

GENERATIONS

HAWAII'S RESOURCE FOR LIFE

MAGAZINE | VOL 16/5 • SEP/OCT 2026

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THE FILCOM CENTER: A DREAM COME TRUE

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Hasegawa GS (Hana), Maui County
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Thurs. Oct. 15th **Thurs. Nov. 12th**
Wed. Oct. 21st **Wed. Nov. 18th**

Starting at 8:00 AM

Hanapepe Library

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Mon. Oct. 12th **Mon. Nov. 9th**
Mon. Oct. 26th **Mon. Nov. 23rd**

Starting at 8:00 AM

Filipino Community Center - Flores Ballroom

94-428 Mokuola St. Waipahu, HI 96797

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Thurs. Oct. 22nd **Thurs. Nov. 19th**

Starting at 9:00 AM

Big City Diner - Makai Room

46-056 Kamehameha Hwy D-01, Kaneohe, HI 96744

Fri. Oct. 16th
Fri. Oct. 30th

Starting at 9:00 AM

Kaua'i All Saints Church - Memorial Hall

4-1065 Kuhio Hwy, Kapaa, HI 96746

Tues. Oct. 20th **Tues. Nov. 17th**
Thurs. Nov. 5th

Starting at 9:00 AM

Mana Christian Ohana Church - Kamuela

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Fri. Oct. 23rd
Wed. Nov. 6th

Starting at 9:00 AM

Maui Beach Hotel

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Fri. Oct. 16th **Thurs. Nov. 12th**
Thurs. Oct. 29th

Starting at 9:00 AM

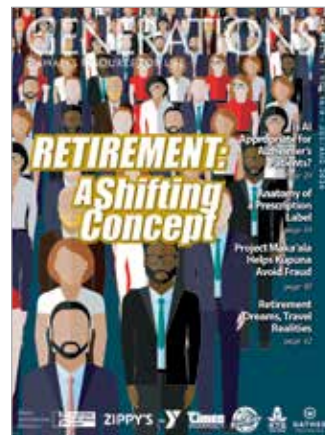


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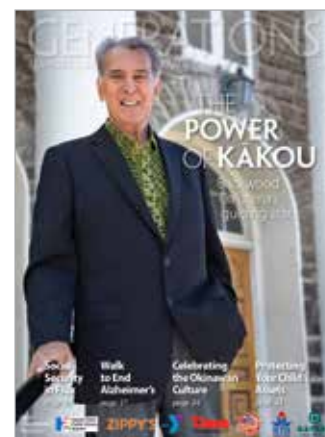
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For more information, contact Sherry Goya at **808-722-8487** or **sgoyallc@aol.com**.



I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make our Aging in Place Workshop on Saturday, Aug. 1, our biggest event since the pandemic! We welcomed more than 1,800 attendees, featured 29 educational presentations and hosted 56 exhibitors. We couldn't have done it without our incredible sponsors, exhibitors, presenters, volunteers and attendees. Thank you for being part of such a wonderful day!

My family spent a week on Maui this summer and we packed a lot into our trip. I also added a few workdays to the trip and had the opportunity to visit several of our valued partners, including Roselani Place, Kalama Heights, MEO, Maui County Office on Aging, Ohana Health Maui and the Kaunoa Senior Center.

In addition, we took a beautiful drive to Hāna to visit Hasegawa General Store, which was featured in our March-April 2026 issue (generations808.com/mar-apr-2026). When they call it a “general store,” they really mean it! It felt like stepping back in time, with just about everything you could imagine on the shelves.

This issue's feature article is about the Filipino Community Center (FilCom) on O'ahu (pgs. 22–29). Writer Haley Burford has a personal connection to FilCom as illustrated in the tender childhood memories she shares with our readers. In May, my daughter and I attended FilCom's Flores de Mayo & Filipino Fiesta. We spent the day enjoying delicious food, wonderful entertainment and learning more about Filipino culture. As someone who is deeply involved with the Okinawan Festival, I appreciate celebrating all the cultures that make Hawai'i so special. I hope you enjoy this feature as much as I enjoyed learning more about the Filipino community.

In a column that is especially close to my heart, my daughter, Lexie, shares her experience with community service in “Volunteering Made Me a Better Person” (pg. 12).

As always, I hope this issue informs, inspires and reminds you that our communities are filled with remarkable people doing remarkable things. ■



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



My family enjoyed a trip to Hāna and our visit to Hasegawa General Store.



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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.

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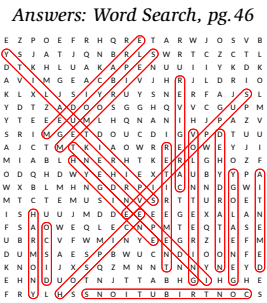
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Older Americans Month Awardees Honored

by Rick Tabor, Policy Advisory Board for Elderly Affairs, Recognition Awards Committee Chair



Hawai'i County
Francisco Galdones
Rita French

Maui County
Joseph Pontanilla
Sister Roselani Enomoto

O'ahu County
Nathan Kapule
Carol Tashima

Kaua'i County
Alan Momohara
Renee Takahashi



The Lanakila Happy Serenaders concluded the ceremony with a sing-along performance of "Hawai'i Aloha" with everyone forming a circle, holding hands and swaying to the music.

County held its event on May 15 and Kaua'i County concluded the month's festivities with a gathering on May 29. Following these county celebrations, the state gathered for the Governor's Hawai'i Statewide

Older Americans Month Recognition Ceremony on June 12 at 15 Craigside in Honolulu.

The Roots of Our Community

Our kūpuna are the roots that ground our island communities. Every year, Hawai'i's Outstanding Older Americans Month events highlight their strength. Through a lifetime of selfless kōkua (help) and deep aloha, awardees remind us that the most beautiful legacy we can leave is a community uplifted.

The chicken-skin stories of our honorees reveal our immense good fortune and privilege to be inspired by these service-above-self leaders. By honoring these individuals who volunteer their time sharing their talents, we become aware of the value of giving. May we always draw from their strength and carry their legacy forward.

Mahalo palena 'ole (boundless gratitude) to our venerable kūpuna—living treasures whose wisdom and grace continue to guide Hawai'i toward a brighter tomorrow. ■

Every May, National Older Americans Month (established in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy) celebrates the profound volunteer contributions of our country's senior citizens. Here in Hawai'i, we deeply value our kūpuna, whose wisdom and aloha spirit shape our communities. During Older Americans Month, each Hawai'i county honors its special senior citizens with Outstanding Older American Awards, crowning a male and female champion who go on to represent their island at the state level. This year's national theme, Champion Your Health, emphasized wellness, prevention and the active role older adults play in society.

Hawai'i's four county Area Agencies on Aging received nominations from the public for Outstanding Older Americans, recognizing two kūpuna from each county for their invaluable lifelong volunteer contributions and community service. Communities across our state honored their kūpuna throughout the month: Maui and Hawai'i County hosted their celebrations on May 9, Honolulu



Another Popular Generations Senior Fair

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

For the second year in a row, Generations Magazine will be partnering with the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Parks and Recreation's Senior Programs at Pearlridge Shopping Center's Wai Makai. All of the City's senior clubs on Oahu will also be holding their annual walk, called *Shuffle & Strut* at the same time.



Yim & Yempuku, LLLC
Estate Planning Attorneys

This very popular Generations Magazine Senior Fair at Pearlridge Shopping Center has been providing useful information for seniors and their families for three years. The public is invited to attend at no charge on Friday, October 16th from 10am to 2pm to talk with professionals about medicare, legal issues, assisted living facilities, real estate needs, reverse mortgages, accessible vehicles, physical therapy, healthcare, pain relief, home care, concierge services, day cares, funeral plans, hospice, estate planning and other support services.

