

Vernon Kahe "Poli'hongva" - Honoring a life of warmth, talent, and purpose

Recently, the HEEF lost a vital position and a close friend. Vernon Kahe gave a large part of his life to the HEEF and our mission and we proudly share a bit of his legacy.

Vernon Kahe was the son of proud parents Sam and Gloria Kahe, brother to Hale and Val, and beloved *Taha* (uncle) to Alex and Adam. He was from the Navajo Todich'iinii (Bitterwater) clan and was born for the Hopi *Poovoingyam* (Butterfly clan) of First Mesa. Vernon's Hopi name *Poli'hongva* (Butterflies Standing Up) was given to him by his Butterfly clan *Kya'as* (aunts) from Sichomovi Village.

After graduating from Hopi Jr/Sr High School in 1989, he became a proud Northern Arizona University (NAU) Lumberjack and graduated with a Marketing degree in 2002. In June of 2003, Vernon was the first hire of then "new" HEEF Executive Director, LuAnn Leonard. He accepted the position of Office Manager for the HEEF.

In that position, he undertook financial, investment, and policy development aspects of the newly-formed nonprofit organization. He proved to be key in laying the early administrative foundation for the HEEF. Recognizing his immense talents and wanting to encourage Vernon on to his fullest potential, the HEEF hired Vernon into the position of Resource Development Manager, aka Fundraising Manager in 2008.

At that time, the art of professional fundraising was fairly new to Indian country so the HEEF invested time and resources to provide training. Under the guidance and coaching of nonprofit professionals, Alice Ferris and Jim Anderson of GoalBusters Consulting, Vernon began his journey into becoming a professional fundraiser. "Vern was a remarkable fundraising student, and it was an honor to be his mentors," Alice shared. "He always had questions! At some point, I started saying to him, 'Patience, grasshopper...."

Vernon had found his calling. Within two years, he was named the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) Outstanding New Fundraising Professional of Northern Arizona. Later he would help the HEEF, as an organiza-

tion, achieve honors such as the AFP *Outstanding Non-Profit Organization for Northern Arizona* and High Honors from the Harvard University's *Honoring Nations Program*. Former HEEF President, Terry Hines shared, "Vem's unwavering commitment to HEEF was remarkable. His continued efforts to promote HEEF were significant and it was always clear his work was a labor of love."

The attentiveness and effort that Vernon showed relationships was also put into creating fundraising opportunities for the HEEF. LuAnn Leonard recalls that Vernon enjoyed special events, "As an artist, he loved the excitement, preparation, and implementation of the HEEF Silent Auction." Vernon may be remembered most for bringing one of his ideas to "life" in 2009.

Being an accomplished Hopi potter, he molded 10 turtles and



gave one to nine Hopi/Tewa potters from First Mesa, while designing the last one himself. The collective result was a one-of-a-kind masterpiece entitled Yöngösona (Turtle) and was the main piece for the HEEF Silent Auction of the same name.

"Vernon was an extraordinary young man who was intelligent, dedicated, and a skilled artist," shared Dr. Cedric Kavena, former HEEF President. "He amplified the Hopi word *Tuhisa* (perfectionist) in not only his art but his work with the HEEF. His passing is a true loss to the Hopi people."

Vernon devoted the last eight years to growing relationships, crafting fundraising campaigns, and nurturing the HEEF into an organization of promise for the future of all Hopis. He took time to build personal relationships with individuals that made each donor feel like they were especially connected to the mission of the HEEF. He touched the lives of all he knew with a sense of humor and sincere warmth. Current HEEF President, Romalita

Laban, shared "Vern will be remembered forever for his warmth, kindness and gentle spirit. I am grateful for having known him and what he has taught me about

'friend' raising." Recent HEEF President, Dr. Kim Kahe-Corkin, expressed that he was a "source of inspiration" to her. She recalls his advice to "Keep an open-mind; it will allow you to

"Keep an open-mind; it will allow you to maneuver through this journey with ease..."

Numerous HEEF members, colleagues,

donors, and friends sent messages of support and condolences. Friend and colleague, LuAnn, expressed that she will "miss his smile, laughter, perfectionism, and his criticism." She stated, "A perfectionist criticizes only because he/she wants the best for whatever they are working with. The HEEF meant the world to him as he truly understood the importance of our work. Every administrator needs a 'Vern' to help

them perform their job better and I will cherish my memories with this talented young man."

August 16, 1971 -

January 16, 2017

Former mentor, Jim Anderson, accurately summed up Vernon in saying, "There are people you meet that change who you are. Sometimes that change is instantaneous. Sometimes it is a slower process of them helping you grow and evolve. Through 10 years of friendship, Vern changed me. He helped me become who I am today. He helped make me a better man. And I know he is not done with me yet. Kwah-kwah Vern."

