



**The Need for Obesity Prevention
and Policy in Hawai'i**



ALOHA,

Hawai'i is facing an obesity epidemic. Obesity can lead to increased risk for type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease, cancer, and asthma. Our state is not alone; communities across the US are assessing their health and asking, "How did we get here?" and, "How do we change?"



The energy balance in our society has changed; we consume more calories than we expend through physical activity. This is due to heavier reliance on cars and automation and increased marketing of inexpensive, convenient, and attractive high calorie foods, making our environment biased towards poor health outcomes. Solutions are needed where we work, study, play and pray so that healthy lifestyles are the accepted norm and achievable for all Hawai'i residents.

The State Department of Health is working with our partners to find solutions that work for Hawai'i. In the pages that follow, we present highlights from the "Weight of Hawai'i" symposium, including scientifically grounded recommendations from the Institute of Medicine report, *Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention*. Stories from partners follow, illustrating strategies already taking place in our state. A task force is also underway to provide obesity prevention policy recommendations to the 2013 Legislature. We ask that you stay engaged and be part of the solution to create a healthier Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Loretta J. Fuddy A.C.S.W., M.P.H.

Director of Health
Promoting Lifelong Health & Wellness

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A groundbreaking symposium brings together local and national experts to address obesity prevention in Hawai'i.



"We have an epidemic on our hands," said University of Hawai'i System President M.R.C. Greenwood, at an important symposium which took place in downtown Honolulu this past June. The event, "Weight of Hawai'i: The Need for Obesity Prevention and Policy," was held by the State Department of Health, the University of Hawai'i and their partners to address the urgent obesity epidemic in our state and motivate key leaders to support necessary action. Local and national experts were in attendance, along with leaders in local government, business, health and more.

and therefore it should be addressed as such. They say it will take the comprehensive cooperation of many and require action at all levels of society—including individual, family, community, and society—to reverse the trajectory.

Governor Neil Abercrombie agrees. He urged participants at the symposium to recognize obesity as one of the most crucial and central challenges of our

society, and to use the symposium not just for discussion, but action. Governor Abercrombie pledged to do his best to implement whatever necessary "in cooperation, coordination and collaboration with the legislature to see to it on the political side of the equation that we meet our obligations and responsibilities."

There is a need to identify and engage leaders at all levels and across all sectors of society who can act to

UH's Greenwood has 30 years of experience in obesity research and over the years, she has watched the problem of obesity go from modest to astronomical proportions.

"If [obesity] were a contagious disease the nation would long ago have put the resources to bear to stop it," Greenwood said, "but because we have tended to think of obesity as an individual problem...we haven't acted when probably we should have." Experts say that obesity is not an individual but rather a societal problem,





“This question of obesity, this question of having a proper regard for our health, is one that, if not answered, will destroy our capacity for a sound fiscal basis. That, believe me, is not an overstatement.” – Gov. Neil Abercrombie

prevent obesity. “It is time that we step up and do something about this,” said Director of Health Loretta J. Fuddy, calling for a task force to build on previous and current community action. The Childhood Obesity Prevention Task Force will put forth policy recommendations for Hawai‘i in time for the 2013 legislative session. “We need to put into place policies and procedures,” Fuddy stressed, that look at food and physical activity to make the healthy choices easier. “It will take a lot to change culture to help [people] make the right choices. But now is the time to stem the tide of rising obesity and begin with the keiki so they can be healthy today as well as tomorrow.”

The task force will look to the Institute of Medicine’s recent report, *Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation*, or APOP, to develop recommendations that make sense for Hawai‘i. The report committee, for which UH’s Greenwood served as co vice-chair, assessed more

than 800 obesity prevention strategies and ultimately came up with five key recommendations. APOP committee members shared these recommendations at the “Weight of Hawai‘i” symposium. They are as follows:

1. **Integrate physical activity every day in every way**
2. **Make healthy foods available everywhere**
3. **Market what matters for a healthy life**
4. **Activate employers and health care professionals**
5. **Strengthen schools as the heart of health**

For more information on the APOP recommendations, please visit: <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2012/Accelerating-Progress-in-Obesity-Prevention.aspx>

Dr. Judy Salerno, the “Leonard D. Schaeffer” Executive Officer at the Institute of Medicine (IOM), explains that while the IOM has released many reports on obesity to sound the alarm, the call to action was never answered before. The unique contribution of the APOP report “...is the emphasis on how we accelerate that progress—and taking a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent approach to working together with these strategies ...so

that we’re moving forward on all fronts at the same time. That’s the only way we will succeed.”

