



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR LUNCH

Monday, July 27, 2015 Miyama Main Hall, Harris United Methodist Church

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Nuuanu Ave. and S. Vineyard Blvd.—Ample parking driveway off Nuuanu Ave

Agenda:

11:30 **Luncheon (optional): Various Pizzas, Salad, and Dessert**—\$5.00 Donation

11:55 **Welcome, Introductions and Remarks, Larry Geller, President**

12:00 **Program: "The senior connection at DHS"**, Rachael Wong, Director, State of Hawaii Department of Human Services

Dr. Rachael Wong was appointed by Governor David Ige in January 2015 and currently serves as director nominee of the State of Hawaii Department of Human Services. Previously, she was the vice president and chief operating officer of Healthcare Association of Hawaii where she advocated for the state's hospitals, nursing facilities, home health agencies, hospices, and medical equipment suppliers. She has served as executive director of Kokua Mau (Hawaii Hospice & Palliative Care Organization) and the Hawaii Consortium for Integrative Care. Rachael earned a bachelor's degree in East Asian studies and certificate in women's studies from Princeton University, a master's degree in public health from University of Hawaii at Manoa, and a doctorate in public health from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She serves on numerous local and national boards and committees.

1:00 **Adjourn**

Legislature cuts funding for Kupuna Care; state hospital system cuts nursing home beds 25% (see Senior services to be cut p. 3)

**On-Line Activism: Got a gripe?
Work on changing the world with
on-line petitions**

These days it's become more difficult to gather people together even for the best of causes. Non-profits may find their meeting attendance dropping off for no clear reason. What's going on? Perhaps people are meeting on-line and less willing to attend in person. (see **Get on-line** p. 2)

**Editorial: Long Term Care Insurance for
Hawaii—an uphill battle worth fighting**

It seems like the battle to have the Legislature pass some form of funding for long-term care insurance in Hawaii may continue to be a long one. As early as 1999 a Long Term Care Committee was formed and met at the State Legislature. At present, several organizations regularly meet to work to pass LTC insurance and other bills affecting caregivers in the state. (see **Long Term Care**, p. 2)

Get on-line to help solve Hawaii's social problems

Why do some non-profits report their membership is down and meeting attendance is dropping off? It's not that the need for services or for advocacy is less these days. Quite the opposite, as budgets and social services remain under attack and climate change takes its toll. The newspaper reports shortfalls in mental health services in Hawaii and, nationally, the social safety net is being trimmed or under threat of drastic cuts. Food stamps (SNAP), Medicare, Social Security—you name it, someone wants to cut it. So why are people not getting together *more* rather than *less*?

Part of the "problem" may be that activism is shifting to on-line platforms. While getting together in person is still important, there are now attractive alternatives to ever leaving home in order to participate with others. At the same time, people are working long hours and may not have time to attend meetings or to do volunteer work. Participating on-line may be a solution for them.

Make Something Happen from home—Join or create an event, or start a petition

The ubiquitous smartphone, whether iPhone or Android, has changed the world in so many ways. Last week I noticed that I and the three other passengers on an elevator were staring into our phones. All of us were together in one elevator yet our attention was miles away. At restaurants, teenagers stare fixedly at their phones oblivious to adult conversation or what they might be eating. So a phone can separate us, but it also presents opportunities for connectedness.

Probably, the smartphone has cut into free time that used to be available for meetings. At the same time, it introduces new tools, and some of them are very powerful. In fact, to use them, just turn on the phone and join in from home, lunch break at work, or even in the elevator—you can use that little phone to help change the world, if you wish.

Use Twitter to follow different organizations, individual advocates or even politicians. It can be a great source of information and news on current events, hot topics, or social issues. It's not even necessary to join up to check it out. Go to twitter.com and play around. See who's on, see what's happening. Search for somebody or for a topic of interest.

Facebook provides similar connectivity and is great for organizing events. To really take advantage, it's necessary to sign up, and while young people just dive right in, the older demographic may be somewhat reluctant.

Finally, and this is proving to be very powerful, it's very easy to start an on-line petition or sign on to one what's already going. Petitions that gather thousands, tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of signatures are having an effect. What's easier to do than to add your name to a petition for something that you support? The White House announced that petitions that gather 25,000 signatures in 30 days will be reviewed by Administration officials. One of those signatures could be yours. A moveon.org petition to remove the Confederate Flag from the South Carolina statehouse gathered 571,000 signatures, and the flag came down.

Some sites to visit to join or create a petition include change.org, moveon.org, thepetitionsite.com, and gopetition.com. There are several others. Read the info on those sites to learn how to create an effective petition and how to publicize it, or search Google for some help.

Senior services to be cut in Hawaii despite growth in older population

Hawaii's population is aging rapidly. Already one fourth are seniors, the fastest growing demographic in the state. Many young people and families are finding the high cost of living unmanageable and leave for better-paying jobs and lower living costs on the Mainland, leaving seniors behind.

Instead of preparing for the growing demand, this year's state legislature actually *cut funding* for Kupuna Care, which assists seniors in remaining in their own homes longer. The growing need for these services justified the \$9 million budget request, but instead of funding the need, the legislature actually cut this year's appropriation by 29%.

Kupuna Care includes chore services, home-served meals and other services which help seniors remain in their own homes and avoid re-hospitalization or institutionalization. The Legislature's cuts may force many seniors into unwanted placement in care homes or nursing facilities.

In a one-two punch, the state hospital system has announced a 25% reduction in the number of beds at Leahi Hospital and Maluhia, the state-run long-term care facilities on Oahu. The cuts will take several months to implement, but they will hurt. We will need more, not fewer, beds.

Nursing homes are already unaffordable for most who may need them, and care homes are in short supply. Seniors generally want to remain in their own homes as long as possible, and it is economically better for the state that they do so, as well.

The combination of cuts to Kupuna Care and to the number of nursing home beds may put Hawaii's seniors into a squeeze. It will take determined advocacy to defend the state budget from further cuts next year and to reverse this year's damage.

Long-Term Care struggle continues despite obstacles (editorial)

There's no question that Hawaii must attend to the implications of an aging population. Seniors will need affordable housing, which has been in short supply in the state for at least a decade. At present, there is no clear indication that a shortfall of tens of thousands of affordable units will be resolved.

For those elders who will depend on some form of long-term care, Hawaii's high costs may prove prohibitive. That's where long-term care insurance kicks in—if one has it.

Two bills failed to pass this legislative session. One would have established a mandatory long-term care insurance program. The other would have provided tax credits for long-term care insurance.

The problem is obvious: how to fund mandatory insurance. The resistance to an extra .5% surcharge to the excise tax to pay for rail transit suggests that any further increase will not likely succeed. A payroll tax is one remaining option. Exactly what funding mechanism would be both adequate and acceptable to legislators and to the electorate still needs to be worked out, and finding a solution will not be easy. Kookua Council members can make a difference by supporting this issue in 2016.



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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Please join us on Monday, July 27, 2015

"The senior connection at DHS" Dr, Rachael Wong, Director, State of Hawaii Department of Human Services

Who Are We?

Kokua Council is one of Hawaii's oldest advocacy groups. There is a **\$10.00 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 Donation. **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."

Board Members

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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**.

Individual Member __ \$10.00 Life Member __ \$100.00 Organizational Member __ \$25.00

Donations: 501(c)(4) Advocacy _____ Education Fund: 501(c)(3) _____ (Tax Deductible)

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