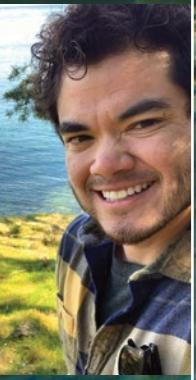


# Kūpono

University of Hawai'i Foundation News

SUMMER 2021 | Vol. 11, No. 2



*Coral support*

Fellowships are helping

PhD student Shayle Matsuda

revive our reef | Page 4



# Taken too soon, Alana still inspires hope

**A**lana Dung was with us for only three years, but her short life continues to affect others, decades after her death in 1997.

"Hawai'i's Little Girl" captured the hearts of Hawai'i residents when, a month before her second birthday, she was diagnosed with a rare leukemia. Thousands of islanders lined up at bone marrow drives across the state in an effort to save Alana's life.

In a Washington cancer research center soon after, Alana received her transplant from a bone marrow donor in Taiwan. She was well enough to return home, but she later suffered a relapse. Her immune system failed, and she died in her Nu'uanu home at age 3.

In a statement to the local press, her parents Stephen and Adelia said, "Alana was a courageous and spirited fighter to the end. We are hopeful that Alana's life has brought to the forefront public awareness of leukemia and the



need for public support to aid those who are afflicted with this disease."

## Stirring a community to take action

Alana's courage inspired a local best-selling children's book, a stage musical, and more than 30,000 of her neighbors to be added to Hawai'i's bone marrow registry, which until then had 16,000 names.

The foundation bearing her name supports research to improve the quality of life for children with serious illnesses and assists organizations that

work to eliminate suffering from terminal illnesses.

Now Alana's impact will reach even further. The Alana Dung Foundation recently donated to the UH Cancer Center for the development of its Early Phase Clinical Research Center (EPCRC) and Organoid Generation Facility.

The EPCRC will be the first in the state and allow cancer patients to participate in Phase 1 trials without traveling to the mainland. The Organoid Generation Facility will provide an invaluable

resource to the biological study of cancers in minority populations with significant cancer disparities in Hawai'i and the Pacific.

## New hope for Hawai'i's cancer patients

Access to early phase clinical trials means some patients may receive life-saving cancer treatments here in Hawai'i.

"My family and I are excited to carry on Alana's legacy with support for the new Early Phase Clinical Research Center," says Spencer Dung, Alana's brother. "It will provide the people of Hawai'i an opportunity to receive innovative and cutting-edge treatments here at home, an opportunity Alana didn't have."

The UH Cancer Center has raised 70 percent of funds needed to build the EPCRC, thanks in part to Alana and her family. With a little more help, Hawai'i will soon take another step toward relieving the suffering caused by this terrible disease. \*

CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTER

This April, ten full-time Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Fellows began their year of service at 10 UH campuses. These recent graduates will help alleviate poverty by strengthening UH's sustainability and resilience programming to better meet the needs of our students and communities. With financial support from Johnson Controls Foundation, the program provides stipends, professional development and other support making this meaningful work experience possible. See the full Q&A at [uhfoundation.org/impact/students/vista-2021](http://uhfoundation.org/impact/students/vista-2021).

## Young leaders strengthen UH sustainability efforts



### Why was joining VISTA important to you?

I love community development and transformative change, and having a mentorship program that further developed my initiative and drive toward acting as an environmental leader was what I was looking for. Any environmental movement always begins with community and motivating people to protect the things important to them.



### Why was joining VISTA important to you?

I believe this will bring me back to my 'āina, and it will assist me in fostering relationships needed to fulfill the sustainable projects, policies and outcomes that should have been utilized and assessed years ago. My talents and skillset can contribute to promoting sustainable programs for future UH students, and also to transforming the community by impacting individual lives one at a time.

### Career Dream?

I would like to work in film, investments and designed community outcomes that are specific and actionable. Communities can be self-sustaining by building businesses that drive self-efficiency, such as farming, locally-grown produce, and community programs that teach families how to grow their own produce.



