

# island scene

well-being, family, and fun for HMSA members || summer 2026 || [islandscene.com](http://islandscene.com)

pearl haven  
provides refuge  
and healing  
for youth



one health hawai'i || dealing with dementia || spinach is leafy, green, and delicious

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# From beach read to browser

Keep the summer vibes going at [islandscene.com](http://islandscene.com)!



Dive into healthy recipes, inspiring stories, and more at [islandscene.com](http://islandscene.com), or scan the QR code.





PRISTINE JACOBSMEYER, LITTLE ISLAND PHOTOGRAPHER



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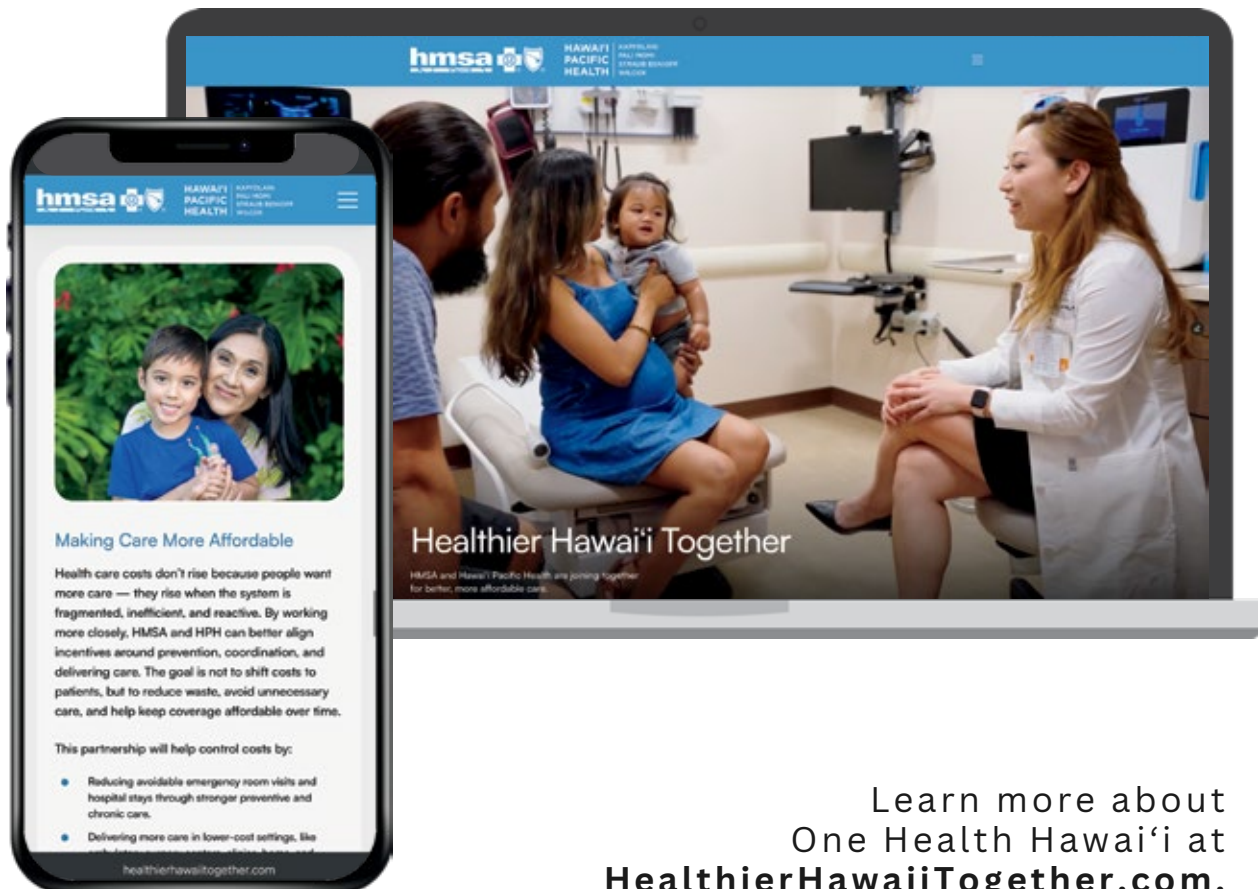
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# Advancing Hawaii's Health Care

We're working to design a more integrated, affordable health care system for everyone in Hawaii. One Health Hawai'i is a proposed partnership between HMSA and Hawai'i Pacific Health.



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**Healthier Hawai'i Together**

**Making Care More Affordable**

Health care costs don't rise because people want more care — they rise when the system is fragmented, inefficient, and reactive. By working more closely, HMSA and HPH can better align incentives around prevention, coordination, and delivering care. The goal is not to shift costs to patients, but to reduce waste, avoid unnecessary care, and help keep coverage affordable over time.

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- Reducing avoidable emergency room visits and hospital stays through stronger preventive and chronic care.
- Delivering more care in lower-cost settings, like ambulatory surgery centers and hospitals.

[healthierhawaii.com](http://healthierhawaii.com)

HMSA and Hawai'i Pacific Health are joining together for better, more affordable care.

Learn more about One Health Hawai'i at [HealthierHawaiiTogether.com](http://HealthierHawaiiTogether.com).



# island scene

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*Island Scene* (ISSN 1064-8674) is published quarterly by the Hawai'i Medical Service Association – an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. HMSA, 818 Ke'eaumoku St., Honolulu, HI 96814-2365.

*Island Scene* is published as a benefit for HMSA members. A copy of each issue is mailed to plan subscribers. Additional copies are available to dependents on request. Subscription: No cost for all HMSA plan members. Nonmembers, call (808) 948-6839 for subscription information. Periodicals postage paid at Los Angeles, California.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to *Island Scene*, P.O. Box 3850, Honolulu, HI 96812-3850.

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Editorial: (808) 948-6839

Circulation: (808) 948-6575

Advertising: (808) 227-5662

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**COVER:** Pearl Haven is a refuge and healing center for youth. Story by Michelle Liu on page 14. Illustration by Garry Ono.



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## aloha members,



Artificial intelligence (AI) is advancing and evolving at an incredible pace. And whether you are aware of it or not, AI touches your life on a daily basis. For the most part, AI has made our lives better: more efficient, more creative, and easier to solve problems, and it gives us access to concepts and experiences that we've never had before. It also comes with risks that we must manage: workforce, privacy, weaponization, and ethics, just to name a few.

With all the benefits and concerns inherent in this technological explosion, you can't ignore it. In this issue of *Island Scene*, we start an exploration into the phenomenon of AI in the article on page 26. We will dive deeper into the various aspects of it in future issues.

In health care, the upside is almost limitless. On the health plan side, managing massive amounts of data to process claims, answering member inquiries, and analyzing the best opportunities to impact population health have always been very manual and therefore inefficient at times.

On the care delivery side, we are hindered by capacity issues (provider shortages), access challenges in rural areas and on the Neighbor Islands, and unsustainable, escalating costs.

A technological evolution that drives automation, efficiency, innovation, problem-solving, data analysis, and unlimited capacity is almost certain to make us better.

That being said, health care, more than any other industry, places value on traits that are uniquely human: kindness, compassion, empathy, and altruism. So AI isn't going to replace all the humans in our field; it's going to change the kind of humans we are going to recruit and alter the way we develop the ones who have chosen this career path. Then, the technology will supplement and enhance their capacity and capabilities to do their job.

So for the member/patient, the job and outcome are better, and it feels better, too. Done right, this will be an amazing health care revolution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark M. Mugiishi'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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

**hmsa** \_\_\_\_\_  
**KAIMANA**  
**SCHOLARSHIP**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **program** ◆◆◆

**CONGRATULATIONS**  
**to the**  
**2026 Kaimana Recipients**

The HMSA Kaimana Scholarship Program celebrates 21 years of recognizing Hawaii's high school seniors for excellence in academics, athletics, and community service.



The Kaimana Scholarship Program is proudly sponsored by HMSA.  
For more information on the scholarship recipients, visit [hmsa.com/Kaimana](https://hmsa.com/Kaimana).



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**JEREMIAH JACINTO**  
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Maui County

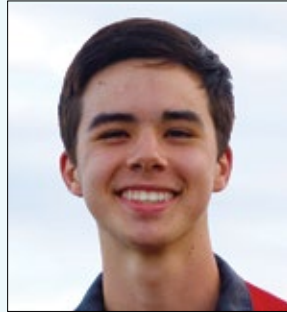


**MARIA PINEDA**  
Pearl City High School  
Honolulu County

## 2026 HMSA Kaimana Scholarship Recipients



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Kapalama  
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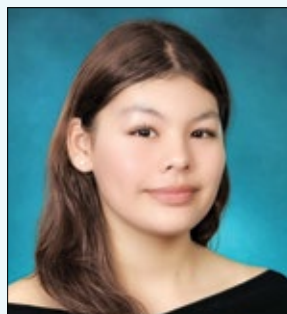
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Kealakehe High School  
Hawaii County



**AYSHA PHAM**  
Makua Lani  
Christian Academy  
Hawaii County



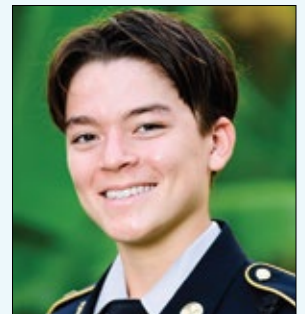
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You must be in Hawaii to use Online Care. Depending on your health plan, you may be charged a fee.

Amwell is an independent company providing hosting and software services for HMSA's Online Care platform on behalf of HMSA.

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## dear friends,

This issue includes a story about Christopher Slavens. I love his family, and I don't even know them.

Christopher is a social worker and Gulf War veteran who is drawing on his experience and training to help other veterans dealing with the same trauma he went through. See his inspiring and heart-warming story by Craig DeSilva on page 18.

I learned about Christopher from his son Connor, who emailed *Island Scene* to suggest that we share Christopher's story with our readers. "Through his work, he has become a beacon of hope for those navigating the unseen wounds of life, showing that healing and purpose can rise from hardship," Connor wrote.

And this wasn't our first contact with Connor. We did a story on him in spring 2021. He's a talented photographer and painter who started Connor Slavens Designs while still in high school at Kamehameha. (Read Connor's story in our online archives at [islandscene.com](http://islandscene.com); scroll to the bottom of the home page and click Archive, then go to the spring 2021 issue.)



Christopher Slavens with sons Cullen (left) and Connor (right).

And how did we first hear about Connor? In 2020, Christopher emailed us and told us about him. "We'd love to share his positive message of empowering people to express their creativity and to inspire the people around them," Christopher wrote.

You've got to love how the Slavens family supports and cheers each other on. Hawai'i needs more families like them. Well-being, family, and fun ... that's what *Island Scene* is all about.

Hope you enjoy the article about Christopher and the rest of the issue. As always, thank you for reading and for being an HMSA member.

Happy summer!

Lisa Maneki Baxa  
Publisher and Editor

around the 808

## kaua'i



First cohort of Kaua'i Medical Training Track students, from left: Jamie Emoto, Erin Evangelista, Dylan Lawton, Kirra Borrello, Ivana Yoon, and Brent Fujimoto.

### More docs on Kaua'i

In May, the Kaua'i Medical Training Track program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) graduated its first cohort of students.

Six medical students are chosen each year to live and work for several months on Kaua'i throughout their four years at JABSOM. "We look for students who can develop community ties and know what it's like to work and embrace Kaua'i," says Travis Hong, M.D., JABSOM's director of Rural Health. "It's important that they live in the place where they practice so they can understand their patients."

Students receive scholarships and commit to practicing on Kaua'i for four years after they graduate. The program serves as a model for other Neighbor Islands that also have doctor shortages in rural communities.

## big island

### Small school, big wins

Kohala High School became the first small school in the nation to earn the Model Academy distinction from the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC), recognized for its four career pathways: natural resources/food systems, construction, health/nursing, and culinary. Academy lead teacher Dean Snelling was also awarded the John Thompson Exemplary Educator Award for extraordinary service.

Kohala High School Principal Amy Stafford says NCAC's recognition is a testament to the heart and resilience of teachers, students, business partners, and community. "Our students are proving to themselves that even though they come from a small, rural community on the northern tip of the Big Island, they can achieve absolutely anything they set their minds to."



A student with Kohala High School's natural resources program, where they learn about the environment, agriculture, and animal care.



Learn more about academy lead teacher Dean Snelling and his award for extraordinary service at [islandscene.com/more](https://www.islandscene.com/more).

# maui, moloka'i, and lāna'i

## Teens helping teens

When teenagers call YouthLine for help, teens are on the other end of the line.

"Local volunteers age 15-24 support youth nationwide with their mental health, while building life skills," says Ashley Tone, deputy director of YouthLine Hawai'i. Support is available by phone, text, or chat. Youth volunteers can help daily from 1-7 p.m. and adults are available by phone at all other times.

