

Hawaii-Based Author Dr. Lance Luke Backs Tinambac's Self-Funded Scholarship Movement

Four professionals fund neighbors' college for five years; first graduate returns as leader as Honolulu author commits backing

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- For five years, four professionals with roots in this coastal municipality have funded their neighbors' college educations from their own earnings—no foundation backing, no government grants, just a



commitment to proving that ordinary people can create extraordinary change. Now, that grassroots effort has earned the attention of Dr. Lance Luke, a Honolulu-based bestselling author and construction management expert featured on ABC, CBS, and NBC, who has committed initial funding to expand the initiative and is urging others to join the movement.

“

I came back because someone stayed for me. This isn't debt. It's a chain.”
Juvelyn Asug, Alumni Program Lead

This is The Ibarra Project, named after Crisóstomo Ibarra—the protagonist of José Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*—who returns to his hometown to uplift his community through education. Launched in 2021 by a four-person founding team from Tinambac, with El Villamora and Bing Clavo among its founders, the project provides local university students with monthly financial

allowances; technology support, including laptops; and mentorship to help them pursue higher education. Their model centers on a simple principle: when you support a student through graduation, they return to hold the door for the next one.

That principle became reality this year when Juvelyn Asug, a 2025 Computer Science graduate who received full support through the project, came back to serve as the organization's Alumni Program Lead, managing operations and screening the next batch of applicants.

"I came back because someone stayed for me," said Asug. "This isn't debt. It's a chain. When you finish, you help the next person. That's the Ibarra way."

Dr. Luke, who holds a PhD in Building and Construction Management and has authored over 80 books, sees the project as infrastructure development of a different kind. "I don't invest in charity. I invest in systems that work," said Luke. "These four individuals built human infrastructure from their own paychecks. They proved that you don't need to be wealthy to sponsor education—you just need to be committed. When I saw that one of their first graduates had already returned to lead the next generation, I knew this was a machine for producing community leaders. I joined because I want others to see what's possible when neighbors bet on each other."

By removing financial barriers through peer support rather than handouts, The Ibarra Project maintains a simple philosophy: education is not a gift from afar but a responsibility shared among those with roots in the community.

With Dr. Luke's backing providing initial external validation, the four founders are now expanding their invitation. The organization seeks additional sponsors, mentors, and volunteers who share the founding principle—that four people putting in what they can consistently creates more change than waiting for one wealthy savior.

"If four of us can put seven students through college, imagine what fifty could do," said El Villamora, Founder and Lead Coordinator. "Dr. Luke didn't come to rescue us. He came to amplify what we already proved works. Now we're asking the community—here and abroad—to join the chain."

About The Ibarra Project

The Ibarra Project is a community-driven scholarship initiative based in Tinambac, Camarines Sur, Philippines. Founded in 2021 by four professionals with roots in the municipality, the organization provides financial support, technology access, and mentorship to Tinambac youth pursuing higher education. The project draws inspiration from José Rizal's national hero legacy in Noli Me Tangere, channeling Crisóstomo Ibarra's spirit of community-led educational uplift. Learn more at <https://theibarraproject.now.site/>.

Join the Chain:

Interested sponsors and volunteers can contact the project through their website or Facebook page.

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