



## Elijah Anakalea-Buckley Future Engineer

*“He ali `i ka `āina, he Kauwā ke kanaka”*, this translates into “The land is the chief, man is its servants”. This way of thinking has escaped the minds of youth today. Elijah Anakalea-Buckley strives toward this ideal, putting the land before all because of the life that it gave and continues to give. Elijah is an incoming freshman at Northern Arizona University. A graduate of Hawaii Preparatory Academy, he attended Waimea Middle School and the Kanu O Ka Aina Public Charter School. For SHYLI’s Mentor & Job Shadow Day Program, Elijah shadowed Paul Ponthieux, Blue Planet Research and Christine Young, Pu’u Wa’awa’a Ranch Zero Waste.

Elijah served as an Emerging Leader for the Institute’s 12th Youth Leadership Summit where he officially welcomed the Hokule’a Worldwide Voyage to Martha’s Vineyard. Elijah first served as a youth delegate from Hawaii Island at the 2015 Youth Leadership Summit. An active member of the Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative (SHYLI), Elijah represented SHYLI at the **VERGE Conference** with Governor Ige and DBEDT Director Luis Salaveria. He co-lead SHYLI’s delegation to Hawaii’s official Opening Day Ceremonies.

For SHYLI’s Job Shadow Day 2016 Elijah was with U.S. Senator Brian Schatz at **HCATT’s BESI Waste to Energy Project Dedication**. He was mentored by Paul Ponthieux and Christine Young, at **Pu’u Wa’awa’a Ranch**; Dennis Furukawa, **Real Green Power** and Ravi Pare, **Oceanit/Design Thinking Hawaii**. He participated in the **Pu’u Wa’awa’a Ranch Energy Lab Tour**. For his SHYLI Sustainability Project Elijah created a beautiful presentation **Zero-Waste and Sustainable Education** which he is sharing with local students to inspire them to join with him to preserve our islands and our planet.

Elijah is very involved in the community, often participating and helping in local Makahiki and Makalii (voyaging canoe) activities. Elijah is involved in many sports and pursues them with passion while balancing his academic and social lives. He is a part of the Kulia I Ka Pono program in Kawaihae teaching and spreading the voyaging side of the Hawaiian culture to the youth every summer. While venturing and exploring the beauties of the island he keeps his values of respect and humility everywhere he goes. One of his focuses for sustainability is keeping Hawaii beautiful while staying resourceful in the process with Zero-Waste programs. He also has the dream of bringing college sustainability programs to the Big Island and his community because of the ideal location and the awareness, initiative and support it would bring to the island.



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**Jacob Bashista**

Jacob Bashista is a homeschool graduate. He is currently a mentor of an FRC (First Robotics Challenge) and FTC (First Technical Challenge) Teams. He is currently an Intern for Holyoke Codes, a non profit that teaches Programming and Robotics to kids of all ages in the Holyoke, MA surrounding areas.

Jacob is a full time app developer and has worked on many projects including an app to track High Altitude Balloons in real time for a startup, goMake. He is also developing a tool allowing kids to make mods for Minecraft Pocket Edition using drag and drop programming blocks called MinelyMod.

While home schooled Jacob spent much of his time learning how to program and develop software. When Jacob was 16 he switched from being home schooled to going full time at his local community college. There he is getting an associates degree in web development.

Jacob goal is develop apps and software to further boost kids understanding of science and technology by creating interactive lessons. He hopes these lessons when allow kids to have fun when learning about what they can do to further boost their own careers and their local community.



**Cassandra Castillo Cruz**  
**Entrepreneur • Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative**

Kassandra Castillo Cruz is a successful entrepreneur is proud of her Vieques Puerto Rico roots. She loves to inspire young people to pursue their dreams. From a very early age, Kassandra was an integral part of her mother's small business of garbage removal and recycling in Vieques. Later, she received her Business Marketing Degree from Inter American University in Puerto Rico and spent a semester abroad at the Spain Business School in Barcelona.