The call center is on Maui, staffed by volunteers who completed intensive training, including 15-year-old "Ayla."

"To me, supporting other people means making sure they feel heard and not alone," Ayla says. "I know how much people our age go through, and a lot of it stays bottled up. I want to be someone people can talk to without feeling judged."

YouthLine: Call 1 (877) 968-8491 or visit [theyouthline.org/youthline-hawaii](http://theyouthline.org/youthline-hawaii).



COURTESY YOUTHLINE HAWAII

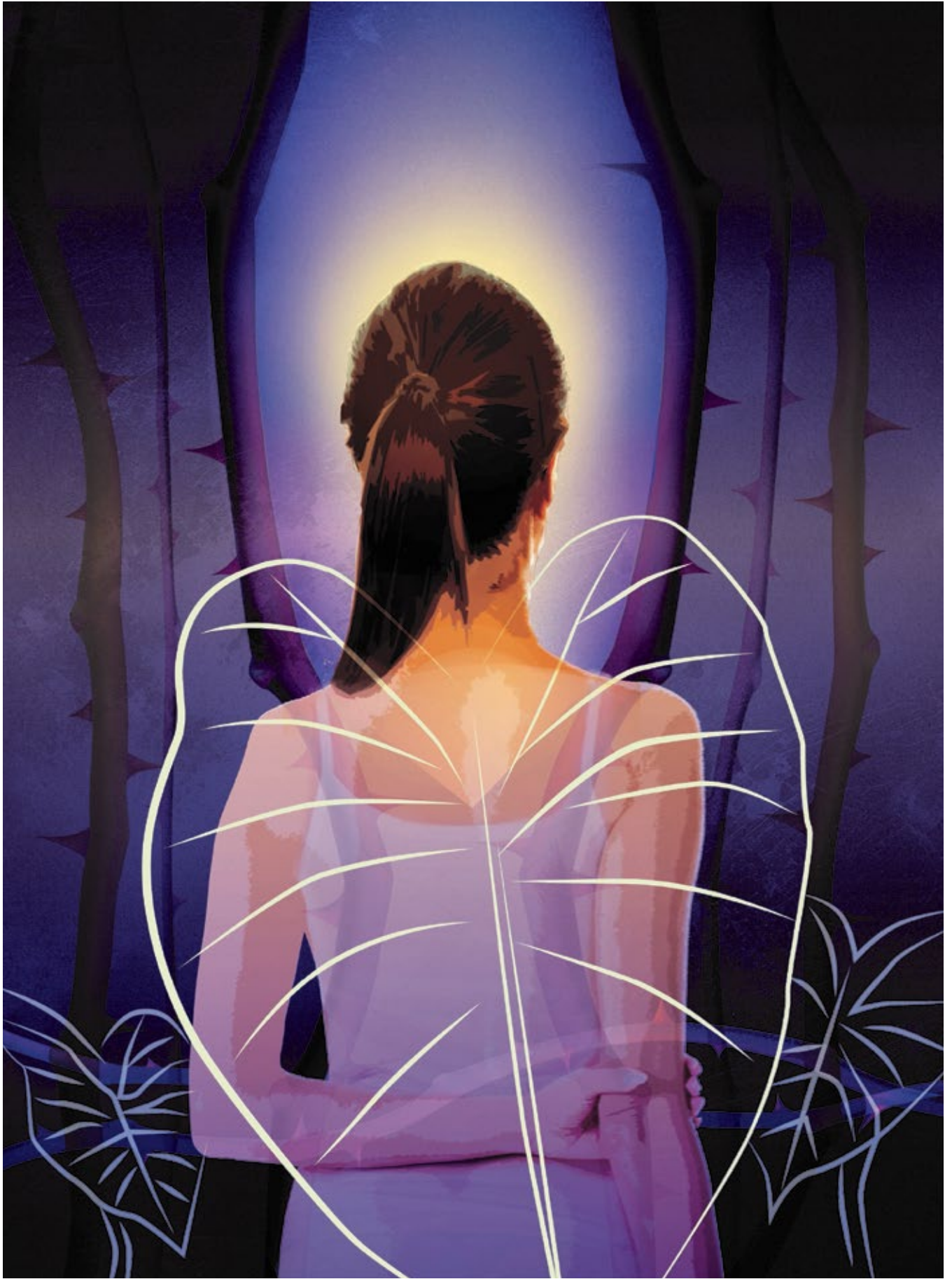


Volunteers build trust and connection with each other before answering the call for other teens.

COURTESY YOUTHLINE HAWAII

Learn more about YouthLine at [islandscene.com/more](http://islandscene.com/more).

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.



# pearl haven: a refuge and healing center for youth

**words** Michelle Liu

**illustrations** Garry Ono

**photos** courtesy of Pearl Haven

Jessica Muñoz, a nurse practitioner, recognized a disturbing pattern as children came into the ER. “They were being labeled as delinquents, truants, or runaways,” she says. “But they were children being trafficked, right here in Hawai’i. I saw kids as young as 11 getting arrested for prostitution.”

Twenty-three percent of victims are sex trafficked before the age of 18, according to the Hawai’i Department of Human Services. Of those under 18, the average age at which a child is first sexually exploited or trafficked in Hawai’i is 11. Sixty-four percent of victims are Native Hawaiian.

“I knew we needed to intervene, protect these kids, and create a space for long-term healing,” says Muñoz, founder of Ho’ōla Nā Pua, the non-profit that operates Pearl Haven, the state’s first-of-its-kind specialized residential treatment facility.

On the rural 12-acre campus on O’ahu, young survivors of sexual exploitation are finding safety, rediscovering their identities, and reclaiming their childhoods and futures. They’re healing in a tranquil environment that’s grounded in nature and carefully designed to support their recovery: soft pastel-painted walls in classrooms and bedrooms, a movement studio for dance and yoga, and a serenity garden where they grow their own food. In this home away from home, they’re learning how to feel safe in their own bodies and the world again.

“I knew we needed to intervene, protect these kids, and create a space for long-term healing.”

: Jessica Muñoz,  
Founder, Ho’ōla Nā Pua  
and Pearl Haven



Girls learn about Native Hawaiian culture as part of their healing journeys at Pearl Haven.

"Before coming to us, some girls couldn't be placed in foster homes because of aggression, substance use, or self-harm," says Elizabeth Ku'upua-mailani Porter, Pearl Haven program director. "This wasn't bad behavior; it was how they knew to cope. Now, they're learning new ways here."

From the moment the girls wake up at 6:30 a.m. until bedtime around 9 p.m., their days are filled with intention. They attend school on campus, where classes are interspersed with talk therapy, mindful movement, culinary arts, and equine and surf therapy.

"Many survivors bury trauma as a survival technique," explains Muñoz. "These experiential therapies allow them to release it and build self-esteem by trying new things."

Restoring self-worth and a sense of self also comes from returning to their roots. The girls learn about their Native Hawaiian culture through hula, music, and 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

"Reclaiming that identity is part of reclaiming themselves," says Porter. "They're relearning who they are beneath the trauma and finding a sense of belonging."

Healing is hard, and it isn't linear. But there are wins every day: a girl struggling with self-harm who chooses to reach out to a staff member instead of acting on this impulse, or a girl previously closed off but becomes excited to talk to others at lunch.

"It's those little moments that keep us all going," says Porter. "That's the hope. That's the light."

Over the course of the nine-month treatment program, those small moments build and the girls' confidence grows, while their trauma symptoms decrease. They foster connections and develop healthy stress responses, overcoming their previous coping skills.



Jessica Muñoz  
Founder, Ho'ōla NāPua and Pearl Haven




Elizabeth Ku'upuamailani Porter  
Program Director, Pearl Haven

“The trauma doesn’t define them. It becomes part of their story, but it’s not the end.”

: Elizabeth Ku'upuamailani Porter,  
Program Director, Pearl Haven

“So many of our kids are breaking generations of trauma, abuse, and violence,” says Muñoz. “They’re the ones shifting the trajectory of their lives.”

Since Pearl Haven opened in 2021, more than 100 youth have found safety, care, and trust. A girl who only wanted to get her GED before Pearl Haven is now an honors student at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. Another girl who once skipped school every day is now keeping her GPA up and able to play on her school’s sports team. They’re returning to their communities with a stronger sense of self and possibility.

“Healing is a lifelong journey. We won’t be able to get them to the finish line, but we’re helping them get farther along on that path,” says Porter. “Because the trauma doesn’t define them. It becomes part of their story, but it’s not the end.” 

Learn more at [pearlhavenhawaii.org](http://pearlhavenhawaii.org) or [hoolanapua.org](http://hoolanapua.org).





EARL YOSHII

Combat veteran Christopher Slavens, LCSW, helps veterans and civilians navigate trauma, grief, and life transitions.

# from combat to compassion

**words** Craig DeSilva

Christopher Slavens discovered that before he could help others, he needed to help himself. Slavens is a licensed clinical social worker and Gulf War veteran.

“But many military veterans are reluctant to get therapy,” he says. “Back then, we were expected to keep quiet and not complain. Just shake it off and continue working.”

Slavens, a combat veteran with the Hawai'i Army National Guard, returned home in 2006 from an 18-month deployment in Iraq. His transition back to civilian life was challenging. Slavens found himself navigating a narrow emotional spectrum between intense frustration, a sense of disconnection, and numbness.

He had no direction or motivation. He had a hard time sleeping because of the physical and emotional traumas of war. He was haunted by images of constant mortar attacks, plagued with the sadness of losing fellow service members, and burdened with the weight of survival. He had little patience and would often lash out at those he loved.

He didn't realize the toll his behavior was having on his family until they intervened. His family recognized that the weight of his experiences was changing him. Their support helped him to seek a path toward healing.



COURTESY CHRISTOPHER SLAVENS

Slavens (left) during Operation Iraqi Freedom in Kuwait (2005).

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“Back then, we were expected to keep quiet and not complain. Just shake it off and continue working.”

: Christopher Slavens

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COURTESY CHRISTOPHER SLAVENS

Slavens earned a black belt in jujitsu.



COURTESY CHRISTOPHER SLAVENS

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“I didn’t think it would be possible to ever experience joy again.”

: Christopher Slavens

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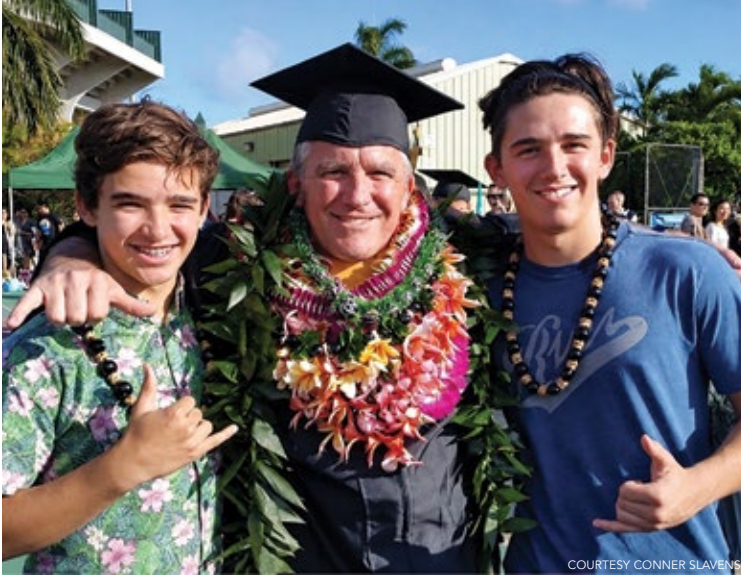
Slavens’s saving grace was his job at the Department of Veterans Affairs, where he helped Gulf War veterans like himself put their lives back on track. But he realized that before he could truly help others, he needed to get his own life in order. That’s when he found a therapist to work on his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“I didn’t think it would be possible ever to experience joy again,” he says. “Laughing, smiling, and feeling good was so foreign to me because it was a long time since I felt that way.”

Realizing how therapy helped give him a second chance in life, Slavens used his GI Bill to earn a Master of Social Work degree at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. He eventually established a specialized private practice dedicated to providing trauma-informed care for veterans and active duty service members navigating the complexities of PTSD.

“I can now hold the flashlight for other veterans dealing with the same trauma I went through,” he says. “Help them see the light that others shone on me.”

Slavens credits his mentors and therapists for helping him achieve his goals. By teaching social work graduate courses at UH Mānoa, Slavens is now shaping the next generation of clinicians with the same compassion and expertise that guided his own recovery.



Slavens at his graduation from UH's MSW program in 2015 with sons Connor (left) and Cullen (right).

For Slavens, therapy is a lifelong project. He checks in with himself regularly to recognize and deal with life's emotional ups and downs. "Even therapists need to work on their own mental health," he says.

