

Good Neighbor



Jane Kurahara & Betsy Young

President Barack Obama's designation of Honouliuli as a national monument in February 2015 was a big step in preserving the history of Japanese-Americans during World War II and in Hawaii. The work leading up to the epithet was years in the making, but thanks to the work of two volunteer educators at Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, even bigger strides are being made in the preservation and education surrounding the site.

Jane Kurahara (far left) and Betsy Young will be honored with the Frank Haines Award at Historic Hawaii Foundation's 42nd annual Preservation Honor Awards Celebration and Ceremony May 27 at Pomaikai Ballrooms for their work in identifying, documenting, evaluating and planning for the preservation of Honouliuli internment camp. The two started the journey in 1998 — by accident. At the time, a local television station called the JCCH resource center for information on the internment camp's location for a special local segment prior to the screening of *Schindler's List*.

"To our consternation, we could not help them," Kurahara recalls. "There was no documentation here in the resource center (at JCCH). We went out and called around, and one or two people said they knew where it was, but they couldn't agree on where it was.

"We realized that this was not only a customer request. It played into our (duty) to preserve the history of the Japanese in Hawaii, and here was this part of our Japanese history that was thinly documented."

"It (internment story) was almost a forgotten history," adds Young.

After four years of research, the duo got in touch with local farmer and history buff Larry Jefts, who was able to identify the site of the internment camp. With Jefts' help, Kurahara and Young then contacted the landowner, and in 2002 the exact location in West Oahu — called *Jigoku Dani* or "Hell Valley" by internees — was rediscovered.

"These unsung heroes helped us connect the dots," says Kurahara.

But the work was far from over. "We felt we needed to gather stories," she continues. "If there were any internees left, we needed to interview them and get their oral histories."

By 2004, Kurahara and Young put up a work-in-progress exhibit, and the response from the community was overwhelming. During the initial reception, which also honored a handful of living internees, organizers expected fewer than 200 people to attend — but more than 400 people showed up to offer support. JCCH now is working on a Honouliuli education center, slated to open this summer. Kurahara and Young also worked on outreach presentations, archaeological surveys, and they spearheaded acquisition of key archival collection manuscripts and photographs relating to internment to assist with public education.

"We're offering outreach to the school classrooms, taking out stories and re-enactments and poetry, photos and artifacts — anything to help this part of history come alive for the kids so they can connect to it," says Kurahara.

"I just hope that folks will learn from history and take some personal or positive action to make ours a better place," Young adds.

For more information, call 945-7633, visit jcch.com or email info@jcch.com.

—Nicole Kato



PROOF POSITIVE

Addressing Need For Low-income Housing

By Kevin Carney, vice president of EAH Housing in Hawaii

EAH Housing is one of the oldest and most respected nonprofit housing development and management organizations in the western United States. The organization was founded by a small group of community leaders in 1968 in response to the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to address the housing needs of low-income individuals. EAH Housing now serves more than 20,000 seniors, families, students, veterans, people with disabilities and the formerly homeless. With a staff of more than 475, EAH develops low-income housing, manages more than 100 properties in Hawaii and California, and plays a leadership role in local, regional and national housing advocacy efforts.

In 1996, EAH Housing stepped in to save properties in Honolulu and Mililani from being converted into market-rate condominiums, which would have resulted in the eviction of more than 1,000 individuals. Since then, the EAH Housing real estate management portfolio in Hawaii has grown to serve Neighbor Islands as well, including Kauai and Maui. EAH continues to advocate

for and pursue the development and preservation of much-needed workforce housing throughout the state.

EAH Housing not only develops and manages homes, but through new initiatives the organization has been able to incorporate services into many of its communities.

foundation grants or annual fundraising events.

It all comes together when residents express comments such as this one from Velma at Villages of Moa'e Ku in Ewa Villages: "I'm a senior citizen right now, and this housing came at just the right time. My life has improved



A farmers market hosted by EAH Hawaii property management coordinators for residents of West Loch Elderly Villages in Ewa Beach

PHOTOS COURTESY OF EAH HOUSING

Property management staff host activities such as resident appreciation days, holiday celebrations, food distribution by Hawaii Foodbank, exercise classes, health service fairs and cooking classes. Resident managers and resource coordinators strive to provide these services at low or no cost to residents. This often involves active pursuit of municipal, corporate and

100 percent since I moved." Before Velma found a place to call home, she was homeless. Villages of Moa'e Ku provides Velma with a sense of relief, security and a new community.

To contact us or learn more, visit eahhousing.org, email communications@eahhousing.org, or call 523-8826 for general inquiries and 439-6286 for housing availability.

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