Kassandra achieved her first dream as a top-fashion model and fashion designer. When she was 14-years-old, she joined the Institute's first bilingual demonstration project, the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative. With VYLI's support, she participated in her first beauty contest, created a professional portfolio, received her first press, and was introduced to the fashion industry leaders who then organized her first professional photo shoots. For VYLI's Job Shadow Day, Kassandra was matched with Ileana Cambó, former Ms. Puerto Rico and VP of L'Oreal. Kassandra's modeling career then skyrocketed - and she received many professional modeling jobs and awards. In just 3 years, she became a model for UNICA, the top-modeling agency in Puerto Rico.

Kassandra helped develop VYLI's Entrepreneurship Initiative. She conducted workshops to train young people to turn local natural resources of seeds, beads, shells, glass and stones into unique jewelry, and once a week, VYLI youth sold their wares. They also raised funds to travel to the neighboring island of Tortola to exhibit their wares at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Caribbean Artisan Festival. While there, the youth experienced quality craftsmanship from ten other Caribbean countries, learned how to preserve their unique culture, and contributed to the economic well-being of their own island. Kassandra helps aspiring models by providing guidance, organizing fashion shows and professional photo shoots, and leading college-prep workshops to encourage youth to strive towards higher education.

Kassandra's entrepreneurial efforts include designing her own line of bathing suits and accessories and studying swimwear design at Centro de Las Artes del Diseño y la Alta Costura. Kassandra was the first employee for the startup company Trendlee.com. In 2014, Kassandra moved with the company to New York City, where it is now a \$5 million enterprise. Kassandra is the Head of Operations at Trendlee.com and Rebagg.com, where she develops operation processes, and manages customer service, logistics, quality control, and leads a team of twelve people.

In 2016 Kassandra led an Entrepreneur Workshop for the Institute's newest initiative in Holyoke, Massachusetts. With Girls Inc. of Holyoke she showed girls how to use entrepreneurship to work towards her goals. She gave her first speech at VYLI's Youth Leadership Summit 2004, and served as faculty for the Institute's Summits from 2012-2014. In 2014 she assisted with the Institute's Hawaii Initiative and mentors young people to realize their dreams.



**Tania DuPont**  
**Emerging Leader • Hawaii**

Tania DuPont is an incoming freshman at Dartmouth University, where she will study environmental law. Born and raised on Hawaii Island in Hawaii, Tania comes from a family of modest means but high expectations. She attended public schools through 8<sup>th</sup> grade where three out of four students came from low-income families and where food security and access to healthcare are pervasive issues. Having worked hard in school and having been pushed to excel by her family, she was fortunate to receive a nearly full scholarship to attend Hawaii Preparatory Academy (HPA). Tania is grateful for this opportunity, and this fuels her commitment to serve others.

Tania was nominated to serve as a youth delegate at the Institute's 12<sup>th</sup> Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development on Martha's Vineyard. As an active member of the Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative, she dreams of bringing positivity into the lives of others by ensuring they have basic necessities such as nutritious and delicious food, clean water, and a place to call home. Tania's SHYLI Sustainability-In-Action Project is a PSA on Food Security on Hawaii Island, to inspire others to donate their time, talents and resources and has produced videos to support food security on Hawaii Island. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsZfa22xdrE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsZfa22xdrE)

Tania actively pursues initiatives that encompass the state of good she has so much admiration for. Her volunteer service projects include beach clean ups and forest/watershed restoration efforts. She has also headed multiple awareness fundraisers for Cystic Fibrosis and Red Cross relief initiatives. Working with sustainability projects has increased her awareness of the world we live in. It is because of these projects that Tania has had the ability to recognize reality, thus driving her to pursue goals that initiate a change for the better. Tania strives to begin a non-profit, community service-focused foundation of her own one-day. She is passionate about the seeing the world and hopes to experience many cultures and environments foreign from her own.

Tania has traveled to her family's homeland of Tahiti. While there, Tania assimilated into the way of life on the islands, participating in the local Tahitian dance and drumming festival by learning the extensive routines, taught in French and Tahitian. Everyone on the island of Rurutu demonstrated self-sustainable methods of living, relying very little on the barge that brought products from the main island and instead utilized fishing and native fruits and vegetables from local farmlands. Revisiting her cultural foundation played an important role in evolving the way Tania views her home in Hawaii, and evoked her recognition that Hawaii could also become a self-sustainable island. Tania believes tenacity is an integral aspect of sustainability and reiterates that failures must not be seen as a discouragement, but rather must be drawn upon and utilized as a means to improve.

