



First Richard Keakahiwa/Wilhelmina Luna Scholarship Recipient

HEA Helps to Perpetuate Teaching Excellence

Sometimes all we need is one person in your life to put you on a positive trajectory. For HEA board member **Wilbur Luna**, that person was **Richard Keakahiwa**, his sixth grade teacher at Mayor Joseph J. Fern Elementary School.

Wil said that Mr. Keakahiwa took the time to teach him a range of subjects that led to receiving the highest score among all sixth graders in the Sixth Grade Achievement Test and the American Legion outstanding sixth grade student award.

"He helped me gain an appreciation for going to college," said Wil, who became a teacher himself, inspiring those at Leilehua and McKinley High Schools.

Wil eventually became a field representative for HEA and after the Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) was formed, joined the union in a similar capacity. The National Education Association (NEA) recognized Wil's contributions and hired him to serve in multiple roles over 28 years.

Wil established the HEA Richard Keakahiwa/Wilhelmina Luna Scholarship because of his gratitude to HEA and to give other Hawai'i students opportunities to give back to the community in their role as educators.



The first HEA Richard Keakahiwa/Wilhelmina Luna Scholarship recipient is **Chaeyoon Cho**, an aspiring elementary educator at the

University of Hawai'i West O'ahu who is dedicated to creating inclusive classrooms where every child feels supported, valued, and empowered to succeed.

Building on her background in psychology and early childhood education, Chaeyoon has gained extensive hands-on experience as a student teacher at Kalihi Waena Elementary School.

Her scholarship will help cover tuition and other school-related expenses. When Chaeyoon moved to Hawai'i as a child, she could not speak or understand English, but a teacher gave her confidence and made her feel capable. This inspired her to become a teacher. As a first-generation college student, Chaeyoon is passionate about supporting children and hopes to inspire confidence, belonging, and lifelong learning in every student.

In addition, Chaeyoon received an HEA Continuing College Scholarship and an HEA Student Teacher Scholarship.



Carissa Miyamoto is another HEA Continuing College scholarship recipient. She is a music teacher at Mililani 'Ike Elementary

School who is dedicated to creating meaningful, high-quality music experiences for Hawai'i's students.

A graduate of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa with a bachelor's degree in music education, Carissa continues to refine her teaching through advanced training in Orff, Kodály, Suzuki, and other music education methodologies while remaining an active performer and youth symphony conductor.

Her scholarship will help offset the cost of pursuing a master of arts in music education through Columbia University's Teachers College, allowing her to bring new instructional strategies and innovative approaches back to her classroom.

Passionate about lifelong learning, Carissa is committed to inspiring a love of music while ensuring every student has access to engaging, enriching, and joyful musical experiences.

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A Message from Our President



Aloha!

It's a real honor to be serving as president of the HEA board. I'm well acquainted with the work of HEA through Joan Kamila Lewis, my wife, who served as HEA's president for a number of years. Now that Joan is serving Hawai'i's education community as deputy executive director of the Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA), I'm looking forward to working with the other board members to help HEA advance its mission of supporting all educators to be the best they can be.

HEA has an admirable track record of supporting educators along the entire continuum of their careers. This includes high school students who aspire to be educators, college students who are pursuing teaching as a career, and veteran teachers who want to learn more and strive to be better educators.

As a freshman seminar teacher at Kapolei High School, where I've been serving for the past decade, I get to help young students navigate the demands of high school. We review the importance of good study habits, time management and other basic skills to succeed in high school and beyond. Freshman year is also the time when many start to choose a career path, including teaching.

As educators, we know that learning is a life-long endeavor. We never stop learning and growing. One thing that I've learned from Joan is that improving the lives of educators and students can take on many different dimensions. In my previous work as a recreation director throughout various communities including the Wai'anae Coast, Mililani, Palama Settlement, and Kapolei, I've also learned that community support for education is an essential part of that work. Supporting educators and the students they serve are investment that benefit communities in every way measurable.

I'm committed to continuous learning and believe it's important to keep growing. I am also committed to making sure that connecting for the greater good is a part of what I do. As HEA president, I want to support students and teachers with opportunities to learn, grow and connect. I know the more we support their journey, the more we all benefit.

