

# GENERATIONS

HAWAII'S RESOURCE FOR LIFE

MAGAZINE | VOL 16/1 | JAN/FEB 2026

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## Cultivating Care Memory in the Garden

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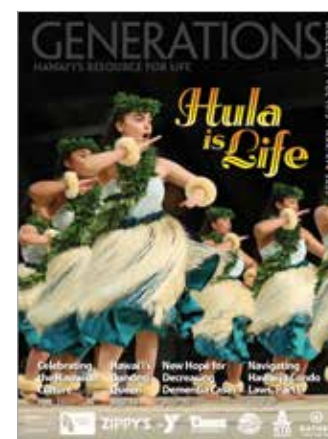
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Happy New Year and Manuia le Tausaga Fou! May 2026 be filled with health, happiness and prosperity, as well as new adventures and goals for you and your family!

For *Generations Magazine*, the new year brings you fresh articles and columns, while keeping our favorites from 2025. We will continue our cultural series/recipes, as well as articles about health, safety, programs, services and stories about our veterans.

This year, we are introducing a new column called “Ask the Doctor,” (pg. 36). The series begins with the topic of physical activity in this issue and will then continue with kidney health and diabetes in the March-April issue. Topics throughout the year will include bladder control, heart health, fall prevention and mental health. If you would like to ask your own questions on those subjects, email them to me. I will ensure the doctors get them so they can address your concerns. (Please include your name and town.)

I’m also excited to share with you our feature article (pg. 22) on the University of Hawai‘i’s Center on Aging (COA), which describes their newest project, Ho‘ōla ‘Āina Pilipili — A Memory Cafe and garden. I am thrilled that my idea for a story on this project has come to fruition! It was also a labor of love for writer Teri Pinney, who shares with you the amazing work COA is doing for our kūpuna. And special thanks goes out to my sister-in-law, Sarah Jua Goya, who took wonderful photos for the feature. It was a group effort! If you’ve never heard of UH’s COA, you will be in for a pleasant surprise as you read about their many essential and important projects.



Besties (L) Rachael Kuoha, (second from R) Julie Daog and (R) Fina Nepo and I (second from L) always have fun when we get together for our girls’ night out!

To begin the year, I want to give a shout-out to my besties! I’ve known these ladies for 25-plus years! Rachael, Julie and Fina, I appreciate your love, laughs, support, friendship and sweet memories over the years. I can’t do life without you! Love you ladies!



I also wanted to share this throwback photo of my now 14-year-old daughter, Lexie. She has written an article (pg. 10) about her experiences at a retirement community. Makes a mom proud!

Lastly, if you have any suggestions on article topics, recipes or even want to share an upcoming event with us, please contact me at [Cynthia@generations808.com](mailto:Cynthia@generations808.com). ■



Aloha & Roll Tide!  
Cynthia Arnold, *Owner-Publisher*  
*A Faithful Alabama Crimson Tide Fan*

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# Who's Behind Generations Magazine?

**G**enerations Magazine relies on Hawai'i's experts—from financial and legal advisors to healthcare professionals and grandparents—to write articles that are important to seniors, their families and their caregivers. The magazine also employs and utilizes writers from across the island chain who are advocates for our kūpuna and passionate about issues that affect our senior community.



**KRISTEN HILLMAN** is the Regional Branch Manager of Līhue Public Library, working in conjunction with the Island Manager on Kaua'i to provide library services across the County of Kaua'i. This is her 12th year as a professional public librarian, starting in Pearl, Miss., as a youth services supervisor, working her way up to a state library consultant for the Mississippi Library Commission and manager for the MAGNOLIA database coalition. She now lives in Kapa'a and enjoys hiking, gardening and beaching.



**ROY KODANI** was born and raised in Hilo. After graduating from George Washington University Law School, he served as a Deputy Attorney General in Hawai'i and later became an international attorney in private practice using his fluency in Japanese. He has been active in local community service on his neighborhood board, the Hawaii Diabetes Society, Friends of the Hawai'i State Library, Friends of the Royal Hawaiian Band and also volunteers at Kuakini Medical Center. He is the author of two books.



**TERI PINNEY** is a seasoned educator, grant consultant and professional writer with decades of experience in education and nonprofit leadership. She has been a teacher, assistant principal, college instructor, small business owner and grant administrator. A retired kupuna, she currently works as a clinical experience facilitator for Western Governors University, guiding future teachers in student teaching programs. Born and raised in Hawai'i, Teri's writing is rooted in professional insight and personal reflection.



**GARY POWELL** is an O'ahu native with a history of service to the communities of Hawai'i. He founded and serves as Executive Director of The Caregiver Foundation, where he devotes his time to providing education and support for caregivers and services for those needing care. Gary views caregiving not as a job, "but an opportunity" to help make the lives of those needing care more comfortable and dignified.



**SCOTT SPALLINA** is a veteran Honolulu prosecutor recognized statewide for his leadership in elder justice. As founder of the Elder Abuse Justice Unit, he has spent over two decades protecting Hawai'i's kūpuna through innovative prosecution, community education and multidisciplinary collaboration. As a presenter at senior organizations, legislative forums and professional trainings, he advocates for stronger safeguards against fraud, neglect and exploitation. His work has earned him respect from across the state.

Mahalo to all of our writers and loyal contributing partners, whose dedication to the senior community is greatly appreciated and whose presence continues to enhance this magazine's value.

ROSA BARKER | HALEY BURFORD | CAROL GRYGLESKI | DAN HAIRE | DAN & JULIE IHARA  
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# Kūpuna Connection

by Lexie Arnold, Moanalua High School Freshman

Caydie Furutani and I are 9th graders at Moanalua High School on O'ahu. For our social studies project, our teacher asked us to identify ways in which we could positively impact our community on a local or national level. We brainstormed and came up with three different ideas. Eventually, we chose to focus our attention on our local kūpuna community. Our project centered on efforts to improve the mental and emotional health of our kūpuna.

Because some kūpuna may not have grandchildren near them, we came up with the simple idea to hang out with them, play games, talk story and bring them homemade snacks, in hopes that socializing with fun young people would make them feel happy and less lonely. And it would be fun for us to engage with the older generation.

When I was born, my mom, Cynthia Arnold, was working to help seniors downsize and move to senior living facilities. She helped many move into 15 Craigs Retirement Community, which had just opened. She continues to this day.

My mom told me that when I was little, she brought me there every Christmastime and we'd give out homemade cookies and treats to all her past clients. Some of them remembered me as a little one, but all I remember is this was the home where all the GGs (great-grandparents) lived. This is the reason that 15 Craigs Retirement Community was the perfect location for our social studies project.



We brought them homemade brownies, broken glass jello and manju. We talked and played "Thanksgiving Catch Phrase" to stimulate their minds in a fun and friendly environment. Some of the residents were surprisingly competitive, but everyone laughed and had a great time. And all the treats were eaten by the end of our visit.

While talking story with them, we found out what they had done for a living and how they are now enjoying their later years. Some even gave us some life lessons, such as, "take the negativity out of your life" and "do yoga to keep looking young!" It was a great time of laughing and learning.

Besides getting an "A" on our project, we took away many happy memories we can share with others. We want to go back again soon! ■



Lexie Arnold is a 9th grader at Moanalua High School and the daughter of GM Publisher Cynthia Arnold. She loves to dance and play softball, hang out with her friends and volunteer for organizations on the island.

If you have a story to share, email the editor: [debra@generations808.com](mailto:debra@generations808.com).




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## Family Vacation Memories

*If you have a story you'd like to share or a topic you'd like to read, contact Sherry Goya.*

**808-722-8487 | [sgoyallc@aol.com](mailto:sgoyallc@aol.com)**

As 2026 begins, many of us will think about the events of the year that will stay in our hearts and minds. For the Goya family, the best thing we do every year since 2021 is to have our "Goya Family Vacation." In 2021, Cliff and I took the ten of us to California and enjoyed the many attractions around Disneyland; then the following year we went to Las Vegas to do much of the "family-friendly venues." The Hawaii Island was our destination in 2023, staying in Kona but driving to Hilo to see the volcano and visiting with my cousins. Last year was our trip to San Diego, staying in an Airbnb for five nights and the last two nights at the Legoland Hotel.



This tradition actually started with my parents taking the Ihara family on vacations to Kauai, Maui, Hawaii Island, California, Washington, Nevada (Vegas, of course), Canada and staycations in Waikiki or at a beach house on the North Shore of Oahu.

As my parents did for many years, my husband and I also pay for the lodging, air fare, activities and most meals. Our children take care of the ground transportation, groceries and cook breakfast when in an Airbnb. Many pictures are taken and Cynthia puts together a hardback book of the entire vacation. These are family memories that the ten of us have forever!



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# First Scammed, Then Murdered

by Scott Spallina, President, Senior Counsel Division, Hawai'i State Bar Association



**T**housands of seniors every year receive the scam message, "Congratulations! You've won the lottery!" For one man, however, that call didn't just drain his savings, it cost him his life.

Abe was a trusting 67-year-old retiree who had been receiving calls for months from a scammer claiming he had won a multimillion-dollar lottery. Like many victims, he believed the caller when they said he only needed to pay "taxes" and "processing fees" to release his prize. He paid hundreds, then thousands, then tens of thousands of dollars to secure his life-changing grand prize... a grand prize that never existed.