An avid photographer, writer and aspiring filmmaker, Tania wrote her first published essay on the **Gandhi Youth Forum**; her first published article in *The Civil Beat*, helped produce SHYLI's video: **Sustainable Economic Development for Hawaii's Future**. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkf4RE1w7GA&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkf4RE1w7GA&feature=youtu.be)

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**Taynara Goncalves**  
**Future Doctor**

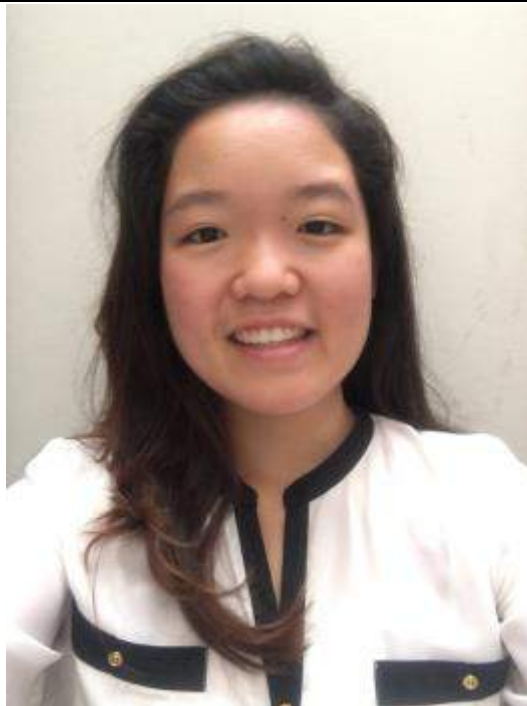
Taynara Goncalves is an incoming sophomore at Gordon State College. Graduated from Martha's Vineyard Regional High School where she was on the Honor Roll and soccer team. Taynara's dream is to become a doctor. Born in Brazil, Taynara moved with her family to the Island when she was four. Last summer Taynara visited her family in Brazil for the first time with her two siblings. They were very proud to hear of her hard work to become a doctor. Taynara speaks 3 languages: Portuguese, English, and Spanish. She helps translate for Brazilian people when they visit the Emergency Room at Martha's Vineyard Hospital. Every month Taynara does community service at her church teaching children the lessons from the Bible and other youth development activities. She has also done community service at the Martha's Vineyard Hospital.

For **MVYLI's College Prep Program** Taynara was hosted by Dr. James Wolff at Boston University's Department of International/Public Health. Mr. & Mrs. Caleb Loring hosted Taynara when she visited Gordon College. Taynara participated in **MVYLI's Career Mentor & Job Shadow Day Program: 2012-2015**. She was mentored by Dr. John Lamb, General Practice, Internist, Dr. Julia Stunkel, Family Practice and Dr. Daniel Pesch, OB/GYN. Impressed by their personal care for their patients, this confirmed her decision to be a doctor. From 2014-2015 Taynara was also mentored by Susan Crampton to support her college aspirations. Taynara served on the 1<sup>st</sup> Brazilian delegation to MVYLI's 2013 Youth Leadership Summit; as a MVYLI Visioneer to create the 2014 & 2015 Summit; and at the 2014 Cronkite Awards. For MVYLI's Multicultural Project Taynara spoke to younger students to inspire them.

*Coming to America was a big change for my family. It was difficult at first but I can't be more grateful for living here. I love to get to know people who are multicultural. Each person has a different story and each one of them will impact you in a different way. That is why the MVYLI Multicultural Project is so important to me. I want to bring the Island together and appreciate everyone's culture. The Island is filled with multi-cultured people. We are all big community, a big family filled with amazing stories to share with one another.*



**MVYLI Mentor Program**  
Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative [www.mvyl.org](http://www.mvyl.org)



**Jacqueline Noborikawa**  
**Emerging Leader • Hawaii**

Jacqueline “Jackie” Noborikawa is an incoming sophomore at Champlain College, where she is majoring in Computer Networking & Cybersecurity and minoring in Mathematics. She is currently involved in the CHAMP (Champlain Has Activities and Motivational Programming) and Women in ITS clubs, and she has an internship through the HTDC (High Technology Development Corporation).

