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AFSP Hawai‘i Chapter Newsletter

Quarter 1, 2025 – Aloha, Connection, and New Beginnings

Aloha AFSP ‘Ohana,

Welcome to 2025—a year of renewed hope, fresh partnerships, and deepened purpose. As we step into this next chapter together, we're proud to continue growing our reach across Hawai‘i, expanding access to mental health education, and strengthening the network of support that saves lives.

This quarter, we've welcomed new board leadership, launched our inaugural **Paws for Prevention** event, and deepened our presence across neighbor islands—all in the name of creating a more connected, compassionate future.

With love and gratitude,
Kiki | Communications & Social Media Lead

- Dennis Hida
- Janice Berry
- Karen Ng
- Kiki Rosario
- Nicolle Grimes
- Rachelle Chang
- Scott Kaeo
- Sheri Taketa
- Val Yamakawa
- Cori Takesue
- Desiree Ui'lani Kiaha
- Jo Anne Balberde-Kamalii
- Lyah Kama-Drake
- Sarah Gudmunson

Board Spotlight: Dr. Cori Takesue

We are thrilled to welcome **Dr. Cori Takesue** to our AFSP Hawai‘i Board. A Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist, Dr. Takesue's leadership in behavioral health has made a deep impact on communities across Hawai‘i.



Born and raised on O‘ahu, Dr. Takesue currently serves as **Director of Behavioral Health at Lāna‘i Community Health Center**, where she supports individuals with chronic health conditions, serious mental illness, and at-risk youth. In 2017, she was recognized by *Pacific Business News* as part of their “40 Under 40” Class.

From forensic settings to island clinics, her experience reflects a deep kuleana to mental wellness and suicide prevention. Dr. Takesue has brought awareness, training, and compassion to Lāna‘i, and we are honored to have her help guide our chapter into 2025.

Q1 in Review: Events & Impact Across Hawai‘i

We kicked off 2025 with presence, purpose, and participation across the islands:

- **1/8 – HIM Mental Health Series (Kaua‘i)**
- **1/9 – HIM Mental Health Series (O‘ahu)**
- 1/18 – Family Health and Wellness Fair
- **1/30–2/2 – AFSP Chapter Leadership Conference (Houston)**
- **2/15 – Moloka‘i ISOSL Event**
- **2/22 – AFSP Hawai‘i Board Retreat**
- 2/28 - Working Families Day 2025 2025 Rally - HCAN Speaks
- **3/8 – Lion's Day at the Park (O‘ahu)**
- **3/21–3/23 – Bereavement Facilitator Training (Virtual)**
- **3/24 – Living808 Segment: Paws for Prevention Promo**
- 3/28 – Pouhana O Na Wahine: Ho‘i I Ka Hale II
- **4/2 – Midweek Feature Article by Rachelle Chang**
- 4/16 – Queer Day at Hawai’i State Capitol

Through these outreach efforts, we engaged directly with communities across four islands, strengthened relationships with partner organizations, and expanded the reach of suicide prevention education and support.

Quarter Highlight: Paws for Prevention 🐾

On **April 6**, tails wagged, and hearts were full at AFSP Hawai‘i's **first-ever Paws for Prevention** event at the Frank Fasi Civic Grounds. Over 150 attendees and their furry companions came together to raise awareness around suicide prevention—and to celebrate the healing power of pets.

The day was filled with a joyful group walk, lively pet contests (including Pet-Owner Look-alike Contest and Pet Costume Contest), and heartwarming story time with **Gizmo the Therapy Dog**. Local vendors, swag bags, and the **Fetchin' Game** brought energy and laughter, while heartfelt speeches from **Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke**, **Ms. United States Angie Martinez**, **Chad Starr**, and others reminded us of the purpose behind our gathering.

Thanks to our generous donors and sponsors, we raised **over $11,000** to support suicide prevention research, education, and programming across Hawai‘i.





Mahalo to Our Paws for Prevention Sponsors & Volunteers

A heartfelt mahalo to everyone who made Paws for Prevention a success:

Event Sponsors:
Calvin and Susie | HMSA | 'Iolani School | Mercedes-Benz of Honolulu

In-Kind Donors:
Alaka'i Inflatables and Party Rentals | Event Sanitation Plus | Aiea Copy Center | City and County of Honolulu

Additional Support:
ALTRES (150+ Clear Bags for Swag) | VCA (Swag Items) | Calvin and Susie (60 Dog Treats + Three $100 Contest Prizes)

Audio and Emcees:
Pastor Isaac Ikeda (Audio Support) | Emcees: Champ Kaneshiro | Fred (Calista's Dad) | Augie T and Daughter Mahea

Media Features:
Laurie Mizuno (KHON Living808 Segment) | Midweek Hawai'i (Event Featured in Weekly Article)

Event Committee:
Keriann Osada (Program) | Jacob Osada (Fetchin' Game & Barbie Box Construction) | Cate Waidyatilleka (Activities) | Noelani Miram & Tita Ei Nei Productions (Vendor Management) | Calista Rodi, KJ Yee, Rylee Cockett, Taylor Cockett (Registration) | Kristine Suehiro (Dog Community Connection & Kaia's Mom) | Shari Imanaka & Yvette Hida (Swag Bag Prep) | Renee Yu (Gizmo the Therapy Dog) | Dennis Hida (Overnight Security)

Silent Auction:
Rachelle Chang | Nicolle Grimes

And to our 30+ volunteers who poured their hearts into making this event unforgettable.

Spotlight Program: Healing Conversations

In 2024, our Hawai'i Chapter became an official provider of **Healing Conversations**, a national AFSP program offering peer support to those who've lost a loved one to suicide.

Led by coordinator **Karen Ng**, our trained volunteers (Nicolle Grimes, Cat Langan, Deb Goebert) connect with survivors via phone, Zoom, or in-person—creating safe, compassionate spaces for healing. We know that support from someone who understands can be life changing.

💙 If you or someone you know is grieving, we invite you to reach out and connect.

Looking Ahead

Quarter 1 reminded us that healing doesn't happen in isolation—it takes community, care, and consistent action. Whether you're walking beside us at an event, amplifying our mission online, or lending your voice to a loved one in need, *you* are part of the solution.

Let's keep building. Let's keep showing up.

Join us, volunteer, or donate today. Together, we are making a difference—one conversation, one connection, one life at a time.

With deep gratitude and aloha,
Dennis Hida
AFSP Hawai'i Chapter Chair

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Hawaii

Upcoming:

Volunteer 101 (learn about AFSP and how to get involved with our Hawaii Chapter)
Sun, May 18th 1PM-3PM @ Aiea Public Library
Sat, May 24th 10AM-12PM Virtual/Zoom
Email: valyamakawa.afsphi@gmail.com to sign up or if you have questions

Construction Hike for Hope - Community Hike
Sun, June 29th, 12PM Aiea Loop Trail (meet at Pavilion at the top of the trail)
Email: rachelle009@yahoo.com if you have questions

RSVP for Hike for Hope

Instagram | Facebook | Website
Join AFSP Hawai'i Volunteer Now