

THE LEADER

KEALAKA'I

FALL 2022 VOL. 1



10 DAYS IN THAILAND

Political science students say the summer field study has successfully set them up for life after graduation
p.12

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ON THE COVERS: Photos of the political science group trip to Thailand during the summer of 2022.

Lead by Rand Blimes and his wife, Michelle, students spent 10 days there. Photos by Emaire Majors.

ABOUT

The Ke Alaka'i began publishing the same year the University, then called Church College of Hawaii, opened. It has continued printing for more than 60 years.

The name means "the leader" in Hawaiian. What began as a monthly newsletter, evolved into a weekly newspaper, then a weekly magazine and is now a monthly news magazine with a website and a social media presence. Today, a staff of more than 25 students work to provide information for BYU-Hawaii's campus ohana and Laie's community.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

A famous Maori proverb says, “He aha te mea nui? Māku e kii atu, he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata,” meaning, “What is the most important thing in the world? Well, let me tell you. It’s people. It’s people. It’s people.”

Our theme for this month’s issue is “Things that shape us.” As you read through the inspiring stories of being a single mother who runs for city council (p.55), finding success and joy in playing tennis in a wheelchair (p. 42), and coming together as a Laie community (p.76), we hope you can find inspiration for your own life and reflect on what has shaped you as a person.

Working on this issue with an incredible team made up of inspiring individuals, it has also been a very personal joy for me. As the Maori proverb says, the most important part of our lives is the people around us and acknowledging their important roles in our lives. With that, I just want to give the biggest shout out to this wonderful and marvelous team who has been working diligently to tell these inspiring stories authentically.

From the many hours we spent late at night in the office to improve our content, to the “deep conversations” that change the way we think about journalism, this team has developed from platonic co-workers to a family-like environment: Everybody strives to support and uplift each other, while telling the stories of our BYUH and Laie community ohana.

I’m also incredibly grateful for our great readership for their honest feedback and constructive criticism that allows us to constantly improve.

Mahalo nui loa and danke!

Rahel Meyer

Rahel Meyer, Editor -In-Chief





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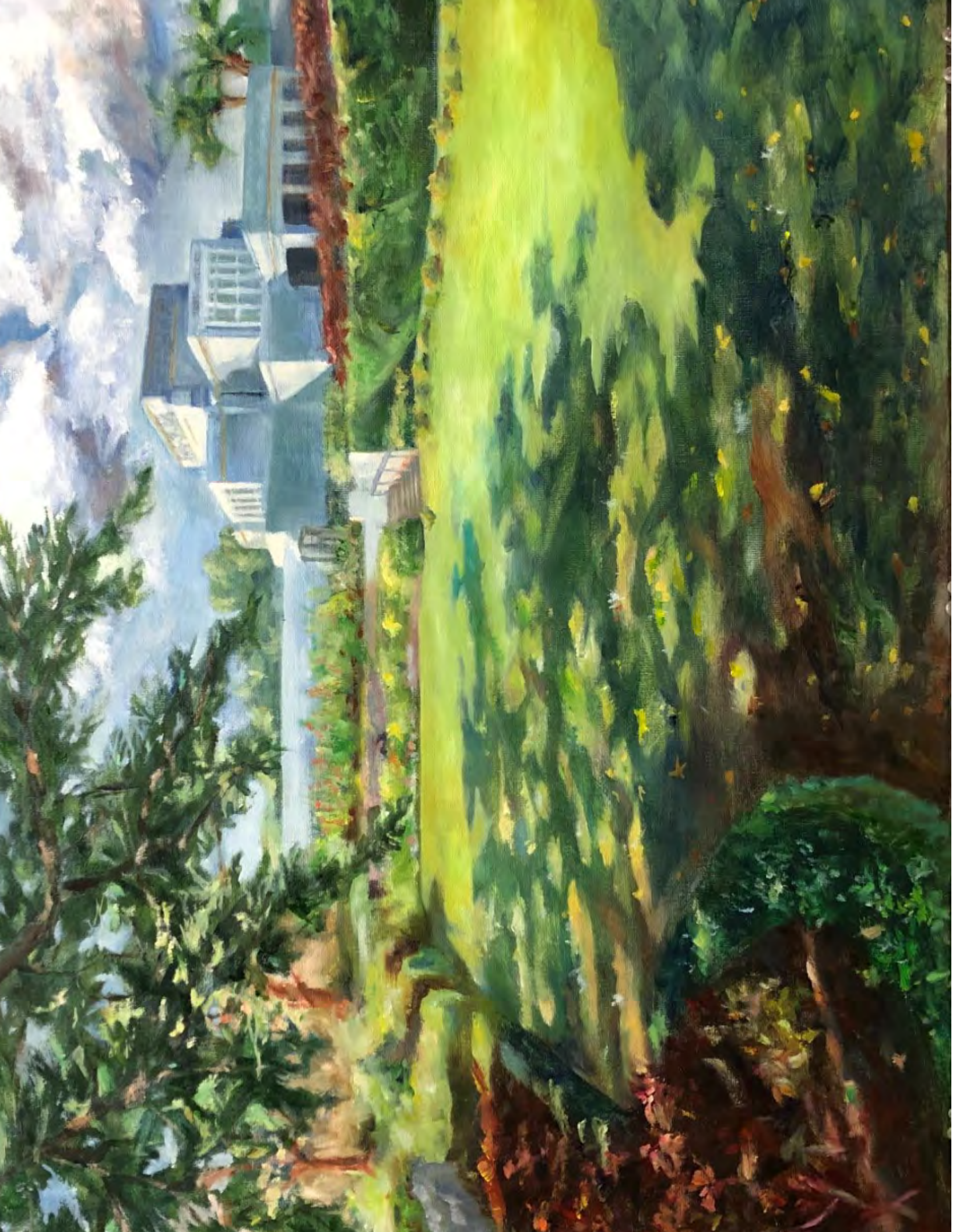
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“The reason I painted this view of the temple is it makes me feel the love of God. This feeling is not limited to inside the temple. I have the same sense around and in nature. The surrounding environment shines its radiance under the sunlight, expressing its unique beauty both separately and collectively sending out the message of the great love of the Creator. I hoped by recording the beauty of the temple, I will be reminded that I should center my life on this place and always remember the gift we receive, the beauty of nature. Especially in Hawaii, where the excellent climate makes nature colorful. While painting, I kept recalling the warm experiences associated with the temple.

“I hope everyone who sees this painting will feel the same and remember fond memories of this place.”

CREATIVE WRITING/ART/PHOTO SUBMISSION

“Laie Temple”

by Samuel Ching, an alumnus from Hong Kong

Share your art, photos or creative writing with us to print in our next issue.

E-mail us your high-resolution photo or work with a caption at kealakai@byuh.edu

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CULT

Ancient temple in Bangkok, Thailand.
Photo by Emarie Majors.
Graphics by Sugarmaa Bataa (Kendra).

WIKI

**“You’ll always be enough
for your ancestors.
You should never be
ashamed of who you are,
regardless where you grew
up. And if you didn’t have
the luxury of learning your
[ancestor’s] language ...
It’s never too late.
It’s who you are.”**

Chesser Cowan



10 DAYS in THAILAND

Political science students say the summer field study in Thailand galvanized their passion for international work and has successfully set them up for life after graduation empowered them as individuals

BY RAHEL MEYER

*Statue in the Golden Palace complex in Bangkok, Thailand.
All pictures in this story are by Emarie Majors.
Graphics and Design by Yichi Lu.*

The trip to Thailand has provided Rafael Tzanis, a senior from Australia, majoring in intercultural peacebuilding, with incredible insights as a person wanting to work in international development, he said.

“You can’t learn these things in a classroom. We can’t learn them from just watching videos or hearing first-hand stories. These unique experiences can’t be learned by reading a book because these are life lessons that are teaching you. They are changing you as a person.”

Emarie Majors, a senior from Montana majoring in political science, said prior to the trip she was set on pursuing a position as a Foreign Service officer for the U.S. State Department. However, it wasn’t until she was able to meet with a myriad of employees at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, she got a true feel for the job.

“It is fair for me to assert that had it not been for this field study experience in Bangkok, I may have wasted months, if not years, of precious time and energy chasing a career that wasn’t suitable for my talents and lifestyle preferences.

“This was truly a once-in-a lifetime opportunity that changed me. This study galvanized my passion for international development and provided me with the necessary experiences I will need to do successful work going forward.”

Preparation meets opportunity

Rand Blimes, assistant professor in the Faculty of Business & Government, said he has been doing trips to Bangkok, Thailand, with his students for the last 10 years. Blimes said he started the trips to Thailand because he realized there were things students need that can’t be learned in a typical classroom setting.

“Deep education comes through experiences that are impactful. It creates a different kind of learning that you can never do in a classroom. The thing students need as they’re getting out in the world is a bit of inspiration, [and] to see people who are doing the jobs that they’ve been thinking about, whether it’s being a diplomat, working for the U.N., or being interested in issues of refugees.

“You meet the people who are actually doing those jobs. It creates a sense of positive empowerment and inspiration where you’re like: Oh, people are actually doing this. I can do this.”

Before the trip to Bangkok, Thailand, at the end of Spring 2022, 10 selected students, wanting to work in the international field, were being taught Thai politics, cultural conducts and the Thai language. In addition to already planned visits to the United Nations, the U.S. Embassy and an organization called Courageous Kitchen, students were able to reach out to organizations themselves and request visits.

In the weeks leading up to the trip, Fahina Lauti, a senior from Oakland, California, majoring in political science, said she acquired language skills as well as the information about different organizations that helped her feel

more prepared for the immersive experience. Before this trip Lauti said she had never been outside the country, so she naturally experienced some anxiety about getting around.

“This trip has taught me that a language barrier should not stop you from seeing the world. At the end of the trip, I got to a point where I was comfortable enough to walk around Bangkok by myself. And after the trip was done, I felt like I could go wherever I want in the world, and I would be okay.

“As someone from a place like Oakland, where not many get to see the world and actually talk to professionals internationally, it has been a life-changing experience. I feel empow-



Top to bottom: Students in Bangkok, Thailand, prepare for a meeting with a local organization. Field study participants explore the Buddhist temple Wat Arun in Bangkok.



A monk walking up the stairs at the Golden Mountain Srakesa Temple in Bangkok, Thailand.



Top to bottom: Field study participants meet with official representatives of Humanitarian Affairs Asia and The Asia Foundation in Bangkok, Thailand.



ered ... like I can do anything. Shout out to Dr. Blimes and his wife, Michelle Blimes. They made this trip possible and I was able to really feel empowered because of their guidance.”

Making a difference

Tzanis said it was extremely helpful to visit the headquarters of the United Nations and the U.S. Embassy to have these important international connections, but he also found the value in the small organizations they connected with during the trip.

“You don’t have to aim super high to be able to make a great difference in the world. You just have to be the difference and positively impact the people around you. You don’t have to be in a great position to be involved in big organizations.”

Meeting Panisha, a cook at Courageous Kitchens, an organization that works with refugees and homeless people, and looking at the work she does, showed him that everybody can make a difference in their own way, said Tzanis.



Top left and right bottom: Students participate in a cooking class with Courageous Kitchens instructor Panisha. Top right: Field study coordinators Rand and Michelle Blimes meet with BYUH alumna who interns at Humanitarian Affairs Asia.



Left page: The Grand Palace complex in Bangkok, Thailand.
Right page: Traditional food, Thai monuments and street market at night in Bangkok, Thailand.

“She is in her own element. She has a small team of people. The work she is doing is fulfilling her and she is able to serve. That is something really valuable I learned. People always want to create something big, but it might be the small and simple things that create the biggest impact in your life and in the lives of the people around you.

“If everyone just had that attitude that you could influence your own individual spheres and make the smallest bit of influence, the world could be a better place. That is definitely one of my biggest takeaways from this trip.”

