



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

BRUCE S. ANDERSON, Ph.D.  
DIRECTOR

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## Raymond Alejo to Receive 2019 Suzanne Richmond-Crum Award on World Aids Day

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health is pleased to announce Raymond Alejo as the recipient of the 2019 Suzanne Richmond-Crum Award, for his outstanding contributions in providing HIV/AIDS services in Hawai'i. The award will be presented during the annual World AIDS Day ceremony at the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Honolulu on Sunday, Dec. 1 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

“For the past 19 years, Raymond has dedicated his life to working with people living with HIV in Hawai'i,” said Peter Whitar, Chief of the Department of Health’s HIV/AIDS program. “His advocacy and loving care for people living with HIV has helped reduce the stigma, fear and unknowns that can keep vulnerable patients from receiving care.”

Mr. Alejo began his career in the field of HIV services while in Seattle, as a nurse at Harborview Medical Center. He returned to Honolulu in 2000 and worked as an HIV case manager at the Life Foundation, now known as the Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC). Mr. Alejo currently serves as an HIV registered nurse case manager and community HIV educator at HHRC. In this role, he provides community-based medical services and education to ensure that people living with HIV obtain necessary medical services that are important for their well-being and for preventing the transmission of HIV infection to others.

Besides his primary work with people living with HIV, Mr. Alejo also offers presentations on HIV and hepatitis C prevention and treatment. He has developed several curricula, including cultural competency trainings which help healthcare providers to better serve the Native Hawaiian and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities. His focus on cultural competency and HIV is especially important given that many Native Hawaiians delay accessing needed HIV care.

In addition, for more than 15 years, Mr. Alejo has offered the *oli* (opening chant) at the annual World AIDS Day ceremony and other public events, helping to ground the occasion in the spirit of the Hawaiian culture, and often brings his *hālau* and family to contribute to the positive energy of such occasions.

Dr. Caroline Mee, Medical Director at the Hawai'i Department of Public Safety, said "Raymond has channeled his own personal experiences of stigma and navigating health care access into a keen sense of justice in his work as a community nurse, which makes him a tenacious and effective advocate for our community's most vulnerable. His drive to ensure Native Hawaiian and LGBTQ populations are adequately served is a shining example of a provider who honors and respects the unique needs of every patient he meets."

The Suzanne Richmond-Crum Award is given annually to a community member who has made outstanding contributions in the provision of HIV/AIDS services. Suzanne Richmond-Crum passed away in August 2004 after serving for more than 10 years as director of the Hawai'i Seropositivity and Medical Management Program (HSPAMM), in the Department of Health's Harm Reduction Services Branch. The award program was established in honor of the competence and compassion she demonstrated in her HIV/AIDS work and is currently in its 16th year.

This year's World AIDS Day will be commemorated at a community event on Sunday, Dec. 1 at 5:30 pm at the Cathedral of St. Andrew, located at 229 Queen Emma Square in Honolulu. In addition to the award presentation there will be music, a *hula hālau* presentation, and a guest speaker panel. The event is open to the public. For more information on this event, visit <https://worldaidsdayhawaii.org/>.

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**Media Contacts:**

Nighat Quadri  
Harm Reduction Services Branch  
Phone: (808) 733-4380

Janice Okubo  
Communications Office  
Phone: (808) 586-4445