“Everyone has a role to play in dealing with this epidemic,” says APOP committee member Dr. Jamie Chriqui, Senior Research Scientist at the University of Illinois at Chicago. “If we do these things in concert and together—but not in isolation—we will improve our chances of accelerating progress in obesity prevention.” Chriqui suggests making healthy foods available everywhere by adopting policies and implementing practices to reduce overconsumption of sugary drinks like soda, energy drinks and juice other than 100 percent fruit juice. This could mean making water readily available everywhere and replacing soda in vending machines with healthier drink options. In terms of physical activity, she advises to keep kids active by supporting policies to improve the built environment, such as safe routes for kids to walk to school.

Attorney William Purcell III, former mayor of Nashville and co vice-chair of the APOP committee, describes obesity as “...among the most critical public policy issues of our day and

time, perhaps for the rest of our lives.” Purcell adds that the symposium “...is an incredibly strong start for a communications strategy for Hawai‘i and...for the nation as a whole. These messages need to be shared and they need to be shared all the time from now on.” Purcell stresses the importance of activating employers and health care professionals. By encouraging healthy living at work or by subsidizing gym memberships for employees, for example, we all benefit. But, he says, “All the recommendations are equally important. Schools can be the heart of health. Schools have an essential role. No one can do it alone. We all have a role, and we have concluded we need to do it all, we need to do it now, and that means all of us. Together.”

Dr. Virginia Pressler, executive vice president of Hawai‘i Pacific Health, moderated a local expert panel made up of Hawai‘i researchers, professionals and legislators at the “Weight of Hawai‘i” symposium. The panel made it clear that the need to address obesity and its consequences in our state is dire. “In Hawai‘i, about one in three children entering kindergarten is already overweight or obese,” said Dr. Corilee Watters, spokesperson for the American Heart Association. Dr. Deborah Taira Juarez, associate professor at the UH-Hilo College of Pharmacy, explained that obesity-related medical expenditures in Hawai‘i are approximately \$327 million annually. “This estimate...is only for direct medical costs,” Juarez said. “It does not take into account other costs, including direct non-medical costs, such as transportation costs to get to the doctor’s office, the extra cost of fuel that an airplane uses due to excess passenger weight, or even the intangible costs, such as reduced quality of life, pain and emotional stress.” Juarez says that Hawai‘i employers who cover health care for their employees bear the burden of many of these costs. She suggests incentives for promoting better nutrition and increased physical activity; adding that numerous studies by health economists have shown that

“If we care about our citizens, we need to make the healthy choice the easy and most attractive choice.”

– Dr. Corilee Watters, Spokesperson for the American Heart Association

people respond to financial incentives. “Yes, it will cost something to change the environment and put new policies in place; however, if we do nothing, obesity will continue to result in ever-escalating medical costs and a less productive workforce, which will hamper Hawai‘i’s ability to compete in the global economy.”

Hawai‘i legislators also shared their ideas for solutions that could help address obesity. Representative Ryan Yamane, chairman of the House Health Committee, supports policies to improve the environment of our communities and increase access to healthy food. Yamane cited successful examples of changes on Kaua‘i which encourage people to be healthier by increasing opportunities for physical activity through better community

design, including the development of streets and trails that allow for safe walking and biking. He also believes that physical activity could be increased within the school setting through physical education and unstructured activity time. “How can we structure the physical environment to support health and increase physical activity and healthy behaviors?” he asked. “With safe sidewalks, bikeways, and schools near parks; we can start by finding ways to make school playgrounds more accessible after school and on weekends.”

Senator Josh Green, chairman of the Senate Health Committee, has seen the impact of obesity on children in families firsthand as a physician in Ka‘u. Requesting the support of leaders across many industries, he believes





About the "Weight of Hawai'i" symposium:

"It is a privilege for me to be in a room that is focused on addressing [obesity]. To know that in [this] room are the people that can...provide the solutions for the people of this state and...for the nation...To have leading members of legislature who are in a position to make a difference, to have members of the cabinet, leaders of the business community, and...to have a governor stand up and convene a group and show in that convening not simply that he's concerned, not simply that he cares, but that he understands the problem and brings to it a passion, tells me that this is a special day and a special privilege."

– **Atty. William Purcell III,**
co vice-chair of APOP report



that, "we need to tackle obesity on several fronts including, "taking a hard look at how we market unhealthy foods to children. We also need to address our poor access to nutritional foods, and the very negative impact that soda and other empty calories have on our health."

