

# island scene

well-being, family, and fun for **HMSA** members || fall 2025 || [islandscene.com](https://islandscene.com)

a journey of healing:  
maui's kapua beyer cavaco



water aerobics || girls flag football || rainy-day recipes



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LEW HARRINGTON



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# island scene

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**COVER:** Story on cancer survivor  
Kapua Beyer Cavaco on page 12  
by Courtney Takabayashi.  
Photo by Lexi Figueroa.



## aloha members,



The world is changing faster than ever before.

Whether it's how we work, how we communicate, how we shop, or how we play, everything is different from yesterday. Automation and digitization are normal now, and are being disrupted by artificial intelligence, machine learning, quantum computing, and robotics.

We each react differently to change, and we adapt to it at different paces. It can be viewed as an opportunity for a better tomorrow, or the loss of a remembered past.

Society becomes more adaptable and resilient, depending on whether we're developing optimistic or pessimistic leaders. That's why it's so important that we invest in our youth, our greatest natural resource and our greatest community asset, to embrace the hopeful vision of a future in which they'll flourish.

At HMSA, this investment in our youth is our steadfast commitment. In June, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of our Kaimana Awards & Scholarship Program, which includes school awards and college scholarships that recognize the future leaders of our state. We featured the list of 2025 school and scholarship winners in our summer issue (available on [islandscene.com](http://islandscene.com)), and our cover story for that issue had updates on past scholarship winners and their recent accomplishments.

In this issue, you'll read about HMSA's sponsorship of the inaugural season of high school girls flag football. It was a phenomenal first year, with unprecedented popularity and participation, culminating in a fantastic and dramatic state championship game between Campbell and Leilehua. And congratulations to the Campbell Sabers!

This wasn't just about a game called football. It was about opportunity, passion, and seizing the day. It's preparing our young student-athletes to become the leaders of tomorrow. With the right tools and guidance, they can face the future with hope and optimism.

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Sincerely,



Mark M. Mugiishi, M.D., F.A.C.S.  
President and Chief Executive Officer





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# publisher's note

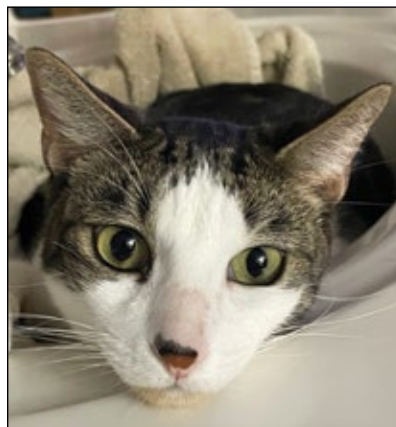
## dear friends,

I love Christmas! It's my favorite time of the year, even with all its busy-ness and never-ending list of things to do.

Last Christmas, our condo buildings were in the middle of a major renovation. With appliances and cabinets temporarily stored in our already small living area, we decided not to put up a tree (gasp!). But no grinchies here. I decorated the rest of the place and tossed a sheet over the bathroom sink stored in our living room. It became the Christmas Sink, and we piled decorations and presents in and around it.

And in that holiday tone, be sure to check out articles on decluttering before the holidays (page 54) and holiday safety for pets (page 35). And remember to protect yourself and your family from the flu this time of the year; see pages 29 and 53 for information and tips.

There's also so much more to read in this issue, including our cover story by Courtney Takabayashi on breast cancer survivor Kapua Beyer Cavaco (page 12), and Kristen Nemoto Jay's very touching story about losing her best friend to suicide, and how Kristen copes and continues to heal (page 22).



Our cat Comet loved hanging out in the sink during the renovations.

And our Eat Well section includes information on kale (page 61), rainy-day recipes (page 58), and recipes for your air fryer (page 62). Maybe you'll get a new air fryer during the holidays!

Enjoy the season, friends, in ways that are important to you. And when you need to relax and take a break, curl up with a good magazine like *Island Scene*!

Take care,

Lisa Maneki Baxa  
Publisher and Editor

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The following statement is required by the United States Postal Service, section 3685, title 30, to show ownership, management, and circulation of *Island Scene*.

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around the 808

## maui, moloka'i, and lāna'i

### Revitalizing Lahaina

There's new growth in a beloved park that was impacted by the Lahaina fires more than two years ago. Puakenikeni, ma'o (Hawaiian cotton), and 'ulu are helping the Kahoma Village Park become a welcoming space once again.

"After the fire, it was vital to bring the community together so that residents could connect and support one another on their healing journey," says Jill Wirt, program director with Maui Nui Marine Resource Council.

The community planted specific native trees, flowers, and shrubs that are both resilient and beneficial for nearby marine ecosystems – a testament to the strength of residents and their commitment to mālama 'āina.

"The results will be seen for years to come, and caring for this space will take the entire community coming together, not just today but every day hereafter," says Wirt.



Community members planting new life in Kahoma Village Park.

COURTESY STUDIO ASALT AND DEER #SANDER



Miss Aloha Hula Jaedyn Pavao during 'auana night at the 2025 Merrie Monarch Festival.

## kaua'i

### Hula healer

For Merrie Monarch 2025 Miss Aloha Hula Jaedyn Janae Pua-haulani Pavao, being a dancer and nurse are one and the same. As a little girl, she remembers the joy she'd bring to her grandfather at his bedside while he recovered from a stroke.

"If a kāholo (hula steps) to the right and left could make him smile, I realized the impact I can make on people as a nurse is far greater," says Pavao, who dances for Hālau Ka Lei Moki-hana o Leinā'ala in Kā laheo.

The 24-year-old credits the discipline, strong work ethic, and commitment she's developed as a dancer with helping her as a public health nurse for the Hawai'i Department of Health.

"Nurses make such a great impact on families," she says. "It's a calling to give back to people in this community who also helped raise me and set a foundation in my life."



For an extended interview with Jaedyn Pavao, visit [islandscene.com/more](https://islandscene.com/more).



# big island

## Reducing the stigma of addiction

Last September, models in recovery walked the Runway to Resilience fashion show to celebrate the Big Island Substance Abuse Council's (BISAC) 60th anniversary in the fight against addiction.

"Our goal is to empower individuals and provide a continuum of care," says Hannah Preston-Pita, Psy.D., BISAC's chief executive officer. "Substance use service has always been the core of our programs, but we've also extended to mental health counseling, a variety of wellness programs, and ancillary services."

Beyond residential and outpatient treatment, BISAC includes these supplemental programs:

- Huliha Ke Ola: A social detoxification program in a safe residential setting.
- Ola Kino: Off-site exercise and nutrition counseling.
- Mahi'ai Ola: 'Āina-based, connecting land and culture to recovery.
- Po'okela Vocational Training: Helping individuals become job-ready after treatment.
- Always Claim Excellence in Sobriety (ACES) mentorship program that is dedicated to cultivating a path toward sustained sobriety.

"Addiction doesn't discriminate – it can happen to anyone," says Dr. Preston-Pita. "But recovery is possible. It's so rewarding to hear people say, 'This is the best thing I ever did for myself and my family.' That lightbulb moment is a remarkable thing to witness."

*For more information, visit [bisac.org](http://bisac.org) or call (808) 969-9994. To check your HMSA plan benefits for addiction services, please call the number on the back of your HMSA membership card.*



The Big Island Substance Abuse Council celebrated its 60th anniversary with a Runway to Resilience fashion show.

Have a great story, place, or event that makes your Neighbor Island community special? Share it with us at [feedback@islandscene.com](mailto:feedback@islandscene.com) or call (808) 948-6839.



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## Oahu



### HMSA Center

818 Keeaumoku St., Hau Room  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Monday, Oct. 13, Nov. 3, & Nov. 24  
Friday, Dec. 5  
Saturday, Oct. 4, Oct. 25, & Nov. 15

### HMSA Center in Pearl City

1132 Kuala St., Suite 400  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Monday, Oct. 27  
Wednesday, Nov. 26  
Saturday, Oct. 18 & Nov. 8

### Aina Haina Library

5246 Kalanianaʻole Hwy.  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Wednesday, Oct. 29  
Friday, Oct. 17

### Ala Moana Hotel

410 Atkinson Dr., Pakalana Room  
**12:30-2:30 p.m. & 3-5 p.m.**  
Wednesday, Oct. 22  
Tuesday, Nov. 18  
(Presented in Japanese)

### Big City Diner - Kaneohe

46-056 Kamehameha Hwy., D-01  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Friday, Oct. 17, Nov. 14, & Dec. 5

### Liliha Library

1515 Liliha St.  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Saturday, Oct. 11, Nov. 8  
Tuesday, Oct. 21, Nov. 18

### McCully-Moiliili Library

2211 S. King St.  
**4:30-6:30 p.m.**  
Friday, Oct. 10  
Wednesday, Nov. 5  
(Presented in Japanese)

## Hawaii Island



### HMSA Center in Hilo

303A E. Makaala St.  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Saturday, Oct. 4, Oct. 25, & Nov. 15

### Premier Benefits Consultants – Hilo

1437 Kilauea Ave., Suite 204  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Tuesday, Oct. 7, Oct. 14, Oct. 28,  
Nov. 4, & Nov. 18  
**1-3 p.m.**  
Thursday, Oct. 16, Nov. 6, Nov. 20,  
& Dec. 4

### Suite Possibilities – Kailua-Kona

75-5915 Walua Rd.  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Wednesday, Oct. 8, Oct. 15,  
Oct. 29, & Nov. 19  
Friday, Oct. 24, Nov. 21, & Dec. 5  
**9:30-11:30 a.m.**  
Saturday, Nov. 22

### Mana Christian Church

67-1182 Lindsey Rd.  
**1-3 p.m.**  
Wednesday, Oct. 15, Oct. 22,  
Nov. 5, Nov. 19, & Dec. 3  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Thursday, Oct. 9, Oct. 16, Oct. 30,  
Nov. 6, & Nov. 20

## Maui



### HMSA Center @ Kahului

70 Hookele St., Suite 1220  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Saturday, Oct. 11, Nov. 1, & Nov. 22

## Cameron Center

95 Mahalani St.  
**2-4 p.m.**  
Tuesday, Oct. 28  
Saturday, Oct. 18, Nov. 8, Nov. 15,  
& Nov. 29  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Friday, Nov. 14

## Maui Beach Hotel

170 W. Kaahumanu Ave.  
Molokai Room  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Monday, Oct. 13  
Friday, Oct. 24  
**2-4 p.m.**  
Friday, Nov. 14

## Kauai



### Kauai Chamber of Commerce

4268-I Rice St., Pili Pili Room  
**10 a.m.-noon**  
Saturday, Oct. 11 & Nov. 1



## Online

### Oahu Presentations

**10 a.m.-noon**  
Tuesday, Oct. 7 & Oct. 14  
Thursday, Oct. 9, Oct. 16, Oct. 23,  
Oct. 30, Nov. 6, Nov. 13, Nov. 20,  
& Dec. 4  
Saturday, Nov. 29

### Neighbor Island Presentations

**2-4 p.m.**  
Tuesday, Oct. 7 & Oct. 14  
Thursday, Oct. 9, Oct. 16, Oct. 23,  
Oct. 30, Nov. 6, Nov. 13, Nov. 20,  
& Dec. 4  
Saturday, Nov. 29



Surrounded by the calm of the kahawai, Wailuku river.



