

# island scene

well-being, family, and fun for **HMSA** members || spring 2024 || [islandscene.com](http://islandscene.com)



kendo: the way  
of the sword



celebrate older americans month || stroke: think fast || spring vegetables

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# island scene

spring issue : 2024 || islandscene.com

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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 and 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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*Island Scene*, P.O. Box 3850,  
Honolulu, HI 96812-3850

Editorial: (808) 948-6839

Circulation: (808) 948-6575

Advertising: (808) 227-5662

Email: [feedback@islandscene.com](mailto:feedback@islandscene.com)

HMSA website at [hmsa.com](http://hmsa.com)

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**COVER:** Seth Harris, Myohoji Kendo Club lead instructor. Story on page 10 by Courtney Takabayashi. Photo by Rae Huo.

## aloha members,



When you ask people what “good health” means, many will reply with, “when you’re not sick.”

That’s partially true, and historically, we’ve valued our doctors, pharmacies, and hospitals for bringing us back to “good health” when a disease, condition, or injury lays us out. HMSA has always been there with you to provide the security and peace of mind to know that your HMSA plan benefits will help you pay for care when you’re sick. And we will always be here for that.

However, we now know that “good health” is much more than the absence of illness. We live in a VUCA world – volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. And good health means that you’ll have the tools and strength to flourish and succeed in turbulent times.

Accordingly, some of the most important components of health in 2024 are:

- Purpose in life.
- Social connections and support.
- Interests and activities that provide “chicken soup for the soul.”
- Optimizing lifestyle to focus on preventing and managing chronic disease.
- Mental health and resilience.
- A place to call home.

All of this together can be summed up in a very simple concept: You have good health when you’re managing any disease, you feel good, and it feels right.

HMSA is growing and evolving with you to help with these components of good health. In this issue of *Island Scene*, we hope you’ll enjoy some examples of unique and personal ways that people pursue good health, which may well be the most important goal in our lifetimes.

Sincerely,

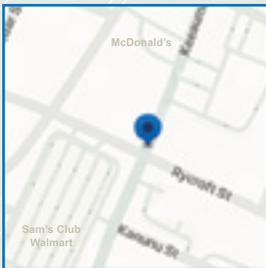
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark M. Mugiishi'.

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

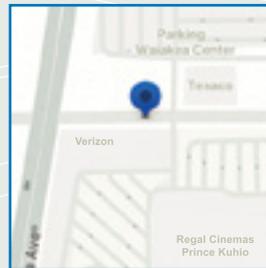


# Hele On to an HMSA Center

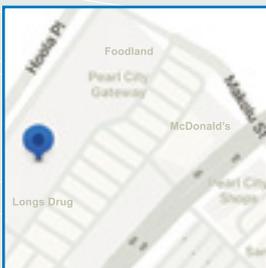
Have a question about your health plan? We can help. Stop by an HMSA Center near you for in-person assistance. Our centers offer a convenient way to shop for a new health plan or make the most of the one you have. Here's where to find us:



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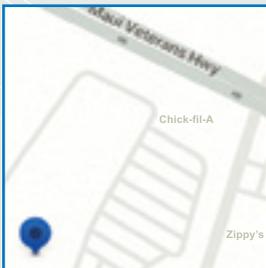
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## dear friends,

I have news for *Island Scene* readers and I'm very excited about it. I'd like you to meet Kristen Nemoto Jay, our new associate editor.

Kristen was editor of *The Hawai'i Herald*, which shared and preserved Japanese American history and culture in Hawai'i. You probably know that *The Hawai'i Herald* ended publication in December after 43 years. This significant loss for Hawai'i's Japanese American community created the opportunity for Kristen to come work with us. I think many regular *Island Scene* readers also read *The Hawai'i Herald*, so you may already be familiar with Kristen's work.

Her many management and writing/editing responsibilities at *The Hawai'i Herald* have translated to her work on *Island Scene*, and we're lucky to add someone with her expertise to our team. As associate editor, Kristen works on story ideas and writes, edits, and proofreads articles, among many other things. Kristen is also manager of corporate communications in HMSA's Communications department, working with our writing team and corporate projects, such as newsletters, brochures, flyers, and more.



Kristen Nemoto Jay

This busy mom of two young girls also teaches yoga at UFC Gym and works with the Zentoku Foundation, a non-profit organization that shares Japanese American stories online. Kristen, a proud Kailua High School graduate, has a master's in journalism from DePaul University in Chicago and a bachelor's in sociology from Chapman University in Orange, California.

We're so happy to have her on our team. Watch for her byline in *Island Scene* and on [islandscene.com](http://islandscene.com).

And as always, take care and thanks for reading!

Mahalo,

Lisa Maneki Baxa  
Publisher and Editor

# around the 808

## maui, moloka'i, and lāna'i

### New village for Lahaina survivors

There are 88 new symbols of hope on Maui and they come in the form of pop-up homes. Local organizations came together to create 'Ohana Hope Village after last August's devastating fires in Lahaina left thousands without homes. The village is helping rebuild the community by providing housing to more than 300 people for three years.

"This is a large undertaking that a number of incredible Maui-based companies and nonprofits, most notably Family Life Center and Hawaii Off-Grid: Architecture & Engineering, are pouring their time, energy, and financial

commitments into," says Eric Carlson, co-founder and chief innovation officer of RevoluSun. "We're grateful for the opportunity to help."

The solar company's nonprofit, Project Empower, is supplying all the village's electrical and HVAC infrastructure for the homes, which have a living area, bathroom, kitchen, and screened lānai.

Project Empower relies on fundraising and donations to support their efforts to help those affected by natural disasters. Many of those donations have come from individuals and families on the island.

"What we learned from the Lahaina fires was that the organic response from community and local businesses was much quicker than the larger organizations," says John Cheever, executive director of Project Empower. "Organizations play an important role, but it was the local community that really came together to help each other in the immediate hours, days, and weeks of the tragedy."

For more information on Project Empower or to help, email [marketinghi@revolusun.com](mailto:marketinghi@revolusun.com), call (808) 748-9313, or visit [projectempower.com](http://projectempower.com).



## kaua'i

### Kaua'i visitors pay it forward

Thousands of visitors go to Kaua'i to enjoy the beautiful beaches and hiking trails. Now, they can also give back to help protect the land and its environmental and cultural resources.

We Care Kaua'i educates visitors about Kaua'i's environment and provides opportunities for them to be a part of the solution. We Care Kaua'i's website and social media pages connect people to stewardship activities, such as beach cleanups, fishpond restoration, trail maintenance, weed eradication, and working in a taro field.

"There's been a strained relationship between locals and visitors over the years," says Sean McHugh, the organization's founder and president. "Many visitors want to help, but don't know where to start. Our organization is a one-stop solution with resources on how to give back."

We Care Kaua'i also helps to fundraise for other nonprofit organizations with 100% of donations going to partner organizations. "If every visitor gave even the smallest amount, it would make a huge difference," McHugh says. "With over a million people visiting the island each year, even a \$2 donation from just 5% of visitors can provide over \$50,000 to our partner organizations."

Check out [wecarekauai.org](http://wecarekauai.org) or @wecarekauai on social media. Or call (808) 208-4849.

# big island

## Local triathletes conquer first-ever women's Ironman

Think of them as superhuman athletes: swimming 2.4 miles in the unpredictable Pacific Ocean, followed by a 112-mile bike ride over rolling hills, and finishing with a 26.2-mile marathon through Kona. All in a matter of hours.

About 2,000 triathletes converged on the Big Island to compete in the first all-women's Ironman World Championship last fall. Brenda Avery of Kailua-Kona, age 58, was among them.

"Competing in a field of just women was special," says Avery. "The event brings us all together with common goals. The vibe was calm, caring, respectful, and so supportive."

Avery's family came to cheer her on, including one of her kids who surprised

her from Tokyo. "It made a huge difference," says Avery. "The locals gave me strength and courage to keep moving, too."

Skye Ombac also felt the energy and support of the crowd. This was the 27-year-old's second Ironman. "It was like a party that lasted all day. You're doing a sport you love and have dedicated so much of your time to while being cheered on by so many people," she says.

Growing up in Hilo, Ombac looked forward to going to Ironman every year to see the elite athletes and maybe get a high-five. "I was so inspired from watching all my heroes. I knew that one day I was going to race Kona," says Ombac, who fulfilled that childhood dream for the first time in 2022.

Now, as a fifth-grade teacher on the Big Island, young athletes are looking up to her. "It makes me proud and keeps me going," Ombac says. "I hope I'm inspiring my students. I wish to be out there in the future, cheering them across the finish line like they've done for me!"



Brenda Avery



Skye Ombac



COURTESY SEAN McHUGH

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.



# kendo: the way of the sword

**words** Courtney Takabayashi

**photos** Rae Huo



Left photo: Michael (right) and Mace Cueva, father and son, practicing.  
Above: Seth Harris preparing for training.

Steeped in Japanese culture and samurai sword arts, modern kendo isn't necessarily about winning duels. For members of Myohoji Kendo Club in the heart of Honolulu, kendo is about perseverance, camaraderie, and more.

### Lawyer by day, *kendoka* by night

Kendo has been an important part of Seth Harris's life since he joined his university's kendo club nearly three decades ago. When he moved to Hawai'i for law school, he continued his training and is currently the lead instructor at Myohoji. "We have a small but growing membership," Harris says. "The ages of the members range from 6 to 94 years old."

Harris enjoys learning self-discipline and camaraderie with fellow practitioners and appreciates how kendo concepts apply to daily life. "In kendo, the fundamental goal is to find an opportunity to strike without hesitation, with full intensity, and with focused attention through completion," he says. "This mindset allowed me to measure my success not against standard metrics of monetary gain or career advancement, but in how I approach situations in life."

Though kendo training can be an intense cardiovascular workout, there are mental health benefits, too. "Experienced *kendoka* (kendo practitioners) show intensity of spirit and vision gained with years of training," Harris says. "As a result, they can properly perceive their opponent and have an advantage over someone younger, faster, and stronger who may not have the same level of self-discipline, patience, and vision."