The Department of Health has been working to pass and implement policies that encourage healthy lifestyles for Hawai'i residents. Lola Irvin, Tobacco Settlement Project and Healthy Hawai'i Initiative manager, cites the passage of "Complete Streets" legislation in all the counties and "Safe Routes to School" legislation this year as examples of policy efforts to encourage the creation of healthier environments in Hawai'i. "The implementation of these policies will lead us closer to creating a healthier Hawai'i environment," she says. Like many others, Irvin explains that past efforts have focused on the individual and failed:

"Two-thirds of adults and almost one-third of children in the United States are overweight or obese, leading to expensive public health and economic problems"

– **Institute of Medicine Report on Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation**

"Going forward, it will take interaction of individuals with the social, economic, policy and physical environments to hold promise for addressing the problem." The Department of Health will look to the Childhood Obesity Prevention Task Force to recommend strategies and policies that could help "make the healthy choice the easy choice" for Hawai'i residents with regard to nutrition and physical activity.

The Institute of Medicine's APOP report says that the obesity epidemic is "complex but conquerable." The "Weight of Hawai'i" symposium brought leaders together who have the power to truly make a difference for obesity prevention in our state. By working together to implement creative societal and community solutions, obesity in Hawai'i truly is "conquerable."

WEIGHT OF THE STATE



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1. Making Healthy Food and Beverages Available Everywhere

Summer Fun: The Department of Parks and Recreation changes vending machines and encourages kids to go soda-free.

"Rethink your drink!" That's what the City & County's of Honolulu's Summer Fun program proposed to its participants this past summer. As the largest program of its kind in the state, Summer Fun serves 9,000 school-age

children and teens throughout 60 sites on O'ahu for seven weeks during the summer. This year, the Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation recognized a prime opportunity to improve keiki health in Hawai'i by making changes to what they drink.

"For the last 18 months our department has been looking at ways to create a healthier environment at all of our City and County of Honolulu's Parks and Recreation Facilities," Albert Tufono, deputy director, said. "We decided that an easy change and something we could do immediately with little impact on the department budget was to change our vending machines from soda and sugary drinks to healthier alternatives like water, 100 percent juice and sports drinks for the [people who] use our facilities."

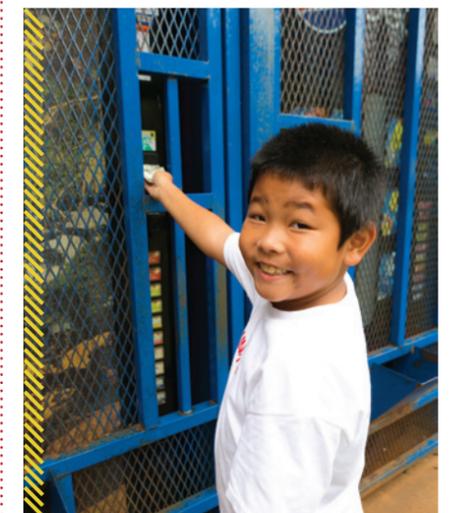
The department began with the vending machines at 26 of its Summer Fun sites. At the same time, they issued an unprecedented "Soda-Free Summer Challenge" to all the kids, junior leaders, and staff to stay away from soda and sugar-sweetened drinks during the 7-week period.

The pledge read, "This summer, I pledge to go soda free and drink more

water! I will also make healthier choices and eat more fruits and vegetables." Parents initialed a box for every week that their child did not consume sugary drinks. Children who returned sheets to their leaders were entered into a raffle to win a surprise gift.

"By changing the environment through vending changes and encouraging kids to drink more water, we hope that kids will continue to make healthier choices as they return to school," Tufono said.

It seems to be working. Mari Foster, a 6th grader at Mānoa Elementary, had a habit of drinking a daily root beer. As an athlete, she began to notice



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that her practices were getting harder. "So I set a goal for myself," she said, "to make the commitment to complete the challenge. Now, I have less of a craving for root beer and I'm drinking more orange juice instead."

Other kids remarked that they felt better and more energized, and were able to do more of the activities they enjoy, like swimming, jump roping and dancing. Hartford Wright, a 5th grader from Maui on O'ahu for the summer, said drinking more water and eating well is important for his active life. "I want to be healthy so I can do a lot in my life," he said. "You have to eat well or you won't feel good."