Previously, as part of SHYLI’s Mentor & Job Shadow Day Program, Robbie Melton at High Technology Development Corporation invited Jackie to attend the NSA Conference’s session on Technology Commercialization. She was honored to spend time with Linda Berger, Alexis Henderson, and Karen Presley and meet NSA Captain Cliff Bean and Mr. Alli, NSA’s recruiter in Hawaii. Jackie also spoke on the STEM panel: Solving the Equation AAUW’s (American Association of University Women).

While in high school, Jackie learned that while money has a large impact on a school’s quality, the community is another important factor. Jackie has determined that despite the economic challenges her high school faces, it can become sustainable with the help of the community. Jackie grew up in Kaneohe on the Windward side of Oahu, where she was surrounded by numerous Japanese and Hawaiian influences. This resulted in many Japanese and Hawaiian traditions, dinners (such as shabu shabu and luau stew), and the occasional Japanese and Hawaiian words.

Jackie is most interested in social and environmental sustainability. The ability to make small changes now and have a huge positive effect in the future is why Jackie would like to bring sustainability to Oahu. For her SHYLI Sustainability-In-Action Project, Jackie led the pilot program with Castle High School’s Knights of the Roundtable Club for SOURCE. Sponsored by Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative (SHYLI), this Platform is an educational tool to implement the Sustainability Resolution #25 with SHYLI Emerging Leader Trevor Tanaka requiring all Hawaii schools to offer one sustainability course.

After attending the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development, Jackie wrote her first published essay: *On Becoming a Global Youth Leader*. <http://conta.cc/1Qms6xl>

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**Nane Alejandrez**  
**Barrios Unidos**

Daniel 'Nane' Alejandrez is a Chicano/Apache Vietnam veteran community activist for social change. He is the founder and Executive Director of Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos and chairman of the National Coalition of Barrios Unidos. Barrio Unidos is acknowledged as one of the nation's most impressive grassroots organizations addressing issues of youth violence in the U.S. Nane is the coordinator for the Warrior's Circle Rights of Passage for youth, a week-long retreat focusing on traditional teachings. He has spread his message, which combines analysis of the root causes of crime and violence with concrete programs that offer youth positive alternatives. Nane believes a spiritual and cultural movement must take place to Rescue (their gifts), Release (their potential), and Restore (their promise). He follows his Native traditional ways and is involved with the International Indian Treaty Council on Indigenous affairs supporting cultural and ceremonial rights. Nane also works in collaboration with the Fair Trade Movement for Indigenous coffee growers in Central America and African Countries to help educate the public on Fair Trade and farmer's sustainability. Nane has been recognized for his inspiring efforts. He is the recipient of numerous awards including the National Fellowship Reconciliation, the Martin Luther King Jr. Award, SANCOFA Lifetime Achievement Award, and a Fellowship from the California Wellness Foundation and a Sabbatical from the Vanguard Foundation. Mr. Alejandrez has been featured on talk shows and as a radio guest on many stations. He has been on the A&E Biography Series, Danny Glover's TV Program "Courage" and the Christina Show. Nane is featured in the book *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes* and is a founding board member of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute and is featured on the Institute's video with Walter Cronkite. Nane is the leader of the Institute's Cultural Sustainability Quest at the Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development on Martha's Vineyard.



**Erin Frawley**  
**Summit Project Coordinator**

Erin is most interested in working with and learning about people all over the world while simultaneously sharing their stories with others. As a 2015 graduate from the University of Connecticut, Erin studied English Literature, Psychology and Gender Studies. While she was in college, Erin was an editor of the Long River Review, UConn's nationally award-winning literary magazine, and she helped write and select pieces to be published.