Harris (facing the camera) competed in the 2023 Leeward Oahu Kendo Tournament.



Clockwise from top left: Shelly Kunishige suited up and ready for practice. Students training under Harris's instruction. Meditation at the end of practice.

"Kendo is an activity where you need other people to practice and grow with."

: Shelly Kunishige

### Elegance and focus

Shelly Kunishige's interest in kendo started when she cheered on a friend competing in a kendo state tournament. "Kendo is very elegant to watch," she says. She decided to give it a try and has been training since 2005.

Kunishige knew that finding the right dojo was important. "Kendo is an activity where you need other people to practice and grow with. I appreciated the structure of the practices at Myohoji and the sensei's teachings," she says. "And I made many good friends at the dojo throughout the years."

Kunishige also values the health benefits of kendo. "It definitely helps with cardiovascular endurance and is a full-body workout," she says. "And when you complete a hard practice, there's a feeling of satisfaction."

As a bonus, kendo is a family affair. "My 7-year-old will train with me when she can," she says. "I've noticed that she's more patient and focused when she practices kendo. It also helps tire her out so she gets a good night's sleep."

### Intensity and dedication

After emergency surgery for a pituitary tumor, Michael Cueva thought about all the things he'd like to try once he recovered. "Kendo seemed interesting since it's a weapon-based art," he says. He also thought it would be interesting to learn about Japanese culture and be a great way to challenge himself mentally and physically.

Cueva chose Myohoji because of its size and member vigor. "It was a small group of people practicing and there was an intensity about the dojo that resonated with me," he says. "I originally went there to just observe, but the head of the dojo at the time, Rev. Eijo Ikenaga, handed me a *bokken* (wooden sword) and had me swinging it." Cueva appreciated Ikenaga's "no need to watch, just train now" attitude. "I had a blast and was happy I could start training right away," he says.

Cueva has kept up his training for nearly 18 years. "I've met and trained with some great people," he says. While kendo practice can be intense, after practice, he always feels a sense of accomplishment. "We're in it together and we're all there to do our best."

### Starting young

At 11 years, Cueva's son, Mace, is one of the youngest members of the dojo. He started practicing kendo in the second grade because he was curious about what his dad was doing. Once Mace started training, he knew kendo was for him. "It keeps me active and I enjoy hitting things," he says. "I also learn about respect and etiquette."

During one of his tournaments, Mace faced an adult opponent in the second round and won! "I did better footwork than him," he says. "And my *kiai* (yell) was louder." Though Mace lost in the next round to the person who'd go on to win the tournament, he still felt good about the experience. "I felt accomplished and had fun."

Mace hopes that one day, his friends will join him at the dojo. "Kendo is a good art," he says. "Since my friends are noisy, they might like yelling and swinging a *shinai* (bamboo sword)." 

For more information about Myohoji Mission Dojo, call (808) 398-5555 or email [honolulumyohojikendo@gmail.com](mailto:honolulumyohojikendo@gmail.com).



Clockwise from top: Kunishige and Harris giving their all during training. Cueva engaged in combat. Founder Rev. Eijo Ikenaga (center front) surrounded by Myohoji dojo members. Mikio Koga training with Mace Cueva.



# put your doctor in your cruise plans

**words** David Frickman

**photo-illustration** Brandon Young

## That long-awaited family cruise

is right around the corner. You've picked the date and the destination, bought all the tickets, and packed your clothes and other essentials (remember your sunscreen!). You're ready to go.

Or are you? Does your list of essentials include medications you'll need during your vacation? Are you and your family up to date on your immunizations? Have you consulted your family doctor before the trip? If not, you may not be as ready to cruise as you think.

"Sometimes people forget about these things," says Brian Pien, M.D., Hawai'i Pacific Health infectious disease specialist. "It does require a bit of forethought and planning to have an optimal, safe, and enjoyable trip."

According to the *CDC Yellow Book 2024*, "Cruise ship travel presents a unique combination of health concerns. Travelers from diverse regions brought together in the often crowded, semi-enclosed shipboard environment can facilitate the spread of person-to-person, food-borne, and waterborne diseases."

Dr. Pien suggests seeing your doctor 10-14 days before your trip to make sure you have all the vaccinations you need, which can vary depending on your destination. Some vaccinations are recommended no matter where the cruise takes you.

"Being in close proximity to other cruise travelers increases the potential risk of getting exposed to communicable diseases like influenza, COVID-19, or RSV. There are very good vaccinations available for those illnesses," Dr. Pien says.

Plan ahead if you'll need any medical devices while on the cruise, such as oxygen or dialysis equipment. "The planning is not dissimilar to trips you'd take to land-based locations," says Dr. Pien. "But being on a cruise ship, you're obviously more isolated and in more cramped conditions. And they may not have all of the necessary equipment or facilities to support your ongoing health care."

The cruise ship travel section of the *CDC Yellow Book 2024* ([cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2024](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2024)) includes a checklist for travelers preparing for a trip, as well as a checklist for providers on essential topics they should cover with you when you see them.

Dr. Pien says best thing you can do once you're on the ship is to make sure you and your children are "more vigilant than normal with everyday types of things such as hand washing," especially children who may touch a lot of things and need reminders to wash their hands. 



For CDC tips for last-minute travelers, visit [islandscene.com/more](https://www.islandscene.com/more).

# building wellness and resilience: putting the pieces together

**interview** Craig DeSilva  
**art** Garry Ono



On the early morning of Aug. 9, while Hawai'i was processing the shock of the Maui wildfires that started the day before and grieving for Lahaina, Tia L.R. Hartsock got to work by coordinating a mental health response. The director of the newly created Office of Wellness and Resilience rallied a team of mental health professionals and community providers to start the healing process on Maui.

"In addition to caring for the survivors' physical health, we needed to also take care of their mental and emotional health," says Hartsock. "I was moved when I received more than 250 responses from people who were ready to help."

Hartsock's office is the first statewide office of its kind in the nation focused on trauma-informed care and other health and wellness issues. She brings to the job more than 20 years of mental health and criminal justice experience.

Since the office was created in 2023, she's been working to improve the overall mental health of Hawai'i as well as help people deal with trauma following the COVID-19 pandemic and Maui wildfires.



Left: Tia Hartsock giving a speech at the Ola Pono O Kaua'i Conference. Right: Hartsock with her staff at the State Capitol.

### **What has your office been doing to help Maui wildfire survivors?**

We've convened regular Maui Coordinated Mental Health Response meetings, including mental health professionals, community organizations, and government employees, both on Maui and in other parts of the state. The meetings have been instrumental in having crisis services available for survivors, breaking down barriers, and sharing resources and lessons learned.

### **What kinds of lessons are you learning from the Maui wildfires?**

The disaster is an example of a new type of collective trauma phenomenon called cascading trauma because it's happened so close to the pandemic. We may see this complex trauma more as communities grapple with natural disasters in addition to trauma

caused by people, such as mass violence.

During cascading trauma, some people may feel like it's harder to get back to their "normal." This type of trauma is just starting to be studied, but we can respond with what we know works to minimize trauma's long-term effects. That includes more support and connection to culture and 'āina-based practices.

### Can you explain trauma-informed care?

First, trauma-informed care is acknowledging that trauma is pervasive in communities. Secondly, it's understanding how traumatic events impact a person's life. And thirdly, it's engaging and working with people in ways that won't trigger and retraumatize them.

### What are the impacts that your office is dealing with related to COVID-19?

One of the impacts of the pandemic was the mass exodus of people from the workforce. Now, it's harder to recruit and keep employees who are healthy and take a balanced perspective.

The workforce is exhausted. They're traumatized. They're retiring early. The remaining employees are working extra shifts to make up for the staff shortage. This impacts family life.

So we're looking at workforce wellness. We're doing surveys that have never been done on a statewide level. We're asking workers how they're doing. And we're engaging employers to find out what their needs are to take care of themselves and employees.

### Who can benefit from your office?

Our office focuses on everyone from keiki to kūpuna. We're looking at different life stages to identify and build wellness. We're coordinating trauma-informed care efforts to conduct training and provide technical assistance with the goal of building the workforce and retaining local knowledge and talent.

The hope is that there won't be a need to rely on government and for social services to solve all the problems. We want people to create their own natural support and connections so they can have something that's bigger than themselves.

It's not one government agency's responsibility to solve community problems. It should be a more collaborative approach. This is a shared kuleana across the state. We need everyone to work together.

## Hawai'i CARES

Do you have moments when you're not feeling like yourself? Here are some self-care tips:

- Take time to rest.
- Connect with a loved one and talk about how you're feeling.
- Spend time in nature or do something that helps you relax.

If you need someone to talk to or if you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text Hawai'i CARES at 988.

### How would you describe the existing support for people in Hawai'i?

There are many grassroots community organizations that are doing amazing work. How do we highlight and uplift that work? How do we support and engage those efforts? It can be through funding, partnering, and organizing opportunities to coordinate and share resources. We're looking at all of that. We're so lucky to live in a state where the administration is focused on improving mental health and well-being. How great is that? What an amazing opportunity for us to affect change. <sup>15</sup>

*To learn more about the Office of Wellness and Resilience, call (808) 586-0034 or email [gov.owr@hawaii.gov](mailto:gov.owr@hawaii.gov).*

*This Badge of Honor Goes to*

*Mark M. Mugiishi, M.D., F.A.C.S.*



Thank you for being an inspirational role model as the  
**Boy Scouts of America, Aloha Council's Distinguished Citizen, 2023.**

This honor is a testament to your strong leadership skills,  
dedication to giving back to the community, and commitment  
to improving the health of Hawaii.

We're so proud of the work you do as an outstanding citizen  
in addition to your role as HMSA's president and CEO.





# hawaiian legends, adventure, and the rainforest

**words** Michelle Liu

**art** Garry Ono

**Legend has it that picking the** 'ōhi'a lehua on the Big Island can get you in trouble with Pele, the goddess of fire. Native Hawaiian author Malia Maunakea learned that mo'olelo (story) as a child. It inspired her to write her debut novel *Lei and the Fire Goddess*.