He recommends people practice self-care by doing things for themselves that they enjoy. He practices yoga and meditates for mental peace and solace, embracing these mindfulness practices as important components of a holistic approach to mental health and resilience. He also earned a black belt in jujitsu. His daily self-care morning routine includes stretching, walking, and working on a to-do list.

His life's focus now is maintaining a strong relationship with his two sons, one at Yale Law School and the other an incoming medical student at the Yale School of Medicine. Slavens is pleased that there's a greater awareness about PTSD, so veterans don't have to feel ashamed to seek help.

"There's more acceptance and normalization now," he says. "You don't have to wait for a crisis to prioritize your mental health."

Even 20 years after his deployment, Slavens still finds it difficult to talk about his war experience. "War is never a good answer," he says. But with a renewed purpose and support from his family, every day gets a lot easier. **15**

# one health hawai'i

A coordinated, sustainable health system focused on keeping Hawai'i healthy



One Health Hawai'i is a proposed nonprofit parent organization that would bring HMSA and Hawai'i Pacific Health (HPH) together under a single locally governed structure. The goal is to better align how care is delivered and how it's paid for, so Hawai'i's health system can be more coordinated, more sustainable, and more focused on keeping people healthy.

Health care in Hawai'i faces growing pressures, including rising costs, workforce shortages, access challenges, and persistent health disparities. Insurance and care delivery often operate separately, even though they serve the same patients and members.

One Health Hawai'i is designed to bring those pieces into closer alignment. When health plans and providers work toward shared goals, it becomes easier to:

- Coordinate care across settings.
- Invest in prevention and long-term health.
- Reduce duplication and waste.
- Reinvest savings into community health.

## A local, nonprofit model

If approved, One Health Hawai'i would be organized as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) parent organization based in Hawai'i. Under this model:

- HMSA and HPH would be subsidiaries of the new nonprofit parent.
- As a 501(c)(3), the organization would not have shareholders or owners.
- Any savings achieved through improved coordination and efficiency would be reinvested into care, workforce support, technology, and community health initiatives.

## An open and inclusive system

One Health Hawai'i is designed to support an open system of care. If approved:

- Patients would continue to choose their doctors, hospitals, medical facilities, and insurance plans.
- Employers and members would continue to select from available insurance options.
- Existing contracts with other hospitals, clinics, and providers would remain in place.
- HPH and HMSA would remain open to collaboration with other health care partners across the state.



## What happens next?

The proposal is now under regulatory review to ensure it meets all legal requirements. This process includes review by state and federal agencies.

## How can I learn more?

Frequently asked questions for HMSA members, employer groups, and providers are below.

The One Health Hawai'i website, Healthier Hawai'i Together ([healthierhawaiiitogether.com](http://healthierhawaiiitogether.com)), includes additional information:

- News coverage.
- Research and policy library.
- Resource room.
- Additional FAQs
  - Non-HMSA members.
  - HPH patients.
  - Non-HPH patients.

## Frequently asked questions

### For HMSA members

#### *Can I keep my doctor?*

Yes. You can keep your doctor, your care team, and the relationships you trust today.

#### *Will my insurance coverage change?*

No. This partnership does not change your HMSA coverage, benefits, or plan options.

#### *Will this increase my health care costs or premiums?*

The goal is the opposite. This partnership aims to better manage costs by improving coordination, reducing inefficiencies, and focusing on preventive care over time.

#### *Why is HMSA doing this now?*

Hawai'i's health care needs are changing. Closer collaboration can help improve affordability, access, and coordination while preserving choice.

#### *Can I still choose my hospital?*

Yes. You can continue to choose the hospital that's right for you, including HPH medical centers or any other hospital you prefer.

#### *Will I be required to use HPH facilities?*

No. This is an open system. Nothing requires you to use a specific hospital or provider.

#### *Does this affect referrals or prior authorization?*

No. Your experience today will remain the same. Over time, better coordination may help reduce unnecessary delays and paperwork.

#### *Who oversees this partnership?*

The partnership would be governed by a nonprofit parent organization, One Health Hawai'i, focused on serving Hawai'i's communities, with regulatory oversight and accountability.

### For employers

#### *Does this change the health plans we offer employees?*

No. Your current HMSA plans, benefit designs, and options remain unchanged.

#### *Does this affect premiums or employer costs?*

No. There is no immediate change due to the proposed partnership. The long-term goal is to better manage costs by improving coordination and reducing inefficiencies, not to shift costs to employers or your employees.

#### *Is this a move toward a closed network?*

No. The model is designed to preserve broad access and choice across Hawai'i's health care system.

#### *Does this require any action from employers right now?*

No. Employers do not need to make changes or take action as a result of this affiliation.



***Will employees be required to use HPH facilities or providers?***

No. This partnership preserves open choice. Your employees will continue to choose their doctors, hospitals, and care teams.

***Will this change our relationship with HMSA?***

No. HMSA will continue to operate as a health plan serving employers and members as it does today.

***How does this benefit our workforce?***

Better coordination can support easier navigation of care, fewer delays, and a more sustainable system. This helps employees stay healthier and more productive over time.

***Why pursue this affiliation now?***

Rising costs, workforce shortages, and system fragmentation affect employers and employees alike. Closer collaboration is intended to strengthen the system while preserving flexibility and choice.

**For providers**

***Does this partnership affect my clinical independence?***

No. Providers retain full clinical autonomy. This partnership does not dictate clinical decisions, referral choices, or treatment plans.

***Does this change how I contract with health plans or health systems?***

No immediate changes are required right now. Existing contracts, arrangements, and relationships remain in place.

***Is this an insurer taking control of provider decision-making?***

No. This is a partnership under a shared nonprofit parent organization, not an acquisition or merger that overrides provider authority.

***How does this support care models that reward quality and outcomes?***

Closer alignment allows for better coordination, shared data, and more consistent care management. This supports value-based models focused on quality and outcomes rather than volume.

***Will this affect patient choice?***

No. Patient choice remains central. Providers and patients will continue to decide what care is right for them, without system-imposed restrictions.

***Will I be required to refer patients within a specific system or network?***

No. This is an open system. You may continue to refer patients as you normally would.

***Will this partnership favor certain providers over others?***

No. The model is designed to preserve open access and support care delivery across Hawai'i's broader health care ecosystem.

***Will administrative processes change?***

Your experience today will remain the same. Over time, closer coordination may help streamline processes, reduce duplication, and improve care transitions, with the goal of lowering administrative burden, not increasing it.

***What does this mean for community and independent providers?***

Community providers remain essential to Hawai'i's health care system. This partnership is intended to strengthen collaboration across settings, not limit participation or care options.

***Why pursue this partnership now?***

Hawai'i's health care system faces increasing pressure. Closer collaboration can help support providers, improve coordination, and build a more sustainable system, all while preserving independence and choice.

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# keeping the humanity when leveraging AI

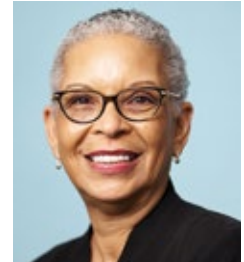
**words** Michelle Liu

**photo illustration** Brandon Young

**What's your relationship like with artificial intelligence, or AI?** Some of my colleagues have names for their favorite AI-powered chatbot. Others use it occasionally and reluctantly, either for quick research or for advice on how to craft an email. Even as I'm writing this article, AI is trying to complete my sentences for me. (That's OK, Copilot, I've got this!)

AI has long been a part of our daily lives; in fact, you may already be accustomed to certain AI tasks without realizing it. AI automatically sorts emails as spam or important, predicts how long your morning commute will take, and prioritizes social media posts you'll most likely interact with. But this recent boom of AI-powered chatbots like Copilot, ChatGPT, and Gemini is reshaping society as we know it.

"There's more immediate access to knowledge at everybody's fingertips," explains Gloria Niles, chief academic technology innovation officer for the University of Hawai'i System. "And that's changing the way we interact with information, the way we access it, and the way we use it to function with."




Gloria Niles

Consider it a technology revolution. The overlap between AI and humans is growing, mainly in cognitive tasks, like pattern recognition, problem solving, and creative production.

There are some caveats, though. While AI can process and analyze large amounts of data quickly, it doesn't understand why it matters. AI can explain complex concepts and generate stories, but it uses learned patterns and follows a set structure, so the writing often sounds the same.

Ultimately, what AI lacks is what humans excel at: genuine care, meaningful relationships, a lived experience, and an identity. And, Niles says, that's essential to keeping humans relevant in this new world of AI.

"We need to lean into things that are uniquely human," she says. "That means building relationships and partnerships and collaborating. Machines can do a lot, but they can't feel. We're teams of humans who must uphold the values of humanity and society, and not hand that off to machines. It's up to us to shape technology and its impact." 

*This is the first in a series of articles on AI. Written by your very human Island Scene team.*



# the art of healing

**words** Summer Nakaishi

**photos** Pristine Jacobsmeyer, Little Island Photographer

Most nights after dinner, Christina Morales gazes at a half-finished canvas, paintbrush in hand. In a small corner of her living room in Kaua'i, sprinkles of paint cover the dining table, an easel, the floor. Her husband and daughter pop in with words of encouragement but it's her space to let go of the day, embrace the quiet, and give her mind a place to rest.

For the self-taught artist, painting is both a hobby and a vital source of self-care.

In 2023, after years of living with depression and anxiety, Morales reached a breaking point. With the support of her co-workers and family, she stepped away from work to focus on therapy and her healing.

Then, one day, a simple errand changed her life. Morales asked her husband to take her to buy art supplies. She began sketching with charcoal pencils, then watercolor, before finding acrylic painting. Without an art degree or instruction, she let the paintbrush be her guide.



Christina Morales's painting of Kaua'i's historic Hanalei Bridge.

“It was about showing up, being honest in what I was feeling, and allowing the process itself to be part of my healing.”

: Christina Morales



Left: Painting was pivotal in Morales's self-care journey. Top right: Hanalei Pier at sunset. Bottom right: Pono Market.

"Mountains, oceans, palm trees, I painted whatever came to mind," says Morales. "It was about showing up, being honest in what I was feeling, and allowing the process itself to be part of my healing."

Painting also taught her patience and self-compassion. "There have been many times when I start a painting, and it doesn't turn out the way I imagined," Morales says. "Instead of forcing it, I set it aside and come back to it later. Over time, that's taught me something important – to give myself grace when I need it."

By day, Morales works as an oncology patient navigator at Kaua'i Medical Clinic, guiding and supporting patients from the moment of diagnosis through

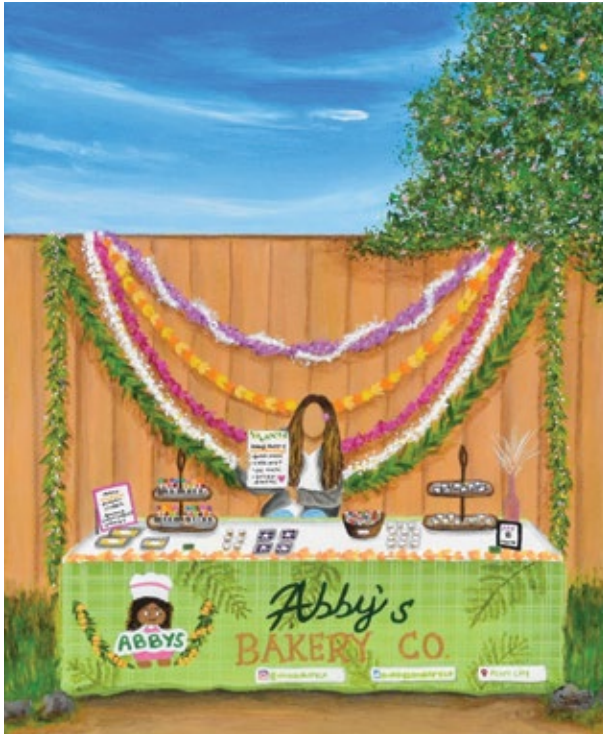
survivorship. She helps identify and address any barriers they may face, whether physical, social, emotional, spiritual, financial, or practical, and advocates on their behalf. She has worked in oncology for the past 12 years and finds it deeply fulfilling.

"As an oncology patient navigator, it's important to me to care for my patients and build real relationships with them and their families," she says. Her job lets her see firsthand how much connection and compassion matter. "It's a reminder that behind every diagnosis is a person with a story."

The same intention guides her as an oncology patient navigator and as an artist – caring for others, including herself, and honoring their journeys.

"It's a reminder that behind every diagnosis is a person with a story."

: Christina Morales



Top: A commissioned painting to commemorate a business owner's new venture. Bottom: Morales is inspired by nature, the Islands, and telling others' stories through her artwork.

At home in her quiet corner and armed with her paintbrushes, Morales releases whatever she's feeling into her paintings.


"I'm fortunate to have found something to use as an outlet," she says. "I hope people are able to find a sense of joy, whether it's through their career, creative expression, or something they love doing."

