



Subaru Telescope in the Local Community on the Island of Hawai'i

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Abstract

Following the 2020 U.S. Astro2020 Decadal Survey, the Maunakea Observatories (MKO) increased their focus on "Community-Based Astronomy," emphasizing dialogue and trust with local communities. In support of this effort, Subaru Telescope launched the "Subaru Stars" program in 2022 to expand astronomy and STEM education beyond Hilo through field trips and school visits across the Island of Hawai'i. We also helps organize MKO/Maunakea Astronomy Outreach Committee (MKAOC) events and collaborates with local science education organizations to build sustainable community partnerships. [Here we present three types of outreach activities](#): Subaru Stars (1.), MKAOC events led by us (2. and 3.), and participation in STEM programs organized by local partners (4.).

1. Subaru Starts

(Subaru Telescope's Original Program, 2022-)

We initiated this original program to bring astronomy and STEM education to students and communities across the Island of Hawai'i.



← The first Subaru Stars was held in June 2022 at Na'alehu Elementary School, the southern part of the Island (see 5. map).



Subaru Topic in Aug 2022



↑ We invite school students from outside Hilo to the base facility, or sometimes to the summit facility, almost every year.



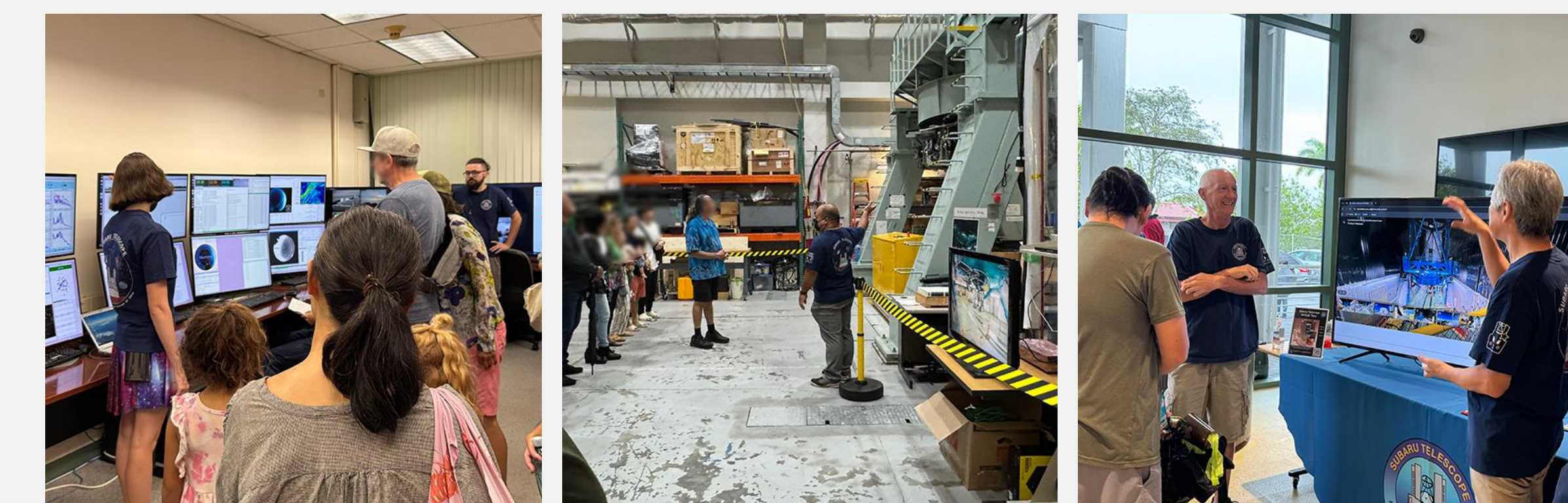
Subaru Topic in Apr 2023



2. Tanabata Block Party

(as an MKO/MKAOC event, 2025-)

