GREATER THAN ITS PARTS

Three UH-affiliated individuals and their community partners talk about how their relationships create a whole new entity greater than what they can do alone.

From formal contracts that span countries and MOAs (Memorandum of Understanding) that cover decades to meetings over coffee and scribbled notes on napkins, partnerships at UH that reach out beyond its campuses are an amazingly mixed bag.

Some are global like Kapi'olani Community College’s partnership with tourism officials and educators from India for a joint President Obama-Prime Minister Singh grant proposal to develop a tourism curriculum model, hopefully this year, for Mumbai University. It’s part of India’s plan to establish 10,000 community colleges for 500 million students by 2030. Some have far-reaching impact, such as the UH School of Architecture’s 2013 MOA with China’s largest design and construction firm, China State Construction Engineering Corporation, to work together on design, sustainability and urbanization issues in natural and built environments to include joint research, training, and faculty and staff exchange.

But many, many more are about individual people collaborating – one-on-one – to meld together expertise, efforts, interests and personal passions to make inspired, sometimes crowd-pleasing, and even life-changing things happen that benefit people, places and the larger community in our island state.
MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN

MLPC Hawai‘i — providing free legal services since 2009 by UH law school’s faculty and students to more than 500 families served by Kokua Kalihi Valley’s federally qualified community health center — is one of only two MLPCs in the nation to win national recognition this year from among 231 such partnerships in 34 states.

DINA SHEK (WSRSL ’06), legal director and co-founder; also associate faculty specialist, William S. Richardson School of Law
DAVID DERAUF, executive director, Kokua Kalihi Valley

SHEK: Social injustice issues have been a lifelong interest (my Japanese mother was interned during World War II), so when (law school dean) Avi Soifer urged me to pursue a grant for a medical-legal partnership, I jumped at the chance. Why KKV? David’s brother, Chris, a pediatrician with ties to JABSOM and KKV, and I had coffee and we just clicked on the same ideas. For our law students, it’s about seeing that their schooling can have real-life impact; they become advocates for making peoples’ lives better.

DERAUF: Lots of things affect how people cope with health issues, which our doctors have no expertise in – housing, employment, immigration. Working with Dina and the law school has allowed us to open that Pandora’s box and expand our services to our large new immigrant population, particularly Micronesians. We joke that the ESQ in a letter is a much better motivator than an MD in getting help for our families. This collaboration enables us to truly see and advocate for policy issues that would not have come to light, even if we had an inkling of them underlying family health issues.

SHEK: I love that we are helping to raise that level of care where medical residents are now trained to screen for social/legal issues affecting health care. We capitalize on the trust that pediatricians have with their patients. We do preventive law to complement preventive medicine. Alicia Turlington, our pediatrician partner and MLPC medical director says, “I cannot imagine practicing medicine without a lawyer. I think I would be practicing substandard care.”

DERAUF: Patients don’t care about your degrees. They want to know what’s in your heart. Dina connects with our community. She’s one of us.

For more information: www.MLPCHawaii.org
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