On behalf of the HEEF and Vernon's family, we at the HEEF wish to express thanks to all those who gave a gift to the family in their time of need and in Vernon's honor. We take comfort in knowing he will be remembered in a good way and hope to carry his memory and spirit in our future work.



Message from HEEF Executive Director, LuAnn Leonard

Dear Friends.

Thank you to all who expressed condolences regarding the passing of our esteemed staff member, Vernon Kahe. Our small HEEF staff is like family so your kind words of support and strength are helping both the staff and HEEF members to continue on with our important work, as Vernon would have wanted us to do.

So moving on . . . We recently presented our 2016 annual report to the Hopi Tribal Council. We shared numbers of students served, programs funded, outreach completed, and fundraising totals. As with many groups, there were one or two critics but the overwhelming response was positive and encouraging. At the end of the presentation, several Tribal Council Representatives handed their generous personal donations to the staff. One Representative in particular, Dale Sinquah of First Mesa, encouraged his peers to help spread the word and to support the fundraising efforts of our organization. This story doesn't end here.

I'm proud to share that Councilman Sinquah "walked the talk". On a cold evening in January, the HEEF staff was invited to join the Sinquah family for dinner. The Sinquah family consists of four generations of Alwungwa (Deer Clan) members and their spouses from across the reservation. During dinner we were able to provide information on the HEEF and hear their ideas on fundraising locally. The Sinquahs shared that they recognize the importance of education and the relationship it has to achieving self-sufficiency. At the end of the meal, the HEEF was presented with a family donation totaling \$1,000! This donation represents not only the generosity of one Hopi-

Tewa family but more importantly, the growing recognition and understanding of the importance of education and the endowed fund by the greater Hopi community.

In this issue, we thank all of our donors for their generous support in 2016. In 2017 we look forward to carrying forward the work of our dear colleague by strengthening our current relationships and sharing the information about the HEEF to widen our circle of friends.

Askwali, LuAnn Leonard

P.S. Arizona Gives Day is April 4th! Early donations are accepted. www.azgives.org/hopieducationendowmentfund



Members of the Sinquah Family in their home

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SEEDS 4 HEEF giving program

The Hopi way of life -our traditions and culture- revolves around farming. Our ceremonies, in essence, are prayers for rain so our crops will grow. Before the springtime, men are busy preparing their fields to plant new seeds with hopes of a bountiful harvest to share with their extended families. The monsoon rains come every summer, but the arid climate we live in requires our seeds to be strong in order to survive the long periods without water.

As Hopi, we know the great potential that seeds hold. One nurtured seed can grow to feed many and strengthen the community. Likewise, our Hopi students if guided and given support, hold the potential to become a nourishing staple to our community. Seeds are a symbol of all that we do at the HEEF. We see our children as our *uuyi* (corn plants), and we believe that they can only grow to their full potential through the nurturing of education. We are striving to plant seeds that will bear fruit beneficial to our society. We also want to have seeds stored up for unforeseen times of difficulty so that we are always able to keep our people alive. Seeds embody the hope we have for our future.

As our men take on the task of tending to a field (and feeding their family), they understand that their work will not be accomplished in a day. A farmer knows that it is all of his collective efforts that add up to a successful harvest. In a similar token, it is not one large donation that allows us to support our students, but rather, many contributions that grow together and allow us to provide funding to over 120 students a semester.

In 2016, our largest source of donor contributions came from SEEDS 4 HEEF donations. Donors like you whose collective efforts amounted to funds that will go towards scholarships and IMAGINE Grants for many seasons to come. SEEDS 4 HEEF is a recurring giving program and opportunity for HEEF supporters to make small contributions throughout the year that amount to one large contribution.

We all like to give when and what we can but sometimes we forget and sometimes we want to help but our bank account just won't allow it. When you sign up for SEEDS 4 HEEF, you can choose when funds are withdrawn or when your card is charged. Funds are withdrawn automatically, making things easier on you and cutting down processing costs for us. By enrolling in the SEEDS 4 HEEF giving program, you are making a commitment to keep planting the seeds that will grow to help support our community. Your monthly SEEDS donation can be like your regular café coffee purchase, but worth a lot more:

- -\$10/mo can purchase a student's textbook
- \$25/mo can cover the cost of one credit hour of tuition at Arizona Community College
- \$50/mo can provide 25 Hopi students with the resources to learn Hopi
- -\$100/mo can fund an IMAGINE Grant in our Hopi community
- -\$150/mo can fund the average grant/scholarship for a semester

To enroll in SEEDS 4 HEEF, fill out the form on the opposite page and indicate that you wish to enroll. You may also call 928-734-2275, or email heef@hopieducationfund.org.



Kwakwhá/Askwali (Thank You)!