"Because I grew up in Volcano and Hilo, Pele was everywhere; she was just a part of life. One of my earliest memories is my living room glowing red from the volcano erupting," says Maunakea, who now lives in Colorado. "Pele has always been in my head and I wanted to pay homage to her."

In the book, Maunakea tells the story of Pele and her fiery temper from the perspective of Anna, a 12-year-old part-Hawaiian girl. Anna destroys Pele's lehua blossom and must save her friend from the goddess's wrath. Maunakea draws on the mo'olelo she grew up with, intertwining Hawaiian legends and culture with themes of friendship, family, and identity.

Like her protagonist, Maunakea also struggled with her identity as a child. Despite being kānaka maoli, she felt like she didn't fit in as a student at Kamehameha Schools. "I never felt Hawaiian enough to belong there. I was called 'haole' growing up, so the crummy feeling of not knowing who I was and where I belonged went into creating Lei," explains Maunakea.



Malia Maunakea



For another book related to Hawaiian culture, *Surfing Sisterhood Hawai'i*, go to [islandscene.com/more](https://islandscene.com/more).

"Writing this book has been a healing journey. I had to dig into my insecurities, but I now understand that it doesn't matter what I look like, that I am Hawaiian enough."

Maunakea went on a book tour across the Islands, visiting elementary schools and sharing the message of "being enough" with students. The experience was one she'll always treasure.

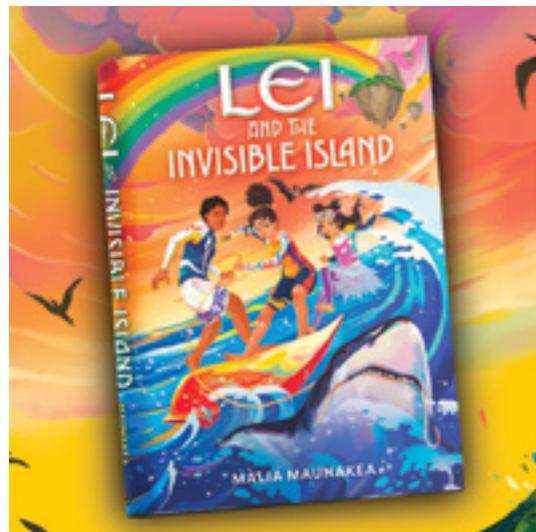
"It's different from doing book tours on the continent; the kids in Hawai'i just got it. They already have so much understanding of what the mo'olelo are and the gods and goddesses," Maunakea says. "It was so fun seeing their faces light up during my presentations. They would come up and tell me, 'Anna looks like me!'"

That was also important to Maunakea while writing her book. When she was a child, there wasn't Native Hawaiian representation in any of the books she read.

"It's what I would have wanted to read; it's what I want my kids to read and learn about. I wanted to create a story for the kids of Hawai'i that would reflect their experience growing up," Maunakea says. "It's also a window for folks not from Hawai'i who want to learn more about our culture and way of life here."

While her book is filled with adventure, Maunakea took an adventure of her own in writing it. She has a degree in civil engineering and never thought she'd become a writer. But she decided to give creative writing a try in 2020 and *Lei and the Fire Goddess* was created. Her sequel, *Lei and the Invisible Island*, comes out in June.

"If you like doing something, give it a shot because you never know if you don't try," says Maunakea. "I had the same experience as many kids growing up in Hawai'i; I was just a country girl climbing trees over a cow pasture. You just don't know where life will take you." 



# HMSA is hiring!



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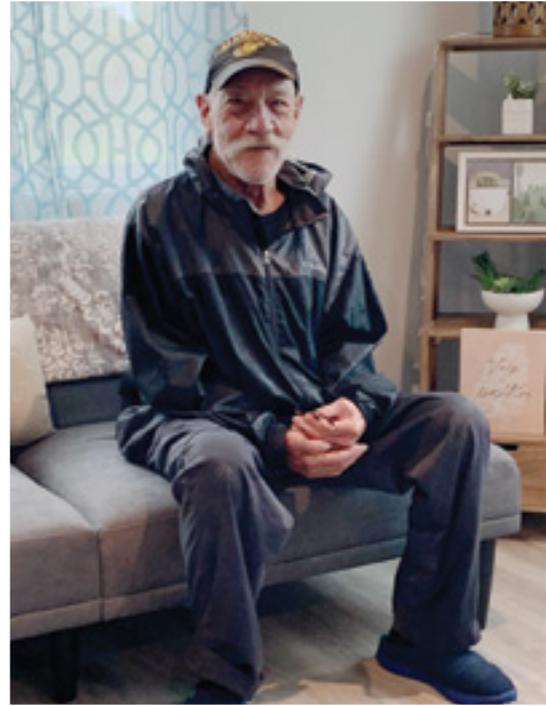
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Clockwise from top left: Susan Cho with tattoo artist Steven Lam. John Hutchinson in his new home. Falling-safely class. Kupuna Aikido Hawaii instructor Bill Doi.

# celebrate older americans month

**words** Lynn Shibuya and Marlene Nakamoto

May is Older Americans Month, which began in 1963 with a proclamation issued by President John F. Kennedy. More than 60 years later, Older Americans Month continues to honor adults 65 and older for their contributions, support their independence, and recognize their value to our communities.

Read on for inspiring stories about our kūpuna.

## Kūpuna aikido: the art of falling safely

On O'ahu, older adults like retiree and HMSA member Cynthia Shimabuku are entering a dojo to learn how to fall safely.

It's a top concern for people who have heard stories of people falling and experiencing serious injury and even death, which is backed by data from the Hawai'i Department of Health.

Bill Doi, a 5th degree black belt in aikido with 40 years of experience, teaches aikido to older adults through an organization called Kupuna Aikido Hawaii. In 2017, Doi and other dedicated instructors started a falling safely course, which teaches fall prevention, strengthening and balance exercises, and safe falling techniques.



COURTESY HOPE SERVICES



ROMEO COLLADO



ROMEO COLLADO

"It's really amazing. We are amazed ourselves. In a short period of time, we've had so many testimonials of people who fell and didn't get injured or experienced minor injury," Doi says. "It's very gratifying to know that we're able to save people from serious injury."

Since it was first offered, more than 1,100 kūpuna have completed the course. The instructors emphasize that the course isn't a martial arts program (the organization has aikido classes for that).

Shimabuku is a proud graduate of the safe falling course. She says the techniques give her peace of mind. "It was very helpful when they taught us how to fall in a way that protects our head and wrists. We practiced falling every week, so the brain remembers it," she says.

Shimabuku encourages people to take the course. "My advice is to try it. I don't think you'll regret it," she says.

*The safe falling course is taught once a week for eight weeks at various O'ahu locations. Registration is required; space is limited. Visit Kupuna Aikido Hawaii's website at [kupunaaikido.org](http://kupunaaikido.org) or email [kupunaaikido@gmail.com](mailto:kupunaaikido@gmail.com).*



ROMEO COLLADO

Student Cynthia Shimabuku demonstrates falling techniques with instructor Bill Doi.



The HMSA-sponsored home.

## Home sweet home on Hawai'i Island

Formerly homeless kūpuna are getting a fresh start in 12 affordable modular homes in Pāhoā. Each unit is a modern 480-square-foot home with a kitchen, bathroom, and lānai.

The nonprofit, HOPE Services Hawai'i, led the project, which was funded by many donors including The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Hawai'i Community Foundation, HMSA, OAK Foundation, the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawai'i, among others.

The home that HMSA sponsored has soft blue touches on the curtains and exterior paint and sports contemporary décor such as a letter board that reads, "Welcome to your forever home." The unit is furnished with a dresser, couch, bed, and other essentials, which were selected by volunteer and HMSA Kea'au office employee Marlo Lyman-Kekauālua.

Residents pay no more than 30% of their income toward rent as it is subsidized by federal rent assistance

programs like the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Veterans Affairs office.

Safe housing is a top social determinant of health, and availability of these homes aligns with nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes and daily life.

"Our intention was to create spaces and places for healing that bring joy and make people feel safe," says HOPE Services Hawaii CEO Brandee Menino.

Lyman-Kekauālua adds, "It was meaningful for me to participate in this project knowing that a kupuna is going into a beautiful and safe home and will be taken off the street."



Scan the QR code to tour the affordable homes.

Learn about tiny homes on the Big Island that support kūpuna health at [islandscene.com/more](https://islandscene.com/more).

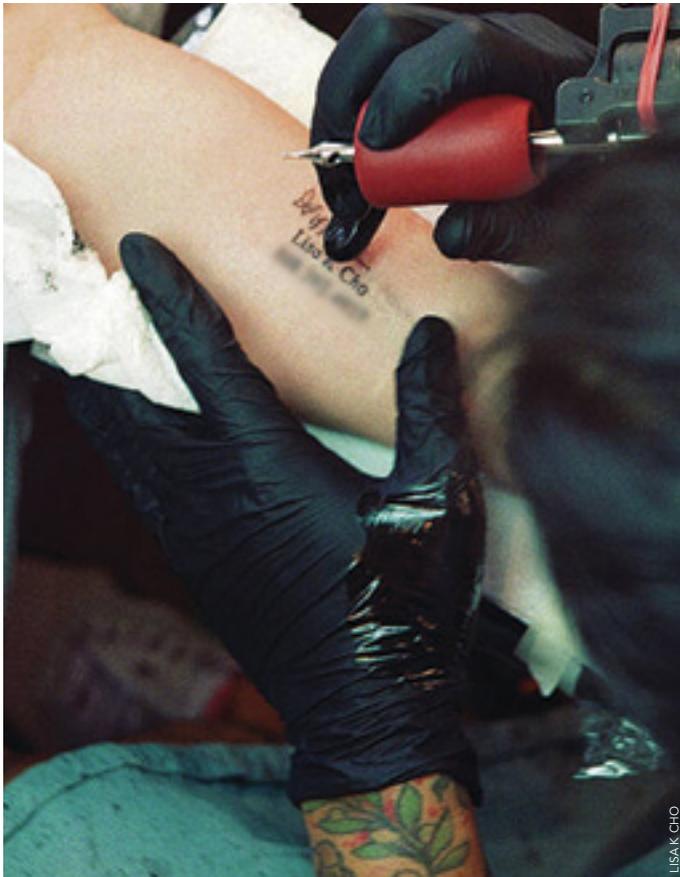


Home recipient John Hutchinson shows off his kitchen.

