



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Sooz Mirikitani
- Joan Bennett
- Terrence Young and Michelle Bowerman
- Debra Gochros
- Jacqueline Levine
- Heather Kihara
- Corinne Ching

### **Sooz Mirikitani**

Sooz was born and raised in Honolulu, graduated from Kalani High School, stayed in Hawaii for college and earned an undergraduate degree in Sociology from UH Manoa. Many years later, she was greatly inspired to apply for law school by Richard, an attorney she met while volunteering for his social crusade "Save Our Beach." After graduating with a juris doctor degree from Marquette School of Law and admission to the bar in WI and HI, Sooz married Richard.

Her past work experience includes:

- Scientific illustrator for the Bishop Museum, Entomology Department
- Certified Ophthalmic Technician at Straub Ophthalmology Department
- Certified Enucleation Technician for Lions Eye Bank of Hawaii, harvesting eye tissue for surgeons for transplant purposes
- Guardian ad litem for the State of Hawaii Family Court, representing the interests of neglected/at-risk children
- Assistant Director for Pacific Law Institute, a continuing legal education organization which put on teaching seminars for attorneys and members of the State Judiciary

In 2001 Sooz made a radical career change, and together with Richard, opened up their home in East Oahu to the public for private events. Listed on the State Register of Historic Places, the Bayer Estate is a seaside property which has been the venue for many gatherings - weddings and receptions, graduations, corporate events, films and television shows (CBS' Hawaii Five-0 featured Bayer Estate as the home of *Lt. Commander Steve McGarrett*). Sooz has donated use of the property for multiple fundraising events for charitable causes near and dear to her including historic preservation, animal rescue, and of course, Conservation Dogs of Hawaii.

Her lifelong love of animals, especially dogs, eventually led her down the path to discovering the world of scent detection training. Yogi, their Labrador Retriever, who is now 6 yrs. old, started training when he was 2.5 years old with Nosework Club of Hawaii, and continued in scent work under the tutelage of Kyoko Johnson. She is



hoping to shepherd CDH dog/handler teams into the area of medical detection training in the foreseeable future.

Other past and present “pleasures in life” have included: alternative health and vegetarian cooking, hiking with the dogs, horseback riding, floral arranging & wili lei making, paddling (steered in the 1<sup>st</sup> Women’s Moloka’i to Oahu Race in 1979), 60s music, tandem biking with Richard, and outdoor movie nights with friends and family.

### **Joan Bennett**

I was born and raised mostly in Detroit, Michigan. I lived in Southern California for ten years in early childhood. Educated at University of Michigan, as a science major. Stopped my education to marry the love of my life and for many years I worked at two dental schools. University of Michigan in Operative and Periodontia. At Indiana University I worked in Pedodontia. While at Indiana I worked on programs directly for the founder of Crest toothpaste correlating the socio-economic findings with the findings in the patients mouth at the grade school and early teen years level.

Later on in life I managed and started two very large thrift shops in Honolulu and used my good organizational skills. I presently still am managing one shop in Kailua. I also served on the Mamiya Theatre Board for several years, which promoted culture & education on the arts to the community. I have had a lifetime of loving animals, especially dogs and presently have a pair of Tibetan Terriers. The very thoughts of the possibility of our beloved animals being trained for very early detection of diseases, is just breath taking and I would dearly love to somehow add to this possibility.

### **Terence Young DDS**

I was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii. I graduated from Punahou High School. After graduation, I attended Creighton University and obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Respiratory Therapy. I later attended University of Pacific School in Dentistry. I have been practicing dentistry for 34 years of which the last eight have been dedicated to airway focused dentistry, which addresses the needs of patients who have sleep disordered breathing.

I have been involved with organizations such as The Rotary Club of Honolulu Sunrise as a Charter member. I have assisted with organizing a medical equipment drive for Western Samoa Hospitals. I organized a team of dental professionals to volunteer in Western Samoa’s dental clinic. I have been a board member for Hawaii Dental Service. I have been a certified Red Cross First Aid / CPR instructor since 1995. I have been a volunteer with the Red Cross in Shelter Operations. I currently have my HAM radio license.



My interests include outdoor activities, cooking, fishing, camping, hiking, archery, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding.

