, now age six (6), with her mom. When he is not at work, Kekoa is with Kailea and he says he takes her everywhere with him and sees her every day.

He embarked in the vigorous apprentice training program and became a well - respected employee by the owners and amongst his fellow co-workers. He is striving to become a journeyman with about 1,500 hours needed to reach this management level. While at Affiliated Construction LLC, Tyran Tanale, a Mason Foreman, took Kekoa under his wings and became a father figure to him. He showed him everything about masonry and to be successful in his trade. Kekoa said he will always

be grateful to him.

During this interview, Kekoa reflected on his past. He wants to make sure to acknowledge the Tanele brother as they put their time and effort to help him move ahead in his life. He is not sure what would have happened to himself without their love, guidance and nurturing. Francis respected the referral from the brothers and gave Kekoa an opportunity. An opportunity that would not have happened if not for the trustworthy recommendation from the three brothers.

He is also extremely grateful for Affiliated Construction LLC and Francis Pascual. Francis continues to teach Kekoa to take pride in his work and to be the best he can be outside of the work environment too. He is humble to work for the company and has a deep sense of loyalty and appreciation. He is finally feeling grounded.

The future is looking bright. After winning the Western Region Apprentice Contest, he still cannot believe he was the forefront winner! It is a humbling experience to win, and he is receiving a lot of attention and accolades that he is not accustomed to. Kekoa is also the first Hawaii raised person to win the competition which truly is an accomplishment for the state of Hawaii.

He still cannot believe he won in front of his bosses, Francis Pascual and Anthony Tomas, who were present at the competition. It is an overwhelming feeling and so satisfying to have done well in front of his mentors.

Kekoa has a strong message to share with the new upcoming apprentices and those contemplating

joining the masonry industry. “Don’t join just to say ‘oh, I work in construction and set block’. You have to be hungry for work and you got to want it! Always strive to better yourself. I know it is an old saying but if I can do it, you can do it. I thought I did not have much of a future and was trying to find my way in life. Since joining Affiliated Construction LLC, my life has changed full circle. I get up each morning anxious to get to work and create structures that will impact many people. It is a very gratifying job and ensures a lifelong sense of security. Not just financially but mentally. I now know I can give my daughter the greatest life she deserves.”

Boston, Massachusetts now awaits his arrival at the national competition and those in the Hawaii construction industry will continue to follow his journey and wish him great success!