## Tattoo with emergency info

It's been nearly a year since Susan Cho got her first tattoo.

In 2022, Cho was having disturbing dreams about getting lost and not being able to get back home. News reports of older people who had gone missing seemed to be occurring more frequently, adding to her anxiety. It could happen to anyone, she thought. "It could happen to me."



She has a smartwatch that asks her if she's fallen after a sudden movement, but she'd often forget to wear it while hurrying out of the house. Or she'd forget to charge it.

To help ensure her safety in unforeseen circumstances, Susan got an ID that would always be with her. The tattoo on the inside of her forearm reads, "If found ... Lisa K Cho," with Lisa's cellphone number.

Susan will celebrate her 71st birthday later this year. The retired owner of Sears Copy & Printing keeps busy with a part-time job and other activities.

The butterfly was Susan's idea; the phone number was her daughter, Lisa's. "I wasn't going to include her phone number, but she insisted," says Susan. "And that really made me feel special and that I was loved."

Susan entrusted Steven Lam of Working Class Tattoos in Honolulu with this endeavor. "He made me feel comfortable and taken care of," says Susan. After an unhurried getting-to-know-you discussion and sketching a design, the actual inking took about five minutes. "It wasn't too bad," she says of the pain. Those concerned about the pain may want to ask their dermatologist to recommend a numbing cream.

Mother and daughter hope that this story encourages others to find ways to safeguard loved ones' well-being in case the unthinkable happens.

"It gives me peace knowing I always have my daughter's name and number. If I get lost, I will be found. I don't worry anymore," says Susan.

"I feel relieved and have no anxiety, and so my bad dreams have gone away." 



Left: The actual inking took about five minutes.  
Above: Susan Cho (left), Steven Lam, and Lisa K. Cho.

# This is the year I make 65 just another number.



HMSA Akamai Advantage® is a PPO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in HMSA Akamai Advantage depends on contract renewal.

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Dan Isobe takes his students through an energetic pace.

# dantastic: a zumba leader

words David Frickman    photos Earl Yoshii



As a teenager, Daniel Isobe had no intention of becoming a dancer or teaching anyone else how to dance.

"I didn't have a background in dance growing up," he says. "I loved acting in theater, but had no rhythm for any kind of dance or singing."

But everything changed when Isobe found Zumba 11 years ago. Now he's a certified instructor and leads regular "Dantastic Zumba" classes for HMSA employees at the company's Fitness Center.

"If someone told my 2011 self that I'd be a dance instructor today, I wouldn't have believed it," he says. "More surprising to my 2011 self would've been if someone told me I would build a reputation as a dancer."

It didn't start out that way for Isobe, a quality assurance trainer who's been with HMSA for 15 years.

"I discovered Zumba and found it was a great way to exercise. It kept me coming back to the Fitness Center," he says "At first, I was terrible. I had two left feet. But I kept going, and over the weeks, I slowly improved. In the process, I became a Zumba instructor."

He loves leading the classes of HMSA employees, many of whom are starting out, with little ability and no experience ... just like he did.

"I make it a point to meet each person where they're at," Isobe says. "It may seem daunting from a distance, but once you give it a try, you'll have so much fun and will meet a lot of great people."

"When I teach a class, it gives me a goal to push myself toward. When others get excited in my class, I feed off that energy. It brings out the best

in me." When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Isobe says it was heart-breaking that he could no longer get that daily dose of motivation from teaching classes.

Without the classes, his health suffered. "As I practiced less frequently, my blood pressure and blood sugar rose. I'd been on a journey to bring both down. It made me realize how valuable group exercise like Zumba is."

In addition to Zumba, Isobe has found another dance passion – salsa.

He took lessons from an instructor known as "Salsa Greg" and soon was helping to teach beginning students. "I've always had a passion for teaching, so I'd get excited whenever I worked with someone new. It's really rewarding watching someone with no experience take off with salsa in a short period of time."

Whether it's salsa or Zumba or any other activity, Isobe says the most important thing people can do is get out there, give it a try, and enjoy it.

"Whenever I talk to someone who's trying Zumba for the first time, I tell them not to worry about getting the moves right. The main thing is to move around and have fun. If that person smiles or laughs during my class, then I consider it a success." 



Dan Isobe has fun leading classes.

**“Hope Lodge was my home away from home when I had to travel for my surgeries. I’m so thankful for this resource that allowed me to access the care that I needed.”**

**ESTELLE, BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR, HILO**



**The American Cancer Society Clarence T.C. Ching Hope Lodge in Honolulu provides a free place to stay for patients who must travel for their potentially life-saving cancer treatment.**

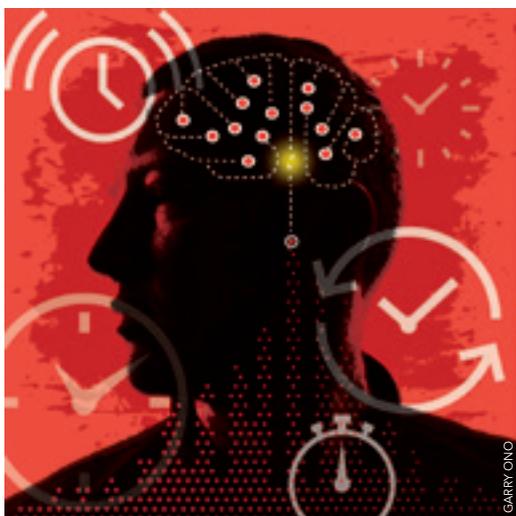
**In 2023, our Hope Lodge served 764 patients and caregivers, providing nearly 8,300 nights of free lodging, ensuring access to care and saving families more than \$2M in lodging and transportation costs.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [CANCER.ORG](https://cancer.org) OR SCAN THE QR CODE.**



## stroke: think fast

**words** Christopher Kwock, M.D.



**a** stroke is a medical emergency and prompt treatment is crucial. Every minute counts.

Early action can reduce brain damage and other complications. In the U.S., stroke is the No. 5 cause of death and a leading cause of serious disability. It's also preventable and treatable.

A stroke happens when the blood supply to the brain is interrupted or reduced. The result is that part of the brain can't get the blood and oxygen it needs.

Types of strokes:

- **Ischemic stroke:** A clot blocks blood flow to the brain.
- **Hemorrhagic stroke:** A blood vessel leaks or bursts and prevents blood flow to the brain.
- **Transient ischemic stroke:** Called TIA or a mini stroke, it's caused by a temporary interruption in blood flow and doesn't cause lasting symptoms. But it can be a warning sign of a future stroke.

Call 911 if you notice signs or symptoms of a stroke, even if they seem to come and go or disappear completely. Think FAST:

- F** = Face. Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- A** = Arms. Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward? Or are they unable to lift one arm?
- S** = Speech. Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange?
- T** = Time to call 911. If you notice any of these signs, call 911 immediately. Note the time that symptoms started.

Men and women often have similar signs and symptoms, but women may also experience:

- General weakness.
- Disorientation, confusion, or memory problems.
- Fatigue, nausea, or vomiting.

*Dr. Christopher Kwock is an internist and an HMSA medical director.*

### Resources to learn more:

- American Stroke Association (a division of the American Heart Association): [stroke.org](http://stroke.org) or 1 (888) 4-stroke (478-7653).
- Mayo Clinic: Go to [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org). Under the Health Library tab, click Diseases & Conditions, and search for stroke.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov/stroke/](http://cdc.gov/stroke/) or call 1 (800) 232-4636.

# may is mental health awareness month

**words** Courtney Takabayashi

**art** Garry Ono

While nearly 20% of adults in the U.S. suffer from mental illness, there still tends to be a stigma surrounding it. The American Psychiatric Association estimates that more than half of those who have a mental illness don't seek help. Some avoid treatment because they're worried they'll be judged or treated differently.

In observance of Mental Health Awareness Month in May, James Westphal, M.D., psychiatrist and consulting mental health medical director to HMSA from Caredon Behavioral Health<sup>SM</sup>, answered our questions about mental health, combating the stigma, and available resources.

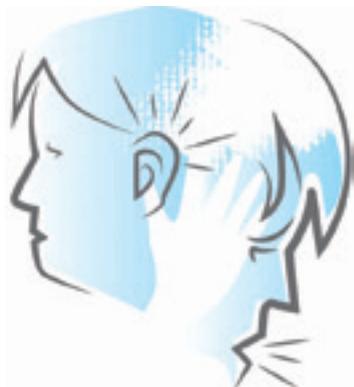


Dr. James Westphal

## How prevalent are mental health issues?

About one in four adults in the U.S. and worldwide experience clinically significant mental health issues and unfortunately, the numbers are increasing. The World Health Organization studied mental health across the world and found that in the past three years, depression in adults increased by 25% and anxiety disorders increased by 25% not just in Hawai'i or the U.S., but worldwide.

When the world is affected by stress, the stress affects the world's mental health. That's why it's so important to take care of your mental health, especially in trying circumstances.



## What can we do if we're feeling overwhelmed by stress?

Talk to a friend or someone you trust. If you feel better, great. If you're still feeling overwhelmed, it's a good idea to talk to a therapist. They can get an understanding of your situation and provide strategies or suggestions for next steps.

## What can we do about the stigma surrounding mental illness?

There's a movement called Mental Health First Aid. In one training session, you can learn how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. This training is for everyone, not just health care professionals. It gives participants the skills to help and support someone who could be developing a mental health or substance problem.

If more people could get this kind of training, they'd know how to talk to others about their health issues and what to do in an emergency. Just getting a basic understanding of how to develop empathy toward others is a great way to start in terms of reducing stigma and increasing acceptance.



