



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

DECEMBER 2008

HAPPY HOLIDAYS--- NO LUNCHEON MEETING IN DECEMBER

See you January 26, 2009

QuickTime™ and a
GIF decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

BOARD RETREAT: DECEMBER 15, 9:00 AM until finished. Harris Methodist Church

Time to pay your 2008 Kokua Council Dues. Look at your address label to see the last payment date. Individual dues continue to be \$5.00, Lifetime \$100, Organization \$25. Send payments to Kokua Council, Harris United Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard, Honolulu HI 96813. Donations welcome. Check our website at www.kokuacouncil.org

MEDICARE PART D "DOUGHNUT HOLE" REMAINS CONFUSING TO ENROLLEES

A recent survey by Medco Health Solutions of Medicare Part D enrollees shows that most of them do not understand the "doughnut hole" coverage gap under which they must pay the full cost for their prescription drugs. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer reports that 62% of enrollees do not fully understand the concept, and 28% do not know what it is or do not understand it at all. Two-thirds of respondents in the coverage gap are unable to identify what spending counts toward the gap. For the year 2008, once a patient's drug costs reach \$2,510, they must pay full cost for their medications on their own until their out of pocket spending reaches \$3,850. At that point, their coverage resumes. What many people do not understand is that the spending of both the patient and the health plan count towards the gap, causing many to fall into the hole months before they expect to.

NOTES FROM NOVEMBER LUNCH MEETING

Jim Shon: Expect plenty of bills favoring gambling. Legislative task forces are exploring issues that can lay the foundation for future legislation.

- Paid Family Leave for caregiver employees. Hawaii's leave policy only covers firms with over 100 employees, 40 % of workforce. Need to gather more data.
- Building Assets for seniors. Exploring ways to educate seniors.
- Taskforce to re-evaluate case managers fees, communication with family members, paper work.

Other Task forces:

- *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: services, permissions and respite*
- *Cash and Counseling Project: Consumer directed choice*
- *Home Medical Equipment Project: Licensing and oversight*

Noemi Pendleton: Director EOA, Helping the Elderly in an Economic Recession; Everyone can do their part by donating their time, talents, money, and needed items to organizations in the aging network that provide services to the elderly. Advocacy for kupuna issues is helpful especially during this financial time. We can all collaboratively kokua for the benefit of our kupuna.

EOA, along with the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA), National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA) and National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A), is working towards the "3 Legged Stool" or known nationally as Project 2020. To address the aging population and the financial situation, this 3-pronged approach includes:

- 1) Person-Centered Access to Information such as an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). A one stop shop can provide outreach, information, resources, and educational materials to the older adults and people with disabilities; Hilo has a physical ADRC and Honolulu will have a virtual ADRC;
- 2) Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion – Promotes health and wellness programs for healthy aging and saves money in the long run as it helps prevent chronic disease; the Stanford Chronic Disease Self-management program is implemented statewide and Enhance Fitness is offered in Kauai;
- 3) Enhanced Nursing Home Diversion Services such as cash and counseling in which EOA funded a study on this program.

These programs will empower individuals to make informed decisions and to better conserve and extend their own resources using lower cost evidence-based programs, including consumer-directed options for care in the community. The 3-pronged approach would also generate significant savings for state and federal governments."

Letter to the Editor: " Even though some of Oahu's residential neighborhoods are already inundated with illegal short-term tourist rentals, the city council is about to end the 1989 "prohibition" and "permit" up to 4,300 new ones. The neighborhood quality-of-life (*noise and safety*) will worsen and the available housing supply will shrink as a result. Save Oahu's Neighborhoods (SONHawaii) was formed in 2005 to reclaim our neighborhoods and prevent further influx of the mini-hotel industry into our neighborhoods. If interested in helping, Email us at sonhawaii@hawaii.rr.com or visit our website www.sonhawaii.org." *Lawrence Bartley*

THE BOARD RETREAT: PLANNING AND DECISIONS

- 2009 Kokua Council legislative priorities, assignment of lead advocates to each priority
- Visits to new and key legislators
- Involving and training willing members for advocacy
- Luncheon program speakers
- Nominating Committee for 2009 Board members
- Exploring ramifications of joining PHOCUSED and FACE
- Increasing membership