### Tell us about yourself.

I grew up in California and settled on O'ahu after finishing my BS in natural resources and environmental management from UH Mānoa in 2017. I'm the VISTA program manager at the UH Office of Sustainability, where we are working to roll out a UH system-wide sustainability coordinator program to help actualize UH's role in Hawai'i's post-COVID economic diversification efforts.

### Career Dream?

I hope to continue working with the Office of Sustainability and eventually work toward achieving my master's degree in the Political Science Futures program. I can't say where my time with the Office of Sustainability will take me, but I know that I will stay firmly committed to serving the past, present and future of Hawai'i.





**Fellowship recipient**  
Shayle Matsuda is collecting small tissue biopsies on a rice coral in Kāne'ohe Bay to study how coral microbial communities vary within and between colonies, and how this variation may contribute to their stress response to climate change-induced ocean warming.

# A *passion* for preserving our reefs

[ Oceanography fellowship gives PhD candidate 'gift of time' ]

**H**ealthy coral reefs benefit everyone," says Shayle Matsuda. "Here in Hawai'i, they have huge social, economic, ecological and cultural significance. Many things can impact our reefs negatively, including

ocean warming events caused by climate change."

Matsuda, a doctoral candidate in the UH Mānoa Marine Biology Graduate Program, is studying a potential coral-saving strategy. He is a recipi-

ent of the 2021 David H. Smith Conservation Research Fellowship by the Society for Conservation Biology and the Cedar Tree Foundation.

## Restoring our reefs

"My research focuses on

understanding why some corals are more resilient than others, which will help us understand what may happen to the reefs as oceans continue to warm, and help us identify more resilient individuals to use in restoration

and conservation initiatives,” he says.

He is on a team of researchers engaging in an international coral reef restoration project. During the fellowship, he will assess how transplanting coral affects its health, specifically the symbiotic relationship between coral and their microbiomes.

Matsuda says, “By studying patterns of microbial dysbiosis—the breakdown of the microbiome-host relationship—in key coral species in Hawai‘i and Florida, we will better understand the risks of implementing large-scale coral translocation as a conservation strategy.”

#### Prepared for the future

Working with Craig Nelson, an associate researcher at the Center for Microbial Oceanography: Research and Education, and the Coral Resilience Lab at the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology, Matsuda has focused his graduate research on the effects of ocean warming on coral-microbial symbioses and coral physiology.

“Shayle’s doctoral work here at UH Mānoa has broken new ground in understanding how rising ocean temperatures

will affect the symbioses between coral, algae and bacteria as coral reef bleaching increases worldwide,” says Nelson. “He has pioneered new molecular techniques to study these symbioses throughout the coral life cycle. Shayle will bring cutting-edge skills in coral microbiome science and the molecular basis of symbiosis to his Smith fellowship project.”

“It’s been a challenge not to take on too many side projects!” says Matsuda. “One thing I’m most grateful for in being based at UH is our proximity to the reef. That, along with the amazing collaborators I’ve worked with during my PhD here, has given me the opportunity to explore more questions than just what is in my dissertation.”

#### Votes of confidence

With fellowships from Hawai‘i Sea Grant, Point Foundation, and the Denise B. Evans Fellowship Fund, plus direct support from Pam Omidyar and the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, he has studied coral bleaching and recovery in Hawai‘i and on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

