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Liane Kim, resource teacher at the Challenger Center-Hawai'i at Barbers Point Elementary School, drapes a maile lei around a photograph of the Columbia crew. To Kim's right is a photo of the astronauts who died in the 1986 Challenger explosion.

# Shuttle tragedy discussed in schools

## Hawai'i teachers ready to address pupils' concerns

By Scott Ishikawa  
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With the Columbia shuttle tragedy, Hawai'i science teachers in the following weeks and months face the challenge of discussing an emotional subject with students.

Art Kimura of Future Flight Hawai'i, a program that teaches students about space travel and related fields of science, knows the topic will come up for discussion during several "Astronaut Ellison Onizuka Science Nights" planned at four O'ahu schools this week.

"Obviously, I'll have to tweak the program a bit to talk about the accident, which I'm sure there will be a lot of questions about," Kimura said. "But just like the NASA space program, we can't let this discourage our children from learning more about space travel and science."

Kimura had the same challenge in discussing the 1986 Challenger explosion with stu-

dents, but noted that many of today's youngsters weren't even born or were too young to remember that tragedy.

Kimura and his wife, Rene, are scheduled to talk with students this week at Kūhiō, Kāne'ohe and Wailupe elementary schools and La Pietra-Hawai'i School for Girls. He plans to bring a ceramic tile used to insulate the space shuttles from 3,000-degree heat as it re-enters Earth's atmosphere. The heat tiles are one focus of NASA's investigation on what possibly went wrong Saturday.

Nancy Rocheleau, Sacred Hearts Academy science department chairwoman, said the Columbia explosion also will be discussed during science classes this week. Sacred Hearts is the only high school in the world affiliated with an International Space Station amateur radio program that allows students to link-up with astronauts at the facility for 10-minute conversations. The last transmission with astronauts from the space station was Jan. 18.

While her students did not talk with the recent Columbia crew, the school had the opportunity to converse with astronauts during other space shuttle flights since

the program began in 1994.

"When things settle down, we will try to schedule another radio conversation with the astronauts on the International Space Station to allow the radio club students to ask questions," Rocheleau said. "For me, there is a deep sadness because we've been given the opportunity to get to know these astronauts. These are ordinary people doing extraordinary jobs."

As for her planned discussions with students, the Sacred Hearts instructor plans to "explain the need to constantly improve on our technological mistakes, and the inherent risks in whatever we do."

"There are risks when you get into a car, swim in the ocean, and when you go into space," she said.

At the Challenger Center-Hawai'i located at Barbers Point Elementary School, resource teacher Liane Kim and others planned to host a class of students today. The center, operated by the state Department of Education's Leeward District, provides hands-on exhibits on space exploration to students in grades six through eight.

Kim said as a tribute to the Columbia astronauts, program organizers yesterday draped a maile

lei around a photo of the shuttle crew.

The staff had honored the Challenger crew only last week during the 17th anniversary of the tragedy.

"I'm sure the children will have questions about the tragedy and we will do the best we can to answer them," Kim said.

After recent tragedies such as the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the shuttle accident, all three instructors understand that it is natural for children to ask questions.

"Unfortunately, sometimes it's only after a tragedy when we begin asking questions," Kimura said. "But I hope what happened will lead to educational opportunities to learn about this brave crew. We need to explain to the students that astronauts know the risks involved, but they do it anyway because they believe in what they're doing."

"The main thing is to encourage students to continue to dream, and not let what happened diminish the opportunities ahead."

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