In just a few years, what began as a personal coping tool has grown into much more. Beyond her own intuitive painting, Morales creates commissioned pieces that honor Kaua'i's and Hawai'i's history, personal stories, and memories – the Hōkūle'a, a new business owner's table featuring her wares, or an oncology patient surrounded by their family under a warm sun. Her paintings capture a snapshot in time, filled with pops of bright blues, pinks, purples, oranges, and especially greens, which she associates with healing and peace, colors that have become part of her natural style.

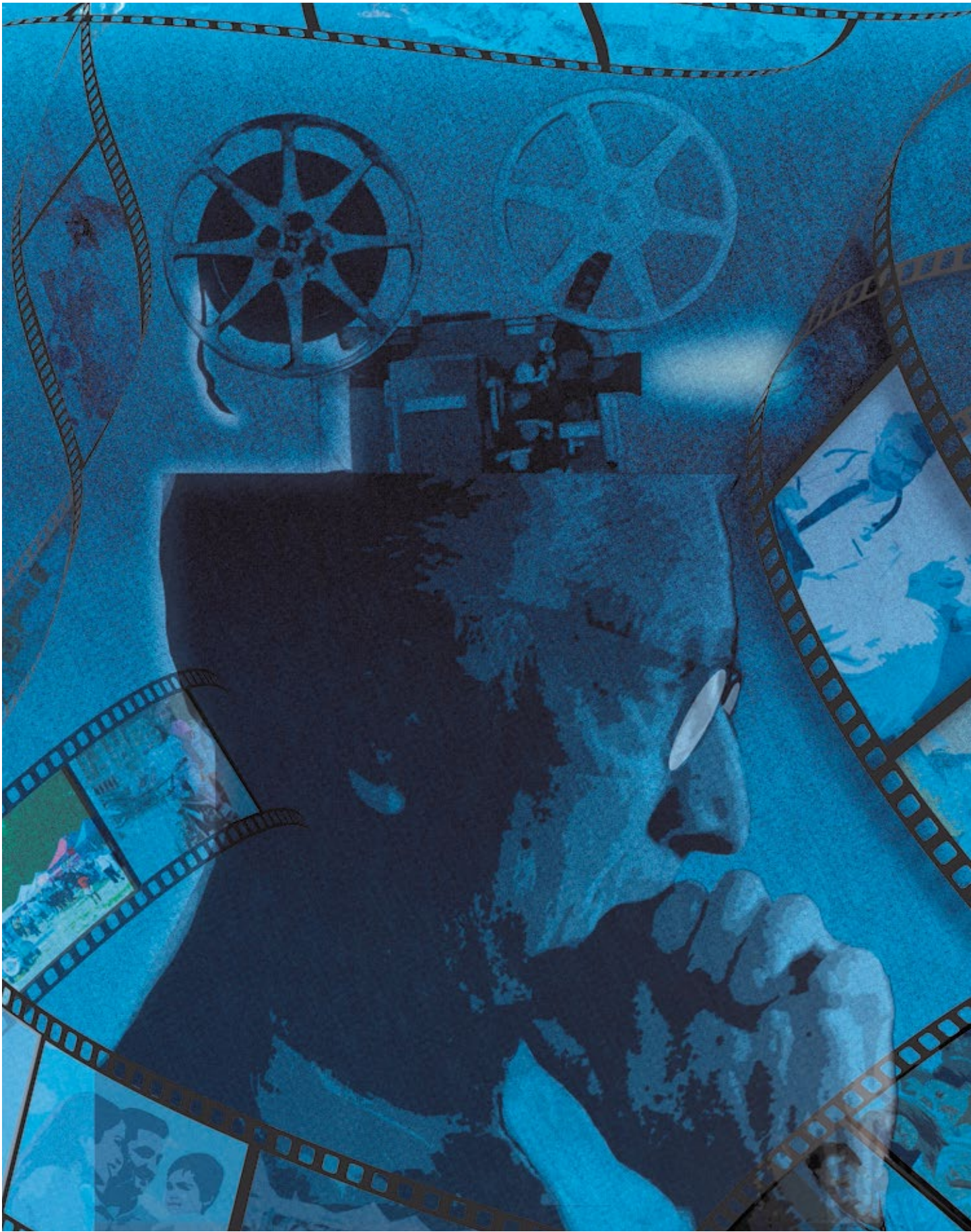
"Through my art, I hope to reflect compassion, resilience, and the spirit of the island that continues to shape both my life and my work," she says.

Morales is grateful to have the opportunity to create art for others, and ultimately, her message is one of hope. She encourages people to be patient with themselves, ask for help when they need it, and remember that we are our own home, deserving of understanding care, and love.

Every day at work, I have the opportunity to become the best version of myself because of my manager, Carrie Hovland, R.N.," says Morales. "Her guidance, leadership, and support continually inspire me to grow both professionally and personally. She creates an environment where I feel encouraged to learn, improve, and give my very best each day, and I'm truly grateful for the positive impact she has had on my career."

For Morales, painting and healing isn't about perfection. It's about making space for yourself and trusting that over time, something beautiful will emerge. 

For information about Christina Morales's art, visit [joyartistrystudio.com](http://joyartistrystudio.com).





# dealing with dementia

**words** Kevin Allen

**illustration** Garry Ono

**Dr. Louis Rockett had a larger-than-life persona** in his hometown of Wailuku, working as a plantation doctor for the Wailuku Sugar Company and later helping to found the Maui Medical Group. He was a venerated member of his community and a family man who was the main caretaker of the Rockett 'ohana.

"He'd pick us up after school and take us to our sports and activities," recalls daughter Camille Rockett. Dr. Rockett began showing symptoms of dementia in his early 70s, when Camille was in middle school. Soon, the family roles of caretaker began to reverse.

"I think that it was probably hardest on him, because he cared a lot about his dignity," says Camille. "Not being able to be the wise and capable person he was, it was really difficult for him." Dr. Rockett passed away in December 1999 at the age of 80.



### 30-hour days

According to the Alzheimer’s Association, dementia is caused by a variety of diseases that damage brain cells. This interferes with the ability of brain cells to communicate with each other, leaving the patient unable to think, feel, and behave normally.

For many families who have a loved one with dementia, it’s common for children, spouses, and even grandchildren to become full-time caretakers.

“We call it the 30-hour day, because it’s definitely a full-time job and more,” says Gina Fujikami, M.D., a Honolulu geriatrician and a board member for the Alzheimer’s Association Hawai’i chapter.



Gina Fujikami, M.D.

Fortunately, there are numerous local groups available to help. The Alzheimer’s Association has respite programs that allow caretakers to take time off from their 30-hour days by getting fill-in help from volunteers, and resources are provided through organizations like Catholic Charities Hawai’i and the state Executive Office on Aging.

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*“There are things you can do to preserve the dignity of your loved ones, and having those conversations with them ahead of time is so important.”*

*: Camille Rockett*

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“There were no dementia support groups back then, but my mom eventually joined grief support groups after Dad passed, and she benefited a lot from that,” says Camille. “Dementia takes a huge toll, but you aren’t alone, and you deserve support.”

### **What’s good for your heart is good for your brain**


“As we get older, there is a higher chance of getting dementia, but it’s not a normal part of aging,” Dr. Fujikami says. “Usually, it’s just bad luck.”

There are other factors, such as staying social and mentally active, that play an important role in keeping your brain healthy. “The key is staying active, not just physically but mentally. So whether it’s volunteering, working a job, playing music, joining a club, or just socializing, it all helps,” she says.

### **Holding on to who they were**

To see someone you love fade away is heartbreaking. But the Rocketts didn’t let that stop them from honoring the memory of Dr. Rockett, a man who meant so much to their ‘ohana and the community of Maui.

“There are things you can do to preserve the dignity of your loved ones, and having those conversations with them ahead of time is so important,” says Camille. “My dad never wanted to be in a nursing home, so my mom did everything she could to keep him at home. Though it seems like the person you love is disappearing, behind the illness, they are still that person you love.”

Camille also recognizes that despite her father’s faulty memory, the moments that existed between them were real and meaningful. “Everything we did to care for my dad was important, whether he remembered it or not. We always reflect on who he was and strive to preserve that dignity and memory for him.” 

*Find support or learn more from the Alzheimer’s Association of Hawai’i Chapter (Aloha Chapter). Visit [alz.org/hawaii](http://alz.org/hawaii).*

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

For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings, call 1 (800) 252-4137. For TTY, call 711. HMSA Akamai Advantage<sup>®</sup> Dual Care is a PPO D-SNP plan with a Medicare contract and is a state of Hawaii Medicaid Managed Care Program. Enrollment in HMSA Akamai Advantage Dual Care depends on contract renewal.



## pain relief isn't one-size-fits-all

words Earl Yoshii

When it comes to everyday pain relief, there's no shortage of options. Walk into any drug store and you'll probably see rows of painkillers on the shelves. Naturally, the question people ask most is, which one works best?

The honest answer: There isn't a single "best" option for everyone.

"That would make my life much easier if there was a best medication, a best treatment for everyone, but there isn't," says Troy Tada, D.O., an anesthesiology and pain management specialist with offices in Honolulu and Waipahu. "This is where patient individuality comes into play. What's most important is checking how well your body can tolerate different medications."



Troy Tada, D.O.


Pain management is personal. What works for your friend or family member might not work for you. That's why talking with your primary care provider (PCP) about common over-the-counter options like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and acetaminophen is so important. They work differently, but both can help with pain.

"When you see your doctor, ask if you can tolerate a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory and what dose is appropriate," Dr. Tada explains. "You should ask the same about acetaminophen. They work differently, but the effects can be similar."

For lower back pain, NSAIDs tend to be more effective because they target inflammation – the body's natural response that can irritate tissues around the spine. "Reducing that inflammation can improve symptoms," Dr. Tada says. But it's not for everyone. People with stomach or kidney issues, or those taking certain medications, may need to avoid them.

Acetaminophen works a little differently. It doesn't reduce inflammation, but it can help decrease pain and reduce fever. It's generally easier on the stomach, but it can affect the liver, especially if mixed with alcohol.

Topical products like Salonpas and Icy Hot are another option. "They act locally and don't significantly enter the bloodstream, so they're safer in many cases, but also typically less effective," Dr. Tada notes.

At the end of the day, managing pain isn't about finding a magic fix. It's about knowing what works for your body. "Ask your doctor what you can safely tolerate," Dr. Tada says. "That's the key to what works for you." 



Learn more about managing pain at [islandscene.com/more](https://www.islandscene.com/more).



Bringing awareness from head to toe at the Bodhi Tree Meditation Center.

# body scan meditation: beginner's guide

**words** David Frickman

**photo** Earl Yoshii

For beginners curious about mindfulness, body scan meditation offers a simple and accessible starting point. Rather than trying to quiet the mind, this practice focuses attention on the body as an anchor to the present.

As one guiding principle, "Body scanning trains us to know our body," says Quynh Nguyen, M.D., "not through a visual or anatomical image, but through direct awareness of physical sensation." In other words, it's about feeling rather than thinking.



Quynh Nguyen, M.D.

## A Physician's Path to Practice

Dr. Nguyen is a retired general internist. About 10 years ago, she started leading meditation practice at Bodhi Tree Meditation Center in Honolulu, drawing on her 40 years of experience in mindfulness meditation. "What began as a way to relieve stress in a busy life eventually became a deep spiritual practice that guides me through what often feels like a chaotic and difficult world," she says.

## How Body Scan Meditation Works

The practice of body scan meditation is straightforward. You lie down or sit comfortably, then move your attention slowly through the body, often beginning with the feet and working upward.

At each area, you pause briefly and notice what's there. Sensations may be obvious or subtle – or you may notice very little at all. That's perfectly fine, Dr. Nguyen says. "Whatever the sensation is, our job is to just bring awareness to it, which could be vague, very faint, or nothing." The aim is observation, not control.

## Letting Go of Expectations

One of the most common challenges for newcomers is expectation. Many assume meditation should feel calming or even blissful from the start. Body scan meditation gently dismantles that myth. "The most important advice is to let go of expectation, Dr. Nguyen says. "There is no 'I should feel this' or 'I should not experience that.'" Each session is different, and learning to meet the experience as it is without judgment is a core part of the practice.

## Building Insight Through Awareness

Over time, Dr. Nguyen says this nonjudgmental awareness can deepen insight into how mental and physical experiences interact. Stress, for example, often shows up as tight shoulders or a clenched jaw. "Body scanning shows us the close connection between mind and body, and through that awareness we learn to understand, accept, and forgive ourselves."

For beginners, that may be the greatest benefit of all: cultivating awareness with kindness, one breath and one body part at a time. **15**

*Bodhi Tree Meditation Center: [bodhitreehawaii.com](http://bodhitreehawaii.com).*



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



# why does my fart smell?

words Earl Yoshii

Let's talk about something we all deal with but don't really talk about: gas.