# a journey of healing

**words** Courtney Takabayashi

**photos** Lexi Figueroa

At the age of 40, Kapua Beyer Cavaco had just been through a traumatic medical emergency and didn't want to endure another. But the mother of two young children and licensed clinical psychologist on Maui knew she should listen to her husband's advice. As her doctor was about to leave the exam room, Beyer Cavaco took a deep breath and asked her doctor, "Can you check something before you go?"

Two weeks later, a biopsy confirmed that she had invasive ductal carcinoma, or breast cancer. "We're so lucky we caught it early," Beyer Cavaco says. "Imagine if I hadn't spoken up. This could have been a very different story."

## A time of change

In 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, Beyer Cavaco and her family moved from O'ahu to Maui to be closer to her husband's family. Professionally, she was transitioning from working with underserved, rural populations at community health centers to building her own private practice.

When she wasn't working, she was shuttling her daughters to school and activities. "At the time, I was busy, but I'd like to think I was healthy," she says. "I did my best to eat well and stay active."

Three years later, she experienced excruciating abdominal pain so sudden and severe that she went to the emergency room. "We know now it wasn't a cyst exactly. It was a growth on my ovaries, and it ruptured," says Beyer Cavaco. "During a follow-up visit with my doctor, we learned it was endometriosis." Endometriosis, a disease where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus, can cause immense pain. There's no prevention or cure.

She shared other symptoms like fatigue with her doctor and did some blood work. "The doctor mentioned that since I was 40, I should do a mammogram, and I said sure; it hadn't really been on my radar otherwise," she says. "A few weeks later, I actually noticed a small lump on my breast, but my mammogram wasn't scheduled until the end of the year."

When Beyer Cavaco went to see her ob-gyn about her endometriosis and her appointment was over, her husband, who happened to be there with her, nudged her.

"Ask him about the lump."

Looking back, Beyer Cavaco can't believe she almost didn't say anything. "We were done with our appointment and I didn't want to ask for one more thing," she says. "But I never want my own patients to feel like that. Take up your doctor's time. That's why we're here. Take up space."

### **A time of healing**

Two weeks after her diagnosis, Beyer Cavaco had surgery to remove the cancer. "Then, I was on the fence about going through with radiation," she says. "But I wanted to give myself the best chance for my girls, ages 4 and 7 at the time, so I did it five days a week for four weeks. It was tough, but I'm glad I did it." In addition, for the next five years, she'll receive

shots once a month and take a daily medication to help keep the cancer from recurring. Though it puts her in medical menopause and is hard on her body, she's determined to do what's necessary to stay cancer-free.

Beyer Cavaco welcomed her children's questions and curiosity throughout the whole process. She spoke in ways she thought her young daughters would understand. "We'd talk about my boo boo, how my cells were growing too fast, and that they needed to be removed," she says. They saw her scars after her surgery and went with her and her husband to radiation treatments. "We spent a lot of time cuddling during those months," she says. "It was their way of helping me heal, even if they didn't know that's what they were doing."

### **A time to connect with nature**

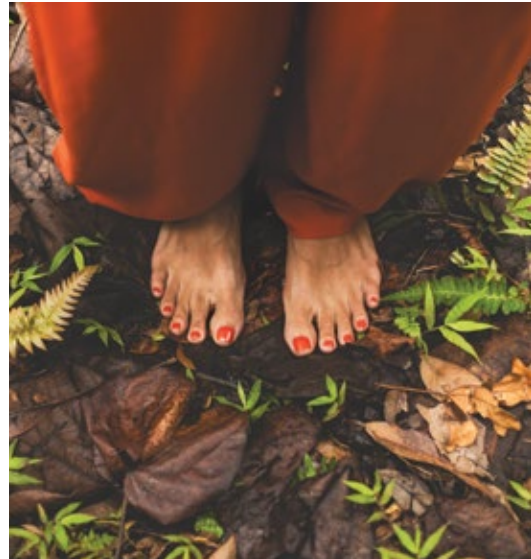
While surgery successfully removed all the cancer and radiation was complete, Beyer Cavaco was exhausted. "There were all these parts of me that needed tending: my mind, body, and spirit," she says. "I had the opportunity to try forest bathing and then I realized what was missing: the 'āina."

In 2024, she was guided by Phyllis Look, Hawai'i's first certified forest therapy guide and founder of Forest Bathing Hawai'i. Look

"I had the opportunity to try forest bathing and then I realized what was missing: the 'āina."

: Kapua Beyer Cavaco






Top: Bird song, flowing water, rustling trees – nature as medicine. Bottom left: Beyer Cavaco and her biggest supporters, her husband, daughters, and their dog, Fugu. Bottom right: Heavy rains cleared, leaving soaked leaves and happy ferns.

collaborated with volunteer Joy Galatro and Maui Forest Bathing to create the free Healing Trees Maui series to support Maui after the 2023 wildfires. "I signed my parents up for forest bathing first and they raved about it!" Beyer Cavaco says. "They came home calm and happy, and said that it was so good to connect with nature. So, I knew I needed to try it."

The result was transformative. "Forest bathing is simply slowing down in order to be in connection with nature," says Beyer Cavaco. Participants are guided in a group setting to engage with the natural environment through their senses, and spend time in quiet contemplation and sharing. "I'd walked in nature before, but for the first time I felt like I was connecting with nature on a cellular level. And as a Kānaka Maoli, I feel very connected to my ancestors through the 'āina," she says. "Some part of me had forgotten, and it felt like coming home."

Her experience was so powerful that she trained to become a certified forest therapy guide. "My dream is for forest therapy to become preventative health care here in Hawai'i," she says. "For me, it's all connected, and reciprocity with nature is health."

And after everything she's been through, her takeaway is to listen. "Trust yourself," she says. "Sometimes we're all in our heads. My diagnoses forced me to trust myself. The best thing we can do is listen to our bodies."

*October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. For other articles on breast cancer, go to [islandscene.com](https://islandscene.com) and search breast cancer.* 



COURTESY KAPUA BEYER CAVACO

Top: Slowing down to experience the beauty of nature.  
Bottom: Guiding nonprofit, Root & Rise Hawai'i team members at the Kona Cloud Forest Sanctuary.



To learn more about forest bathing,  
**visit [islandscene.com/more](https://islandscene.com/more).**





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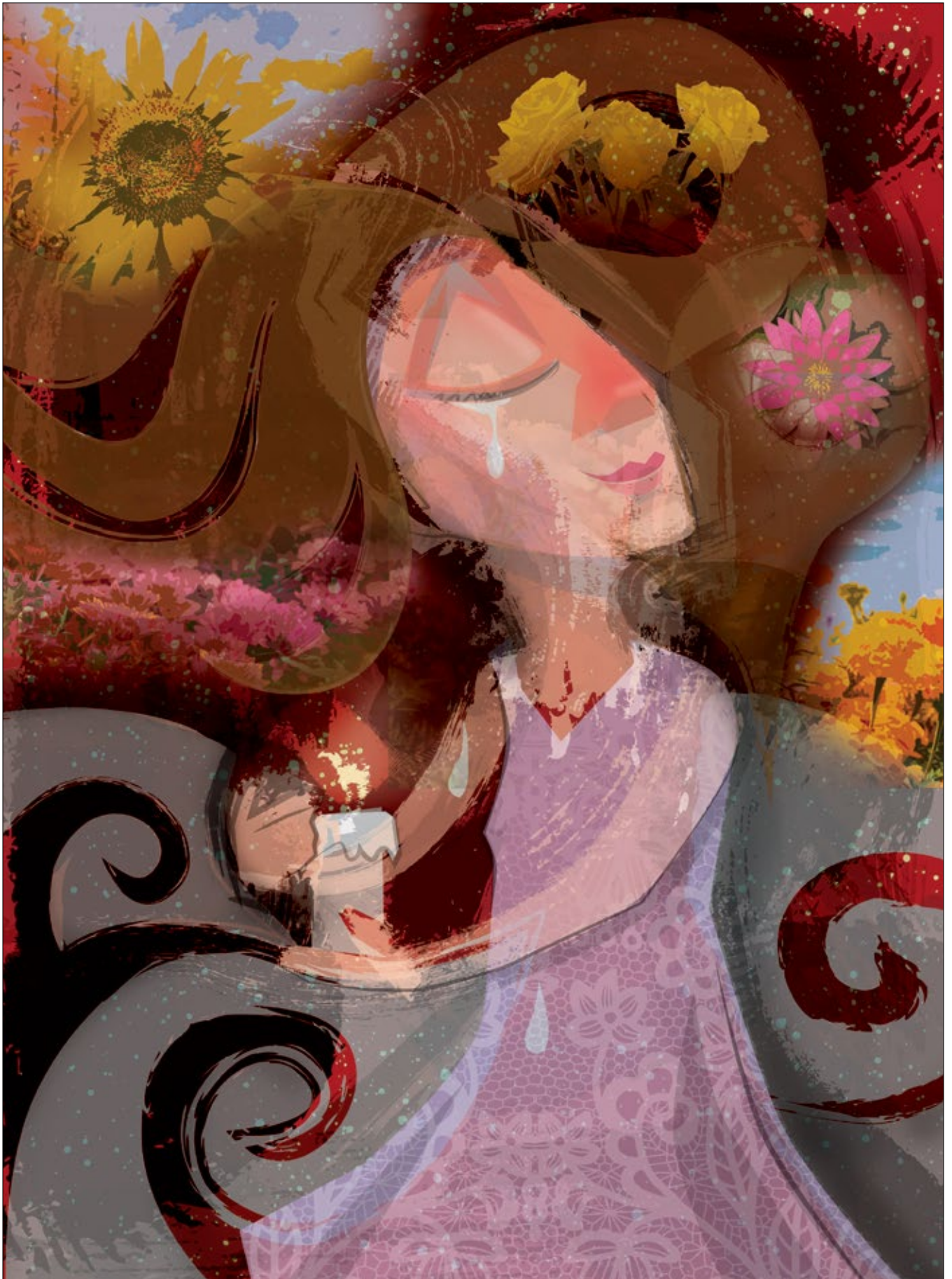


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\*\* Find locations and hours at [hmsa.com/contact](https://hmsa.com/contact).