Thank you again for giving me this great opportunity to serve.

Mahalo,

Christopher Lewis
President
HEA Board of Directors

Our Vision

To affirm the professionalism of
Hawai'i's educators.

Our Mission

To strengthen excellence in education:

- Advocate teaching as a profession.
- Support pre-service and in-service educators.
- Advance professional learning for effective teaching.

Hawaii Education Association

1953 South Beretania Street, Suite 5C
Honolulu, HI 96826

Tel: 808.949.6657

Fax: 808.944.2032

hea.office@hawaiieducationassociation.org



Re-Elected HEA Board Officers



Jonathon Medeiros



Wilbur Luna

Congratulations to **Jonathon Medeiros**, *left*, who was re-elected to serve as HEA's vice president, and **Wilbur Luna**, *right*, who will continue to be HEA's board treasurer. They were voted into office at the HEA board meeting on Aug. 1 board meeting.

HEA Supports Professional Learning for Hawai'i Educators

The Ronald K. Toma Scholarship for Professional Learning supports tenured Hawai'i State Department of Education pre-K–12

teachers and school administrators who are pursuing professional learning opportunities, other than an advanced degree and formal post-secondary courses in higher education. Congratulations to the following seven educators!



MaliaLee Akutagawa is a veteran educator at Moloka'i High School who has dedicated more than 20 years to helping students succeed.

With a bachelor of science degree from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, MaliaLee is committed to continuously strengthening her teaching practice to meet the needs of all learners, particularly English learners. Her grant will help cover graduate coursework through the University of Massachusetts Global as she pursues specialized TESOL training focused on Writing Across the Disciplines.

MaliaLee aims to improve writing instruction and ensure English learners have equitable opportunities to succeed across all subjects. She looks forward to sharing her new knowledge with colleagues through professional learning communities, school leadership teams, and mentoring opportunities to strengthen instruction throughout the Moloka'i school community.



Stephanie Keseday is a special education teacher at Maui Waena Intermediate School who is dedicated to helping diverse

learners succeed through engaging, accessible science instruction.

She holds a bachelor of science degree in special education from Miami University and a master of science in curriculum and instruction from Western Governors University.

Her grant will help fund coursework at Idaho University as she works toward earning a middle school science certification, strengthening her knowledge of next generation science standards and inquiry-based learning.

Stephanie is passionate about making complex scientific concepts meaningful and accessible for all learners, particularly students with disabilities. She looks forward to applying her new knowledge to create high-interest, inclusive science lessons that inspire curiosity and achievement in her classroom.



Arica Lynn is a biology teacher at Lahainaluna High School who is pursuing professional learning through the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's

Sustainability and Resilience Education program.

A dedicated educator since 2013, Arica is passionate about integrating place-based education, indigenous knowledge, and sustainability into her science curriculum to inspire the next generation of environmental leaders.

Her grant will help cover tuition for the yearlong program, equipping her with new knowledge in climate science, eco-literacies, and culturally grounded sustainability practices that she will bring back to her classroom and school community.

Deeply rooted in the recovery and future of Lahaina, she hopes to help students reconnect with the region's rich cultural and ecological history while exploring innovative solutions for community resilience and food sustainability. Through her studies, Arica plans to develop interdisciplinary lessons, collaborate with fellow educators, and empower students to help build a stronger, more sustainable future for Lahaina.



Joy Paul is a dedicated third-grade teacher at Holualoa Elementary School who is passionate about helping all students become confident,

successful readers. With more than a decade of teaching experience and a strong background in literacy instruction, Joy continually seeks opportunities to strengthen her practice and better serve students with diverse learning needs.

Her grant will help fund the Institute for Multi-Sensory Education (IMSE) Dyslexia Specialist Practicum and

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HEA Supports Professional Learning for Hawai'i Educators

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certification exam, allowing her to earn a Structured Literacy Dyslexia Specialist credential and expand her expertise in evidence-based reading instruction and interventions.

Her work directly supports school goals focused on improving literacy achievement and ensuring students receive timely, effective support. Joy has already seen positive results through her practicum experience and is committed to applying these strategies to help more students overcome reading challenges.