For all Generations senior fairs, the current and many past issues of Generations Magazines are made available to attendees. Seniors and their families can look at the covers and know which issues they have read and which they would like to have. There are also a few attendees who actually have never seen Generations Magazine, even though it has been published since October 2010. Drop by the Generations table to see which issues you would like to have.



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For more information on our programs, please call Kathy Wyatt at (808) 292-4665. **TUITION ASSISTANCE MAY BE AVAILABLE IF QUALIFIED.**

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Centering Mind, Body & Spirit With Tai Chi

by Roy Kodani, GM Columnist

Centuries ago in China, tai chi was a form of martial arts. It was practiced as an internal force, not brute strength. Certain hand movements and footwork were taught as techniques of tai chi. Techniques of pushing hands were an important part of tai chi and this technique was to maintain combat efficiency. Currently, tai chi is a sports activity in some parts of China, enjoyed by many athletes.

"Tai chi has made a great, positive impact on my life," says Elizabeth Thu Hai Pham, the current tai chi instructor at the YMCA Kaimuki Wai'ala Branch. "I teach kūpuna tai chi, mainly the prevention of falling and the hand movements and footwork if the kūpuna should find himself or herself in a situation of unexpectedly falling. Tai chi consists of slow movements, and consequently, it is easy for a kupuna to learn. Because it is slow, kūpuna gradually become graceful and acquire balance in everyday life."

Elizabeth was born in Vietnam. In the final days of the Vietnam War in 1975, she fled, leaving her family possessions behind. She traveled to New Jersey, where her brother-in-law resided.

In America, she cried to God, "Why me? My father was weak. He didn't have enough to eat. But I learned whatever happens makes us stronger. Every Saturday, Vietnamese refugees came to our small apartment for a bowl of soup from my grandmother. Our family didn't have enough to eat, but when you have little, I was taught to share what little you have with someone who has nothing."

Tai Chi Master Dr. Paul Lam taught her not only the tai chi forms, but also her strengths and weaknesses, because "by learning such conditions, you look within yourself," Elizabeth says. "You learn about yourself, how to focus, how to breathe properly and how to move your energy deliberately without rushing, with calmness of the mind, now called 'mindfulness.' My master said I must honor myself." Dr. Lam is recognized



throughout the world as a Tai Chi Grand Master.

Elizabeth, who I will now call "sensei" (Japanese for teacher or highly respected person), has been awarded a tai chi certificate for her completion of training in tai chi education and skills. She is certified to teach the remedy for arthritis and the prevention of falling of all levels, more particularly for kūpuna.

Pham Sensei says, "Myself and the kūpuna who attend my classes are in a support group. There is no denying that, in their own way, the kūpuna support me and I do my

best to support them. We honor, respect and practice tai chi for the benefit of our health, to reduce arthritis and to prevent falling."

Pham Sensei continues by saying, "Proper breathing has an important connection with the brain. Unless you can relax and have peace of mind, it adversely affects the waves in your brain, which results in poor health."

She also emphasizes drinking water: "Our body requires water, because our blood needs water. I encourage everyone to drink at least 17 fluid ounces of water each day."

Pham Sensei rises at 3am daily, does her tai chi exercises and attends church where she prays for everyone and finds spiritual peace. In the early morning she has time to think, she says. As her Tai Chi Master recommended, she enjoys her life the best she can, particularly since her early years had been a time of suffering.

Her enduring advice for everyone, not only kūpuna, is to be slow and gentle in all aspects of life. Practice tai chi every day to maintain your health, peace of mind and happiness.

"Tai chi has made a great difference in my life, good health, clear thinking, lots of friends and happiness," Pham Sensei says. "If you practice tai chi every day, slow and gentle, a certain spirituality will emerge in your life." ■

A Wake-Up Call for Congress

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

This year's Social Security Trustees report sends a clear message: Congress needs to act. The latest projections show Social Security's Trust Fund reserves are expected to be depleted by 2034. That means without Congressional action, Social Security will have about 80% of the money it needs to make full payments. Congress needs to act to fill the 20% gap and they have plenty of tools in their toolbox to do it.



Some special interests in Washington will seize on this report to push proposals that would cut Social Security by reducing payments, raising the retirement age or otherwise shifting the burden onto hardworking Americans. We are fighting against this.

At AARP we hear every day from older Americans across the country who are struggling to make ends meet, like Victoria in Hawai'i, who told us she depends on Social Security to pay her mortgage and bills. "Without it, my financial security would be shattered," she said.

She's not alone. A recent AARP Financial Security Trends Survey found that six in 10 Americans 50 and over worry about whether they will have enough to stay financially secure in retirement. Nearly seven in 10 say prices are rising faster than their income. Almost half report higher healthcare costs than just a year ago.

At the same time, many are entering retirement without enough savings—42% of adults 50-plus who are not yet retired have less than \$50,000 set aside.

This is why Social Security remains a lifeline. It helps people cover basic needs like housing, groceries, utilities and healthcare. Even with that support, a majority of older Americans say today's average benefit (around \$2,000 a month) is not enough.

For millions of Americans—including 302,577 here in Hawai'i—Social Security is an essential part of their plan for financial security in retirement. It is earned through a lifetime of hard work. Social Security is not a bonus or a handout and it must be protected.

The good news is Social Security isn't going broke. This is absolutely something Congress can fix in a way that protects the money we've earned, without cuts. Lawmakers have time to act and there are many ways to strengthen Social Security and close the projected funding gap.

You can join our fight to maintain your earned Social Security benefits. Go to action.aarp.org/protectsocialsecurity to learn more. ■

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Volunteering Made Me a Better Person

by Lexie Arnold

When my family started volunteering for Hawai'i Meals on Wheels on Thanksgiving in 2023, I honestly didn't want to do it. My mom signed us up, and my dad and I just went along with it. I was 12 years old and I remember thinking, "Why am I being forced to do this?" I wanted to hang out with my friends or watch my iPad. I'm now 15 and I'm really glad she made me do it.

Delivering meals to kūpuna showed me how different life can be for other people. Some don't have family nearby, some can't cook anymore and some can't even drive to get groceries. I never really thought about these things. My favorite part is seeing them smile when I bring them their food. They also talk to me and ask me questions like how old I am, where I go to school and even if I play sports. Talking with them has helped me be able to talk to strangers and new people, which is something I have to learn to do. This experience made me learn to not only help others, but it is helping me grow, too.

I've started volunteering at my school office and library this summer. My mom signed me up because she said she needed more time to work instead of driving me all over the place. It turned out to be a lot of fun. I met new people, learned how to speak to staff, did office work and helped



out the librarians. I am also collecting service points to go toward a service cord, a braided honor cord worn at graduation to recognize community service, when I graduate from Moanalua High School. This is helping me get more volunteer hours that will look good on college applications and scholarships.

My mom always tells me that it's better to give than to receive, but I mean... getting money is still pretty nice, not gonna lie! Next year, I will still volunteer,

but I also want to get my first job. I love shopping and going out with my friends, and apparently I need to start paying for those things myself. Plus, I want to start saving for my future, maybe even for a house someday.

Even though I didn't want to volunteer in the beginning, I'm really glad my mom made me do it. It turned out that this changed the way I see other people — and myself. ■



Lexie Arnold is a 10th 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.

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One Story at a Time

by Vicki Boswell, Founder and President of Hōkūlani Children's Theatre of Moloka'i

Many people believe family history begins with old photographs, genealogy charts or lists of names and dates.

While those things are important, I teach kūpuna that family history truly begins with something much simpler: your own story — preserving family history through personal memory.

If we fail to tell our personal stories, the links between generations slowly disappear. Grandchildren may know where they came from, but they may never know who their ancestors truly were — their struggles, traditions or dreams.

I often compare family history to making a lei. Each memory is like a flower added one piece at a time. Alone, each memory may seem small, but together they create something beautiful and lasting. When stories are left untold, empty spaces are left behind for future generations.