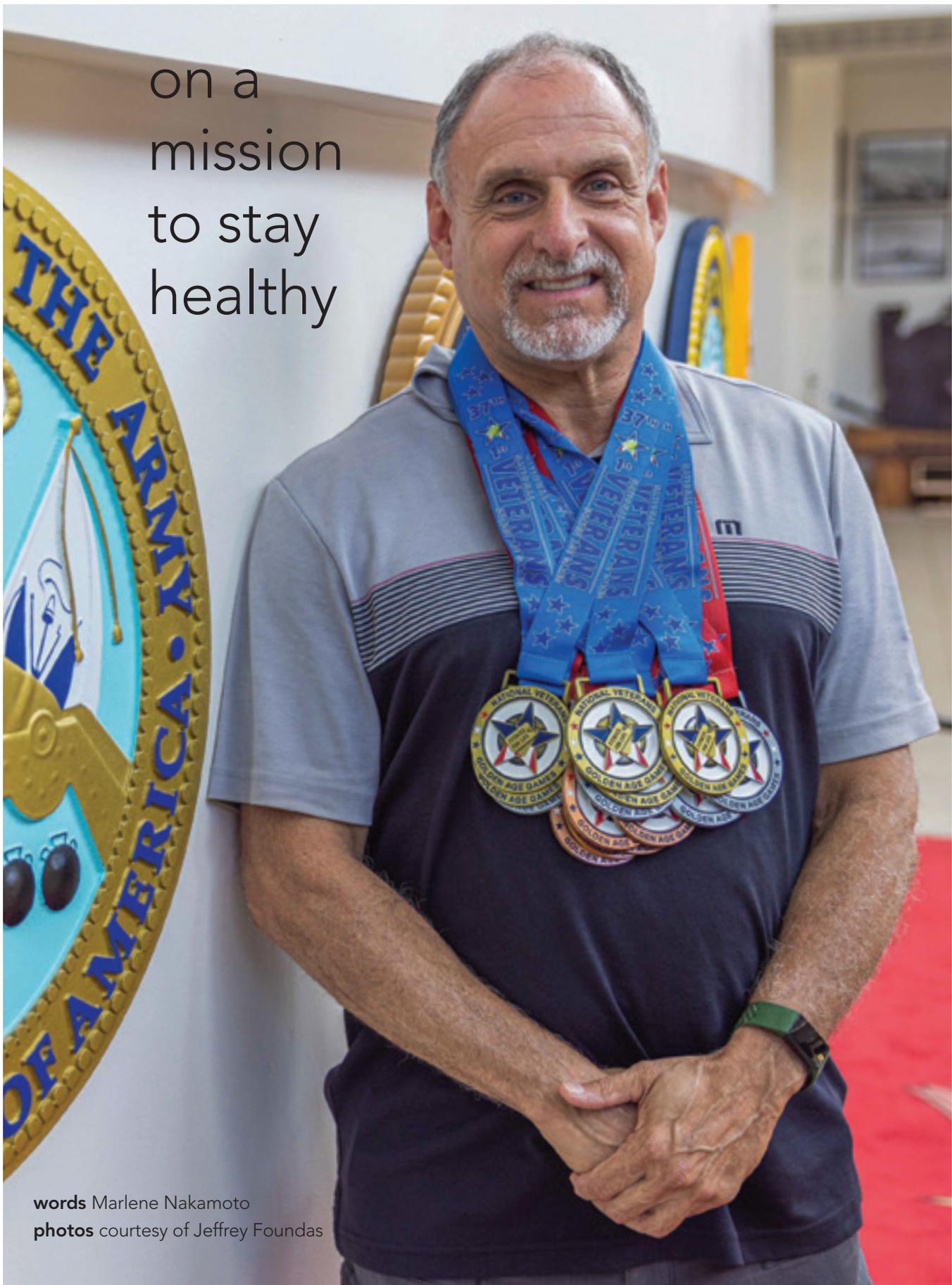
## What kind of mental health resources are available for HMSA members?

A good place to start would be to call HMSA's Behavioral Health Program at (808) 695-7700. The program is managed by Carelon Behavioral Health. After you share your situation and preferences, they match you with the right person for your needs, whether it's an outpatient therapist or a doctor who might prescribe medication. You can also try HMSA's Online Care<sup>®</sup> to speak to a social worker, marriage and family therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist from the privacy of your home. 

Carelon Behavioral Health<sup>SM</sup> is an independent company providing behavioral health utilization management and quality improvement services on behalf of HMSA.

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

on a  
mission  
to stay  
healthy



**words** Marlene Nakamoto  
**photos** courtesy of Jeffrey Foundas

At 60 years old, Lt. Col. (retired) Jeffrey Foundas lifts weights and runs. Recently, he added swimming, javelin, discus, shot put, long jump, and air pistol and air rifle practice to his activities. More on that later.

Last year, Foundas enrolled in a University of Hawai'i health study "to better myself with a healthy lifestyle," he says. The study, which is in progress, requires regular activity and a Mediterranean-type diet. His wife of 33 years, Julianna Lopez, is a big part of the latter. She prepares meals, watches his portions, and "makes me eat my fruit and vegetables," says Foundas. "She tries to limit treats, too."

His motivation to live healthy has partial roots in his military career – 18 years active-duty Army and 11 years as a reservist and national guardsman. Fitness was never an option. "At Officers Candidate School, we exercised six days a week," says Foundas.



Deployed in the Philippines and Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom, he's now a military contractor who facilitates communications solutions for military exercises (i.e., training exercises or "war games") in the U.S. and with foreign allies and partners.

In August, Foundas will put his fitness to the test at the National Veterans Golden Age Games in Salt Lake City, Utah. Last year, he competed in 17 events and medaled in all but one due to an equipment failure – five gold, six silver, five bronze. "He did good and he didn't get hurt," says Lopez.

And that's why Foundas has added swimming; field training in discus, shotput, javelin, and long jump; and air pistol and air rifle shooting practice to his athletic regimen. He recognizes that exercise has well-being benefits beyond the physical. "There's a camaraderie at the gym" and wherever you exercise, he says. "You see the same guys, find out how they're doing, and motivate each other.

"I know that staying active and eating healthy will help me in the long run," he says. "It will help me live as long as possible for my wife, children, and future grandchildren." 



Jeffrey Foundas with his wife, Julianna Lopez



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Mahalo.



## fresh start for your home and mind

words Michelle Liu



Spring cleaning is often associated with a fresh start. The benefits of tidying up can extend beyond your home; it can also boost your mood and mental health.

### Organizing clutter

While some people may not mind a little mess, it can create chaos. “Each of your possessions requires some degree of maintenance and attention, so it takes up space in your mind and can make you feel overwhelmed,” says Janette Abramowitz, M.D., a Honolulu psychiatrist.

A messy environment can also impact your quality of life and wellness.

“Disorganization can take an emotional toll, which makes it harder to relax and feel comfortable in your home,” says Chelsea Wong, Psy.D., assistant clinical professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Hawai‘i John A. Burns School of Medicine.

Cleaning can help organize your living space and even ease some stress. Some people find that the physical act of scrubbing, vacuuming, or organizing reduces anxiety.

“It allows you to triage the chaos, making things more manageable. When things feel more manageable, there’s a level of control. We

feel more confident, our focus and concentration increase, and we’re more productive,” says Wong.

### Set goals

Spring cleaning doesn’t have to be done in one day. While some people may prefer to dedicate a full day to cleaning, tackling your entire house at once can be taxing. Make a plan – start in one room, like the kitchen, bedroom, or even the linen closet.

Be mindful of what you need physically and emotionally as you clean. If you need a break, take one.

“Just use a timer to keep you on track,” says Wong. “Don’t forget to reward yourself to keep you motivated.”

### All cleared out

Once you’re done cleaning and deciding what to keep, make a pile of items you don’t need anymore. While some may inevitably end up in the trash or recycle bin, consider donating.

“Our possessions can become a meaningful contribution to society,” says Dr. Abramowitz. “Donating can also improve your mental health because helping others makes us feel better.” 

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- TTY: 711
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- Fax: (808) 948-6414
- Mail: 818 Keeaumoku St., Honolulu, HI 96814

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- Phone: 1 (800) 368-1019; TDD users, call 1 (800) 537-7697

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- Mail: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Ave. S.W., Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201

For complaint forms, please go to [hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html](http://hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html)

**Hawaiian:** E NĀNĀ MAI: Inā ho'opuka 'oe i ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, loa'a ke kōkua manuahi iā 'oe. E kelepona iā 1 (800) 776-4672. TTY 711.

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**Pohnpeian:** Ma ke kin lokaian Pohnpei, ke kak ale sawas in sohte pweine. Kahlda nempe wet 1 (800) 776-4672. Me sohte kak rong call TTY 711.

**Samoa:** MO LOU SILAFIA: Afai e te tautala Gagana fa'a Sāmoa, o loo iai auaunaga fesoasoan, e fai fua e leai se totogi, mo oe, Telefoni mai: 1 (800) 776-4672 e leai se totogi o lenei 'au'aunaga. TTY 711.

**Spanish:** ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1 (800) 776-4672. TTY 711.

**Tagalog:** PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 1 (800) 776-4672 toll-free. TTY 711.

**Tongan:** FAKATOKANGA'I: Kapau 'oku ke Lea-Fakatonga, ko e kau tokoni fakatonu lea 'oku nau fai atu ha tokoni ta'etotongi, pea teke lava 'o ma'u ia. Telefoni mai 1 (800) 776-4672. TTY 711.

**Trukese:** MEI AUCHEA: Ika iei foosun fonuomw: Foosun Chuuk, iwe en mei tongeni omw kopwe angei aninisin chiakku, ese kamo. Kori 1 (800) 776-4672, ese kamo. TTY 711.

**Vietnamese:** CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 1 (800) 776-4672. TTY 711.



# the scoop on your poop

words Craig DeSilva



**d**o you look before you flush? If not, you should get into the habit of monitoring your deposits.

Your poop can tell you a lot about your health and provide some important insight, according to *WebMD*.

### True or false? I don't really need to look ... do I?

**False.** Here's what you should look for:

- **Shape.** Well-formed like a sausage. Pellet shapes could indicate constipation from not enough water or fiber.
- **Color.** Brown to dark brown. Anything darker could indicate blood.
- **Size.** Whole and soft with a smooth or cracked surface. Diarrhea could indicate food poisoning, inflammatory bowel disease, or an irritated GI tract.
- **Smell.** Don't expect Chanel No. 5, but it shouldn't be unbearable to take a whiff.