The beauty of Thai culture

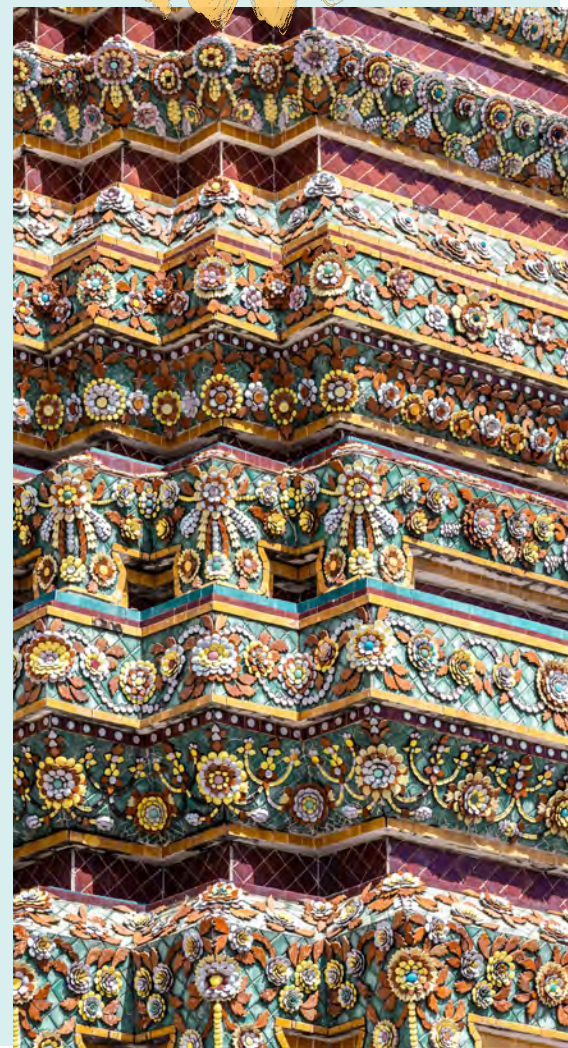
After a full week of visiting different organizations each day, the students had one

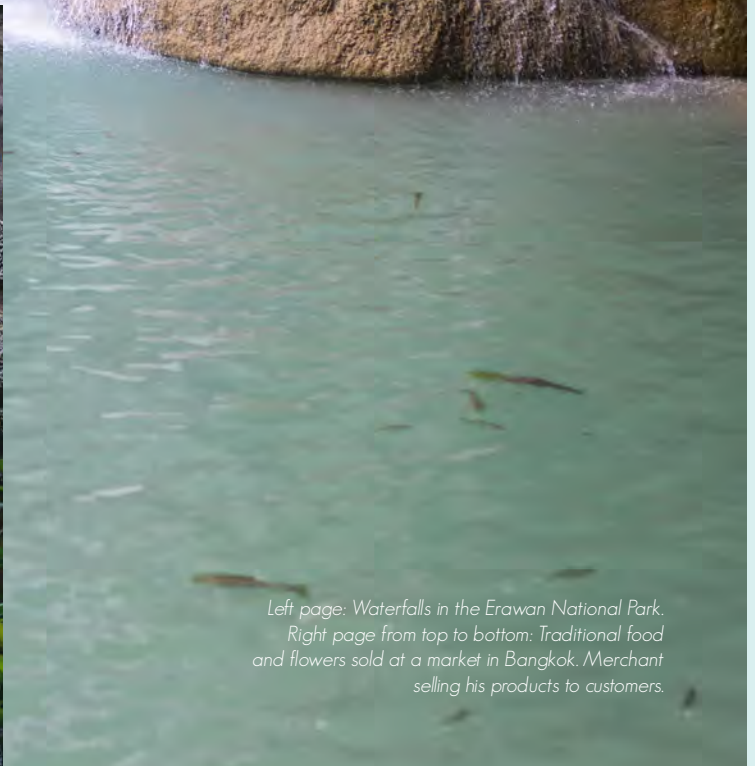
day, Saturday, where they had the opportunity to travel to Kanchanaburi, which is a five-hour drive north of Bangkok. They were able to see the famous waterfalls, eat spicy Thai food and connect with locals throughout the trip.

Tzani, who had lived in Thailand for five years and helped out as a translator on the trip, said it was amazing to see the awe in his fellow traveler’s eyes when seeing all the ancient monuments and the beauty of nature.

“Watching everybody’s eyes light up as they tried the new food and seeing the excitement everybody felt when visiting these historically unique places was really cool for me.

“Being able to share culture is something that is really important because that’s how





Left page: Waterfalls in the Erawan National Park.
Right page from top to bottom: Traditional food
and flowers sold at a market in Bangkok. Merchant
selling his products to customers.



we keep culture alive. It helps us to be more affirmed in our identities.”

Majors said sometimes she felt she was walking back in history when visiting these breathtaking historical landmarks. “I always saw pictures of Thailand, but they don’t do the country justice. I was in constant awe with the beauty of the architecture, especially the grand palace, and the beauty of the people.”

Lauti said one of her favorite cultural memories was waking up early in the morning to get breakfast and seeing the locals in action cooking food, going to work or school and selling trinkets.

“I loved seeing the monks in their saffron robes and people praying with them. I just loved seeing a different world and culture. I would buy mango sticky rice with the very few Thai words I knew and would just watch the locals do their thing. It was a good way to start my day.”

Majors said the one of the best parts of the trip was getting to know the Thai people. Their kindness, generosity, and passion are something she will always remember, she said.

“Whenever we tried to speak our limited Thai to them, the vendors were so excited. I’ve rarely met so many people who are so welcoming and kind.” •

Life ♡

*Chara taru tea I te tea taritani
engari he tea taritini*

**'MY STRENGTH IS NOT
OF MY OWN BUT OF MANY'**

You can connect with your ancestors without knowing their language, says BYUH alumnus, and learning your culture makes you unstoppable

BY RAHEL MEYER

Chesser Cowan, a BYU–Hawaii graduate from Hamilton, New Zealand, said his connection to his ancestors shapes who he is as a person. Cowan, who is of descent of the indigenous people of New Zealand called Maori, said he grew up learning about his ancestors’ traditions and stories and the importance of remembering them. Cowan shared this lesson of looking back is exemplified in one of his favorite Maori proverbs.

It says, “Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini,” meaning, “My strength is not of my own but of many.” Cowan shared it entails the important perspective that no one is self-made.

“Everyone at one point in their lives has received help from someone else and someone else. And so my strength is not from my one but from many who have come before me.

“I want to make sure I’ll be the best future ancestor for my people and I hope my descendants will be good ancestors for their descendants. ... Heavenly Father wants for all of us to be good people and to be caring, ... We can always learn from the past.”

A unique culture

Cowan said Maori ancestry differs from other cultural ancestries since not a day goes by where Maoris don’t reference their ancestors. “We acknowledge them. We keep them in our memories through our songs and dances. And we usually talk about them when introducing ourselves. It’s a way we have been taught. When you move forward, you must look back to see where it all started.”

In Maori culture learning from his ancestors not only gives him strength and inspiration, said Cowan, but it empowers and inspires him to be a better person. “It unlocks the feeling that they’ll always be with you. You can always call upon them for help.”

Cowan said there are several ways he calls upon his ancestors for help, including meditating at the beach or in the environment, because it helps him realize everything is connected. However, he said he feels closest to his ancestors when he sings chants from his region since he realizes he is just one star in the galaxy of his relatives and there were many before him.

“When I sing these songs, I feel empowered. I feel like there is someone else touching my shoulder, there is someone else pushing me on. And that’s my mindset. I can’t go one day without knowing my ancestors weren’t there.”

Empowering others

Cowan said it is important to realize it is never too late to learn more about your culture and your genealogy. When he was talking to a couple of new students of Maori heritage who hadn’t grown up in New Zealand, Cowan said they expressed their insecurities about not speaking the language.

“I told them the fact that you are Maori ... is enough. You’ll always be enough for your ancestors. You should never be ashamed of who you are, regardless where you grew up. And if you didn’t have the luxury of learning your [ancestor’s] language ... It’s never too late. It’s who you are.”

Cowan said he realized empowering and educating people with their culture makes them unstoppable. “I truly believe that culture does not divide us, it makes us more united. That’s how we can connect. By listening to similar stories that are relatable.”

Reconnecting in the present

Cowan said when his mother gave him his grandfather’s journal before leaving for college in Hawaii, he didn’t expect it to be of such a significance to the people around him. One day, Cowan explained he found out some of his relatives were living in Hawaii. He said they connected and he met up with them for dinner at their house.

Throughout the dinner, Cowan explained they talked about their common ancestry, until they stumbled over the most surprising coincidence. “Little did I know the father of the relative I’m visiting was in that journal, and it was a special feeling. I let them borrow it and read it, and they learned stories about their father they hadn’t heard for a while. This relative was my auntie.”

Cowan explained he is incredibly grateful to share this connection to his auntie and the journal has been copied into the Archives at BYUH. “Now it’s available whenever they want to read it.”

Ancient guidance

The stories of his ancestors convey many life lessons, said Cowan, including the value of giving kindness to others. He especially looks up to his ancestor Nukanoa, an ancestor from his subtribe the Ngāti Pōpōro, in this regard, shared Cowan.

He was one of the youngest tribal leaders in his subtribe, known as Ngati, and was chosen to be a leader at a very young age since his older



brother and father were seriously ill, explained Cowan.

He became a very prominent, skilled warrior and very loving chief in his respective area, but Cowan said what stood out most to him was Nukanoa's love for his sisters. He had many sisters and respected them by always putting them first. "He was mostly influenced by [them] and [they were] helping him become a leader," said Cowan.

Cowan said his ancestor's story taught him it doesn't take much to help people feel loved and respected. "Kindness is a free gift no matter how old you are. You are only a true leader if you serve others."

Sharing these stories with his friends or at his work, as a demonstrator guide in the Polynesian Cultural Center's Aotearoa (New Zealand) Village, has helped him grow in the most unexpected ways, said Cowan. "Talking about their triumphs, their failures and their moments of growth really defined me as I sought and found relatable circumstances."

During the Aotearoa presentation at the PCC, Cowan explained he shares his ancestors stories on stage and sometimes he feels prompted to share some personal experiences from his ancestors and how they overcame their trials and doubts.

"No doubt, [sometimes] I start tearing up, and I know when I talk about them, they're with me. I can feel their special spirit. And I think that's something that I'm very proud of." He said as he shares his stories with others. It "in turn becomes [the visitor's] story when they leave our beautiful place. I never thought that talking about others would actually edify me, but it did."

Paige Taylor, a senior from New Zealand majoring in social work, said others can learn from Cowan to be unapologetically themselves. "You can tell that he is undeniably and fiercely proud to be Maori through his energy when performing. ... We shouldn't shy away, but rather stand with pride and be staunch when we represent our own culture and whanau [family]."


Lasi Cowan, a BYU alumna from New Zealand and wife of Chesser Cowan, said her husband is always making the conscious decision to read more books and converse with elders although he is already immersed in his culture.

"He is passionate and respectful not only about his culture but also the cultures of others. He loves people and is always looking for ways to serve. Everyone needs a Chesser in their corner." •

BUILT WITH GRANITE

Prioritizing the Lord in all things doesn't take away all the struggles people face, but it sure makes things better, says Jessica Chalk

BY VIVIANA CHUAH



Having gone through the process of leaving the Church and then restoring her faith, Jessica Chalk said she realized God is always there, ready to accept his children, but they have to decide to accept him.

“Just go for it and don't wait for the right moment to repent.”

When things fell apart and her parents divorced, she became less active, shared Chalk. “I thought everyone was perfect. I could not keep up with that,” she continued.

Chalk said she always knew she wanted to go back to church but kept delaying acting upon it. After talking to a non-member friend and being asked, “What are you waiting for?” It hit her straight in the heart, she said.

Following her reactivation in church, Chalk was called to teach Seminary and served in Thailand, Bangkok and England Manchester missions, she said.

Finding the gospel

A descendant of both ancestors in England and Thailand, Jessica Chalk, majoring in intercultural peacebuilding and social work, is one of the first students from Scotland who has chosen to get a higher education at BYU–Hawaii.

Chalk said she is the eldest of two siblings and the only convert to the Church in her family. She explained the desire to search for happiness led her to the gospel.

“[Life at the time] was hard. My brother had just been born, and my parents were going through some things. I wanted to be happy. I [tried] to figure out where I could find that, and then I saw people on YouTube. They [looked really] happy, and they were like, ‘This is because we're members of the LDS Church,’ that caught my attention,” she added.

Chalk said she was baptized on her 16th birthday.

Beautiful Scotland

Born and raised in the small town of Aberdeen, a city in North East Scotland, Chalk said, “Usually, when people think of Scotland, they think of Edinburgh or Glasgow because that’s the two big cities. People aren’t familiar with Aberdeen at all.”