- Other business

NEW LAW WILL AID GRANDPARENTS RAISING THEIR GRANDCHILDREN

President Bush recently signed into law the "Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act" (H.R. 6893). Under this law, the federal government will offer support for states to assist with subsidized guardianship payments to grandparents and other relatives who have children placed with them and will allow states to choose to continue benefits until the child reaches age 21. This program will also ensure relatives get notice when children are removed from their parents' care, and allow states to waive non-safety related

standards for relatives who want to care for these children. The law also guarantees that funding will be available for Kinship Navigator programs, which help caregivers access community assistance and support services. The act will help hundreds of thousands of children and youth in foster care by promoting permanent families for them through relative guardianship and adoption. For more information, visit www.grandparentsforchildren.org or call 866-624-9900

CHANGES MAY BE IN STORE FOR MEDICARE AND THE FDA THAT BENEFIT RETIREES

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Medicare reform looms as a major issue for President-elect Obama and the new Congress. Spending on the program stands at about \$430 billion a year, and the government's vast budget deficit and wider economic turmoil has brought the program's size to the forefront of the budget debate. Still, the Democratic majority in Congress has vowed to avoid any cuts in Medicare benefits. Possible reforms include removing restrictions on the federal government's ability to negotiate lower drug prices with pharmaceutical companies, and reducing payments to private insurers through the Medicare Advantage program. In another change, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will be getting new leadership that is likely to be tougher on drug makers on a range of issues, from approving new drugs to policing consumer advertising.

MEDICARE CAUTIONS ABOUT FRAUDULENT PHONE CALLS

A caller says he needs to know the name and address of the Medicare member in order to mail a new card. Another caller tells the Medicare member to make a one-time lump-sum payment and premium deductions from the member's Social Security benefits check will cease forever so please provide a bank account number. Also Medicare does not sell products or services.

Do not volunteer personal information to anyone claiming to call from Medicare. If this happens, report the call to SMP Hawaii, a fraud prevention program at Executive Office on Aging at 586-7281. If you think you have given your bank account number to a scam artist call your bank immediately.

Among the unemployed today age 55 to 64, nearly 42% have been fired or laid off. That's up from 32.2% last year. Although many Americans believe once they retire Medicare will cover all medical expenses, many don't realize that up to 50% of health care related costs may NOT be covered. *AARP*

VOLUNTEER NEEDED—Office of Representative Della Au Belatti,

District 25: Tantalus, Makiki, McCully

Receptionist/Administrative Support, Part-time volunteer positions

Service-oriented individual with strong organizational and communications skills and an attention to detail to assist with general office duties including answering phones, greeting visitors, data entry, and other administrative support duties as directed by the office manager. Previous work in an office environment, as well as working knowledge of Microsoft and office copy/scanning machines desirable. Maintain confidentiality. Contact Bernadette Fo, Office Manager, 586-9425, fo@capitol.hawaii.gov

Correction: John McDermott, LTC Ombudsman did not say at last month's Community Forum, "Funeral Trusts Need more regulation". Someone did but we don't know whom.



Kokua Council for Senior Citizens
of Hawaii Education Fund, Inc.
20 South Vineyard Blvd.
Honolulu, HI 96813
<http://www.kokuacouncil.org>

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Who Are We?

The **Kokua Council** is one of Hawaii's oldest advocacy groups. There is a \$5 annual membership to defray printing and postage costs. At each meeting, topical issues are presented for discussion and possible action. We embrace diversity and extend a special invitation to any senior or intergenerational minded individual interested in advocating for these important issues in Hawaii." All are welcome. **WHEN** 4th Monday of every month, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. **WHERE** Harris United Methodist Church @ Nuuanu and Vineyard Blvd., Ample parking and a light lunch are provided for \$5. **REACH US** c/o Harris United Methodist Church, 20 South Vineyard, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Mission: "Kokua Council advocates and seeks to empower seniors and other concerned citizens to be effective advocates in shaping the future and well-being of our community, with particular attention to those needing help in advocating for themselves. "

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|----------------|---|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
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JOIN KOKUA COUNCIL!

Yes! I want to join Kokua Council. Here are my annual dues and my contact information. I understand that my phone number will be added to the Kokua Phone Tree and I will receive the monthly newsletter and occasional e-mails. Our fiscal year starts in January. Please make checks payable to Kokua Council.

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS | LIFE MEMBER | ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS | |
| ___\$5.00 | ___\$100.00 | ___\$25.00 | DONATIONS _____ |
| Name _____ | Phone _____ | Fax _____ | Email _____ |
| Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ | | | |

Mail to: Treasurer, Kokua Council, Harris United Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard Blvd.,
Honolulu, HI 96813