



HAWAII'S VOICE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Please join us for lunch  
**MONDAY, September 24, 2007**

**11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

Miyama Main Hall, Harris United Methodist Church  
Nuuanu Ave. and South Vineyard Blvd.  
Ample parking - driveway off Nuuanu Ave.

**AGENDA:**

11:30 Luncheon: Various Pizzas, Salad, Dessert by Eloise. \$5.00 donation

11:45 Welcome, Introductions and Remarks, *Larry Geller, President*

**12:00 PROGRAM: "What in the world is going on with Medicare?" Recent Changes by Pamela Cunningham, Sage PLUS, Executive Office on Aging.**

12:30 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Lunch Host: Rose Ann Poyzer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: 10:00 A.M. PRECEEDING LUNCH

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**NOTES FROM AUGUST MEETING-"Single-Payer Healthcare vs. Business as Usual"**

In spite of the plans proposed by the Democratic Presidential candidates, Renee Ing and Jim Brewer, who have been advocating for Single Payer Health Care for at least ten years and have been attending meetings on the Legislative Taskforce on Health, are convinced that the Single Payer system is the best for this country and state. They pointed out that the Single Payer system would be the cheapest, simplest and offer the most coverage than the combination plans discussed by the candidates.

Across America, our broken health care system is squeezing families. In 2005, 47 million U.S. residents had no health insurance, and the numbers keep growing. Of the 47 million Americans without health insurance, nearly one-quarter—more than 8 million—are children. In Hawaii 108,000 people are uninsured.

Health care costs are rising at more than twice the rate of inflation. Health care premiums have increased 81 percent since 2000 based on the Kaiser Family Foundation surveys and wages have increased 16.5 percent. As employers find it increasingly hard to pay their share, this trend may result in millions of workers losing their employer-based coverage. 18,000 people die due to no coverage. Even with health insurance coverage, many people have had to declare bankruptcy because of health costs.

In a comparison to the Canadian system, Canada costs \$3,500 per year per person, the USA costs \$7,000. 31% of our costs are for administration: advertising, overlapping coverage from multiple insurances covering health, profit, commissions for sales agents. Canada spends only 1.7% on administrative costs.

A Canadian research firm found no differences in waiting times for services between the USA and Canada. Emergencies are seen immediately.

## **4<sup>th</sup> Annual COMMUNITY FORUM**

### **Be Part of the Solution**

Public Invited Free

Lunch \$5.00 donation

MONDAY OCTOBER 22, 11:30 -1:30

UNIVERSAL HEALTH, CAREGIVER SUPPORT, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

ELDER ABUSE, HAWAII RX PROGRAM, LONG TERM CARE

Representatives from key government departments, legislators, nonprofit and other organizations involved with seniors as well as advocacy groups who have needs/concerns that can be helped legislatively or by other means will present their issues.

Call Laura Manis, 597-8838 if you wish to have time on the agenda.

### **DOCTORS GROUP AND DRUG COMPANIES MAKE MILLIONS TRADING DATA**

Despite the disapproval of most doctors, the American Medical Association (AMA) is continuing to sell its prescribing data to drug companies. According to a recent article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the AMA made over \$44 million selling data in 2005. While the AMA represents less than 30 percent of U.S. doctors, it stores and sells information on all licensed physicians. The purchasing organizations match physician names and contacts to prescription records bought from pharmacies, and sell everything to the drug industry in a process known as "prescription data-mining." Pharmaceutical representatives can then make personalized pitches to doctors, using a hand-held computer with each physician's prescription history that they carry on sales calls. As a result, high-priced, brand-name drugs are prescribed more. States are increasingly acting to stop the practice. Legislation has recently been passed in Maine and Vermont prohibiting prescription data from being sold, and New Hampshire is currently fighting companies who have opposed its law, the first ban on such data-mining in the country.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY BACKLOG MEANS WAITS FOR DISABILITY**

The number of people seeking help from the Social Security Administration (SSA) because they are too disabled to work has created a record backlog of appeals that is rapidly continuing to grow as the Social Security program approaches its 62nd Anniversary on Tuesday, August 14. According to an article last week in *USA Today*, more than 745,000 applicants are waiting an average 17 months for their disability case to be heard, both record numbers. The SSA says this backlog has doubled in only the last six years, and estimates it could reach 1 million cases by 2010. An increasing overall population and the aging of baby boomers have contributed to the buildup, as older workers are more likely to become injured or sick

on the job. At the same time, the agency is at its lowest staff level in over 30 years, having lost more than 2,300 workers since 2005.

To receive disability, a state agency of the SSA must first review the claim in a process taking an average of three to four months. Approximately 65 percent of the 2.5 million people filing disability claims each year are denied at first, until appeals are heard by federal administrative law judges. 62 percent of appeals are ultimately approved, but average waits for hearings range from an additional nine months (Harrisburg, PA.) to 31 months (Atlanta, GA). Currently, 15.3 million people are collecting disability benefits, an increase of 24% over the past five years.