It might get a few laughs (or some serious side-eye), but most of the time smelly gas is just your body doing its thing. That rotten egg smell? It comes from a gas called hydrogen sulfide, produced when bacteria in your gut break down certain foods, especially ones high in sulfur.

## Fact or fiction? Smelly gas means something's wrong.

**Fiction.** "Most of the time, strong-smelling gas comes down to diet and how your gut bacteria are processing what you eat," says Kristi Lopez, M.D., of Aloha Gastroenterology. "It might be uncomfortable or embarrassing, but it's usually not harmful."



Kristi Lopez, M.D.

## True or false? It's normal to pass gas every day.

**True.** Most people do it 10 to 20 times a day. You might not notice it, but your digestive system is always working. The bacteria in your body is doing the fermenting, which is what keeps your gut balanced.

## Can or no can? You can control flatulence.

**Can – to a degree.** You can't eliminate gas completely, but you can reduce it. Eating slower, avoiding excess air swallowing, and identifying trigger foods (like beans, dairy, or certain vegetables) can make a noticeable difference.


## Thumbs up or thumbs down? Food affects how often and how intense your gas gets.

**Thumbs up.** Here in Hawai'i, where local plates might mean garlic shrimp, cabbage, and lots of protein, it's no surprise that some favorites can be triggers. Eggs, onions, broccoli, and cauliflower are known for producing stronger smells.

## Yeah or nah? Eating healthy means less gas.

**Nah.** Even the "good" stuff like beans, lentils, and whole grains can make things a little more ... noticeable. And it's not just about food. Lactose intolerance, changes in gut bacteria, certain medications, or constipation can also play a role.

If you have concerns, talk with your primary care provider. And don't be embarrassed, they've heard it all before.

At the end of the day, it's not the most glamorous topic, but it's normal. Your body's just doing its job, even if it's a little loud (or stinky) about it. 



# health matters

## The upside of aging

There are meaningful advantages that come with age. For example, wisdom is real. Experts say as you age, your brain gets better at using decades of experiences to recognize what's happening now (a skill known as pattern recognition).

This means you've seen and learned enough to feel more comfortable with:

- Trusting yourself and your instincts. You know your life better than anyone else and realize decisions are yours to make.
- Recognizing negativity in your life and letting those things go.
- Saying no, understanding it's not rude to meet your own needs.
- Building relationships that support you as you are. You no longer need approval or to fit in.
- Listening to your mind and body, such as needing time alone vs. socializing, rest vs. activity, or getting support vs. managing an issue on your own.

Aging has challenges, but it also brings wisdom that adds confidence, depth, and meaning to life.



## Small steps move you forward

If you want to improve your health but it feels overwhelming, start with simple changes. Small actions every day add up and move you toward your goals. You can add an extra fruit or vegetable to a meal, take a 10-minute walk, choose water instead of a sugary drink, wake up at the same time every day, or write a gratitude list for mental health before bedtime.

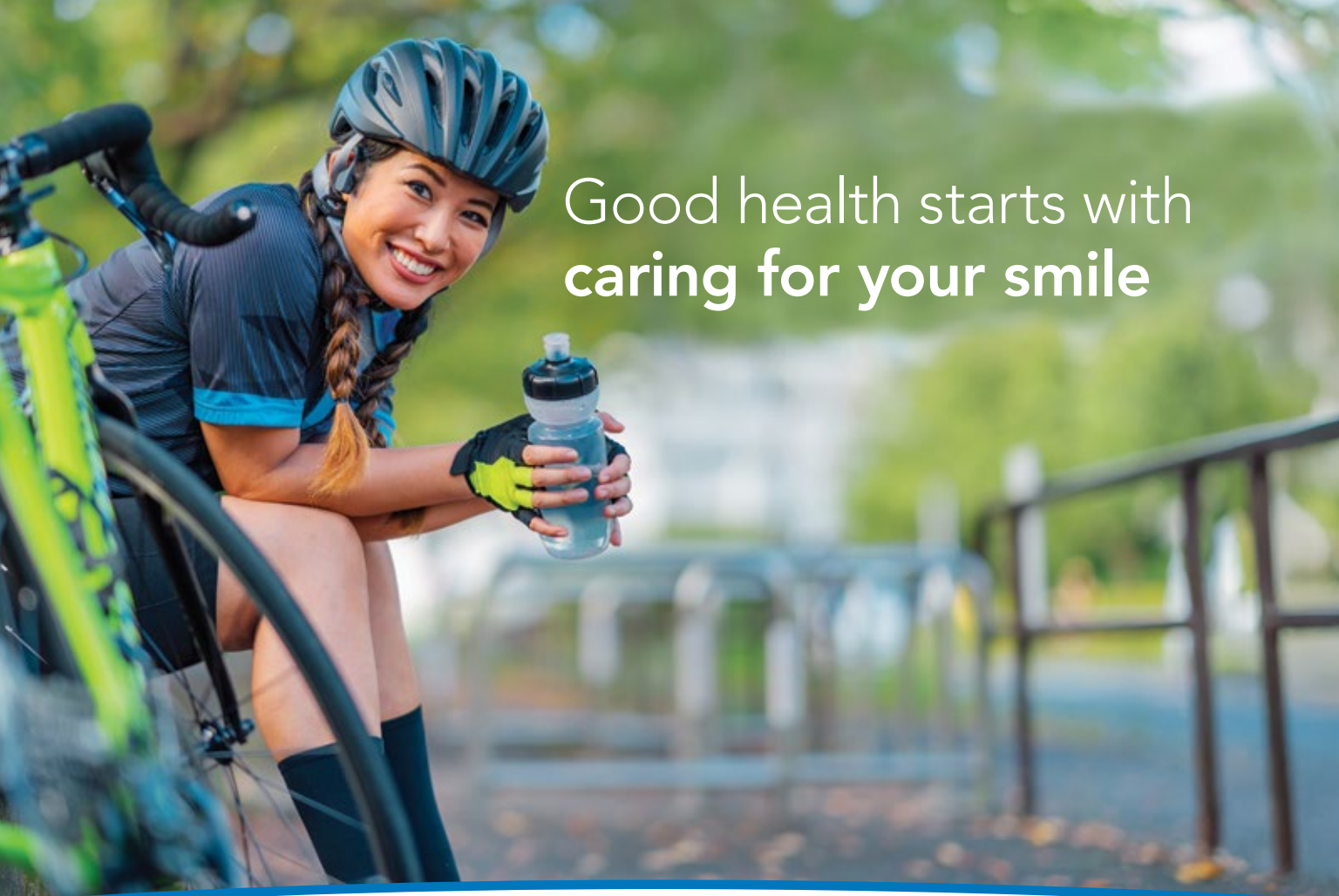
You don't need to be perfect. Repeating small steps creates healthy habits. If you're unsure about where to start, talk with your doctor.



## Always be prepared for emergencies

The devastating rain earlier this year was a powerful reminder that natural disasters can strike anytime. Every household should keep a go-bag ready.

- Pack for each person's needs. Plan for at least three days.
- Include nonperishable food (and a can opener), water, medicine, clothes, personal care items, a first-aid kit, chargers, important documents, some cash, a radio, and a flashlight.
- Keep the bag somewhere easy to find.
- Update it at least once a year or as needed.



# Good health starts with caring for your smile

On the islands, we understand that everything is connected – the land, the ocean, and the people. Our health works the same way. Maintaining good oral health supports your whole body, which is especially important if you live with a chronic condition like diabetes or are preparing to welcome a new addition to your ohana.

HMSA's Oral Health for Total Health<sup>SM</sup> program provides additional preventive dental benefits that have been shown to lessen the severity of certain medical conditions.

If you're an HMSA Dental member and have an eligible condition, you're enrolled automatically – at no extra cost. All you need to do is schedule an appointment with a dentist in your plan's network.



Learn more at [hmsadental.com/total-health](https://hmsadental.com/total-health) or call (808) 948-6440 or 1 (800) 792-4672.

## finding calm in the chaos

words Michelle Liu

When you're stuck in a spiral of intense anxiety, it can feel like you're drowning in your own thoughts. It's scary and overwhelming, but there are ways to find the light out of the dark.



Andrea Plasko, LCSW

Andrea Plasko, a licensed clinical social worker at Psychotherapy Hawai'i in Honolulu, shares grounding techniques to reset your nervous system and find safety in the present moment.

**1. Change the narrator:** Use humor, accents, or third-person narration.

Instead of being fully immersed in the thought ("I'm overwhelmed"), step back and observe it, creating psychological distance. Adding humor or a playful tone signals to the brain that the situation may not be as threatening as it feels.

**2. Cold factor:** Splash your face with cold water or hold ice in your hands.

Cold exposure activates the body's dive reflex, slowing the heart rate and reducing physiological arousal. Because anxiety is often very physical, using temperature (especially cold) is a fast way to regulate the nervous system.

**3. Ground through the senses:** 5-4-3-2-1 method.

Name five things you can see, four you can feel, three you can hear, two you can smell, and one you can taste. It pulls your attention out of anxious thinking and back into the present moment.

It's especially helpful for people who feel "in their head" or disconnected.

**4. Sing loud and proud:** Focus on lyrics and breathing.

Singing and humming stimulate the vagus nerve, which plays a key role in calming the nervous system. It also encourages a slower, more controlled breathing pattern. Focusing on lyrics gives the mind something structured to hold onto, which can reduce spiraling or intrusive thoughts.

**5. Sour shock:** Eat an extremely sour piece of candy or suck on a lemon slice.

Strong sour flavors quickly activate the body's sensory system, which can interrupt the anxiety cycle. When someone is anxious, their attention often gets stuck in future-focused or repetitive thoughts. A sudden, intense taste pulls attention back into the present and the body, creating a brief "pattern interrupt" to help reset the nervous system.

These tools can reduce anxiety and help restore a sense of control in the moment, but they aren't permanent solutions. For ongoing or chronic anxiety, it's still important to address underlying patterns through therapy, lifestyle changes, and longer-term coping strategies. **15**



# Privacy Notice

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

We care about the privacy of your health data. In keeping with federal law, we protect your privacy. This notice describes our privacy rules, our legal duty, and your rights about your health data. This notice went into effect Sept. 22, 2013.

We must give you a copy of this notice and follow the terms of this notice. We have the right to change this notice at any time. If we make major changes to this notice, we'll post a revised notice on HMSA's website ([hmsa.com](http://hmsa.com)). We'll give you a copy of the revised notice or details about the changes and tell you how it can be retrieved.

## Your Protected Health Information or PHI

Your PHI includes data about you, the health care you get, and payment for your care. HMSA gets and creates PHI. As an example, after you see your doctor, a claim is sent to HMSA. The claim may have details about your health, symptoms, injury or illness, exam, treatment, and more. Your PHI may be used in several ways, such as to pay your claim or to plan for your care.



## Your Rights

The law gives you rights about your PHI. As an HMSA member, you have the right to:

- Ask for and get a copy of this notice at any time.
- See or ask for a copy of your PHI on paper or in electronic form. Or ask us to send a copy to a third party. There may be a fee for these copies.
- Ask us to limit how we use and share your PHI. There may be reasons why we can't agree to your request. Even if we agree, we may still share your records during an emergency or when the law says we have to.
- Ask for and get a list of third parties that we share your PHI with for certain reasons.
- Ask that your PHI be sent to you by a different way other than by mail or be sent to a different address. This can be done if you think that your life is in danger.
- Ask to add to your PHI. Sometimes, we may not be able to grant your request, such as if we didn't create the PHI. If we deny your request, we'll tell you why in writing. If you don't agree, you may send us a letter that says you don't agree.
- If there's a misuse of your PHI, we'll let you know about it if we think it's needed or if the law says we have to.

You will not face any form of discrimination or retaliation for exercising your privacy rights.

You may contact us about your rights as noted at the end of this notice.

## Our Duties

The law clearly spells out the duties of health plans. HMSA must:

- Protect the privacy of your PHI.
- Give you a notice of our privacy practices.
- Follow the terms of this notice.
- Fulfill your request to send PHI in a different way or to a different address. You can do this if you think that you're in danger. Your request must be reasonable and state the other address or another way you want us to contact you. Also, your request must let us pay claims, send you letters, and collect premiums for your health plan.\*
- Use and share only the PHI we need to do our jobs.
- Make sure our business associates agree to protect your PHI the same way we do.

We won't use or share your PHI except when the law says we have to or as described in this notice. Also, we won't ask you to give up your privacy rights to join an HMSA plan or to get care.

## How PHI is Used and Shared

There are three key areas where we need to use and share your PHI: to treat you, to pay your claims, and for other health care operations. We may also contract with other parties or business associates to do the work for us as long as they agree to protect your PHI as we do. Each area is described below.

**To treat you:** This includes services to provide or manage your health care. As your health plan, we may need to share PHI with your doctor or others so that they can treat you.