One of the most important lessons I share is that you do not need to be a professional writer. A simple notebook, loose paper or recorded conversation can become a treasured family history.

Start with small moments: What was your childhood home like? What foods remind you of family gatherings? Who taught you important lessons? What traditions made your family unique?

Often, as kūpuna begin talking about their lives, forgotten memories naturally return. I have seen this many times while helping elders write their personal histories. One memory unlocks another, almost like opening old drawers and rediscovering treasures tucked away for years.

I also encourage families to talk story about loved ones who have passed on. Celebrating a heavenly birthday or remembering someone on an anniversary — whether it marks a loss, a milestone or a past relationship — can gently reopen important connections.

Memories are closely tied to our senses. Talking about favorite meals, familiar music or what an old neighborhood looked like can help awaken details long forgotten.



Sometimes one of the best ways to help memories return is to revisit meaningful places. Taking a senior family member on a drive through an old neighborhood, stopping at a former school, church or family home can spark stories that have been resting quietly for years.

Today there are wonderful tools available to help preserve memories. Websites such as FamilySearch (familysearch.org/en/united-states) offer free ways to record stories, upload photographs and preserve audio memories for future generations. This can be especially helpful for kūpuna who find writing difficult but enjoy speaking about their memories and life experiences.

But technology is only a tool. The real gift is the willingness to share.

The important thing is not to wait for the perfect time or perfect words. Simply begin. ■



Vicki Boswell is the Founder and President of Hōkūlani Children's Theatre of Moloka'i and a dedicated advocate for life skill development among kūpuna. Drawing from her lifelong experience with hearing loss, she teaches practical, multisensory communication strategies that strengthen connection and reduce isolation. Vicki holds a BA in educational psychology and an MSW with a child and family emphasis. She loves working with children and kūpuna, helping them build confidence, express themselves and stay meaningfully connected within their communities.

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Celebrating the German 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 11th article in this ongoing series on the many cultures that comprise Hawai'i, we will focus on the Germans, their arrival to the Hawaiian Islands, their traditions and celebrations. Today, people of German descent make up 5.8% of Hawai'i's population.

Arrival in Hawai'i

In 1778, three German sailors and one Swiss painter aboard Captain Cook's ships were the first Europeans to land in the Hawaiian archipelago, on the shores of Kaua'i. Kaua'i's German population grew to such an extent that Līhu'e was nicknamed "German Town" at one point in time. From the first landfall, German and Hawaiian culture became intertwined. German firms flourished in Chinatown, Lutheran churches dotted the landscape and while many Germans also toiled in the sugarcane fields, they also eventually held positions of power, overseeing other migrant workers.

King Kalākaua had an especially strong relationship with the German people. He appointed the Royal Hawaiian Band's most influential bandmaster, Prussian-born Heinrich (Henry/Henri) Berger. He arranged the Hawaiian Kingdom's national anthem, "Hawai'i Pono'ī," deriving it from the Prussian anthem, "Heil Dir im Siegerkranz." Berger befriended future Queen Lili'uokalani — who named him "The Father of Hawaiian Music" — arranging and performing the songs she wrote.

Culture and Traditions

German culture in Hawai'i primarily manifests itself in food and drink. Baumkuchen, a traditional many-layered cake cooked on a stick, is a beloved pastry here. It is speculated that King Kalākaua was the first Hawaiian to have baumkuchen when he visited Berlin in 1881.

The largest and most known cultural celebration is Oktoberfest, which takes place at various venues throughout the Hawaiian Islands during September and October. Local restaurants, bars and other venues annually host Oktoberfest, featuring a plethora of festival beers, bratwurst and Masskrugstemmen — stein-hoisting competitions.

Celebrations

On O'ahu, Helping Hands Hawai'i hosts its annual Oktoberfest fundraiser event to support local community programs, with other local breweries also hosting their own celebrations. The Honolulu Museum of Art hosts the annual FilmFreude Honolulu every spring, a film festival showcasing the latest in German cinema. On Hawai'i, Oktoberfest is organized by the Rotary Club of Hilo Bay. Celebrations are also held on Maui and Kaua'i.

For more information, visit German Club Hawaii's website (germanclubhawaii.org) as well as *Generations Magazine's* FaceBook page (facebook.com/genmag808) and website calendar (generations808.com/calendar) for community events and opportunities. ■

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



Beate Lipko's German Potato Salad

Recipe by Beate Lipko, written by Cynthia Arnold, GM Publisher

When looking for a German recipe, I asked Beate Lipko, AKA Auntie Crystal, my brother's high school/baseball friend's mom. She is kindly sharing with us her German Potato Salad recipe. I am a sucker for potatoes and who doesn't love bacon! So this was one I was happy to make and it turned out yummy! OMG! I may start making this for parties. It was simple and easy, but super tasty!



Ingredients

- 6 cups peeled potatoes (cut in half if large)
- 12 bacon slices
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- ½ cup white or apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup water
- 4 tbsp. granulated sugar, to taste
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper, freshly ground
- 1½ tsp. celery seeds
- 1 tbsp. Dijon or spicy brown mustard (optional)
- 2–3 tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped

Directions

1. Add potatoes to a large pot and cover with at least 1 inch of water. Generously salt the water with about 1 tbsp. of salt and boil for about 10 minutes or until the potatoes can easily be pierced with a fork. Drain well and slice potatoes into thick discs or chunks. Set aside. We prefer

- Yukon gold or red potatoes, but Russett potatoes will also work. I ended up using a combination of red and gold potatoes and kept some of the skin on.
2. Cook bacon in a large skillet over medium-high heat until crispy. Remove from pan, crumble and set aside, reserving at least 2 tbsp. of the bacon grease.
3. Cook the onions in the bacon grease over medium heat until softened and starting to brown, about 5 to 8 minutes.
4. Add vinegar, water, sugar, salt, pepper, celery seeds and mustard. Bring to a boil.
5. Add potatoes, parsley and half of the crumbled bacon. Toss to coat the potatoes and evenly heat everything through, then transfer to a serving dish.
6. Sprinkle with remaining crumbled bacon and chopped parsley. Serve warm.

Prep and cooking time: 45 minutes

Serves: 6 with a main entrée item ■

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.



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The Importance of Staying Hydrated

by Ed Motosue, Co-Principal and Vice President, Financial Benefits Insurance

An Alaska cruise can be one of the most memorable trips of your life. The breathtaking scenery, fresh mountain air and cooler temperatures often make travelers feel comfortable and refreshed. However, one health concern that many passengers overlook is dehydration.

Because Alaska is cooler than tropical destinations, many people simply do not feel thirsty. As a result, they may drink far less water than their bodies need. Unfortunately, dehydration can develop gradually and become serious before you realize it.

My wife, Darlee, and I learned this lesson firsthand. On the final day of our Alaska cruise, Darlee became ill with vomiting and diarrhea. She was unable to eat breakfast, lunch or dinner, and more importantly, was unable to keep fluids down. Our flight home was delayed for four hours, requiring us to remain at the airport much longer than expected. During that time, it became increasingly difficult for Darlee to replace the fluids she had lost.

While we were at the airport, Darlee became so weak and dehydrated that we called emergency medical technicians. She was transported by ambulance to the emergency room, where she remained hospitalized for four days and required three bags of intravenous fluids. Multiple blood tests, EKGs and MRI studies revealed no underlying medical problems. The physicians concluded that severe dehydration had placed significant stress on both her kidneys and her heart.

As we age, our bodies naturally contain less water and our sense of thirst becomes less reliable. Older adults can become dehydrated much more quickly than younger individuals. When vomiting or diarrhea occurs, life-threatening risks increase dramatically.