### **U.S. IS ONLY 42<sup>ND</sup> IN LIFE EXPECTANCY**

Americans are living longer than ever, but not as long as people in 41 other countries, the Associated Press reported. For decades, the United States has been slipping in international rankings of life expectancy, as other countries improve health care, nutrition and lifestyles. A baby born in the United States in 2004 will live an average of 77.9 years, giving America a rank of 42nd worldwide. That is down from 11th two decades earlier, according to international numbers provided by the Census Bureau and domestic numbers from the National Center for Health Statistics. Countries that surpass the U.S. include Japan and most of Europe, as well as

Jordan and the Cayman Islands. Andorra, a tiny country in the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain, had the longest life expectancy, at 83.5 years. It was followed by Japan, Macau, San Marino and Singapore. Swaziland, in sub-Saharan Africa - part of a region that has been hit hard by an epidemic of HIV and AIDS, as well as famine and civil strife - has the shortest lifespan, at 34.1 years. Researchers said several factors have contributed to the United States' falling behind other industrialized nations. A major one is that 45 million Americans lack health insurance. Among the other factors: Adults in the United States have one of the highest obesity rates in the world. Racial disparities are also a factor: black Americans have an average life expectancy of 73.3 years, five years shorter than white Americans. Another reason for the U.S. drop in the ranking is that the Census Bureau now tracks life expectancy for a lot more countries - 222 in 2004 - than it did in the 1980s.

**Welcome Deborah Jackson, Eldercare Hawaii, Harry Mattson, Pacific Research & Planning Assoc., Inc. and Jim Shon, former State Legislator, appointed to Kokua Council Board of Directors.**

### **OVERSIGHT IS LAX AS DRUG COMPANIES SPEND MORE ON ADVERTISING**

Ten years after a rule change allowed drug companies to advertise directly to consumers, the overall amount spent promoting medicines is more than 2.6 times what it was in 1996. But direct-to-consumer advertising, which increased by 330 percent during that period, still only makes up 14 percent of the nearly \$30 billion the companies spend to advertise their drugs, according to a *New England Journal of Medicine* study written up in *The Star Ledger* of New Jersey. Total spending on pharmaceutical ads grew to \$29.9 billion in 2005, from \$11.4 billion in 1996, an average annual growth rate of 10.6 percent. The "Ask your doctor about..." commercials, which sometimes do not even say what a drug is for, have been widely derided and cited as one reason health-care costs are rising faster than general inflation.

For the study, researchers at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health looked at industry data from three market-research firms, as well as data from the FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) and other government agencies. The group found evidence that regulators are doing less to police these ads, as well, noting that the FDA has been sending out fewer letters to drug companies with warnings that their commercials are minimizing risks or exaggerating effectiveness. In 2004, only four FDA staffers were reviewing such advertisements.

Where have all the reporters gone? We used to see them at the State Capitol covering the hearings. We used to see them on the streets covering main events. Are they all in their offices depending on PR press releases?

### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**Hawaii 2050 Summit, Sept. 22, 8am-12:30, Hilton Village, Coral Ballroom Hawaiian.** What are Hawaii's communities saying about the future of our economy, our society and our environment? A premier of the draft of Hawaii 2050 Sustainability Plan. The Plan will address the public's expressed desires for the direction of Hawaii's economy in the coming years. Register online at [www.hawaii2050.org](http://www.hawaii2050.org).

Pedestrian Safety Workshop; Which are the most dangerous intersections? Actions to take. Saturday, **September 29**, 9:30-11:30 AM, Ali'iolani Elementary School Cafeteria, 1240 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue (on Waialae Ave.) RSVP 528-688, email [pedsafety@gmail.com](mailto:pedsafety@gmail.com)

14th annual Children and Youth Day, Sunday, **October 7, 2007**, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Over a hundred free fun, interactive activities for children, teens and families will take place at the State Capitol, Iolani Palace, Hawaii State Art Museum, Kalanimoku Building and Honolulu Hale Grounds, Punchbowl Street, and Dept. of Health Miller Street Parking Lot. Park free at the City and County and State parking lots in area.

**October 22**, 11:30 am-1:30 pm. "Be A Part Of The Solution". 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Forum. Kokua Council, Harris Methodist Church, Vineyard and Nuuanu, 11:30 -1:30.



20 South Vineyard Blvd.  
 Honolulu HI 96813  
 www.kokuacouncil.org

Hawaii's Voice for a Better Future

**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 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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|----------------|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| President      | Larry Geller, 540-1928, lgeller@igc.org            | Treasurer Ed. Fund            | T.J. Davies tjdavies@juno.com |
| Vice President | Tony Lenzer, 261-2095, tlenzer@hawaii.rr.com       | Treasurer Advocacy            | Evelyn Shepard, 595-4025      |
| Vice President | Laura Manis, 597-8838, manis@lava.net              | General Info                  | Eloise Monsarrat, 839-1545    |
| Secretary      | Betty Sugarman, 261-8936, betty333@hawaiiintel.net |                               |                               |
| Newsletter     | Jeanne Y. Ohta, 373-3186, jyohta@hawaii.rr.com     | Website: www.kokuacouncil.org |                               |

**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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|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS</b> | <b>LIFE MEMBER</b> | <b>ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS</b> | <b>DONATIONS</b> _____ |
| ____\$5.00                | ____\$100.00       | ____\$25.00                   |                        |

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