

# ‘NCIS: Hawaii’ is different, yet more of the same

Kelly Lawler  
USA TODAY

If ever a TV show felt like it came out of a focus group, it’s CBS’s latest “NCIS” spinoff.

That’s not inherently a bad thing, but when you look at “NCIS: Hawaii” (Mondays, 10 EDT/PDT, ★★☆☆), it’s hard not to think someone down at ViacomCBS corporate headquarters thought, “Hey! What if we combined ‘NCIS’ and ‘Hawaii Five-0!’ ”

What if, indeed. The latest series in the mega-popular “NCIS” franchise, which includes the original, “LA” and the recently canceled “New Orleans,” recycles familiar parts of the Naval investigative formula against the starkly gorgeous backdrop of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Although the one major change here is that instead of a Mark Harmon-type baby boomer hunk at the center as in the original and “New Orleans” (or a Chris O’Donnell-type Gen X hunk, as in “LA”), “Hawaii” is anchored by Vanessa Lachey, a younger woman of color. It also includes LGBTQ characters in the ensemble cast.

It’s a modicum of a new direction for “NCIS,” one that might alienate some fans but also bring new ones to the franchise that has a reputation for being enjoyed by old (and old-fashioned) viewers. But “Hawaii” doesn’t change much about the core structure of “NCIS,” in which agents investigate crimes involving members of the U.S. Navy, this time in Hawaii. The first episode of the new

series has all the trappings of a typical “NCIS” affair: Dramatic crime, joking NCIS agents, connections to international espionage, patriotism, an action set piece and a predictable ending.

As an extension of the popular procedural, “Hawaii” is a perfectly serviceable series. Lachey plays the leader of our new group, Special Agent in Charge Jane Tennant, a soccer mom and a tough-as-nails agent. Her team includes newbie Kai (Alex Tarrant), a native Hawaiian who reluctantly returned home because of his father’s health; Lucy (Yasmine Al-Bustami), a rule breaker dealing with romance complications; tech expert Ernie (Jason Antoon); and second-in-command Jesse (Noah Mills), who has few defining traits (so far). Also occasionally involved is CIA agent Kate (Tori Anderson), a sometime foe of her NCIS colleagues.

The first episode finds the team investigating a suspicious crash of a Navy pilot flying a top-secret jet. The Navy believes it’s just an accident, but Jane and her team suspect foul play.

It’s all very standard, and all very entertaining in the same way the easy mysteries of the other series are. What sets “Hawaii” apart is its setting and its cast. Most of the actors are appealing, although Lachey is not quite strong enough of a performer to anchor the show, lamely line-reading her way through most of the episode. The character with the most potential is Kai, who already has a back story and a connection to Hawaii that the others lack. Sto-

ries set on the islands often have received criticism for ignoring the indigenous culture in favor of exoticizing the state and elevating the experience of white residents and tourists. This “NCIS” spinoff isn’t about to start a revolution, but it seems to be doing slightly more than paying lip service to native Hawaiians.

It seems as if “Hawaii” is trying to hit a sweet spot between the old and new.

Creatively the series has potential but tired pitfalls its predecessors did. There is very little surprise to the series. For some, that’s a feature, not a bug. Yet one can only wonder, how many times can we see the same story? How many locales can “NCIS” find a team of agents?

As broadcast TV faces increasing competition from streamers and the industry continues to change, we might find that even “NCIS” has a shelf life.



Alex Tarrant stars in CBS' latest “NCIS” spinoff, “NCIS: Hawaii.” KAREN NEAL/CBS

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## BLUE ZONES PROJECT - SOUTHWEST FLORIDA



### Building a Culture of Workplace Resilience at The Shelter for Abused Women & Children

by Sebastien Saitta

Numerous studies show that job stress is a major source of stress for American adults, and that it has increased dramatically over the past few decades. Add to that the demands of everyday responsibilities and a worldwide pandemic, it is no wonder that stress is at an all-time high. It is no secret that prolonged stress can affect both mental and physical health, and have a big effect on employee morale and productivity.

While certain occupations can naturally bring higher levels of emotional or physical stress, one concept holds true for all. When it comes to managing workplace stress, the environment matters.

The Shelter for Abused Women & Children recognized this in 2016 when they received certification as a Blue Zones Project Approved worksite. Since then, they have taken major steps over the years to combat emotional stress in the workplace.

So far this year, The Shelter has handled over 1,200 calls to their crisis line, created more than 12,000 safety plans, and nearly forty-thousand nights have been spent at the Shelter for crisis victims according to their website. Given the nature of services and amount of support that The Shelter provides, employees can be vulnerable to emotional stress. This magnifies the importance of incorporating measures to build resilience and increase well-being for employees to help them



continue serving the community.

“Our motto at The Shelter is Happy, Healthy and Whole understanding that you can’t give what you don’t have,” said Linda Oberhaus, Chief Executive Officer at The Shelter. “I believe that this philosophy of showing up as your best self every day and being prepared to be of service to others is essential and trickles down.”

To help employees build resilience and maintain a healthy culture, The Shelter has incorporated well-being measures to include:

- Employees wearing Fitbits to track their steps. A walking map was posted with distance measurements to allow employees to track their steps and incentives included a monthly Fitbit drawing for those who met their goals.
- Adding bike racks to encourage staff and Shelter participants to utilize bike transportation
- Offering employees who work out 12 times per month for at least 30 minutes a chance to win a standing desk in a monthly drawing
- Implementing a smoke-free policy for administration
- Fifteen-minute meditation and yoga sessions at the beginning and end of the workday
- Blue Zone parking at the outer edges of the parking lot to encourage more walking

- Offering healthy snacks in the employee lounge
- Cash reimbursement with proof of fitness activities

By adding well-being measures like these, Oberhaus notes that she has seen the culture shift to one that is healthier and happier, and has a positive impact on staff morale.

Megan Greer, Worksite Lead at Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida adds that partnering with worksites has many benefits. “Employees with higher levels of well-being are shown to perform better, have higher productivity and reduced absenteeism,” she says. “By having healthier employees, an employer can experience lower healthcare costs and reduced turnover, which also allows them to attract top talent by being a worksite of choice.”

If you are a worksite and would like to partner with Blue Zones Project to help create a healthier and happier workplace, contact Megan.Greer@Sharecare.com.

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc., Blue Zones Project is part of Southwest Florida’s well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com.

