People in Kohala, throughout Hawai‘i, Oregon, California, and around the globe were greatly moved when Raylene Ha‘alelea Kawaa‘e’a “changed addresses” on March 9, 2012. This loss has caused much sorrow… and those who knew Kumu during her time on earth are sure she would not want us to focus on what we have lost. She would want us to truly celebrate what we have…

Her gifts to the world are huge, and they will continue to grow.

In fact, you could feel a dramatic surge of aloha and empathy throughout the district on that windy afternoon as folks rapidly learned about a serious collision on the Kohala Mountain Road. The coconut wireless became a shockwave as people heard the truth about this special woman “not making it.”

Raylene was truly a ray of light for many of us during her 61 years on Earth. She was the oldest child and only daughter in a family of six, a birth mother of five and adopted mother to more, a friend to many, and a master teacher to all. Her passion to support her ‘ohana was enormous, and her love for her children, parents, relatives, friends, and students was like the sun... able to fill everyone’s hearts.

Many called her Kumu as we held her in such high regard; when around her, we were always learning. Raylene was the founder and executive director of Na Huapala ‘O Hawai‘i (Friends with much love for Hawai‘i), a culture-based organization incorporated in Hawai‘i in January 2001 and sanctioned as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in April 2002. Na Huapala’s purpose is to “perpetuate and preserve the knowledge and wisdom of the Hawaiians, the first peoples of these islands, who dignify, honor, and respect all life.”

In her humble style, Raylene had been teaching about her culture with great pride for many years before the formalization of her local nonprofit. A Kumu Hula since the early 1970s, she started her first hula halau in Fairfield, Calif., which continues today with faithful students. Shortly after moving to North Kohala in 1993, Raylene began teaching, first as a cultural specialist in local schools. The initial class she taught for the Kohala community was entitled “Your Name As a Prayer,” where she helped participants explore the meaning of their names and who they were. She began her Kohala hula halau in 1994, which kept on growing in many directions.

Programs Kumu Raylene was the heart of include Halau Ka Lani Mamo at Kohala High School; Ka Hale ‘o I‘o at Kohala Middle School; Halau ‘o Ha‘alelea, which included new and veteran dancers; Na Kupuna ‘O Kohala, seniors who have danced with Kumu for many years; and youth mentoring and cultural exchanges. Her students have performed countless times in cultural events, competitions, and community gatherings here in North Kohala and around the world. She also held recurring “talk story sessions” about Ho‘oponopono for the Kohala community as well as regular workshops for different halau and groups in Hawai‘i, California, Oregon, and other places. Her trips in the last few years to New Zealand, Taiwan, Europe, and across...
Raylene, continued from page 1

The mainland allowed Raylene a chance to fulfill her dream to see the world and share her culture.

Some of this travel was due to her position as a community building facilitator for Queen Lili‘uokalani Children’s Center, where she was employed for more than 15 years. Her quiet, strong, supportive style as well as deep knowledge of Hawaiian thinking and cultural practices provided a wealth of information and aloha for both staff and those served by this agency. According to David García, assistant unit manager for the center, “Raylene approached her work with families with much enthusiasm and aloha. She was a valued member of the staff for her cultural expertise.”

Besides being an exceptional teacher, Raylene was forever a student, as she recently explained during a meeting at Kohala Middle School teachers’ meeting. Raylene shared that she was always an observer, wanting to learn what she could about people, about growing as a teacher, and about life in general. A o—simultaneous learning and teaching—was a foundation for Raylene, and her enthusiasm was contagious.

“When Kumu Suse was a small child, he received a chant from a kupuna in Kohokoi. He recalls that he was scared, and he found his teacher ‘spooky.’ But he knew that his teacher had transmitted mana to him, and he realized, even then, that being chosen was a special blessing, and that it would be his kuleana to give those oli (prayers) to the community. Even as a very young man he recognized that he would dedicate his life to serving and teaching the profound wisdom of Hawaiian culture.

Kumu Suse was one of 12 children. He was raised by his grandmother in a large nine-bedroom house. That house burned down when his sister dropped coals from a coal iron that she was using to iron her dress for a dance. The plantation subsequently built the family a smaller house, which he still lives in today. At 85 years old, Kumu Suse continues to be a community treasure who has enriched all our lives.

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A Night at the Opera

Kohala youth recently enjoyed a night at the opera on O‘ahu. The opera, “Aida,” was performed at the Hawaii Opera Theater. Kohala High School English teacher, Fern White, with her students Calisia Carvalho, Kanani Wishard, Breea Souza and Shaylen Reyes-Galan, are pictured here with Program Director Eric Haines (center). Support for the student travel, coordinated by Fred Cachola, who also performs at Hawaii Opera Theatre, was provided through Friends of the Opera and Kohala Alumni. While on O‘ahu, the students also visited ‘Iolani Palace and Bishop Museum. Students will present their learning to their peers.

Nothing says I love you like a stack of pancakes!

Treat your Mother to the Kohala Lions Club Mother’s Day Breakfast

May 13th, 2012 • 7 am to 10 am
Kohala High School Cafeteria • Dine In or Take Out

Tickets available from any Lions Club Member

Pancakes, Scrambled Eggs, Sausage, Fried Rice, Fruit, Coffee

Donation: $6.00