

# 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE 4 of 5

## Nurse Excellence Awards

Two Nurse Excellence Awards were presented at this Conference.

Dr. Kevin Emmons DrNP, APN, AGPCNP-BC, CWCN, CFCN was presented with the Hawai'i-ANA Award for excellence in Foundations of Nursing Practice and for promoting the interdependence of Practice, Research, and Education, by Yurise Yamaguchi, his Undergraduate Student in the Nursing Program, at University of Hawaii at Hilo, Class of 2024 President and NSNA President – UH Hilo Chapter."



**Nurse Excellence Award winner Dr. Kevin Emmons & Yurise Yamaguchi (his student who nominated him) with ANA President**

Hawai'i-ANA Secretary and Past-President Katie Kemp, BAN, RN-BC was presented with the Hawai'i-ANA Award "In recognition of our 1st President, for her remarkable dedication and leadership in making Hawai'i-ANA the best and largest professional organization advocating for healthcare in Hawai'i", by grateful Hawai'i-ANA members."



**L to R: Hawai'i-ANA Director-at-Large Bob Gahol; Hawai'i-ANA Vice President and Executive Director, Linda Beechinor, DNP, FNP-BC, APRN; Hawai'i-ANA Secretary and Past-President Katie Kemp, BAN, RN-BC; Hawai'i-ANA President Nancy Atmospera-Walch, DNP, MPH, MCHES, LNHA, CCHN, CMC, FAAN, BSN, RN.**



**Nurse Excellence Award winners Dr. Kevin Emmons & Katie Kemp with ANA President**

*Below is the letter of recommendation submitted by Yurise Yamaguchi on behalf of Dr. Kevin Emmons.*

August 27, 2023

Aloha esteemed Hawaii American Nurses Association Members,

I write this letter of recommendation on behalf of my professor, Dr. Kevin Emmons and his nomination for the Foundations of Nursing Practice Award. I could not imagine a better candidate for this prestigious award and am honored to have the opportunity to write this recommendation.

My name is Yurise Yamaguchi, and I am a senior in the nursing program here at UH Hilo. I am the president of my cohort and the NSNA President for our campus chapter. Although the first year of the program has flown by, I can still remember feeling overwhelmed during the orientation process, fully knowing that the next two years would be some of the most challenging years I would face in my life. Looking around at my peers and seeing the expression on their faces on our first day of school assured me that I was not alone in that sentiment. However, upon meeting Dr. Emmons, not only did I believe we were incredibly lucky and privileged to have the honor of someone so experienced and knowledgeable at our school, we were also fortunate to have an educator whose passion and enthusiasm continues to mold us into the best versions of ourselves so that we can one day safely serve the communities in which we live.

**'O ka 'imi na'auao, ke ola a me ke aloha kā kākou e huliāmahi ai** - Connecting learning, life, and aloha.

I have never had a professor go out of his way to make learning accessible for everyone in the way that Dr. Emmons does. When students shared the difficulties with long commute times that cut into study time, he made his recorded lectures available in formats that allowed for streaming. For those who are visual learners, he provides multiple graphics, charts, and videos to supplement his Power Points. He promotes enhanced retention and application of dense subject matter by the use of case studies that we work through as a class. His lectures are engaging, never just reading off of a PowerPoint slide, and his energy and enthusiasm for nursing is evident in the way he connects with the class as a whole. When he says there are no dumb questions, he means it 100%. At no point has he ever made a student feel less than for not getting the correct answer. Instead, he always praises the effort, providing encouragement that fosters the continued engagement of the critical thinking process. It has cultivated an environment where students are not afraid to participate. Because of this, our class is constantly inspired to rise to the challenges he presents each week in lecture. We recognize the time and effort he takes in preparing the lectures and want to show him our appreciation by working just as hard to adequately prepare for class. This is just a fraction of the infinite ways he has worked to support and encourage us academically.

**'A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi** - One learns from many sources.

The University of Hawaii at Hilo has the distinction of having one of the most diverse student populations in the United States. Our cohort represents the diversity of the community in which we live and will one day serve. It is in reflecting about this that I recall a lecture where Dr.

Emmons spoke of all of the places and people he visited and met with since his arrival to Hawaii Island. He made it a priority to meet with practitioners of la'au lapa'au (the traditional Native Hawaiian practice of treatment or healing through the use of native plants, herbs, and spirituality). Dr. Emmons took the time to learn about the cultural significance of kalo to Hawaiians (it's more than just a tuber that one finds in paste form at lu'aus) and connected with leaders in our Hawaiian community to gain a deeper understanding of the place he chose as his new home. Also, by incorporating what he has learned during his short time here into our lectures, Dr. Emmons was able to connect concepts and theories that felt foreign to us, showing us how what we are learning is truly applicable to our lives and nursing as a profession. He doesn't sugar coat the disparities our community faces, circling back to remind us each week of the reasons why what we are doing is so important. He has taught us that when healthcare and its providers reflect the communities in which they serve, that positive outcomes increase, and that what we are working toward is significant. It is this kind of respect that exemplifies who he is as a person. His connection with us, his students, is fostered in mutual respect and a desire to truly understand one another beyond just the superficial student teacher relationship. This relationship continues to grow and strengthen and is probably the reason as to why there are now many students who are interested in continuing their education - wanting to become "Mini Emmons" in their respective future specialties.

**E hele me ka pu'olo** – make every person, place, or condition better than you left it always.

Dr. Emmons not only talks the talk – he walks the walk. His enthusiasm for healthcare promotion extends far beyond the classroom. Most recently, he has given his time to provide wound care to persons experiencing homelessness in our community. Showing aloha, compassion, and empathy to those who need it, he is showing us that nursing goes far beyond the brick-and-mortar boundaries of a clinic or hospital. He goes to those who lack the resources necessary to find adequate care, meeting them wherever they are. Additionally, Dr. Emmons is also taking it a step further by using this as an opportunity for his students to shadow him when he goes into the community to show us first-hand the challenges and hardships that some of the members in our community are facing. In so many ways, while we always strive to do no harm, he is a reminder to us that we should also push ourselves to try to actively do good, giving as much of ourselves within our scope of practice to bring care and comfort to those who need it.

**Kūlia i ka nu'u** - Strive to reach the highest.

Through his actions, Dr. Emmons has proven that he is a leader in nursing education. He does this by going above and beyond to meet each student at the level they are at, encouraging each and every one of us to strive for excellence, and respecting us as the student we are in this moment. His work ethic is incomparable and is one that continues to inspire us to push ourselves harder, even when everything feels overwhelming. In him, I have found a mentor that I trust and respect and his guidance is something I will never fail to appreciate. It is because of him that I have decided to continue my education after the BSN program in order to be able to one day teach and inspire future students who will, undoubtedly, feel as I did a few short months ago. This is why I fully support the nomination of Dr. Emmons for this award. **'A'ohe pu'u kī'ekī'e ke ho'a'o 'ia e pi'I** - it is because of him that no cliff is so tall it cannot be climbed.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration,



Yurise Yamaguchi  
University of Hawaii at Hilo  
Undergraduate Student | Nursing Program  
Class of 2024 President / NSNA President – UH Hilo Chapter