A leader within her school community, she also serves in several educator leadership roles and looks forward to sharing her knowledge with colleagues to strengthen literacy instruction and student outcomes across her school.



Mari Sato is an accomplished educator and instructional leader at Enchanted Lake Elementary School, where she has served students

and colleagues for more than 25 years. A National Board Certified Teacher in Literacy and the school's Academic Coach, Mari is dedicated to advancing student achievement through evidence-based instruction, data-driven decision-making, and collaborative professional learning.

She holds both a bachelor's and master's degree in education from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and has been a leader in district-level initiatives focused on literacy, mathematics, and instructional

improvement. Her grant will help cover the fees required to maintain her National Board Certification, ensuring she continues to strengthen her expertise in literacy instruction, instructional coaching, and student-centered learning. Passionate about empowering both students and fellow educators, Mari remains committed to fostering excellence, innovation, and continuous growth within Hawai'i's public schools.



Nolan Yamaki is a veteran educator at Ernest Bowen deSilva Elementary School in Hilo, where he has dedicated nearly two decades

to teaching and supporting student achievement.

With more than 25 years of experience in education and advanced degrees in elementary education and reading instruction from the University of Northern Colorado, Nolan is committed to continuously refining his craft to meet the evolving needs of students.

His grant will help cover tuition, airfare, lodging, and transportation to attend the Hawai'i Writing Project's Advanced Invitational Summer Institute and Young Writers Camp, where he will strengthen his expertise in writing instruction. Recognizing writing is a key focus area for his school, Nolan is striving to help students develop the skills needed to communicate effectively and think critically.

Beyond the classroom, he is an active community leader and mentor who looks forward to sharing new

strategies and insights with fellow educators, helping to advance teaching and learning throughout his school community.



Rain Yong is dedicated to being a kumu kaiapuni (Hawaiian language immersion teacher) at Ka Waihona o ka Na'auao and

is committed to fostering academic success, cultural identity, and lifelong learning among her haumana (students).

A graduate of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa with a background in Hawaiian language, Hawaiian studies, and Kaiapuni education, Rain has served students across multiple Hawaiian immersion schools and continues to be an active leader within the education community.

Her grant will support conference registration, travel, lodging, and college coursework, allowing her to participate in professional learning opportunities such as ELEVATE Your Classroom, Get Your Teach On, and University of Hawai'i courses that strengthen culturally grounded teaching practices and support for diverse learners.

Guided by her school's mission and a deep commitment to the revitalization of ʻōlelo Hawai'i, Rain strives to build learning environments where students feel connected, confident, and empowered. She is passionate about sharing new knowledge with fellow educators and contributing to the collective growth of Hawai'i's educational community.

HEA Supports High School Students

Teaching As A Career Scholarships Jointly Sponsored by Pi Lambda Theta-Beta Zeta Hawai'i Chapter

Three high school students interested in teaching as a career received valuable HEA scholarships to help cover the cost of tuition, books and other expenses to pursue their dream of leading a classroom on their own.

HEA provides TAAC scholarships, jointly sponsored by Pi Lambda Theta-Beta Zeta Hawai'i Chapter, to students who are involved in their schools club or Career and Technical Education pathway. The following are passionate about their work and show great promise of becoming the educators of tomorrow. Congratulations to the following recent high school graduates!



Layden Balisacan graduated from James Campbell High School, where he was an active member of the school's Career and Technical Education Pathway, FCCLA, and Educators Rising.

Passionate about working with children and advocating for student well-being, Layden has gained valuable hands-on experience through kindergarten internships, early college coursework, leadership projects, and community service.

His scholarship will help offset the cost of pursuing a degree in education, allowing him to focus on preparing for a career as a teacher and returning to Hawai'i to serve future generations of students. Inspired by the impact educators have on students' confidence and sense of belonging, Layden is committed to creating supportive, inclusive classrooms where every child feels heard, valued, and empowered to succeed.



Adora Cobb graduated from Mililani High School and participated in the Teaching as a Profession (TAAP) pathway. Her goal is to be a secondary English teacher.

Over the past four years in the education pathway, she has gained valuable classroom experience through lesson planning, teaching, classroom observations, and mentoring students across elementary, middle, and high school settings. Her scholarship will help offset the cost of attending the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where she plans to pursue a degree in education with a focus on secondary English.