### Yes or no? It's important that you poop every day.

**No.** There's no study suggesting you need to have a daily bowel movement. It's OK if you miss a day or two. However, anything less than three times a week is abnormal.

### Can or no can? It's OK if you hold it in.

**Can.** There's no doubt that you'll feel better when you let it out. But if the urge happens at an inconvenient time or place, such as on the bus, it's OK to hold it in until you can get to a bathroom. Just don't make it a

habit. Over time, you could get constipation or damage muscles that help you to poop. And holding it in too long may cause you to lose control.

### Yeah or nah? A colon cleanse will clear out toxins in your body.

**Nah.** Cleansing could drain out healthy bacteria as well as unhealthy bacteria and lead to cramping, bloating, or nausea. Your colon is meant to have stool. Unless you're prepping for a colonoscopy, it's best to leave things alone.

### Fact or fiction? Your poop should float like a boat.

**Fiction.** Healthy poop should be heavier than water and sink like the *Titanic*. Occasional floaters are OK. But if you notice a flotilla, see a gastroenterologist. It may indicate you're not absorbing nutrients, according to Healthline.

### Yup or nope? Do your business quickly.

**Yup.** Some people use the throne room as their reading room or to scroll through their phone. But it's best to get done and get out. If you're constipated and have to strain to push out, talk to your doctor to help prevent hemorrhoids. Consider a high fiber diet of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

So next time, don't rush to flush. Take a glance. If you notice any abnormalities, talk to your doctor to make sure it doesn't indicate a medical issue.

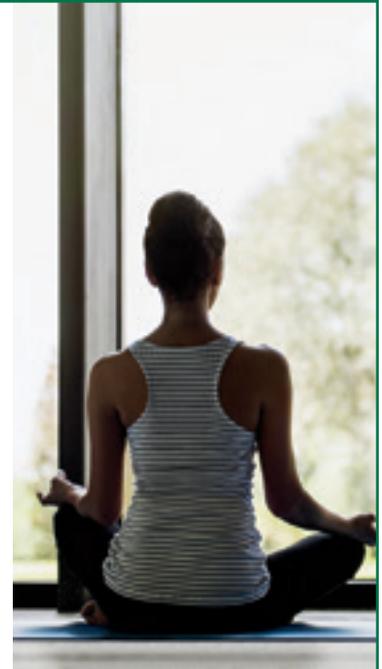
# health matters

## Starting self-care

Self-care means caring for yourself to ensure your physical and mental health needs are met. Self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy.

Here are eight tips to get started:

1. Exercise regularly: To boost your mood and improve your health, walk briskly for 30 minutes a day.
2. Eat healthy and stay hydrated: A balanced diet can improve energy and focus.
3. Prioritize sleep: Rest and start the day feeling refreshed.
4. Try a relaxing activity: Meditation, yoga, and journaling can help reduce stress.
5. Set goals and boundaries: Prioritize what needs to get done and what can wait.
6. Practice gratitude: Remind yourself of what you're grateful for.
7. Focus on positivity: Distance yourself from negative and unhelpful thoughts.
8. Stay connected: Lean on family and friends for emotional support.



## Disconnect to reconnect

Take a break from social media to rejuvenate your mental and emotional well-being.

Limiting your screen use can offer a break from the constant barrage of notifications, comparisons, and information overload that can contribute to stress and anxiety. Unplugging can help you relax and reconnect with others in person.

## National Women's Health Week



### Her health matters

National Women's Health Week starts on Mother's Day (May 12). As caregivers, women often forget to care for themselves. Transgender women face even more barriers to health care, highlighting the importance of inclusive medical care for vulnerable groups.

"We want all women to prioritize their health by remembering to schedule their regular checkups," says Stephen Lin, M.D., ob-gyn specialist and HMSA medical director. "You can't pour from an empty cup, and taking care of yourself is one of the best ways to ensure you can care for others well," he adds.

### What is spirulina?

You may have seen spirulina touted as a superfood on store shelves or as a smoothie ingredient in café menus and wondered about the health benefits.

The blue-green algae are a potent source of nutrients, are high in protein, and are a good source of vitamins, minerals, and an essential fatty acid.

Although the FDA says spirulina is generally recognized as safe, like other dietary supplements, spirulina isn't regulated for safety and effectiveness. Talk to your doctor before taking it.



## don't rush to antibiotics

**words** David Frickman



**I**t's no fun to be sick. When you're ill, you want relief and finding the right medication is likely one of your first thoughts.

To get relief, many people seek antibiotics from their doctor, but that's not always the right treatment. Antibiotics treat illnesses that are caused by bacteria (such as strep throat), but won't help you feel better if you have a cold or the flu, which is usually caused by a virus.

Worse yet, using antibiotics for colds or the flu may actually harm your body.

The use of antibiotics can save lives when used appropriately, but can also contribute to the development of antibiotic resistance. When antibiotics are over-used or used indiscriminately, it breeds antibiotic resistant bacteria, which can quickly spread through contact, the environment, and other methods.

"Bacteria can become resistant to medication and won't be able to be treated by the antibiotics we have today," says Lucie Tam, a registered nurse and HMSA clinical coordinator. "People can get very, very sick and possibly die because these bacteria that are resistant

to antibiotics can really take a toll on someone who has a weakened immune system."

The CDC believes antibiotic resistance to be one of the most urgent threats to the public's health. More than 2.8 million antibiotic-resistant infections occur in the U.S. each year and more than 35,000 people die as a result.

Instead of seeking antibiotics for your next cold, consider using an over-the-counter cold remedy, stay hydrated, and get plenty of sleep.

Tam says, If your symptoms aren't getting better after three to four days or you are starting to feel worse, see your doctor, who can offer the best way to treat your condition. Also see your doctor for advice if you have underlying health conditions. [IS](#)

# What does the rest of your **2024** look like?



✓ stay active

✓ live healthy

✓ see my  
primary care  
provider

Don't have a PCP?  
Or looking for a new  
doctor or specialist?

Check out the  
newest choices for  
quality care.

## Hawaii Island

Casey K. Brown  
Vikki Francis  
Macy B. Hayashi  
Carrie L. Larsen  
April L. Lowenthal  
Isaac Mizrahi  
Jerom B. Nelson  
Elizabeth Joyce D.P.  
Pacarro  
Rebecca C. Priebe  
Megan E.B. Sedig  
Jennifer L. Smith

## Kauai

Jon-Michael Allen  
Bernice C. Yap

## Maui

Jason T. Call  
Bradley E. Neuma  
Alicia Roston

## Oahu

Richard A. Ahn  
Akika Ando  
Linh T. Banh  
Wendy N.P.  
Carter-Loretero  
Jane Cha  
Chang-Han T. Chen  
Susan M. Christensen  
Charles Egesdal  
Hikiaumoana D.T. Flood  
Kelli Ann C. Furuya  
Kirsten Garner  
Jared H. Hara  
Hannah M. Hawk  
Skyler J. Hilden  
Brandon T. Hixson  
Anson K.W. Ho

Michelle C.P. Horng  
Lauren A. Ing  
Rachel T. Inouye  
Robert N. Knear-Bell  
Max V. Korzec  
Kaily A. Kuikahi  
Joanika LeBlanc  
Dylan E.L.T. Lee  
Lung-Yi Lee  
Tesu Lin  
Rayan M. Ling-Hawkins  
Christine J. Lynders  
Sunny C.S. Mah  
Adam Marinucci  
Lloyd S. Paredes  
Kelly M. Paschke  
Aaron Suzuka  
Lauren G. Sword  
Troy A. Tada  
Tara L. Tannenholz  
Alyssa K. Tao  
Stephanie M. Trudell  
Yi Tu  
Shin Wakatsuki  
Jennifer W.H. Wong  
Lucia Y. Xiong

**These providers  
joined HMSA's  
network between  
Sept. 21 and  
Dec. 20, 2023.**

**For a complete list of  
HMSA participating  
providers, contact  
information, and  
plans accepted, visit  
Find a Doctor on  
hmsa.com.**

for your benefit



### Support on your journey to quit tobacco

Quitting tobacco is hard, but there are ways to lessen nicotine cravings and manage withdrawal symptoms. HMSA has partnered with the Hawai'i Tobacco Quitline to give you the support you need to quit for good.

The quitline offers:

- Free nicotine patches, gum, and lozenges.
- Tools to help you set a quit date, beat cravings, and manage stress.
- Help from friendly local coaches by phone or text.
- Special programs to meet you where you're at in your quit journey.

To learn more, call 1 (800) QUIT-NOW (784-8669) or visit [HawaiiQuitline.org](http://HawaiiQuitline.org).

*The Hawai'i Department of Health's Tobacco Quitline provides programs for members who want to quit smoking or using tobacco products on behalf of HMSA.*



## Stay healthy during your pregnancy

Congratulations on your upcoming bundle of joy! Preparing for a baby is an exciting and joyful experience, but it can also be challenging. The HMSA Pregnancy and Postpartum Support Program pairs you with a maternity nurse to complement the care you get from your ob-gyn.

You'll also receive referrals to resources and services, postpartum support for six months after delivery, and more.

The program is available at no cost to HMSA members. If you'd like to enroll, visit [hmsa.com/help-center/pregnancy-support/](https://hmsa.com/help-center/pregnancy-support/) or scan the QR code.



## Get the care you need

If you need to travel to a Neighbor Island for specialty treatment, HMSA can help get you there.

Under the Care Assistance Access Program, HMSA members can be reimbursed for airfare when flying to another island for specialty care when that care isn't available on their home island. Most HMSA members qualify for the program.

For more information on how the program works, talk to your provider or visit [hmsa.com/help-center/hmsa-care-access-assistance-program/](https://hmsa.com/help-center/hmsa-care-access-assistance-program/).



Top: Shed members (from left) Rocky Uyehara, Dean Keil, and Glenn Goo create projects in the workshop. Left: Members appreciate donations, such as this wood lathe. Right: You'll find smiles and shakas at Aloha Community Shed.