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# losing someone to suicide: how to grieve and heal

**words** Kristen Nemoto Jay

**art** Garry Ono

I'll never forget the date. March 17, 2023. It was a Friday. I was in a parking lot when I received the news. My best friend was "no longer with us." She was 38 years young. I got in my car, sat in disbelief for what seemed like an eternity, then began to cry uncontrollably. Fear, anger, sadness, uncontrollable sadness, took over. I was no longer a part of my body. I became my emotions. I was overcome with emotions, and the most intrusive thoughts. This will be the case for the next two years. I'm still working through it.

As much as I grieved and will forever grieve her passing, I think I always knew this day would come. For as long as I'd known her, over 20 years, she battled with depression. It was like this monster that would overtake my vivacious, loving, and free-spirited friend, and hold her hostage until it brought her back down. Cheer competitions, concerts, graduation, getting her dream job, it didn't matter. The monster was there to take her happiness away, always.

As her friend, it was debilitating to see that I couldn't do anything to get rid of the monster. She hid it so well from me and many others. When she took her life, I was heartbroken. I couldn't face or accept it. "What more could I have done?" I'd ask myself, over and over and over again. It was torturous, and still is.

It's taken me two years, and maybe more time is needed, to learn that there was nothing more that I could have done. This was her choice, and I have to learn to accept it. It will take a while, for I'm still not fully there yet (even as I type this), but I do know that I've been finding pockets of growth that have helped me heal:

**Therapy:** The number one reason I've been able to wake up and carry on another day after my best friend's passing is because of my relationship with my therapist, Liza Alex Baker, LMFT, M.A.

Working with a therapist has been the best decision I've ever made for my mental health. It's why I've been able to move through these past few years with more clarity and grace. "Finding a safe place to feel and express your emotions is so important," says Baker. "These emotions that you are feeling exist whether you ignore them or not. Self-compassion is a critical part of healing, and a therapist can help you in this process."

Once a week I meet with Baker for an hour. We talk about anything and everything that comes to mind. It's comforting to feel completely seen and heard; someone who can fully help work through the nuances and challenges of every emotion. It's hard work, and there are days when

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**"Self-compassion is a critical part of healing,  
and a therapist can help you in this process."**

**: Liza Alex Baker, LMFT, M.A.**

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I don't feel like opening up as much as I do on other days, but that's part of the process. It's like going to the gym, except I get to flex my mental health muscles more so than my glutes. The results have been life-changing. After each session, I feel like my Instant Pot the moment I switch the valve to quick release. It's not perfect, as some days are harder than others, but the heaviness of my thoughts are much more lighter and manageable every time I finish a session.

**Surround yourself with loved ones:** You cannot do this life by yourself. Ask for help. Call a friend to watch your kids for an hour so you can nap. Say "no, thank you" to obligations that you don't want to do. Your tribe will understand and support you.

**Eat, sleep, and try to work out:** Before you can do anything well, you need a good night's sleep, nutritious food in your belly, and physical activity to be able to assess if there's something wrong. There were so many times when I just needed to do better in any of these three categories to feel like myself again.



**Volunteer/Do something nice for yourself or others:**


Whether it's hosting a movie and crafts night with friends or teaching a yoga class, donating my time and surrounding myself with my community has been a true joy and a gift to my mental health.

**Get creative:** Through therapy, I learned that doing something creative helps me combat anxiety. In my spare time, I've been working on a paint by numbers project. I don't get very far, as I can only get to it when my kids are napping on the weekends, but the intention is there and it keeps me hyper-focused and present when I'm working on it.

**Go outside:** These past few years, I've noticed the need to go outside more often than usual. Though my fair-skin seems to turn beet-red just by being around the sun rather than under it, I found myself gravitating more to the beach with my family, or packing up lunches to have picnics at the park.

This summer I started a garden on our 100-square-foot balcony, and it's been, so far, a blissful project. I bought a pink hammock chair, with a matching pink rug, that overlooks my lemon tree and sweet potatoes. Sometimes my 2 year old and 5 year old squish on with me while we read a picture book. It's hard to take life too seriously whenever I set foot on our tiny outdoor oasis.

Overall, I have to remind myself constantly that there is no clear path to healing. It comes in waves. Some days I'll feel like I've moved on. Other days I feel as if I need to start all over again. It's frustrating but, from what I've learned, it's part of the path toward healing.

Whatever your path to healing looks like, just know you are not alone. We're all here, together, taking it one day at a time, and I'm especially here with you, my friend. 



Clockwise from top: Nemoto Jay celebrating her 40th birthday last year with her close family and friends; a craft project made during one of Nemoto Jay's movie and crafts nights; Nemoto Jay enjoys practicing and teaching yoga in her spare time.

*If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).*



For suicide loss resources and more information on how to help heal, visit [islandscene.com/more](https://islandscene.com/more).







# fighting fires and fighting for mental health

**words** Michelle Liu and  
Courtney Takabayashi

**photo-illustration** Brandon Young

**Firefighters are real-life superheroes.** From running into burning buildings to rescuing people from crashed cars, they save lives every day.

But even superheroes need to take off their masks and capes. These brave first responders face tragedy day in and day out, and that can take a serious toll on their overall well-being. That's why the Honolulu Fire Department is ensuring the warriors in battle are getting the care they need, so they can be their best selves and get their jobs done.

## Double duty

Saving lives and giving back to the community are just some of the reasons Capt. Kevin Calleon and Capt. Brent Dillabaugh chose to become firefighters. Interestingly, firefighting was a second career for both of them. In fact, their previous jobs (Calleon was a mental health specialist and Dillabaugh was in the nonprofit sector) informed their ability to serve on the Honolulu Fire Department's Peer Support Program, which offers one-on-one peer counseling for employees and their family members to discuss professional and/or personal matters.

"We experience a lot of gruesome things on a daily basis, things people may rarely experience in their lives," explains Calleon, who assists in leading the program.

Firefighters and other first responders are more prone to mental health concerns compared to the public because of their constant exposure to potentially traumatic events (PTE). How each firefighter reacts to a PTE is different; some may be able to cope, while others may struggle with what they witnessed. There are also those who compartmentalize the event, but as their exposure to PTE cumulates over their career, so does their anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

"Sometimes first responders may hesitate to reach out to a mental health professional," says Calleon. "We've found that they may be more likely to talk to a peer or someone who went through a similar experience."



Captain Kevin Calleon



Captain Brent Dillabaugh



The Peer Support Program opens the conversation, letting firefighters know they're not alone in their struggles.


"We're helping folks acknowledge the importance of focusing on mental health and reducing the stigma," says Dillabaugh. "The more we talk about mental health concerns, the more we'll reach more members, allowing them to have a long and healthy career and retirement."

### Coffee and camaraderie

The Honolulu Fire Department also has a proactive approach to caring for firefighters' mental health. Once a month, firefighters are invited to Coffee Talk, where they talk story and share any life updates, both professional and personal.

"We're all 'ohana. One of the best ways we can be there for each other is to stay connected," says Calleon. "As first responders, we do a great job protecting our community and putting ourselves out there. But sometimes what we fall short on is our own self-care. So, we make it intentional and mindful to hold these conversations."

Both the Peer Support Program and Coffee Talk give firefighters a safe space to gather and be authentic with themselves and each other. By taking care of themselves, this community of brave superheroes can be the best they can be when they come to our rescue.

"It's a unique experience to be a firefighter in this department here in these Islands," says Dillabaugh. "We really feel like we're making a difference in the community, so it's truly a blessing to be able to be part of the department." 

For mental health resources, tips on how to manage stress, and information on behavioral health, go to **islandscene.com** or **scan the QR code.**



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# water aerobics: not just for seniors

**words** David Frickman

**photos** Romeo Collado



You don't need to know how to swim to join in.



The exercise helps you tone and build muscles and endurance.





Instructor Joni Amuro says, "All people can benefit from doing water aerobics."



It's a social time as well as an exercise time.

Joni Amuro joined a water aerobics class and thought it would be easy. "I saw these seniors in the water, and I said to myself, well, if they can do it, I can do it."

It turned out to be more challenging than she expected. And she was hooked. Now Amuro is an Aqua Fit instructor at the YMCA of Honolulu Mililani Branch.

Water aerobics is a form of exercise performed in a pool, typically in shallow water, where participants use the water's resistance.

### For any fitness level

Some people think it's mainly for older adults, but Amuro disagrees. "I feel that all people can benefit from doing water aerobics, all the way from young athletes to people who have special conditions like arthritis."

You don't need to know how to swim to join in. "In fact," Amuro says, "I have a lot of members who are not swimmers, but they enjoy their time in the water. I've had members with past traumas regarding the water, but after they spend time in the water, they begin to feel comfortable."

### Physical health benefits

Amuro says water aerobics can improve many parts of the body for adults and teens. Such as:

- **Heart:** "It helps with your cardiovascular. It strengthens your heart muscle and improves circulation and lowers blood pressure."
- **Muscles:** "It helps with muscle strength, and helps you tone and build muscles and muscular endurance."
- **Joints:** "It helps with flexibility, greater range of motion in the water. It's considered lower impact to your lower limbs, so it helps with the knees, hips, ankles, and feet. You can actually wear a water belt and take it into a deep end with zero gravity."

And it can be a great weight loss exercise, she says "The number of calories you burn is amazing."

One woman who came to the class daily eventually dropped 40 pounds. Amuro says the woman was very afraid of the water when she started. "Now she's able to go on her back and kick back and forth. She's no longer afraid."

## Mental health and social benefits

Amuro says water exercise can also help with mental health. “It’s a very calming environment,” she says. “It produces all these endorphins when you’re exercising, so it makes you feel better. Your mood is uplifted.”

“I like our members to interact with each other, so between exercises, I always encourage them to high-five someone or encourage their neighbors. And they just love that. It brings them together. It’s a social time as well as an exercise time.”

Amuro recommends trying a class a few times. “I encourage people to try different instructors and find one they like. Different instructors may do the same set of exercises, but you’ll have different outcomes. A lot of it has to do with the personality of the instructor.” <sup>15</sup>



Learn about the benefits of low-impact exercise.  
Go to [islandscene.com/more](https://islandscene.com/more).



Amuro found water aerobics more challenging than she expected at first.





# My Account

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- See if your recent medical, drug, dental, or vision claims have been processed.
- Find out how much your drug plan will cover your prescription costs.
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- Order prescription refills from a mail-order pharmacy through our pharmacy benefit manager.
- View your HMSA membership card, request a duplicate, or print a copy.
- Submit questions to HMSA via AskHMSA.
- And more!

## **Need help?**

Call us at the number on the back of your HMSA membership card.







Jamie Higa

# head games

**words** Earl Yoshii

**art** Garry Ono

**“My dad found me slumped over the steering wheel** in the middle of the night, parked in our driveway,” says Jamie Higa, who was playing college basketball at the time. “I don’t even remember driving home from practice.”

Higa was living her dream – playing college ball, competing at a high level and doing what she loved. But behind the scenes, she was pushing herself past the breaking point.