Kaiser Permanente: Fresh Day Farmers' Markets create a one-stop preventative care stop for communities.

In 2003, Oakland physician Dr. Preston Maring walked into the Kaiser Permanente clinic and asked, "What are we doing for health?" His vision was to bring a farmers' market to the hospital

environment and, in response, Kaiser's Fresh Day Farmers' Markets were born. One year later, Ashlyn Saunders, market champion and regional coordinator, brought the idea to Hawai'i.

To date, Kaiser has 49 farmers' markets, including three on O'ahu. The markets are part of H.E.A.L., the Healthy Eating Active Living program, and fulfill Maring's vision of creating an environment where you can pick up fruits and vegetables as well as healthy prepared foods, along with your prescription. The markets also feature health promotion and education information, like tobacco cessation, at each site.

"People love it," Saunders says. "Patients schedule their appointments on market days. It's great for our senior population. They come to the doctor and they can get their produce, too. We make it a one-stop shop."

Candyce Kaaia, a case manager for Kaiser's weight management and bariatric surgery program at Moanalua Medical Center, is a regular at the weekly market. "I come to work, peruse and pick up vegetables," she says. "I have to pass by it on my way in, so it's in a perfect place." The convenience has led Kaaia to make more

healthy meals at home. She's even gone off medications for high blood pressure and cholesterol, by losing weight and being more active.

"It's a great idea to have someone be able to leave a doctor's office inspired to try and live a healthy lifestyle and be able to then act upon it as soon as they leave the lobby," Kaiser internist and community care physician Dr. Craig Nakatsuka adds. "It becomes a habit. The doctors and workers use it just as much or more, making the entire organization healthier."

2. Integrating Physical Activity Every Day in Every Way

Kaua'i: The Garden Isle leads the way for the State in creating a healthy environment for physical activity.

When Kaua'i Mayor Bernard Carvalho gave his inaugural speech in 2010, he shared his vision for his county in the year 2020. Among many things, he envisioned the majority of kids walking to school and adults commuting to work by bike. He saw Kaua'i's citizens enjoying the island's beautiful parks for exercise and recreation. He saw others with bikes, strollers, wheelchairs and pets buzzing up and down miles of coastal pathways.

"Holo Holo 2020 is a vision I hope we can achieve," Carvalho said in his speech. "I believe that all of it can be done...it may not all be complete in 10 years, but it could all be in motion."

Today his plan is in motion, literally. Kaua'i is leading the way for the state in built environment and physical activity initiatives. Just this past July, Governor Neil Abercrombie signed the Safe Routes to School Bill into law, which promotes children walking and biking safely to school, thereby increasing

their opportunities for physical activity. Effective this month, the law will add a surcharge to traffic tickets, which will be used to fund Safe Routes to School programs throughout the state. Hawai'i is the first state in the nation to pass this type of legislation.

In 2010, the Kaua'i City Council unanimously adopted a Complete Streets policy, in conjunction with Kaua'i's nutrition and physical activity coalition, "Get Fit Kaua'i" and other county agencies. It was the first to come after 2009's passage of a statewide Complete Streets law. Since then, Maui



County, Hawai'i County, and the City and County of Honolulu have followed suit.

Complete streets are designed so that everyone, not just drivers, but pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders can safely move along and across the street. Safer streets make Hawai'i a better place to live and encourage everyone to be more physically active.

On Kaua'i, the natural beauty of the landscape lends itself to activity and Carvalho, who remembers walking to



school as a child, wants to enhance access to places and programs where people can be active in a safe and enjoyable way.

"Getting out and being able to experience the outdoors, that's what Kaua'i is about," Carvalho says. "We have the footprint on this island because of the layout; it sets the stage for needing to encourage health and wellness and fitness."

Ke Ala Hele Makalae, Hawaiian for "The Path that Goes by the Coast," is another example of the Mayor's vision in motion. The shared-use path is envisioned to ultimately follow the coast from Nāwiliwili to Anahola. Currently, it is in its third of six phases of building, with about eight miles of coastal pathway completed. Residents and visitors love the path and take full advantage of it as a beautiful way to stay active. It is also host to events such as the recent Mayor-a-thon. This past June, 800 people took to the path in the free event coordinated through the County of Kaua'i and Get Fit Kaua'i with the purpose of encouraging physical health and fitness while celebrating Ke Ala Hele Makalae.