As an ESL teacher in Thailand, Erin worked with students in grades 7-10. She designed and implemented four different curriculums and wrote and evaluated monthly examinations to track learning progress and identify topics needing further study, but her favorite part of working as an ESL teacher was playing vocabulary Jeopardy! Erin studied Irish Literature in Dublin, Ireland, taught English outside of Bangkok, Thailand, and completed a six-week road trip across the United States, visiting as many museums (and delicious restaurants) as possible.

Over the next year, Erin will be working with an AmeriCorps program City Year, where she will serve as a teacher's aide in the Denver, Colorado school system. In the future, Erin hopes to go back to school to study Psychology, and to ultimately find a meaningful and fulfilling career that incorporates working with youth while always promoting a sense of equality, acceptance, and connection.

Erin has lived on Martha's Vineyard for the last year—first on Chappaquiddick and now in Edgartown. Erin is super excited to be working with MVYLI, and will be the Project Coordinator for the 2017 Youth Leadership Summit.

**Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative • [www.mvyl.org](http://www.mvyl.org)**





**Jason Dela Cruz Gavina**

Jason is an Emerging Leader and Cohort #1 Certificate Facilitator for the Institute's TouchStone Leaders Platform. He is a Project Manager on the BETA for the Platform's Life Planning Tools. In 2016, Jason served as the first delegate to the Stone Soup Leadership Institute's 12<sup>th</sup> Leadership Summit. His presentation on Project Management and Sustainability in the Philippines. Using Design Thinking tools, Jason co-designed the Institute's Sister Island Partnership Project between Hawaii and the Philippines. His photo essay is published on the Institute's website.

Jason uses his background in economics and community work to develop innovative and impactful Corporate Social Responsibility programs. His past CSR projects include establishing seven Centers of Excellence in early childhood education in Zambales and leading a team of 18 in a Values Formation and Education program implemented across six learning centers in the Rizal, La Union, Pampanga and Davao.

Jason aims to revolutionize the way companies use CSR programs in the Philippines and ASEAN. He is certified as a Sustainability Reporting Specialist and has trained under the Global Reporting Initiative's program in Manila.

In 2015, Jason led a team of youth at Mindmap, a start-up social enterprise driven to promote inclusive growth by accelerating the growth of local enterprises. Currently, Jason is developing a project that engages youth in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by encouraging the implementation of community action projects.

As a millennial, Jason's goal is to create a vibrant community of local leaders with diverse backgrounds who come together to develop impactful projects in their community. With the Institute's Platform, Jason will facilitate the training of these young leaders in the leadership skills that they need to implement community action projects.

Jason graduated from the University of the Philippines, Los Baños with a degree in Economics. He was a Kainan University Scholar in Taiwan with the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO). In 2011, the British Council recognized Jason as a Global Changemaker at age 19. In this capacity, he represented the Philippines in various forums including the Global Youth Summit in London, the World Economic Forum, and the APEC Summit in Hawaii.

In 2009, the Ateneo School of Government and the World Bank chose Jason as one of their 100 Young Leaders for Knowledge and Development. As a student-leader, Jason founded the Philippine Junior Jaycees in Los Banos, and spearheaded the first ever National Youth Leadership Camp of the University of the Philippines Junior Executive Society. Through the Students for the Advancement of Global Enterprise (SAGE), Jason helped organize business competitions for teenagers. Jason has also facilitated trainings on project management, communication, and leadership for various organizations. He has published in the *Manila Bulletin* Youth Section, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer's* Youngblood, and the book *Kaya Natin* (Vol.2) published by Ateneo Press.

As a Filipino and the son of a former overseas Filipino worker, Jason's dream for the country is to transform the Filipino Dream away from the idea of leaving home. He sees the burgeoning of the Philippine's economy as an opportune time to engage companies in social development and innovative CSR programs for a more-sustainable economy.