Adora is committed to creating inclusive classrooms where every student feels they belong and enjoys learning. She looks forward to using her classroom experience and passion for education to inspire the next generation of students.



Chloe Toledo graduated from Pearl City High School and was a member of the Teaching as a Profession (TAAP) pathway. Her dream is to become a special education teacher.

Throughout high school, Chloe gained valuable classroom experience by creating lesson plans, working one-on-one with students in special education, and leading learning sessions at the 2026 EdRedefined Conference. Her scholarship will help cover the cost of attending Leeward Community College, where she plans to begin her studies in education with a focus on special education.

Inspired by the teachers who have shaped her own life, Chloe is committed to supporting students with diverse learning needs and creating inclusive classrooms where every learner can succeed. She looks forward to building on her classroom experience helping students reach their full potential.

Supporting Our HEA Members

Hawai'i's Next Generation of Innovators

One of the benefits of being a member of HEA is scholarships for family members. HEA gives scholarships to high school students to support our members to cover tuition and other related costs for students who are pursuing careers that support Hawai'i students and our community outside of the school system. Congratulations to following high school graduates!

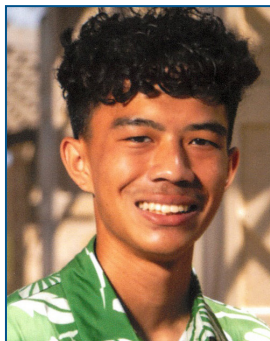


Sydnie Melemai, graduated from Kalani High School this year, plans to use engineering and sustainability to create innovative solutions for Hawai'i's future. Her dad, Scott, in the photo with her, is an HEA member.

As captain of her school's FIRST Robotics Competition team, a leader in STEM outreach, and founder of programs that inspire younger students, Sydnie has combined technical expertise with a deep commitment to environmental stewardship and community service.

Her scholarship will help offset the cost of pursuing an engineering degree with a focus on sustainability, allowing her to continue developing technologies that address Hawai'i's most pressing challenges, from renewable energy to food security.

Guided by a strong sense of kuleana, Sydnie is committed to designing solutions that honor Hawai'i's people, culture, and environment while inspiring the next generation of innovators.



Micah Ynigues graduated from Pearl City High School and looks forward to pursuing a career in digital design and business.

Through digital design coursework, college-level classes, and a graphic design internship with PD Technologies Hawai'i, Micah has developed creative and technical skills while building a portfolio that reflects his interest in branding, marketing, and visual communication.

He will use his scholarship to attend the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he plans to continue his studies in business or digital design while expanding his professional experience.

A dedicated student leader and athlete, Micah has served as captain of his high school soccer and cross-country teams and is committed to using design to help businesses and organizations connect with their communities in meaningful ways.

Support the Teaching Profession With Give Aloha



When you shop for groceries
at any Foodland or
Sack N Save
store during the month of
September 2026,
please consider making
a donation to HEA.

Foodland will make a
matching donation
through the
Give Aloha program!

HEA's organization
code is

77193

Mahalo!



Maui Educator Receives First HEA Carol H. Yoneshige Scholarship in Memory of Faith C. Ai



Erin Rodrigues, an educational assistant at Makawao Elementary School, is the recipient of the first HEA Carol H. Yoneshige Scholarship in memory of Faith C. Ai.

Erin is pursuing a bachelor of science degree in elementary education at Grand Canyon University, with plans to become a licensed elementary teacher in Hawai'i. Her scholarship will help offset the cost of earning her teaching degree, allowing her to continue balancing college coursework while working full-time in the classroom.

Erin has nearly a decade of experience supporting students and is dedicated to creating inclusive, supportive learning environments where every child feels valued and capable of success. Her passion for teaching is rooted in helping students build confidence in themselves and their abilities.

Her goal is to serve Hawai'i's children by fostering classrooms where all learners can thrive and reach their full potential.

Sharing Their Knowledge

Public School Educator Scholarships for In-Service

Learning is a gift that keeps giving! Investing in the professional development of public school educators who are committed to helping others provides many benefits. Those who receive HEA Public School Scholarships for In-Service share their newly acquired knowledge with other educators and their students to make lift up the entire teaching community. Congratulations to the following educators and mahalo for your dedication to the teaching profession!



