

# Aloha!

December 2020

This past year, everyone faced unprecedented challenges. The pandemic made kūpuna especially vulnerable to food insecurity — the ability to obtain basic sustenance to meet their nutritional needs. They were unable to shop for groceries because of stay-at-home orders to prevent the spread of the disease.

As a result, many are turning to Hawai'i Meals on Wheels (HMoW) for relief. When Hawaii's senior population was advised to stay at home, we realized the COVID-19 pandemic would challenge our existing delivery models, our operating procedures and our volunteer corps. For the past nine months, our team not only served our existing clients safely without any disruption in service, but also quickly geared up for exponential demand for home-delivered meals.

## Setting a New Record for Meal Deliveries

We have expanded the criteria to include hundreds of additional seniors, including residents in 9 senior housing communities throughout O'ahu. Today, we serve over 1,000 seniors, and serve 20,000 meals per month — nearly three times the 7,500 meals per month before the pandemic! By the end of this year, we will easily set a new record – delivering more than 150,000 meals this year.

## Bringing Aloha and Holiday Cheer

Food is critical. But Hawai'i Meals on Wheels staff and volunteers offer something just as precious: human connection. During this season of pronounced isolation, we offer timely conversations. Staff and volunteers place a bag of food on the client's doorknob, knock, and then step back at least six feet. Even at a distance, our team continues to bring warm aloha as they check in on clients' wellbeing. Our staff and volunteers are often the first to know when a client needs extra support and services.

This year, we received a call from "Mr. Ching" who is undergoing treatment for cancer. Mr. Ching lives alone, and the prospect of making a meal at home was daunting. He quickly connected with our meal delivery volunteers, who enjoy talking story with him at a safe distance from his doorway. While checking in on how he was feeling, volunteers learned that Mr. Ching's illness and its treatment affected his appetite. Before receiving home-delivered meals, he had been eating less and his specialists were concerned about his alarming weight loss. Now, on days when he's especially discouraged by his illness, he looks forward to volunteers' shakas and cheerful greetings and is encouraged to "appreciate every bite." HMoW offers clients who are in post-op recovery at home or



*Continue on back.*

fighting life-threatening illnesses, like Mr. Ching, wellness checks and menu options specifically tailored to meet their nutritional needs – allowing them to feel better, stay socially connected, and maintain or boost their strength.

### Preparing for the New Year

Delivering a higher volume of hot and frozen meals has stretched our budget like never before. We expect to continue to see the effects of the pandemic in 2021. I would like to ask you to consider supporting homebound kūpuna during this holiday season and to prepare for challenges in the new year. **Your generous support will:**

- Bring comfort and smiles to 1,000 homebound clients throughout O’ahu;
- Allow us to deliver over 150,000 nutritious meals, many of which will be medically tailored to accommodate special diets; and
- Provide weekly safety and wellness checks to those we serve.

With your support, seniors like “Lisa” can look forward to receiving her home-delivered meals each week: “I am a vulnerable senior with health issues. I am not supposed to go out. Before someone referred me to your wonderful, compassionate service, I would ride the bus, walk and try to go out and look for food supplies and found the shelves empty. I had no one to help me. I was scared and anxious not knowing what the future would be like for me. I am independent and live alone. My family is on the mainland. They begged me not to go out. There would be no one to take care of me if got COVID-19. Thank goodness someone referred me to your service . . . I don’t know what I would do otherwise. Thank you everyone for the delicious meals.”

### Make the Season Bright for Kūpuna

For many of our kūpuna, just knowing there is someone who is willing to show up, listen and cares is very comforting. Your donation, no matter what amount, will have a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable seniors. Make the season bright for our kūpuna by making a generous tax-deductible contribution before the end of the year. Mahalo for your support!

Mahalo nui loa,



Michelle Cordero-Lee  
Chief Executive Officer



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