American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Hawaii

HAWAI'I CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

June 2026





PAWS FOR PREVENTION

Despite bad weather forecasts, about 80 people and dogs of all shapes and sizes showed up on a beautiful day for our second annual Paws for Prevention on Saturday, April 4th at Momilani Community Center in Pearl City. A Dog Walk kicked off the afternoon and was followed by fun-filled contests, a silent auction, and local vendors showcasing their brands. Emcee Darah Dung, State Representative Gregg Takayama, and Quinn Grimes spoke in support of the importance of mental health and suicide prevention. Local non-profits, including National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and Mental Health America Hawai'i (MHAH) provided resources. Despite having a smaller attendance than our first Paws for Prevention in 2025, we were pleased to raise more this year. Thank you to all the pet parents and their fur babies who attended!



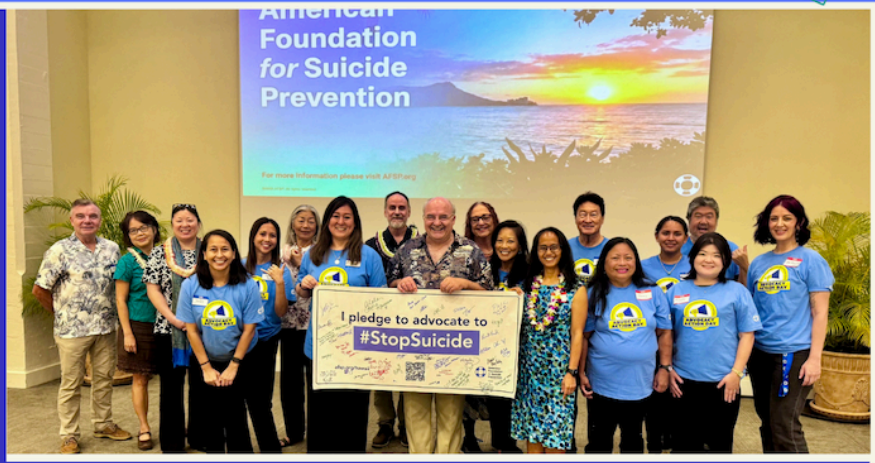


HAWAII CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

Angela Martinez
Cori Takesue
Dennis Hida, Board Chair
Karen Ng
Nicolle Grimes
Presley Hill
Rachelle Chang
Sarah Gudmunson
Sheri Taketa
Ui Desiree Kiaha
Valerie Yamakawa

AFSP HAWAIʻI LEGISLATIVE BRUNCH

The AFSP Hawaiʻi Chapter's Legislative Brunch brought together legislators, community leaders, volunteers, and suicide prevention advocates from across Hawaiʻi on April 17 for a meaningful day of learning, connection, and shared purpose.



Participants heard from Dr. Dan Galanis, who shared the latest suicide data and trends impacting our state, and from Dr. Jeanelle Sugimoto-Matsuda and Danielle Bergan, Co-Chairs of the Prevent Suicide Hawaiʻi Task Force, who provided an overview of Hawaiʻi's Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention. Attendees also learned more about AFSP's mission to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide, along with the education and prevention programs serving communities across Hawaiʻi. Throughout the day, presentations, conversations, and shared experiences reinforced the importance of collaboration, compassion, and collective action in advancing suicide prevention efforts statewide.



The Collaborative Storytelling activity created a powerful space for participants to share their personal moʻolelo and reflect on the experiences, people, and moments that inspire their commitment to suicide prevention. As stories were exchanged, words such as hope, belonging, resilience, compassion, connection, advocacy, and love filled the room and our Story Catcher board. The activity reinforced a message felt throughout the brunch: while data helps us understand the scope of suicide's impact, it is our stories, relationships, and collective commitment to one another that inspire action. Together, we left with a renewed sense of purpose and hope, reminded that meaningful change only happens when communities come together to truly listen, learn, and support one another.



CONSTRUCTION HIKE FOR HOPE



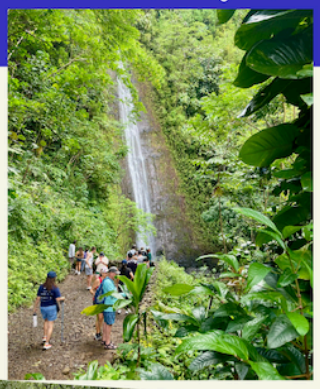


Each day, on average, 12 construction workers are lost to suicide. We want to encourage, equip, and empower mental health champions in the workforce. AFSP Hawai'i paved the way for Construction Safety Week with our second Construction Hike for Hope.