The Scottish news source, The Scotsman’s Scottish fact of the week, explains in an online article, “Aberdeen is full of ‘well-known buildings and residential properties [that] were hewn from rock retrieved from large quarries... by the end of the 19th century, it became the granite capital of the world.”

Chalk added, “They named my city the ‘Granite City.’ ... I like to think of it as a gray city because it is mostly cloudy all year long.”

‘God told me to come.’

Studying at BYUH was not her first option, said Chalk. She said she was frequently asked why she’s here since the educational system is decent back home in Scotland.

During the remaining time on her mission, Chalk said she began her university applications. She said she had always thought of going to BYU–Idaho. However, she said God told her to apply for BYU–Hawaii instead.

Chalk said about applying to BYUH, “No, that wasn’t even an option for me. Then I came across a scripture that goes like this: Study it out in your mind, think about it thoughtfully, pray about it and you’ll get your answer. I prayed and felt good about it. I obeyed the prompting I received and started my application soon after that.”

Despite the doubts and challenges she faced during the whole process, she got accepted to start school in the Winter Semester of 2022.

“I was comforted by God’s reassurance that He’ll always provide.”

Chalk added coming to this school has changed her perspectives on her career choice and secular knowledge, but also her spiritual growth. “His ways are higher than ours. His persistence led me here and showered me with wonderful experiences.”

Kill them with kindness

Similar to other BYUH students, it has been Chalk’s first time attending a church school, she shared. Chalk explained there are noticeable differences and struggles of fitting in that she had to go through.

“It’s hard to be the only Scottish here,” Chalk said. “I didn’t know anybody. People didn’t understand my culture and I had to start from complete scratch.” Having experienced a cultural shift made her realize the loneliness of being a mixed-race child, she shared.

“Loneliness doesn’t always have to do with people. I have amazing friends, but I still feel like an outsider sometimes. Anybody can experience that.” She said she thinks she was affected by it so much “because I wasn’t reading my scriptures, prioritizing God in general.”

Chalk said the difference was noticeable for her whenever she decided to put God first. “Just looking at the past, when I prioritize God, that’s when my loneliness started to dissipate. Nothing drastic changed. I just felt better,” she said.

Additionally, she said she is also a firm believer that being kind is the way to live life.

Taylor Collett, one of the supervisors for the retail department at the Polynesian Cultural Center where Chalk works, said Chalk brought the kind of energy that “spreads to everyone and gets everyone excited about the day.”

“I can trust [Jessica] with any job. She’s also one of the sweetest and fun people to be around,” Collett added. Chalk said she is still working at Tutu’s Sweet Shop in the Hukilau Marketplace.

Thavanrat Chongmeesuk, Chalk’s friend, a BYUH student from Thailand majoring in social work, said, “[Chalk] is the kind of friend who puts her heart into understanding you and your situation.” She noted Chalk truly has the gift of healing and uplifting people around her.

Veia-Atua Lowry, a sophomore from the Cook Islands studying psychology, said, “I want people on campus to know that Jessica is amazing. She is smart and talented. She loves people around her, and she is just full of light.”

Lowry and Chalk have been best friends since Chalk’s first semester in school, she said. “She honestly has helped me to do so much. She’s such a good friend. [Chalk] is the kind of friend who’s more than willing to lend a compassionate ear when you need her,” Lowry shared.

Embrace change

Chalk said prior to coming to BYUH, she knew nothing about British colonization history. It was never taught in her history class, she shared.

“If I hadn’t come here, I wouldn’t have known and gone anywhere near intercultural peacebuilding where all of my current knowledge on history is from,” she commented.

She initially enrolled in the intercultural peacebuilding introduction class due to having no other alternative, but she said it turned out to be one of her favorite classes so far.

As for her future career, Chalk said she feels pretty strongly about restorative justice. She believes change should start with each individual person. She said, “I didn’t understand the extent of it until I came here. I feel like I’m a part of a tiny group of people in my country who know about this history, so if [I don’t start the change], then who will? I want to make a real difference.” •



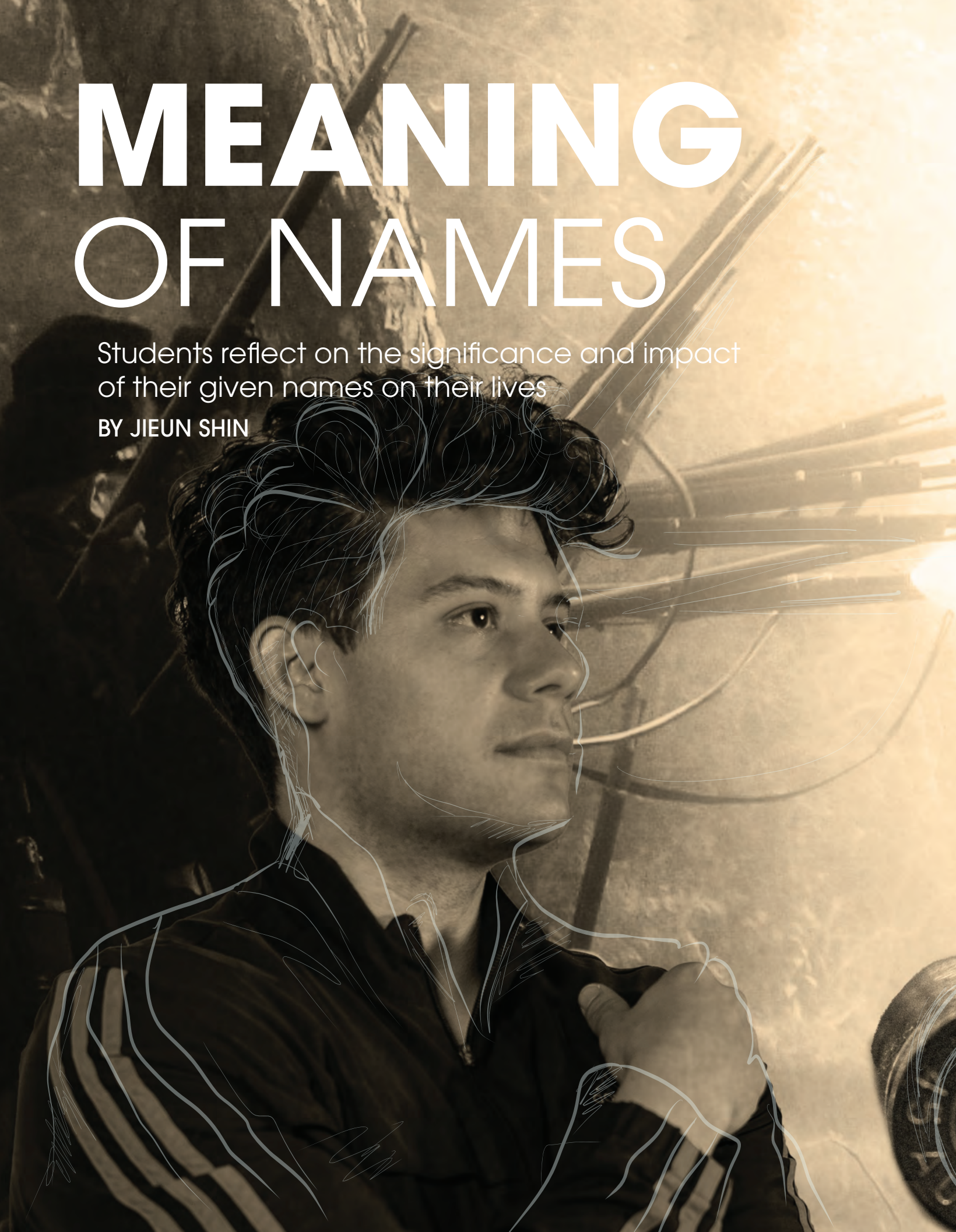
Castle Street and municipal buildings in Aberdeen, Scotland in the 1800s. Photo from the Library of Congress website.

Graphics by Akira Nagahama.

MEANING OF NAMES

Students reflect on the significance and impact of their given names on their lives

BY JIEUN SHIN



JOSEPH ELLIEN BERRY WYNE

Joseph Ellien Berry Wyne, a senior from Maryland majoring in secondary education, said parts of his name came from one of his ancestors, Joseph Barry Lindsey, who fought in the U.S. Civil War.

“So, [by being named as Joseph Berry, my father] wanted me to remember my family history as well as bring good fortune,” he said.

According to his father, Joseph Berry Lindsey was shot and wounded in one of his legs but miraculously survived, said Wyne. He explained a bullet went through his leg and Lindsey survived an infection. Similarly, Wyne explained his life has been fortunate and he has been protected as he lives up to his ancestor’s name.

His middle name, Ellien, is his grandfather’s last name, said Wyne. He said his grandfather’s original last name was “Ajay.” However, his family could not pronounce Ajay, so his grandparents changed their name to Ellien, he recounted. He said it has become a famous name in his family’s immigrant heritage.

“My grandfather is a very important person to me because he sacrificed so much for my family,” said Wyne. While experiencing extreme poverty after immigrating out of Syria, he said his grandfather ate “basically half a can of beans to sustain himself [for breakfast and lunch].”

Wyne said having a Middle Eastern immigrant background from his Syrian grandfather and a European immigrant background from his Italian grandmother helps him connect and relate to international people. •

*Joseph Wyne recalls his ancestors and the names he carries from them.
Photo by Yui Leung*

TAOTAOTUAALEA- MOMUAALETUIATUA IPU MOAFANUA SANERIVI

Her second name, “Ipu,” means a dish or a cup, and her first name is named after a well-known chief’s daughter from the village Lotuamui in Upolu, Samoa, said Taotaotuaalea-momuaaletuiatua Ipu Moafanua Sanerivi. Sanerivi is an alumna of BYU-Hawaii who was born in Oahu but grew up mainly in Samoa and is working as a digital banker.

She said when she was young, many people called her “Ipugi,” meaning teacup. She said she originally hated it, saying, “I am not a teacup.” But as she continued to grow up, she said she thought it was cute and wondered, “Who would care?”

Sanerivi said “Ipu” is a simple, short name but represents to everyone she meets where she is from, her background, her family and her ancestors.

She shared the chief’s daughter from Lotuamui was very loyal to her father and followed him everywhere, whether he was attending meetings or visiting villages. After seeing the course of the chief’s daughter’s life, Sanerivi said, “I see why they named me after that.”

She said she learned how important it was to be with her family in the trying time of the COVID-19 pandemic. She said she continued to participate with and work near her family despite the heartbreaking adjustments to her original plans of staying in California to pursue her career path. But she shared, “I knew Heavenly Father had a better plan for me.”

After completing her master’s degree in graphic design at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, California, during the COVID-19 pandemic, she said she returned home, supported her father’s calling as a bishop and helped serve BYUH students.

“All the accomplishments that I have done were to remember my roots and remember my family and our struggles,” said Sanerivi.

She chuckled as she recalled her memories of feeling sorry for two elders who once gave her a blessing. She shared while serving as a missionary in the Honduras Tegucigalpa Mission, she got sick and asked for a blessing. She said the elders asked her, “Okay, can you write [your name]?” and so she wrote her full name on the blackboard for them. •



Sakeri laughs as she explains the meaning behind her long name. Photo by Yui Leung



CHIT PYONE HNINSI SHIN

Chit Pyone Hninsi Shin, a sophomore majoring in information systems from Myanmar, shared her first name, Chit Pyone Hnisi, means “love-smile-rose.”

She said her mother chose her name one-by-one, according to what she felt about her. After she was born and her parents were taking time deciding what to name her, her mother saw her smiling whenever she heard her mother’s footsteps approaching her, said Shin. Her smile reminded her mother of a rose, causing her to name her daughter “love-smile-rose” in Burmese, Shin explained.

Coincidentally, Shin said her mother heard a singer singing the lyrics, “love-smile-rose,” in the exact same order of her name, in a television show about a year after naming her.

As part of the Buddhist culture in Burma, Shin explained it is common to request a child’s name from the monks. They determine the name according to astrology, aligning the name with the day of the week. She explained, “If the child was born on Monday, they [follow] the specific alphabet that aligns with the day.”


