



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Brain Injury Awareness Month kicks off March 1 with the “Rock It, Don’t Stock It” rally at Leeward Community College**

HONOLULU – The Hawai‘i Department of Health (DOH) Developmental Disabilities Division Neurotrauma Program will kick off National Brain Injury Awareness Month with the “Rock It, Don’t Stock It” rally on March 1 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Leeward Community College Concourse, located at 96-045 Ala Ike, Pearl City, HI 96782.

The event is free to the public and will provide attendees with tips, resources, fun activities, and moped, bike, and multi-sport helmet giveaways on a first-come first-served basis. The rally will be held outdoors, COVID-19 safety protocols will be observed and attendees are required to wear a mask.

March is recognized as Brain Injury Awareness Month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), across the United States there were approximately 223,050 traumatic brain injury (TBI) related hospitalizations in 2018 and 60,611 TBI-related deaths in 2019. Each year, Hawai‘i sees an average of 4,360 TBIs, with 41 percent due to unintentional falls among those age 65 and older, and 21 percent due to sports played by those between the ages 10-17.

“TBIs are often referred to as a ‘hidden disability’ because survivors may not exhibit outward impairment,” said Mary Brogan, Developmental Disabilities Division Administrator. “However, 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.”

The rally will showcase brain injury mask art, a collection of three-dimensional masks made by TBI survivors. The masks are portrayals of survivors’ personal emotions and feelings

experienced during their healing journey. The masks give survivors a voice and creative outlet to educate others about the impact of living with a brain injury.

To increase public awareness about the effects of brain injuries, available resources, and ways to prevent serious, life-changing brain injuries, the DOH Neurotrauma Program is partnering with: Hawaii Bicycling League, Hawai'i Concussion Awareness Management Program, Kapi'olani Medical Center, Leeward Community College, Neuroscientist Dr. Sheri Hiroi-DuBay, Queen's Medical Center, and University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UH Manoa) College of Education.

The DOH Neurotrauma 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 a TBI:

- 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 TBI, please call the Neurotrauma Helpline at (808) 733-2155 or visit the Neurotrauma Program at <http://health.hawaii.gov/nt/>.

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