**To pay your claims:** We need to pay claims from doctors, hospitals, and others for your care. We may also share PHI to collect premiums\*, to see if you can get care, to set your level of coverage, and to work with other health plans to decide on benefits.

**For health care operations:** We want you to get quality health care services. To do that, we may get copies of your medical records and test results for quality review, to review provider qualifications, and to track wellness and manage disease. We may also use PHI to set premiums, resolve complaints and appeals, manage our business, and other operations.

Other laws may apply to the use and sharing of PHI, including laws for the use and sharing of substance use disorder information 42 C.F.R. Part 2.

## Other Ways We Use and Share PHI

At times, we'll need to use and share your PHI for your own good, to serve the public good, or when the law says we have to. In these cases, we'll use and share only the least amount of PHI needed. For example:

**To discuss treatment options or other products or services:** HMSA or its business associates may use your PHI to send you details about care options or other products or services as allowed by law. This may include data about our provider network and new products or services that only HMSA members can get. It may also include options for other care, health care providers, or settings of care that may work for you. You may contact us if you don't want to get certain letters. We'll get your authorization to send you details about a third-party's products or services if we get payment from the third party for doing so or in other cases when the law says we have to.

\* Collecting premiums does not apply to HMSA QUEST members.

**To others involved in your**

**health care:** Unless you object, we may share your PHI with your family members or a friend who's involved in your health care.

**For raising funds:** HMSA doesn't ask its members to raise funds for its own use. We don't use PHI or substance use disorder information for fundraising purposes.

**For underwriting:** We may use your PHI to create, renew, or replace your health plan or health benefits. We won't use or share this PHI for any other reason except when the law says we can or the law says we have to. We won't use or share genetic data for underwriting uses. If the contract for a health plan or health benefits is placed with us, we'll use and share your PHI only as described in this notice or as allowed by law.

**With your written authorization:**

Uses and sharing of psychotherapy notes, some uses and sharing of substance use information, some uses and sharing for marketing, and sharing that involves the sale of your PHI will need your authorization. You may also give it to us electronically or in writing so we can use or share your PHI with a person or third party your name. You may end your authorization in writing at any time. We'll honor your request unless the PHI has already been shared. We won't use or share your PHI for reasons that aren't allowed by law or aren't described in this notice unless we get your written authorization.

**During an emergency or disaster:**

During a medical emergency or disaster, we may share your PHI to make sure you can get the care you need or to process payment for your care. We may also need to share your PHI during a disaster to help your family find out how you're doing and where you are. If you aren't present or aren't able to agree to these uses

of your PHI, we may need to decide if sharing the PHI is best for you.

**To plan sponsors:** We may share your PHI with your group health plan sponsor or its legal representative to help them manage your group health plan. Only the least amount of PHI needed will be shared.

**For Health Information**

**Exchanges (HIEs):** We may take part in one or more HIEs. This means that your PHI may be available electronically to treat you, to pay your claim, or for health care operations. Other doctors and health plans that take part in the HIE may have access to this data.

**To report to authorities:**

As required by law, we may share your PHI if we suspect abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.

**For research:** We may use or share your PHI with researchers when they agree to protect it.

**To comply with privacy laws:**

We may use or share your PHI as required by privacy laws.

**For workers' compensation:** We may share your PHI to comply with laws on workers' compensation or similar programs.

**For public health:** We may share your PHI with public health or legal staff who work to prevent or control disease, injury, or disability as allowed to under law.

**For health oversight:** We may share your PHI to prevent fraud and abuse, and for audits, investigations, inspections, licenses, and other government activities that monitor health care as allowed under law.

**For judicial and administrative matters:** We may share your PHI in response to a court or administrative order, subpoena, or other law process in some cases as allowed under law.

**For law enforcement reasons:**

In a few cases, such as a court order, warrant, or grand jury subpoena, we may share your PHI with law enforcement officials as allowed under law.

**For military or national security reasons:**

In some cases, we may share PHI of armed forces staff with military authorities. We may also share PHI with federal officials for national security reasons.

**To coroners and medical**

**examiners:** In some cases, we may share PHI of decedents with coroners and medical examiners as allowed under law.

**Substance Use Disorder (SUD)**

**information:** We may use and share your SUD (42 CFR Part 2) information for treatment, payment, and health care operations. If we receive SUD information from a federally qualified SUD treatment center under a general consent, we will only use or disclose the information as allowed to under law. If the records are obtained under a specific authorization, we will only use or disclose the information as allowed by that authorization. We won't use or disclose your SUD information in a civil, criminal, administrative, or legislative proceeding against you, unless we receive your written consent or a court order for such use, as allowed under law. Individual HIPAA rights pertain to SUD information (see above section titled Your Rights). SUD information is protected under HIPAA's breach notification rule. If your records are involved in a breach, we will notify you as required by law.

**Redisclosure:** PHI disclosed in compliance with this privacy notice may be subject to redisclosure and no longer protected by the Privacy Rule.

## Use of Artificial Intelligence

**(AI):** We may collect, use, and share PHI using applications with AI to better serve you. We will only use AI as allowed under law.

## Nondiscrimination and Language Assistance Services

HMSA doesn't discriminate, exclude people, or treat people differently because of:

- Race
- Age
- Color
- Disability
- National origin
- Sex

HMSA provides the following services to our members free of charge:

- Language interpretation or translation services for our members with limited English proficiency.
- Sign language services.
- Information in other formats, such as large print, audio, and accessible digital formats.

## For More Information or to Report a Problem

For more details on HMSA's privacy practices, please contact us as noted below.

If you think that your privacy rights have been breached, you may file a complaint with us at the address below. You may also send a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. If you file a complaint, we assure you that we won't retaliate in any way.

Thank you for taking the time to read this notice. As your health plan, HMSA works hard to take care of and protect your PHI. We know this is important to you and we take our duties seriously.

## Contact HMSA at:

HMSA Privacy Office  
P.O. Box 860  
Honolulu, HI 96808-0860

## Honolulu, Oahu

- Group/Individual Plans:  
(808) 948-5555
- Federal/State/County Plans:  
(808) 948-6499
- HMO Plans:  
(808) 948-6372
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan (FEP):  
(808) 948-6280
- HMSA QUEST:  
(808) 948-6486
- HMSA Akamai Advantage:  
(808) 948-6000
- Text Telephone (TTY):  
1 (877) 447-5990
- Toll-free:  
1 (800) 776-4672

## Contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,  
Office for Civil Rights  
90 7th St., Suite 4-100  
San Francisco, CA 94103

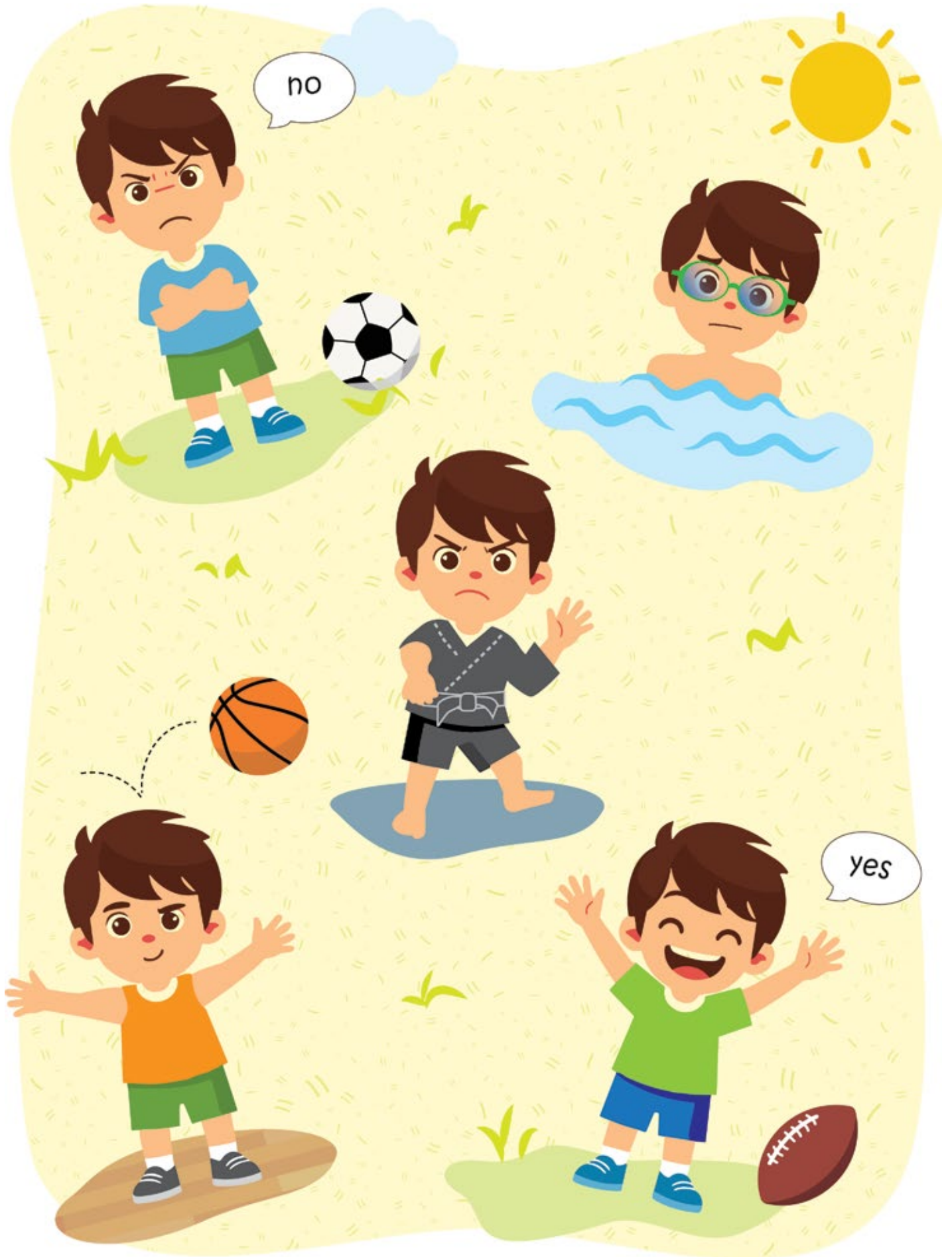
Phone: 1 (800) 368-1019 toll-free

TDD: 1 (800) 537-7697 toll-free

Fax: (202) 619-3818

Email: [OCRMail@hhs.gov](mailto:OCRMail@hhs.gov)

Website:  
[hhs.gov/hipaa/filing-a-complaint/index.html](https://hhs.gov/hipaa/filing-a-complaint/index.html)



# kids and activities: finding balance

words Summer Nakaishi

It's the night before class and your keiki is wringing their hands and swaying from side to side. "Is swimming tomorrow?" they ask, forehead creased. After you confirm swimming lessons are indeed scheduled, that's when their eyes begin to cloud. "I don't want to go!" they cry, and the pre-swim stress cycle begins.

Maybe you've been there – whether it's a swim class, hula, or jiu-jitsu. It's never easy to see your child wrestle with anxiety, especially when after-school activities are meant to help them grow. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), extracurricular classes and sports can support physical and mental health while building social skills, persistence, and a sense of community.

Still, how can parents tell when an activity offers a healthy challenge versus creating too much stress?



Kathryn Egan, M.D.

Kathryn Egan, M.D., board certified in pediatrics, psychiatry, and child and adolescent psychiatry, says there's no one-size-fits-all answer. Instead, she encourages parents to consider whether an activity aligns with their child's age, temperament, and developmental readiness.

"Before age 6, children have a shorter attention span and may learn best when they can explore, experience, and copy others," Dr. Egan says. Instruction for younger keiki should be time-limited, make space for play, and avoid competition.

Between ages 6 and 9, many children develop basic motor skills for organized sports but may not have the coordination or cognitive skills needed for complex strategies and quick decision-making. By ages 10 through 12, children may be ready for more advanced sports that require complex motor skills and teamwork. Even then, many experts believe that sports should focus on skill development and cooperation instead of winning and losing.

Their emotional environment matters, too. AACAP encourages parents to model good sportsmanship by offering support and positive feedback, setting realistic expectations, helping them handle disappointment, and reminding them that success isn't the same as winning and failure isn't the same as losing.

Striking a healthy balance between after-school activities and free time can be challenging. Families can encourage children to explore a range of activities, stay open-minded about unfamiliar interests, and avoid imposing their own wishes on their child. Encourage your kids to speak up if they're overwhelmed or need a break. Chat openly if they continue to resist an activity. What don't they like? Dunking their head under water? Class scheduled too close to lunchtime? Too many commitments interfering with school, time with family and friends, or self-directed interests?

If an activity is still affecting your child's well-being after you talk to them about it, Dr. Egan suggests checking in with your pediatrician to help decide next steps – whether that means hanging up their goggles temporarily or encouraging them to keep diving in. **15**

# What you need to know

## about breast reconstruction benefits

In accordance with the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998, most HMSA health plans cover all stages of breast reconstruction when a mastectomy is performed.