"There is a spark happening on this island. We want to take care of this island and make sure we're healthy and

strong and make the quality of life better for the people we serve," Carvalho says. With the seeds planted, Kaua'i is doing the work to make them grow and "grow responsibly," he says.

3. Strengthening Schools as the Heart of Health

Mililani Uka Elementary School: A model for integrating health and wellness into the school day.

"The basic premise of wellness is important to us," Mililani Uka Elementary School Principal Heather Wilhelm says. "We always had the idea that we wanted our children to be healthy. It wasn't enough for our children to be smart academically, but what we were looking for was the whole child... There is such a strong link between physical well-being and health in terms of a child being able to learn. It just made sense."

Mililani Uka is a model school for its progressive work in promoting health and wellness. Because many children spend the majority of their waking hours in school and consume more than half of their daily calories there, the school environment provides a



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unique opportunity to support the health of students, not just in the short term but over their lifetimes as well.

Wilhelm and her staff have created a Wellness Plan above and beyond the Department of Education's Wellness Guidelines (<http://doe.k12.hi.us/foodservice/toolkit/wellnessguidelines.htm>). The Guidelines provide specific standards for food and beverage items as well as health and physical education, to improve nutrition and physical activity among students.

At Mililani Uka, all snacks must follow the Department of Education's standard for "healthy snacks," meaning they must be less than 200 calories and low in fat, sugar and salt. Wilhelm has seen parents get on board with the changes. Jill Hirota, a teacher and parent of two Mililani Uka students says, "I feel like the snack policy kind of backs me up as a parent...to choose their snacks for school, we have to remember the snack policy. Now it's not just mom saying it, but it's part of school culture."

For classroom parties and celebra-

tions, it's no longer about pizza, soda and cake. The school doesn't allow distribution of any food for birthday celebrations anymore. Instead, the school encourages sharing non-food items or donating a book or game to the class.

"We have wonderful parents and they love to bring things for the children," Wilhelm says. "We don't want to say no because giving is so important in terms of culture, but what we can do is make it more healthy and more beneficial."

Even school food fund-raising items have been adjusted and all meet the State of Hawaii Wellness Guidelines. Bess Morimoto, president of the school parent/teacher organization Hui O Mililani Uka, says the response has been overwhelmingly positive. "Everything is not just all about the food, we want to have a mix of different things and events for the kids. We just want to support the school and their efforts to make healthy choices for the kids," Morimoto says.

The school also provides weekly physical education classes. Students receive 30 to 45 minutes per week, depending on their grade level. They also have 15 minutes of



independent activity time where they can choose from a variety of options, such as basketball, jump rope, hula hooping, or simply walking with friends while talking story.

Before physical education teacher Lance Fujioka came on board, students only had P.E. every other week. When he was hired, Fujioka created a new schedule and made the commitment to weekly physical education instruction.

"There was a time when we couldn't afford to have a fulltime P.E. teacher," Wilhelm remembers. "Our Hui got money together and paid the other half and were able to bring Lance on board. The following year we were able to have enough money to pay for it ourselves. That's the extent parents and the Hui believe in the health and wellness of their children."

Fujioka's enthusiasm for keeping his students active results in a variety of other opportunities for kids to get exercise,

including after school programs for things like cross country running, participation in community fun runs, visits from inspiring athletes and twice yearly Get Fit days.

Principal Wilhelm understands the importance of integrating health and wellness into the curriculum itself: "It's not an add-on. It's not something you do after. It's something you do all the time...We're trying to provide experiences for them to learn more about it



when they're younger, so that two or three years down the road they can make healthier choices on their own."

This year, Mililani Uka will participate in the Kōkua Hawai'i Foundation's 'AINA in Schools program. Building on their own school gardens, the program will expand students' awareness of how food is grown and where it comes from. "It will extend the classroom beyond campus," Wilhelm says, "to go visit farms and see things that can't be seen here. It's the true integration of the curriculum."

4. Marketing What Matters for a Healthy Lifestyle

Webling Elementary School: How the 'Ōlelo Youth XChange competition empowers students to live healthy.

Whether we realize it or not, we are constantly surrounded by messages about food. Multi-media advertising, packaging, restaurants and product placement can affect our daily health decisions. Not surprisingly, the most frequently marketed foods and beverages in America are high in fat, sugars and salt.

These messages are often targeted at the group most influenced by marketing: youth. Advertisements affect the preferences, purchases, and eating habits of young children and teens. However, Hawai'i's students are beginning to pay attention and question the messages that the media feeds them.

