“When I grew up I just knew that I wanted to help people but I didn’t know how. The YMCA gave me the tools to do that.”

— Mary, Y College Camp Mentor

When Mary was a sophomore in high school, she remembers reading the program bulletin advertising the YMCA’s College Camp. The chance to tour colleges and learn about financial aid offered an opportunity she hadn’t even considered. Says Mary, “I’ve never really thought about pursuing college because coming from my family and from Kalihi, we have a big stigma where all we do is go straight to the workforce and don’t pursue higher education.”

When Mary attended College Camp at the Atherton Y, she not only had a chance to learn about different colleges and universities, she also found new confidence in herself. Through teambuilding exercises at the Y’s Camp Erdman, she discovered she was capable of more than she imagined. In the process of being mentored, she also discovered that she could be a mentor too.

Mary enrolled at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and returned to College Camp to serve as a mentor in the program where she works with students who have come from challenging backgrounds just as she did. “These students are more than just the stereotypes they have grown up with,” says Mary. Through different courses at Camp Erdman and personal statement workshops, the Y helps students learn to direct their future. “It’s more than just learning about college and financial aid,” says Mary. “It’s learning about who you are and what you want to be.”

Atherton Y Goal
$45,000