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“Every Community Needs a Charlene”

A tribute to Charlene Iboshi, co-chair of the Community First Advance Health Care Directive Committee

By Amy Hamane and Doug Adams

The vision of East Hawai‘i’s non-profit Community First is one where we as a community not only take personal responsibility for our own health but help each other care for our mutual well-being. We want to recognize former Hawai‘i County Prosecutor and Community First Board member Charlene Iboshi. Charlene’s hands-on leadership has helped tip the idea of healthcare from treating disease to caring for health through grassroots, community initiatives. Charlene is currently the co-chair for our Advance Health Care Directive (AHCD) Committee.

Amy Hamane:

During this time of uncertainty, it is more important than ever that your Advance Health Care Directive is current, and you are sure that it meets your needs today. Charlene Iboshi, who has chaired the all-volunteer committee on Advance Health Care Directives since 2015, is making sure folks continue to have access to help in completing AHCDs despite COVID-19.

Charlene’s most important quality is her ability to welcome and embrace new ideas and approaches, always willing to try a different road to accomplish the committee’s goals. Volunteers are assigned to help folks connect with Zoom, important for our older population. The last in-person AHCD workshop was held in March. COVID-19’s restrictions on in-person gatherings presented a real challenge but with Charlene’s enthusiasm and guidance, by May, the committee was ready to test out a Zoom workshop and now the Zoom workshops are available island wide. At the October workshop, a son from North Carolina Zoomed in with his parents and siblings. They all now understand their parents’ health care wishes. Drive-thru follow-up sessions, first in the state, allow participants to have their completed AHCD witnessed by committee volunteers under strict COVID-19 procedures. Participants never leave their car and are also provided with 5 free copies of their completed AHCDs. From 2015 to February of 2020, the initiative held 58 community presentations reaching 1447 people.

Besides chairing the AHCD project, Charlene is actively involved in the State Bar Association, the Zonta Club, Vibrant Hawai‘i, Rotary Club of South Hilo, and the Aloha Exchange Club.

Doug Adams:

There are many ways that one may describe Charlene Iboshi--formidable; compassionate; diligent--are a few which come immediately to mind. However, for me, ultimately, I think of

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Charlene as spiritual, as in spirit filled. My connection with Charlene has been after her time in the County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, as she has taken on a myriad of tasks associated with health care, human services, and global and local peace initiatives, to name but a few. I have had the wonderful opportunity to work beside her as her get-it-done nature, combined with a heart as big as the Big Island, tracks down the problems that our community often finds intractable and asks, "why can't we fix this, why not us?" For me, her spirit is her most engaging characteristic--a spirit that combines the best of the tiger, the water buffalo, and the dove--the intellectual capacity to attack our problems, the wherewithal to see the task through, and the spirit to recognize and acknowledge the peace that resides in each of us. In our Rotary Club, one of our past presidents is fond of saying that every club needs a "Charlene." I would modify that to say that every community needs a "Charlene, and that we are blessed that our community has had the original.

We sincerely thank Amy Hamane, co-chair of the AHCD committee, and Attorney Doug Adams, Director to County of Hawai'i's Department of Research and Development in helping us to honor Charlene's commitment to service.



Photo: Community First AHCD committee