THINK Fund Scholarships at HCF help Hawaiʻi students reach for the stars

The Hawaiʻi Island New Knowledge (THINK) Fund at Hawaiʻi Community Foundation (HCF) scholarships help Hawaiʻi Island students pursue a college education that will lead to a career in a STEM field or as a STEM educator. In 2019, 39 Hawaiʻi Island students received $166,000 in scholarships.

Student Spotlight: Emilia Kaawa

Leading by example, that is what inspires Emilia Kaawa to pursue her Master’s degree in mathematics education at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa. “As a teacher, it is very important to always seek higher education and push oneself just like the expectation we set for our students. Being a single mother, I strive every day to set an example for my children to push and work hard for every goal they set forth.”

Emilia is also a teacher at the Hawaiian language immersion school, Ka ‘Umeke Kāʻeo Public Charter School, where she teaches math through a cultural lens. As an immersion school graduate herself, Emilia always wanted to become a teacher to educate future generations in Hawaiian culture and language. “My Master’s program offers me a more in-depth perspective on how I can help my students understand mathematical concepts related to our everyday way of life, like limu awareness, kilo, mahiʻai, and so on.” Emilia’s long-term goal is to create an instructional book where mathematics is taught through experiential learning using moʻolelo (stories) and loina (customs) as the forefront of instruction.

Since 2015, over $670,000 has been awarded through THINK Fund at HCF Scholarships.

107 Hawaiʻi Island students
22 Hawaiʻi high schools
55 Higher education institutions
36 STEM majors
Student Spotlight: Rod Neil Burbano

Rod Burbano has been overcoming obstacles since moving to Hawai‘i from the Philippines, when he struggled to learn a new language. “I had a hard time with my classes because the lessons were presented in English. Thankfully, I have the English Language Learners community that enhanced my English skills and assisted me with my education.”

Full of gratitude, Rod volunteers as a tutor at Honoka‘a High School helping students overcome the language barrier he once faced. “Meeting female engineers motivated me to be unafraid of industrial and engineering technology classes, often filled with males. These women studied and worked, making it to the top of their fields. I am excited to travel down the paths they carved in the STEM industry and emulate them.”

Did you know? Scholarship applications are due in January and awarded in the fall each year.

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- Madison Hara, 2019 scholarship recipient and PISCES Women’s STEM Aerospace Research Scholars program participant

For more information about THINK Fund at HCF, please contact Lydia Clements, Vice President of Foundation & Corporate Partnerships, at (808) 935-1206 or lclements@hcf-hawaii.org

HawaiiCommunityFoundation.org/THINKFund