



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 29, 2021

21-163

Nurses of the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine's Hawai'i Center for AIDS to receive recognition at World AIDS Day Ceremony in Hawai'i

HONOLULU – The nursing staff of the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine's Center for AIDS (HICFA) will be recognized with a prestigious Suzanne Richard-Crum Award for 2021 at the annual World AIDS Day ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 1. The virtual event begins at 6 pm.

The HICFA conducts research to evaluate optimal therapies for HIV infection and AIDS-associated complications, increase understanding of the disease, and transfer research findings to improve the quality of life for those living with HIV. HICFA operates the Clint Spencer Clinic on O'ahu, Maui and Hawai'i Island and today provides care to about 500 patients living with HIV statewide.

HICFA nurses have been dedicated to the fight to end HIV and its stigma. They stepped forward to uphold the values of the nursing profession in the early days of the AIDS epidemic when fear, stigma, and discrimination were widespread. They have provided essential medical care to hundreds of people living with HIV/AIDS.

HICFA nurses have also contributed to research in numerous clinical trials for effective treatments to find a cure. Their work with AIDS service organizations and HIV housing programs has also elevated the level of health care among people living with HIV in Hawai'i.

"The current COVID pandemic reminds us of the challenges we faced when the HIV epidemic began four decades ago," said **Dr. Glenn Wasserman**, chief of the Hawai'i Department of Health's Communicable Disease and Public Health Nursing Division. "Our former Department of Health colleague, Suzanne Richard-Crum, would be proud of the HICFA nurses, who have worked tirelessly on the frontlines, providing direct patient care and taking the time to build meaningful bonds with their patients, seeing the whole person, not just the disease."

The entire nursing staff of HICFA, past and present, are being honored for their dedication and self-sacrifice. The HICFA nursing team includes: **Debbie Ogata-Arakaki, RN**, HICFA's Nurse-Coordinator since 1989 when operations began; **Nancy Hanks, RN**, who recently retired after 28 years with HICFA; **Cris Milne, APRN**, with HICFA over 25 years; **Lorna Nagamine, RN**, with HICFA for over 20 years; **Maya Barney, RN**, nurse-manager of the Clint Spencer Clinic for 5 years; and **Mary Lichota, RN**, the newest nurse at the Clint Spencer Clinic. The past nurses whose dedication and commitment left long lasting impacts include **Paul Coelho, Nicole Valcour, Joanne Frederick Auskern, Jo McKeague, Lyle Oshita, Monica Millard, James Cairl, Sandra Akina, and Sue Congdon.**

“The HICFA nurses make the world a better place by their love, kindness, and the care they give to our community. They have been and remain pillars of healthcare workers, treating and caring for people living with HIV/AIDS,” said **Raymond Alejo**, community health nurse at the Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center and a former recipient of a Suzanne Richmond-Crum Award. “The gentleness and kindness they lend to our HIV community breaks down barriers of shame. They provide a judgment-free environment and their patients are therefore able to access the care the nurses offer.”

Christine Kapi'ioho, director of client services at Kumukahi Health and Wellness on Hawai'i Island, praised the Clint Spencer Clinic nurses. “They are devoted to nurturing and displaying acts of kindness, even when the patient is stressed or in pain. The nurses are the glue that hold all the pieces together for a patient's care.”

Suzanne Richmond-Crum served for more than a decade as director of the Hawai'i Seropositivity and Medical Management Program of the Hawai'i Department of Health's Harm Reduction Services Branch and passed away in August 2004. The award was established in honor of the competence and compassion she demonstrated in her HIV/AIDS work and is presented each year in Hawai'i for outstanding contributions in providing HIV/AIDS services. 2021 will mark the 18th annual bestowing of this honor.

This year's World AIDS Day in Hawai'i will be commemorated with a community event on Wednesday, Dec. 1, at 6 p.m. It will take place virtually via Zoom, hosted by the Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu. All are welcome to be part of the ceremony to observe World AIDS Day and the presentation of the Suzanne Richmond-Crum Award. For more information on this and all statewide World AIDS Day events, go to: <https://worldaidsdayhawaii.org/>

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