This includes:

- All stages of reconstruction of the breast on which the mastectomy was performed.
- Reconstruction of the other breast to produce a symmetrical appearance.
- Coverage for chest wall reconstruction with aesthetic flat closure.
- Treatment of complications of mastectomy, including lymphedema.
- Prostheses.

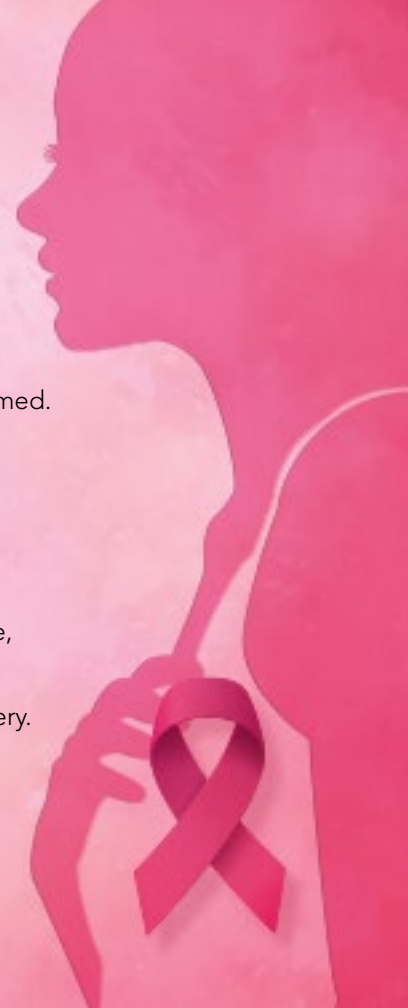
These benefits will be provided in consultation with the patient and the patient's attending physician and will be subject to the same annual deductible, coinsurance, and/or copayment provisions otherwise applicable under the plan.

Call us to find out if your HMSA plan covers mastectomies and reconstructive surgery.

**(808) 948-6079 or 1 (800) 776-4672**



1010-1734950



## Get a summer health glow up with a FREE HMSA Health Education Workshop!

### Mind Your Muscles

Review muscle anatomy and physiology and learn how to train your muscles. Come and receive a free resistance band.

#### HMSA Center in Honolulu

Aug. 17, 10-11 a.m.

#### HMSA Center in Pearl City

Aug. 20, 10-11 a.m.

#### HMSA Center in Hilo

Aug. 29, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

### 808 Trail-Ready:

#### Hiking Safely in Hawaii

Prepare for hiking adventures with tips on clothing, gear, trails, and safety.

#### Online at [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)

Aug. 31, noon-1 p.m.

### Just the Facts

Learn how to read, understand, and compare nutrition facts labels to make smarter choices.

#### Online at [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)

Sept. 9, noon-1 p.m.

### Modern Perils

Find out how to make informed choices for modern health risks like screen time, sedentary occupations, and ultra-processed foods and drinks.

#### Online at [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)

Sept. 17, noon-1 p.m.

### Crimes Against Spines

Everyday habits can strain your neck and back. Discover simple ways to protect your spine and avoid pain.

#### Online at [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)

Sept. 23, noon-1 p.m.

### Register today!

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

Workshop dates and times are subject to change.



## books to write home about

words Summer Nakaishi



In our digital era, handwritten letters have largely been replaced by emails or texts, while journals may often take the form of apps, video logs, or social media posts. Yet stories woven through letters, diary entries, or transcripts remain timeless. Explore our selection of books that captures this enduring appeal in fresh ways.

### ***The Day the Crayons Quit***

By Drew Daywalt

The crayons are on strike! This picture book is a series of handwritten letters addressed to Duncan, the proprietor of the unhappy box of crayons, each airing their grievances. Blue is tired of coloring water! Orange and Yellow each insist they're the true color of the sun! After reading their letters, Duncan finds a way to appease them all, creating a beautiful collaboration of color and compromise.

### ***Daisy Jones & The Six***

By Taylor Jenkins Reid

Told through interview transcripts, this novel follows 1970s rock band Daisy Jones & The Six's ascent, their legendary album, and the tensions that led to their breakup. Written as an oral history, it blurs the line between fiction and reality.

### ***The Correspondent***

By Virginia Evans

Nearly every morning, retired court clerk Sybil Van Antwerp reserves time to write letters. Anyone from customer service representatives or her former co-worker's son, to famous writers to let them know what she thought of their latest books or notes to an unnamed recipient that she'll never send – she will write a letter. One day, she receives an unfriendly letter from someone who forces her to reexamine her past. Like puzzle pieces, the first few letters may be hard to put together, but soon, we begin to see Sybil emerge, all through her correspondence.

### ***The Unselected Journals of Emma M. Lion, Vol. 1***

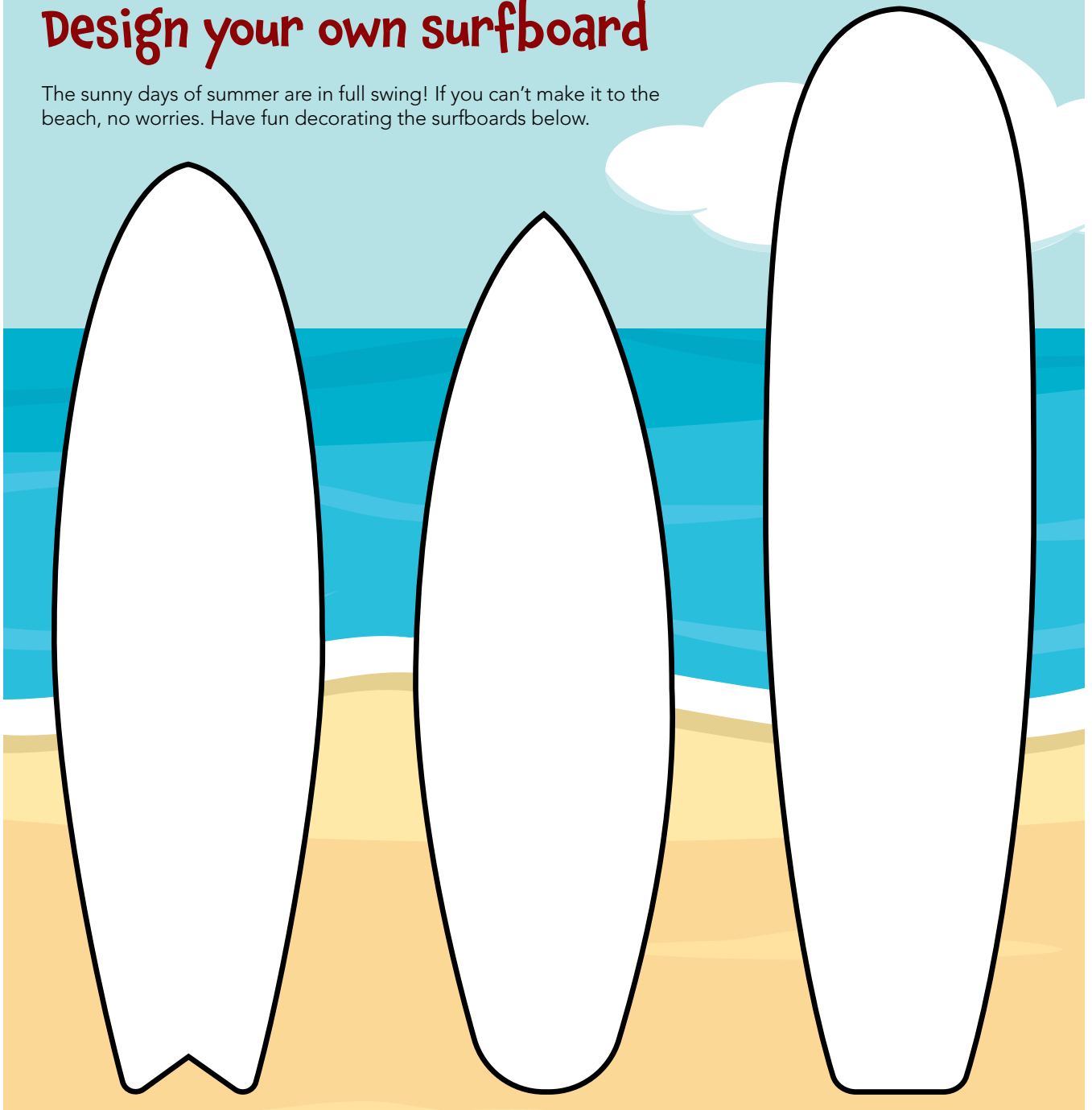
By Beth Brower

In book one of an ongoing series, we peek into Emma Lion's journals as she returns to the Lapis Lazuli house in St. Crispian's London. Set in 1883, the quirky Victorian heroine documents peculiar happenings with her cousin and archnemesis Archibald Flat, eccentric Aunt Eugenia, and even possibly a Roman ghost, all as she struggles to keep her dwindling inheritance. Blending historical fiction with a touch of magical surrealism and humor, the novella-sized book can be a quick diversion and/or a deep dive into the subsequent volumes.

keiki corner

## Design your own surfboard

The sunny days of summer are in full swing! If you can't make it to the beach, no worries. Have fun decorating the surfboards below.



# Finish the summer sentences

Making memories is what summer is all about. Finish each sentence to help you plan or capture the vibes of the season.



This summer, I want to try/I tried \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite thing to do at the beach is \_\_\_\_\_

When it's hot outside, I like to \_\_\_\_\_.

My perfect summer snack is \_\_\_\_\_.

I feel happy in the summer because \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite summer sound is \_\_\_\_\_.

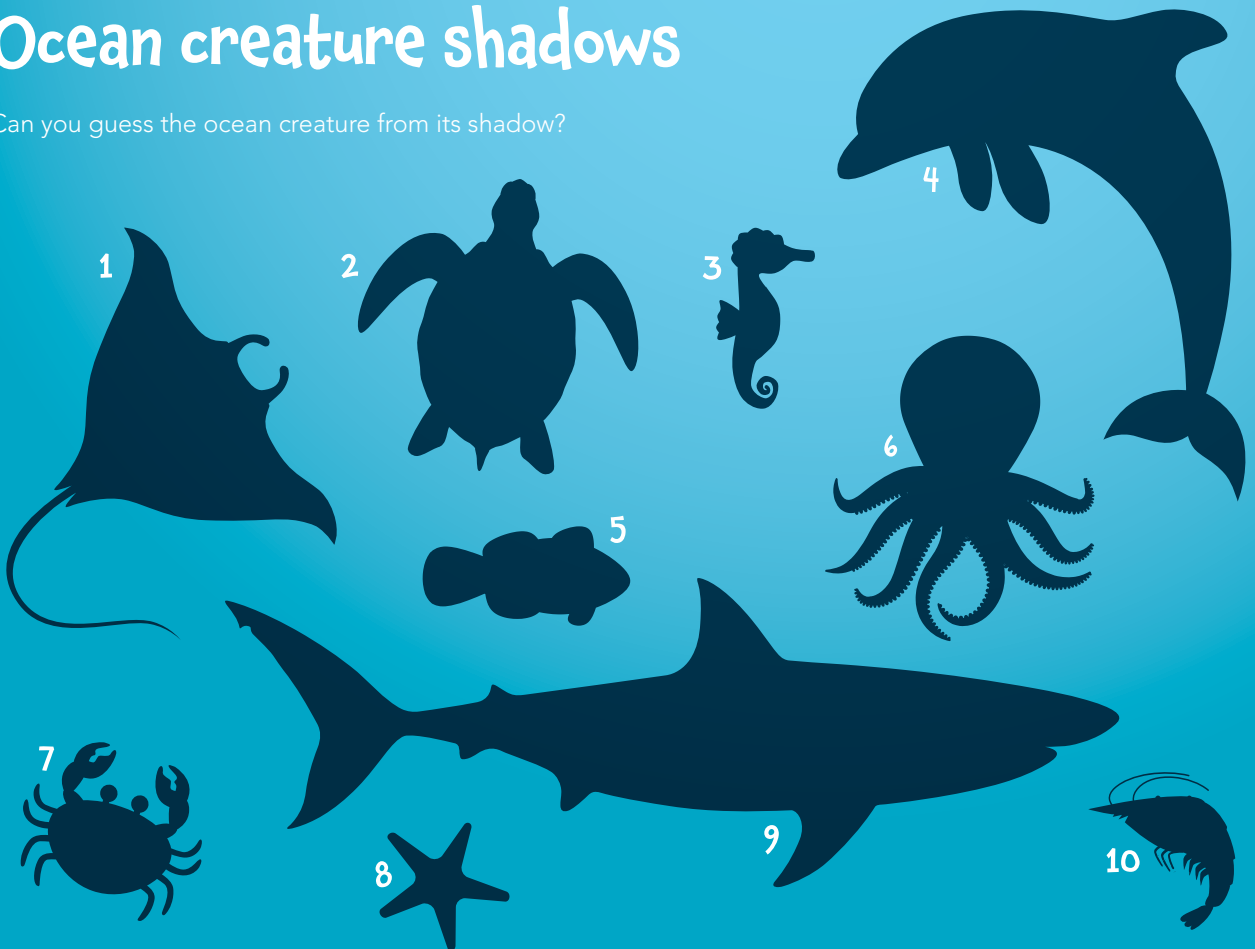
If I could spend all day outside, I would \_\_\_\_\_.