More unfortunate, Abe was not the only one who believed this fantasy. Dee Dee, his live-in girlfriend, also fell for these lies. She saw the outgoing wire transfers, the frantic calls and the promises of a jackpot "about to arrive." She "knew" a huge fortune was coming—a fortune she believed she deserved, as well. When the money did not appear, Dee Dee thought Abe was hiding the payout from her. When she confronted him, he told her he didn't have any more money to send for the taxes and processing fees and that he hadn't received anything at all. Upon hearing this, she thought he was lying and attacked Abe, fatally injuring him. The "lottery winnings" that never existed had destroyed two lives: his and hers.

This case highlights how deeply and dangerously criminals manipulate their victims. Scam artists know exactly what they're doing—they build trust, create emotional dependence and manufacture hope. Victims often hide the scam

from family out of embarrassment. Loved ones watching from the outside may misunderstand the situation, misinterpret the victim's behavior or become entangled in the false belief that money is on its way.

Scams don't just empty bank accounts. They destabilize homes, relationships and mental health. This case shows that the consequences can become deadly when fear, delusion and financial strain collide.

But there are ways to protect yourself and those you care about.

- In Hawai'i, it is impossible and illegal to win a foreign lottery. Also, no legitimate lottery contacts winners by phone, text or social media. If you didn't physically enter a contest, you didn't win. Period.
- Be aware that you *never* need to pay money to receive prize winnings. Taxes, fees, customs charges—all fake. Requesting payment is the No. 1 giveaway of a scam.
- Keep communication open with trusted family. Scammers isolate victims by urging secrecy. If a loved one suddenly becomes secretive about finances, check in compassionately.
- Watch for sudden financial stress in a household. Unexplained withdrawals, new credit card debt or abrupt behavioral changes may signal a scam.
- Do *not* confront scammers or escalate disputes at home. If someone in your household is being scammed, contact police or Adult Protective Services.

Lottery scams are designed to destroy lives—emotionally, financially and, in rare cases, physically. The best defense is knowledge, honest conversations and early intervention. No jackpot or prize is ever worth a life. ■

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# Cryptocurrency ATM Scams

by Keali'i Lopez, State Director, AARP Hawai'i



**T**he latest scam tool that international criminal gangs use to take money from kūpuna is likely in your neighborhood supermarket or convenience store.

Bitcoin ATMs, which look similar to bank ATMs, have become commonplace sitting next to regular ATMs, alongside the DMV registration machine and video rental box. There are nearly 100 of them in Hawai'i and more keep getting added.

The FBI said that reported crimes involving cryptocurrency ATMs almost doubled last year with nearly 11,000 complaints and losses of about \$247 million in 2024.

The scammers target kūpuna who may not be familiar with bitcoin and cryptocurrency. The Federal Trade Commission says people 60 and older are three times more likely to report being a victim of cryptocurrency ATM fraud.

The scams often involve a phone call from a fake government or bank official who convinces the consumer that their money is in danger and

they need to transfer it to a safe place. Sometimes they call cryptocurrency ATMs a "federal safety locker." Sometimes it's a variation of the grandparents or romance scams; the consumer is told to pay into a cryptocurrency ATM to get their grandchild out of jail or to invest in cryptocurrency by someone they have been persuaded to trust.

## What can be done?

AARP Hawai'i is pushing for commonsense legislation to limit cryptocurrency ATM transactions to \$2,000 per visit, which could limit fraud losses. We're also lobbying for better fraud warnings and in some cases refunds to consumers.

Be aware that only scammers demand payment with cryptocurrency. The government never accepts cryptocurrency. Also, if you see someone, especially kūpuna, feeding money into a cryptocurrency ATM who looks distressed and may be on the phone with someone directing them, let store authorities or even the police know.

If you have been a victim of cryptocurrency ATM fraud or know someone who has lost money, let AARP Hawai'i know by emailing us at the address below. We need to educate lawmakers about this fraud trend and hearing from constituents will help us pass legislation that could save kūpuna from losing their life savings. ■

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# Food Stamps Are a SNAP for Seniors!

by H. Doug Matsuoka, Kupuna Advocate

One of the things about growing older is that it happens gradually. When I retired from Hawai'i Meals on Wheels last year at age 72, I didn't realize I was already a dozen years into what is legally defined as "senior"—60 years old or older—by many government program standards. I had already started receiving early Social Security at 62 and had seamlessly transitioned my medical coverage at my workplace to Medicare at 64.

Retirement for many means living on less income and I remembered reading somewhere that the governor had done something to make Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/Electronic Benefits Transfer (SNAP/EBT) more available for Hawai'i seniors. I wondered what the qualifications were. It took some digging to find out.

I applied online at Hawai'i's Department of Human Services (DHS) website ([humanservices.hawaii.gov](http://humanservices.hawaii.gov)), qualified and received my EBT Kokua Card (Hawai'i's name for the EBT card) in about a month. If you don't know if you qualify or not, go ahead and try. Nothing bad will happen if you don't qualify and all the information is confidential.

In case you are wondering, "SNAP," "EBT" and "Food Stamps" refer to the same thing. I use the term "EBT," which is the tool we use to use our SNAP benefits. Your monthly SNAP benefits are loaded onto the EBT Kokua Card. "Food Stamps" is an old-school term for the same thing.

SNAP is a federal program funded by the US Department of Agriculture, administered here by the State of Hawai'i. It helps American farmers. If we spend EBT dollars in Hawai'i, it helps local businesses and local farmers if we buy local. And it certainly helps us seniors.

You can use EBT to buy food at the market, but you can't buy medicine, vitamins, tobacco, alcoholic beverages or hot, prepared food (although you might qualify for a meals-on-wheels type service from other nonprofit organizations in Hawai'i).



If you qualify, your benefit amount will vary according to your income. Some surprising benefits come with your EBT card. Before I even received my Kokua Card, I received a DaBux card. What is DaBux? It's a Hawai'i program that gives EBT users a 50% discount off local produce at most local supermarkets and online at Farm Link Hawai'i ([farmlinkhawaii.com](http://farmlinkhawaii.com)). And that includes "name-brand" organic produce. You double your EBT bucks with DaBux.

With your EBT card, you can even get seeds for vegetables and herbs at a discount from participating retailers so you can grow your own. You can't get fresher than that.

## Need Help?

Not all seniors are computer savvy, so I made a short instructional video about the new rules and how to apply online. You can find my 14-minute YouTube video that further explains the process on at [tinyurl.com/HowToApplyEBT](http://tinyurl.com/HowToApplyEBT).

For those seniors who are not online at all, a local nonprofit organization can help you apply for SNAP/EBT and let you know about your eligibility for other senior programs.

Call Catholic Charities Benefits Enrollment Center on O'ahu at **808-527-4777**. Other islands can call **808-521-4357**.

For SNAP application, interview and recertification updates, visit [humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/updates](http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/updates). ■



H. Doug Matsuoka was born in Hilo, Hawai'i, and lives in Honolulu. Now retired, his career spanned social service nonprofits, including Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii. He recently retired from his 10 years with Hawaii Meals on Wheels, where he started as a part-time driver and became the IT director. He is a social activist, author and co-founder of Hawaii Guerrilla Video Hui.

If you have a story to share, email the editor: [debra@generations808.com](mailto:debra@generations808.com).



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# Tips for Smarter & Safer Buying This Year

by Cameron Nakashima, Media Engagement & Digital Campaigns Manager, BBB Great West + Pacific

If you are planning on making high-trust purchases in 2026, such as home improvements or a new vehicle, consider these three ways to make smarter buying decisions:

**1. Build confidence before you buy.** Before purchasing, spend five minutes on research ([bbb.org/search?find\\_country=USA](http://bbb.org/search?find_country=USA)). Confirm the business is legally registered, properly licensed for its trade and has a history of delivering on promises.

**2. Use tools that make research convenient.** Keep your research habits focused and simple by using a trusted research tool ([BBB.org](http://BBB.org)) that allows you to investigate and get trusted, free quotes ([bbb.org/get-a-quote](http://bbb.org/get-a-quote)). BBB business profiles show a business's rating, BBB accreditation, reviews and complaint history.



## 3. Have a plan if things go wrong.

If your purchase/project doesn't go as promised, communicate directly with the company. If that fails, involve a neutral third party like BBB ([bbb.org/file-a-complaint](http://bbb.org/file-a-complaint)). You can also seek guidance from industry associations or authorities. As a last resort, legal action may be necessary—but most issues are resolved faster and at little to no cost through BBB's mediation and arbitration services. ■

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# Legal Warrior for Social Upheaval

by Roy Kodani, Contributing Writer



Judge Daniel R. Foley, formerly an Associate Justice of the Hawai'i Court of Appeals, by his representation of three same-sex couples in the Hawai'i court case of *Baehr v. Lewin*, moved to overturn the then hard-fast belief that marriage should be reserved to opposite-sex couples. Judge Foley's legal strategy and courageous action changed the world, leading to the legalization of same-sex marriage in other parts the world.

What prompted Judge Foley to take on such Herculean task, in great part, alone? As a boy, Judge Foley explains, "I was always the new kid in school. I went to six different schools before high school. I was identified with the outsiders. I always detested bullies. When a bully would taunt defenseless classmates, I would stand up for the classmates, which often resulted in a fight. I regarded the government's treatment of members of the LGBTQ community as a form of bullying."