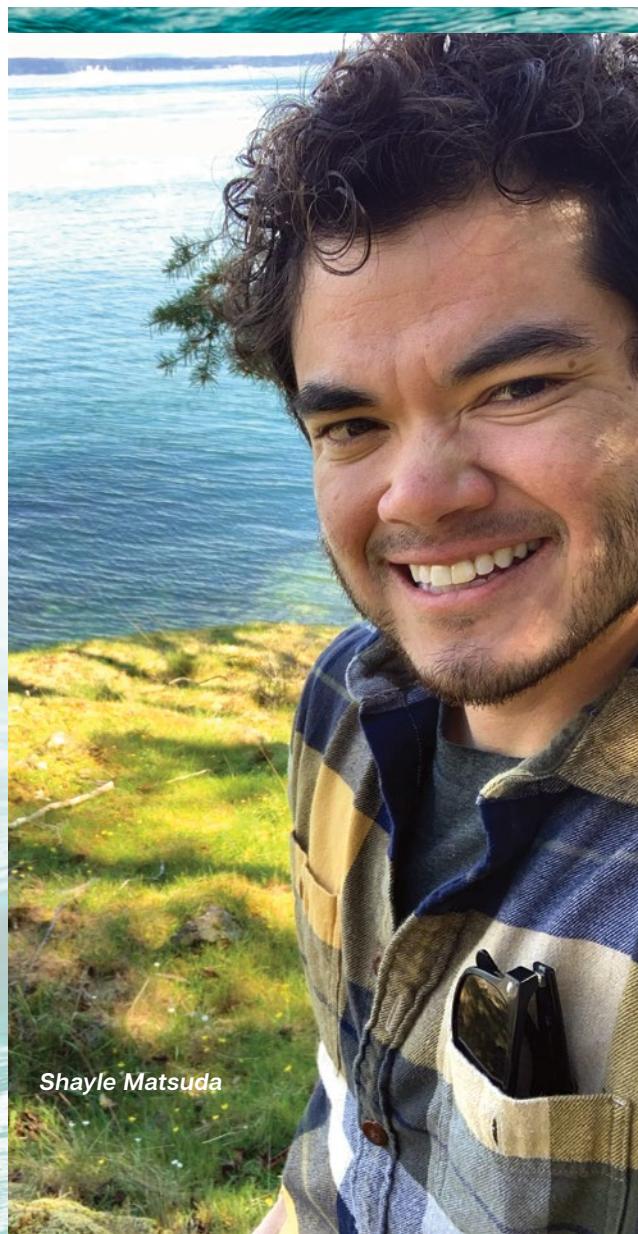
The Smith Fellowship, one of the nation’s

premier postdoctoral programs in conservation science, identifies and supports early-career scientists who will shape the growth of applied conservation science and seeks solutions for the most pressing conservation challenges.

The Denise B. Evans Fellowship offsets expenses—such as tuition, travel, materials and supplies—for students conducting oceanography research through the

Hawai‘i Institute of Geophysics at UH Mānoa’s School of Ocean & Earth Science & Technology.

Matsuda says, “It has a huge impact on my ability to finish my PhD, allowing me to focus on writing rather than teaching this year. The gift of time that comes with the Denise Evans fellowship allows me to make greater strides in my dissertation, allowing me time to focus more fully on my research.” ☀



Shayle Matsuda

# UHAA—Las Vegas honors its *spark*

**M**erriam had a great smile and a great personality, and she never had a bad word for anyone,” says Bill Olds. “No matter where she went, people wanted my wife involved in whatever they were doing.”

Her involvement spanned continents. Bridging oceans and cultures, Merriam Olds brought people together in business, international relations and education.

## Spreading aloha

As a young adult, she moved to Hawai‘i from her California home to help with family businesses. She assisted with her grandmother’s bridal shop and opened aloha apparel stores featuring the artistic creations of Alfred Shaheen.



In 1962, she represented Hawai‘i as a princess at Washington D.C.’s Cherry Blossom Festival, where Daniel Inouye, Hawai‘i’s first member of Congress, was her escort. “It was three weeks of celebration,” she wrote years

later, “including a dinner at the Lebanese embassy, a parade in an open car, a huge dinner at which I was the sole performer dancing hula, and a handsome U.S. Marine escort to each event. What an amazing experience!”

In the years soon after, Merriam organized fashion shows, briefly reported the weather on local ABC affiliate KITV, performed voiceovers on Liberty House TV commercials, assisted the producers on the first two seasons of “Hawaii Five-0,” and aided Bill Dana with his Tapa Room musical shows.

All this time, she shared hula around the world while generating interest in travel to Hawai‘i, as a promotional dancer for Hawaiian Airlines.

She wrote, “We made \$1 a year plus per diem when we traveled! It gave everyone the freedom to have full-time jobs, and most of our employers understood the value of our work.”



ABOVE: Merriam Olds roots for UH at UNLV in 2007.