# aloha community shed: saving lives

**words** Courtney Takabayashi

**photos** Earl Yoshii



Bob Jewell

## Bob Jewell and a few others started

Aloha Community Shed in 2021. "Sheds save lives," Jewell says. "Members are having a great time socializing and working together, breaking their isolation, and giving back to the community."

The shed movement originated in Australia in the 1990s to help improve the health and well-being of retired people. Today, there are an estimated 2,500 sheds around the world. In Hawai'i, Aloha Community Shed offers an opportunity for socialization and a chance to be productive. While some sheds focus on gardening, construction, or restoration, Aloha Community Shed uses woodworking to give back to the community.

"Our mission is to encourage healthy physical, social, and mental opportunities for senior men and women," says Jewell, who is their board treasurer. "We offer friendships, experiences, and projects with pride, dignity, and aloha."

There are currently more than 30 members from different backgrounds with a variety of experiences and skills. "We have retired pilots, engineers, physicians, you name it," Jewell says. "Sheds help to enhance the well-being of members by encouraging social inclusion and the spirit of camaraderie."

## A focus on giving back

Members use their woodworking skills for a variety of projects. "We've made benches, planter boxes, and tables for schools, senior centers, and nonprofit organizations," says Jewell. "We partnered with the AOK Foundation to build tiny homes in Waimānalo."

When the John A. Burns School of Medicine received a new van to serve as a mobile clinic, shed members were called upon to help. "From storage to an exam table," Jewell says, "we built the guts." As a result, the Houseless Outreach and Medical Education, or H.O.M.E., project can provide medical students with hands-on training while patients get the services they need.

If someone isn't familiar with woodworking, they can learn if they're interested or just hang out since the shed hosts social events, too. "We have a potluck and Sausage Sizzle on the first Saturday of each month," Jewell says. "We also volunteer around the island. We go wherever we're needed."

## Support the movement

Aloha Community Shed relies on generosity and community support for tools and supplies. "We're not funded by the government," Jewell says. "Everything is donated." They appreciate any support that allows them to do more for members and the community.

When a company donated empty shipping crates, one member envisioned closets for the tiny homes they'd built in Waimānalo. "One person's empty crate is another person's closet," Jewell says. "It goes hand in hand with our belief in reusing, repurposing, and recycling."

*For more information about Aloha Community Shed, email [info@alohacommunityshed.org](mailto:info@alohacommunityshed.org), visit [alohacommunityshed.com](http://alohacommunityshed.com), or call (808) 295-0471.*

# Are you struggling?



**If you're overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, or feeling sad,  
don't keep it inside.**

HMSA's Online Care® makes it easy to talk with a behavioral health professional wherever you are. All you need is a mobile device or computer.

Online Care has providers ready to see you. And making an appointment is easier than ever.



Download the app,  
visit [hmsaonlinecare.com](https://hmsaonlinecare.com),  
or scan the QR code.

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

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



## what's cooking?

words Courtney Takabayashi



C. SATO

Whether you're too busy to cook or you never learned how, being able to throw together a meal is a useful skill. Here are some reading recommendations for the culinarily challenged that will get you on your way to preparing healthy dishes and save money on takeout.

***How to Cook for Beginners: An Easy Cookbook for Learning the Basics***

By Gwyn Novak

If learning to cook feels as intimidating as understanding rocket science, this book is for you. Before you start cooking, find out what kind of equipment you need, how to stock your pantry, and what kitchen safety entails. Then, practice fundamental techniques as you make recipes that will have you dicing, pan cooking, broiling, and more.

***The Plant-Based Diet for Beginners: 75 Delicious, Healthy Whole-Food Recipes***

By Gabriel Miller

Anyone looking to incorporate more plant-based meals into their diet will enjoy this beginner's guide to making delicious and healthy whole-food recipes. Even if you're not vegan or vegetarian, you'll discover it's possible, and easy, to make flavorful, meat-free meals.

***You Suck at Cooking: The Absurdly Practical Guide to Sucking Slightly Less at Making Food***

By You Suck at Cooking

Though the title may seem off-putting, anyone familiar with YSAC's YouTube channel will enjoy the funny and helpful way the host teaches skills like peeling a potato. The book also includes recipes that are at the "intersection of simplicity and tastiness" for beginners and advanced cooks.

***Farm to Keiki***

By Tiana Kamen

Once you feel comfortable in the kitchen, get the keiki involved, too! This book is filled with gardening tips, nutritional information, and recipes using fresh, local food. Starting a backyard garden helps kids connect to the 'āina and enjoy a farm-to-table experience.



words David Frickman  
art Garry Ono

# persuading the reluctant patient

It's frustrating and heartbreaking when a family member or close friend clearly needs to see a health care professional for a physical or mental health issue, but they refuse to go. The reasons vary, but the result is often the same – their condition doesn't get better and sometimes gets worse.

A study by Jennifer M. Taber of the National Cancer Institute, which is part of the National Institutes of Health, looked at the reasons people avoid going to the doctor. Reasons included lack of time or money and unfavorable views of the medical industry.

But 12% of study participants say they simply don't believe they need to see a doctor and have a variety of excuses why. They don't believe they're sick enough, they think their condition will improve over time, or they simply don't believe they've got an issue that needs attention.



Toby Smith, D.O.

In the elderly population, Toby Smith, D.O., HMSA Supportive Care medical director, says another reason for the reluctance is that some don't feel comfortable going to a doctor's office. He says many have seen their provider retire and don't want to have to start over with a new provider.

"They've lost someone who knew them well and had established trust and confidence in how they manage their health. They're fearful of

providers who they think may lack the time and compassion to listen to them and help guide them in their decision making," he says.

When it becomes obvious that a loved one needs care, overcoming their objections is vital. But Dr. Smith says that takes a measure of compassion.

"Family and friends need to understand what fears or experiences have contributed to their objection to seeing a doctor," he says. "Going to an appointment without discussing concerns ahead of time will likely lead to more frustration during the visit and further difficulty establishing or reestablishing trust."

He says it's also helpful to write down questions or concerns before the appointment so that the visit focuses on the patient and not the just the disease or condition being treated.

Most importantly, Dr. Smith says don't avoid the difficult discussion. "It's important to address your concerns with your family members regarding their health and not avoid discussions about it just because there have been objections in the past. There are a variety of providers who can address medical conditions and often finding the right physician and offering to help in the process removes some of the barriers that family members have."

After the visit, "getting feedback regarding a family member's visit is important to determine the likelihood of a family member returning for follow up," Dr. Smith says. "Taking the time to discuss and clarify what was said and what is expected often reinforces your desire to help." 

keiki corner

## Amazing islands

Help the airplane get to each island!



# Mind boggle

Link the letters to make words with three or more letters. Challenge your friends (or yourself) to see who can earn the most points!

3 letters: 1 point

4 letters: 2 points

5 letters: 3 points

6+ letters: 5 points



_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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# Cherry blossoms in bloom

Spring is here and the flowers are in bloom. Celebrate with this easy craft you'll want to hang on your wall! Or make a picture for mom for Mother's Day on May 12.

You'll need:

- Tissue paper, different shades of pink
- Scissors
- Brown marker
- White cardstock
- Glue

## Instructions

Have an adult cut the tissue paper into small squares (about 2" x 2"). Next, use the brown marker to draw branches on the cardstock. Don't worry, it doesn't have to be perfect since the flowers will cover most of your drawing. One by one, crumple a piece of tissue paper and glue it onto the branches. Continue until your cherry blossom looks fully bloomed.



# cocktail mockery

**words** Marlene Nakamoto **photos** Lew Harrington **food styling** Marjie Beaton

It doesn't matter why you're not drinking alcohol. No judgment here. But when family, friends, and others are imbibing, you may want to enjoy something a little more fun than a soft drink.

Mocktails are nonalcoholic cocktails that can mimic their alcohol-infused counterparts. Sure, there's nonalcoholic beer, wine, hard liquor, and maybe even liqueurs. However, you don't always need nonalcoholic rum, for example, to create a mocktail.

The next time you're at a bar or restaurant, ask the bartender to craft a mocktail for you. Or use these recipes as starting points to create mocktails with your favorite flavors.

Each recipe makes one serving. Double it if you dare.



## Lemon Grass Jasmine Iced Tea

- 1 lemon grass stalk
- 1 Tbsp. simple syrup
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup jasmine tea
- ¼ cup lychee or pineapple juice
- Ice
- Garnish

Remove tough outer leaves and root end of lemon grass. Reserve one leaf for garnish. Bruise the lower half of the stalk with the blunt end of a knife. Chop roughly and place in a cocktail shaker with remaining ingredients. Cover and shake vigorously. Strain into a glass and add more ice. Garnish as desired.

## Bitters and Soda

- Ice
- 4 dashes angostura or other bitters
- Seltzer or club soda
- Garnish

Fill a glass with ice and splash with bitters. Add seltzer almost to the rim. Garnish as desired.

## Cranberry Spritzer

- ½ cup cranberry juice
- 1 Tbsp. simple syrup
- ½ cup seltzer or club soda
- Ice
- Garnish

Stir together cranberry juice, simple syrup, and seltzer. Add ice and garnish as desired.

## Coconut Cucumber Cooler

- 1 cup coconut water
- Few thin slices Japanese cucumber
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 2 Tbsp. chopped mint leaves
- Ice
- Mint sprig (garnish)

Combine all ingredients except garnish in a glass and stir gently to combine. Garnish with mint and cucumber.

## Nojito

- ¼ cup loosely packed mint leaves
- 1 lime, quartered
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup plus 2 Tbsp. nonalcoholic rum (optional)
- 1 Tbsp. light agave nectar
- 1 cup ice
- ¼ cup seltzer or club soda
- Mint leaves and lime (garnish)

Muddle mint and lime quarters in a cocktail shaker until mint is fragrant. Add lime juice, nonalcoholic rum, agave, and ice. Shake to mix well, pour into a glass, add seltzer, and garnish.