She had already suffered three concussions playing basketball at Kalani High School. Then, during a college practice, she took another hard hit – bumped from behind, slammed forward, and hit her head on the court. It was her fourth concussion. Higa says that she didn’t take her injury seriously. “I could still run, jump, and make shots so I told myself I was fine. I didn’t want to tell my athletic trainer or coach, or even admit it to myself. I felt so connected with my team and really identifying myself as a student-athlete, I did struggle with the stress and that anxiety of what am I going to do if I’m not playing any sports? I didn’t have the strength to speak up.”

Like many athletes, Higa felt pressure to tough it out. That pressure is part of a larger problem in competitive sports – a culture that sometimes rewards silence and toughness over health and safety.



Troy Furutani

“Too many athletes stay quiet about head injuries,” says Troy Furutani, athletic trainer and program manager for the Hawai’i Concussion Awareness and Management Program (HCAMP). “But the long-term risks are real. Recognizing and reporting symptoms are critical.”

Even after countless doctors’ appointments and hours of rehab, Higa still feels lasting effects from the concussion. However, she now wants others to learn from her experience. She graduated from the University of Colorado Denver with a doctorate in psychology. Now a licensed clinical and school psychologist, she works with Furutani at HCAMP, helping students cope with the social-emotional and academic effects of concussions.

“This concussion consumed my life and affected not only me, but the ones closest to me as well. I thought staying silent made me stronger,” she adds. “But real strength is knowing when to take care of yourself.” **is**

For a video on brain health, visit  
**[youtube.com/@hmsahawaii](https://youtube.com/@hmsahawaii)** or  
scan the QR code.



This is part of a series of articles on concussions. For past articles, go to **[islandscene.com](https://islandscene.com)** and search for concussion.

# HMSA Health Education Workshops

Check out these free health education workshops we're offering this spring.

## Stress Bucket

Stress is a part of life and knowing how to manage and release it is crucial in preventing high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, and other health conditions. Learn simple, enjoyable ways to lower your stress levels before it becomes a problem.

**Online at [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)**  
Oct. 28, Noon-1 p.m.

## Rest Easy?

Busy schedule? Taking time to unwind can reduce stress, improve sleep, and support your overall health. Join us to learn how to destress and find your calm.

**Online at [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)**  
Dec. 11, Noon-1 p.m.

## Mind Your Muscles

Our muscles control our body's movement and play a key role in our overall health. In this session, you'll learn about muscle anatomy, conditioning, and exercises for strength. Plus, all participants will receive a **free resistance band!**

**HMSA Center in Honolulu**  
Oct. 24, Noon-1 p.m.

**HMSA Center in Hilo**  
Nov. 15, 11 a.m.-Noon

**HMSA Center in Pearl City**  
Dec. 2, Noon-1 p.m.

## Holiday Hurdles

It's easy to overindulge in food and alcohol during the holidays. Learn easy and effective strategies to enjoy the festive season without going overboard. Participants will receive a **free portion plate!**

**HMSA Center in Honolulu**  
Nov. 3, Noon-1 p.m.

**HMSA Center in Pearl City**  
Nov. 7, Noon-1 p.m.

**HMSA Center in Hilo**  
Nov. 15, Noon-1 p.m.

Visit [hmsa.com/HealthEducation](https://hmsa.com/HealthEducation)  
or call 1 (855) 329-5461 to register.

There's no cost to attend workshops.  
Workshop dates and times are subject to change.





## pet safety during the holly jolly holidays

words Michelle Liu



Anna Neubauer

**T**he holidays are a joyful time of celebrating with loved ones, but it can also be a dangerous time of year for your pets. Anna Neubauer, president and CEO of Hawaiian Humane Society, explains what to watch out for to keep the holidays happy for your furry four-legged family members.

**True or false? Holiday treats are safe for pets as long as they're chocolate-free.**

**False:** While chocolate is a well-known danger, many other holiday treats pose significant risks to our furry family members. Foods like poke with macadamia nuts, mochi, and malasadas can be dangerous for pets. Macadamia nuts are toxic to dogs. The sugar and rich butter in malasadas can trigger pancreatitis, while mochi dough can expand in a pet's stomach, causing blockages. Even poi can cause digestive upset if pets aren't used to it.

**Fact or fiction? Poinsettias, holly, and mistletoe are toxic to dogs and cats.**

**Fact:** Poinsettias can cause mild irritation, primarily to the mouth and stomach. Holly berries and leaves can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and depression if ingested. Mistletoe is the most concerning, potentially causing severe gastrointestinal upset, cardiovascular problems, and even death. Keep holiday plants out of reach of curious pets or opt for pet-safe alternatives.

**Can or no can? Tinsel, ribbons, and ornaments are safe for your pets to play with.**

**No can:** Tinsel and ribbons are particularly hazardous for cats, who may be attracted to the shiny, string-like appearance. If swallowed, they can cause intestinal blockages requiring emergency surgery. Glass ornaments can break and cause cuts or internal damage if ingested. Secure decorations firmly to trees, keep tinsel off the tree entirely if you have cats, and consider pet-safe zones in your home where decorations are absent.

**Yes or no? Sharing table scraps isn't harmful to your pet.**

**No:** Even "safe" human foods can upset pets' digestive systems when they're not accustomed to them. Fatty foods can cause pancreatitis, bones can splinter and cause internal damage, and sudden diet changes often lead to gastrointestinal upset. If you want to include your pet in celebrations, prepare a small plate of pet-safe foods like plain kalo (taro) or 'uala (sweet potato), or stick to their regular diet with a safe, vet-approved treat. **IS**

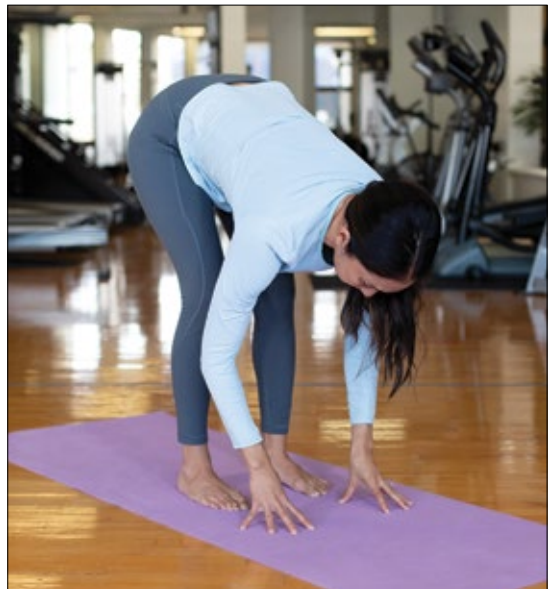
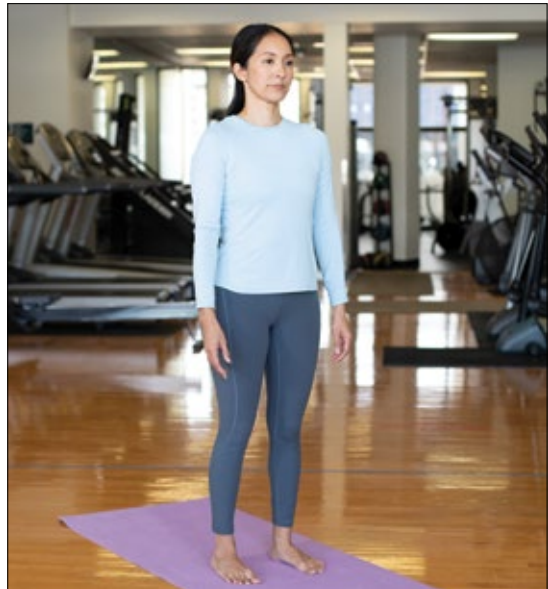


# five essential stretches you should do every day

**words and photos** Earl Yoshii

**The older I get, the harder it is** to drag myself out of bed in the morning. I'm almost 60 now, and I can feel my body getting stiffer. I found that doing simple stretches every day can really help with flexibility and posture, and it can ease muscle stiffness and lower my risk of getting hurt. It also gets my blood flowing and helps me feel more relaxed and less tense.

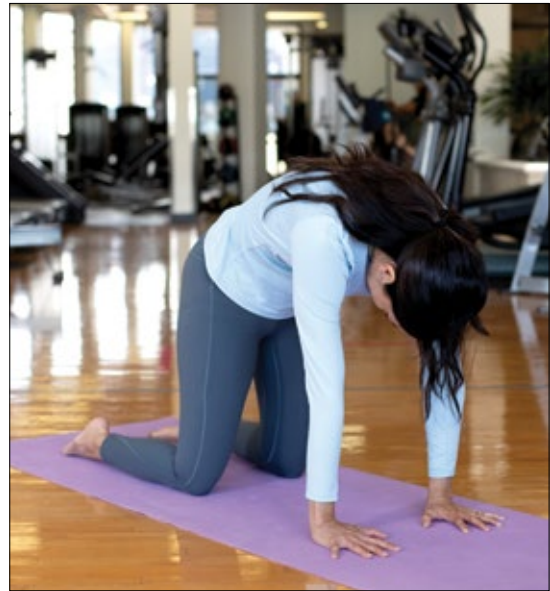
Here are five easy stretches recommended by Candace Yonashiro-Barretta, DPT, a physical therapist with StayFIT Physical Therapy and demonstrated by *Island Scene* associate editor Kristen Nemoto Jay.



1. Standing forward bend: For tight hamstrings and a stiff lower back

Stand with your feet about hip-width apart, then fold forward from your hips while reaching for your toes.





## 2. Cat-cow stretch: For your spine

Get down on all fours, with your hands placed under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Inhale, cow pose, arch your back and lift your head. Exhale, cat pose, round your spine like you're pulling your belly button to your spine. Do this slowly for about 30 seconds.



## 3. Chest opener: For that hunched-over feeling

Stand tall and clasp your hands behind your back. Then gently push your knuckles downward and open your chest.




4. Hip flexor stretch: For tight hips

Step into a lunge with one foot forward and your back leg extended. Sink into it a little, keeping your chest upright.



5. Seated back twist: For your lower back

Sit with your legs straight out, then cross one leg over the other. Place your opposite elbow on the outside of your bent knee and twist gently toward the back. Hold it for a bit, then switch sides. 





# Everyone deserves a bright, healthy smile

Dental health is vital for total health. That's why HMSA offers a range of dental plan options for individuals and businesses that include:

- Access to 94% of all dentists in Hawaii.
- Preventive care at little or no cost.
- Dedicated, local customer support.

Plus, our medical and dental plans work together to help you live healthier.

Whether you're looking for dental coverage for yourself, your family, or your business, HMSA has the dental plan you need.

Learn more at [hmsadental.com](https://hmsadental.com).



1010-1329650



*This holiday season,  
spread joy, not the flu!*

Call your doctor or pharmacy to find out  
where you can get a flu shot, often at no cost.



1010-1328250

## fend off the flu

**words** Keely Kalama-Lakey



Brian Wu, M.D.