I grew up with animal companions—dogs, birds, rats, fish, turtles, guinea pigs, and a cat.

### **Michelle Bowerman**

I have lived in Hawaii for most of my life and I've raised my three children in the Islands as well. For the last 14 years, I have pursued careers in the healthcare industry. Globally, our health and well-being are affected by one another, man and animal alike. The Covid pandemic is a reminder of this. I have worked in hospice and currently am managing an airway focused dental practice. We are a general dentistry practice as well as one that screens and treats sleep disordered breathing in children and adults.

I am a lifelong lover of all animals, advocating for the promotion of humane animal treatment and the prevention of animal cruelty. I have remained affiliated with multiple animal welfare organizations, both in Hawaii and internationally, for more than 25 years. The unconditional humanity animals exude is an inspiration to me.

It gives me great pleasure to see animals interacting with people in our everyday world, whether for work or pleasure. The important work of Conservation Dogs of Hawaii is very much in alignment with my beliefs in utilizing our 4-legged friends for the betterment of mankind and the lands upon which we live.

### **Debra Gochros**

Debra was raised in Colorado with a love of animals since early childhood, becoming a self proclaimed animal rehabilitator at age 12. Raising such creatures as baby ground squirrels, baby birds, snakes, and lizards with her ever loving dog Spot by her side, she was able to learn more about the world of animals through actual experiences. As time went on, Debra volunteered with exotic animals being trained for motion pictures. This gave her some unique experiences with lion cubs, black bear cubs, and even an introduction to wolves. Next came her favorite time of all, rehabilitating and researching hawks, owls, and eagles in southeastern Colorado.

In 1980, Debra relocated to Kaua'i and started a new life. She found herself involved with the visitor industry in a variety of roles but switched positions when offered an opportunity to work with parrots in a wildlife program at a resort on Kaua'i. In 1992 she relocated to O'ahu to attend University of Hawai'i at Manoa. She graduated with a degree in Secondary Education with a focus in Science while working full time as a reptile keeper at the Honolulu Zoo.

Moving back to Kaua'i, she started a teaching career as a middle school Science teacher. Debra loved turning on middle school students to Science and has heard



from former students that she motivated them to focus on a career in science in college. She taught in several public schools, and a Hawaiian Immersion school, learning Hawaiian (although she was able to teach in English). Debra involved the students in conservation projects while teaching them the importance of protecting native plants and animals. She focused on turning students into science nerds by getting them involved in such things as butterfly houses, shearwater projects and garden clubs. Extracurricular activities included being chosen as one of 25 teachers across the nation to attend a NASA supported project of developing lesson plans with JPL and CalTech. In 2005, in collaboration with the University of Alaska, Debra assisted with writing a curriculum comparing continental and oceanic volcanoes.

In 2003 Debra joined Kaua'i Search and Rescue and became a K9 handler with her dog Astro, a wilderness search dog. They helped in searches with missing hikers, families lost in a flood, lost Alzheimers patients, and others in need of assistance. Debra also became a HAM radio operator and continues today assisting with communication across Hawai'i.

In December 2020, Debra started training her dogs Luna and Xena to become conservation K9s. As volunteers with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Luna and Xena detect native wetland birds affected by avian botulism. Debra and her dogs continue today going out to Hanalei Wildlife Refuge once to twice a week to survey for sick birds and retrieve the carcasses of those affected by botulism. In 2022 Luna and Xena were awarded 100 hour volunteer pins from FWS for their dedicated service, and Debra received the volunteer of the year award.

Currently Debra volunteers for a variety of groups: K9 handler for FWS, Wildlife interpretation at the Kilauea Point for FWS, Albatross in the Schools program for FWS, VP for the Friends of Kaua'i Wildlife Refuges non-profit, Communications for Kaua'i Search and Rescue, and now a board member of Conservation Dogs of Hawai'i. Debra also received the 2022 Mea Ho'omana'o award from the Kaua'i Chamber of Commerce for volunteering service.

### **Jacqueline Levine**

Jackie was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, attended UCLA where she was an All-American swimmer, graduating with a major in geology with an emphasis in business.

