



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Fall Prevention Consortium and Hawaii Department of Health Award Four Individuals for Helping to Reduce the Number and Severity of Falls Among Hawaii's Seniors

HONOLULU – Almost every hour of the day in the U.S., a senior is transported to an emergency room because of an injury from a fall. This equates to more than 8,050 falls per year. The toll in human suffering is staggering.

Each year, the Fall Prevention Consortium identifies individuals who exhibit unique and passionate dedication to reduce the number and severity of injuries from senior falls and honors four outstanding individuals to promote fall prevention efforts in Hawaii.

The Hawaii Department of Health's Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch and the Fall Prevention Consortium announced the recipients of the annual Fall Prevention Awards for Outstanding Community Service at the Plaza Club today, Dec. 16. Each was presented with a special trophy and proclamation. The Plaza at Moanalua was a sponsor of the awards ceremony.

"Fall injuries are tragic events for families throughout the year, but especially during the holiday season," said Alvin C. Bronstein MD, FACEP, Chief of the Hawaii Department of Health's Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch. "Fall injuries are serious and it's appropriate to honor those that help to reduce these injuries."

This year's honorees were:

David Nakamaejo, President, Comforting Hands Senior Care

David Nakamaejo, of Comforting Hands Senior Care, is a giving and passionate health care professional. He was honored for his years of dedication to fall prevention. Nakamaejo provides trained and certified health care aides and helpers for in-home care. For more than 25 years, he taught at Kapiolani Community College before retiring to launch Comforting Hands.

Nakamaejo was one of the founders of the Fall Prevention Consortium. He works tirelessly to enhance the knowledge and skills of both health care professionals and the general public.

Michael Dowell, Chair of the Fall Consortium, said: "I have seen David work with seniors many times, and his compassion and understanding is world-class."

Chris Ridley, Director of Social Services, Hilo Life Care Center

Chris Ridley of Hilo Life Care, is a Hilo based health care icon serving Hawaii County. Her Fall Prevention program ranks as one of the best in the nation. With the cooperation of her employer, Ridley invites nutritionists, physical and occupational therapists, geriatricians, pharmacists, ophthalmologists, social workers, nurses, and family physicians to meet with seniors who participate in her fall prevention classes.

"I have seen fall prevention programs all over the United States, and can confirm that Chris's program is truly one of the finest in our nation," said Stan Michaels, Fall Prevention Coordinator with the Hawaii Department of Health, and recent delegate to the White House Conference on Aging, Fall Prevention Summit 2015. "She is tireless, and is a true champion of our kupuna."

Ridley can be found all over Hawaii Island helping with the Alzheimer's Association. In addition, for many years she has worked with youth soccer benefitting parents and children county-wide.

Billie Jean (BJ) Tang, Physical Therapist, Straub Clinic & Hospital

Billie Jean (BJ) Tang served as Chair of the Fall Prevention Consortium for more than five years. During her leadership, the Consortium grew into a vibrant community asset that mounted yearly statewide awareness campaigns, produced educational DVDs for distribution to the public and countless presentations to senior organizations, and most recently, hosted the state Fall Prevention Conference.

Tang did all of this while working full time as a Physical Therapist at Straub Clinic & Hospital, where she hosted a yearly in-depth fall prevention event for Straub patients and families.

"BJ is truly wonderful to work with as her dedication is incredible and her intelligence is amazing," said Michael Dowell, one of last year's honorees, and President of Stay-at-Home Modifications.

Valerie Yontz, PhD, Specialist and Practice Coordinator at the Office of Public Health Studies, University of Hawaii-Manoa

Valerie Yontz was honored for her dedication for preventing senior falls. She has devoted hundreds of hours helping guide and evaluate various senior falls prevention programs. Yontz has been instrumental in the success of the Fall Prevention Conference.

"Valerie is an amazing individual, able to see the big picture and even more important, able to help guide the complex tasks associated with leadership of both large and small programs," said Therese Argoud, Hawaii Department of Health's Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch Program Manager.

Department of Health Acknowledges The Plaza at Moanalua

The Hawaii Department of Health created a special Fall Prevention Perpetual Trophy to honor the Plaza's dedication to preventing falls.

"The Plaza at Moanalua is pleased to help honor these selfless individuals that have dedicated so much of their lives to assist our kupuna with living safer and more independent lives," said

Shannon Miyazaki, Administrator of The Plaza at Moanalua, which sponsors and supports a number fall prevention initiatives, including Tai Chi for Health Instructor (TCHI) workshops..

More Information

For a complete summary of the fall prevention campaign, the accomplishments of the honorees, and to view a special video for seniors and their caregivers, go to www.nogethurt.hawaii.gov and scroll to fall prevention campaign.

For more information and if you would like to get involved, contact Stan Michaels, EMS Injury Prevention Program at the Hawaii Department of Health at (808) 733-9202 or stanley.michaels@doh.hawaii.gov.

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