The Webling Broadcasting Group (WBC), a group of Webling Elementary students, pays close attention to media because the members not only consume it; they create it for their fellow students. Each month, WBC students present new material to their peers through a closed-circuit television



Webling Broadcasting Group students: Tyler Kamei, 12, Lucy Lee, 11, Summer Kamioka, 12, Caitlin Taga, 12, Kylie Bakey, 12, Candice Shimizu, 12, Diego Nikitas, 10, Jonah Loricca, 11, Mari Kimoto, 10.



station broadcasted throughout the school. The goal is to "produce pieces that inform and persuade the entire school to make good choices and to be responsible for themselves," says Erin Unebasami, WBC media teacher.

Each year WBC students enter 'Ōlelo Community Media's Youth Xchange competition (YXC). Since 2003, YXC has been the state's largest student video competition, "striving to provide students with a consistent outlet to 'speak strong.'" With education as the heart of 'Ōlelo's mission, YXC encourages elementary, middle and high school students to creatively explore the issues facing our communities. The

competition culminates with a gala awards banquet for the finalists and winners receive Sony HD cameras for their schools.

This past year, WBC students won first prize for their public service announcement (PSA) in YXC's "Start Living Healthy" category. Their video, "Filet-O-Fat," spoofed a popular fast food commercial with a talking fish. "We decided to create a funny video about how some fast foods are unhealthy, so people would eat right," says Tyler Kamei, age 12.

"The point was to not to let something as silly as an ad or talking fish tell you

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what to eat or how to live," explains Caitlin Taga, also 12 years old.

The students took two weeks to make "Filet-O-Fat," and utilized a green screen to enable one student to act as a talking fish on the wall. The PSA was popular and impactful around campus: "I truly believe that the messages we send on WBC do have an impact on our students," Unebasami said. "After a broadcast of something like Filet-O-Fat, you can walk around campus and hear students singing the song. They'll point to the [WBC] students and say 'I saw you on TV as the fish!' These kids produce pieces that stick in the minds of their viewers."

Since the creation of the PSA, many WBC students noted that they are more aware of their food choices and more motivated to make healthier ones. Many mentioned eating at fast food restaurants less frequently and having more fruits and vegetables. But WBC students weren't the only ones affected by watching it. As a result of the PSA, Principal Sherrylyn Yamada—whose love of fried fish filet sandwiches partially inspired the video—looked up the nutrition information and was shocked at how much fat and sodium the sandwich contained. "I used to give them to my elderly mother!" Yamada said. "Now, I eat a lot less fast food and only have it as an occasional treat."

"We believe in the goal of Youth Xchange and have seen first hand the impact programs such as this motivate and drive our students to become better at what they do," Unebasami says. "It encourages creative thinking, creates leaders in our youth and gives students a voice to inform others."

For more information on the 'Ōlelo Youth Exchange, please visit: <http://www.olelo.org/yxc/>



5. Activating Employers and Healthcare Providers

UHA: Worksite wellness initiatives aim to better lives by bettering health.

When Howard Lee became president and CEO of the University Health Alliance (UHA) last year, the chief human resources officer told him he was going to have to set an example of good health and fitness.

Looking back, Lee says, "I was probably overweight and did not have good eating habits. Walking up two flights left me huffing and puffing. I thought, 'I need to live on so that I can one day enjoy retirement.' As a leader, I also need to be an example for others by not just talking, but living our 'Better health, better life' motto."

Lee jumped into a fitness program and, with the help of a coach, learned to achieve a healthier weight. Now, he feels better and is a more effective leader. "One of the most important things that we've learned is that a successful worksite program requires leadership from the top," he says. "Health has to be a high priority in the organization."

UHA leads the way for its associates, their dependents, and its employer groups. The company's own worksite wellness program includes encouraging exercise with programs like "Wellness Bucks," in which employees receive cash bonuses for being physically active; weekly "Wellness Leave"; on-site CrossFit classes; YWCA circuit training classes; and access to a FitBit device and the accompanying program which tracks steps and fitness progress.

Lee describes FitBit as LinkedIn for fitness. "It's about creating a social environment for health where people feel like getting fit is cool," he says.

UHA also offers nutritional counseling and provides healthy breakfast and snacks to employees, and also ensures healthy options at meetings and functions. On-site Weight Watchers meetings are available and fresh apples are always available in the reception area.

If that wasn't enough, there are also financial incentives for annual health screenings, flu shots and more, plus up to four mental health counseling sessions per year.