However, Shin said because her parents do not hold Buddhist beliefs, “They want me to be who I am.” •



*Shin smiles while holding one of her namesakes, a bouquet of roses.
Photos by Yui Leung.
Graphics by Sugarmaa Bataa (Kendra).*



*Brother Matthew Bowen during his early morning jog.
Photo by Yui Leung.
Graphic by Sugarmaa Bataa (Kendra).*



**“At any given moment,
there are 1,000 things
we can choose to spend
our time on ... but you
do have to make the
choice ... [and] keep
doing it.”**

Professor Matthew Bowen



SPRINTING TOWARDS WELLNESS

The habit of running provides physical and spiritual benefits for this BYUH professor

BY LEVI FUAGA

On one Saturday, seven years ago, Matthew Bowen said he was watching football all day when he received an impression to start exercising consistently.

He said he realized if he wanted to be around for important events in his children's lives, he had to start getting active. He put on his running shoes and clothes and ran for the first time in seven years, he added.

Bowen, an associate professor in the Faculty of Religious Education, said he stopped at half a mile, weighed himself and noticed he was several pounds overweight. He made it a goal to run farther every time he ran and began losing weight from running consistently.

Commitment and progression

In May 2017, he said he stepped on a scale and saw he had been under 200 pounds for the first time in a decade. From then, Bowen said he maintained his running routine and has increased his distance to 6.2 miles, five times a week.

Bowen said he runs from his home on Palekana Street and circles through Naniloa Loop into campus, Kulanui Street, Iosepa Street and throughout the neighborhood.

As a result of his running habits, Bowen said he began noticing physical changes in himself and his eating routine. He said he went from being a 41-year-old man not in great shape to feeling better at 48 years old than he did during his 20s. For two and a half years, he said he stopped drinking whole milk and avoided eating baked goods and desserts as part of his diet modifications.

Pua'ena Kapu, a senior from the Big Island majoring in Hawaiian Studies, said during a conversation with Bowen, the religion professor compared running to living gospel principles. She said he told her how people have to train their lungs to adapt themselves to running. Similarly, people must do and practice spiritual habits consistently before coming to the truthfulness of the Gospel, she added.

Bowen said a friend once told him there are times when one must subject their body to their spirit. He said running has allowed him to subject his body to his spirit. He said it has helped him become more receptive to spiritual promptings and discipline himself to stay healthier.

While working as a Teaching Assistant, Vaea Enos said Bowen would share his running habits with him. He said Bowen told him it requires hard work and commitment, but that he will feel

the difference in himself once he commits to the daily habit.

Bowen said he wished he ran more when he was younger, and it would've helped him to manage stress as an undergraduate. As a teenager, he said he disliked running because physical education teachers would make it something to dread or punish him if he didn't run a certain distance. Now, he shared, it has become a big part of his life and enabled him to stay centered and balanced.

Kapu said Bowen is a great example of consistency and determination, and treats his students fairly. "He's always consistent with what he says, what he teaches and with how he treats people."

Enos, a junior education major from the Big Island, said Bowen's ability to balance his spiritual knowledge, his teaching and running regime inspired him to start running himself. He said if Bowen, who claims himself as an "old man" can do it, he certainly can too.

Tips for running

Bowen said nobody should feel pressured to run if they don't like running. However, he shared people can motivate themselves in different ways to start different running regimes. "The more you get moving and the more ... you exercise consistently, the better you're going to feel."

For those who want to start running, Bowen shared it is good to have more than one pair of running shoes. He said by alternating between pairs of shoes, one can save wear and tear on their shoes and their knees.

Bowen said his friend, Neil Anderson, a former professor at BYUH and former marathon runner, said running on asphalt is safer for the knee joint than running on concrete because it allows more give for the joint.

Making conscious decisions

Bowen shared running has helped him focus on the important things in life,



Right and above: Professor Matthew Bowen jogging in the streets of Laie. Photos by Enkhtuvshin Chimee

BOWEN SAID A FRIEND ONCE TOLD HIM THERE ARE TIMES WHEN ONE MUST SUBJECT THEIR BODY TO THEIR SPIRIT. HE SAID RUNNING HAS ALLOWED HIM TO SUBJECT HIS BODY TO HIS SPIRIT. HE SAID IT HAS HELPED HIM BECOME MORE RECEPTIVE TO SPIRITUAL PROMPTINGS AND DISCIPLINE HIMSELF TO STAY HEALTHIER.





including his marriage and family. He said their family exercises together and consistently as part of their family routine. “It’s 100 percent helpful to have people who support you.”

Making conscious decisions means committing to do certain things at certain times, Bowen added. “At any given moment, there are 1,000 things we can choose to spend our time on ... but you do have to make the choice to do it at certain times, and to keep doing it.”

Overcoming exile

In March, Bowen shared, BYUH Academics Vice President Isaiah Walker asked him if he could give the convocation speech for the Fall Semester. “I was very honored. I was also surprised. I consider it a great honor.” In preparation for his talk, he said he kept

writing and refining his ideas throughout the summer.

Bowen said he had never given a devotional address and the convocation lecture was different from a weekly devotional talk. The title of his talk, he added, was “Wanderers in a Strange Land: Exiles Coming Home to Christ.”

Bowen said he talked about “exile” as a theological concept and how the Book of Mormon helps people access Christ’s atonement to overcome all types of exile and to come unto Him. •

Above and across: Professor Matthew Bowen on his early morning run. Photos by Enkhtuvshin Chimee. Graphics by Yichi Lu.



KAHUKU

FIELD DEDICATION

The new Kahuku field is a blessing and relief for players, says Coach Carvalho

BY LEVI FUAGA & RAHEL MEYER

After a lost a year due the pandemic, plus another season of full road travel and about \$12 million in state funds, the website Spectrum News says the football-crazed North Shore community has officially blessed and opened the new Kahuku turf field.

Gudrun Beibee, a Laie community member, said the field was worth the wait for the community. She explained students' future will be decided on this field. "On this field, we have many students who have the opportunity to go to college. So, if you ask me why we're here? It's because we belong here."

The new artificial field looked "every bit what was promised for years," says Spectrum News because the beloved venue of one of the state's most iconic programs was "plagued by persistent muddy conditions and drainage issues."

Sterling Carvalho, the coach of the defending 2021 Hawaii state champions, said in an interview on the news website, what a blessing it was to finally play football again on Kahuku's home field. The team used to take an hour-plus bus ride every week to play in town, but now they can finally relax in familiar confines for pregame meals.

"The field, it's a blessing," Carvalho said. "We have lines. We have hashes, numbers - not just to play on, but to practice on."

Terry Moeai, senior manager at BYU-Hawaii's Student Leadership & Service, said he is an alumni of Kahuku High School and a part of the Class of 1988. One of Kahuku's traditions is having generations of families play on its field, he said. His father and his brother, he added, played on this field and so will his son, an upcoming high school senior.

"I feel this is a representation of a place or a space where students can fulfill their athletic goals they want to achieve. The field is also used

as a classroom for physical education. So this marriage of athletics and academics, I think, is the beauty of this new field."

The field was blessed during the summer on July 9, accompanied by a performance by the Halau Hula O Kekela. •



Dr. Donna Lindsey, principal (right) and Lea Albert, former principal (left) pictured above, cut the ribbon to the new turf field.



An aerial photo of the new Kahuku High and Intermediate school turf field.

*Photos by Marwin Jay Villegas.
Graphics by Sugarmoa Bataa (Kendra).*



After traveling all around the world for tennis tournaments, Eric Huayi Court says he hopes to be part of the Paralympics

BY LEXI LANGLEY

Eric Huayi Court, Laie community member and former concurrent student at BYU–Hawaii, said he has found joy through challenges by playing tennis using his wheelchair.

Court, originally from China, came to Hawaii about seven years ago when he was adopted by his parents, Tom and Anna Court. Tom Court is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education & Social Work. “Being [Eric’s] parent has made me more appreciative of my privileged life and more motivated to try my best despite any difficult circumstances,” said Anna Court.

According to Court, he was introduced to sports by his mother when he first moved to America, as he didn’t get much exposure to them in China. Some of the sports Court learned included swimming, surfing, basketball, archery and tennis, he said.

Tennis quickly became his main interest because it was the only COVID-19-friendly sport he could consistently play during the pandemic, said Court.

Achieving dreams

Court said he has traveled all around the world for tennis tournaments. Some of the places he explained he has visited include France, the Netherlands, and places around the United States.

While Court typically traveled with his mom, he explained how none of this would have been possible without the support and resources both of his parents gave him. “Tennis is a more self-promoting and personalized sport. [We] had to do everything ourselves, including paying for travel,” said Court.

Eventually, he was recognized by the National Federation for tennis and was recruited by the University of Arizona to play for its wheelchair tennis team, he shared. Court is grateful to his parents for helping him achieve his tennis dreams, he said.

He shared, “My parents and brothers are not sports people. They have been [involved with] sports just because I wanted to be.”

In the future, Court said he hopes to be part of the Paralympics. “I would also like to raise more awareness of adaptive sports through my tennis,” said Court.

Sports as an outlet

Court said tennis has impacted his life in many ways. “Tennis is one of the biggest things in my life because it’s given me a lot. Sports have always been a stress reliever. So if I’m ever having a rough day, I just go play tennis and feel much better,” said Court.

He shared tennis is similar to playing chess. It requires mental strength and engagement, which is something he said he greatly enjoys. However, unlike chess, tennis allows him to be physically active, Court said.

Stronger than your excuses

Court shared the story of Nick Taylor, an American tennis player who won three gold medals and one silver medal in the Paralympics. “Nick is a really good example of the possibilities for people in wheelchairs,” said Court. Tom Court, Huayi Court’s father, shared, “[Court is] very persistent when it comes to doing hard things, especially doing the ‘harder right’.”

One motto that Court lives by is “You are stronger than your excuses.” He said this motto comes from the company that made his tennis wheelchair. Court encourages others in similar situations as him to try sports because they will never know until they try.

Court believes that if you live by this motto, you can show people what they can achieve if they put their minds to it. •

SPARK



*The front of the Laie Temple.
Photo by Yui Leung.
Graphics by Sugarmaa Bataa (Kendra).*

TRUAL

“When you feel like you’re not going to make it to the next day, my advice is that you hang on to God ... It might be two years, it might be five years, but when the light comes, the value of that struggle will all be made clear.”

Lupe Funaki

**MIND
THE**

ING MIRACLE

BYUH student says his near-death experience during
a hike made him reconsider his purpose in life
BY HADLEY WURTZ

*Keaton Ceci reflecting on his near-death
experience. Photos by Marwin Jay Villegas.
Graphics by Yichi Lu*

While hiking through the lush, jagged mountains of the North Shore, Keaton Ceci fell several hundred feet off a mountainside but miraculously survived. While recognizing his life as a miracle, Ceci said he still struggles at times to understand why he was able to survive his fall from a mountain. “It’s hard to understand why certain people get to see miracles and certain people don’t, when I know ... more people rely on them. ... I just couldn’t understand.”

Ceci, a senior from Atlanta, Georgia, majoring in business, said he didn’t want it to be over for him that day but explained, “I was comfortable because I knew where I was going. I wasn’t scared.”

Ceci said he frequently asked himself the question, “Why am I still here?” and said part of the answer came when lying in his bed speaking on the phone with his mission president, who also once lived through a near-death experience in his life.

He said, “I remember asking him, ‘President, out of everything, the hardest thing is I still don’t understand why ... I was able to see a miracle. So many people who deserve it don’t get to.’” Ceci said he remembers

his mission president chuckling when he responded by saying he also asked himself the same thing when he too had personally experienced such a profound miracle.

Ceci said his mission president told him, “There is something more the Lord wants you to accomplish here and something important.”

Getting lost

Ceci said the day of his near-death experience started out as a routine hiking adventure. Hiking is something he said he loves and does often. But on this day while hiking with others, he said he got lost when he stayed back to take pictures of a waterfall. After several failed attempts searching for a way to his group, Ceci said he made contact with his friend who was on top of the ridge.

Ceci said he decided to climb up the dangerous mountain side to catch up but had to stop during his climb due to rough, dangerous rocks. He said, “I wasn’t panicking, but I knew there was a problem.”

Confused and in need of direction, Ceci said he turned to prayer but didn’t feel like he received an answer. With only a few hours of daylight left, he said he recalled something he

had always been taught. “I have to put forth some kind of effort. I can’t just sit here and expect something to happen.” He continued, “I tried going left. I tried going right. I tried going up. I [knew that] I can always go down.”