During your Alaska cruise, make a conscious effort to drink water throughout the day, even when you do not feel thirsty. Carry a refillable



water bottle, limit excessive alcohol consumption and increase your fluid intake if you become ill. Staying hydrated is a simple step that can help ensure your Alaska adventure remains enjoyable, safe and memorable. ■



EDWARD MOTOSUE is a 1967 graduate of 'Iolani High School. In 1971, he earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Hawai'i. In 1978, he earned a master's degree from Pepperdine University. He is the Vice President of Financial Benefits Insurance, Inc. (FBI). Ed's mission is to help educate our kūpuna. Our kūpuna deserve to live healthier productive lives and find peace of mind.

If you have a story to share, email the editor: debra@generations808.com.

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Saving Memories and Space

by Sara-May J. Colón, Director, Mission & Spiritual Care, Adventist Health Castle

As the years of our lives accumulate, so do our belongings. Every drawer has stories overflowing, closets are museums of memories and the contents of each room whisper about the moment in time they became part of your home. So how do we bring honor to a lifetime of memories, without being weighed down?

Be gentle with yourself. Ask, "Does this reflect who I am today?" and/or "Does this need to travel with me into the next chapter of my life?" Grief may be part of this journey as you learn to let go. Set realistic expectations and deadlines. Be strategic by tackling one drawer at a time or by working one hour a day. Celebrate the small wins.

Sift through belongings with curiosity and reflection beyond "keep or toss." Ask yourself,



"What do I use daily? What is deeply meaningful and/or a legacy item? What can I gift with intention?"

There are ways to save things using a fraction of space. One idea is photographing your items/memories. Then create a digital photo library for viewing on-screen or for printing into a book. Curate and create a space for items that you've kept that best tell your story.

Downsizing is about distilling down to clearer stories, people and things that truly matter. You'll soon feel lighter, clearer and more connected. ■

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THE FILCOM CENTER: A DREAM COME TRUE

by Haley Burford

Photography by
Steve Nohara



Clockwise (L-R): Roland Casamina, CEO, House of Finance; Hugh Madula, Programs & Events Coordinator; Rose Cruz Churma, Architect; Eddie Flores Jr., L&L Co-Founder; Su Lazo, 2nd Vice Chair, Executive Committee

At first glance, the Filipino Community Center looks Filipino enough — Spanish-inspired architecture, an engraved golden sun over the entrance, a glittering mosaic portrait of Consuelo Zobel Alger, after whom the central courtyard is named. The history of the building is evident in its grander pieces, yes, but taking a closer look reveals pieces of the past in the form of plaques and carefully preserved curios, all telling of Filipino history in Hawai‘i. For October’s Filipino American History Month (FAHM), we look to the Filipino Community Center as a guiding light and gathering place for people from all walks of life — not just Filipinos. In order to get to where we are, though, we must first look back to where we come from.

A Constellation of Civilizations

Over 4,000 years ago, immigrants from southern China were the first to inhabit the Philippine Islands, also spreading throughout areas in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia and Indonesia. The Philippines boasts a profoundly rich cultural catalogue, though written records fall short in capturing the nuances of this history. Until Spanish arrival in the 16th century, the people inhabiting the islands did not see the archipelago as one unified entity.

The Philippines, like Hawai‘i, is an archipelago in the Pacific Ocean, with islands numbering over 7,000. Before the Philippines was the Philippines, the islands were comprised of ancient kingdoms throughout Luzon, Mindanao and the Visayas regions. Each kingdom’s tribes had their own ways of life, following *datus* (leaders/protectors) and living in *barangays* (“boat” in Tagalog, the language originating from central Luzon).

The Fight for Freedom

Sailing for the Spanish crown, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan arrived in the Visayas region in 1521. Through his arrival, Spain forced its access to the kingdoms, naming and unifying the islands as the Philippines after King Phillip II. Native populations were displaced and Spanish rule lasted through the 19th century.

At the very end of the 1800s, the young men of an economically robust elite native class were sent to Manila and Europe for a liberal education, becoming known as *ilustrados*. Establishing the Propaganda Movement, they called for equality and systemic reforms, the most famous being Jose Rizal, a Filipino revolutionary who inspired the people. The Philippine Revolution began in 1896 as people fought for emancipation from Spain’s 333-year colonial rule and the right to self-governance. The 1898 Treaty of Paris transferred “ownership” of the archipelago from Spain to the US.



Through 48 years of American colonization, two World Wars took place. Japanese imperial forces invaded the shores of northern Luzon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. Manila was occupied just a couple of weeks later, and imperialist forces committed grave atrocities such as the Manila Massacre (that occurred all over the archipelago) and Bataan Death March.

The people persevered. The Hukbalahap (Huks for short) were a communist guerrilla movement conceived by peasant farmers in central Luzon. The women of the Huk resistance were especially indispensable to the movement. Enduring abuse from Japanese forces, Filipina women organized guerrilla units, worked as spies and fought tooth and nail in combat. Filipino revolutionaries never lost their grit — staying determined and fighting for independence from the US in the Philippine-American War, remaining under US imperial rule through July 4, 1946, when the US formally recognized Philippine independence.

Post-independence, the Philippines focused on rebuilding and struggled to restimulate its economy. After Ferdinand Marcos Sr. was exiled for corruption and dictatorship, the Philippines worked hard to restore democratic processes — a significant milestone in this process was the passing of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines. Today, the people of the Philippines are still striving to address poverty and corruption. But freedom, hard-won, can never be taken away.

An Ocean Apart

Across the Pacific, migrant Filipinos would begin another legacy. Filipinos known as “Manila men” settled in the Kingdom of Hawai‘i in the mid-1800s, working as cooks and musicians in the Royal Hawaiian Band (RHB). They were some of the first of many *sakadas*, or Filipino overseas workers. In the early to mid-1900s, an estimated 125,000 *sakadas* immigrated to Hawai‘i from northern and central Philippines, working on sugar plantations. As time went on, more *sakadas* brought their families with them, strengthening the local Filipino community.

One Manila man, Jose Sabas Libornio, an understated hero in Hawaiian history, headed the RHB during the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. As a loyal friend to Queen Lili‘uokalani, Libornio was one of few RHB mem-

bers to refuse allegiance to the US government. Ellen Prendergast, a Native Hawaiian composer, was inspired by Libornio’s and others’ loyalty to the queen and wrote “Mele ‘Ai Pōhaku,” a mele for hula. Libornio turned the lyrics into a musical composition, creating “Kaulana Nā Pua,” a song of resistance to imperial rule and colonialism.

Filipinos were exploited, enduring grueling labor and inadequate pay. A series of strikes across the Hawaiian Islands culminated in the Hanapēpē Massacre that took place on Sept. 9, 1924, where 16 Filipino laborers and four police officers were killed. These events of Filipino resistance and bloodshed remain as scars on the body of the Filipino fight for freedom.

Filipino Excellence

In the 1970s, tourism and militarism were gaining ground in Hawai‘i because of its increasing desirability as a travel destination and the Vietnam War. As a result, Filipinos were being displaced. An example is the Ota Camp in Waipahu. The people organized against this and fought eviction. The People Power Movement in the Philippines, the robust Filipino participation in the labor unions in Hawai‘i illustrate that ordinary people, when working together, can accomplish extraordinary things. Today, people of Filipino descent make up the second largest ethnic group and the largest Asian group in Hawai‘i — roughly ¼ of the overall population.

Enter the nonprofit Filipino Community Center Inc., established in 1992, with its constitution and by-laws filed with the state prior to the completion of the building in 2002. Finally, the Filipino Community Center (FilCom Center/FCC) opened its doors in 2002 and has become integral to Filipino/local cultural vitality as a gathering place and culmination of Filipino passion, hard work, kindness and strength.

But in order to ascend to this level, it had to be built from the ground up.