**I**t's fall, and flu season is here. To learn more about the flu and flu shots, we talked with pediatric pulmonologist and HMSA Senior Medical Director Brian Wu, M.D.

### What's the flu and how does it affect people?

The term "flu" is often mistakenly used for many different virus infections that cause cold and gastrointestinal symptoms. However, it should be reserved to describe infections caused by the influenza virus. Common flu symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, body and muscle aches, headache, and fatigue. Vomiting and diarrhea are more common in children than adults.

Even if you're healthy, you can develop severe infections from the flu, like pneumonia. People at higher risk of complications include younger children, older adults, pregnant individuals, and those with conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, and obesity.

### How can you prevent the flu or reduce complications?

Getting the flu shot is the best way to lower your risk of getting the flu. And, if you do get infected, it lowers your risk of having a more serious illness. The flu shot only helps protect you from the influenza virus, not other viruses.

### Who should get the flu shot?

Generally, everyone over the age of 6 months should get the flu shot annually. While it's ideal to get it by the end of October, you can still benefit if you get it afterwards.

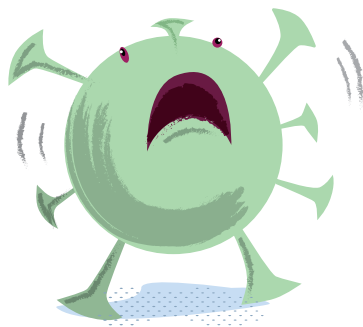
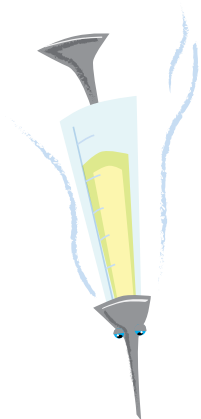
### What should people know about antibiotics and the flu?

**Antibiotics** are used to treat infections caused by bacteria but won't work on influenza because it's a virus. If you get the flu and are at risk of developing a bacterial infection, like pneumonia, your doctor may then prescribe antibiotics.

There are **antiviral** medicines made for the flu that can be prescribed by your doctor. They work best when started within one to two days of symptoms. Most patients with mild illness who are not at high risk for flu complications don't need antivirals. Discuss this with your doctor; sometimes benefits of antivirals outweigh the risks, including possible side effects.

### What else should people know about the flu shot?

It's impossible to get the flu infection from the flu shot or flu nasal vaccine. If you feel symptoms after getting a flu shot, either your immune system is developing protection against the flu or you coincidentally have another illness. **is**





# health matters



## October is Health Literacy Month

What is health literacy and how does it affect you? Health literacy is the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to make well-informed health decisions. When you understand your health conditions and the options available, you can make better decisions for your health. This includes learning about preventive screenings and understanding your medications and treatment plan.

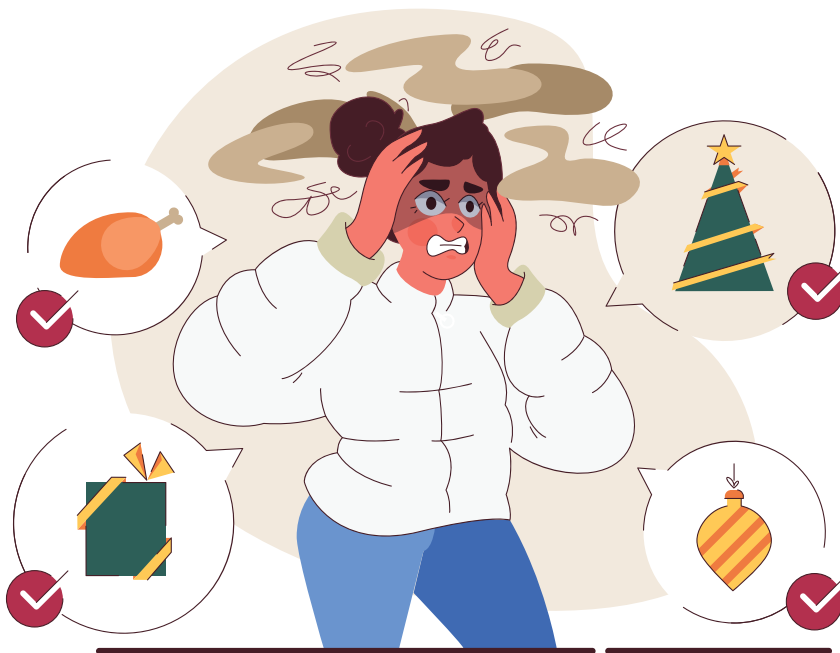
To improve your health literacy:

- Ask your doctor questions if you don't understand a diagnosis, test, or medication. Your doctor wants to know if you need more information or have any concerns about your treatment plan.
- Take notes during doctor appointments or bring someone with you to listen and ask questions with you. Your doctor may have suggestions for you based on your health condition.
- Seek reliable information from reputable sources, such as the American Diabetes Association, American Cancer Society, or American Heart Association.

## Hey, Wash Your Hands!

Flu season is here and it's time for a handwashing reminder. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends washing all parts of your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. To make sure you get your full 20 seconds in, sing the ABC song, sing the Happy Birthday song twice, or find and time your own favorite tune.

Handwashing is especially important before, during, and after preparing food; before and after eating; and before and after caring for someone who's sick. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when soap and water aren't available.



## Prepare Your Body and Mind for the Holidays

The holiday season will be here before we know it, with lots of treats and too many or too few social events! Prepare your body and mind now to handle the holidays by increasing your physical movement. Just 15 minutes of physical movement helps improve your mood, and more is even better for your mental and physical health.

Talk with your doctor to see what type of exercise is right for you. To get started, check out:

- Online classes, such as those found at [nutrition.gov/topics/exercise-and-fitness](https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/exercise-and-fitness).
- Exercise articles and videos available at [islandscene.com/fitness](https://www.islandscene.com/fitness).
- Discounts on gyms, classes, and trainers through HMSA365 Discounts. To learn more, visit [hmsa.com/hmsa365](https://hmsa.com/hmsa365) or call HMSA's Health and Well-being Support at 1 (855) 329-5461.



# support during your time of need

**words** Jay Corsilles and Courtney Takabayashi

**photos** Jay Corsilles



Joan Wylie (left) with HMSA care manager and registered nurse Sharlene Cabuhat.

Life can be tough, especially when you're dealing with one challenge after another. And when the unexpected happens, it's sometimes difficult to know what to do or who to turn to. But with HMSA, you have a built-in support system ready to help you.

HMSA member Joan Wylie was in a life-threatening car accident and broke her pelvis, a bone in her face, and her collarbone. She also had orthostatic hypotension, where she would pass out if she were sitting or lying down in a 45-degree position. Then, she lost her husband, which was heartbreaking and changed her day-to-day life dramatically.



Sharlene offering Joan personalized support as part of HMSA's Case Management Program.

But one day, HMSA care manager and registered nurse Sharlene Cabuhat called Wylie as part of HMSA's Case Management Program. Wylie says that she needed the additional support, and working with Cabuhat by phone was the human connection that kept her motivated. Cabuhat encouraged Wylie to stay positive, and Wylie says Cabuhat was "like a cheerleader" for her.

HMSA's Case Management Program provides personalized support to help members understand and manage their health conditions and helps them get timely, coordinated access to the care they need.


We work closely with your doctors to help coordinate your treatment, medication, and other services. Our goal is to ensure that you have access to the care you need to achieve your best health and well-being.

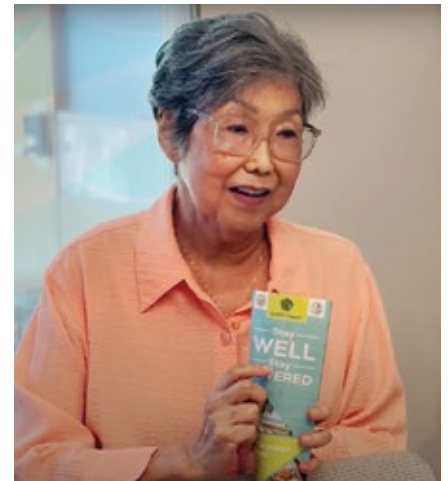
You have access to a team of Hawai'i-based registered nurses who'll connect with you or your caregiver by phone, virtual visit, or in person. You can meet or talk with them from your home, in your doctor's office, or at an HMSA Center.

A case manager can collaborate with your health care team and caregiver to support you to:

- Help you understand your health needs and goals, care plan, and medications.
- Connect you with resources to support your health and well-being.
- Discuss an advance health care directive, living will, or power of attorney.

Your care manager can also provide support if your symptoms get worse, if you're hospitalized and have questions about your discharge instructions, or if you need out-of-state care.

This program is voluntary and available at no cost to eligible HMSA members. For more information, please call HMSA Health and Well-being Support at 1 (855) 329-5461, option 1. 



Watch the touching story of how HMSA care manager and registered nurse, Sharlene Cabuhat, reached out to Joan Wylie and gave her the help and resources she needed to continue living life after the passing of her beloved husband.

Scan this QR code or go to [youtube.com/watch?v=UQ1a7P3fcMQ](https://youtube.com/watch?v=UQ1a7P3fcMQ).



# More providers, more choices to find the right care for you.



## Hawaii Island

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Alina DeSousa  
Kanani K. Dilcher  
Kathryn A. Gorsuch  
Jacqueline M. Guerrero  
Victoria Lynn Krohn  
Justin Connor Larkin  
Louona M. Larkspur  
Christine A. McKenzie  
April E. Moran  
Debbie Jo Netzel  
Karen L. Nishimoto  
Kenneth Ese Otah Sr.  
Dara Lynn F. Pagaduan  
Gina Reyes  
Trent M. Tamate  
Nutan J. Vaz  
Andrea Galus Walters  
Nicole Simone Weston  
Barbara Allen Wise

## Kauai

Carolyn Davis  
Angela N. Heilgental  
Mary E. Hurley  
Laleh Koochek Lourie  
Douglas R. Mailman  
Farhad Safi  
Kanayo Sakai  
Elysse S.L.M. Tom  
Christine Patrice Keery Veal

## Maui

Adreana Jazmyne Finks  
Cole B. Sheldon  
Zoe R. Standing  
Amy B. Thompson  
Elysse S.L.M. Tom  
Ann T. Vance  
Julia Kahalelaukoa Ii Hannon  
Wadsworth

