

# travel



**HAWAII'S BACKYARD**  
Pacific Islands Institute's programs immerse visitors in local culture and lifestyle >> G3

SIGNS OF HAWAIIAN LIFE >> G4  
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TRAVEL

SUNDAY 4/13/14 >> HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER >> G3

## Educational escapes take visitors off beaten path



CHERYL  
CHEE TSUTSUMI  
HAWAII'S BACKYARD

**K**aren Lockwood met her husband, Andrew, in 1995, when they were students at Amherst College in Massachusetts. He was from Hawaii; she was from California. Both were new to New England and wanted to explore it together.

"We went on road trips in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont and Maine," Lockwood recalled. "Along the way, we stopped at dozens of towns and met just as many amazing people. We toured factories, visited historical sites and browsed at farmers markets. We loved driving on back roads, tasting regional foods and learning new things."

Their penchant for such getaways made them good fits for Pacific Islands Institute, or PII, which Andrew's late mother had founded in 1989 to offer educational group travel programs in Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. The company is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Hawaii has been its primary destination from the start, and Andrew and Lockwood are now at the helm as president/CEO and vice president of business development, respectively.

When the couple moved to Hawaii in 1992, they started going on road trips just as they had done on the

East Coast. "We realized there is so much to discover in our backyard," Lockwood said. "We'd find wonderful places and ask ourselves, Could we bring a group here? What would the logistics be? That led to conversations with the owners to see if they were interested in occasionally hosting groups."

According to Lockwood, PII's programs are authentic Hawaii experiences geared to those who are eager to learn about local art, food, culture and lifestyle. Experts in astronomy, botany, geology, marine biology, Hawaiian history and other fields lead the classes and excursions.

One of Lockwood's favorite escapes is Hawaii island's Volcano region, which is included in six of PII's regularly scheduled programs. "I love the diversity of the landscape, from lush rain forests to barren lava fields," she said. "One of our group leaders is a retired Hawaii Volcanoes National Park ranger who points out steam vents, lava formations and native plants and birds on our hikes there. Those incredible discoveries are even more memorable when you're sharing them with friends, family or a group of like-minded people."

Intergenerational pro-



COURTESY ROSE MEECE

**Participants in the Submarines, Volcanoes and Tropical Forests program try their hand at poi pounding in Kahakulua, Maui.**

### IF YOU GO ...

#### PACIFIC ISLANDS INSTITUTE

- >> **Office:** 3566 Harding Ave., Suite 202, Honolulu
- >> **Call:** 732-1999
- >> **Cost:** \$100 to \$6,000 per person for trips ranging from one day to two weeks
- >> **Email:** travel@pac-island.com
- >> **On the Net:** www.ExplorethePacific.com
- >> **Notes:** Meeting places vary depending on the program. Call or email to receive a brochure (the latest one will be mailed in May) and ask to be put on PII's "Friends and Family" list to receive kamaaina discounts.

grams provide bonding time for keiki and their grandparents. Young and young-at-heart adventurers dive into outdoor activities such as surfing, snorkeling, paddling an outrigger canoe and riding a submarine.

On a weeklong service program, participants help maintain the Battleship Missouri, where the treaty ending World War II was signed. Tasks aboard the mammoth vessel, which is now a floating museum, include

scrubbing the teak decks, polishing brass fixtures and painting interior walls. Spending a night onboard gives the group a firsthand look at what life at sea was like 70 years ago for the "Mighty Mo's" 2,500 crewmen.

Since its inception, PII has provided programs for Road Scholar (www.road-scholar.org), a nonprofit educational travel organization which was launched in 1975 as Elderhostel. PII also

customizes programs for schools, families, churches, clubs and other groups of at least 10 people. Trips typically include a tour escort, three- to five-star accommodations, most or all meals, interisland airfare, ground transportation, and itineraries and interpretation by experts based on the program's focus and activity level.

One customized Oahu program included the fish auction at Honolulu Harbor, gyotaku (traditional Japanese fish printing) lessons, and tours to ukulele and chocolate factories and a bakery where participants made their own baguettes. In keeping with PII's commitment to environmentally sustainable practices, the group also spent time at Re-use Hawaii, which sells building materials salvaged from deconstructed homes.

"Hawaii is rich in experiences beyond the usual visitor activities and attractions," Lockwood said. "We enjoy taking travelers behind the scenes and off the beaten path with programs that are historically accurate and culturally and environmentally sensitive. By doing that, it's win-win-win for everyone — our staff, our guests and the remarkable communities that we visit."

*Cheryl Chee Tsutsumi is a Honolulu-based freelance writer whose travel features for the Star-Advertiser have won several Society of American Travel Writers awards.*

### LEARN AND EXPLORE

Following is a sampling of PII's upcoming programs. Call or check the website for more information.

#### REGULAR PROGRAMS

##### Tropical Splendor:

Visit Oahu, Maui, Kauai and Hawaii island on Norwegian Cruise Line's Pride of America  
Program No. 11513  
Sept. 24-Oct. 4,  
Oct. 29-Nov. 8  
Highlights: Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park

##### Hawaii's National Parks:

Exploring five islands from Volcanoes to Pearl Harbor  
Program No. 2810 (Oahu, Maui, Kauai, Molokai, Hawaii island)  
Oct. 13-29  
Highlights: Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park

**Aloha Hawaii:** Oahu, Maui, Hawaii island  
Program No. 21586  
Nov. 15-23  
Highlights: Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Arizona Memorial, Heeia Fishpond (paepaeoheea.org), Papahana Kuaola (papahanakuaola.com), Haleakala National Park, Iao Valley, snorkeling off Lahaina

#### INTERGENERATIONAL AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

Hawaiian water adventure  
Program No. 4827 (Oahu, Kona)  
June 16-24, June 23-July 1, July 21-29  
Highlights: Waikiki Aquarium, snorkeling, backyard luau, submarine tour, surfing lessons, outrigger canoe tour

#### SUBMARINES, VOLCANOES AND TROPICAL FORESTS

Program No. 12426  
Visit Oahu, Maui, Kauai and Hawaii island on NCL's Pride of America  
July 11-19  
Highlights: Private loi (taro farm) visit, Iao Valley, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, submarine tour, surfing lesson or outrigger canoe ride

#### SERVICE PROGRAM

**All Hands on Deck:** Maintaining the Battleship Missouri  
Program No. 2617 (Oahu)  
Aug. 27-Sept. 3 (includes "End of World War II" commemoration ceremony Sept. 2)  
Dec. 4-11 (includes Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony on Dec. 7)  
Highlights: Overnight stay on the ship, hands-on restoration work, classes on Pearl Harbor history



COURTESY JONATHAN WANG

Pacific Islands Institute can arrange custom programs for groups. University of Southern California students helped build a rock wall at Heeia Fishpond in Kaneohe during a program that PII organized for them during spring break last year.