Many of UHA's employer groups have followed suit. In 2010, Bowers and Kubota started WHIP IT (Wellness &

Health Individual Program), a web-based program where employees accumulate points and prizes if they make healthy choices. The program offers annual reimbursements for wellness-related activities or equipment. Vice President Dexter Kubota stated that, "with escalating healthcare costs, the only way to continue providing the same level of benefits was to improve the wellness and health of individual employees." Two employees reported weight loss resulting in a reduction of cholesterol medications for one, and a dramatic reduction from high blood pressure to normal for the other.

The Hawai'i Dental Association (HDS) also promotes living healthy at work. HDS' program, 'Imi Ola, which means "to seek health," is rooted in employee education, offering brown bag lunch sessions by health experts and exercise "tasting" events in which employees are exposed to a variety of fitness activities. As a result, HDS CEO Faye Kurren says, "Many of our employees began to incorporate regular exercise and a healthier diet into their lifestyles. We didn't tally the number of pounds lost, but our workforce has become noticeably trimmer."

It's no surprise that UHA has been recognized as a *Hawai'i Business*

magazine Best Places to Work, Healthiest Employer. Because people spend a quarter of their lives at work, it's an ideal setting for promoting healthy eating and active living. Wellness programs are a benefit to both employees and their employers—having healthy employees means reduced employee turnover, reduced costs associated with chronic disease, fewer sick days, greater productivity and increased morale and satisfaction.

Many of UHA's employees have improved their health because of the company's initiatives. One employee took advantage of Wellness Leave and began exercising regularly and eating better with Weight Watchers, losing 30 pounds. She ran a 10K and hopes to run in the next Honolulu Marathon.

"I clearly would never have been able to have met these achievements if it had not been for the various programs that UHA offers me," she says.

Asked if he has advice for other businesses, Lee says, "It comes down to leadership, meaning the CEO needs to support, even if by policy, the initiatives for better health. I can't emphasize this enough. The program has to be customized to fit your workforce. There is not a one-size-fits-all program; you

will need to engage the workforce to find what works best for them and the organization. Behavior change has little to do with knowledge or incentives; it has a lot to do with motivation and a supportive and caring environment." UHA has that covered.

Kapi'olani, Queen's and Kūlana Hawai'i: How three local programs are helping to improve wellness and health.

Health care providers and insurers can support people in making lifestyle choices that reduce obesity-related medical costs. They can also help people enhance their quality of life and, in turn, create positive changes within the community. Locally, several providers are doing just that—improving the health and wellness of the people of Hawai'i through education and group support.

Two years ago, Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children developed the Pediatric Weight Management Program after it discovered that one in four of the hospital's pediatric and adolescent patients were obese. The program's multi-pronged approach to care addresses a variety of the reasons a child may be overweight and relies heavily on support from the whole family for effectiveness. The small outpatient clinic team of experts includes a pediatrician, case manager, dietitian, physical therapist, and clinical psychologists. Together, they examine the various aspects of the patient's health and develop a comprehensive plan of action.

Michael Taylor Jr. is a 12-year-old patient from Pearl City. It has been about a year since his doctor referred him to the program and he says his life has changed drastically for the better: "Physically, I feel lighter and I know if I look better, I feel better and I'm more confident," he says. He's lost nearly 20 pounds and started playing sports, such as basketball and boxing, for the



first time. A former fast food lover, Michael now monitors his calories with the MyFitnessPal app and enjoys eating better, more nutritious foods.

Michael's progress has influenced his whole family to prepare healthier meals at home and make less frequent stops at fast food restaurants. Michael's father has improved his own health and lost weight, but remembers initially being skeptical of the program. "At first I was kind of fighting it," he says, "but then I knew that Michael needed something structured and actually it's benefited all of us...The key is you can't stop when you leave here, the program continues at home and we all have to work together to succeed."

At The Queen's Medical Center, a Diabetes Self-Management Education Program is available by doctor referral. This outpatient program provides a comprehensive, interactive approach to teaching patients how to successfully manage their diabetes and develop healthy habits to integrate into their daily lives. Participants attend classes and also receive counseling from registered dietitians.

For someone with diabetes who is overweight, even small weight loss—five to ten percent body weight—can make a big difference for your health," says Judy Thompson, registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator.

Program participant Karen Lovell was diagnosed with diabetes in 2008. Although she says she was knowledgeable about the disease before, the education program has helped her apply the information to her daily life: "The awareness has helped me be able to fit the components into a puzzle I can actually understand now," Lovell says.