## Oahu

John P. Alamodin  
Mia I. Anduha-Hermosura  
Kimberly Athuman

Danielle L. Baksic  
Giselle A. Baquero Caranama  
Eric M. Barbut  
Rose A. Berkoff Basilio  
Juliet G. Beniga  
Maria Del Carmen Bermudez  
Robert Stanley Bermudez Jr.  
Kelly W. Bickel  
Melika Biglarpour-Watson  
Andrew R. Breton  
Casandra Miller Cashman  
Francisco Castillo  
Simon Yu-Wai Che  
John Michael Lawrence Conklin  
Aquarius N. Cox  
Raquel L. Curtis  
Christina Duran Daris  
Charlotte Pacleb Day  
Frank L. Degiacomo  
Jaime B. DeGuzman  
Suzanne Mary Doyle  
Lucy K. Egesdal  
Matthew K. Elam  
Mariah N. Falls  
Blossom I. Fonoimoana  
Sherrie A.L. Freitas  
Brendon M. Friedman  
Ashley-Rae N.V. Fujie-Fukuki  
Ashley Furumoto  
Jill Ann H. Garcia  
Catherine K. Gee  
Lynn R. Gloden  
Laura Genevieve Gonzalez  
Bernadette L. Goodness-Glory  
Tayler A.M. Gorgas  
Michael J. Ham  
Shaun K. Hara  
Juliet G.T. Hart  
Sara H. Hashimoto  
Naoko Hokari  
Sonjia Howard  
Robert E.T.M. Hsia  
Jan Hua  
Matthew Huang  
Lafaaua T. Iafeta  
Krystal M. Ikeda-Albinio  
Shyretha Tawanee Johnson  
Marisa M.N. Kamada

Ashlyn J.E. Kanai  
Julika Kaplan  
Krish Khatri  
Elease K. Kim  
Nicholas S. Klinkefus  
Lisa M. Krumwiede-Zupsich  
Christina S. Kuba  
Leonie S. Kubo  
Milani N. Kyaw  
Lucia H.B. Kye  
Sharika D. Labrie  
Rowena Santos Laino  
Justin Rodolph Lamb  
Sean Thomas Lanegan  
Carl M.S. Le  
Errol E. Lee  
Christina Louie  
Dean Lurie  
Kyle B. Machos  
Kathy A. Maemori  
Zena U. Mahelona  
Joseph John B. Manlolo  
Chad Masuda  
Casie I. Mcalinden  
Lauren D. McKinney  
Emily A.E. Migliorini  
Colin P. Moore  
Doris Mugume Mukisa  
Nicole L. Nakamura  
David Y. Nakao  
Kha H.P. Ngo  
Kylie R. Nishisaka  
Judith I. Ojukwu  
Kevin T. Osborne  
Kacy M. Oshita  
Shane V. Owens  
Hien P. Quach  
Suzanne Marie Reichert  
Shylah K. Ridgway  
Michele Anne Rockett  
Callie Elizabeth Rucker  
Raul T. Sabat  
Kaimi N. Sakamaki  
Jyron Val Salamanca

Krystle M. Salazar  
Lina T. Sarusal  
Michele S. Scofield  
Stacey Renee Shinn  
Christyn Liana Sims  
Haramandeep Singh  
Courtney Alexis Sowle  
Trent M. Tamate  
Kari M. Tanimoto  
Elysse S.L.M. Tom  
Kaitlin Toner  
Heather L. Tuttle  
Natalia T.A. Villegas  
Lauren N. Webb  
Amy L. Winebarger  
Annalise Evelyn Wisniewski  
Kacey A. Wong  
Kathryn Zarko

**These providers joined  
HMSA's network  
between March 21 and  
June 20, 2025.**

**For a complete list of  
HMSA participating  
providers, contact  
information, and plans  
accepted, visit Find a  
Doctor on [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)  
or scan the QR code.**





## supplement safely

**words** Keely Kalama-Lakey



Cindy Pau, M.D.

**S**upplements, like vitamins, minerals, herbs, or amino acids, can be valuable for your health, but may have some risks. Cindy Pau, M.D., an HMSA medical director and specialist in endocrinology, diabetes, and metabolism, provides guidance on how to use supplements safely and effectively.

### Why is supplement safety important?

Supplements can be powerful tools for improving your health. Many people rely on them to fill nutritional gaps, support joint health, boost immunity, or manage chronic conditions. However, supplements can cause harm if they interact with your medications, other supplements, or health conditions.

Misuse, overuse, or low-quality products can also lead to unexpected side effects or interactions with medications. It's crucial to talk with your doctor or pharmacist to review your health history and identify potential risks before starting a supplement.

### How do you know which supplements to take?

Choose based on your specific needs. Your doctor can help you determine the best fit for you. Supplements differ, even within the same category. For example, magnesium glycinate is a gentle option for sleep and muscle health, while magnesium citrate is often used for digestion and constipation.



### What should you consider when choosing supplements?

In addition to consulting your doctor:

- Check trustworthy sources such as the National Institute of Health Office of Dietary Supplements, United States Pharmacopeia (USP), or National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) International.
- Choose supplements with simple, clear ingredient lists, and avoid excessive fillers and artificial colors.
- Be wary of products with exaggerated promises like "miracle cure" or "guaranteed results."
- Look for third-party verification of ingredients and testing for contaminants with "NSF certified" or "USP verified" labeling.

### Other tips?

- Watch for side effects. If you experience symptoms like headaches, digestive issues, or mood changes, stop the supplement and talk to your doctor.
- Be aware that more isn't always better. Too much of anything can cause unwanted side effects.
- Stay alert for recalls and hidden ingredients. A recalled Himalayan Pain Tea marketed for pain relief was found to contain undeclared steroids and prescription drugs.

Remember that supplements aren't substitutes for a healthy diet, regular exercise, and good sleep. They should enhance, not replace, your primary defenses against illness. **IS**

To read the extended version of this article, scan the QR code or visit [islandscene.com/the-benefits-and-risks-of-supplements](https://islandscene.com/the-benefits-and-risks-of-supplements).



for your benefit

### A Condition Care Program Success Story

HMSA has a Condition Care Program to support you with your health and well-being goals, tailored to your specific condition.

We work closely with your doctors to help coordinate your care, including your care plan, medication, and other support services. We want to make sure that you have access to the care and support you need to manage your health and well-being.



Miki St. Laurent

Miki St. Laurent had success with this program after her hip replacement surgery. She worked with a condition manager and health coach who gave her the help she needed. "She made me feel valued, and she really is a good friend," says St. Laurent.

You can read about St. Laurent's recovery and see a video that describes how the program helped her recover. Go to [islandscene.com/road-to-recovery-with-hmsa-s-condition-care-program](https://islandscene.com/road-to-recovery-with-hmsa-s-condition-care-program) or scan the QR code.



The Condition Care Program is voluntary and available at no cost to eligible HMSA members. For more information about this program, call HMSA Health and Well-being Support at 1 (855) 329-5461, option 1.

## Well-child Screening

If you missed the chance to take care of your keiki's well-child screening over the summer break, it's not too late.

HMSA's QUEST plan covers all preventive services for eligible children under the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) program. At these appointments, your child can have their growth and development checked and get their scheduled shots.

To learn more about the EPSDT program, call HMSA QUEST at (808) 948-6486 or 1 (800) 440-0640 toll-free.



## Ride to the Doctor

Need a ride to your doctor? HMSA has a new non-emergency transportation partner for QUEST members, Modivcare.

Modivcare makes it easy to book a ride for your doctor visit. They'll select the most appropriate ride option for you and schedule your trip when your appointment is covered by your HMSA plan.

You can contact Modivcare to arrange your transportation, or have someone else reach out on your behalf.

To schedule your ride, have your subscriber number handy and call 1 (800) 440-0640 toll-free, book through the Modivcare app, or visit [mymodivcare.com](https://mymodivcare.com).



Modivcare is an independent company that provides non-emergency medical transportation services on behalf of HMSA.





Top: Moanalua quarterback Zaira Sugui (far left), goes back to pass against Kaimuki. Left: Kailua High School linebacker Aleah Ortiz proudly displays her HMSA-sponsored flag football helmet. Right: Under the evening sky at Castle High School, girls flag football is in full swing.

# high school girls flag football hits hawai'i

**words** Marvin Buenconsejo

American-style football is arguably the most popular sport here in Hawai'i.

And since its inception, the high school game has been played almost exclusively by boys. But now, girls finally get their shot.

"It means a lot to me because it was a long time waiting for us and I know there's a lot of girls out there who want to be serious with flag football," says Moanalua High School quarterback Zaira Sugui. "This gives them the opportunity to showcase their talent and finally get out there for flag football."

Hawai'i is the 12th state to officially recognize girls flag football as a high school sport. In its inaugural season, HMSA is proud to support this growing sport by providing access to a protective helmet for every athlete.

"Our heads are the most important part of our bodies and we need to keep them protected at all times," says Kailua High School linebacker Aleah Ortiz. "If we're playing safe, we're playing good."

"It's so physical, but that physicality comes at a cost," says HMSA President and CEO Mark M. Mugiishi, M.D., F.A.C.S., who coached 'Iolani School to seven boys basketball state championships from 1994 to 2006. "Sports can be violent sometimes and that's why it's so important that you have the right equipment to protect you. Injuries can affect you in the short term and the long term. So if we're going to ask our girls to go out there and give it their all and play hard, we've got to keep them safe and protect them," he says.

Moanalua High School head coach Ladd Mokiao says that even though flag football is a non-contact sport, accidents happen. "I thank HMSA for giving us the helmets. I try to make it mandatory for the girls to wear them. I've been around this sport for a very long time. Collisions happen," he says.






Top: Kailua head coach Fatu Sua-Godinet with the team before kickoff against Kalāheo. Bottom: HMSA proudly sponsors Hawai'i high school girls flag football.

Hawaii has always been a leader when it comes to gender equality in education and in sports. The late U.S. Representative Patsy Mink – born and raised in Pā'ia, Maui – authored Title IX, the groundbreaking federal law that ensures equal opportunities for all students, regardless of gender, to participate in federally supported educational programs and activities – including athletics.

"It's exciting. It's been blowing up over the past couple of years. It's a great opportunity for our girls in Hawai'i," says Kailua High School's head coach, Fatu Sua-Godinet. "We're appreciative of HMSA and everything that they did to step in with the helmets and everything else that they sponsored throughout this first season." Flag football, both womens and mens competitions, has seen tremendous growth in popularity, not just in the United States, but around the globe. Women's flag football is set to debut at the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 2028.

"I feel truly blessed to be able to compete in this sport," said Kailua High School wide receiver Amythest Thomas-Sare. "I've been asking for a while to play and I finally got the opportunity to, so I'm very happy." 



## slow and steady

words Summer Nakaishi

As the holiday season approaches, instead of constantly running in circles, make time to reach for a good book.

Here are some of my recommendations that may help you pump the breaks and possibly turn over a new leaf.

### **Digital Minimalism**

By Cal Newport

Scrolling through my phone can be like traveling through a space-time continuum – one moment I’m scrolling through social media and suddenly, an hour has passed. Newport shares strategies like a 30-day digital declutter challenge to help remove distracting technology so we can spend more time offline creating healthy habits like having a conversation without checking our phone, going for a walk, or best of all, reading more books.