On behalf of the IMAGINE grantees and all current and future Hopi students, the HEEF would like to express gratitude to the following donors for their generous support in 2016:

Kukuma (Purple Corn) \$5,000 - \$9,999

George & Susan Then Peabody Western Coal Company Salt River Project Terri Hall Qötsaqa'ö (White Corn) \$2,500 - \$4,999

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Grad Student, Kiara *Le-len-mana* (Flute Girl) Pahovama



We featured Kiara (Shungopavi Village, Honwungwa [Bear clan]) in 2009, then a 2nd-year, full-time student at the University of Arizona. In 2014, she received a B.S. in Education with a bilingual endorsement (U of A). She is now pursuing a master's in Educational Leadership online from Northern Arizona University, teaching 1st grade full-time, coaching sports, and being a mother to her six-year-old daughter, Yoihowmana. She hopes to become a principal for one of the elementary schools on Hopi.

Do you see yourself making more of an impact as a principal than as a teacher?

I have a lot of things that I want to bring and change about education out home that I can't unless I have this degree and more education behind me. Out home there's a lot of teachers who do want to make change but they really can't because they don't have the authority.

I know that there's a lot of programs that they could take advantage of after school and in high school that have to do with math and science. I'd say it starts in elementary school to build that enthusiasm and excitement about math and science. In my classrooms here in Phoenix, it's something that I'm glad I'm able to instill in my students. Math is fun and Science is amazing. They really like it.

Language is also something you want to instill.

We all know something has got to be done about keeping our Hopilavayi going. I want to actually start doing something about it. That's why I am going to school to become a principal. I knew I wanted to go back for my master's right away because I'm very passionate about this and don't want to lose that momentum and motivation. With this, it's now or never. My daughter's six years old now. She knows some Hopi, the things that I'm able to teach her. But I know she doesn't get as much Hopi as I did when I was younger because my parents, my grandparents would talk to me in Hopi. I don't want her to have to lose it completely. That's something that I'm scared of.

I got my B.S. with the *Hopi Tutuqaynayani Program* -a program for teachers to go to school to become a Hopi teacher. Something I talked about with my cohort was, building our own school with a curriculum created by Hopi teachers to teach math using Hopi, to teach all the different subjects...integrating a part of Hopi into it so our children can be proud of who they are and learn more about

who they are, without having to choose Hopi as a special during the day.

Creating learning materials from scratch is a daunting task.

I've been invited to Native American education conferences where we were able to present on the lesson plans we had created. We went to Alaska and a lot of the people there, the elders, were crying and saying, "Thank you. You need to do this for your people." That's always something that motivates us even more as teachers, Hopi educators. We can do it, we've been trying to do it this whole time. It takes a lot of time to actually get things done, but it's absolutely worth it.

Why is education important?

An education is something that can't be taken away. As a Native American tribe, we're very fortunate that we have the HEEF and the Hopi Tribe Grants & Scholarships Program. I remember my kwa'a (grandpa) telling me, "The Hopi way of life paas ahni hikaita -it's worth a lot. But to a pahana person it might not be as much. If you don't go for those types of things, your life will be hard." In today's world, it's essential that we do because then we'll be smart on both sides. We'll be rich in both places. We'll have the Western way and on the other side, we'll have our Hopi way of life.



Kiara with her family

Nurture a Student, Enrich a Community

If you believe in the mission of the HEEF to provide education to Hopis of all ages, now and into the future, why not make a tax-deductible donation? Every day out here on Hopi, we can see the impact our students are having in the community -as teachers, tribal employees, artists, medical staff, and program developers. Your gift to the Hopi Education Endowment Fund, no matter the size, is placed in a secured account where it grows interest with the rest of our funds. A small percent of the interest is what is used to fund scholarships, IMAGINE Grants, and program costs.

Please send your check/money order payable to:

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Student Highlights

Felina Cordova (Hotevilla, Kyarsngyam [Parrot clan], B.S. Microbiology, Master of Public Health, Doctoral Student Public Health University of Arizona) received 2016 UA Dean's List Centennial Award which is given to students "who have shown academic achievement despite facing challenging social, economic, or educational obstacles." "Felina plans to combine her degrees to decrease the health disparities that American Indians currently face."



Source: https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/awards/2016-centennial-doctorate-degree-awardees

<u>Marshall Masayesva</u> (Bacavi, *Paaqavi* [Reed clan], B.A. *Adventure Education*, Fort Lewis College) will begin work as Hopi Field Coordinator for the Southwest Conservation Corps' Ancestral Lands Program to establish a program on Hopi. Their efforts will focus on land restoration and education/job opportunities for community members. Marshall has been serving as Program Director for *Adventures 4 Hopi* -a previous IMAGINE Grant recipient-where he has also worked to provide outdoor educational and recreational opportunities.



<u>Amber Poleviyuma</u> (Moenkopi, *Iswungwa* [Coyote clan], Arizona State University College of Nursing and Innovation) received 2017 *MLK Student Servant-Leadership Award* for her "efforts to represent and increase awareness for Native American communities both on and off campus."

Source: http://www.statepress.com/article/2017/02/spcampus-amber-poleviyuma-mlk-student-servant