He said he started down the mountain but as a couple hours passed, he grew tired, and the mountain grew steeper. Ceci said he realized how serious it had become and called his friend, Christian Wade, who Ceci asked to screenshot his location.

Wade, a senior majoring in business and supply chain operations from American Samoa, said, “We had so many questions. How did he get there? Is he with people? What does he need? He sounded pretty okay the way he was over the phone. He sounded pretty calm.”

Despite Ceci’s calm demeanor over the phone, Mala Tukuafu, from Mesa, Arizona, who was with Wade at the time of the phone call said, “Christian was not going to go to sleep until he could see Keaton face to face.”

After hours of aching muscles and relying on roots to hold onto, Ceci said he eventually reached a point where he had nowhere to go and was still hundreds of feet above the valley ground. He explained, “There was no logical



Across the pages: Ceci holding onto roots and trees on a hiking path.



thinking. Just pure adrenaline and survival mode. [My] only objective is to live.” Ceci said he saw one root and thought if he leapt for it, he could reach the root and continue down. Although it would mean risking his life, he said he knew he had no other option.

Up to this point, Ceci said he had prayed several times but expressed his frustration of not feeling that he received any guidance. “I’ve never felt more alone.”

Ceci continued, “At this time, I felt like I was living a good life. I was obedient. So, I was just confused by not getting an answer.”

Blessed by a miracle

With no options left, Ceci said he lunged for the only open root. Once he grasped it, the roots snapped, and he said felt himself fall, closed his eyes and fully “expected to wake up on the other side of the veil.”

“It wasn’t one of those things where you think you’re going to die, I knew it. It wasn’t a question. I was like, ‘This is it,’” Ceci said. “When I opened my eyes in the valley, I was just shocked.” He continued, “I honestly think I was saved by angels.”

After realizing he survived the fall and was not critically injured, Ceci said he knew

he had to try to get out, so he began scooting while sitting down in the middle of the rocky valley.

Ceci said when he was in the valley, he heard voices shouting in the mountain, calling for him and he would call back but could not be heard. He also recalled a rescue helicopter shining its lights on the mountain and valley.

When he realized that he was unable to be heard or seen, Ceci said he continued scooting on the rocky ground of the valley towards the way out for about four hours. “I was pretty tired and didn’t have a lot of energy, but I had my adrenaline just carrying me.

He continued, “Finally, I see a light in the valley, different from the helicopter light, and it’s followed by a voice.” Ceci said he yelled back and was found by the Search and Rescue Team who hiked him out of the valley on a stretcher with a team of about 10 men.

Junior Pedron, a junior from Tahiti majoring in art, recalled seeing Ceci in this moment. “He had his ankle in a brace, he was missing a shoe, but we were just super happy he was alive, and they were able to take care of him.”

Despite falling hundreds of feet, Ceci said he sustained a broken ankle, toes and other

injuries that were thought to be non-critical, and was taken to the hospital and discharged several hours later, the same night.

A challenging recovery

After being discharged from the hospital, Wade said he and Tukuafu drove Ceci home, where Wade said he carried him up the stairs and helped him get around his tight living quarters.

Wade explained, “[Ceci] probably makes it seem like we did a lot but we did what was necessary for him. What anyone would do for their friends.”

Similarly, Pedron, who Ceci said took care of him during the entirety of his recovery, shared how Ceci’s accident put the priorities in life into focus. Pedron said, “Being faithful to God, putting family first, and serving others all were things that my parents taught me growing up . . . so it was a big reminder to do those things.”

From keeping Ceci company and helping him get around to cleansing and bandaging his wounds, Pedron said he never thought twice when it came to supporting and taking care of Ceci. “I didn’t really ask myself if I had to do it. It was just automatic. I consider him my

"If you are walking on this earth, you have a purpose here
and you don't need a near-death experience to remind you."

—Mala Tukuafu



family.” Pedron said neither of them had family on the island and many of their friends had left during that year due to the pandemic. He continued, “We had each other and had to watch each other’s backs.”

The day before surgery, Ceci said he received a blessing, in which Ceci recalled the word “infection” appearing in his mind.

When arriving for pre-op for surgery, Ceci asked the doctors to check his foot, to which he said they realized they had previously stitched over an infection. He said this led them to cancel his surgery for the time being and remove and treat the infected area, otherwise it could spread throughout his body, which could have been potentially fatal.

Ceci explained the news of his surgery being canceled was the hardest part of his whole experience. “I was devastated. I was so confused and thought, ‘How can I survive a mountain but I’m going to die from a freaking infection.’” Pedron said he helped to keep his wound clean and take his antibiotics diligently, but also recognized this moment for Ceci “was more painful than anything.”

Ceci said the Tueller family graciously allowed him to stay at their home during his recovery.

Finding the purpose

After experiencing almost losing one of his closest friends, Wade said he was also reminded of the value of the people in his life. “We all get caught up in life and do things that

don’t really benefit your relationships, but one day it could all go away.” Wade emphasized it is crucial to remember what is most important in life. He continued, “Keep your friends and families close . . . and relationship with God strong.”

Since this conversation with his mission president, Ceci explained he is still trying to figure out what his purpose is. Laurie Tueller, Laie community member and wife of Administrative Vice President Steve Tueller, said she could tell from his demeanor during his recovery that Ceci was trying to understand “What does God need me to do?” Further she said after such a powerful experience, “you ask yourself, have I done what God has sent me here to do?”

Tukuafu reflected on how this experience is a reminder to everyone of their purpose in life. She said, “When you have an experience where you literally are going to meet your maker, it’s so humbling and a great reminder on your purpose and your purpose in life in general. . . . If you are walking on this earth, you have a purpose here and you don’t need a near-death experience to remind you.”

Pedron explained the purpose of people’s lives is the mission of their lives. “There is a reason why everyone is here on earth. I think our mission is to find that. Find the why, why are we here on earth. What is our purpose and what is the purpose of this life?”

Wade said after Ceci’s incident, the way Ceci would talk and act was in a way that he

knew God kept him alive for a reason. Wade said this was a wake-up call for him as well. He said, “This is a life we take for granted, we are living and we have to make something of ourselves. The way he was thinking influenced the way I thought [and] influenced my testimony and perspective on life.”

Moving forward

Along with the significant miracle of surviving a deadly fall, Ceci shared other miracles along the way such as minimal injuries and a quick recovery to walking again. With his miraculous experience constantly in his heart, Ceci said, “I always have in my mind if I’m living the type of life that makes me worthy of a second chance at life.”

Ceci explained he feels his purpose is something he will “realize over time,” fulfilling it through living his life in a way that can have a positive impact on others and “falls in line with the type of person that God wants [him] to be.”

Ceci shared his gratitude for his close friends who took care of him and “didn’t complain once.” He expressed he feels he can pay it forward through serving others in his life.

While living to find his purpose, Ceci said, “I am trying to never take another moment, with the people I love, for granted and to value the experiences and time I get to have with the people who mean the most to me.” •



Across the pages: Ceci walking along a path and reflecting on his purpose in life.

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY—HAWAII

GUIDED BY GOD

BY LEVI FUAGA



*Vilai "Junior" Ilolahia posing in front of the BYUH mosaic.
Photo by Yui Leung.
Graphics by Akira Nagahama.*

Trusting in the Lord and finding his purpose in life has helped this BYUH student succeed in finding eternal happiness

Upon coming to Hawaii, Vilai Ilolahia, mostly known as “Junior,” said he never planned to attend BYU–Hawaii nor become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He said although he grew up in the Methodist faith, his non-LDS mother urged him to join the Church.

“It just surprised me that my mom had such an impression to tell me to [get] baptized into this Church. It was a life-changing moment.”

Ilolahia, a freshman from Tonga studying political science, said he moved to Laie, Hawaii, in November 2019, seeking the opportunity and experience to live in the United States.

He shared he was attending the online Vanuatuan law school USP Emalus Campus School of Law while living with his uncle in Laie, which was challenging due to time zone differences. As a result, he added, he failed his classes and didn’t see any success from trying to pursue an education during the pandemic.

Ilolahia said schooling was no longer a priority because he became depressed, homesick and lost all motivation. While attending school online, Ilolahia said he worked as a photographer for “Magic Memories,” a photography company at the Polynesian Cultural Center and as a temporary cook for BYUH Food Services.

While working at the BYUH cafeteria, he said he met and began bonding with a group of Tongan students. He said hearing their stories about school inspired him to apply to BYUH in June 2021.

Upon attending BYUH, Ilolahia said he knew he’d be surrounded by members of the Church. He said he felt like an outsider because he couldn’t relate to the spiritual experiences and testimonies his friends would share.

Despite his fear, he said God had a plan for him and he realized the Lord works in mysterious ways.

From friendship to fellowship

Alfred Kapeli, a junior biochemistry major from Tonga, said he met Ilolahia during the pandemic while hanging out at the Hale Pavilion. When he learned Ilolahia was Tongan and wasn’t a member, he said he asked him if he had met with the missionaries before but Ilolahia expressed no interest.

Following their first interaction, Kapeli said he befriended Ilolahia and would invite him to social activities with his friends. He said they would say prayers before meals and go on hikes, and it made Ilolahia realize how important the gospel is to him and his friends and that Heavenly Father watches over them.

On one occasion, Kapeli said he invited Ilolahia to attend Church with him, which Ilolahia declined. However, Kapeli said that didn’t discourage him and he messaged him later asking him if he’d like to accompany him on his walk to Church. Kapeli said Ilolahia accepted his invitation and decided to come. Later, Kapeli learned Ilolahia had been meeting with a pair of sister missionaries referred by his uncle, a bishop of one of the local wards.

Kapeli said he and the missionaries taught Ilolahia for an entire year, and Ilolahia grew more interested in gospel principles. However, he said Ilolahia did not want to disobey his parents, who were of the Methodist faith and who didn’t want him to get baptized. Kapeli said he and the missionaries gave him time to pray and ponder about his decision.

Ilolahia cares and loves his family very much, Kapeli said. While teaching him at the temple, he said Ilolahia was interested in the principle of families being sealed in the temple. He said he told Ilolahia by accepting the gospel, he can be with his family forever. He said Ilolahia expressed his love for his family and said he wanted to be with them forever. “On that night, it also helped him know there’s no other way but to join the gospel,” shared Kapeli.

A mother’s impression

Initially, Ilolahia said he while he was never impressed to join the church, he decided to meet with the missionaries when he was struggling with depression. “For me, it was more of just trying to figure out what life was for me.” The missionaries kept urging him to pray about the truth of the principles being taught, he said.

Ilolahia said he would get annoyed by the constant invitations, having said no to eight sets of missionaries. Despite his annoyance, he said missionaries kept visiting him. “Call it perseverance, if you will.”

At one point, Ilolahia said he prayed and began shedding tears, asking God for help. He said joining the Church was something he thought about but didn’t anticipate happening anytime soon. One day, he said his mother surprisingly told him he should get baptized.

Ilolahia said his mother worried about his depressed state and told him joining the Church would bless his life. Still today, he said he could not understand why his Methodist mother received the revelation, when he was the one meeting with the missionaries.

He never found out why his mother experienced a change of heart, he explained. Eventually, he said he spoke to his bishop and was scheduled to be baptized on Oct. 24, 2021.

Although he invited only 10 people to his baptism, Ilolahia said half of the chapel was full and there were a lot of people supporting his baptism. “It was a surreal moment for sure, but a really humbling one.”

When Ilolahia said he was getting baptized, Kapeli said it was an answer to his prayer. He said he informed Ilolahia this would be one of the most difficult choices he’ll ever make. At his baptism, Kapeli said he acted as a witness and became emotional and shed tears upon seeing Ilolahia get baptized.

He said it makes him happy seeing Ilolahia interacting with other members of the Church. “I’ve worked with the sisters for almost two years of getting him baptized into the Church . . . It’s just amazing to see the changes in him.”

Dorothy Tonga, a sophomore biology major from Tonga, said she met Ilolahia while she was serving as a missionary in Laie. Upon meeting each other, she learned she and Ilolahia were distant cousins, she



Vilai Ilolahia with friends at his baptism. Photo courtesy of Vilai Ilolahia.

added. She said he is very courageous being the first in his immediate family to accept the gospel.

“It was him trying to learn for himself to really figure out if this is something that he wanted for his life, instead of just doing it because everybody else here does it.”