An Impossible Dream

According to Rose Cruz Churma, one of the key figures in building the center, the dream had been in the making for decades. In 1992, the Filipino Chamber of Commerce Hawai‘i (FCCH) was ready to make the center a reality, but had no idea where to start. Rose was recruited in 1993 by local businessman Eddie Flores Jr., who was already putting together the first ever Filipino Fiesta. Concurrently, another businessman, Roland Casamina, asked Eddie to help with what would be called the “FilCom Center project.” While most saw the development of the center as integral to uniting Filipinos and the community, Eddie took a simpler approach: Many other cultures had festivals at Kapi‘olani Park. “Why not us?”

Most people know Eddie as the co-founder of L&L Hawaiian Barbecue, but he also played a foundational part in building the center. Half Chinese and half Filipino, he was born in Hong Kong and moved to Hawai‘i with his family when he was young. As someone of mixed heritage who knew little Tagalog, when Eddie moved to Hawai‘i, he was anxious that the community wouldn’t accept him. In 1991, he decided to take a leap and join the FCCH. He was immediately welcomed to the group, kickstarting what would become decades of community advocacy and activism through his life.

The Filipino Community Center had been a dream in the making for decades. The nonprofit Filipino Community Center Inc., established in 1992, brought the dream to fruition with the completion of the building in 2002.

When it came time to take on the project, Eddie shone with tenacity and wit. Described by Rose as having “Filipino creativity and Chinese pragmatism,” Eddie was the one who suggested that the center lease tenant spaces so that the building accrues income. “Without what I envisioned, we’d be in trouble.” To this day, this decision specifically is one that the folks at the center are especially grateful for.

Rose specialized in architecture and design. From the beginning, she was wary of this nonprofit project and what it entailed. In “FilCom Center: A Reflective History,” published on the eve of the center’s grand opening, Rose writes, “[W]hat would evolve as the FilCom Center consisted of an enthusiastic group of dreamers with very little resources, no land, no organization, no plan of action... My initial reaction was to stay away.” Though she swore off involvement with the project, Eddie, Roland and then-FCCH-president Lito Alcantra eventually convinced her to join. She noted how Eddie and Roland especially complemented each other as business partners — Eddie’s passion for the project manifested in his drive to ensure financial sustainability for the center, and Roland’s in how he represented the typical Filipino immigrant.

Roland was born in the Philippines and immigrated to Hawai‘i in 1968, facing racial discrimination growing up. As a result, he was ashamed of being Filipino until early adulthood, when he got a job as the youngest manager at a bank, in part, because of his ability to speak Ilocano. Thus began his career in finance, eventually establishing his own company called “House of Finance.” But, he still wanted to do more for the community, taking on the project before recruiting Eddie.

Roland’s concern has always been that Filipino people as a group are often content in being employees instead of starting their own businesses. He remembers that, after graduating from high school, his peers were relieved to “‘finally be done.’ For me,” says Roland, “graduating high school was just the beginning — a stepping stone.” He wanted to retain that drive when working on

the project. Though both Eddie and Roland were motivated, Roland divulges that it felt like “the blind leading the blind,” especially in the project’s early years.

By 1996, the executive committee working on the FilCom Center project hosted a planning workshop. The Waipahu Sugar Mill had closed its doors the previous year and 2 acres were designated for the center. Roland recalls, “We went to the boardroom and saw the map and it was all drawn out.” Roland and Eddie kept straight faces above the table, but underneath, Roland started kicking Eddie’s leg. “And one of the things I’m really proud of is, here’s a guy, he’s half Chinese, half Filipino, born and raised in Hong Kong, and here he is identifying as a true Filipino.” In the face of this major accomplishment (and throughout the entire project), Roland bragged about Eddie: “I talked about him in front of all the Filipinos and they were all so proud of Eddie.” In conversation, Roland turns to Eddie after explaining and says, “I’m proud of you, Eddie,” to which Eddie responds, “Hey, don’t say that. Tears in my eyes now. I’m proud of you, too, brother.”

Seeing It Through

The project did not progress without its hiccups. A few times, funding was paused or almost completely halted due to federal requirements. But, in 2000, groundbreaking took place. Still, more obstacles arose as the committee realized their lack of funding. They were hoping for a grant from the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. Chuck McLemore, the committee’s fundraising consultant, told them that the most they should expect was about \$1.5 million, but in February of 2001, they received a call from grant director Gailene Wong who said they could ask for double. Rose, Eddie and Roland remember this moment fondly, keeping their composure until they reached the parking garage, where “all hell broke loose. Eddie did his version of the ‘funky chicken katsu’ and Roland was jumping up and down and doing strange cheers,” Rose writes.

The Filipino Community Center officially opened its doors on June 11, 2002. “How could the Filipino community of Hawai’i pull off something like this?” Rose asks. It was the leadership, political involvement, the social acclimatizing but, most importantly, the volunteers. “We knew that



to make this happen we had to draw all — Filipino or not, immigrant and local, young and old.”

The Filipino Community Center in Waipahu is, according to Eddie, the largest community center in the US and outside of the Philippines. Eddie says, “We spent 10 years on this. That’s hard work. I was actually in line for FCCH president and I said I couldn’t do it. When we first went to the center site, it was just a sugarcane field.” When the center finally opened, it was a sunny day. “I had tears in my eyes,” says Eddie. Roland adds, “Every time I walk into the center, I have goosebumps. I can’t believe that what Eddie and I and everyone else dreamed of really happened.” They both agree that if asked to undertake the project today, they wouldn’t be able to do it. “It was really an impossible dream. Everything came into place.”

Eddie and Roland both believe that whatever they give or put into a project will be returned to them 10 times over. Through all of their hard work, both Roland and Eddie end their retelling with a word of gratitude to the community — Filipino, non-Filipino, federal, state and local. What started as a decades-lingering daydream now stands as both a gathering place for all and a monument to the love and hard work that went into its development, for those who came before and for all who will come after.

At the FilCom Center

The three-story center is overseen by a board of directors. Edmund Aczon has been chairman of the board since 2011, but, he jokes, “I’m the janitor and the doorkeeper.” As chairman, a lot of his work involves maintaining the center and receiving guests. Before FilCom, he worked for



As chairman of FilCom, Edmund Aczon’s leadership is paramount to the continued success of the center.

former Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, ensuring the senator was an advocate for the Filipino people. Edmund organizes meetings and meets with members of the board. Su Lazo has been with the board since 2024 and is also second vice chair of the executive committee. “It’s a labor of love,” she says.

Year-round Programs:

- **Zumba**
Mondays, 6:30pm – 7:30pm
- **Ballroom Dance**
Tuesdays, 6:30pm – 7:30pm
- **Traditional Dance**
Wednesdays, 5:30pm – 6:30pm
- **Escrima: Filipino Martial Arts**
Every last Saturday of the month,
(Please call for specific times: 808-680-0451)

Periodically Scheduled Classes & Workshops:

- **Language**
- **Immigration**
- **Filipino cuisine cooking**
- **Financial literacy**
- **HiNAMI Nursing Examination Class**
(From July to November. One of FilCom’s signature programs for more than 20 years, is a volunteer-led board preparation course provided by Hawaii Nursing Advocates & Mentors Inc. to help nursing graduates, especially foreign-educated nurses, pass their licensing exams.)



The center structures itself and its programs around six foundational pillars. **Kultura** (cultural preservation) celebrates Filipino traditions through the arts, music, dance and intergenerational storytelling. The events under this pillar are FilCom Sundays, Banda Kawayan and History Fest. **Kapaligiran** (environmental stewardship) focuses efforts on protecting nature through community-based projects and sustainable practices. The center holds hydroponics/herb-planting workshops and hosts clean-up days. **Kalusugan** (health and wellness) promotes holistic well-being for all ages. The program under this pillar is called “FilCom Cares.” **Kinabukasan** (economic empowerment) offers educational opportunities for financial literacy, mentorship and general learning. The center offers immigration/naturalization services and NCLEX-exam review. **Kababayan** (community building) unites the Filipino diaspora via civic initiatives and community events. The main events for this pillar are Filipino Fiesta, Pasko sa FilCom and Bayanihan Gala. Finally, **Kabataan** (youth development) is concerned with building the next generation through leadership training and creative workshops. The main program that falls under this pillar is Fil4Kids. Registration/participation in almost all of these programs is free.