On May 2, 70 people (12 teams) showed up to hike at 'Aiea Loop Trail, enjoying nature, building community, and raising $3,825 for suicide prevention. Layton Construction raised the most, and the Hawaii Stevedores brought the most hikers! The next day, 12 members of the Pali Lions Club hiked for hope at Kawainui Marsh. Mahalo to the Hawaii Stevedores, our stretch leader Coach Lola, Aiea Copy Center, Mercedes Benz of Honolulu, Patagonia, and the Hawai'i United Prevention Task Force for helping us save lives and bring hope to the construction industry and Hawai'i communities!

We ended the month strong with a Volunteer Connect hike at Manoa Falls on May 24.





VOLUNTEER CONNECT HIKE

On Sunday, May 24, a group of AFSP Hawai'i volunteers gathered at the Manoa Falls Trail for a morning of hiking and connection in honor of Hike for Hope month. We enjoyed a refreshing day of exercise and fellowship while taking in the beautiful views on the trail. Following the hike, we shared lunch together, which provided an additional opportunity to "talk story" to get to know each other better, as well as exchange ideas regarding our organization and community mental health. We hope to see more volunteers at our next Volunteer Connect!





VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



JAX PRECIADO

1. How long and how have you volunteered with AFSP?

I've volunteered for AFSP a little over a year. For a while I had considered volunteering but hadn't taken the next step—life was busy and complicated. Then I met Janice while I was tabling for another nonprofit, and our conversation reminded me how much this cause matters to me.

AFSP felt like a place where people lead with compassion, connection, and hope. I wanted to be part of a community that reminds people they are not alone—where I could show others who see what I do that I'm here to talk, I'm here to listen, I'm here for a hug, or just to share some human presence.

2. What motivated you to get involved?

Suicide prevention is personal for me. In 2010, I lost my childhood friend Michael to suicide. We had been friends since I was five. His loss changed the way I move through the world and deepened my understanding of how profoundly suicide affects families, friends, and entire communities.

As an educator, I also saw firsthand how mental health challenges affected young people. I spent several years teaching middle school and advising a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), where students often shared their struggles, fears, and hopes with trusted adults. Later, I worked with grieving children and families, including some who had lost loved ones to suicide. Those experiences reinforced something I believe deeply: connection matters.

As a mother of four, including three teenagers, that belief feels even more urgent. I want my children and the young people around them to know they are loved, supported, and worthy of help. I want them to know that reaching out is a sign of strength, and that there are people and resources available when life feels overwhelming.



3. What impact has AFSP made on your life?

AFSP has reminded me that there are extraordinary people everywhere, quietly showing up for others. The volunteers, survivors, advocates, and community members I've met through AFSP have given me hope. They have reminded me that compassion is powerful and that healing happens in connection with other people.

At a time when I needed more light in my own life, AFSP provided a community rooted in care, understanding, and action. Being involved has strengthened my belief that prevention begins with human connection: checking in, listening without judgment, sharing resources, and reminding people that they matter.

I often speak about aloha as a practice rather than simply a feeling. AFSP embodies that idea for me. Every conversation, every walk, every volunteer shift is an opportunity to show up for one another and help create communities where people feel seen, supported, and valued.

RECENT NEWS

AFSP-THE JED FOUNDATION MERGER

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and The Jed Foundation are thrilled to announce the intent to merge as equals to form AFSP/JED, the nation's largest nonprofit dedicated to preventing suicide across the lifespan and bringing hope to those affected by suicide loss or risk.

By combining AFSP's national reach and research leadership with JED's expertise in youth mental health, we'll be able to save more lives, support more communities, and bring hope to millions across the country. Read more here.

BOARD MEMBER SHERI TAKETA HONORED

On May 20th, 2026, our very own Sheri Taketa was recognized at the annual Mental Health America of Hawai'i (MHA) Mental Health Awareness & Awards Celebration, which honors individuals and organizations dedicated to mental wellness across the islands. She received an Outstanding Government Leader award. Her passion, leadership, and commitment inspires all who work with her. Congratulations, Sheri!





OUTREACH







TABLING

AFSP Hawai'i continues to show up in community—creating space for connection and sharing resources for mental health and suicide prevention.

4/18 Aloha 'Aina Fair @ Windward Mall
5/6 May Mental Health Fair
5/9 Moloka'i Resource Fair
5/21 National Association of Women in Construction
6/27 Walk for Life









GUEST ESSAY

An Upstream Approach to Thriving

From the perspective of a peace educator

In peace studies, we often talk about the difference between negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace is simply the absence of violence. Positive peace is the presence of justice, belonging, dignity, and connection. When we apply this lens to suicide prevention, it reminds us that we cannot only respond to crisis. We must also help create the conditions where people can truly thrive. Prevention often begins long before someone reaches a place of loneliness, despair, or hopelessness. It begins upstream, in how we nurture compassion, resilience, and connection within our communities. One important part of upstream suicide prevention is helping people understand their emotions and their nervous systems. When children and adults learn to recognize what stress feels like in their bodies, how to calm themselves, and who they can turn to for support, they gain tools that can serve them throughout their lives.

