



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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FIRST LADY DAWN IGE RECOGNIZES VENDORS FOR PROVIDING HEALTHY SNACK OPTIONS TO GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

HONOLULU – First Lady Dawn Ige today honored snack shop and cafeteria vendors participating in the Department of Health’s *Choose Healthy Now* project. In a congratulatory ceremony at the State Office Tower, Leiopapa A. Kamehameha Building, 2nd Floor Snack Shop, blind vendors received Healthy Vending Champion Awards for being among the first to adopt the project. The ceremony was followed by a taste test in which building employees sampled new healthy items being offered.

Choose Healthy Now labels snack shop items green (“Go!”), yellow (“Slow”) and red (“Uh-Oh”), enabling employees to easily identify healthier food and beverage items. Promoting healthy food options where people work increases the likelihood that people will eat a healthier diet.

“Many of us spend most of our day at work,” said First Lady Dawn Ige. “Having access to healthy snacks and drinks at work allows employees to make better choices for their overall health, and it increases productivity throughout the work day.”

Healthy vending is part of worksite wellness programming that makes changes to the work environment that can positively impact employee health. Worksite wellness programs have proven effective at improving the health of employees, lowering overall health care costs, reducing absenteeism, and improving employee morale and productivity.

Choose Healthy Now is a partnership between the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services’ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Ho’opono Business Enterprise Program, commonly known as the Blind Vending Program, and is funded by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The project launched in May 2014 with 6 state and federal government building snack shops on Oahu and will be expanding to an additional 12 government worksites by the end of this year.

“In the midst of our obesity epidemic and rising chronic disease rates, *Choose Healthy Now* provides a practical solution for employees to make prudent food choices, so that they feel better and can enjoy better long term health,” said Dr. Virginia Pressler, Director of Health. “The program has made great progress in its first year expanding to more locations and improving how it meets the nutritional needs of an active workforce.”

Poor nutrition is a significant contributor to obesity, which has serious health and economic implications. More than half of Hawaii’s adults or 55.4 percent are overweight or obese. The extra weight takes a toll on health, and can increase the risk of diabetes, heart disease and other chronic health conditions, all of which raise healthcare costs in our community.

In 2009, the estimated annual direct medical care costs for obesity among adults in Hawai’i was \$470 million. Indirect costs resulting from absenteeism, presenteeism (work lost due to illness when present on the job), and disability, conservatively add \$610 million in added costs each year, for a total of more than \$1 billion in obesity-related costs in Hawaii. Without effective interventions, half of adults in Hawaii are projected to be obese by the year 2030.

“Through their involvement in this program, the Ho’opono blind vendors receive training on how to make healthier food selections for their customers,” said Rachael Wong, Director of the Hawaii Department of Human Services. “And they feel good about the important role they play in promoting a healthy diet to help Hawaii’s people to live healthier, longer, quality years of life.”

For more information about obesity and chronic disease prevention and the *Choose Healthy Now* project, please visit: <http://health.hawaii.gov/chronic-disease>.

To download *Choose Healthy Now* materials for use in your worksite snack shop, visit the employer toolkit at: <http://www.healthyhawaii.com/choose-healthy-now/>.

Participating *Choose Healthy Now* sites:

Queen Liliuokalani Building 1390 Miller Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Downtown Post Office 335 Merchant Street Honolulu HI 96813
Prince Kuhio Federal Building 300 Ala Moana Boulevard Honolulu, Hawaii 96850
Ho’opono Center for the Blind 1901 Bachelot Street Honolulu, HI 96817
State Health Department Building <i>temporarily closed for repairs</i> 250 Punchbowl Street Honolulu, HI 96813

Matsunaga Building - Tripler AMC 1 Jarrett White Road Honolulu, HI 96859
Hawaii State Capitol 415 S. Beretania Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Keelikolani Building 830 Punchbowl Street Honolulu, HI 86813
State Office Tower 235 S. Beretania Street, Room 201 Honolulu, HI 96813

Coming Soon (by January 2016):

Hilo Medical Center 1190 Waianuenu Ave Hilo Hi 96720
Kapolei Judiciary 4675 Kapolei Parkway, Rm 106 Kapolei Hi 96709
Kapolei State Office Bldg 601 Kamokila Blvd, Rm 1 Kapolei Hi 96707
Kauai Civic Center 4444 Rice St Lihue Hi 96766
Kona International Airport (2 sites) 73-200 Kupipi Street Kailua-Kona Hi 96740
Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam Annex (2 sites) Whitmore Village, Hi 96786
Naval Station Pearl Harbor (2 sites) Wahiawa Annex
Nimitz-McArthur Pacific Command Center Camp Smith Hi 96701

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