One of the events, if not the largest, that take place at the FilCom Center is the annual Flores de Mayo & Filipino Fiesta (usually shortened to Filipino Fiesta), which happens on the first Saturday of May and is chaired by Su. Fiesta has something for every generation, ranging from *tinikling* and other traditional arts workshops to a balut-eating contest, cultural storytelling, karaoke and more. Already planning for the next event, Su shares her excitement and gratitude for the people who help make fiesta happen every year. A lot of her work is also modernizing fiesta operations and processes, work she accomplishes with the help of her committee and community partners.

Along with the FCCH, Su says that the Filipino Jaycees of Honolulu is a pillar organization as they consistently collaborate with the center, expressing pride in her ability to bridge gaps

across expertise and age. “The work that I do is making sure we continue to build that trust with the older generation while also giving those opportunities for young folks to develop their skills, because they’re going to lead one day.” She is also grateful for Eddie and Roland’s guidance. “I want to make sure he and Roland are honored. They built the Filipino Community Center, right?”

Going all the way back to the early ’90s, the first Filipino Fiesta was planned and executed by Eddie. “It’s my baby,” he says, “from day one.” What started as just fiesta and Flores de Mayo became the annual flagship project of the center. According to Su, fiesta represents a microcosm of the Center that takes place in just one day.

“Fiesta is a platform for cultural preservation and education as much as an economic opportunity for local organizations and performers to share their resources and talent. And, at the root of it all, fiesta is a multigenerational gathering of our community,” she says.

In turn, Eddie and Roland express their admiration for Su: “She is the young generation and is very dedicated. I’ve never seen anyone do such a great job.”

Eddie still mentors the fiesta planning committee and helps fundraise. He’s “really proud of the group. Young people are a little different, but I see them as the future of the Filipinos.”

THE WAY BACK HOME by Haley Burford



I wrote this issue’s feature and, coincidentally, was also a kid at Fil4Kids for a couple of years. I was nervous at first to take on this feature because I have difficulty writing about things close to me, but after speaking

with Rose, Su, Edmund, Roland and Eddie, my nerves calmed almost immediately after meeting each of them. The way they spoke about their work with the Filipino Community Center (FilCom Center) inspired me and reminded me of my time there. I want to express my sincere gratitude to them for sharing their knowledge and passion with me.

The Power is With the People

Those involved with the FilCom Center, past and present, continue advocating for the Filipino people. Roland and Eddie support scholarships for Filipino students at their alma maters and the Shidler College of Business. They wish to see more rising Filipino leaders and role models. Eddie says, “We don’t have many Filipino role models, so it’s important for us to be in the mainstream,” to which Roland adds, “I want Filipino students to feel that it’s common to see that a guy that looks like me can become successful.”

Hugh Madula is the center’s programs and events coordinator. When he’s not setting up for the next celebration, he’s curating a small room of his personal collection of Filipino artifacts and literature. He stresses how important it is that young Filipinos know their history and take pride in being Filipino. “Without my accent, without my history, I don’t know who I am. Who else is gonna share these things? I want more people to come see, and hopefully one day I’ll have a bigger room. That’s my goal: for more Filipinos to know where we come from.”



I related to Eddie when he spoke about the fears of not being accepted because of his mixed heritage. My experience growing up in Hawai’i, which I’m sure many others can relate to, included anxiety and confusion—not really knowing where I fit in—too nervous to assert myself into one culture or another. Sometimes, even people who I considered family would ostracize me for being “only” half Filipino. When I would spend summers at the FilCom Center, though, I never felt that anxiety and confusion. For young me, this was quite rare, so I treasured it.

Everyone I interviewed either invited me to lunch or to join their volunteer committees. The readiness with which they wished to share these spaces with me reminded me of some of my own

No longer with the center, Rose now works with the Filipino-American Historical Society of Hawai’i and the Filipino Association of University Women (FAUW), seeking to document and preserve Filipino American history: oral histories, digitizing historical documents, hosting workshops and publishing Filipino writing. With FAUW, she seeks writers to publish their creative work. “It’s in the arts that we can best tell our story, because it reaches the heart,” she says. “If it’s just didactic, it’s hard to remember. But if it touches the heart, it’s easier to do so.”

She is also writing a piece on Eddie for his nomination to the Manong/Manang annual tribute in San Francisco, an annual event when Filipino elders are celebrated for their community work and achievements.

Su also talks about the Filipino curriculum project that aims to teach K through 12 classrooms about Filipino history in Hawai’i. As the second largest ethnic group in the islands, Su and others feel it is imperative to teach the youth about how Filipino and Hawaiian communities have been interlinked since the first wave of immigrants.

relatives and friends, always inviting and always companionable. When I interviewed Edmund, he invited me to the board of directors luncheon at the center later that week. It was my first time back at the center since I was a child, so it meant a lot to me to be back in that space. At the luncheon, the same thing happened! Everyone I spoke to was happy to hear about my interest in volunteering and being more integrated with the community, inviting me to concerts and meetings after speaking with me for a few minutes. It felt a bit like whiplash, but gratitude and awe quickly overpowered that feeling.

I took the opportunity to write this feature quite seriously. I mean, I take every feature opportunity seriously, but the FilCom Center holds

A Gathering Place

During October, Filipino American History Month, various celebrations will take place. Many events on O’ahu will take place at the FilCom Center beginning on Oct. 4, including dance workshops, history exhibits and food showcases. See the schedule of their events at filcom.org. The FilCom Center is also celebrating its 25th anniversary next year.

“Filipinos own the center,” says Eddie. Roland adds, “If you’re Filipino or Filipino at heart, if you’re from Hawai’i, you’re part of the community.” Edmund says, “Community involvement is key.” The FilCom Center encapsulates the spirit of the Filipino people.

This story is told with the hope that all readers come away knowing more, with a heightened sense of curiosity and appreciation for Filipino history and heritage, a desire to learn more and an anticipation of what can be done to pass this aloha and sense of community (*bayanihan*) from one person to the next. Everything starts with a dream. Through careful attention, hard work and togetherness, impossible dreams come to life. ■

some of my most precious childhood memories, and I knew that if I was going to write this story that I had to go back to that headspace and sit with it. Going back to the center after over a decade was strange—I noticed things that child-me never noticed. I read each plaque, went up to see the historical exhibit, saw Hugh’s curated room, took in the afternoon quiet and thought about how much had changed over the years.

I definitely have changed; the center, though, is just as I remember it. For some reason, this realization brought me peace. I’m worlds apart from the kid I was, and I’ll keep changing, but the center has been here, and I hope you’ll join me in helping to make sure it stays that way for the rest of our lives. ■

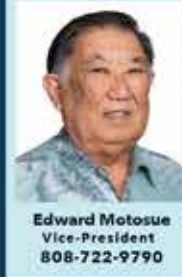
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Avoiding Falls as We Age

by Dr. Anthea Wang, Kaiser Permanente Hawaii

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

As we age, staying active and independent becomes even more important and that starts with staying steady on our feet.

What are the most important things I can do to prevent falls as I get older?

Balance training: One of the most effective ways to prevent falls is to build lower-body strength with exercises such as squats and sit-to-stands. Balance training also significantly reduces fall rates. Simple exercises such as standing on one foot, heel-to-toe walking, side-stepping and slowly turning in circles can improve stability. There is strong evidence that tai chi is an effective balance practice.

Shoes are safer: I know it's hard to give up the slippers, but if you're walking more than a few steps outside, choose shoes with good traction and support, particularly for wet or uneven surfaces.

Medication review: As we age, our medication lists often grow. Be sure to regularly review all the medications you're taking with a physician or pharmacist, particularly those used for high blood pressure, diabetes, or depression and anxiety, as some of these medications can cause dizziness or lightheadedness.