Tonga said Ilolahia would always credit his family and the sacrifice they made for him to where he is today. She said his example has taught her to be mindful of the sacrifices that have been made for her.

A new perspective

Ilolahia said getting baptized taught him the power of invitation and having the desire to serve others. He said he enjoys listening to different stories from students, he said. “You can never know what someone is going through unless you’ve been through it yourself.”

Kapeli said Ilolahia is an amazing person and is sensitive to the needs of others. He said he is the type of person who will make sure people are happy and smiling. His example, he shared, teaches him to be positive, humble and kind to other people.

Ilolahia always seeks the good in everyone and doesn’t judge them, shared Tonga. “I think that’s why everyone loves him and everyone loves his energy and presence.” She said she’s the oldest in her family, so she never experienced what it is like to have older siblings, but Ilolahia filled in that place. “[He] has become like an older brother to me here.”

Being accepted to BYUH was a blessing, and it changed his perspective on the students, said Ilolahia. Initially, he said his perspective of BYUH rooted in it just being a Church school. However, he said

despite his initial resentment, he realized it doesn’t make a difference if you are a member or not. BYUH opens up opportunities for everybody and everyone here is still figuring out their lives for themselves, he explained. “A lot of my pride has gone away because I’ve actually discovered the truth behind this wonderful campus we call BYU–Hawaii.”

Having attended BYUH for three semesters, Ilolahia said he’s still learning about the people. He shared it’s not about trying to be the perfect member or having many friends, but being the person God expects him to be.

“I, and most of my friends who influenced me in this school, have been shaped by this gospel, this Church and this whole foundation of academics It’s magical.” •

flourish IN TRIALS



BYUH alumna shares how she found God through struggling to success

BY VIVIANA CHUAH

*Lupe Funaki posing with her family.
Photo courtesy of Lupe Funaki.
Graphics by Marlee Palmer.*

Despite finding success in her educational and professional endeavors, Lupe Funaki explained it did not come without trials. She said, “Even in the most difficult times, like when I was trying to adjust to the reality of being a single mother, with all the children I have, we’ll get through crossing the Red Sea on dry ground. . . . Once we come through it, the light, the blessing, the truth, the strength will all be made clear.” Funaki works as an advisor for BYU–Hawaii’s International Student Services and recently ran for Honolulu City Council.

Funaki said she came from a solid cultural upbringing where she said her parents wanted to inspire and shape young minds to someday be useful to society. She said this upbringing influenced her to take a different route in college.

Despite the challenges, she fought, Lupe said. “I don’t know if I would understand or appreciate life as much if I didn’t have those refining experiences through my academic experience.” Now as a single mother raising 10 children, Funaki said she believed the best way to triumph over obstacles is to rely on and trust God.

Trusting God

Funaki emphasized the importance of developing a testimony that ensures trusting in God no matter the circumstances.

During what she said was the hardest two years of her life, after her marriage ended, Funaki said she had to work in places outside of the field she spent several years studying. She said she picked up a job at Denny’s with graveyard hours, a job landscaping and a job at the grocery store.

“Life was hard, but [this life was meant to be hard] because part of God’s plan is for us to walk by faith,” she added. Funaki expressed, “When you feel like you’re not going to make it to the next day, my advice is that you hang on to God . . . It might be two years, it might be five years, but when the light comes, the value of that struggle will all be made clear.”

Born of goodly parents

Funaki said she was raised by incredible Tongan parents who were also BYUH alumni. Having been encouraged and supported by her mother, Funaki’s said her father pursued higher education at BYU in Provo, completed a master’s and doctoral degree. Her father accepted a position teaching psychology at BYUH, where she said he was one of the first Pacific Islander professors hired.

When it was hard for her to pick up books, read and study, she said her father believed if she could train her mind, it would serve her well. Funaki said the advice her father gave her when she was young helped her better cope with the challenges of life. When it was time for her to apply for law school at BYU in Provo, she said her father’s advice remained with her. She explained, “My father tried to give some perspective by telling me, ‘You went on a mission. You had a chance to focus on spiritual development. Now is your time to focus on developing mentally.’”

Funaki also highlighted the critical role her mother played in her success. As an immigrant from Tonga, she described her mother as resilient, courageous, and humble. Funaki continued, “She had a lot of courage to not only support us but also even to go so far as to inspire us to want to be involved [and contribute] in [the] community. My

mother never failed to push my siblings and me to give our best in anything we did.”

Thriving in humility

Aaron Shumway, director of Religious Education at BYUH, said he has known Funaki practically his whole life. Recognizing Funaki’s role at the university and in the community, he said, “[Funaki] is sensitive to the needs of others and will go to great lengths to help anyone in need. She loves God and is a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.”

Shumway explained Punahou, an exclusive private high school in Honolulu, is known for their students getting accepted to big-name colleges on the mainland. He said, “When people in the community found out that [Funaki] got into that school, nobody was surprised. It’s like everyone knows that if anybody in Laie would go to Punahou, that’s her. Everybody was in awe of her.”

With the same feeling, Keith Peterson, an associate professor of English at BYUH, said, “With all the chances to go study on the mainland, it was such a surprise that [Funaki] decided to choose a local college like BYU–Hawaii.” Funaki said she appreciates the small environment BYUH provides that allowed many opportunities for her to embrace cultures, get to know people from different places and have competitive academics. “I’m happy I came,” she said.

Peterson recalled, “Lupe Funaki is one of the best English majors I’ve ever had, and I’ve taught hundreds of students. She was truly the best.” However, Funaki said she constantly felt she was not the ideal English major and wanted to quit countless times but persevered through the difficulties.

Peterson added Funaki excelled in her studies because she was prepared to learn, committed to the Honor Code, got involved with the clubs and was always kind and willing to help her classmates. With a positive university experience, Funaki said she earned the title of Miss BYUH. “How can I forget such an exceptional student?” Peterson said.

Despite all the praise, Funaki said she gives all credit to God and her parents. Shumway said, “She was smart, outgoing and very musical but never once snotty or showed an, ‘I’m better than you,’ kind of attitude.”

Funaki explained she is a strong advocate for education. “Sometimes we think that [we’re] not smart enough, but learning and developing intellectually is very much a part of God’s plan for us.” She said she believes the process and struggle matter more than the result because they gave her confidence not to be afraid of learning new things and strength not to quit easily.

“The struggle as an English major trying to read and interpret Shakespeare, sonnets and literature, that wasn’t even English to me, and then [I got] into law school [and tried] to apply those things. I feel the value has come as I tried to raise my children. The same applies to work situations.” Funaki said she learned “with a strong mind, [anyone] can navigate through hard things and turn challenges into blessings.”

Showcase Hawaii

Shumway said him and Funaki were a part of Showcase Hawaii, a group of BYUH student performers introducing “a delightful, fun and faith-filled program” to audiences throughout the Hawaiian Islands and internationally. “We went to Guam, the Philippines, China and Korea.

It was about a three-week-long trip. And of course, there are many performances before that throughout the year.” The group was discontinued several years later.

When Funaki agreed to major in English, she said she made a deal with her father. She said, “I’m going to do what you say as long as you let me do what I want.” She then joined the infamous Showcase Hawaii and anything related to music.

Shumway said he had the opportunity to know Funaki more while in Showcase Hawaii. “I always admire her optimism,” he said. “There were times in the Philippines when we were really hot ... There were many new things for everybody, especially our students who’d never been exposed to Asian cultures. Even though [Funaki] was one of the younger people in the group, she provided a stabilizing influence that helped all of us in the group to have a good attitude.”

A serving heart

Funaki said she has always been a people person. “I’ve always been fascinated with the diversity of people and countries. I think going to [BYUH] ... opened my eyes and my understanding. Combined, [this] has really deepened my appreciation for how much God truly loves His children.”

While contemplating where she could contribute her talent, Funaki said she naturally chose to continue to at BYUH. She worked as an advisor in International Student Services for several years and also taught English. Funaki said since struggling in law school, she took a chance looking into another program that would fit her abilities: public administration. After some academic exploration, she graduated with a joint program degree with master’s in public administration and a juris doctor, or law degree.

Funaki said of pursuing both degrees, “I have always felt my heart I wanted in some way to contribute to my community. I grew up here in Laie ... So I’ve always felt the desire to contribute ... and do some good, especially for the next generation.” She continued, “I felt very strongly that I could make a difference by trying to run for public office that would allow me to educate and bring them on board to learn how to engage more.” •

Top right: Funaki as Miss BYUH.

Middle right: Funaki posing with her children.

Bottom right: Funaki with her parents and siblings.

Bottom left: Funaki, her mother and two sisters.

Photos provided by Lupe Funaki. Graphics by Marlee Palmer.



ART & M

“These landscapes of water and reflections have become an obsession. It’s far beyond the strength of my old age, and yet I want to succeed in rendering what I feel.”

Claude Monet

MUSIC

Monet's impressionist art in the immersive
experience *Beyond Monet*.
Photo and Graphic by Sugarmaa Bataa
(Kendra).

META HAWAII

During a question and answer session following the premiere of “Meta: Hawaii,” regisseur and BYU–Hawaii student Jonas Weitzel shared his project was inspired by people’s relationships with digital devices. “The idea . . . that you are so involved with your social presence . . . everything that you do . . . is kind of your own world, a virtual world.”

As of July 15, 2022, the short film has already been selected for six different international film festivals, according to its official Instagram page. It has been selected for the Best Student Short Finalist category in the Brazil New Visions Film Fest and will be screened in Los Angeles this year in the Independent Shorts Awards as a finalist, says the page.

Weitzel, a sophomore majoring in communications from Germany, held a premiere at the McKay Auditorium for his short film, “Meta: Hawaii,” on May 14, 2022. The actors and actresses in the film, including Polynesian Cultural Center Senior Cultural Ambassador Kap Te’o-Tafiti, as well as friends, students and families of the performers, attended the premiere.

Inspired by journey of uncertainty

The short film looks at the questions, “Would you spend all day in virtual paradise? Which adventures would you go on? What kind of person would you be? Would you even want to go back to reality?” according to Weitzel’s official website jonasweitzel.com.

Weitzel said he developed the story from his journey of coming to Hawaii and his relationship back then with his iPhone. Due to the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, his plan to move to Hawaii right after getting married to Freedom Weitzel was discouraged, he explained.

Having travel restrictions between borders, he said he and his wife moved around between five to six Airbnbs and hotels before eventually arriving in Hawaii. He described his experience as, “I felt like I didn’t have my home in some sense.”

He explained how during his travels in the United States, he found his iPhone as an object that provided him a sense of security, a safe place he knew super well, like a “back pocket.”



A short film directed by a BYUH student starring Kap Te'o-Taftiti amasses international success

BY JIEUN SHIN



“The [smart phone] is no longer just a device, but it has really [become] our identity,” said Weitzel. He explained he reflected on the idea of someone submerging into this digital world and getting distracted from things that matter most in his film “Meta: Hawaii.”

After going through all the challenges and arriving here in Hawaii from Europe, he said, “I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s so beautiful here. I love it ... It felt really like a dream.”

He explained the scenes, sequences, images, and sounds in the movie are all inspired by the real-life beauty found in Hawaiian nature. “I just want to mention that it is supposed to be edifying, beautiful and uplifting for everybody.”

Aspiring actors

Britni Hull, a junior majoring in biology with an emphasis in marine biology from California, said she participated in the filming. “I think to me, the message was about really being able to find yourself and find the things that you love and get away from all the crazy stuff in the world. And that is where you find peace and you find yourself and are able to live life to the fullest,” said Hull.

Austyn Eugenio, an aspiring actor from Hawaii working at Kualoa Ranch, who was also in the film, said he saw Weitzel taking clips all around the island and putting them into one film as if trying to solve a jigsaw puzzle.

“With one-piece... you have just that. But then if you put it all together with the audio and great editing, you have a great 20 minutes. So, seeing my friend being able to accomplish that ... is pretty cool. Pretty proud of him,” said Eugenio.

During the Q&A session, Weitzel shared he is planning to participate in 100 global short film festivals and asked the audience to follow “Meta: Hawaii” channels on social media for support. •

For those interested in watching the film, follow social media channels to access updates.

www.tiktok.com/@jonasweitzel,

www.instagram.com/metahawaiiinf/

Center: Jonas Weitzel and his wife Freedom.

