

Building with Brains and Beauty

By: Jeffrey Iwaniec

Joleen Iwaniec



"Hawai'i Space Grant Consortium has afforded me the opportunity to be a part of Windward Community College CanSat team, to attend the ARLISS competitions in Black Rock, Nevada and to be a member of the NASA-University Student Launch Initiative, or USLI Team."

These challenging programs allow university students to think outside the box in researching, designing, and building a rocket which will later launch, in competition, to one mile in altitude. Joleen hopes to inspire and motivate students at all levels to pursue higher levels of study in science and technology, including those in traditionally underserved and underrepresented communities that deserve our greatest support. With all this training she hopes it will propel her to a position within the NASA community. "My dream is to one day be a member of the NASA team."

Of her many exploits outside of school, volunteering, horseback riding, and pageantry are her specialties. On February 21, 2010 Joleen competed in the Miss Island Oahu Scholarship Program, which is a preliminary to the Miss Hawai'i Scholarship Pageant. Her platform is NASA and science education, specifically a program she developed called K.I.T.S. or Kids in Technology and Sciences.

Joleen is a leader both in and out of school. She is pursuing a degree in Electrical Engineering and plans to apply her degree to exposing the youngest members of our society to the critical role technological advancement has for our future as human beings. Young adults must have their eyes open to the world of opportunity within technological studies and educated as to their possible contributions to it. With that aim in mind Joleen developed K.I.T.S. to enhance the knowledge of technology, its place in our society, and the role young adults will have in shaping our future. But this goal would not be possible if not for the affiliation and support of the Hawai'i Space Grant Consortium, which has enabled her to broaden K.I.T.S.' horizons as far as Kaua'i.

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This Windward Community College student won the Miss Congeniality distinction in the 2009 Miss Hawaii pageant. She didn't know that building rockets would become a passion until she met Astronomy professor Joseph Ciotti and rocket mentor Jake Hudson. "She has a self-drive that's incredible. When you have a positive attitude, it opens up so many doors," said Ciotti.

Photos: Joleen Iwaniec, "Miss Ka'ena" and (at right) working with WCC CanSat teammate Premo Ames II.