### **Have Yourself a Minimalist Christmas**

By Meg Nordmann

Struggling to reduce the noise this season? Instead of saying “yes” to every invitation, toy trend, or seasonal decoration, Nordmann shares actionable steps to regain control over the cultural expectations of what can be a consumer-driven season. I’ve read this book before the holidays for the past few years, and though I still find myself succumbing to



a little holiday overwhelm, I always take away helpful tips on decluttering, simplifying my calendar, and focusing on spending quality time with loved ones.

### **Invisible Things**

By Andy J. Pizza and Sophie Miller

“Mom, this book is so good,” my 6-year-old daughter told me, and I can see why. Ever wonder what a smell looks like? What about hope? Or melancholy? Pizza and Miller invite us to put on our “invisible thing” spotting glasses to find and reflect on things we cannot see but know are there. A kid-friendly way to visualize senses and emotions, this book encourages creative discussions to understand the invisible world around us.

### **There Is No Right Way to Meditate**

By Yumi Sakugawa

If you’re like me and your brain immediately transports you to a faraway land while meditating, this book may be for you, too. Artist Yumi Sakagawa’s ink illustrations are an easy-to-digest meditation guide, depicting different ways to lead a more mindful life. While this short book could be a quick read, you won’t want to rush through its calming pages – a real-life example of how we should slow down to enjoy life’s beautiful moments.

# teaching keiki to invest in their future

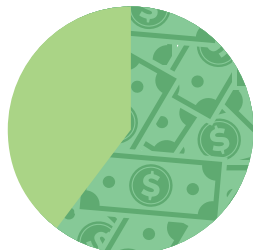
**words** Courtney Takabayashi



Aimee Matsuura is all smiles as she teaches her students about financial literacy.

With Hawai'i's high cost of living, trying to keep up can be challenging. According to a 2022 American Psychological Association report, inflation was a source of stress for 83% of the adults polled and 66% said that money is a significant source of stress. Of those who said money caused stress, most worried about covering basic needs.

These are just some of the reasons Ewa Makai Middle School health and wellness teacher Aimee Matsuura, teaches her 6th and 7th graders financial literacy. "One of the best life skills they can learn is understanding how important it is to invest in their future," she says.



**66%** of adults said that money is a significant source of stress

### Compounded interest


One day, while Matsuura was banking at Hawaii State Federal Credit Union (HSFCU), she came across the offering of free financial literacy workshops for students. Matsuura emailed the contact, Bunny Tanaka, HSFCU community impact section manager, and they developed a course that encompassed how to write checks, create a budget, and save money.



Bunny Tanaka, HSFCU

"It was fun to collaborate with Aimee and see what her students were interested in and what kinds of skills we wanted them to learn," Tanaka says. "I believe it's important to meet students where they're at and work from there." The course was such a success, other teachers incorporated the lesson into their curriculum as well.

### The gift of gratitude

One of the biggest lessons Matsuura and Tanaka wanted the students to learn was gratitude. "At our school, we talk a lot about kindness and gratitude," Matsuura says. "And money fits right in there. We emphasize how important it is to be grateful for what they have and save, save, save." 

Watch for articles on financial health in future issues of *Island Scene*.



### Aimee Matsuura's Money-saving Tips

As a mother of three, Matsuura is creative when it comes to entertaining her children. Here are some of her favorite tips for having fun and saving money.

#### Arts and Crafts

- Save rubber bands, paper clips, and toilet paper rolls for arts and crafts supplies.
- Melt old crayons to give them new life.
- Use containers for storage or painting.

#### Holidays

- Cut out holiday cards to make gift labels.
- Reuse tissue paper, ribbons, yarn, and bows.
- Use the comic section of the newspaper to wrap gifts.

#### Household

- Water down hand and dish soap and shampoo.
- Find hand-me-down clothes and shoes for kids from friends, family, garage sales, or thrift stores.
- Water down juice or milk.
- Try to buy used first.



# decluttering before the holidays

**words** Summer Nakaishi

As the holidays approach, our homes and minds can get overcrowded with busy schedules, shopping lists, and seasonal décor. This year, instead of getting swept away with holiday chaos, gift yourself with an act of self-care by decluttering your home.

Getting rid of clutter is more than just tidying up – it's about restoring calm and hitting a mental reset button. According to WebMD, decluttering can benefit your mental health by reducing the stress hormone cortisol, making you feel calmer, happier, and more in control. By clearing clutter, you're creating more breathing room, both physically and mentally. An added bonus? As you clean, you may find hidden treasures perfect for gifting.

## Start slow

If you don't know where to begin, start small. Don't worry about dust bunnies until after you declutter.

Create a five- to 10-minute holiday playlist and tackle one goal at a time:

- Clear one room, one drawer, or one countertop.
- Toss trash, broken items, and stained or ripped clothes.
- Keep what you can store. If you can't find a home for that extra mug or stuffed animal, it might be time to let go.
- Create a donation box.





## Go treasure hunting

One of the best parts of decluttering before the holidays is unearthing potential gifts hiding in plain sight. After putting away the things you've decided to keep, focus on finding clean, unused, or gently used items to rehome.

Here are some items that might make a great gift for friends, family, or co-workers, or your local donation center:

- Books or cookbooks.
- Duplicate kitchen gadgets.
- Specialty mugs.
- Extra serving dishes.
- Teas, coffees, and spices.
- Unopened skincare products.
- Makeup bags or unused travel kits.
- Unused candles.
- Vases or small planters.
- Art, wall décor, decorative knickknacks, or picture frames.
- Unused art supplies or DIY craft kits.
- Clothes you or your kids have outgrown or don't wear.
- Halloween costumes.
- Board games, puzzles, or gaming equipment.
- DVDs or CDs.

## Upcycle your gifts

Once you've identified potential gifts for friends and family, consider the following additions:

- Include a personal note.
- Bundle several new and gently used items to make a kit. A self-care bundle could include a face mask, box of tea, and a good book for a friend who could use a pick-me-up.
- Wrap the gift in a clean tea towel or a dust jacket from a children's book.
- Repurpose last year's holiday cards and make gift tags. Trim the decorative cover, punch a hole in the top and tie to your gift.

Decluttering is never about perfection – it's about letting go what no longer serves you and creating a calm space so you can slow down and enjoy the peacefulness of the holiday season. **15**

keiki corner

## Spooky haunted house

Help the little witches and wizards find their way through the haunted house!





# Enchanted word scramble

Unscramble the mystical and mysterious words!



erbw \_ \_ \_ \_  
 udorlnac \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 macshr \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 srlcyat labl \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 anhnacetetnm \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 cmgai dnwa \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

plsle \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 toponi \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 suilnlo \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 rcrsoere \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 riadzw \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
 hitwc \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

## Magical butterscotch cake and elixir

Celebrate fall flavors with these easy and fun recipes. They're perfect for a Halloween party or cozy night in.



### Butterscotch cake

When it comes to baking, it can feel like you need magic to get the finished product just right. But you don't need enchantments to make this delicious butterscotch cake.

#### Ingredients

1 box yellow cake mix  
 1 cup diet cream soda  
 1/3 cup vegetable oil  
 3 eggs  
 Butterscotch pudding  
 2 cups milk (we used skim)  
 Sugar-free whipped topping  
 Butterscotch sauce

#### Instructions

Preheat oven and prepare cake according to package, substituting diet cream soda for water. Mix ingredients and bake in a 13-by-9-inch pan for recommended amount of time.

While the cake is baking, whisk pudding mix and milk.

Once the cake is cooked through and it's still warm, poke holes at the top using a chopstick and pour pudding mixture directly and evenly onto the cake. Cover and chill for at least one hour so the pudding sets. When you're ready to serve, spread whipped topping and butterscotch sauce on top.

### Butterscotch elixir

While this type of drink was popularized in the books about a magical wizarding boy, any muggle or non-magical folk, can make it at home. Here's a simple, less-sugary, and delicious version.

#### Ingredients

Diet cream soda  
 Butterscotch dessert sauce  
 Whipped cream (you can use zero sugar)  
 Caramel sauce

#### Instructions

In a glass, mix about 1 tablespoon of butterscotch with about 2 oz. of cream soda. Whisk until butterscotch dissolves.

Fill the glass with more cream soda, leaving room at the top.

Add with as much or as little whipped cream as you'd like.

Drizzle caramel sauce on top for an extra level of flavor. Enjoy!

Answers: brew, cauldron, charms, crystal ball, enchantment, magic wand, spell, potion, illusion, sorcerer, wizard, witch

# cozy recipes for a rainy day

**words** Michelle Liu and Kristen Nemoto Jay

**photos** Lew Harrington

**food styling** Marjie Beaton

Rainy season is upon us! It may be warm year-round in Hawai'i, but there's something about the soft pitter patter of raindrops and gray skies that makes us crave cozy meals (and even more so when it's torrential downpours). These recipes help get us in the perfect mellow mood.







## Vegetarian Chili Cornbread Casserole

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 sweet onion, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 10 oz. plant-based ground beef
- 1 15.5-oz. can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15.5-oz. can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 8-oz. can tomato sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water
- 1 Tbsp. agave
- 1 cup frozen corn
- $\frac{1}{2}$  Tbsp. chili powder
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes

### Cornbread

- 1 15-oz. box cornbread mix
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup milk
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup neutral oil
- 1 egg

### Suggested Toppings

- Avocado
- Sour cream
- Green onions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, bell pepper, and plant-based ground beef and sauté for 5 minutes. Add remaining ingredients; cook for 20 minutes or until bubbling.

Meanwhile, make cornbread batter according to package instructions. Batter may be slightly lumpy.

Spread chili in casserole dish. Pour cornbread batter on top and spread evenly. Bake in oven for 30 minutes, or until cornbread is golden brown. Top with your favorite chili toppings. Makes 6 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving (not including suggested toppings; cornbread mix and mix ingredients were based on a cornbread mix with honey): 680 calories, 29 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 35 mg cholesterol, 1,100 mg sodium, 89 g carbohydrate, 9 g fiber, 30 g sugar, 22 g protein



## Creamy Artichoke, Kale, and Rice Casserole

Nonstick cooking spray  
2 cups water  
¾ cup uncooked brown rice  
½ tsp. salt, divided  
10 oz. refrigerated Alfredo sauce  
4 oz. cream cheese, softened  
3 garlic cloves, minced  
2 Tbsp. red wine vinegar  
1 lemon, juiced  
¼ tsp. black pepper  
1 13.75-oz. can quartered artichoke hearts, drained  
4 cups chopped kale  
¾ cup Italian seasoned panko breadcrumbs  
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese  
2 Tbsp. olive oil  
Crushed red pepper, optional

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Spray an 11-by-7-inch baking dish with cooking spray.

In a small pot, bring water, rice, and ¼ teaspoon salt to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and cook about 10 minutes. Drain well. Spread in prepared dish.

In a large bowl, mix Alfredo sauce, cream cheese, garlic, red wine vinegar, lemon juice, pepper, and remaining salt until smooth. Stir in artichokes and kale. Spoon mixture over rice.

