‘The Y’ still shapes lives with core values

By Andy Beth Miller

I t carries one of the most recognized acronyms in the world today, but the Young Men’s Christian Association — more commonly known as YMCA — is quick to dispel any misconceptions about its time-honored name. Far from being limited to serving one gender, race or faith, the organization is dedicated to reaching out to all within the community, offering affordable programs and state-of-the-art facilities that foster health and well-being.

According to Carolyn Matsutani, director of human resources at the YMCA of Honolulu, the organization has been a welcoming and safe place for people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and financial means since its inception in 1869.

“Our eight YMCA branches and outreach programs reflect the communities we serve,” she explained, “each distinct in the variety of programs they provide, yet uniform in one aspect: We all work to strengthen the foundations of the community through programs and services focused on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

“Many people may still think of the YMCA as just a place to learn how to swim or play at the gym, with little understanding of the profoundly different family of volunteers and professionals we have become,” Matsutani continued. “We are more than a gym or a place to hang out. We are programs that will help people of all ages get and stay healthy ... who will help our youth grow and mature into responsible, civic-minded adults, and (assist) local families in need.”

The YMCA knows all too well that in order to continue on in these accomplishments, it requires a staff dedicated to carrying out the YMCA’s four core values of caring, respect, responsibility and honesty.

“It is truly inspiring to hear how our employees love their work environment. They know they are making an impact on the lives of children, adults, families and seniors and the vitality of the communities they serve. We are all very committed to our mission,” said Matsutani.

“We offer a variety of employment opportunities at our YMCA branches, Camp Erdman, A+ Afterschool program sites, teen program outreach sites in middle and high schools and at the YMCA of Honolulu Metropolitan Office, which provides administration services to the entire association,” she described. “The Y is dedicated to helping our employees reach their professional goals through coaching, career-pathing and a comprehensive leadership development and certification system that encourages learning at all stages of their careers.”

With the belief in investing in future generations, the YMCA also is seeking out “super staffers” for its Summer Day Camps at each of its branches and YMCA Camp Erdman, as well as other programs.

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