Regular vision and hearing checks: Have your vision and hearing checked routinely. Even small changes can affect stability.

Fall-proof your home: Remove clutter and loose rugs that could cause trips. Keep rooms well-lit and use night lights throughout the home. Install grab bars where needed, especially in bathrooms and hallways.

Clear vision, strong legs, good balance, safe footwear and a safe home together make a powerful difference in staying steady and independent.



How can I tell if I should start using a cane?

A lot of folks worry that using a cane means they're getting weaker or losing independence.

Others are concerned it might even make their balance worse. But in reality, the opposite is usually true. A properly fitted cane often helps you walk more naturally and with less tension. When you feel steadier, your muscles move the way they're supposed to so you can stay active.

A cane is like eyeglasses for balance. A cane gives your body clearer feedback so it can move safely.

You might benefit from a cane if you notice yourself reaching for walls or furniture, feeling unsure on uneven ground, tiring quickly in one leg, or if you've had a fall or a near fall. Another important sign is when you start avoiding places or activities because you're worried about tripping.

Walking while feeling unstable tends to make the body stiffen and over time that can worsen balance. A cane often allows people to take a more relaxed step, walk farther and stay engaged in the things they enjoy.

Falls are not an inevitable part of aging.

Staying steady on your feet is about being engaged—in your routines, your community and the activities that bring you joy. A few small adjustments today can help you move confidently for years to come. ■



Dr. Anthea Wang is a board-certified internist at Kaiser Permanente's Honolulu Medical Office. She earned her medical degree from the University of North Carolina (UNC) School of Medicine and did her internal medicine internship and residency at UNC Hospitals. Dr. Wang also trained in general preventive medicine at UNC Medical Center. She serves as Assistant Area Medical Director for Government Programs & Population Community Health Solutions at Kaiser Permanente Hawaii.

Kaiser Permanente will cover mental health in the next issue. If you have a medical question for the doctor, email cynthia@generations808.com.

Healthy Habits for a Lifetime of Smiles

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

With October's National Dental Hygiene Month just around the corner, it's a great time to focus on the healthy habits that keep your smile strong. The annual observance recognizes the important role dental hygienists play in promoting good oral health and encourages people of all ages to practice good oral hygiene and schedule regular dental visits.

Practicing good oral hygiene becomes even more important as we age because it supports both a healthy smile and overall well-being. Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, floss daily, and visit your dentist regularly for exams and cleanings. These habits help remove plaque, prevent cavities/gum disease and reduce your risk of tooth loss. Professional cleanings by your den-



tist can remove hardened plaque (tartar) that cannot be removed at home.

Many older adults experience dry mouth as a side effect of medications. Because saliva helps protect your teeth, staying hydrated and talking with your dentist about ways to manage dry mouth can help reduce your risks.

Daily oral care and regular dental visits are essential. Take care of your oral health today and enjoy a healthy smile for years to come. ■

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Keep Your Mind Sharp

by Jenny Ostlind, Membership & Healthy Lifestyle Program Executive, YMCA of Honolulu



For many of us, one of the greatest fears of aging isn't wrinkles or gray hair—it's losing our memory, our independence or the ability to recognize the people we love. While some changes in memory are a normal part of aging, dementia is not simply an inevitable part of getting older.

Up to 45% of dementia cases may be linked to risk factors that can be modified through healthy lifestyle choices—the most powerful ways to support long-term brain health.

Brain health isn't just about memory, it's about whole-person health. Everyday habits that support brain health include regular physical activity, nutritious eating, quality sleep, stress management, social connection, cognitive stimulation and healthy hearing and vision. It's never too early or too late to make positive changes.

That's the foundation of Brain Health Hui, a six-week, evidence-based program offered by the YMCA of Honolulu in partnership with Brain Matters Hawai'i. Over weekly 90-minute sessions, kūpuna learn practical strategies to support brain health while connecting with others. The program is free for Y members.

Each session combines gentle movement, discussions and hands-on activities focused on nutrition, exercise, sleep, stress management, hearing health, memory strategies and mindfulness. The program emphasizes practical habits for daily life.

A unique feature of Brain Health Hui is SMART-fit technology, an interactive system that combines movement with cognitive challenges. Participants match colors or shapes on a lighted board while balancing, stepping or performing gentle squats. These "dual-task" exercises challenge the brain and body simultaneously, improving reaction time, balance, coordination and memory through entertaining and engaging game-like activities.

Just as important, Brain Health Hui creates opportunities to build friendships and reduce social isolation—both important contributors to healthy aging. Many participants who began the program as strangers finished as friends, continuing to check in whenever they meet at the YMCA.

Interest has been so strong that every Brain Health Hui session has reached capacity shortly after registration opens.

Brain Health Hui isn't about turning back the clock. It's about helping people stay active, connected and independent as they age. To learn more about Brain Health Hui, upcoming class dates, membership information or other healthy aging programs offered by the YMCA of Honolulu, visit ymcahonolulu.org.

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Is Caregiving Straining Your Marriage?

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

Retirement with your spouse is just within arm's reach, when you receive the phone call: "Something happened to Mom." Suddenly, your world is turned upside down as the realities of caregiving set in. You may think you can simply organize help, get things all set and quickly return to your world and your plans. But shortly into your new caregiving role, you realize that Mom and Dad did not plan well for this possibility and it's too late to change things now. Somebody has to shoulder the work of caring, arranging for care and possibly, financing care.

Aging Baby Boomers are faced with caring for our long-lived parents. Although we are glad to still have our parents with us and doing well, when things take a turn and caring becomes your all-encompassing activity, real problems can develop for you and your spouse.

Approximately 80% of caregivers report strain on their marriages due to caregiving pressures. About 75% of them say they had no choice but to step up. So how do you create both the understanding and the support needed in a caring relationship that also includes providing care for a parent or other loved one?

♥ **Understand that even if you are the only child, caring for your loved one is not a solo act.** You may have to dig, get creative, not meet every desire expressed and accept whatever help is available. Providing care does not have to mean that you provide the care. It means you ensure that care is provided.



♥ **Your spouse/partner cares more about you, the caregiver, than they do the loved one you are caring for.** While that might seem selfish, would you really want it any other way? You must respond to that love openly and with acknowledgement. "I know this is not what we had planned and having you with me is the only way I can get through this. I love you for loving me."

♥ **Find ways to make as much of your life together shine.** Kim Andreus, the aging and eldercare manager for SAS Work/Life, urges people to keep romance alive. "Try to find small, regular moments for you and your partner to connect. This can be making time for morning coffee together, a special show that you make time to watch or an evening walk with the dog."

The Caregiver Foundation works with the community to promote caregiver support groups and holds a Caregiver Support Group on the third Tuesday of every month. Check out the website for announcements and registration details or call the number below.

Joining a Caregiver Support Group connects you with others who understand your challenges, offering validation, practical advice and emotional support to help prevent burnout. ■

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A Family's Guide to Hospice Care

by Ashley Helfer, RN, MSN, MBA, Chief Operating Officer, St. Francis Healthcare System of Hawai'i

As Hawai'i's kūpuna population grows, more families will face decisions about end-of-life care. Hospice can be a compassionate choice, yet many people are unsure what it involves.

What is hospice care? Hospice provides specialized support for people with serious illnesses who choose comfort rather than curative treatment. Care is guided by each person's goals, values and priorities, focusing on symptom management, emotional/spiritual support and quality of life. Hospice helps patients live as comfortably as possible with dignity, and supports their loved ones.

Who provides hospice care? Care is delivered by an interdisciplinary team that may include doctors, nurses, social workers, spiritual counselors, aides and trained volunteers.



How does hospice support families?

Hospice offers counseling, caregiving guidance, education and grief support, helping loved ones focus on meaningful time together.

Where is hospice care provided?