Judge Foley has had an interesting career that included diverse experiences in remote places. After college, he joined the Peace Corps and was assigned as an agricultural extension officer in Lesotho, southern Africa. After law school, he served as a legal adviser to emerging governments in Micronesia, writing constitutions and other laws as these governments achieved independence from the US. He has served as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Palau. He drafted the Rules and Regulations of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission, chaired the Hawai'i's

Access to Justice Commission and has taught civil rights litigation at the University of Hawai'i Richardson School of Law.

In the Hawai'i legal community, Judge Foley was known as a lawyer who represented unpopular and controversial clients and causes. For instance, he successfully represented a Miss Gay Moloka'i Pageant after an official refused to grant a permit to allow a hula to be performed at a carnival.

On Dec. 17, 1990, three gay couples applied for marriage licenses at the Hawai'i Department of Health, but they were told that their applications would be held until the State Attorney General could rule on their applications. Within five years, the US Supreme Court permitted the right for gay and lesbian couples across the nation to be legally married. In the 2015 Supreme Court ruling, Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy cited Hawai'i's pivotal same-sex marriage decision.

Judge Foley says, "Same-sex marriage is a right protected by the Equal Protection Clause in both the US and Hawai'i Constitutions. I believed there should be no discrimination against persons of the same sex who apply for a marriage license. I was raised as a Catholic and attended a Jesuit university in San Francisco. I was aware of the traditional biblical view of marriage, but what controlled it was the Equal Protection Clause."

Judge Foley is married to a Japanese-Chinese-Hawaiian woman. After marriage, he converted to Buddhism. Earlier in San Francisco, he had studied Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism. He has studied renowned Zen Master Daisetz Suzuki. He meditates early in the morning and later in the day.

His spirituality is deep and profound. He says, "The spirituality of life is very important to me. I try to be good person and treat others with respect and compassion. I believe that our acts have an immediate impact on ourselves and those around us in this life and in the hereafter. I believe that our karma determines our afterlife. We should be true to our values. Our values shape our character and guide us in our decision-making." ■

# Bridging the Generation Divide

by Rosa Barker, Contributing Writer



Last year, I was a "senior" senior at the University of Hawai'i (UH) West O'ahu. My learning adventure began in the fall of 2019 when I enrolled in a basic Hawaiian language course at the Moloka'i Education Center at age 67. It is a satellite campus of UH Maui College and our classes were conducted via a Skybridge video link to the classroom on Maui. I also enrolled in a Hawaiian music class that was taught in-person. I continue exploring those interests through the 'Ukulele Kanikapila and 'Olelo Hawai'i Papa offered here on Moloka'i by Kaunoa Senior Services, a division of the County of Maui's Department of Human Concerns.

Eligible for financial aid, I was able to become a full-time student at UH Maui College and UH West O'ahu. It was a blessing in so many ways to be immersed in campus life—even at a distance. Being surrounded by young minds eager to forge a pathway to their future career was energizing and inspiring. No less inspiring were the students who were returning to college while working and caring for family, but still found time to attend class, complete assignments and participate in collaborative projects.

I soon discovered that collaboration was the skill I most needed to learn. Students and faculty all put me at ease and I learned by their example how enriching—and fun—collaboration can be! It was time to set aside my "wise elder" hat and listen with respect and compassion, keeping

my mind open to views that hadn't even existed when I was their age. It was a two-way street because some of the things I'd experienced and brought to the table were ancient history for today's students. I strove to enrich my fellow students' learning treks and greatly appreciated that I was never made to feel like a dinosaur!

Other skills I learned were how to give presentations and how to use the many apps available today to create written and audiovisual material. Encouraged by the supportive learning environment, I developed the confidence to share these skills in my local community. I volunteered to proofread the computer-created transcripts of documents scanned into Moloka'i's Digital Repository, Moe'a, and created an Instagram post as my contribution to a Hawai'i Tourism Authority community session on Moloka'i.

If you live on O'ahu, you can attend classes for free with the instructor's permission. The UH System, comprised of three universities, seven community colleges and community-based learning centers across Hawai'i, is committed to promoting lifelong learning, active aging and intergenerational community-building through its Nā Kūpuna program at UH Mānoa and the Senior Visitor programs at UH West O'ahu and the Leeward, Windward and Kapi'olani community colleges. You won't get a grade, but you can fully participate in course activities. (*For enrollment information, see below.*)

It is well-known that being engaged socially and intellectually enhances the well-being of seniors: My experience as a student attests to that. Being constantly challenged and encouraged to keep going forward despite early stumbles and uncertainty was a great confidence-booster.

I highly recommend pursuing higher education in your golden years! ■

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# Celebrating the Samoan Culture

by Haley Burford



Since more than 1,500 years ago, Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) have welcomed immigrants from every corner of the globe, cultivating and perpetuating a tapestry of diverse cultures. In the sixth article in this ongoing series on the many cultures that comprise Hawai'i, we will focus on the Samoan, how the people arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, the culture and celebrations such as the We Are Samoa Festival.

## Samoan Arrival in Hawai'i

An ocean of islands, it is common speculation that the Pacific was settled from west to east, with people from Southwest Asia settling in Samoa and Tonga from 1600 to 1200 BC. Samoan and Tongan navigators discovered and settled Tahiti-nui, Hiva (Marquesas Islands) and Tuamotus, among others, in 300 BC. A few hundred years later, these voyagers discovered and settled in Hawai'i. By the time Europeans sought to explore the Pacific in the 1500s, almost all of the islands had been inhabited for several centuries.

Samoans have migrated to Hawai'i for almost 2,000 years. Many immigrated from American Samoa after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Today, about 44,000 people in Hawai'i are of Samoan descent, making them the second-largest group of Pacific Islanders after Kānaka Maoli.

## Culture and Tradition

Because of their geographical and ancestral proximity, Samoan culture shares many similarities with other Polynesian islands—Aotearoa (New Zealand), Hiva, Tonga and Hawai'i, to name

a few. Historically, artifacts such as fishhooks, lures and records of vegetation/wildlife gesture to similarities, as these island populations shared strengths in fishing and farming.

*Fa'a Samoa* (the Samoan way) prioritizes 'aiga (family/community), lotu (church) and alofa (love). Some traditions include the rite of 'ava, where the ceremonial beverage is shared to mark significant events and *tatau* (Samoan tattoos), a 2,000-year-old art form that affirms Samoan identity and adulthood. *Lotu Tamaiti* (White Sunday) is a Samoan holiday (also celebrated in Tonga and Tokelau) held on the second Sunday of October, when communities celebrate children.

## Celebrations

The We Are Samoa Festival is Hawai'i's largest Samoan cultural fête, centering the *ailao* (traditional warrior's knife dance) via the World Fireknife Championship. The festival is typically held in early May. Another celebration, the Samoan Heritage Festival, a widely practiced celebration that takes place during the summer all over the US, came to Hawai'i in 2023.

For more information, visit the We Are Samoa Festival website ([worldfireknife.com/we-are-samoa-festival](http://worldfireknife.com/we-are-samoa-festival)) as well as *Generations Magazine's* Facebook page ([facebook.com/genmag808](https://facebook.com/genmag808)) and website calendar ([generations808.com/calendar](http://generations808.com/calendar)) for community events and opportunities. ■

*The next article in this series will feature the influences of Korean culture in Hawai'i.*

# Papa's Sapasui

Recipe by Salei Nepo, written by Cynthia Arnold

When we were looking for a family dish to pair with our Samoan culture theme, the first person I thought of was one of my best friends, Fina Nepo. We've been friends for over 25 years and her family always has great food at their get-togethers. She is sharing one of their favorite meals with all of us! This family favorite was always made by Fina's father, Salei Nepo (Papa).

Sapasui is the popular Samoan adaptation of Chinese chop suey. Even the name "sapasui" is a Samoanized version of "chop suey." This saucy dish is a staple at Samoan family gatherings and feasts. Fina and her family enjoyed many sapsuis at big and small gatherings. I made it myself and my own family enjoyed it with rice, but Fina said they usually pair it with *fa'alifu fa'i* (green bananas cooked with coconut milk).

Enjoy this wonderful Nepo family favorite!

## Ingredients:

1 lb.	boneless chicken, beef chuck or 2 cans of palm corned beef
2 tbsp.	vegetable oil (for frying garlic, onion and ginger)
1	large onion
2–3 cloves	garlic
1–2 tbsp.	ginger
1/2 cup	shoyu (may need to add more for flavor and color)
1 cup	water or beef/chicken stock (use stock for more flavor)
1 package	vermicelli or glass noodles
	salt and pepper to taste
1	medium cabbage

## Preparation:

Cut the meat chicken or beef chuck into bite-sized pieces. No need to cut the corned beef.

Chop or mince garlic and ginger. Chop onion.

Prepare noodles by following the instructions on the package. After draining, cut the noodles into 3- to 4-inch pieces.



(C) Fina, pictured with her nephew, Achilles, and her parents, Sunita and Salei, has handed down the recipe for this family favorite to the next generation.