LEFT: Merriam with Daniel Inouye at the National Cherry Blossom Festival, Washington, D.C., in 1962

RIGHT: Merriam dancing hula



### 'We got along right away'

Merriam met Bill Olds, stationed in Korea with the U.S. Army, while he visited home in 1978. "Her aunt was married to my uncle," says Bill. "They introduced her to me, and we got along right away. We were married the following year."

Bill, a UH grad, later served as a professor of military science at UH Mānoa. He taught classes in psychology and ROTC, convincing head football coach Dick Tomey that the discipline of military courses would be good for his players.

Merriam wrote, "Two of them became close to us: (future Super Bowl champions) Jesse Sapolu and Mark Tuinei. I was a devout Dallas fan, so I couldn't have been happier when Mark joined the Cowboys!"

She shared her aloha, patriotism and love for Hawai'i and the

U.S. with senior Middle Eastern military and civilian officials—and their families—living in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, where Bill was the senior military advisor with the U.S. embassies. She was often called upon to represent the embassies with the most senior diplomatic officials.

### A cheerful spirit

Although she never attended UH, she "took the ball and ran," says Bill, when the couple started

the Las Vegas chapter of the UH Alumni Association.

"Right away, she became a leader, especially in fundraising. She spread the good word about UH and convinced a lot of students to go to UH."

Merriam will continue to influence UH students into the distant future, through a scholarship UHAA-Las Vegas has established in her name.

David Swanson, chapter president, says, "All of

us on the board literally came up with the idea at the same time after learning of Merriam's death in late 2020. She did so much, and we all knew she was the spark giving the chapter life."

"She was constantly on the lookout for fundraising opportunities, and would organize and coordinate each event or endeavor," says chapter treasurer Jerry Seo. He says she took charge of the chapter events like the annual stew night and Christmas dinner.

"She was tireless in her work, and persuasive in her efforts to get people to help. And she did this all with a smile and cheerful spirit," Seo remembers. "Future scholarship recipients should know how unselfish she was. She truly wanted to help them."

"I was just a good old island boy who made friends," says Bill, "but she had the Aloha Spirit. There was nothing selfish about her." ■



*ABOVE: The 2010 UHAA-Las Vegas Scholarship Fundraising Golf Tournament planning committee*

*BELOW: Merriam, center, helps recruit new members at the Las Vegas Hawaiian Civic Club Ho'olaule'a, 2010.*

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If you'd like to learn about including UH Foundation in your will, trust or other gift plan to benefit UH, please contact us at **808-376-7874**, [giftplanning@uhfoundation.org](mailto:giftplanning@uhfoundation.org) or [uhflegacygift.org](http://uhflegacygift.org).



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## CORPORATE CORNER

# Hawai'i Gas still supporting students after a tough year

Hawai'i Gas has been a long-time supporter of UH, providing scholarships to support UH Community College's culinary programs since 2005.

With Hawai'i's hospitality and culinary industries hit hard by the pandemic, Hawai'i Gas' continued generosity is especially appreciated. Their funding provides ongoing scholarships for students pursuing degrees in culinary arts at Hawai'i CC, Kapi'olani CC, Kaua'i CC, Leeward CC and UH Maui College.

"Being able to count on Hawai'i Gas for these scholarships during such a critical time is heartening," said Erika Lacro, vice president for UH Community Colleges.

"Their support will go a long way to help our culinary students, particularly those who may have lost jobs or faced other challenges due to the economic downturn."

"We are proud to support students and professionals who have a passion for culinary arts and continue to pursue their dreams, especially as we recover as a community," Alicia Moy, president and CEO of Hawai'i Gas said. "Our hospitality and food service industries were hard hit and yet it is those very individuals who continue to inspire us through their perseverance."

"Hawai'i Gas' generosity during this difficult time is a testament to how people look out for each other here in Hawai'i," said Lacro. "Even when the going gets tough."



UH Maui College culinary students at the 22nd Annual Noble Chef gala on Nov. 10, 2018, at Sheraton Maui Resort & Spa.



Culinary arts students at Leeward CC prepare for their L'ulu fundraising gala on campus on May 6, 2017.