



# THE OUTDOOR CIRCLE INCUBATES HAWAII NATURE CENTER



April 2021 – As we celebrate Hawaii Nature Center’s 40th anniversary, we pay tribute to our parentage The Outdoor Circle, an institution that was founded in 1912.

It all began in 1970 when federal funds became available for a people’s park through the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The Hawaii State Legislature set aside matching funds and 2,000 acres were designated as the Makiki–Tantalus State Recreation Area. A decade later, an environmental education center in the valley was realized.

Mary Steiner, who served as The Outdoor Circle’s Chief Executive Officer in 1992 and led the organization for nearly a quarter of a century, recalls some of the history that was shared with her. “Our members felt strongly that Honolulu was becoming more and more urban and there was a real fear that children wouldn’t be able to experience nature.” There was a growing desire amongst members to create a legacy of nature’s protectors that would pass down this responsibility from generation to generation.

An idea was born to start an initiative called the Makiki Educational Center which organized in a warehouse and became the humble start of a sweeping movement. It was the foresight of those early visionaries in the 1970s who anticipated the impact of Honolulu’s changing landscape and the important role that children would play as nature’s stewards.

As Mary recalls: “The Outdoor Circle was a group of nearly all women who were extremely insightful and could imagine the density that was to become downtown Honolulu and now Aiea past Makakilo.”

Mary recalls that well into the 1990s, the two organizations remained steadfastly connected. Many of the board members such as Laura Thompson, Irma Cunha and Ann Subenberg of The Outdoor Circle also served on the board of the Hawai’i Nature Center. In addition Mary worked as close colleagues with HNC’s executive director back then Tamar Chotzen.

With shared values, a common heritage and humble roots, Hawai’i Nature Center has carried forward the vision of The Outdoor Circle and has since touched the lives of more than 1 million keiki and their families.

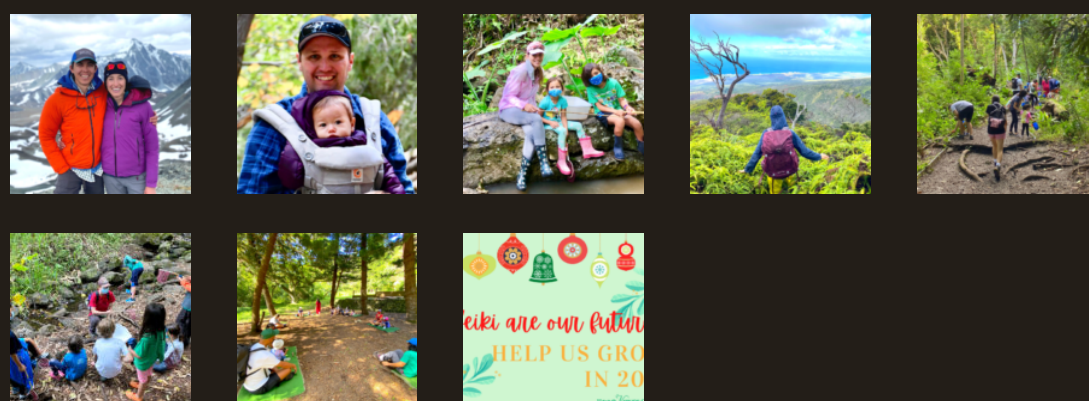
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We seek to foster awareness, appreciation, understanding, and stewardship of Hawai’i’s environment by educating children with an interactive and immersive approach.

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