Photo provided by Jonas Weitzel.

Graphics by Sugarmaa Bataa (Kendra).



BEYOND *Monet*

MONET BEYOND THE CANVAS

BY HADLEY WURTZ

Being immersed in art projected on screens and set in motion with music, say visitors, made 'Beyond Monet' mesmerizing

Stepping into a world of art, students, tourists and locals were enveloped by the motion-filled art displayed on 360-degree panoramic screens. Music flowed in and out in sync with the motion of the projected paintings at the "Beyond Monet" exhibit in Honolulu. "In Monet's vision lies an incandescent world without a shore, a world of fleeting and effervescent reflections," says the "Beyond Monet" website.

Chloe Tiengerd, a senior majoring in travel industry management at the University of Honolulu, said the production "takes you through different emotions and sets the mood and the serenity." She continued by exclaiming how amazing it was to see the art pieces come to life.

IMPRESSIONISM WITH A MODERN TWIST

The exhibit, showcasing more than 400 of Claude Monet's works, was separated into two rooms: the Garden Room and the Immersive Room, says the "Beyond Monet" website. The Garden room leads visitors through aspects of Monet's life, his inspiration for his paintings, and the style of Impressionism, which became a key movement in art history, according to a plaque at the exhibit.

Impressionism, as explained on one of the plaques in the Garden Room, was "radically nonconformist" for its time, when precise details and light usage in paintings were praised. Monet's paintings embody a "gentle

luminance," and thus, his paintings are "an open invitation to pure subjective expression" reads a Garden Room plaque.

Emelia Mike, a junior from Malaysia majoring in communications, said the exhibit "gives a sense of modernity by combining the use of art, music and projections to bring the impressionist art to life." She continued, "It's a non-traditional way to immerse [the audience] in Monet's world through the sense of touching, seeing and listening. I enjoyed every bit of it."

Monet's pictures are projected on the exhibit's walls as museum visitors wander.



ELEMENTS OF THE ART

Sitting in the Immersive Room, with motion paintings surrounding the visitors, the music shifted from airy, romantic French songs and grew more intensified as the images increased in motion with the colors and weather portrayed through the movement of Monet's projected paintings. The projection in the large room incorporated movement, lights and sound to bring Monet's work beyond the original canvas.

Similar to what Mike highlighted about the modern elements appealing to the viewers' senses, Lily Monaco, an ambassador and employee for the event, also discussed the imaginative exhibit, focusing particularly on the power of the added music. "I think it adds to the story that is told within the video.

Where the art is more intense and tranquil, it really pushes that emotion," said Monaco.

In agreement, Tiengerd said of several points in the Immersive Room, "It was really fast-paced, and the music was bumping, and I was just mesmerized. It still looked like paint [despite the projection and movement] and then turned completely black." Tiengerd said it felt like a "wave of emotion" experiencing the art.

Lauren Bonnici, a senior from the University of Hawaii majoring in public health, expressed how impressive it was to hear and see the "music and timing of everything and the paintings mesh together."

Whimsical, oversized flowers are showcased under colorful lights in the Garden Room of the "Beyond Monet" Honolulu exhibit.





FAN-FAVORITES

Mike explained several of Monet's pieces hold significant value for the audience. Her favorite piece of Monet's is entitled "The Poppy Field." She said, "As the painting moved through the projection, I couldn't help being nostalgic about my life as a missionary in Manchester, England. ... Growing up, I have always been drawn to poppies, even though I have never seen them in Malaysia. To finally enjoy the poppies right before me [in England] is an indescribable feeling."

Mike continued, "I always find comfort and joy in poppies. To cope with our fast-paced world, I always encourage people and myself to take a step back and enjoy the little things."

In connection with the poppies, she also said her favorite part of the exhibit was the large art installation of flowers in the Garden Room. She explained, "The three-dimensional flowers are made from foam, colored plastic and wires. They look oddly realistic and radiate a whimsical feeling"

Monet's painting of waterlilies, as highlighted in the Garden Room, and the music were other popular favorites shared by museum visitors. •



Monet's colorful impressionist paintings as displayed at "Beyond Monet" Honolulu. Photos and graphics by Sugarmaa Bataa (Kendra).



"These landscapes of water and reflections have become an obsession. It's far beyond the strength of my old age, and yet I want to succeed in rendering what I feel."

Claude Monet



COLLEGE PLAYLIST

Students share their favorite songs and why they bring them joy

BY VIVIANA CHUAH



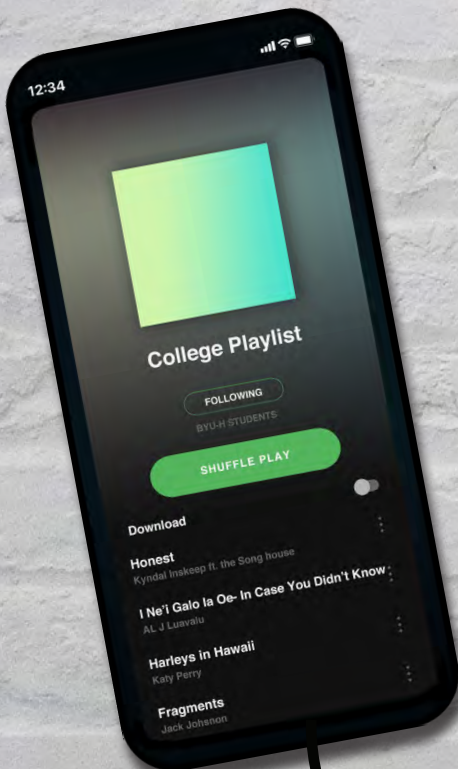
“HONEST”

KYNDAL INSKEEP,
SONG HOUSE

Ana Alofaki, freshman majoring biology from Tonga

- “I love the vibe of this song. I first heard it from TikTok.”
- Fact: According to Song House, this song wasn’t ready when it was released. Kyndal Inskeep, a rising pop singer, song writer said, “That is why this song is so powerful because in all of its rawness, in all of its imperfections, it is perfect!”

Source: Instagram - @thesonghouseco



“FRAGMENTS”

JACK JOHNSON

Sophie Dalby, sophomore majoring in business marketing from California

- “This song just makes me feel calm and understood ... all of us are ... fragmented, and not entirely whole.”
- Fact: This song was written by Johnson while filming the documentary called “Smog of the Sea,” which examines the amount of pollution humanity puts into the oceans. The fragments Johnson refers to in the song are the fragments of plastic particles that are in the oceans.

Source: songfacts.com



“THESE WALLS”

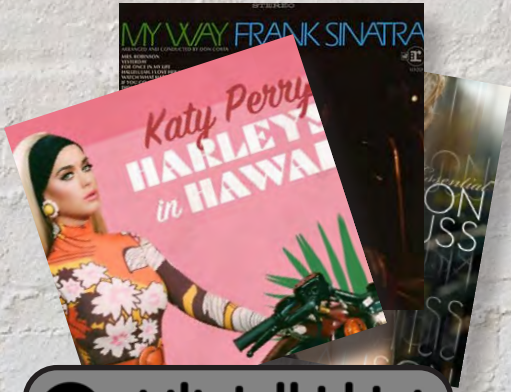
SAM KIM

Melanie Benavidez, junior majoring in social work from California

• “This song has a happy, energetic vibe that you can listen to while you walk to class on a beautiful, sunny day. It is impossible to feel sad when listening to such a feel-good song. Sam Kim’s perfect, angelic voice paired with the groovy chords on the guitar are a match made in heaven.”

• Fact: Sam Kim has more than 2 million monthly listeners on Spotify.

Source: Spotify.com



SCAN ME ON SPOTIFY TO HEAR
MORE STUDENT FAVORITES



Woman listening to music. Photo provided by Unsplash.
Graphics by Marlee Palmer and Sugarmaa Bataa (Kendra).

BY KYRON LEVI CORPUZ & ABBIE PUTNAM

A MUSIC LIFE



Allie Donato, a junior from Milford, New Hampshire, majoring in instrumental performance, said the first musical instrument she learned to play was the flute at the age of 9. She said she can now play instruments like the piano, which she self-learned, organ, ukulele, trumpet, steel pan, toere, French horn, trumpet, mellophone and melodica. The French horn, she said, is her focus instrument while studying at BYU–Hawaii.

“I asked my mom if I could play the trumpet, and she said, ‘We don’t have one of those. ... Let me call my sister and see if she can send us a flute,’” Donato explained. She remembered how she felt the first time she was able to make a sound on the mouthpiece of the flute. “I feel like that’s when I got really excited about wind instruments,” she said.

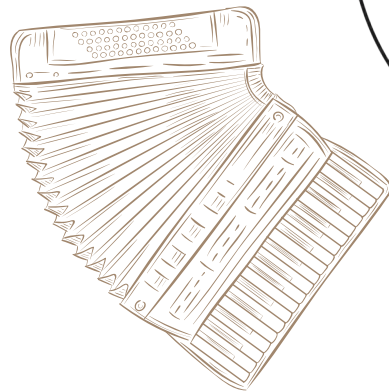
“It’s not as if you can reach a threshold of playing an instrument and then declare, ‘I play this instrument,’” she said. “I think with a proper attitude, you can really learn how to play anything that creates music.”

Her musical journey

Donato said she enjoyed playing the flute in fourth grade and is also one of the few who stayed in music class to pursue it. “There was probably 10 girls in the room for the first lesson, and then in the next lesson, there was maybe eight,” explained Donato. “By the end of the year, there were only a few left.”

She said she played the flute from fourth grade to eighth grade, which is when she got bored of the repertoire available for the flute. “I asked my teacher if I could try a brass instrument. I took home a French horn when I was about 12 or 13,” she shared.

“I don’t profess to have mastery of any instruments,” Donato said. “I really think being able to be a multi-instrumentalist is more of an attitude than anything.”



Co-musician in the Street Band

Mayuka Konno, a senior from Sapporo, Japan majoring in instrumental performance, said she met Donato at the BYUH Street Band in 2019, where she played the trombone and Donato played the mellophone.

When they first joined the band, Konno said Donato was an inspiration for her because they were the only two girls at first. Currently, there are just three girls in the band, she added.

Konno said being in the Street Band means they have to walk while playing their assigned instruments. Many members are used to sitting, like in an orchestra, and “not used to moving around.” She said Donato would set the example by trying first so the others could follow her.

She said on one occasion when she was having a difficult time with one of her music classes and was about to give up, Donato encouraged her and said, “Just do it.”

Konno added, “She never gives up when she faces difficult things. I want to follow that way of thinking.”

Future plans and advice

Roche Donato, an alumnus from Qatar, said he supports his spouse fully in her musical journey. Besides helping Allie Donato carry her

instruments to the Cannon Activities Center (CAC), he said he bought her a high-end laptop she can use to run required software for class.

He said being married to a musical person is great because he gets to listen to free music instead of listening to music from the internet.

Donato said she sees herself becoming a band director, conducting ensembles and assisting young people with their music, at a school or other institution. Aside from that, she said she also hopes to become a music teacher at some point in her musical journey.

“If [someone wants] to be a musician or a teacher, and [they] really have drive and motivation, I think it’s been within reach for [them]. I think it’s not as unreasonable as a lot of people make it out to be.”

One thing she said she learned during the pandemic is to not limit herself to one specific musical destination. “I want to keep learning,” she said.

Her advice for others who want to play instruments comes from Ella Fitzgerald, an American singer, who she quoted, “Just don’t give up trying to do what you really want to do.” •



Allie Donato playing the melodica (left) and the trumpet (right).
Photos by Munkhbayar Magvandorj. Graphics by Yichi Lu.

COMM

Welcome ALOHA

*Aloha sign board at the Hukilau Marketplace.
Photo by Stop Khemthorn.
Graphics Sugarmaa Bataa (Kendra).*

UNITY

LOHA!

“Because of the pioneers,
our ancestors, who came
here [through their] faith,
.. Laie has prospered.
It is now up to us.”

Verla Moor





A GREAT PILLAR OF **HTM**

David Preece says his dream to be a professor was fulfilled coming to BYUH, and he hopes students remember him as someone who did his best to help them become better people

BY XYRON LEVI CORPUZ

David Preece, a retired emeritus BYU–Hawaii associate professor, said he hopes students will remember him in his efforts “to help them be a better person, both academically and spiritually.”

