

In Honor of ERNEST LIBARIOS, SR.

College can be a pivotal time in a young person's life. For over 40 years, counselor and professor Ernie Libarios has nurtured the academic and personal growth of Leeward Community College students through counseling, and teaching culturally-based self development.

His professional expertise coupled with the teaching experience of his late wife Shirley, helped spur the growth of Sariling Gawa. Thirty years ago, the two providing leadership training for the team of young Filipinos planning the first statewide Sariling Gawa conference. Their teachings became the structural foundation for the conferences which now sharpen the leadership skills of over 120 young Filipinos each year.

"Ernie and Shirley's influence is evident even to this day," said Sariling Gawa board member Milli Asuncion. "Every conference still features small group discussions – or barangay sessions – and basic rules of group dynamics govern the actions of participants.

"In addition, motivational energizers raise morale and conflict resolution gatherings empower leaders to cope with disagreements and diversity in a healthy manner. After Shirley's sudden passing in 1987, Ernie continued to assist the Sariling Gawa leaders in training new and eager groups of young people."

Ernie is a proud Filipino deeply rooted in Hawai'i. He grew up in Kona. After graduating from Konawaena High School, he went on to earn a bachelor's degree in history from Chaminade University, and a master's degree in educational psychology from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

His expertise in academic advising – especially of underrepresented students – and his development of a culturally-based self development course have earned him local, state, national, and international acclaim. He has received award recognition from organizations including: the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents, the United Filipino Council of Hawai'i, the National Education Association, and the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development.

Ernie makes time to share his expertise with the community serving organizations including the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission and the United Visayan Club. He is also an ordained deacon for the Catholic Diocese of Honolulu. Part of his ministry is to serve the spiritual needs of inmates at the Hālawa Correctional Facility.

"Time and again, Ernie and Shirley's message to their young trainees was clear: 'Learn from us, and pass it on,'" said Asuncion. "Their only hope was that someday they could sit back and watch these young people take the leadership reins and continue to fuel successful Sariling Gawa leadership conferences for years to come. "I think that day has come. Today we celebrate their insurmountable trust in those young leaders."

Ernie resides in Aiea. He and Shirley have two sons, Ernest Jr., and Jason, and three granddaughters.