**Marianne Larned**  
**Stone Soup Leadership Institute**

Marianne is the Founding Director of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute and the author of educational series *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes* and education curriculum. The Institute's unique model is impacting young people in island, rural and urban communities to change their lives & their world. This model is the foundation for the Institute's 8 youth-community leadership initiatives on 7 islands in 3 countries and inner cities of Holyoke, Oakland, Baltimore, Cincinnati. [www.soup4worldinstitute.com](http://www.soup4worldinstitute.com)

For its 20th Anniversary, The Institute is launching the TouchStone Leaders Platform to scale our work globally. The Institute's Facilitator Certificate Program will train millennials to catalyze innovative partnerships, collaborative action to address local-global challenges. A curious student of Design Thinking, Marianne embraces its principles into the Platform prototype.

Over the years Marianne trained numerous millennials to become Project Coordinators, transforming the lives of young people in their communities. These millennials inspired her to develop the TouchStone Leaders Platform to connect them, reinforcing their combined strength to build a humane, sustainable world. Grounded in the Institute's Education Curriculum, empowered by its innovative training and technologically connected, this Community catalyzes projects and start-up social entrepreneurs with major impact. [www.touchstoneleaders.com](http://www.touchstoneleaders.com)

Marianne is a life-long learner whose innovative education allowed her the freedom to design her own undergraduate degree with the Rudolf Steiner International Training Center in Aberdeen, Scotland. She received her MBA in Organizational Development at Boston University. Marianne's management/leadership development experience encompasses a wide range - from corporate executives with Wilson Learning Management Systems to lifestyle coach, professional mentor to women and young and emerging leaders. Working intimately with the next generation of leaders gives her hope for our collective future.

With deep New England roots, Marianne lived in the Bay Area during her corporate consulting career where she developed national corporate social responsibility initiatives and public-private partnerships in education and economic development. A world traveler, Marianne has visited 45 islands, living on islands for over 20 years.



**Josué Cruz Morales J.D.**  
**Immigration Lawyer • Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative**

Josue Cruz Morales is an Immigration Lawyer with The Law Office of Vernal Farnum Mejia in Houston, Texas. Josue achieved his childhood dream of becoming a lawyer, practicing first in Puerto Rico. He graduated in 2015 from the University of Puerto Rico Carolina, Forensic Investigation, Law & Society Interactions in the top five of his class.

Josue has aspired to change the social, economic and educational destinies of Vieques by offering his services pro-bono to communities in need. Previously, Josue worked as the co-director of a pipeline program called Enlace, which exposes high school students from marginalized areas to real law school classes. Josué's main role was to train students in legislative affairs and community involvement; over 250 students participated in this program during his time there. His final project was to create a database program to encourage his students to pursue college careers; this program is the first software of its kind in the legal field, and it will help identify the needs of students and provide them with the help they need to be accepted into law school. Josue also worked closely with the first Legal Profession Self-Study in Puerto Rico—a combined effort between the University of Puerto Rico and the Chief Justice of the Puerto Rico Supreme Court.

Josué's dream of enriching his community began early. When he was a shy and quiet 14-year-old, he discovered—at the Institute's first Youth Leadership Summit—that his dream was to become the Mayor of Vieques and to inspire other youth to become leaders of their island. Josué took that goal seriously and created strategic plans to accomplish his dreams. In 2004, Josue co-founded the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative to train young people to build a new Vieques. Josué wrote *The Challenges Facing Vieques Youth*, which became the foundation for the Institute's four-year bi-lingual demonstration project. Josue and VYLI college youth produced a 2020 Report on Sustainable Development for Vieques that was presented at the APEC Youth Summit in Peru in 2008. In 2009, Josue co-founded Comunidad Verde Vieques (Green Vieques) where the Mayor dedicated 500 acres to 300 landless families—the second-generation victims of the U.S. Navy land expropriation in the 1940's.

Josué's deep commitment to designing the best practices for his island inspired him to help implement the first "Green Initiative" in Puerto Rico's public schools in which more than 5,000 students and 150 teachers created more than 100 school gardens. At his Law School graduation, Josué received the prestigious Award for founding VYLI and his dedication to his Vieques community. Josue serves as Co-Director of the Institute's Youth Leadership Summit and works with the Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative and Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative. In 2010, Josue received the Institute's first Walter Cronkite Award.