Jackie then moved to the Utah/Idaho area becoming a successful entrepreneur creating three museum exhibits focusing on interactive education for children in paleontology and geology. Jackie developed her own fossil kits that were sold in 35 museums in the US and Canada and supplied museums globally with fossil, rocks, minerals. During this time she also wrote a children's book based on her experience of excavating fossils with her children and father. *The Adventures with professor Dig It! Digging With The Dinosaurs.*



Decades later, Jackie was approached to represent Lambertz, a 370 year German Cookie Company, as their Vice President of USA division concentrating on Specialty Markets. During her time with Lambertz, the USA division grew to over 300 million in annual sales; including private label accounts with Costco, Sams Club and Walgreens.

After raising her two children, Alex and Dana in Utah and Idaho, Jackie and her husband Maury migrated to the North Shore of Oahu to focus on their love of the ocean. They have been North Shore residents for 10 years.

Jackie has been involved in numerous philanthropic endeavors including major fundraising for International NGO Helpcode; Drowning Prevention Program teaching life saving swim skills to Cambodian children. She also served on the Board of Directors for the St. Michaels Church on the North Shore and volunteers at the Medical Reserve Corp for Hawaii State Health Department.

Jackie's love for animals and her beloved labradoodle Hank led her to conservation nose work. Jackie and her dog Hank enjoy hiking and finding "devil weed." In Utah this summer they worked on finding elk and deer antlers and took a class in rattle snake detection.

In addition to swimming and surfing, Jackie is an accomplished distance runner and triathlete. She has completed over 30 marathons, 20 ultramarathons, and several Ironman Triathlons.

### **Heather Kihara DVM**

Born and raised on the island of Oahu, Heather is blessed to be able to continue her career and follow her passions here in the islands. From a young age, everyone knew that she would become a veterinarian. She has always adopted and cared for animals and many locals remember her goat out in the lawn, and her dogs in parades as hula halau mascots. She enjoyed a great public school education at Leilehua High School and had wonderful teachers who fostered her love for agriculture and science. With those combined interests, veterinary medicine was a natural career choice. She received a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at Colorado State University. After graduating, she returned home to Hawaii to join a very large and busy veterinary emergency hospital. From there, she has practiced at several hospitals until joining Hill's Pet Nutrition which has provided an amazing opportunity to visit almost every clinic in the state and become a more diverse part of the vet community. These connections have allowed Heather to become the current president of the Honolulu Veterinary Society and current president elect of the Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association.

At first Heather's involvement with CDH was to advise on first aid and safety protocols with the working dog teams. That changed dramatically when a highly energetic 8 month old terrier found her way to Heather's home! This dog is



something else and we quickly realized she not only needed an enormous amount of basic obedience and behavior modification but potentially a job! Bear and Heather enjoyed their time at first just learning scent detection work (boxes will never be the same again) and then when introduced to the scent of rodents... Bear's inner terror (...oops I mean terrier) found its true calling!

While Heather and Bear fully enjoy being able to gather with friends, dance hula (Bear does go to class), and travel (Bear has also gone to the mainland), they do miss the days of the pandemic in which they could focus on dog training and gardening in order to social distance. Heather also likes to occasionally horseback ride and latin dance which she can not do with Bear in tow. Heather and Bear also share their household with Nacho, Taco, Frijole, Sopapilla, and Spaz, who are all considered Heather's fur-children but would rather spend their time on the couch rather than participate in CDH.

### **Corinne Ching**

Born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, Corinne was educated at Punahou School and University of Hawaii. She is married to Dr. Stuart Lerner, MD and they have one daughter Anna Lauren. Corinne has always been interested in helping people and improving the community around her. She served on two Neighborhood Boards (Downtown and Liliha), spent ten years as an elementary school ESL teacher, then served Representative Quentin Kuhio Kawanānakoā as his community liaison. She later ran for office herself, serving five terms in the State House of Representatives where her passions included environmental protection, agriculture and historic preservation.

Especially as a former teacher and legislator, Corinne sees canines as unique in their potential to help, whether through protection of our servicemen, search and rescue efforts, assisting the disabled, or detecting endangered and/or invasive species. It is her hope that canines detecting various diseases will become mainstreamed. One of the highlights of her legislative career was a speech wherein she outlined the benefits of dogs in defense of a bill addressing abuse of dogs.

In her spare time, Corinne enjoys historical documentaries, learning foreign language, gardening and organizing events for the neighborhood children.