## Cooking Instructions:

- 1) Preheat a wok or pot over medium heat, then add the oil.
- 2) Add garlic, onion, ginger and meat.
- 3) When almost halfway cooked, add the shoyu and cook for 10 more minutes.
- 4) Keep stirring until the meat is almost fully cooked. If using corned beef, reduce cooking time to 30 minutes.
- 5) Add water—or stock for richer flavor.
- 6) Add noodles. Stir well. Simmer for 10 minutes.
- 7) Add more shoyu to taste.
- 8) Add chopped cabbage.
- 9) Stir, mixing all ingredients thoroughly. Turn the heat to low and cook for another 10 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent the ingredients from sticking to the pan.

Serve on a large platter or in a big bowl. Enjoy!

**Prep & cook time:** 45–60 minutes

**Serves:** 6–8 servings

Do you have a favorite recipe and story to share? For consideration, include a photo and mail them to Generations Recipe, PO Box 4213, Honolulu, HI 96812, or email them to [Cynthia@generations808.com](mailto:Cynthia@generations808.com).



# Kaua'i Libraries Offer Fun for Everyone!

by Kristen Hillman, MLIS, Regional Branch Manager, Librarian V, Līhu'e Public Library



Left: The Līhu'e Public Library's Community Mural Dedication Ceremony was held last September. Attendees included (C) Nani Larsen, Toni Kaa'a and (L) local mural artist Holly Ka'iakapu. Nani's son was a long-time HSPLS employee. He is featured in the mural as a memorial to him.

Below: Hanapēpē Public Library Branch Librarian Mindy Gipson poses with new library locations signage in Olelo Hawai'i and English. Hanapēpē Public Library celebrated its 75th anniversary with a 1950s-style swing dance last February.



Exciting, free events are happening at Hanapēpē and Līhu'e Public Libraries on Kaua'i! The public library is the place to be for all ages, keiki to kūpuna, say Līhu'e Branch Manager Kristen Hillman and Branch Librarian Mindy Gipson.

Līhu'e Public Library strives to offer programs that support the needs of library users of all ages. First Thursday Memory Catchers meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at 4pm. The monthly meeting of the Kaua'i Live Poets Society happens on the first Monday at 4:30pm. The Mom's Support Group convenes every first Wednesday at 5:30pm. And the Early Literacy Center is for our youngest patrons.

The Coloring Cafe offers a low-key atmosphere where adults can create and converse. The Friends of Līhu'e Library provides self-serve coffee. "Usually thought of as a children's activity, coloring has recently been recognized for its potential mental and physical health benefits, especially for adults facing stress, anxiety and dementia," says Kristen.

Hanapēpē Public Library, a community hub in Kaua'i's West Side, offers many free, fun activities for keiki, such as the Mokihana Berry Read-Aloud Club and Tunes, Tales and Twirls Keiki Storytime. Its adult events are also impressive, and above all, fun!

"We had a remarkable turnout for our monthly Game and Puzzle Night on the last Thursday of

the month," says Mindy. "Families and individuals are returning to connect with others in the community to play chess, bridge, work puzzles and create with Legos."

A growing number of enthusiasts join together from 2 to 4pm for 4-Player Games: bridge on Tuesdays and mahjong on Wednesdays. The library has created the space for young adults and kūpuna alike to enjoy these brain-healthy games that provide a stimulating mental challenge. Game & Puzzle Nights are held the last Thursdays of the month from 5 to 7pm.

"We are very grateful to the Friends of the Hanapēpē Public Library who fund the purchase of card tables and other furnishings, plus literacy developmental toys, storytime props and musical instruments to support our children's programs," says Mindy. "They also fund refreshments for many of our special events. The friends meet weekly in our meeting room creating oshibana (pressed flower) cards and other crafts to fund-raise for the library."

Learn more about Hawai'i library events at [tinyurl.com/HIPublicLibraryEventsCalendar](https://tinyurl.com/HIPublicLibraryEventsCalendar).

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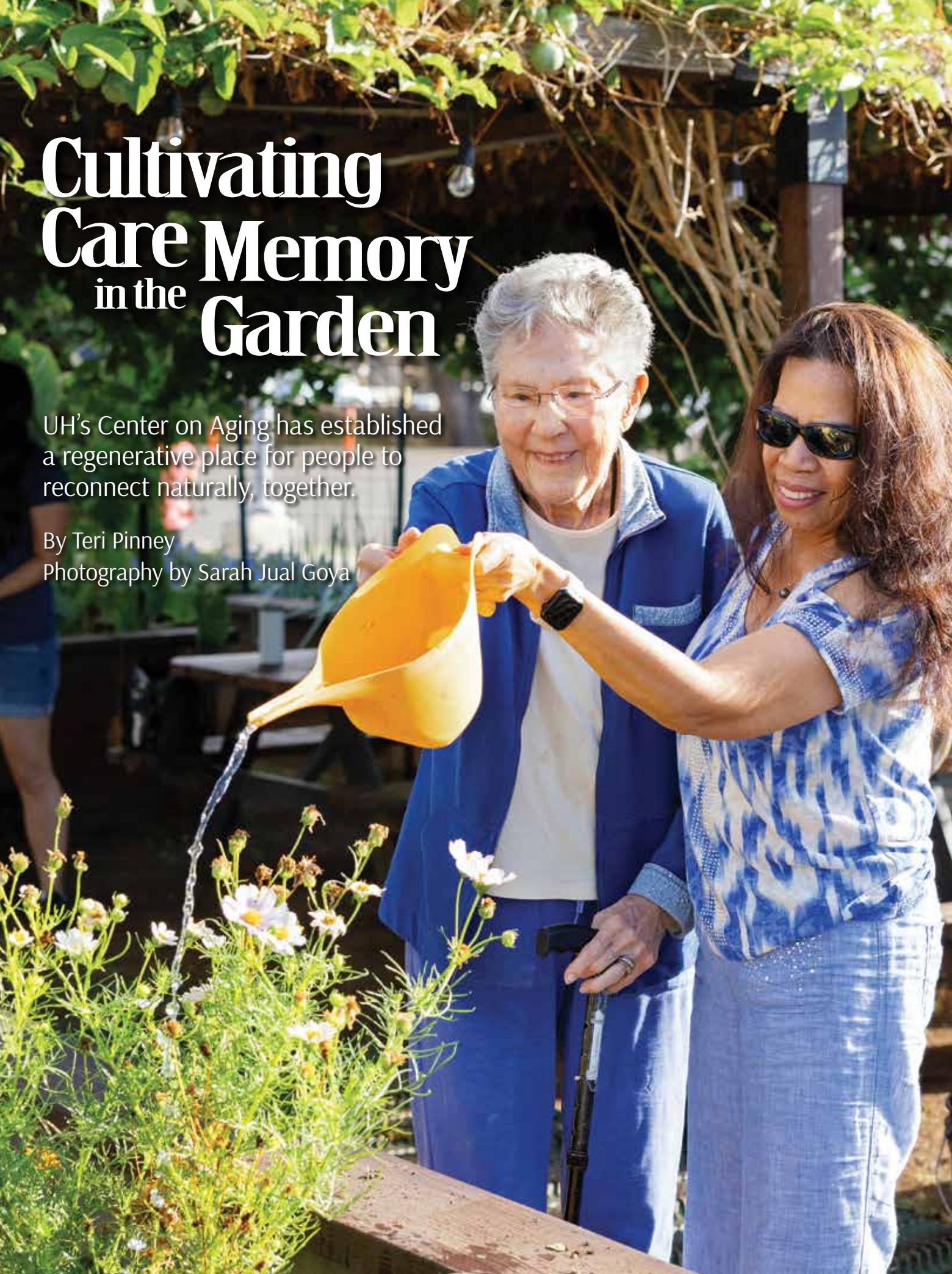


# Cultivating Care Memory in the Garden

UH's Center on Aging has established a regenerative place for people to reconnect naturally, together.

By Teri Pinney

Photography by Sarah Jual Goya



Tucked between campus classrooms near the College of Education, the leafy paths of the University of Hawai'i's (UH) Ho'ōla 'Āina Pilipili garden come alive every third Thursday afternoon. Soft laughter blends with the rustling of leaves and the hum of gentle conversation. Under the shelter of liliko'i shade tents, a kupuna presses seeds into the soil, a caregiver smiles from across the table and a UH student leads a memory-based activity. It's a quiet, powerful moment when generations meet, stories resurface and healing takes root.

This is the Memory Café and its garden in action. But it's much more than a soothing gathering place. It's what the UH Center on Aging (COA) was created to do — bring research, community and compassion into one space.

## *A Vision Grows into a Vital Hub*

The UH COA was formally established in July 1988 after years of planning by educators and community advocates who saw Hawai'i's shifting demographics as both a challenge and an opportunity. By the late 1980s, the islands were already home to one of the fastest-growing senior populations in the nation.

About 311,000 seniors (aged 65 and over) live in Hawai'i today — roughly 21.5% of the state's 1.4 million residents, according to Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism's summary of the US Census 2024 population characteristics.

Since its founding, COA shifted through reorganizational umbrellas and now finds its current home within the Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health at UH Mānoa. This signaled a larger vision. Aging isn't just about health. It is social, emotional, environmental and deeply human.

Its mission remains steady: to enhance the well-being of older adults through collaboration, applied research, education and service.

In addition to measuring success by journal citations, the center quantifies its accomplishments in smiles, independence and community strength.

