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Lucoral Museum on Kuhio Avenue in Waikiki has a "cave" with displays of rocks, minerals and gemstones.

Museum

Lucoral Museum provides educational fun for all ages

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While some children are already returning to school, others have a few more weeks of freedom, leaving their parents with the continuing task of serving as social and entertainment directors.

For those who've run out

7/30/15 HSA

a hidden gem in Waikiki

of ideas, there is a place as entertaining for adults as for children, where both can explore the wonders of nature in the sanctity of air-conditioning.

At Lucoral Museum in Waikiki, owner Flora Lu has built an indoor cave reminiscent of lava tubes to house displays of rocks, minerals and ocean treasures such as red and pink corals as a reminder to care for the planet that, in turn, provides for us.

Visitors take a free self-

guided stroll through the museum in a half hour, but some can spend an entire afternoon browsing Lu's jewelry creations or sitting in her workroom during make-and-take jewelry sessions, stringing semiprecious gemstones, pearls and shells into bracelets, at \$10 per bracelet.

If it's a necklace you want, the base cost is \$10 plus \$1 per inch for every inch over 8 inches, so a 16-inch necklace would be \$18. An 18-inch necklace

would be \$20.

For Lu, a wholesale jeweler, building the museum was a way of engaging with the public and reminding children to appreciate nature's gifts. It's her way of giving back out of gratitude for the blessings in her own life, starting when she was a child growing up on Penghu Island, or Pescadoreas as named by the Spanish, a fishing island off the coast of Taiwan.

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MUSEUM

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In 1963, Typhoon Gloria hit, destroying all the fishing boats and with them, the island's industry and her family's 10-generation livelihood.

"Everyone have different ideas of what my parents could do," said Lu, the seventh of 11 children. "One said open a barber shop. Our neighbor was a shell manufacturer who saw that my parents have so many kids so taught us how to polish and cut shells and drill holes. That's how I got started, at 10 years old."

Accustomed to the abundance of the ocean, fishermen regarded the shells as worthless, she said, prior to the typhoon.

"People would eat the shellfish meat and the leftover shell we would dump into the ocean," she said. "After the typhoon, it turned into treasure. Abalone shell became like gold.

"I found out I was good with my hands, creative, so I would spend all day playing with the shells and making jewelry. I didn't go to school."

In five years' time, the Pescadores fishing industry rebounded, and with her family's future secure, Lu moved with two of her sisters to Taipei, where she continued to develop her jewelry business. She



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Flora Lu runs the Lucoral Museum. She shows a 2,000-pound rose quartz sculpture that Kaohsiung, Taiwan, donated in 2011, the same year that Lu was named the mother of the year in Honolulu. The large art pieces on each side were also donated.

moved to Hawaii in 1982, opening Lucoral Museum in 1989 to share her passion and attendant messages of education, self-motivation and conservation.

Her displays include a 145-million-year-old dinosaur egg and 30-million-year-old fossilized fish, but much of what is displayed are reminders of how much has disappeared in Hawaii over two centuries, such as calcite and stalactite caves and quarries, Kaneohe Bay clams, and the pearl oysters that gave Pearl Harbor its name — all lost to the impacts of development.

Lu was named Mother of the Year 2011-2012 by the United Chinese Society, but her mothering extends beyond her three children to all the youngsters who pass through her museum, many during school excursions.

"I tell them they have to name 20 gemstones before they leave, and they remember. Their teachers can't believe it. They say, 'These are bad students,' but I can't believe it. They're so smart.

"Teaching and education are very important. I often wonder what would have happened to me if my neigh-

bor didn't help us.

"Now, I see the homeless and so many kids living on the street and wonder if I can help them. Maybe if I collect shells from restaurants' leftovers I could teach them to polish and buy it from them. Sharing my technique is something I could do because other people taught me 'to fish' so I could survive."

Lucoral Museum is at 2414 Kuhio Ave. Open 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays to Fridays. Admission is free. To book private jewelry parties, call Liz at 922-1999.