



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### **National Brain Injury Awareness Month Kicks Off with “Rock It, Don’t Stock It” Rally March 4 at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa**

**HONOLULU** – The Department of Health (DOH) Neurotrauma Supports Program kicks off National Brain Injury Awareness Month by unveiling the **UnMasking Brain Injury Mobile Exhibit** at the “Rock It, Don’t Stock It” rally on March 4th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the University of Hawai‘i Mānoa, Campus Center, located at 2465 Campus Road, Honolulu, HI 96822. The rally, which is free to the public, will provide attendees with injury prevention tips, resources, fun activities and multi-sport helmet giveaways on a first-come first-served basis.

Following the rally, the UnMasking Brain Injury Mobile Exhibit will be on display at the following locations/dates:

March 4	9am – 1pm	Rock It, Don’t Stock It Rally, UH Campus Center
	11:45 am	First Lady Dawn Ige Remarks
March 5 – March 12	8am – 4:30pm	Honolulu Hale 3rd Floor Gallery
March 13 – March 23	7am – 6pm	State Capitol Chamber Level
March 23 – March 31	10am – 9pm	Windward Mall

March is recognized as Brain Injury Awareness Month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of total traumatic brain injury (TBI) related emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths increased by 53% from 1.88 million in 2006 to 2.88 million in 2014. Between 2016-2018, about half (52%) of the patients hospitalized for TBI in Hawai‘i and 90% of those treated in the emergency department were discharged. Between 2012 - 2018, the Hawai‘i Department of Health, (DOH) reported an annual average of 3,723 visits to Hawai‘i emergency departments and 1,561 hospitalizations related to a head injury.

According to Mary Brogan, the DOH Developmental Disabilities Division Administrator, “TBIs are often referred to as a “hidden disability” because survivors may not exhibit outward impairment. Yet, a TBI can affect how a brain processes information, compromising a person’s cognition, emotions, language, physical mobility, and sensory perception. This impacts their daily livelihood and ability to function.”

To increase public awareness about the effects of brain injuries, available resources, and ways to prevent serious, life-changing brain injuries, the DOH Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD) Neurotrauma Supports program is teaming up with community partners for events throughout the month of March.

The UnMasking Brain Injury Project is a national initiative that empowers brain injury survivors to share their stories through the creation of three-dimensional artistic masks that are beautiful and inspirational portrayals of survivors’ personal emotions and feelings experienced during their healing journey. The goal of this project is to raise public awareness about the prevalence and impacts of a brain injury while giving survivors a voice and creative outlet to educate others about the challenges of living with a brain injury.

Organizations participating in the rally include: University of Hawai’i at Mānoa (UH Manoa) College of Education, UH Mānoa Kokua Services, Hawaii Concussion Awareness Management Program, Queen’s Medical Center, Kapiolani Medical Center, Hawai’i Bicycling League, Hinds Feet Farms, DOH Injury Prevention Systems Branch, Rehabilitation Hospital of the Pacific, City and County of Honolulu Proud to be Pono Prevention Campaign, and Leeward Community College Motorcycle Training Instructors.

The Hawai’i DOH Neurotrauma Supports Program cultivates and shares resources to address the needs of individuals and their families affected by neurotrauma injury. The program encourages people to learn about brain injuries and how to prevent them. The following prevention techniques are recommended to avoid traumatic brain injuries:

- Wear a seatbelt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle and properly install and use infant and child car seats;
- Never drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Wear a helmet or appropriate headgear when you or your children ride a bike, motorcycle, moped, scooter, or skateboard, play contact sports or baseball/softball, or ride a horse;
- Eliminate trip hazards at home for kupuna through regular medication reviews and annual eye exams. Regular exercise is highly recommended to help older adults maintain and improve their balance and coordination; and
- Make living and play areas safer for children by installing window guards, using safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs, and make sure your child’s playground has soft material under it.

For additional information on resources for individuals with traumatic brain injury, please call the Neurotrauma Helpline at (808) 733-2155 or visit the Neurotrauma Supports website at <http://health.hawaii.gov/nt/>.

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