COA has become a hub for interdisciplinary research and hands-on community engagement that touches nearly every aspect of aging in

Hawai'i. Today, it supports dozens of projects that address issues such as dementia awareness, caregiver education, intergenerational connection and public policy for elder care. COA's faculty and students collaborate with health systems, schools, state agencies and nonprofits to turn research into action, improving how Hawai'i understands and supports its kūpuna.

Right now, the UH Center on Aging is behind some remarkable efforts to make life better for Hawai'i's older adults. Through Age-Friendly Honolulu and the Kūpuna Collective, a state-wide network co-founded by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, they're shaping how our cities grow — pushing for engaged and inclusive communities that welcome everyone. And with the CARE Registry (Collaborative Approach for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders Research and Education), they're helping ensure that island and Pacific voices are finally represented in national studies on aging and dementia.

COA helps ensure that local voices and cultural perspectives are included in studies that shape future healthcare policies. The center also partners with the state's Executive Office on Aging, the City and County of Honolulu's Elderly Affairs Division and supports the Pacific Islands Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program's efforts to train healthcare and social service professionals across the state.



Together, these efforts reflect COA's mission — to not just study aging, but to improve what aging looks and feels like in the islands.

Hawai'i residents were living longer, often healthier lives, and the cultural tradition of multi-generational homes meant new kinds of caregiving needs were emerging. Families wanted to keep their elders close to home and not necessarily in institutions. COA became a bridge, linking university research to real families and real challenges.

Early COA projects explored caregiving education, senior employment and aging-in-place initiatives. As the population aged, the center expanded to address Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and the emotional well-being of kūpuna and their families. That early foundation has grown into today's blend of community programming, applied science and hands-on service.

### ***Nurturing Lives Touched by Dementia***

More than 30,000 people in Hawai'i live with dementia today. It's a group of symptoms. The most familiar and common is memory loss, which is caused by brain disease. Alzheimer's disease is one type of dementia and accounts for approximately 60% to 80% of dementia cases.

"A dementia diagnosis is scary and overwhelming," says Christy Nishita, PhD, a gerontologist at UH COA and the Memory Café program lead. "Unfortunately, there is a lot of stigma regarding dementia. It can make people afraid or embarrassed to go outside and engage in our community."

Life with dementia calls for more than medical care. It thrives on connection. Both those experiencing memory loss and their caregivers benefit from strong circles of support that keep each day meaningful and full of purpose.

Staying socially active, moving the body and keeping the mind engaged through activities like conversation, gardening, music or puzzles can help lift the spirit and preserve a sense of joy, even as memory and thinking evolve.

Recently, the Alzheimer's Association reported that Hawai'i faces one of the most rapid increases in the number of dementia cases in the nation. With people living longer and kūpuna making up a growing share of the population, families across the islands are feeling the impact of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia. Apparently,

tens of thousands of Hawai'i residents are currently living with dementia and nearly twice that number serve as unpaid caregivers.

The challenge isn't just medical; it's emotional, cultural and social. Many caregivers juggle full-time jobs while tending to loved ones, and families often struggle to find culturally appropriate resources that fit local ways of living and caring.

That's where UH's COA plays a vital role. Through community-based programs, caregiver training and research partnerships, COA helps families navigate the complexities of dementia with compassion and knowledge.

The center is also a partner in the Hawai'i Dementia Initiative (HDI), which promotes public awareness, professional training and memory support services statewide. And through projects like the Memory Café and garden, COA offers a model of social connection that restores dignity and joy to those living with memory loss.

Together, these efforts help make Hawai'i not just a place where people live longer, but where they can live better, surrounded by care, understanding and aloha.

### ***Ground Preparation: Establishing Partnerships With Purpose***

COA is built on connection. Faculty, students and local leaders work hand-in-hand with city agencies, nonprofits and health systems. Their goal is simple but profound — to make Hawai'i a place where aging feels supported, not feared.

One of the most impactful collaborations is with Age-Friendly Honolulu, a long-term partnership with the City and County of Honolulu that reimagines how the city supports residents as they grow older. This initiative brings together City and County of Honolulu departments and community organizations to create neighborhoods where seniors can stay active, connected and independent.

Through surveys, walk audits and community trainings, the project has promoted more accessible spaces and engagement of kūpuna in community life. What began as a pilot has now become part of Honolulu's citywide strategy for livable, age-friendly communities, shaping how the islands plan for accessibility and inclusion for years to come.



*Age-Friendly Honolulu's mission is to change mindsets about aging by empowering kūpuna, promoting intergenerational engagement, and supporting accessibility and inclusion for all. It's a community endeavour.*

### ***Planting a Dementia-Friendly Garden***

The dementia-friendly garden and Memory Café are UH COA initiatives. Research by Melody Halzel, PhD candidate in Public Health, under the direction of Dr. Nishita, complements these initiatives by examining how outdoor spaces — like the Ho'ōla 'Āina Pilipili Garden at UH Mānoa — can be designed to support people living with dementia and their caregivers. Melody's research evaluates how accessible, safe and engaging these environments are, aiming to create practical guidelines for developing dementia-friendly gardens that nurture memory, comfort and social connection across Hawai'i's diverse communities.

Dementia Friends Hawai'i is part of the Age-Friendly Honolulu initiative, which is also coordinated by UH COA in partnership with the state's Executive Office on Aging and other community organizations. The center trains volunteers and community partners — healthcare workers, students, local businesses and faith groups — to host Dementia Friends Hawai'i sessions across the islands.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) plays a meaningful role in extending the reach of UH COA's community work. RSVP volunteers — many of them kūpuna themselves — bring decades of experience, empathy and local knowl-

edge to the center's initiatives. They assist with events like the Memory Café and garden, and support outreach activities that connect older adults and caregivers with resources.

Their participation adds a powerful layer of peer-to-peer connection. When RSVP volunteers share their time and stories, it helps build trust and encourages other seniors to stay active, engaged and informed.

For COA, it's a win-win. The program gains capable, community-minded helpers, and volunteers gain renewed purpose by giving back in ways that directly improve the lives of fellow kūpuna across Hawai'i.

Another key initiative is the CARE Registry, which invites Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander residents to participate in national aging studies. Historically, these groups have been underrepresented in research. CARE 2.0 helps close that gap and ensures local families see themselves reflected in data and solutions.

The COA is involved in dozens of projects and partnerships — too many to list or fully explain here — all designed to improve the lives of Hawai'i's seniors and their caregivers. From statewide policy work to neighborhood-based initiatives, each effort reflects the center's deep commitment to community well-being.



Among its many programs, one in particular has captured the heart of that mission—the Memory Café and garden, where connection, compassion and learning come together in the most down-to-earth way.

### Research Meets Heart at the Memory Café & Garden

A dementia-friendly garden, situated on an underutilized space within the UH campus off Metcalf Street, now flourishes with plants like mamaki (a Native Hawaiian tea plant), kalo, 'ōlena, rosemary, liliko'i, cherry tomatoes, basil and more. It features elevated planter boxes, resting areas and wide pathways, all designed with accessibility in mind.

Monthly gatherings at the garden welcome people of all ages and abilities, including those living with dementia, along with their caregivers and friends. Supported by COA staff and student volunteers, participants connect through shared, nature-based activities that nurture both body and spirit. The space is thoughtfully designed for comfort and inclusion, featuring shaded seating, raised garden beds and nearby restrooms—ensuring everyone can take part and feel at ease.

“‘Ho‘ōla ‘Āina Pilipili’ translates as ‘restore/regenerate, to bring life back,’ to ‘āina—the land which feeds,” says Melody, the garden’s co-found-

er and Memory Café program coordinator. “And ‘pilipili’ refers to the name of the smaller land division (ili), where the garden is located. Together, it means ‘to restore and bring life back to the land.’ ‘Pili,’ such as ‘pilina,’ is for close relationship between people and connection to nature.”

Often called the person with “the heart behind the project,” Melody finds it deeply rewarding to see how much it’s grown. “It’s wonderful to bring back to life and regenerate unused land,” Melody says. “The garden has become a place for people to reconnect—with nature, with each other and sometimes with themselves.”

Last April, the garden and its caretakers welcomed dozens of visitors who helped pilot a new Dementia-Friendly Garden Checklist, developed by Melody as part of her dissertation research. The project evaluated how outdoor spaces could better support people of all ages and abilities.

The garden also serves as a living classroom for ‘āina-based learning and community connection.

Summer Maunakea, garden co-founder and associate professor of curriculum studies in the College of Education, incorporates it into ‘āina-based education courses, while the COA continues to guide its growth as a model that supports engagement of older adults, particularly persons with memory loss and caregivers.



(Bottom left photo) Melody Halzel (with lei) and student volunteers evaluate how accessible, safe and engaging dementia-friendly gardens and environments such as UH COA’s Memory Café are. Supported by COA staff and student volunteers, participants connect through shared, nature-based activities that nurture both body and spirit. (Left photo) Ongoing discussions regarding how Honolulu can be more age- and dementia-friendly that began years ago resulted in the creation of UH COA’s Memory Café. The project is just one example of many efforts to improve quality of life for island kūpuna.

The Memory Café and garden have grown into the living heart of the UH COA’s mission—where research meets compassion. “The program has a lot more engagement now... digging right in and maturing nicely,” says regular garden visitor Gary Simon, state volunteer president of AARP Hawai‘i. The garden’s steady growth mirrors the café itself—vibrant, welcoming and deeply rooted in community connection.

