

# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Date:** September 21, 2018

**Contact:** Shere Saneishi-Kim  
Director, HDS Foundation  
(808) 529-9228  
[ssaneishi-kim@HawaiiDentalService.com](mailto:ssaneishi-kim@HawaiiDentalService.com)

Nathan Hokama  
Strategic Communication Solutions  
(808) 226-7470  
[nhokama@scsolutions-hi.com](mailto:nhokama@scsolutions-hi.com)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **New Preventive Oral Health Education Program for Hawaii Island Seniors**

Hilo, Hawaii — The Hawaii County Sub-Area Health Planning Council (HCSAC), in collaboration with Hui Malama Ola Na Oiwī, the Native Hawaiian Health Care System serving Hawaii Island, and the HDS Foundation, will launch a preventive oral health education program to reach nearly 9,000 seniors age 60 and older in Hawaii County within a year.

The first oral health education session will be held at Kamana Senior Center, Room RR, on Thursday, Sept. 27, from 9:30 am to 11:30 am. The session is free for participants in Hawaii County's Parks and Recreation program and other Hawaii Island seniors.

Each session will cover such topics as the most common oral health problems among seniors, best preventive practices, and remedies for oral health conditions. Attendees will receive a free dental kit, which includes a toothbrush, toothpaste, and floss. Light refreshments will be served.

#### **Filling the Need for Oral Health Education**

In Hawaii county, about 70% of adults age 65 and over visited a dentist in the past 12 months and 14.1 % had all their teeth removed. According to the latest county health rankings, Hawaii County has a dentist to population ratio of 1,665 to one, in contrast to Honolulu County at 1,067 to one.

#### **Extending Care to Grandchildren**

"Since data shows many seniors in Hawaii county take care of their grandchildren, we hope seniors will share what they learn with their grandchildren for intergenerational learning," he said, noting that national and local studies show Hawaii's children rank at the bottom of the nation in oral health.

#### **Caring for Native Hawaiians**

Native Hawaiians in Hawaii county are particularly vulnerable. They had a significantly higher rate of oral health emergency department visits across the State when compared to Native Hawaiians in the other counties as well as other ethnic groups combined.

#### **Islandwide Collaboration**

"We started a small oral health project to meet the needs of Ka'u residents, but to meet the need for better oral health care we are expanding this educational program to serve seniors throughout Hawaii county," said (Name), (Title), of (Organization). "Many other organizations have seen the need for this program. This has become a positive, islandwide grassroots effort."

# NEWS RELEASE

Other partners who have stepped forward to support this new education program include the Hawaii County Parks and Recreation's Elderly Activities Division; Big Island Veterans, an affiliate of Hawaii County Parks and Recreation; Alu Like Elderly Services Program; the University of Hawaii Center on the Family; Hawaii Community College; and the Hawaii Department of Health's Family Health Services Division.

## **Sustainable, Measurable Impact**

To measure the effectiveness of the preventive oral health education program, the seniors will be surveyed before and immediately after they attend an information session, and six months later to assess whether they adopt practices to improve their oral health. A reinforcement session will be conducted prior to the six-month assessment.

# # #

## **Hawaii County Sub-Area Health Planning Council (HCSAC)**

The Hawaii County Sub-Area Health Planning Council (HCSAC) is one of eight advisory councils to the State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA), an agency administratively attached to the Hawaii Department of Health. HCSAC engages in service projects to support the health needs and services of Hawaii county.

## **About Hui Malama Ola Na Oihi**

Hui Malama Ola Na Oihi is the Native Hawaiian Health Care System that serves Hawaii Island as part of the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act. The organization provides health promotion and education, disease prevention, and community building services throughout the county.

## **About the HDS Foundation**

The HDS Foundation was established in 1986 by Hawaii Dental Service to improve the oral health in communities across Hawaii. Grants are distributed twice a year to local non-profit organizations for programs and projects that provide oral health education, prevent oral disease, and increase access to dental care for underserved populations