One fun thing I want to do/did this summer was \_\_\_\_\_.

Summer makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_.

## Ocean creature shadows

Can you guess the ocean creature from its shadow?



1. Manta ray; 2. Turtle; 3. Seahorse; 4. Dolphin; 5. Fish; 6. Octopus; 7. Crab; 8. Starfish; 9. Shark; 10. Shrimp.



# leafy, green, and delicious

**words** Michelle Liu and Courtney Takabayashi

**photos** Lew Harrington

**food styling** Marjie Beaton

Whether you eat it raw or cooked, spinach is versatile and delicious.

Regarded as a powerhouse food by the American Heart Association, this leafy green is nutrient-dense and low in calories. Enjoy these locally inspired recipes that showcase just how easily spinach can enhance all kinds of dishes!

And learn more about spinach on page 61.

## Kabocha and Red Lentil Stew

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 medium carrot, peeled and diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 lb. kabocha, peeled, seeded, and cubed
- ¾ cup dried red lentils
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 2 tsp. paprika
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ tsp. red pepper flakes
- 5 oz. baby spinach

In a large saucepan over medium heat, sauté onion and carrot in olive oil about 5 minutes or until onions are soft. Stir in garlic and sauté about 1 minute. Add remaining ingredients except spinach. Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce heat. Simmer, stirring occasionally, about 20 minutes or until kabocha is tender. Add spinach and stir gently until wilted. Makes 6 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving: 110 calories, 4 g fat, 0.5 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 350 mg sodium, 16 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 4 g sugar, 4 g protein

## Potato Spinach Frittata

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil | Salt and black pepper, to taste |
| 2 small red potatoes, diced    | 4 eggs                          |
| 8 oz. spinach, torn            | 2 egg whites                    |
| 1 stalk green onion, chopped   | ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese   |

In an ovenproof skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add potatoes and cook, stirring frequently, until potatoes are tender. Add spinach and green onion. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cook and stir until spinach is wilted.

In a small bowl, beat eggs and egg whites together. Pour into skillet and spread evenly. Sprinkle with cheese. Place skillet in broiler for 3-5 minutes or until the eggs are cooked through and cheese begins to brown. Makes 4 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving (not including salt to taste): 220 calories, 13 g fat, 4.5 g saturated fat, 200 mg cholesterol, 250 mg sodium, 12 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 1 g sugar, 14 g protein



## Soba Tofu Spinach Salad

16 oz. dry soba  
8 oz. baby spinach  
4 oz. baby kale  
4 oz. mung bean sprouts  
1 small red bell pepper, julienned  
1 small carrot, peeled, julienned  
12 oz. firm tofu, drained, cubed  
½ cup frozen shelled edamame,  
cooked, cooled  
2 stalks green onion, chopped  
½ tsp. black sesame seeds

### For the dressing

½ cup white miso  
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil  
1 Tbsp. low-sodium shoyu  
1 Tbsp. mirin  
2 Tbsp. raw sugar  
1-inch piece ginger root, peeled,  
minced  
¼ tsp. shichimi togarashi  
(Japanese spice mixture)  
or ground red pepper

Cook soba according to package instructions.

In a large bowl, combine spinach, kale, bean sprouts, bell pepper, and carrot.

To make the dressing, combine all ingredients and mix well.

Split vegetables evenly among four salad bowls. Drizzle with dressing. Top with soba, tofu, edamame, green onion, and black sesame seeds. Makes 4 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving: 700 calories, 14 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 2,100 mg sodium, 120 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 13 g sugar, 37 g protein



Slip spinach into dessert recipes for a healthy boost. Find recipes at [islandscene.com/more](http://islandscene.com/more).

# Join us at the Akamai Living Fair

Free admission!

Visit the HMSA booth for health information and resources and win door prizes!



Flu shots.\*



Health information and other resources.



Door prizes. And more!

For more information, call the Kamana Senior Center at (808) 961-8710.

\*Ages 3 and older. Minors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Thursday, Oct. 22  
9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Edith Kanaka'ole  
Tennis Stadium  
350 Kalanikoa St.  
Hilo, HI 96720



Mahalo to the  
County of Hawaii  
for their support.



1010-1753105

## Serving you is our privilege.

Visit an HMSA Center where we  
can help you with your HMSA plan.

HMSA Centers are conveniently located  
in Honolulu, Pearl City, Hilo, Kahului, and  
Lihue. No appointment needed.



For locations and hours of  
operation, scan the QR code  
or visit [hmsa.com/contact](https://hmsa.com/contact).



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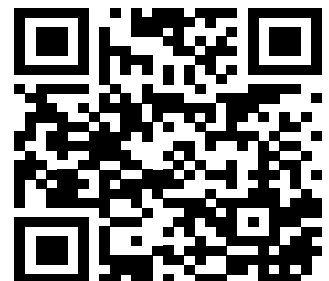


# Music is Medicine

Be informed, inspired and connected.

Music has the power to uplift us all. Join Hawai'i Public Radio on-air and online for music from Hawai'i and around the world, plus trusted information and connection that is an essential part of a healthy routine.

More music and events  
information at  
[HawaiiPublicRadio.org](http://HawaiiPublicRadio.org):



# inside the sailor man's spinach can

words Michelle Liu

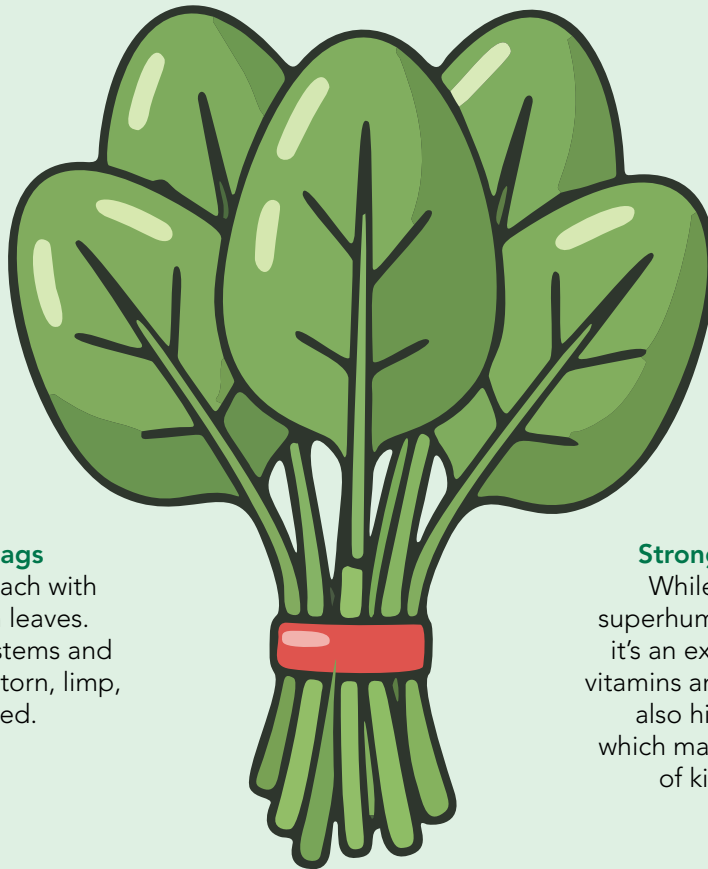
Spinach's rise to legendary leafy green fame is thanks to an iconic cartoon from the 1930s. Cartoonist E.C. Seegar chose spinach as Popeye the Sailor Man's source of strength based on a chemist's report that mistakenly overstated its iron content by 10 times. But there's more to this green than muscle! Here's the dirt on this super leaf.

## Freshly wrapped

Tired of spinach going bad? Dry leaves and wrap them in paper towels, place them in a sealed bag, and refrigerate for up to a week.

## Texture trio

There are three main varieties of spinach: savoy (crinkly and curly leaves), flat and smooth, and semi-savoy, a mix of the two.



## Seed to salad

If you need a fast-growing green, spinach can be harvested in as little as 40 days after planting.

## Green flags

Look for spinach with bright green leaves. Avoid coarse stems and leaves that are torn, limp, or spotted.

## Strong to the finish

While spinach isn't superhuman-level iron rich, it's an excellent source of vitamins and minerals. But it's also high in oxalates, which may increase the risk of kidney stones.

## Versatile wonder

Spinach can be eaten raw, sauteed, steamed, blended, baked, and even hidden in smoothies and desserts.

Find delicious spinach recipes in "leafy, green, and delicious" on page 56.

# rise and shine with easy sheet pan breakfasts

**words** Michelle Liu

**photos** Rae Huo

**food styling** Cedric Fujita

Mornings are busy! There may not be enough time to get breakfast on the table, but eating in the morning sets your brain and body up for success throughout the day. Streamline any kitchen chaos with these sheet pan breakfasts, which can be made ahead of time and reheated in the microwave or on the stove, so everyone has time to eat without rushing out the door.



## Sheet Pan Pancakes

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole-wheat flour
- 3 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1¼ cups nonfat milk
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

### For the add-ins

- ¼ cup thinly sliced strawberries
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips
- ¼ cup blueberries
- ¼ cup raspberries
- Maple syrup, butter, or powdered sugar, for serving, optional

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Coat a 9x13-inch rimmed sheet pan with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together flour, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add eggs, milk, butter, and vanilla. Mix until smooth.

Evenly pour batter into prepared pan. Divide batter into four equal quadrants for add-ins: In first quadrant, add strawberries. In second, add blueberries. In third, sprinkle chocolate chips. In fourth, add raspberries.

Bake for 15-18 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in middle comes out clean. Serve with maple syrup, butter, powdered sugar, or all three if desired. Makes 6 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per pancake serving (not including add-ins or optional toppings): 260 calories, 8 g fat, 3 g saturated fat, 75 mg cholesterol, 400 mg sodium, 40 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 10 g sugar, 9 g protein

## Sheet Pan Garden Egg Frittata

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 10 large eggs
- ¼ cup nonfat milk
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ cup chopped fresh baby spinach
- ½ small yellow onion, diced
- ½ small red bell pepper, diced
- ⅓ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray 9x13-inch rimmed pan with nonstick spray.

In large mixing bowl, whisk eggs, milk, salt, pepper, and garlic powder until fully combined. Pour eggs onto prepared sheet pan.

Sprinkle spinach, onion, red bell pepper, and cheese evenly over eggs. Bake 18-22 minutes or until eggs are set. Makes 8 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving: 150 calories, 10 g fat, 4 g saturated fat, 240 mg cholesterol, 250 mg sodium, 2 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber, 1 g sugar, 10 g protein



## Sheet Pan Sweet Potato Breakfast Hash

- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 2 Yukon Gold potatoes, cubed
- ½ red onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 4 slices uncooked turkey bacon, chopped
- 6 large eggs
- Green onions, sliced, for topping, optional
- Hot sauce, for topping, optional

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.

Add potatoes, red onion, and garlic to 9x13-inch rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle olive oil on top and add salt and pepper.


Toss until combined. Spread bacon evenly over potatoes. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until bacon is crisp and potatoes are soft and golden.

Remove baking sheet from oven. Add each egg directly on top, all over the sheet pan. Bake about 5-6 minutes for over easy, 7-8 minutes for over medium, or 9-11 minutes for over hard yolks.

Top with green onions and hot sauce, if desired. Makes 6 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving (not including optional ingredients): 220 calories, 9 g fat, 2.5 g saturated fat, 195 mg cholesterol, 300 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 4 g sugar, 11 g protein





Pūpūkāhi i holomua.  
*Unite in order to progress.*

Island Scene  
PO Box 3850  
Honolulu HI 96812-3850  
islandscene.com



"Over the years and as our kids now have kids, HMSA has been and continues to be there for us, like an extension of our family."

- Cindy and Bartolome Garcia,  
HMSA members and Hanapēpē  
residents, and parents and  
grandparents.

For nearly 90 years, HMSA has been proud to provide access to quality care to members and their families statewide. As we continue to deliver on the excellence our members value and trust, our goal is to ensure that reliable health care is available in Hawaii for generations to come.

To learn more about our health plans, visit an HMSA Center near you or go to [hmsa.com/health-plans](https://hmsa.com/health-plans).

Watch the Garcia family's HMSA story at [hmsa.com/MyHMSAStory](https://hmsa.com/MyHMSAStory).



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