Care can be provided at home, in assisted living, a nursing home or a dedicated hospice inpatient facility.

When should families talk about hospice?

Early conversations with doctors and loved ones can align care with personal values, especially when treatment is no longer effective and comfort becomes the priority. ■

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Silent Disco Transforms Memory Care

by Kanani Sakai, Life Enrichment Manager, Hi'olani Care Center at Kāhala Nui

Music has a remarkable ability to awaken memories, spark emotions and bring people together. For older adults—particularly those living with dementia—combining music with movement can support physical, emotional and social well-being. Silent disco offers a unique way to experience those benefits.

Unlike a traditional dance class, participants wear wireless headphones. Individual volume controls allow everyone to choose a comfortable listening level, while noise-canceling technology minimizes surrounding distractions. The result is an immersive experience that encourages participants to focus on the music, sing along and move with confidence.



Research suggests that personalized music can help evoke memories, reduce anxiety and agitation, and encourage social interaction for people living with dementia. Adding gentle movement supports balance, coordination and physical activity.

While silent disco is not a treatment for dementia, it is an engaging activity that can create joy and supports quality of life by combining the therapeutic power of music, movement and meaningful human connection. ■

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Supportive Care During Serious Illness

by Dan Haire, President & CEO, Navian Hawaii

During a serious illness, supportive care helps people maintain the best possible quality of life.

Supportive care focuses on relieving symptoms such as pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea, anxiety or difficulty sleeping. It also helps individuals and families navigate complex medical decisions, understand treatment options and identify resources that can make daily life more manageable.

Supportive care can begin at any stage of a serious illness and may be provided alongside curative or life-prolonging treatments. Early access to supportive care has been associated with improved symptom management, better communication between patients/healthcare providers and reduced stress for family caregivers.



Supportive care also recognizes that serious illness affects more than physical health. Emotional well-being, social connections, spiritual needs and caregiver support all play important roles in overall quality of life. Addressing these needs can help individuals remain more comfortable, engaged and independent.

Families are encouraged to ask healthcare providers about supportive care options soon after a diagnosis of a serious illness rather than waiting until symptoms become overwhelming. ■

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Protect Your Medicare

by Norma Kop, Director, SMP Hawai'i

Older adults in Hawai'i face many challenges today and protecting your Medicare number is more important than ever. The high cost of living, fewer healthcare workers and rising Medicare scams put kūpuna at real risk for losing money or getting the wrong medical care.

Hawai'i is one of the most expensive places to live and many kūpuna depend on fixed incomes. Housing, food, medicine and doctor visits continue to cost more each year. When someone charges your Medicare for care you didn't receive or for services you didn't need, those extra costs can be very hard to manage. Even small mistakes or false charges can add up and cause stress.

There are also not enough healthcare workers in many hospitals, clinics and homecare agencies, meaning longer wait times and rushed visits. Busy doctors and staff may make coding or billing mistakes. High turnover can also lead to confusion or poor communication, which can affect your care and your wallet.

Across the country, Medicare loses an estimated \$60 billion every year due to fraud and abuse. This money is lost because of false billing, scams and dishonest actions—not clerical mistakes. Scammers may try to steal your identity, offer fake medical equipment or “upcode,” which means billing Medicare for a more expensive service than what you received. Many older adults do not report suspicious activity because they feel embarrassed or worry about causing trouble. But reporting helps protect everyone.

Medical identity theft is one of the most serious problems. If someone uses your Medicare number,



false information—like wrong diagnoses or treatments you never had—can be added to your medical record. This can lead to unsafe care in the future. Medicare may also deny real services if it thinks care was already provided.

However, there are easy steps you can take.

Treat your Medicare card like a credit card. Never share your Medicare or Social Security number with anyone who contacts you unexpectedly. Medicare will not call you to ask for your number or send a new card. Read your Medicare Summary Notice or Explanation of Benefits often and make sure the charges match the care you received. If something looks wrong, or if you need help, contact Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Hawai'i at **1-800-296-9422** or visit **smphawaii.org**. SMP Hawai'i can help you understand your benefits, report possible fraud and protect your identity. You can also ask about volunteer opportunities to help protect yourself and others.

Contact Hawai'i State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) for free help with your Medicare questions as we prepare for the Medicare Open Enrollment Period (Oct. 15 to Dec. 7, 2026). ■

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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.¹

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.^{1,2}

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.

¹ 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.

² 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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Make Your Money Last a Lifetime

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

Whether you're still a decade or more away from retirement or already enjoying life after work, it's worth asking an important question: Will your financial resources support you for as long as you need them? With people living longer and economic conditions constantly shifting, having a financial plan focused on longevity is essential. The following are strategies that can help you feel confident that your money will support you throughout your lifetime.

■ **Create a sustainable withdrawal strategy.** After years of saving, it's natural to feel excited about using your hard-earned money during retirement. Some retirees are quick to prioritize spending on the retirement dreams and hobbies they planned for, while others hesitate for fear of outliving their savings. A thoughtful withdrawal strategy can help you strike the right balance, allowing you to enjoy your retirement lifestyle today while protecting your financial wellbeing for the years ahead. Your financial advisor can help determine an appropriate withdrawal rate based on your assets, expected expenses and long-term outlook.

■ **Build tax-efficient income streams.** Tax efficiency becomes increasingly important as you transition into retirement. A range of investment vehicles—such as Roth IRAs, Roth 401(k)s, Health Savings Accounts, municipal bonds, ETFs and index funds—offer varying degrees of tax advantages in retirement. Maximizing these opportunities can help you keep more of what you earn and stretch your income further. Because the options are diverse and each person's circumstances are unique, an advisor can help you identify which combination best aligns with your goals.

■ **Consider guaranteed income solutions.** Having at least one reliable, predictable income source in retirement can provide peace of mind. Guaranteed income solutions typically offer payments on a regular schedule and are not affected by market downturns. Options may include pensions provided by former employers, annuities purchased through insurance companies and Social Security benefits. Understanding which of

these solutions are available to you—and how they fit within your broader retirement plan—can help create greater stability and confidence in your long-term cash flow. But it's important to understand the associated fees, contract terms and trade-offs before making a decision.

■ **Be strategic about Social Security**

timing. Social Security is often a cornerstone of retirement income and deciding when to begin collecting benefits can have a significant financial impact. While you're eligible to start receiving payments at age 62, benefits increase each year you delay—up to age 70.¹ If you have other income

sources to support your early retirement years, waiting may provide a higher lifetime benefit. Your financial advisor can model different scenarios and help you determine the timing that best supports your personal and financial goals.

■ **Work with a financial advisor.** No one wants to reach the later chapters of life feeling financially vulnerable or uncertain about the future. Working with a financial advisor can help you create a plan designed to support longevity, adapt to life changes and inspire confidence that your money continues working for you. ■

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¹ Social Security Administration: "Starting Your Retirement Benefits Early." ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/agereduction.html

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Neutralize DPAHC Designee Conflicts

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

Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPAHC) designations can shape sibling relationships in unexpected ways. When one child is appointed as the sole healthcare agent, other siblings may feel excluded, mistrusted or resentful. Research indicates that surviving adult children report higher-quality sibling relationships when the deceased parent designated someone other than a spouse or child as the DPAHC. This finding suggests that removing siblings from sole decision-making authority may reduce interpersonal conflict during emotionally charged end-of-life situations.

The structure and use of a DPAHC can further influence family dynamics, depending on how authority is assigned and exercised. Parents may appoint children jointly as co-agents or designate



them in a specific order of authority. While these legal arrangements clarify who holds decision-making power, they do not guarantee family harmony. The manner in which authority is carried out is often more consequential than the formal designation itself.

To preserve positive sibling relationships, appointed agents, whether serving jointly or individually, should prioritize collaborative and transparent communication by openly discussing medical options, professional recommendations and the parent's stated values and preferences with all siblings. ■

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