

# MidWeek

## Returning Dropouts Earn Scholarships

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By Kerry Miller

**Two former high school dropouts can count themselves among the many graduates preparing to attend college this fall.**

**After commencement ceremonies last month at the Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Academy, James Kuwata, 17, and Jahna Hironaka-Ortiz, 16, are now high school graduates with the necessary skills for career success. In addition to completing the program, both cadets were also awarded the Merrill Lynch scholarship for \$2,000 to the college of their choice. Kuwata, a Honolulu resident, plans to attend Leeward Community College and major in elementary education, while Hironaka-Ortiz, an Aiea resident, is headed to Kapiolani Community College and the University of Hawaii to study business administration.**

**The Youth Challenge Academy is a voluntary intervention program for 16- to 18-year-old high school dropouts who are looking to change the course of their lives through education, community service, physical fitness and life skills training. The 17-month program helps kids with returning to high school, graduating with a diploma, enrolling in college and entering the workforce or the military. A total of 110 Hawaii cadets graduated at this year's ceremony, held on June 23 at the Pearl City Cultural Center. David Stem, principal of the Waipahu Community School for Adults, presented the diplomas. Due Pham was on hand representing Merrill Lynch. Also in attendance was Nicole LaBerge, assistant program coordinator and information specialist for the YCA.**

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