It’s not therapy in the traditional sense, but it is healing. Under shaded tents, laughter drifts through the air as kūpuna and students plant seedlings, paint stones or simply talk story. On one recent afternoon, 100-year-old Doris Inouye attended her first session with her 77-year-old daughter, Kathy Umemura. “They enjoyed being outdoors and intermingling with other people of all ages,” a volunteer shared. Moments like these show that joy and connection don’t fade with age, they just take new forms.

The garden itself was designed for inclusion. Wide paths, shaded seating and adaptive tools make it easy for anyone to join. Everything is provided, from gloves to refreshments, so participants can simply show up and fellowship together. Each session ends with quiet reflection and feedback that helps COA keep improving what matters most—that human connection.

“The café is like a family gathering,” one participant said. “We come, we talk, we plant and we leave feeling lighter.”

### Planting the Next Generation

If the seniors are the roots, the youth are new shoots. At the COA, youth involvement is guided in part by Kevin Y. Kawamoto, PhD, a gerontological social worker, whose work bridges students and kūpuna through shared learning and service. Dr. Kawamoto describes COA as giving young people a chance to learn by doing—to sit beside elders, listen and serve with empathy.

Students who volunteer at the Memory Café and garden gain firsthand experience working with older adults and caregivers. Through conversation, gardening and shared laughter, they build the kind of intergenerational understanding that strengthens both community and workplace relationships. These connections go beyond volunteer hours—they nurture compassion and respect across generations.

Among those students is Brayden Jadulang, an 18-year-old UH biology major. “I’m interested in healthcare and sustainability,” he says, crediting his parents for inspiring his volunteerism. Students like Brayden show up at the garden to volunteer and cultivate not only plants, but empathy, the kind of insight that will shape Hawai‘i’s future caregiving workforce. And he does this without any expectation of college credit.

“Many students volunteer simply to help kūpuna, but it’s also a wonderful educational opportunity that will ideally drive more students to careers in aging.” She goes on to state that the café thrives



because of the sincerity of those volunteer youth who show up. Their kindness turns research into relationships and classrooms into communities. “Our youth need to learn about aging,” she adds. “When generations connect, they build bridges of understanding and find common ground.”

Through the CARE Registry, students also serve as ambassadors, helping to recruit participants and share information across island communities. Others lend their voices to social media campaigns promoting brain health or storytelling projects that connect generations. To promote careers in eldercare, Dr. Nishita has partnered with ‘Iolani School and other public high schools to promote awareness, foster empathy and provide intergenerational programming. This approach reflects one of COA’s long-held goals, which is to develop a workforce that values and understands aging. The Memory Café is where that vision takes root—students learning the human side of healthcare, while seniors rediscover purpose through mentorship and friendship.

**The Memory Café and garden at Ho‘ōla ‘Āina Pilipili.** Under the guidance of (L–R) Kevin Y. Kawamoto, PhD, a gerontological social worker; Christy Nishita, PhD, UH COA project lead; and Memory Garden cofounder Melody Halzel, a PhD student in Public Health; young people are given the opportunity to learn by doing and build intergenerational understanding by sitting beside elders, listening with full attention and serving them with empathy.



### Deepening Community Roots

What happens when a university research center steps off campus and into the heart of neighborhoods? For the COA, it means transformation on both sides. The university learns from lived experience and the community gains access to knowledge, tools and relationships once tucked away in academic buildings.

Because the center is based in Hawai‘i, it naturally embraces the islands’ cultural mix—Native Hawaiian, Asian, Pacific Islander and immigrant families—all with a deep respect for elders. That cultural awareness makes every project more personal, more local and more grounded in aloha. From neighborhood workshops to ‘āina-based gatherings, COA’s work reaches people where they live, work and talk story.

Programs like Dementia Friends Hawai‘i and the CARE Registry open doors to understanding and inclusion, helping residents learn how to better support those living with memory loss, while

encouraging participation in research that reflects Hawai‘i’s diverse voices. The CARE Registry, in particular, helps researchers across the nation understand how culture, language and community shape the aging experience—insights that may one day influence how healthcare, caregiving and mental wellness are approached across the Pacific.

These community partnerships don’t just educate—they strengthen ‘ohana connections and restore confidence in aging with grace. They give kūpuna opportunities to share wisdom and remind younger generations what compassion and continuity look like in everyday life.

But numbers and studies tell only part of the story. At the heart of it all is something that can’t be measured—dignity. Whether through an awareness session, a volunteer’s kind word or a quiet chat in the garden, the goal is always to remind seniors that they matter, that their stories still shape Hawai‘i’s future and how every generation has something to give and something to gain.

### Cultivating a Successful Future

While the laughter in the garden is real and immediate, COA’s leaders are also thinking about the future. The center hopes to expand Memory Café gatherings to neighboring islands and to develop partnerships with local hospitals and nonprofits to reach more caregivers. There’s also talk of blending technology with tradition—perhaps introducing virtual garden sessions for those unable to travel.

Dr. Nishita envisions Hawai‘i becoming a model for aging in place—where kūpuna can live independently, surrounded by support, culture and community. “Aging is something we all share,” she often says. “It’s a journey we take together.”

COA’s ongoing research on dementia-friendly design is another seed for the future. As cities across the Pacific look for ways to make public spaces more inclusive, UH’s work may help guide how communities everywhere design for dignity.

The story of the UH COA isn’t about numbers or programs. It’s about people. It’s about kūpuna like Doris, students like Brayden and visionaries like Melody, who see potential where others see wilderness. It’s about finding joy in the soil and meaning in the shared act of caring.



### Growing Together for a Bountiful Harvest

As a kupuna myself, I visited the garden and spoke with those who gathered there. What I witnessed was more than a program—I saw and experienced a sense of belonging.

Students laughed alongside elders, caregivers shared stories and the simple acts of planting and conversation bloomed into connection. For this kupuna-writer, it was a reminder that aging is not about slowing down. It’s about staying rooted in purpose, community and aloha.

Each seed planted in the garden reflects the center’s larger mission, to cultivate a community where learning, service and compassion thrive side by side. Here, research blossoms into relationships and the wisdom of one generation nurtures the promise of the next.

In every way, UH COA continues to prove that the best kind of growth happens when generations work together—listening, laughing and helping life take root in the spirit of aloha.

If you would like more information about the University of Hawai‘i Center on Aging, the Memory Café and garden or for inquiries about volunteering, visit [manoa.hawaii.edu/aging](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/aging). ■



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# Meeting a Growing Need: Palliative Care

by Dan Haire, President and CEO, Navian Hawaii

As Hawai'i's population ages rapidly, the need for compassionate, coordinated care for kūpuna living with serious illness is growing. Palliative care offers a vital solution providing relief from symptoms, emotional support and guidance for individuals and families navigating complex health challenges.

Unlike hospice care, which is reserved for end-of-life support, palliative care can begin at diagnosis and continue alongside curative treatment. Its goal is to improve comfort, reduce stress and help patients maintain independence and dignity throughout their care journey.

Palliative care is delivered by a multidisciplinary team—nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers and care specialists—who address physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural needs.



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It empowers patients to make informed decisions and focus on what matters most: spending time with loved ones and preserving the traditions that give life meaning.

With kūpuna expected to make up a quarter of Hawai'i's population by 2035, early access to palliative care is becoming essential. Palliative care enhances quality of life, supports caregivers and reduces unnecessary hospital visits. Families are encouraged to learn about palliative care options early, as more seniors choose to age in place. ■

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# Start the New Year With a Smile

by Dr. Vinh Tran, Dental Director, Hawaii Dental Service

The beginning of a new year is a great time to focus on your health. What better place to start than your smile? Many people don't realize how closely oral health is connected to overall well-being, especially as we get older. Gum inflammation has been linked to serious conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and even Alzheimer's.

Oral health can also affect how we feel about ourselves. Many kūpuna report smiling less with their teeth because of dental issues, which can lead to lower self-esteem and even social withdrawal. The good news is that it's never too late to start taking small steps that can make a big difference.

Brushing your teeth twice a day for two minutes and flossing once daily helps prevent gum disease. Regular dental checkups, ideally



twice a year, allow problems to be caught and mitigated early. This proactive approach prevents issues from escalating into major crises.

Eating a healthy, low-sugar diet also supports strong teeth. If brushing isn't possible, rinse with water after meals to help prevent cavities. And don't forget to share a list of your medications with your dentist, since some may affect your oral health.

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# Guard Your Vision Against Glaucoma

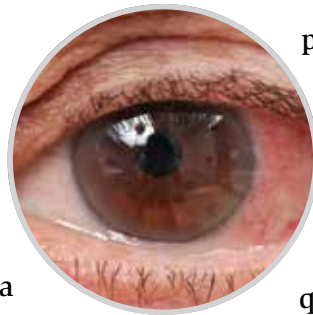
by Dominic Niyo, Editor—The Pinion, McKinley High School

Our eyesight is one of the most important ways we experience life, yet it's easy to take it for granted. From noticing subtle changes in the sky over Mauna Kea to reading the expressions of your mo'opuna, vision keeps us connected to the people and places we love. January is Glaucoma Awareness Month, serving as a reminder to protect this vital sense.