Drinks from left: Lemon grass jasmine iced tea, bitters and soda, cranberry spritzer, coconut cucumber cooler, nojito



## Pomegranate Paloma

2 Tbsp. grapefruit juice  
2 Tbsp. pomegranate juice  
1 Tbsp. simple syrup  
Ice  
¼ cup plus 2 Tbsp. grapefruit-flavored seltzer  
Pomegranate seeds and lime slice (garnish)

Place grapefruit and pomegranate juices, simple syrup, and three ice cubes in a cocktail shaker or glass jar. Shake to blend well. Strain into a chilled glass and add seltzer. Garnish.

## Blue Refresher

½ cup seltzer or club soda  
½ cup blue punch  
2 Tbsp. pineapple juice  
1 Tbsp. frozen lemonade concentrate  
Ice  
Maraschino cherry and lemon slice (garnish)

In a glass, stir together seltzer, punch, pineapple juice, and lemonade concentrate. Add ice and garnish.

## Simple Syrup

1 cup sugar  
1 cup water

In a small saucepan, heat sugar and water over medium heat. Stir constantly until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and allow to cool. Transfer to a jar and refrigerate.



# HMSA Health Education Workshops

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

## Stress Bucket

Each of us has a limited amount of stress we can hold before overflow occurs. Knowing how to manage and drain this stress is crucial in preventing high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, and other health conditions. Join us to learn simple and enjoyable ways to lower the volume of stress in your bucket.

HMSA Center in Pearl City  
April 30, 10-11 a.m.

HMSA Center in Hilo  
May 4, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

HMSA Center in Honolulu  
May 6, 10-11 a.m.

HMSA Center in Kahului  
June 15, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Online at [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)  
June 25, noon-1 p.m.

## Takeout Tips

We don't always have the time to prepare meals at home. Unfortunately, many of the fast foods that we turn to for convenience are very unhealthy for us. In this workshop, we'll explore strategies to use when ordering takeout. With the right amount of knowledge and determination, we can make choices that are healthier than our routine menu selections.

HMSA Center in Hilo  
May 4, 10:30-11:30 a.m.

HMSA Center in Pearl City  
May 23, 10-11 a.m.

HMSA Center in Honolulu  
June 3, 10-11 a.m.

HMSA Center in Kahului  
June 15, 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Online at [hmsa.com](https://hmsa.com)  
June 27, noon-1 p.m.

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

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







# spring vegetables

Think green (and other vibrant colors) when it comes to spring! Here are three recipes that focus on fresh, nutritious vegetables to enjoy all season long.

## Sugar Snap Pea Spring Salad

- 4 cups sugar snap peas, ends and string removed
- ½ large Japanese cucumber, sliced into rounds ⅛-inch thick
- 1 small red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and sliced ⅛-inch thick
- 2 11-oz. cans mandarin oranges in light syrup, drained
- 1 small red onion, sliced ⅛-inch thick

### Dressing

- 3 Tbsp. shoyu
- 3 Tbsp. rice vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- ½ tsp. minced garlic
- ½ tsp. grated ginger
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 Tbsp. sesame oil
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable, peanut, or avocado oil

Place salad ingredients in a large bowl. In a small bowl, whisk together shoyu, rice vinegar, honey, garlic, ginger, and pepper. Drizzle in the oils, whisking until well blended. Add dressing to vegetable mixture and toss gently to mix. Makes 6 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving: 190 calories, 7 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 550 mg sodium, 32 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 24 g sugar, 3 g protein

## Fresh Carrot Salad

- 1 lb. carrots, peeled and shredded
- 2 Tbsp. minced chives
- 2 Tbsp. minced parsley
- 15-oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

### Dressing

- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 tsp. honey
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. fine sea salt

Place salad ingredients in a medium bowl. In small bowl, mix dressing ingredients until fully combined. Pour dressing over carrot mixture and toss until evenly coated. Makes 4 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving: 200 calories, 9 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 400 mg sodium, 28 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 10 g sugar, 6 g protein

**words** Michelle Liu

**photos** Rae Huo

**food styling** Cedric Fujita



## Asparagus and Green Pea Pasta

- 1 lb. whole-wheat pasta
- ¼ cup olive oil, plus more for garnish
- 5 shallots, quartered lengthwise and sliced thinly crosswise
- 1 lb. asparagus, trimmed, sliced into 1-inch pieces
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups fresh shelled or thawed frozen peas
- ⅔ cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 tsp. grated lemon zest
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 cup roughly chopped parsley, chives, and mint
- ½ cup toasted pine nuts
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Cook pasta 2 minutes less than indicated on the package directions. Reserve 2 cups pasta water, then drain pasta. Set aside.

Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat and sauté shallots about 5 minutes or until golden brown. Add asparagus and garlic and cook until asparagus is bright green and tender, about 3 minutes. Add peas and cook about 2 minutes until bright green. Stir in pasta and 1 cup pasta water and cook until sauce starts to coat pasta.

Remove skillet from heat and transfer contents to serving dish. Add Parmesan, butter, and more pasta water as needed for sauce to cling to the pasta. Stir in lemon zest, lemon juice, herbs, and pine nuts. Season with sea salt and black pepper. Garnish with olive oil and grated Parmesan. Makes 8 servings.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving (not including salt): 480 calories, 23 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 15 mg cholesterol, 200 mg sodium, 59 g carbohydrate, 10 g fiber, 5 g sugar, 17 g protein



For more spring recipes, visit [islandscene.com/more](http://islandscene.com/more).

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# have a papaya

In the 1990s, papaya ringspot virus devastated papaya farms on the Big Island. However, in 1997, scientists at the University of Hawai'i and Cornell University developed the Rainbow papaya, which is resistant to the virus. The result was renewed papaya production and a revitalized industry.

## Enjoy at all stages

Eat green or ripe, raw or cooked.

## Peak flavor

Tastes best when three-quarters yellow and slightly soft.



## Choices

Popular varieties in Hawai'i include Kapoho Solo, Rainbow, Sunrise, and Kamiya.

## Origin

Believed to have originated in southern Mexico.

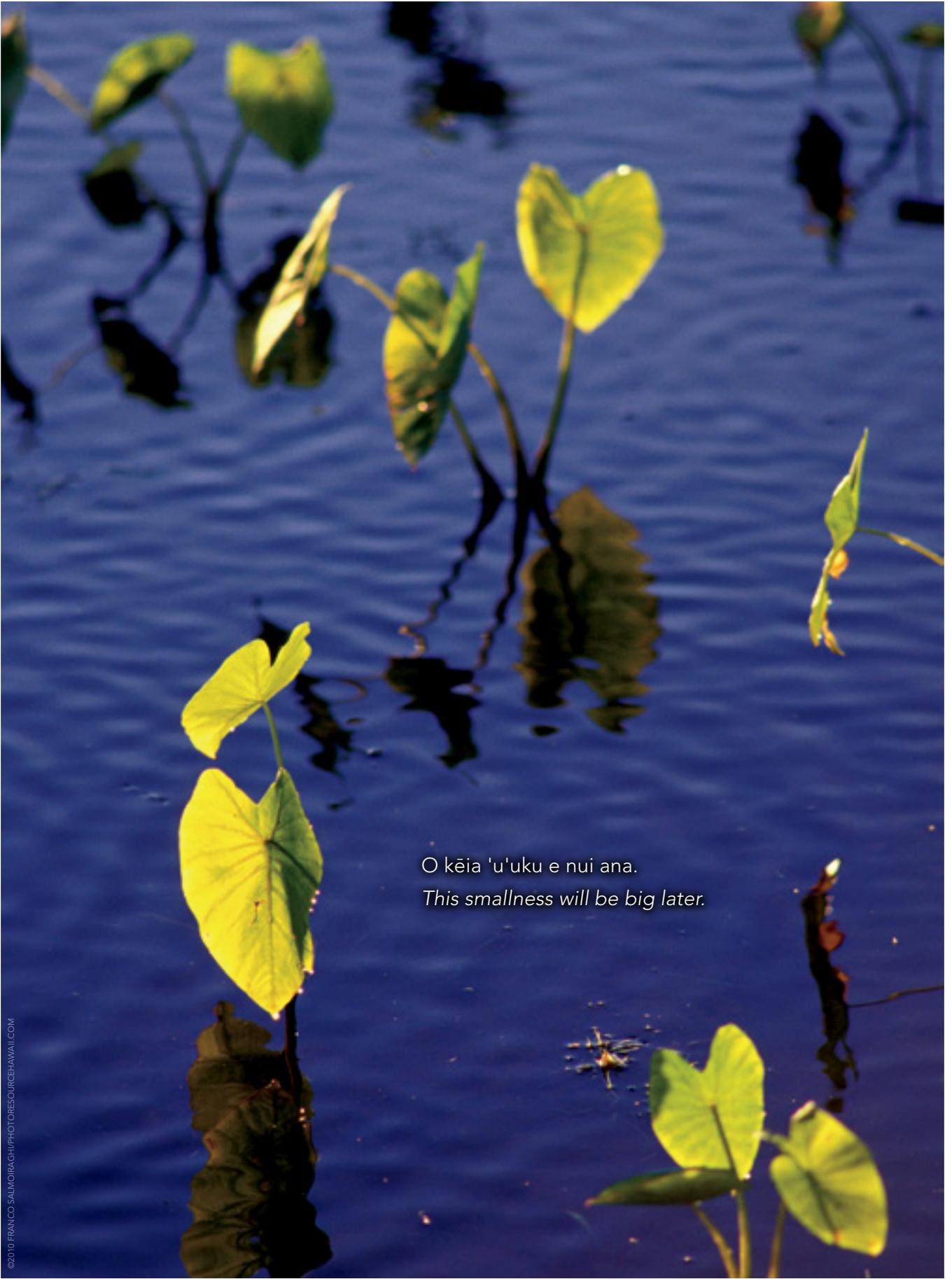
## Enzyme

Papain is an enzyme in raw papaya that breaks down proteins. May help digestion and reduce pain and inflammation.

## Vitamins

Good source of vitamin C and beta carotene, the latter of which the body converts to vitamin A.

words Marlene Nakamoto



O kēia 'u'uku e nui ana.  
*This smallness will be big later.*

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- Jonathan Ota, Owner, Tip Top Cafe

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