

## Features

### Students star in Cosmic Poster contest

Published: Sunday, June 7, 2009 8:18 AM HST

Print Page

Combine inquisitive and creative youth with committed adults and organizations from Big Island communities and the result can be as stellar as posters created by Hawaii's K-12 students for the Cosmic Poster Contest.

Winners were announced at Prince Kuhio Plaza May 2 during AstroDay, an annual Hilo event designed to share the joy of astronomy with the general population.

The gathering was the climax of months of preparation that drew islandwide participation from the sponsors of the contest, poster judges and participants.

"Those involved in the contest have experienced a process of collaboration, generosity, and creativity that has made Big Island residents the grand prize winners of the contest," said Subaru Telescope press officer Suzanne G. Frayser.

The Mauna Kea Observatories Outreach Committee and KTA Superstores, sponsors of this year's contest, provided their own special contribution to the success of the event.

With representatives from all of the Mauna Kea observatories, MKOOC develops activities for residents that are in line with its mission of connecting astronomy and the observatories with the community.

Kumiko S. Usuda, Ph.D., chairman of the Cosmic Poster Contest Committee and an outreach scientist in the Public Information and Outreach Office at Subaru Telescope, is an astronomer whose enthusiasm for developing interesting ways to educate students about astronomy is contagious.

She not only developed the idea for the Cosmic Poster Contest but also invented and crafted a 56-card set of Mauna Kea Brand Astronomy Trading Cards, which were one of the prizes for the poster contest winners.

This year's contest had special meaning for Kumiko because her daughter, fourth grader Serena Usuda, won first place in both East Hawaii's K-5 category and the islandwide contest.

Since the KTA and astronomy judges assessed the posters without knowing their creators' names, Kumiko was thrilled by the surprising news that her daughter had received two of the top honors in the contest.

KTA Superstores has also contributed to the poster contest in various ways, from branch stores serving as collection points for the posters and providing judges for the contest to donating prizes. They will display the posters of regional winners so that friends, family, and others can view the achievements of their local students.

Tracey Yamane, KTA's advertising promotions manager, collected and tallied the posters from each district and also served as a judge in the contest. She said that KTA's contribution was a way of giving back to their customers, who have supported them in their 90-year history on the island.

Yamane also expressed the personal satisfaction she felt from being involved in the contest: "It was really a sight to see all 300 entries laid out on the tables. It gave me a sense of accomplishment and pride. It made me feel good. It made the students proud to create nice posters. They are our future leaders."

Jon Lomberg, an internationally renowned artist inspired by astronomy, selected the islandwide winners from among the district winners. Lomberg specializes in designing and implementing visual presentations about astronomy in all media. He was astronomer Carl Sagan's principal artistic collaborator, illustrating most of his books and magazine articles and has been involved in diverse creative projects too numerous to name.

A resident of the Big Island for over 22 years, Lomberg is passionate about educating the public about astronomy. As long as he can remember, he thought that astronomy was the most interesting thing in the world.



Click Photo to Enlarge

Kumiko S. Usuda presents an award to West Hawaii's Justyn A. Toyama, grade 4, as "Galileo" looks on at the May 2 ceremony and reception for the recent islandwide Cosmic Poster Contest. - Courtesy Photo

He emphasized, "Science is not just good for people who are good with numbers. The enterprise of science requires all the skills that humans possess.

"It includes art, interpersonal dynamics, communication and teaching skills. Whatever your interests and skills, there's a place for you in science."

Islandwide winners are Serena Usuda, first, and Tatiana Sheldon, second, in Grade K-5; Victoria Birrenbach, first, Raymond Tanase, second, Grade 6-8; Kyra Blue and Kadi Igawa, tied for first, Grade 9-12.

Copyright © 2009 - Hawaii Tribune-Herald

[\[x\] Close Window](#)