According to information from Hawai'i Pacific Health (HPH), glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually damage the optic nerve, affecting the pathway that carries visual information from the eyes to the brain. Glaucoma often develops silently. While elevated eye pressure is a common factor, glaucoma can occur even when pressure is within normal ranges. Left untreated, it slowly diminishes vision, often beginning with peripheral sight—the aspect of vision that helps us move safely through our surroundings. Glaucoma can cause vision loss long before any symptoms appear, making routine exams crucial for early detection.

An estimated 2% of adults over 40 in Hawai'i have glaucoma and the risk grows with age, HPH says. Kūpuna with diabetes, high blood pressure or a family history of the disease should remain especially vigilant by scheduling regular eye exams.

Open-angle glaucoma, the most common form, develops gradually and often shows no early warning signs. Peripheral vision may begin to fade before more noticeable changes occur. Many



patients are unaware of glaucoma until measurable vision loss has already taken place, underscoring the importance of consistent screening.

Some forms, such as acute angle-closure glaucoma, can appear suddenly, HPH says. Eye pressure rises quickly and immediate medical attention is critical. Symptoms may include severe eye pain, redness or irritation, blurred vision or halos around lights and headaches or nausea. Angle-closure glaucoma is considered a medical emergency, as rapid pressure increases can damage the optic nerve within hours.

Local clinics advise that preventing glaucoma begins with regular, comprehensive eye exams. During these visits, doctors measure intraocular pressure, examine the optic nerve and test peripheral vision to detect early signs before significant vision loss occurs.

Adults over 60 are generally advised to schedule exams every one to two years, with more frequent visits for those at higher risk.

While there is no cure for glaucoma, early detection and proper treatment can slow or even stop its progression. Options may include prescription eye drops to lower eye pressure, laser procedures to improve fluid drainage or surgery for advanced cases. Maintaining overall health also supports eye health—managing chronic conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure, staying active and avoiding smoking all contribute to preserving vision and independence. ■




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# Maintain Balance in the New Year

by Debbie Kim Morikawa, Owner, GYMGUYZ



As we welcome a new year, it's the perfect time to focus on balance, building strength, stability and confidence through movement. For seniors, fitness isn't just about exercise, it's about maintaining independence, living fully and preventing falls. Nearly every senior worries about falling, and for good reason. Falls are a leading cause of injury, so maintaining good balance is important for older adults.

## Test Your Balance

A quick self-test can highlight where you stand: Try balancing on one leg for 10 seconds. If it feels difficult, it may be time to add balance training into your routine. Simple activities, such as marching in place with knees lifted high, performing gentle step taps to the side (shift your weight onto one leg and tap the floor lightly with the other before returning it next to your planted foot) or standing on one leg while brushing your teeth can improve coordination, posture and core strength over time.

## Build Up Your Strength

Brisk walking is great for the heart, but equally important is strength training to build muscle tone and bone density. Chair squats are a great practical exercise that strengthen the legs, hips and core while improving everyday functions like getting out of bed or on and off the toilet.

## The Fear Factor

Fear of falling itself is a risk factor, often leading seniors to shorten their stride or avoid activi-

ties altogether. Over time, this restrictive behavior reduces both mobility and confidence.

Instead of holding back, it's important to keep challenging yourself safely with balance and strength activities designed to make you feel grounded and secure.

## Consistency is Key

Consistency matters more than intensity. By weaving these exercises into daily routines, seniors can stay active, confident and independent in the year ahead. ■

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# Ask the Doctor: Physical Activity

by Serena Lo, MD, Geriatric Medicine, Kaiser Permanente Hawaii

In this ongoing column, Kaiser Permanente doctors will answer commonly asked questions.

When a new year rolls around, it always feels like a fresh start. So it's the perfect opportunity to turn that positive energy into simple, healthy habits that keep you strong, steady and feeling good.

### What are the best exercises for strength without overdoing it?

When we talk about "strength," we mean staying strong and steady for everyday life—from getting up from a chair to playing with the grandkids. The best exercises are functional movements that help you stay strong and help ensure your independence.

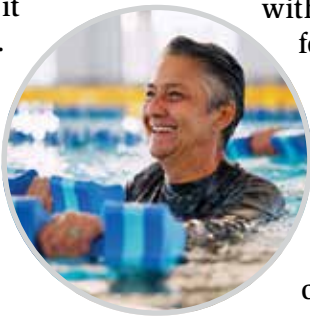
The good news? You don't need a gym or fancy equipment. Try simple moves such as chair squats, wall push-ups or standing leg lifts. Resistance bands work your muscles without putting pressure on your joints.

Living in Hawai'i, there are plenty of fun ways to stay active. Dance hula to keep your core strong and your posture proud. Go for a walk at the beach or around the park with friends. Join a tai chi class or try water aerobics at your local pool.

Aim for two days a week of light strength training—using small weights (2 lbs. or less), resistance bands or wall push-ups—and mix in walking, jogging or swimming for heart health. Move a little every day and you'll soon feel stronger and more balanced. Even a five-minute walk before or after meals makes a difference.

### How do I know if I'm pushing too hard—or not enough?

Finding your balance with exercise is like paddling a canoe: Find your rhythm. Don't sprint the whole way. The easiest way to check your effort is the talk test. If you can talk story with a friend while you're walking, but can't quite sing along with the radio, you're in the sweet spot. If you're



gasping and can't talk, it's time to ease up. Pay attention to what your body's telling you. Feeling lightheaded, dizzy or having chest pain are red flags to stop and rest—or check in with your doctor. Even soreness that lasts for more than a couple of days is your body's way of asking for a break. Take a day of rest and come back the next day when you're feeling better. If you're sore, try ice, topical creams or patches first—or acetaminophen. Check with your doctor before taking other types of pain relievers.

Think of exercise as a friendly conversation with your body. The goal is to find that steady rhythm.

### The Bottom Line

New year health goals don't mean reinventing your life—it's about finding small, joyful ways to move more. Everyday activities can give you a solid workout. Sweeping the lānai and even cooking a big family meal keep your body moving. Go as slowly as you need to prevent falls and don't lift objects heavier than you can handle.

Get your family and friends involved and it becomes an even healthier way to connect with others. When you share these moments with the people you love, you're not only keeping your body active, you're also strengthening those meaningful connections for the new year and all the years to come. ■



DR. SERENA LO, a Honolulu native, combines her love of science and helping others through medicine. She earned her medical degree from the University of Hawai'i, John A. Burns School of Medicine and completed her residency in internal medicine at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle. Board certified in geriatric and internal medicine, Dr. Lo values teamwork and compassionate care—and enjoys mentoring students interested in becoming physicians. Kaiser Permanente will cover kidney health/diabetes in the next issue. If you have a medical question for the doctor, email: [cynthia@generations808.com](mailto:cynthia@generations808.com).



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# Caring is Sharing in a Group Setting

by Annette Pang, Owner, Caring Manoa

Maria no longer felt doubtful after her warm welcome at the pau hana gathering. Her dad recently moved into a care home, but she and her siblings had second thoughts about the move when he pleaded to go home. She spoke softly then smiled after other attendees shared their own stories. By the end of the hour together, Maria's eyes sparkled with relief. She wasn't alone after all.

Relaxed, regular talk-story gatherings with caregiving team members are like a warm blanket for families who receive empathy, guidance and friendship to help cope with aging decisions, burnout or strained family relationships. These types of group meetings provide an opportunity for families to learn from each other so no one feels lost or alone when making life decisions.



Caregiving professionals can also offer support and valuable information.

Storytelling and reflection can unify gathering attendees and remind us all to honor each other as energizers who lead their families' rites of passage. Whether or not you are able to regularly attend structured meetings with your inner circle, we encourage you to follow through on your bucket lists for your own rest and relief, and share your stories with trusted people you can rely on for support. ■

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# Namaste Care for Dementia Patients

by Carol Grygleski, CTRS-Recreational Therapist, Manoa Cottage Kaimuki

Namaste Care is a sensory-focused program for people with dementia living in a care home. It's especially helpful for those in the later stages of dementia who may not be able to join in traditional activities due to a loss of abilities.

Facilities with a dedicated space that includes elements like mood lighting, fishtanks, lava lamps, essential oil diffusers and relaxing music have anecdotally been found helpful in creating a sense of calm and reducing agitation. Namaste Care guests may also receive a hand or foot massage, hydration and a snack.

The attention given to the sensory experience of the guest is what allows this modality to be accessible, even in later stages of dementia. Though more research is needed, many case studies have



shown a reduction in anxiety after dementia patients attend a Namaste Care session. Sometimes the relaxation and calm may last well beyond their time in the Namaste Care room. As care home residents are often at risk for isolation, the Namaste Care program provides them an opportunity to experience a soothing touch and physical connection while engaging them in a meaningful activity. ■

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# How to Avoid Caregiver's Guilt

by Gary Powell, Founder & Executive Director, The Caregiver Foundation

"Something bad will happen if I am not there." It's the familiar fear of caregivers everywhere. Caregivers often live under the constant pressure that their presence alone keeps disaster from striking. This deeply human belief can trap us in emotional chains and lead to exhaustion.

Many caregivers feel indispensable. "No one else helps. I'm the only one who really cares." That conviction brings both pride and pain. It can create burnout and isolation. While some caregivers may be more attentive than others, awareness is not the same as control.