In a small bowl, mix breadcrumbs, Parmesan cheese, and oil. Sprinkle evenly on top of mixture.

Bake 15 minutes or until golden brown. Sprinkle with crushed red pepper, if desired. Makes 6 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving: 430 calories, 26 g fat, 12 g saturated fat, 55 mg cholesterol, 1,050 mg sodium, 39 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 3 g sugar, 11 g protein



## Chicken and Squash Soup

8 cups chicken broth  
4-5 pieces dried opae (shrimp)  
2-inch piece ginger, peeled and sliced  
2 medium opo or other green squash, peeled, cored, and cubed (about 8 cups)  
1 large daikon radish, peeled and cubed, optional  
2 pounds, boneless and skinless chicken thighs, cubed  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Green onions, for garnish

In a large pot, bring the chicken broth, opae, and ginger to a boil over medium-high heat. Taste the broth and adjust ingredients accordingly. Reduce the heat to medium-low, add squash and daikon, cover, and then simmer 7-8 minutes. Add chicken and simmer another 5-6 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. While the chicken is cooking, skim off and discard the scum from the top of the soup. Season with salt and pepper. Makes 6 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving (not including salt and pepper to taste): 250 calories, 7 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 150 mg cholesterol, 1,600 mg sodium, 15 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber, 3 g sugar, 39 g protein



# kale: queen of greens

**words** Michelle Liu

Kale earned its royal title by being one of the most nutritious leafy green vegetables. It first surged in popularity 15 years ago, but it's actually been grown and eaten for thousands of years! Here are some other facts about the queen of greens.

## Unique variety

Curly kale (pictured below) is the most common (bright green and ruffled leaves), but there are dozens of others, including dinosaur (dark blue-green with a scaly texture).

## Green thumb

If you enjoy gardening, try growing kale. It can be grown year-round in the Islands.

## Don't overdo it

Kale contains a compound that can interfere with iodine uptake and the production of thyroid hormone. Moderation is key!



## Munch and crunch

Make your own kale chips! Toss the leaves with olive oil and salt and bake for 10-15 minutes at 400 degrees F.

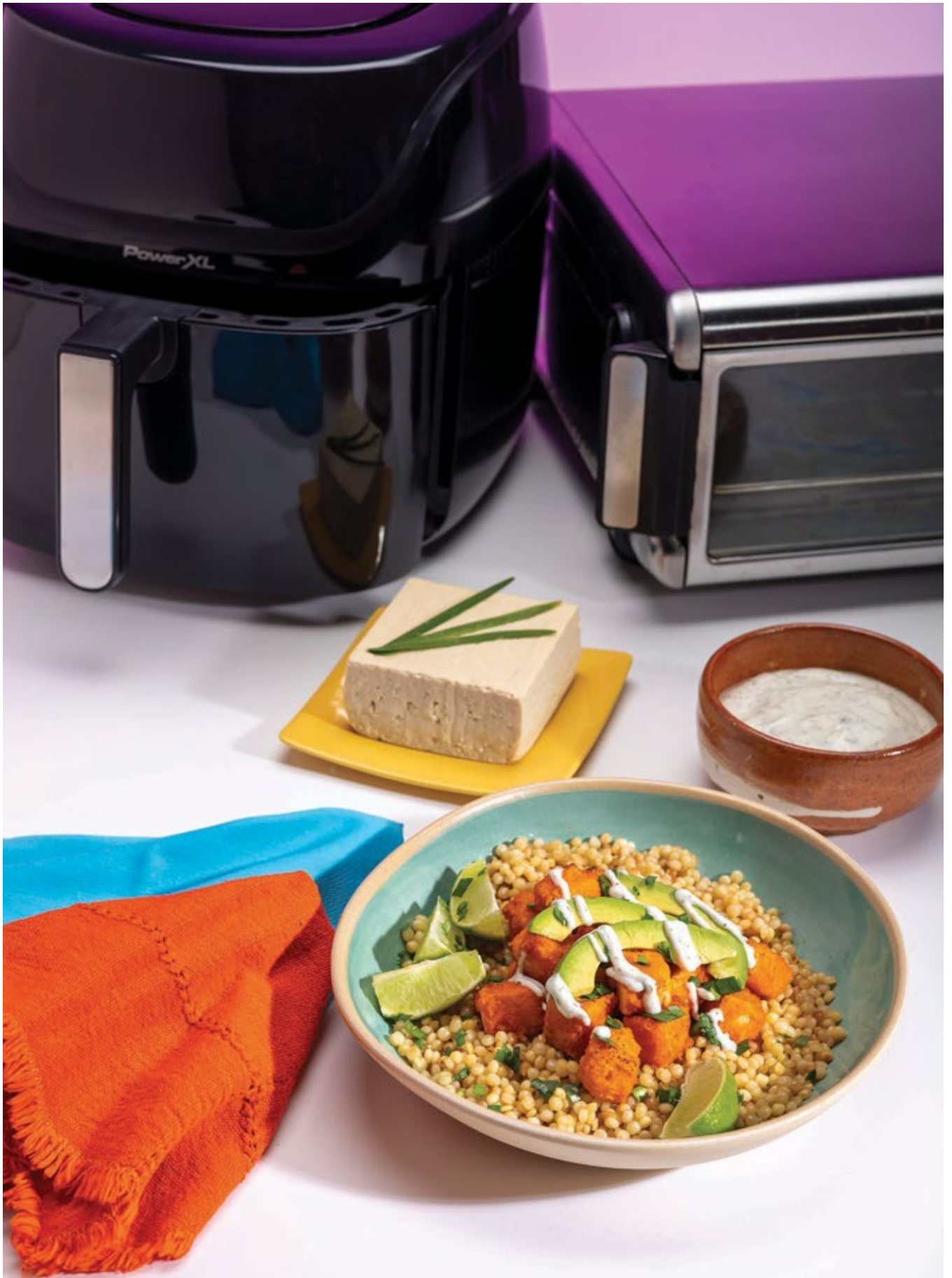
## Nutrition powerhouse

Kale is packed with vitamins and antioxidants that can support your eyesight, brain function, and bone and skin health.

## Love and care

Massaging kale with olive oil, lemon juice, and salt can soften its tough texture and reduce its bitterness.







# air fried to perfection

**words** Michelle Liu

**photos** Rae Huo

**food styling** Marjie Beaton

When air fryers became popular, I wasn't interested in having yet another appliance taking up precious counter space. But I've changed my mind since our food is now always evenly crisped, it uses less oil than deep frying, and it heats up faster than an oven, which means dinner is on the table sooner!

## Buffalo Tofu Couscous Bowls

16 oz. extra firm tofu, drained, pressed, cubed  
¼ cup cornstarch  
1 tsp. garlic powder  
⅓ cup milk  
1 cup panko breadcrumbs  
1 cup buffalo wing sauce  
1 Tbsp. butter  
2 cups pearl couscous  
2¼ cups vegetable broth  
1 lime, juiced

### Sauce

½ cup plain yogurt  
¾ tsp. garlic powder  
¼ tsp. onion powder  
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice  
1 tsp. fresh chopped chives  
½ tsp. dried dill  
¼ tsp. salt

2 avocados, sliced  
Lime wedges

Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees F.

Place tofu in resealable plastic bag with cornstarch and garlic powder. Shake gently until coated.

Dip tofu in bowl of milk and drain excess liquid. Dip in separate bowl of breadcrumbs. Place tofu in even layer in air fryer basket. Cook for 12-14 minutes, flipping halfway. Dip cooked tofu in buffalo wing sauce; drain excess liquid. Cook for another 5 minutes until crispy.

Meanwhile, add butter to medium saucepan. Toast couscous until golden brown, about 2 minutes.

In a separate saucepan, bring broth to a boil. Pour into saucepan with couscous. Bring to a boil, then lower heat, and simmer for 15 minutes until liquid is absorbed. Add lime juice and stir to combine.

Mix all sauce ingredients in a small bowl.

To assemble, add couscous to bowl and top with tofu, sauce, and avocado. Serve with lime wedges. Makes 4 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving: 750 calories, 21 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 15 mg cholesterol, greater than 2,200 mg sodium, 113 g carbohydrate, 11 g fiber, 5 g sugar, 29 g protein



## Garlic Steak Bites with Roasted Broccoli

- ¾ lb. broccoli florets
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. garlic powder, divided
- ½ tsp. red pepper flakes
- 2½ tsp. salt, divided
- 1 tsp. black pepper, divided
- 2 lbs. top sirloin, cut into bite-size chunks
- 1 Tbsp. avocado oil
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ cup chopped parsley

Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees F.

In a large bowl, add broccoli florets, olive oil, ½ tsp. garlic powder, red pepper flakes, ½ tsp. salt, and ½ tsp. black pepper. Toss to combine. Cook in air fryer 8-10 minutes until tender and crisp around edges. Set aside.

While broccoli is cooking, add steak bites, avocado oil, and remaining garlic powder, salt, and pepper to large mixing bowl. Toss until well-coated. Place steak bites in air fryer basket in a single layer. Cook for 5-7 minutes until internal temperature reaches 145 degrees F. Let rest for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, melt butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in parsley. Add steak bites to skillet. Toss to combine. Makes 4 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving: 550 calories, 36 g fat 10 g saturated fat, 170 mg cholesterol, 1,650 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 1 g sugar, 53 g protein

## Roasted Cauliflower Tacos

- 4 cups cauliflower florets
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- ½ tsp. Tajin (Mexican seasoning)
- ½ tsp. smoked paprika
- ½ tsp. salt

### Sauce

- |                            |                                    |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2 Tbsp. olive oil, divided | ½ tsp. salt                        |
| ¼ cup chopped red onion    | ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper |
| ⅓ cup light mayonnaise     | 3 jalapeños, chopped and seeded    |
| 2 Tbsp. white vinegar      | 2 cups chopped fresh cilantro      |
| 4 tsp. yellow mustard      | 3 cloves garlic, crushed           |

6 street taco-size tortillas

Pickled red onions

Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees F.

In a medium bowl, combine cauliflower, olive oil, Tajin, smoked paprika, and salt. Cook in air fryer until browned and tender, about 12-14 minutes.

To make sauce, heat 1 tsp. of olive oil over medium heat. Sauté onions until soft, about 3 minutes. Transfer to blender; add remaining oil and sauce ingredients. Blend until smooth.

Assemble tacos by topping tortillas with cauliflower, sauce, and pickled red onions. Makes 2 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving (not including tortillas): 460 calories, 41 g fat, 6 g saturated fat, 15 mg cholesterol, 1,650 mg sodium, 20 g carbohydrate, 6 g fiber, 8 g sugar, 6 g protein

No air fryer? No problem! For instructions on how to make these recipes in the oven, head to [islandscene.com/food](https://islandscene.com/food) or scan the QR code.





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