Describing what kind of teacher Preece was, Ammon Tamarason, a Spring 2022 alumnus from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, said Preece has an aura around him that makes him lovable, friendly and difficult to dislike.

Sesimani Dulaki, a Winter 2022 alumna from Suva, Fiji, echoed Tamarason’s response when she said, “He’s got this warm vibe around him that makes it very welcoming for students.” She said she is comfortable coming to him with questions, and she feels she can ask him anything regarding the hospitality and tourism management industry.

As one of the former students of Preece, Tamarason added he is very warm in that his voice intonation makes people feel welcome and makes him easy to approach.

Tamarason said he genuinely cares about his students when they have questions. He said when Preece is helping students, he focuses on the students without getting distracted easily. He explained whenever Preece had time, he would accommodate his students.

Preece would always give Tamarason, “his honest full insights,” he said. Tamarason explained Preece would give him feedback about whether his plans would work or not with examples from his own experiences.

Tamarason shared Preece is a very optimistic person and always taught encouragingly. Preece would use motivational words to help students see what their potential could be, he explained.

He added Preece often invited students to come over to his home to talk story and eat, and he always welcomed his students with an inviting demeanor, Tamarason explained.

“When you know him as a teacher, you’ll love him, but when you know him as a person and you’re not talking about school, you’ll love him even more because he’s just being himself,” he said.

During those visits, he added, Preece would also give his students life advice and talk about world events.

Tamarason said, “I wish he had 10 more years at BYU[H]. I’m sure the [future] students would really love a great teacher like him.”

HISTORY AT BYUH

Preece said he has lived in Laie since 1995 and raised his family here with his wife, Laurie Preece. Prior to their big move to Laie, they were living in the state of Georgia, and by the time Preece and his wife had three children, he was working at the Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC) as vice president of marketing and sales, Preece explained. He said he oversaw the company’s “marketing, sales, reservations and retail stores.”

Preece, born and raised in Las Vegas, Nevada, said after a few years working at the PCC, he left his job to work for Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau as vice president of marketing while still residing with his family in Laie. From there, he said he returned to

“WHEN YOU KNOW HIM AS A TEACHER, YOU’LL LOVE HIM, BUT WHEN YOU KNOW HIM AS A PERSON ... YOU’LL LOVE HIM EVEN MORE.”

the mainland for other work opportunities.

Around 2009, he said he heard that a hospitality and tourism management (HTM) faculty position opened. Preece revealed it had always been his dream “to go into [the] university teaching environment.”

He said he always wanted to be a professor but hadn’t had the opportunity until then. In the Fall 2010 Semester, he was hired for the teaching position at BYUH, where he taught HTM and marketing. But over the last five years, he added, he’s been teaching HTM for the most part.

For Preece, helping to direct the expansion and development of the HTM program at BYUH has been his most memorable experience. “[The] effort really started back in 2015. That’s when we established the Center for Hospitality and Tourism to provide a full range of support services for our students,” he said.

He said the expansion of the program includes improving their internship program, scholarship funds, bringing senior missionaries with professional experience who can guide the

students, local and off-island field trips, lecture series with professionals and much more.

Preece said, “Back in 2015, we had about 130 HTM students. Now we have about 325.”

TEACHING AND GETTING TO KNOW THE STUDENTS

Preece said he hadn’t had professional teaching experience before coming to BYUH as a professor.

“I was very comfortable in front of groups, making presentations, having discussions ... However, I had never been given the responsibility to create a curriculum for a course,” he commented.

He said he was initially nervous and anxious because everything was new to him. “I had a few fellow professors who were good mentors for me, but I put a lot of time in that first year or two, trying to figure out how to be a good professor,” Preece said.

Talking about how he taught his classes, Preece said he always told people since 2010 that he never “taught the same course twice.” He explained he changed the curriculum each time he taught each course, added new video presentations and updated the quizzes.

“I try to figure out how to make it contemporary [and] how to make it relevant to the students today. ... I’m always changing [the courses] every semester,” he said.

When asked what he would miss the most at BYUH, Preece said, “I will miss being in the classroom every day with our wonderful students where they bring such a huge diversity of backgrounds, language, ethnic backgrounds, cultural interests and career path interests.”

Talking about the most memorable and meaningful part of teaching at the University, Preece said it was interacting with the students. He said, “I actually consider a lot of my former students [my] good friends.”

He said because of the small campus environment and small class sizes, it allows teachers to get to know students more profoundly.

One of his student friends is Sesimani Dulaki, he said. “The thing that you’ll find out about Sesi is she’s very outgoing. She has a very strong personality. And so, she was always very good at participating and expressing her opinions in class discussions.”

Dulaki, who attended three of Preece’s classes, said Preece made his classes enjoyable in a way that he not only taught the theory

but also shared his plentiful work experiences from the industry in his classes.

One of the things she learned from Preece is the possibility of traveling and seeing the world. “When I first started in HTM, I took it because I liked socializing [and] talking to people, and I thought that was it. I didn’t really consider being able to travel and explore the world until I was able to get it from his perspective,” she commented.

A GREAT MENTOR

Preece said he gave a networking opportunity to Dulaki along with several other students. “There is a large group of donors who give money to the university that come every year. It’s called the Genuine Gold Society,” he shared. The administration requested the HTM program bring some students to one of their gatherings, which they did, he said.

Dulaki said towards the end of her senior year she received a lot of opportunities, one of which came from David Preece. Dulaki was one of the four students who represented the HTM program to the donors who visited the university.

She said, although it was nerve-racking, it was a special time when she met people who supported her education. It was an honor to be trusted with that opportunity from Preece, she added.

“I was very nervous, but I was very happy that I got the chance to sit down with [Preece], and he gave me pointers on what to present [and] how to present it,” she shared. She added from

the experience she learned to be confident in what knowledge she already has and not worry so much about what she does not know.

Preece said, “When people come to campus, they want to find different ways to support the University. The best thing to do is to let them interact with our students because they [will] learn to love our students, just like we do.” •

Top to bottom: David and Laurie Preece, Preece with his students at the airport, and Preece with his students at a HTM event. Photos provided by David Preece.





Sports Tournament

LAIE DAYS

Honoring those who came before us

Kupuna Luncheon





Community members hold month-long celebration to strengthen bonds and remember local history, says Laie resident Verla Moor

BY JIEUN SHIN

The Laie ohana gathered for the whole month of July to celebrate the community, remember local pioneers and build bonding experiences with families, neighbors and visitors.

“It is not about the Hawaiians, the Samoans, the Tongans, [or] about the individuals. It is the culture of the gospel. That’s what makes this place special,” said Verla Moor.

Moor, a lifelong resident of Laie and the president of the Laie Community Association Board, explained Laie Days started being celebrated around Utah’s July 24 Pioneer Day. She explained the now month-long Laie Days celebration is about “honoring those who came before us.”

As part of the annual celebrations, there is a fireside on the first Sunday of the month, entertainment and fireworks for the 4th of July at the Polynesian Cultural Center’s Marketplace, three community sports tournaments for three weeks, a kupuna luncheon at the Gateway Buffet, a summer bash at the Laie Shopping Center and finally a hukilau, the tradition of fishing at the Hukilau Beach on the last Saturday of the month.

Embracing the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ

Community members and BYU–Hawaii students gathered to listen to speakers and musical numbers presented with the theme, “Gathering to Laie: the Next Generation,” on the evening of July 3 at the Laie Back Chapel on Lanaihuli Street.

“We need to embrace the culture of Jesus Christ as these are the things that help build our community. These are the things that our

ancestors sacrificed for everything that we have here today,” said Pane Meatoga, Jr. from Laie, sharing these ideas with the next generation at the fireside.

He explained his grandfather dreamed of a white house on a hill overlooking sugar cane fields while serving a mission in Western Samoa. Discussing the dream with their stake president, Meatoga said his grandparents were told the news of the construction of the Laie Hawaii Temple, and they were advised to move their family to Laie.

He told of their contribution of building BYUH and doing the hukilau, raising funds to build a new chapel after the first chapel burned down in 1941.

Another speaker at the Laie Days fireside, Kela Miller, a member of the LCA board, said, “I am forever grateful to my ancestors who love the gospel for us and love their families the most.”

“Some of the things we did was to swim at the Beauty Hole. I know some of you don’t know what Beauty Hole was,” Miller said. She explained that’s something people should learn about.

Miller shared her generation grew up playing their ukuleles or guitars and learning the songs of Laie. She also said they would go to the store to buy a pake cake and 5-cent sodas before sitting down to listen to the kupunas.

After sharing her childhood experiences in Laie, she invited the next generation “to know your community, [and] to know your leaders.” She encouraged them to listen to the kupunas’ stories, experiences and insights.





Renee Cabrinha said she was born and raised in Laie. She and other people representing three generations of Laie residents, sang “Turn Your Heart to Home” written by Janice Kapp Perry and Joy Saunders Lundberg. Faith Thompson, born and raised in Laie but who now lives in Northern California, performed several pieces, and Dr. Allen Anae from Laie shared his Samoan heritage by performing a song he wrote, “Laie, My Home.”

Sports tournaments include everyone

Hundreds of community members, students and visitors ranging from the age of 6 to 69 participated in the 2022 Laie Days tournaments for volleyball, basketball and pickleball at the Cannon Activities Center on campus.

One of the players in the volleyball tournament, Christopher Fidow, from Waipahu and a member of Team Kim Chee who won second place in the gold division, said he likes how the community organizes this event that brings everyone in the community together.

He said he feels blessed to be part of the event and to know the welcoming Laie community members. He added, “It is truly because of your love for God. . . . I truly believe this is all divinely appointed.” He was invited to join in by Tia Thompson, who was on the committee for the Laie Days tournaments, and Fidow said he wants to participate again next year.

To allow all the participants to have fun, Moor explained the Laie Days Tournament Committee organized three divisions for volleyball to separate highly skilled players and create a safe, fun environment for the community.

Parewhakaarahia Mahoni, an assistant manager at Hukilau Marketplace from Laie, said the pickleball tournament was included last year during Laie Days and had 200 participants.

This year she attended the Laie Days event as a volunteer to help coordinate the pickleball tournament. She shared she loves pickleball because it is inclusive for all people. “I feel like it’s accommodating to anyone.”

“We are blessed that BYUH donates this facility to us during our month-long celebration [for the three-week tournaments],” said Moor.

Continuing the legacy of the pioneers

“Because of the pioneers, our ancestors who came here [through their] faith, this is why Laie has prospered. It is now up to us,” said Moor. She said it’s important to know what sacrifices they made to continue their legacy.

Moor emphasized the community’s need to be worthy to live next to the House of the Lord, the Laie Hawaii Temple. She shared the following questions to ponder: “If Jesus is your neighbor, how are you going to act? Are we worthy enough to be his neighbor? Are we keeping our yards clean? Are we taking care of ourselves?”

Having these perspectives in mind, Moor said, helps community members do things differently.

How it became a month-long celebration

Laie resident Junior AhYou said the practice of being a “community that prays together, eats together, plays together, stays together,” has



brought Laie residents together, built strong bonds and helped unify the community.

AhYou said he has been serving as a long-time member of the LCA board since he retired from being a college and professional football player in the 1980s. When he returned to Laie, he said he witnessed the community members' struggle with housing problems.

While seeking ways to mitigate or resolve the housing problem as the vice president of the LCA board, he said, "We were trying to organize ourselves to have a voice, and that's how the [month-long] Laie Days came about."

While thinking of how they could help people to come out, be informed and strengthen their input on community issues, he said, they decided they could tap into the community's passion for socializing and having fun. He added it's hard to get people to attend meetings.

"Our people love to socialize and have fun," he said. "They love to play." So AhYou said he thought, "Let's have a Laie Day. Do it big. Do something for everybody, [from] Primary to senior citizens, for the whole month of July."

With the vision of extending the Laie Days to a whole month, AhYou said he sought advice and received support from his dad, his wife and his mentors Patriarch Linkee and Charles Barenaba.

AhYou said Harvey Alapa, David Hee, Elae Kapu, Sam Choi, Ray Pasi and Alfredo Cabael donated funds to Laie Days over the years. •



Laie community members celebrate Laie Days with sports tournaments, a hukilau at Hukilau Beach, and dancing.

Photos by Marwin Villegas, Sugarmaa Baata (Kendra), Yichi Lu, and Yui Leung. Graphics by Akira Nagahama.



KE ALAKAI