Professionals — nurses, aides and physicians — are taught an essential truth: Even with the best care, decline still happens. Family caregivers must learn the same lesson. Old age is fatal. Our role is not to save lives, but to make lives as safe, comfortable and anxiety-free as possible.

Accepting this truth eases guilt. The work, the stress and even the emotional strain remains, but perspective allows us to let go of the belief that everything depends on us.

## Understanding 'Guilt'

Real guilt results from knowingly doing harm. Most caregivers don't do that. What we often feel is anxiety, sadness or regret, not guilt. Worrying about what happens when we take a break makes us human, not guilty. Unless you wear a cape, you cannot prevent every fall, illness or misstep.

Of course, there are times when guilt is appropriate — if we lose control, ignore a need or fail to



act. But even then, guilt should lead to change: Seek help; share the load; adjust your caregiving plan. For most, guilt is misplaced and undeserved.

## The Power of Respite

The cure for caregiver fatigue and misplaced guilt is respite — planned time away from caregiving. National caregiving organizations recognize it as essential to caregiver health. While paid respite care can be expensive, options exist, including professional in-home aides, short-term nursing home stays, trained volunteers, or trusted friends and family.

Tech tools such as [lotsahelpinghands.com](http://lotsahelpinghands.com) can help coordinate schedules and share responsibilities among your caregiving "team." Even small breaks restore balance and perspective.

You cannot pour from an empty cup. Think of the man holding a bucket of water but dying of thirst because he's afraid to set it down and take a drink. Don't let misplaced guilt stop you from caring for yourself. Taking care of yourself is part of caring for your loved one.

Recognize what you can control, prepare for what you cannot and give yourself permission to rest. When you care for yourself, you return stronger, more patient and better able to continue giving care — with hope and without guilt. ■

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## Is Travel on Your Retirement Agenda?

by Michael W. K. Yee, Financial Advisor and Certified Financial Planner, Ameriprise



One of the great benefits of retirement is having the freedom to pursue new interests and hobbies at your leisure. For many, travel is at the top of their retirement bucket list. The key question is how to make sure your retirement savings can keep up with your travel ambitions. The following considerations can help you determine your answer:

• **Make travel a part of your retirement budget.**

Without the funds to pursue travel, you likely won't get too far. As you plan for your living expenses, include travel as a line item in your retirement budget. Identify a portion of your monthly income to cover travel expenses before you hit the road.

• **Consider travel timing.** Most retirees plan their biggest travel excursions in the early years of retirement, when health challenges may be fewer and stamina is greater. Therefore, your travel budget may represent a larger portion of your overall expenses in the first years of retirement. If this aligns with your travel vision, factor it into your retirement budgeting strategy.

• **Determine your travel style.** To come up with a reasonable cost estimate, identify the types of traveling you would like to do. Are you more interested in short trips to nearby locations, mostly traveling by car? Do you plan to explore the country in an RV? Are you looking to visit foreign destinations on a regular basis? Your travel goals will tell you a lot about how much you are likely to spend, which should be reflected in your retirement plan.

• **Find ways to cut costs.** It's easy to face "sticker shock" when you travel. Expenses like food (usually eating out), lodging and transportation can add up quickly. If you plan to stay in one place for an extended period, look into renting a home or apartment rather than "hotel-ing" it. Try to eat like the locals by buying food at grocery stores and markets. Take the time to look for flight deals or make your automobile travel routes as efficient as possible. One of the perks of being retired is that you may have more flexibility than working people to lock in deals by traveling off-season or at other unpopular times.

• **Don't overlook insurance needs.** Travel insurance may be appropriate if you get sick or lose luggage on a trip. Medicare is not accepted outside the US, and even within the US, you want to be sure your health insurance has you covered in the states you're visiting.

• **Look for discounts and rewards.** Costs for some activities are reduced for seniors. Although discounts may be modest, every dollar counts. Check to see what discounted options are available through AAA, AARP or others. Pursue smart credit card strategies that help you earn rewards: free travel or cash back on purchases.

If travel is in your plans when you leave the workforce, it's key to go beyond dreaming and do some significant preparation. Use the time you have now to set specific goals and build savings that will help make your dreams a reality. ■

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Michael W. K. Yee, CFP®, CFS®, CLTC®, CRPCTM, is a Private Wealth Advisor/Financial Advisor with Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC in Honolulu, Hawaii. He specializes in fee-based financial planning and asset management strategies and has been in practice for 41 years.

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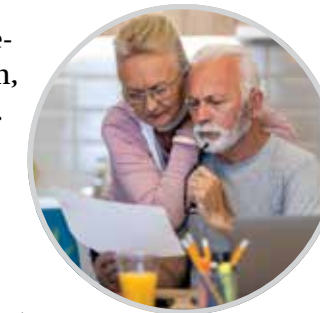
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## Minimizing Estate Taxes

by Stephen B. Yim, Esq., LL.M., & Monica M.M. Yempuku, Esq. – Yim & Yempuku, LLLC

Hawaii's estate tax exclusion remains at \$5,490,000 per person, with tax rates as high as 20%. While this may seem like a high threshold, many Hawai'i residents can exceed it quickly — especially when factoring in the value of a primary residence, inherited assets, life insurance proceeds, retirement accounts and investment portfolios.

Minimizing exposure to Hawai'i's estate tax should be a key part of your estate planning strategy. One of the most effective yet often overlooked tools is estate tax portability. This allows a surviving spouse to use the unused portion of the deceased spouse's estate tax exclusion — potentially doubling the exclusion to \$10,980,000. However, portability is not automatic. You must file a timely Hawai'i estate tax return after the



first spouse passes away, even if no tax is due at that time. Unfortunately, many families miss this opportunity because their advisors — whether attorneys or CPAs — are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the process and simply don't file the return.

Failing to claim portability can result in a significant and unnecessary estate tax burden when the surviving spouse dies.

If you or your spouse have a combined estate nearing or exceeding Hawai'i's exclusion amount, now is the time to plan ahead and take full advantage of the available estate tax strategies. ■

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# How to Minimize Capital Gains Taxes

by Dan & Julie Ihara, Real Estate Wealth Advisors, 1031 Exchange Experts – The Ihara Team

**S**elling real estate is one of the most impactful financial decisions you make. Understanding taxes, especially capital gains, can make the difference between simply selling a property and creating a lasting legacy.

When you sell your property for more than you paid for it, the profit is called a “capital gain.” If the property was owned for less than a year, the capital gain amount is taxed as ordinary income. If held longer, it’s taxed at a lower federal rate (0%, 15% or 20%), plus state taxes. But there are ways to minimize these taxes.

The primary residence exclusion benefit allows eligible homeowners to exclude up to \$250,000 of capital gains for a single owner and \$500,000 for married owners filing jointly, if they’ve lived in the property two of the last five years.



For investment properties, a 1031 exchange lets you sell and reinvest in another like-kind property, deferring capital gains and keeping more equity working for you.

A 1031 exchange can improve cash flow, diversify your portfolio and strengthen your real estate plan by passing on property with a stepped-up cost basis. By planning early and always seeking advice from a tax professional and real estate wealth advisor, you can prevent family disputes and create strategies to build, protect, preserve and transfer wealth for future generations. ■

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# Myths & Realities of a Reverse Mortgage

As with many financial products, reverse mortgage loans can be complicated and there may be a number of misconceptions about how the product works. Do you know the myths vs. the realities?

## Myth No. 1: The lender owns the home.

You will retain the title and ownership during the life of the loan, and you can sell your home at any time. The loan will not become due as long as you continue to meet loan obligations such as living in the home, maintaining the home according to the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) requirements, and paying property taxes and homeowners insurance.<sup>1</sup>

## Myth No. 2: The home must be free and clear of any existing mortgages.

Actually, many borrowers use the reverse mortgage loan to pay off an existing mortgage and eliminate monthly mortgage payments.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Myth No. 3: Once loan proceeds are received, you pay taxes on them.

Reverse mortgage loan proceeds are not considered income or otherwise (though you must continue to pay required property taxes). However, it is recommended that you consult your financial advisor and appropriate government agencies for any effect on taxes or government benefits.

<sup>1</sup> You must still live in the home as your primary residence, continue to pay required property taxes, homeowners insurance, and maintain the home according to Federal Housing Administration requirement. Failure to meet these requirements can trigger a loan default that may result in foreclosure.

<sup>2</sup> Your HECM loan will accrue interest that together with principal will need to be repaid when the loan becomes due.

## Myth No. 4: The borrower is restricted on how to use the loan proceeds.

Once any existing mortgage or lien has been paid off, the net loan proceeds from your HECM loan can be used for any reason. Many borrowers use it to supplement their retirement income, defer receiving Social Security benefits, pay off debt, pay for medical expenses, remodel their home, or help their adult children. You worked hard for this asset and prudence, along with budgeting, should be the proper approach to enjoying proceeds received from your HECM loan.

## Myth No. 5: Only poor people need reverse mortgages.

The perception of the reverse mortgage as an assist for the “poor” borrower is changing - many affluent senior borrowers with multi-million dollar homes and healthy retirement assets are using reverse mortgage loans as part of their financial and estate planning, and are working closely in conjunction with financial professionals and estate attorneys to enhance the overall quality and enjoyment of life.

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WORD LIST & DIRECTION: → ↓ ← ↗ ↘ ↙ ↚      Answers on pg. 9

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