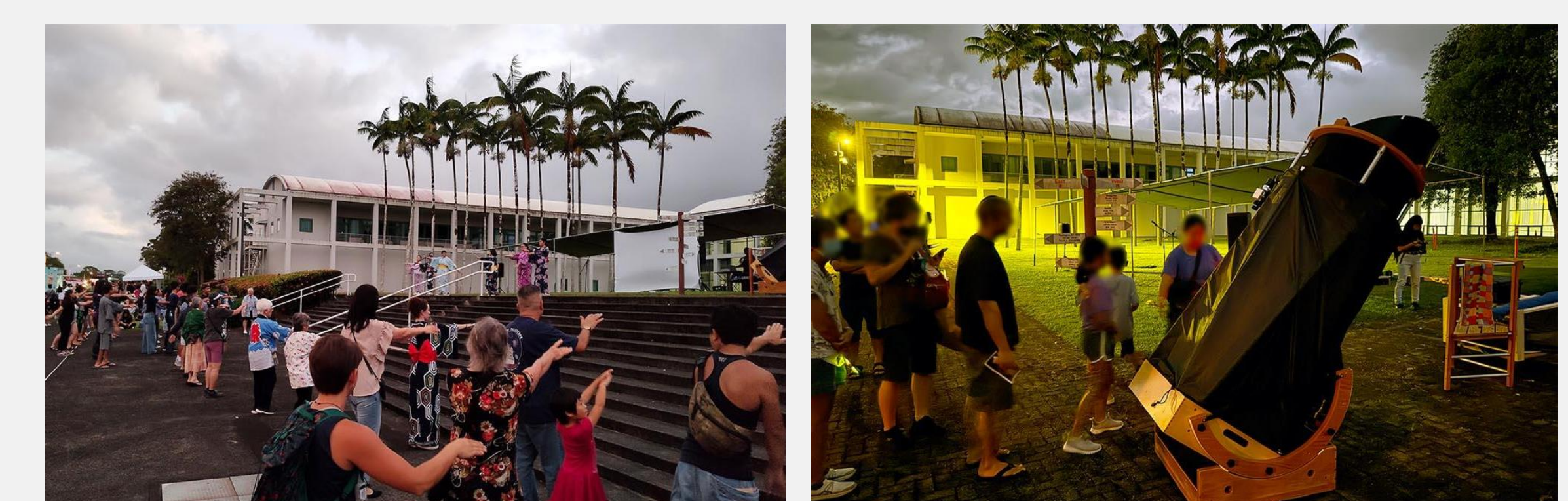
Tanabata Block Party is a new [annual joint open house at MKO base facilities in Hilo](#) that showcases our workplace and also fosters cross-cultural understanding. Subaru Telescope spearheads as an observatory where astronomy meets Japanese culture.



MKO Story in Nov 2025 (2025 report)



↑ We provide facility tours (Obs Room & Sim Lab), and Subaru Telescope virtual tours at the lobby.
→ At the lobby, participants write a wish on a Tanzaku strip, which is a popular Tanabata activity.
↓ Local groups and a school provide Taiko performances and Bon Dance lessons. We provide stargazing if the weather permits.



Subaru Topic in Nov 2024 (2024 report)



3. Maunakea Coin Contest

(as an MKO/MKAOC event, 2011-)

In 2011, Usuda-Sato launched the art contest for K-12 students on the Island of Hawai'i. It invites students to design a commemorative coin for Maunakea [by incorporating various aspects such as the night skies, observatories, Hawaiian culture, and natural resources](#). The design of the grand prize winner is crafted into bronze coins, which are sold at the Maunakea Visitor Information Station. Aluminum coins are distributed at local outreach events throughout the year.



2011-2026 Winning designs at the MKO official site



↑ 2026 Awards Ceremony at [AstroDay in Hilo](#) (left), and the 2023-2026 grand prize winners' designs (right). Every year, the contest starts at [AstroDay West in Kona](#) in November of the previous year, and holds the awards ceremony at AstroDay in Hilo in May. Both AstroDays are hosted by the Maunakea Astronomy Outreach Committee (MKAOC).

4. Science Day/Night, VEX, etc.

(Organized by local STEM organizations and schools)

As local community members, we participate in [Science Day/Night](#) events organized by the Hawaii Science and Technology Museum (HSTM) at various schools, set up booths at [school career events](#), serve as judges at [VEX robotics competitions](#), etc.



← Science Night at a school in Hilo (left), and Career Day at a school in Ka'u, the southern part of the Island (right).

