



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR LUNCH

Monday, September 28, 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**

12:00 **Program:** Rick Blangiardi: "**How the media analyzes and covers homelessness**"

Rick Blangiardi co-authored an op-ed published in the August 23, 2015 Star-Advertiser titled, *A crisis that demands action*, referring to the current homelessness crisis. Kokua Council has invited him to enlarge on his views.

Rick Blangiardi is the General Manager of Hawaii's largest multimedia company, Hawaii News Now, KGMB (CBS) and KHNL (NBC). In 1977, he began his broadcast career at KGMB and is a nationally recognized television broadcaster, succeeding in senior executive positions in many of the nation's most competitive markets including Seattle, New York City, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Prior to returning to Hawaii in 2002, Blangiardi was the President of Telemundo Holdings, Inc., the nation's second largest Hispanic television network and was highly instrumental in leading the sale of Telemundo in 2001 to NBC for \$2.7 billion.

1:00 **Adjourn**

Solving Honolulu's homelessness crisis is not rocket science

(see **Solving**, p.3)

Appeals court grants home care workers minimum wage and overtime protection

Advocacy groups and labor unions celebrated a victory in the appeals court for low-wage home care workers. Under federal law home care workers hired through third-party staffing agencies had been exempted from wage and overtime requirements

(see **Appeals Court**, p. 2)

Editorial: Followup: Department of Health inspection reports still missing

At this writing in mid-September, 2015, the Hawaii Department of Health remains in violation of a state law that it must post inspection reports for the state's care homes on its website. Without these postings, it is cumbersome, time-consuming and expensive for individuals to obtain reports on an as-requested basis, and futile in the time frame that families need to make critical decisions. (see **Followup**, p. 2)

Appeals court grants home care workers minimum wage and overtime protection

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit said in mid-August that the Labor Department has the right to include home health care workers in the protections guaranteed by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Approximately two million home health care workers in every state are affected.

A federal judge had scrapped the Labor Department rules earlier this year after finding that the agency had overstepped its authority. Since 1974, federal law has exempted home care workers hired through third-party staffing agencies from wage and overtime requirements.

Home care workers have also joined in the struggle for a \$15 minimum wage. In Massachusetts they have already been successful and will be paid at least \$15 per hour.

Followup: Department of Health inspection reports still missing

Last month we reported that the Department of Health has not yet posted any inspection reports for Adult Residential Care Homes (ARCH) and Expanded Adult Residential Care Homes (E-ARCH) on their website. This means that they are in violation of HRS §321-1.8, a law that was hailed as a victory after many years of struggle by senior advocates.

A phone call to DOH clarified that they have not posted reports due to a "lack of resources."

Coincidentally, Civil Beat posted an editorial on the same day in which they noted that

What's even more appalling about this situation is that the inspection reports in question cover such facilities as adult residential care homes and assisted living facilities. Those two categories account for about 5,000 beds, and not a single inspection report has been posted on any of the facilities in question.

According to Civil Beat, their reporter was told that the Governor's office expects to correct the situation soon. Civil beat wrote:

That promise needs to be fulfilled. Thousand of families and current and prospective care home patients around the state are counting on it.

Likewise, health department director Dr. Ginny Pressler needs to explain why an agency under her direction doesn't seem to be taking its obligations under the law very seriously. State agencies and their staff are not above the law, whether or not they believe they have the proper resources to comply.

Kokua Council was among the organizations that supported passage of HRS §321-1.8. Reports were to be posted starting January 1. It is already September. We call for rapid resolution of this issue, and for inspection reports to be posted back to January 1 and kept current thereafter.

(See: Civil Beat, *Resume Posting Care Home Reports Now, Without Delay*, 9/16/2015)

Solving Honolulu's homelessness crisis is not rocket science, but is far from easy

Honolulu's city council and mayor, abetted by singularly one-sided coverage in the commercial media, have focused their energy and invested taxpayer money in "sweeping" homeless individuals and families off the streets of Waikiki into other areas. This does nothing for the people whose property is seized and destroyed in violation of their civil rights and nothing to alleviate the acute shortage of truly affordable rentals in Honolulu.

Instead, the sweeps cause harm and actually bar people from access to housing since very often the city illegally confiscates and destroys ID and other personal items that then need to be replaced. The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit on September 16 that addresses the civil rights violations allegedly perpetrated by the City and seeks damages. Even though the suit has been filed, the sweeps continue.

So what's the simple formula for success against the growing numbers of people living on the streets? It is no secret. And no one says it is easy—on the contrary, it will take time, even if the City were to begin today.

The formula:

1. Housing First: an evidence-based process that puts people into apartments immediately, and provides the supports appropriate to each individual or family that will enable them to stay there or move on to other permanent housing. Housing First has proven to be a cost-saver for municipalities that have applied it.
2. Creating affordable housing in sufficient quantity not only to accommodate those living unsheltered or in shelters, but for those who currently have housing but are in danger of losing it. The number of homeless increases in Hawaii even as it decreases nationwide because a steady stream of people lose their homes or apartments annually. If we can build luxury condos, we can build affordable housing.
3. Passing living wage legislation so that people can pay rent. Wages in Hawaii are very low in comparison to the cost of living. Given a place to stay, people still need to be able to pay the rent.
4. Resuming adult mental health services that help prevent people from ending up on the streets.

That's basically it. Each part of the solution is interdependent—Housing First requires that there be adequate affordable rentals for it to succeed. Given the availability of rentals, and it may take 20 years to find or build sufficient units, people still need to pay for them.

Some other cities have had success with rent control or rent stabilization. The idea is both to keep people from being evicted if they can pay the current rent, and to preserve a pool of affordable rentals.

Perhaps there is a fifth part to the formula:

5. Get real. 140% of area median income is not affordable. Another number that is bandied around, 80% of AMI, is also not affordable. Yet government and our newspapers use those figures regularly. In New York City, the plan is to create housing for various income levels, down to no more than 40% of AMI.

Part of "getting real" is understanding that sweeping people from one place on the island to another serves no purpose and does not contribute to a solution. Another part of "getting real" is that a proper plan needs a budget, the assignment of staff, timelines and an understanding of the barriers to success and how they can be removed. Honolulu needs to "get real".



Kokua Council for Senior Citizens of Hawaii Education Fund, Inc.
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Please join us on Monday, September 28, 2015

"How the media analyzes and covers homelessness" with Rick Blangiardi, General Manager of Hawaii's largest multimedia company, Hawaii News Now

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. There is ample parking. A light lunch is provided for a \$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."

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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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