**Stone Soup Leadership Institute • [www.soup4worldinstitute.com](http://www.soup4worldinstitute.com)**



**Pamela Ray**  
**Summit Meal Coordinator**

Pam has lived on Martha's Vineyard for twenty years. She has worked with the Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative for six years as a support person as a chef, driver, support person for Vineyard youth as well as for the Stone Soup Leadership Institute's Summit faculty. As a mother of two sons who attended Martha's Vineyard schools, she knows first-hand about the challenges facing young people of color.

Pam is a caring and person-oriented woman whose greatest strength is her ability to empathize with and speak to people to gain important insights. She has been a healthcare provider, assisting clients with serious medical issues and weight loss. She has also been a personal assistant and caregiver to mentally and/or physically-challenged clients in an on-island residential care home.

Pam's greatest accomplishments include raising her two sons, working at a spa for seventeen years, and receiving back the love that she has put into the world. Pam hopes to aid in the transformation of youth and guide them to live as one and work together to create a better world. She wants everyone to work towards treating our planet well.

In her free time, Pam enjoys cooking and walking on the beach. Martha's Vineyard sunsets are one of Pam's favorite things, and she enjoys the beauty and the peace that they bring. Pam also enjoys the sense of community that comes from living on the Vineyard and believes in living the best life possible.



**Kutasha Bryan Silva**  
**Cellist, Educator, Scholar**

Kutasha is an educator, musician, and scholar who is most passionate about innovative forms of education for K-12 students. At the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico, she works with students ages 3-80 years old; mentors Head Start Teachers to endorse positive values through music to preschoolers. She always works to promote women's compositions in all genres of music. Kutasha writes scripts that are broadcasted weekly for preschoolers on the cultural radio station, *WIPR*. These shows aim to educate students about the values of respect, tolerance, responsibility, and love by using fun and joyful music presented by two strong and youthful characters. Kutasha worked with "El Sistema," a Venezuelan program-model that merges music education with socially uplifting messages. Through this program, Kutasha taught students from low-income families and successfully guided and encouraged several of her students to become professional musicians.

Kutasha was the first Project Coordinator for the Stone Soup Leadership Institute's Youth Leadership Summits. She helped create the Institute's chapter, VYLI (Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative, [www.vyli.com](http://www.vyli.com)). Kutasha championed VYLI's Cultural Arts and Entrepreneurship Initiatives. She helped tailor lesson plans using the Institute's book and curriculum, *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*. She co-facilitated weekly workshops on Cultural Arts—working together with local songwriters, dance teachers, and an archaeologist—and Entrepreneurship—where she was trained and certificate by the Institute's partner, Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship on Wall Street. Together with a group of dedicated teens, Kutasha created a successful business on the Vieques boardwalk, selling t-shirts and homemade jewelry to tourists - offering teens a part-time income, and an opportunity to hone their entrepreneurial skills. After two years, Kutasha was inspired to pursue her own dream of becoming a musician and music teacher by obtaining a second bachelor's degree in San Juan.

Musically, Kutasha first fell in love with vocals. She has recorded with jazz, pop, and medicine-song artists and one day aspires to record her own professional album—mixing cello and her own voice. As a young cellist, Kutasha was the Governor's Scholar for Puerto Rico at the Interlochen Arts Camp and she represented the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra with the Know Your Orchestra program, traveling throughout the island offering lectures to K-12 students on classical music. Her musical group, Duo Alma, plays recitals from coast to coast and has been featured at the Michigan Women's Music Festival and the Spiritual Living Convention in Chapala, Mexico. Duo Alma has performed and written music for several theatrical productions and is an on-island destination wedding specialist. Kutasha's studies include a Master's Degree in Cello Performance from the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico where she wrote her thesis *Women Composers of the 19th Century and their Works Written for Cello*. As a Gilman Scholar in Holland, Kutasha wrote her thesis *Women and their Relation to Music* for her Bachelor's degree in Women Studies. In the fall 2017, Kutasha begins her graduate work at the University of Illinois in Curriculum and Instruction. Ultimately, Kutasha aims to be instrumental in transforming the educational system to become a place where students enjoy going to school and teachers are treated with respect and offered proper compensation.