



Lovely Hula Family

Preparing for a performance, Robyn Kuraoka and husband Lance (far right) make ti leaf skirts. Kupuna Carolee Nishi arranges flowers in her granddaughter Kiralee Kuraoka's hair. Ron Nishi helps his granddaughter Kaila Nishi with a lei.

Hawaiian music and dance have always been part of Robyn Kuraoka's life. "Before I could walk, I was sitting in my mom's hula classes," she says. "And it was the same for my daughter, Kiralee. We'd put her in her car seat in front of class while I was teaching. And when she started sitting up and crawling, we'd lay a mat out for her to sit on."

Kuraoka follows in the footsteps of her mom, Carolee Nishi. They belong to a dedicated hui of longtime volunteers who teach Hawaiian traditions such as hula, music, crafts, and language at Hula Hui O Kapunahala at the Nu'uaniu YMCA. Students range from keiki to kūpuna. "It's rewarding to see the children grow into wonderful adults and know that we had a small part in that," says Kuraoka.

Hula is shaping three generations of dancers in the Nishi family. Kuraoka's daughter and niece are active in the hui.



Photos courtesy of Robyn Kuraoka

"It's given them confidence and the sense that they can do anything. They've learned how to help their younger hula sisters and respect their kūpuna. And it's given them a sense of purpose," Kuraoka says.

Her husband, Lance, helps pick flowers and ti leaves for the dancers and drives them to performances. And Kuraoka's dad, Ron, attends weekend performances and rehearsals.

"No matter how busy we are as a family during the week, we can always count on seeing each other on Saturdays for hula at the YMCA," says Kuraoka.