About Ka'u Career Day as MKO Story



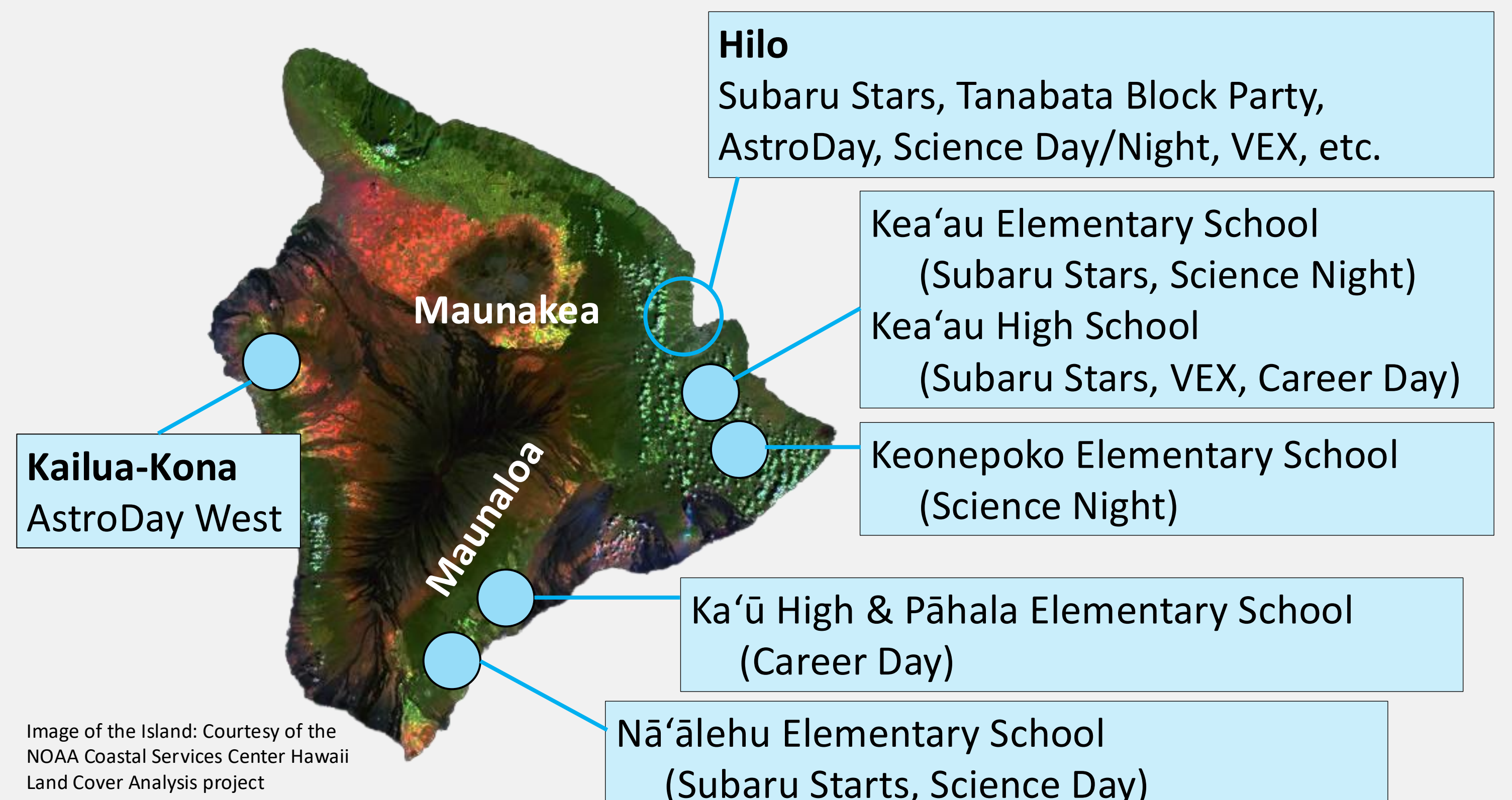
← Subaru Telescope engineers judge an intermediate school group at a VEX competition.

About VEX Competition as Subaru Topic



5. Geographic Distribution

Our goal is to [bring astronomy/STEM activities across the Island of Hawai'i](#). Thanks to our collaboration with MKAOC and local organizations, we can now reach southern areas outside Hilo.



* Through the Maunakea Coin Contest, we can reach the entire Island.