



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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**Ralph Goto and Sharon Hanley Vitousek, M.D. to be honored  
for outstanding contributions to injury prevention in Hawai'i**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch in partnership with the Injury Prevention Advisory Committee will present this year's Safe Hawai'i Awards to Ralph Goto and Sharon Hanley Vitousek, M.D. The two honorees will receive their awards during the 2019 Hawaiian Islands Trauma Symposium on Friday, Aug. 9 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort's Coral Ballroom in Honolulu.

"These two individuals have spent their careers focused on preventing life-threatening injuries related to drowning and motor vehicle crashes in Hawai'i," said Alvin C. Bronstein M.D., FACEP, Chief of DOH's Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention Branch. "Their work has saved countless lives and made a tremendous difference in improving the health of the people of Hawai'i."

"The foresight and commitment of Mr. Goto and Dr. Vitousek is exemplary and the reach of their work over the years is infinite," said Deborah Goebert, DrPH, chair of the Injury Prevention Advisory Committee. "They set the groundwork for much of what we consider the foundation of injury prevention in Hawai'i today."

The Safe Hawai'i Award acknowledges the contributions of either an individual or organization towards any given area of injury prevention in Hawai'i. Drowning and motor vehicle crashes are the fifth and fourth leading causes of fatal injuries among Hawai'i residents. In 2018, there were 102 drowning related deaths and 116 motor vehicle related deaths in Hawai'i.

**Ralph Goto**, retired administrator of the City and County of Honolulu's Ocean Safety and Lifeguard Services Division and inaugural member of the Injury Prevention Advisory Committee is recognized for his lifetime of service preventing drownings and improving the safety of O'ahu beaches.

Between 1981 and 2013, Goto focused on ocean safety legislation, community issues, and governmental matters, while serving on boards, committees, and coalitions in Honolulu. He contributed to the development and formation of the Hawai'i Region of the U.S. Lifesaving Association, the Personal Watercraft Rescue Program, and unionizing water safety officers. In 1984, Goto was appointed to the Accident Prevention and Injury Control Task Force, which established state-level injury prevention activities for the first time within the Department of Health. He was instrumental in incorporating the important concept of prevention guided by collecting, analyzing and interpreting data to drive environmental, legislative, and public education interventions in beach safety.

Goto is the recipient of the national 2012 Paragon Award for Water Safety. Since his 2013 retirement, he continues to be a champion for water safety as a long-standing volunteer with the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association and co-chair of the Hawai'i Drowning and Aquatic Injury Prevention Advisory Committee.

**Sharon Hanley Vitousek, M.D.**, retired director of the North Hawai'i Outcomes Project is recognized for her major achievements in preventing traffic-related injuries and deaths in Hawai'i. A graduate of Williams College, University of Hawai'i (UH) John A. Burns School of Medicine, and the UH Internal Medicine Residency Program, Vitousek moved to Hawai'i County in 1987.

A Board Certified physician in internal medicine, Vitousek worked as director of the North Hawai'i Outcomes Project from 1999 to 2013 measuring the relative health of the people in North Hawai'i compared to the county, state and nation. When traffic deaths in Hawai'i County became a focal point, Vitousek engaged and organized volunteers from public and private sectors to form the Motor Vehicle Crash Reduction Group.

The group identified key causes of the high traffic death rate in Hawai'i County and effective strategies to reduce traffic deaths in both the county and state. Members of the group included the Departments of Health and Transportation, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Hawai'i County Police, county and state traffic engineers, Hawai'i County Mass Transit, the Office of the Mayor of Hawai'i, and community members. Through facilitated dialogue, the group set yearly joint priorities for traffic safety legislation, including ignition interlock. From 2000-2010, the traffic death rate in Hawai'i County decreased by 52 percent.

Vitousek also served for many years on the state Strategic Highway Safety Plan and on its Data and Information Systems Committee. Although she is now retired, Vitousek still advocates for traffic safety policies and for improving access to high quality primary care in Hawai'i.

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