Lauren Collier is a special education teacher at Kāne'ohe Elementary School and a statewide leader dedicated to advancing inclusive education for Hawai'i's students. With more than a decade of experience in special education, Lauren serves as president of the Hawai'i Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children while mentoring educators and leading initiatives that strengthen equitable practices across the state.

Her scholarship will help offset the cost of pursuing a doctor of education degree in educational leadership at the University of Southern California, where she is studying instructional change with a focus on educational equity and inclusive systems.

Through her research and leadership, Lauren is committed to improving instructional decision-making, supporting fellow educators, and ensuring students with disabilities have access to high-quality, culturally responsive learning opportunities throughout Hawai'i's public schools.



Eleonor Simonette Ines is an English Language Arts teacher and team lead at Robert Louis Stevenson Middle School. She focuses on strengthening student-centered learning and instructional leadership in Hawai'i's public schools.

Currently pursuing a master of education in curriculum studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Eleonor combines her classroom experience with research in progressive pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and Philosophy for Children to better serve her students and colleagues. Her scholarship will help offset the cost of graduate tuition, allowing her to continue her studies while balancing the financial responsibility of supporting her family.

Passionate about educational equity and teacher leadership, Eleonor looks forward to applying her advanced learning to curriculum development, mentoring fellow educators, and creating meaningful, culturally grounded learning experiences that help all students thrive.

Mahalo to Our Generous Donors

PLATINUM

(\$5,000 - \$25,000)

HSTA-Retired (Susan Hagiwara
Special Education Teacher Micro
Grant)
Wilbur Luna (Annual Drive, Endowed
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GOLD

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Irene K. Imada
Warren Y. Imada
May L. Imamura-Uruu
Faith Ito (HSTA-Retired Scholarship)
Sara S. Iwai

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Student Teacher Scholarship Recipient



Kaua'i resident **Taylee Yamamoto** said she has always felt called to be a teacher. Throughout her life, she has been inspired by teachers who made learning feel meaningful, encouraging, and fun. Their impact showed her the powerful influence of a good teacher, and this inspired her to be that same kind teacher.

She has always taken her calling very seriously. "I have discovered a lot of joy working with keiki through my volunteer experience as an assistant kids coach at my local CrossFit gym, which has helped me build patience, confidence, and a stronger connection with children," Taylee said.

After attending Kaua'i Community College and completing her student teaching at Kekaha Elementary School, she is now pursuing a degree in elementary education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, with support from an HEA Student Teacher scholarship.

"I want to help create a classroom where students feel supported, capable, and excited to learn," Taylee wrote in her scholarship application. "I hope to contribute to the teaching profession by being a caring, dedicated, and encouraging teacher who helps students grow both academically and personally."

In Memoriam



It is with great sadness to report that **Susan Hagiwara** passed away on Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2026. She was a passionate special education educator who leaves an indelible mark in Hawai'i's education community.

Her positive influence in the lives of special needs children, their families and other teachers continues. We will always remember her caring spirit.

Her legacy continues through the HEA/HSTA-Retired Special Education Micro Grant, which was established in her honor in 2025. Her family requests that in lieu of flowers, donations support her scholarship. Send your tax-deductible donations to HEA, 1953 South Beretania Street, Suite 5C, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96826.

Mahalo to Our Generous Donors

(continued from page 8)

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- Leinaala Kealoha
- Elsie S. Kimura
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HEA Offers Grants for All TAAC High Schools

Deadline: Monday, November 30, 2026

If you're a Department of Education high school with a Teaching As A Career program to support your school's club or Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways, your school could be eligible for an HEA grant.

HEA, in partnership with Pi Lambda Theta-Beta Zeta Hawai'i Chapter and Hawai'i Alpha Delta Kappa, will award grants to schools to develop and build programs that encourage more students to enter the teaching profession.

Deadline to apply for the grants is Monday, November 30, 2026. For more information and application forms, contact the HEA at (808) 949-6657. Neighbor island residents may call toll-free at (866) 653-9372.