

## **David C. Ai Charitable Trust Donates \$3 Million to Reimagine the Nu‘uanu YMCA**

*Gift honors Ai family legacy and names the YMCA’s flagship branch*

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **YMCA of Honolulu Honors the Ai Family by Naming the Nu‘uanu YMCA**

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Honolulu, Hawai‘i (August 26, 2025) – The YMCA of Honolulu today announced a transformational \$3 million gift from the David C. Ai Charitable Trust to support the reimagining of the Nu‘uanu YMCA, the association’s flagship branch. In recognition of the Ai family’s century-long legacy of service, the Nu‘uanu YMCA will be named in their honor.

#### **Ai Family Roots to the Original Nu‘uanu YMCA: World’s First Interracial YMCA**

The story of the Nu‘uanu YMCA began in 1915, when YMCA of Honolulu director Lloyd Killam drove his open-air Model T through Honolulu’s flooded streets in a pouring rainstorm. Traveling from one ethnically connected YMCA branch to another—the Japanese YMCA, the Korean YMCA, the Chinese YMCA, and the central Honolulu YMCA—he asked himself: “Wouldn’t it be better if all of these groups could come together under one roof?”

That idea soon became reality. In 1917, five visionary YMCA leaders united the separate Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Filipino associations into one branch, creating the world’s first racially integrated YMCA.

The original Nu‘uanu YMCA opened in 1918 at Vineyard and Fort Streets, where CVS Longs and Safeway stand today, as a gathering place for people of all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Its five founders reflected the strength and diversity of the community: Frank C. Atherton, a philanthropist and business leader; Dr. Iga Mori, a respected Japanese physician and civic leader; Dr. William D. Westervelt, a missionary and historian; Dr. Syngman Rhee, a Korean independence advocate and future president of Korea; and Chung Kun Ai, fondly known as C.K. Ai, co-founder of City Mill and a prominent Chinese businessman and philanthropist.

C.K. Ai’s devotion to unity and service extended well beyond his role in founding the Nu‘uanu YMCA. He continued to support YMCA programs for decades, while also helping to establish Palolo Chinese Home, the First Chinese Church of Christ, and championing community service across Hawai‘i.

## **60 Years and Continuing: Ai Support**

In 1963, the YMCA relocated to its current home on Pali Highway, directly across from the original site, and later expanded in 1994 with the addition of the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Youth Center. For more than 60 years, this facility has served as the YMCA of Honolulu's flagship branch, home to youth programs, kūpuna activities, health and fitness spaces, and generations of community gatherings.

"From the founding of the original Nu'uanu YMCA in 1918, to the branch we know today, the Nu'uanu YMCA has always been a symbol of vision, courage, and community," said Arnold Martines, Chair of the YMCA of Honolulu Board of Directors and Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of Central Pacific Financial Corp and Central Pacific Bank. "C.K. Ai and the other founders created a place that broke barriers, and today, the Ai family continues that legacy of leadership and service. With this extraordinary gift, they are helping us reimagine our flagship YMCA into a modern hub for youth, families, and kūpuna. It is a gift that honors the past, meets the needs of today, and builds hope for the generations to come."

## **Four Generations of the Ai Family Legacy**

The Ai family's connection to the YMCA spans four generations. C.K. Ai's son, David C. Ai, established the David C. Ai Charitable Trust to ensure under-resourced families could access YMCA programs. His quiet generosity uplifted countless children, supporting YMCA summer programs for decades and opening doors to opportunity.

That legacy has continued through the Trust, which in recent years has sponsored middle school afterschool programs for teens, provided free summer memberships for middle and high school students through the YMCA's 'Ōpio initiative, and invested in the professional development of YMCA staff and leaders.

**"This transformational gift is about more than a new facility—it's about people,"** said Lisa Ontai, Interim President & CEO of the YMCA of Honolulu. "The Ai family's generosity has always been about opening doors of opportunity. It ensures that the reimagined Ai Nu'uanu YMCA will be a place of belonging that nurtures body, mind, and spirit while extending the Y's reach far beyond these walls. Today, the YMCA already serves families in more than 115 program and service sites across O'ahu. With this gift, the inclusive community C.K. Ai envisioned more than a century ago will continue to grow stronger for generations to come."

Today, the third generation, Steven Ai and Carol Ai May, lead City Mill and continue their father's tradition of philanthropy. Steven has also served on the YMCA of Honolulu Metro Board for nearly 32 years. The fourth generation, Evan Ai Killips and Andrew Ai Killips, are now helping to carry the family's legacy of service forward.

“The YMCA has always been close to our hearts,” said Steven Ai, Trustee of the David C. Ai Charitable Trust. “It’s where my grandfather C.K. helped build something groundbreaking, and where my father David ensured that kids who needed it most would always be included. This gift reflects our family’s belief that the YMCA continues to be a cornerstone for youth, families, and community.”

### **A Bold Vision for the Future**

The reimagined Nu‘uanu YMCA will be developed in two phases. Phase 1 will focus on the new Nu‘uanu YMCA, a vibrant, multi-level community hub, bringing together spaces for health, fitness, aquatics, youth programs, and kūpuna activities, alongside areas designed for connection, learning, and growth. It will be a place where families can thrive, youth and teens can find belonging, and everyone can come together in ways that strengthen our entire community. Phase 2 will bring affordable housing to the site, planned in partnership with housing experts and the City to address one of the most pressing needs on the island.

### **Continuing Momentum**

The YMCA of Honolulu continues to actively engage additional partners and supporters across philanthropy, government, and business to bring the reimagined Nu‘uanu YMCA to life.

### **About the YMCA of Honolulu**

The YMCA of Honolulu is one of Hawai‘i’s leading nonprofits, dedicated to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Serving O‘ahu since 1869, the Y ensures that people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds have opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive.

The Y operates ten locations across O‘ahu: Atherton, Kaimukī-Wai‘ālae, Kalihi, Leeward, Mililani, Nu‘uanu, Windward, Wai‘anae Coast, Central (with dormitory-style lodging), and Camp H.R. Erdman, a resident camp on the North Shore. Its reach extends to more than 115 community sites, including afterschool programs at 60 schools; substance abuse treatment and prevention at 28 school campuses across O‘ahu, Moloka‘i, Lāna‘i, and Kaua‘i; teen mental health services at 26 middle and high schools; and Early Learning Centers and Preschools, including those serving houseless families.

The YMCA of Honolulu holds a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for strong fiscal management, accountability, and transparency. Learn more at [www.ymcahonolulu.org](http://www.ymcahonolulu.org).

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