Lovell has made changes to how she eats and increased her physical activity with walking and hula. "If you follow what you're being taught in this pro-

gram, there's absolutely no way that you cannot feel good," she continues.

Kūlana Hawai'i is a weight management program created by I Ola Lāhui in conjunction with Hawai'i Medical Service Association (HMSA) and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA). The two-year pilot program tackles health and wellness from an integrated behavioral health perspective to address all of the barriers—physical, emotional and social—that present challenges to living a healthier lifestyle.

"Making small, sustainable changes is where it's at for long term health improvements," I Ola Lāhui Executive Director and licensed clinical psychologist Aukahi Austin, PhD, says. Kūlana Hawai'i provides a multidisciplinary team of health psychologists, registered dietitians and fitness instructors, to personally tailor a program to help individuals both one-on-one and in group settings to set goals, get sup-



port and stay motivated to make lasting changes.

With a special focus on the Native Hawaiian population, of which more than three-

quarters is overweight or obese, the no-cost program is available to eligible HMSA members, Native Hawaiians and members of the National Guard and Reserve. HMSA is using this program to cover weight management services not traditionally provided and positive outcomes could lead to permanent changes in the provision of these services.

"Kūlana means stature; it's how you carry yourself," Austin says. "It has to do with how you feel on the inside. If we can change attitudes on the inside about health, it will be reflected on the outside...and that could eventually elevate the health status of the whole community."



Moving Forward >>

The State Department of Health works with partners on policy and systems changes that have a positive, lasting impact. Our collective goal is to create healthier environments in which we live, work and play to make living healthy easy and accessible for Hawai'i residents.

The preceding articles present model programs that address obesity and illustrate the strategies outlined in the Institute of Medicine report, *Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention*, or *APOP*. Our partners who lead these programs are implementing changes that improve the health of their clients, patients, employees, and students. We thank them for sharing their stories.

While these programs and others throughout the state are working hard on the issue, there is much work left to do. About one in three of our keiki entering kindergarten and more than one in two adults are overweight or obese. The percentage of obese high school students increased 26 percent from 1999 to 2011. Among adults, obesity increased 48 percent from 2000 to 2010.

The release of the *APOP* report (May 2012), "The Weight of the Nation" series on HBO (May 2012), and the "Weight of Hawai'i" symposium (June 2012) have invigorated the conversation on obesity, and have helped us realize that our environment has become unhealthy.

According to the *APOP* report, "children, families, and people in general are at every turn surrounded—even bombarded—by inducements that discourage physical activity and encourage overeating." We must take action now to make the healthy choice

the easy choice in Hawai'i. Change requires commitment by leaders who influence healthy options available to our keiki, adults, and families.

Establishing the Childhood Obesity Prevention Task Force will help us move toward solutions for Hawai'i. It brings together government, community, and private organizations to develop Hawai'i-specific policy recommendations. The Task Force is reviewing the programs highlighted herein as examples of evidence-based policies that work, and looking to national strategies like the IOM's *APOP* recommendations. Local resources like our State Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Plan and the Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse (<http://www.hhdw.org/>) will also help guide us.

The Department of Health and partners are also working to integrate and increase the scope of obesity prevention activities, such as:

- **Continuing to engage stakeholders in policy and systems change.** We will be updating the State PAN Plan and convening a summit in spring 2013. The Plan will help us track progress on our goals to address obesity.
- **Implementing existing policies.** We are improving our built environment by implementing Safe Routes to School and Complete Streets policies to make communities

more walkable and bikeable. We are also working with schools to help them fully implement the DOE Wellness Guidelines that create healthy school environments for our keiki

(<http://doe.k12.hi.us/foodservice/toolkit/wellnessguidelines.htm>).

- **Promoting healthy workplaces.** We are supporting worksite wellness programs in government agencies and with private sector employers so healthy options and practices become the norm in Hawai'i workplaces.
- **Informing the public.** We are continuing to coordinate education on healthy behavior change and collaborate on media campaigns.

This document is a call to action. Finding solutions requires leaders from every level of society to find their role in supporting healthy choices. This could be the team mom or coach who serves only healthy beverages, the principal who provides students with the recommended hours of health, nutrition and physical education, the employer who funds a worksite wellness program, or the health care provider that actively supports health promotion and prevention.

The obesity epidemic in Hawai'i can be overturned; however, the collective will of citizens and leaders like you is needed to create this urgent social change.

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