Peace is not only philosophical. It is physiological.

Our bodies carry stress, grief, fear, and disconnection. When we live in prolonged states of stress from social isolation, trauma, cultural pressures, or overwork, our nervous systems remain on constant alert. Over time, this can wear down our resilience. Somatic practices can help restore balance and strengthen our ability to cope. Simple tools such as box breathing, body scans, quiet reflection, time in nature, mindful movement like qigong, or even placing a hand over the heart and breathing slowly can help the body return to a sense of safety. These practices are part of a larger body of trauma-informed and mindfulness-based approaches that support wellbeing.

Healthy rhythms also matter.

Adequate sleep, nourishment, time outdoors, creative expression, and meaningful work are all protective factors. Just as important is a sense of belonging. Being part of a group, faith community, team, club, or volunteer effort helps interrupt isolation and reminds us that we matter to others.

Today's young people are growing up in a time of significant pressure and uncertainty. One way we can support them is by creating spaces where they feel heard and respected. Restorative conversations, listening with the intent to understand, and guiding rather than punishing when mistakes happen can help young people feel safe enough to reach out when they need help.

As parents, teachers, and mentors, our role is not to eliminate hardship. It is to strengthen the capacity to move through it. Children thrive when they experience unconditional care, clear expectations, emotional coaching, time in nature, and opportunities for play and connection.

We also need to normalize conversations about mental health. When young people grow up hearing that it is okay to talk about difficult feelings, they are less likely to suffer in silence.

For friends, neighbors, and colleagues, prevention often shows up in small and meaningful ways: checking in with someone, inviting them for a walk or conversation, noticing when someone seems withdrawn, or simply being willing to listen. When someone shares something heavy, our role is not always to fix it, but to listen, validate their feelings, and help them connect to additional support if needed.

Upstream prevention is ultimately about reducing isolation and strengthening community. Schools that teach social-emotional skills, workplaces that value wellbeing, and neighborhoods where people know and support one another all help create environments where people can flourish.

When individuals feel seen, valued, and connected to something larger than themselves, hope grows stronger. Together, we can cultivate emotional awareness, compassion, resilience, and connection so that young people and adults alike feel supported by family, community, and purpose.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 5 @ 2pm Out of the Darkness Flyer Distribution - Let's hit the pavement together! We'll be heading out to distribute flyers to local businesses to invite their participation and support for this year's Walk.
July 12 @ 1-2pm Volunteer 101 Hawai'i (Virtual) - Volunteer 101 is a great introduction to our organization and how you can get involved with our chapter. Register here.
July 12 @ 2:30-3:30pm Talk Saves Lives Hawai'i (Virtual) - Talk Saves Lives is AFSP's signature introductory presentation on suicide prevention. Register here.
July 14 and Aug 20: Nationally Hosted Session of Talk Saves Lives: Construction
July 23 and August 26: Presenter 101 Training
August 2 @ 12-3pm Out of the Darkness Poster Making - Let's gather together to make posters for our upcoming Out of the Darkness Walk! Poster supplies and pizza will be provided. RSVP here.
August 15 @ 1-4pm Volunteer Connect Karaoke - It's time to have some fun together! We appreciate everything you do and want to take some time to relax, connect, and sing our hearts out. ·Please RSVP and Venmo Val $5 (@yamakawav) by Monday, August 10. Also, feel free to bring a favorite food/snack item to share! RSVP here.

WALK SEASON IS ALMOST HERE!

It's time to form your team! Registration for the 2026 Out of the Darkness Hawai'i Walks is now open and we'd love for you to join us! Your participation helps raise awareness, and fundraising is vital to support research, advocacy, and education. Every step we take together makes a difference.



Oahu Walk, September 5
Magic Island, Honolulu
7:45am Registration/9am Program
REGISTER FOR THE OAHU WALK
Maui Walk, September 12
Keopuolani Park, Kahului
10am
REGISTER FOR THE MAUI WALK



CONTACT US:
HAWAII@AFSP.ORG

FOLLOW US @AFSPHAWAII

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE
24/7 CALL,TEXT,CHAT

WALK WITH US

TO PREVENT SUICIDE







REGISTER TODAY

O'ahu Community Out of the Darkness Walk

Saturday, September 5, 2026

Magic Island, Honolulu, HI
Check-in: 7:45am Event Start: 9:00am

Register at afsp.org/HawaiiWalk

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention | OUT OF THE DARKNESS Community Walks

Your Support Helps Save Lives

Hawaii 2025 Impact

With chapters in all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico, AFSP is leading the fight in suicide prevention. Our mission is to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide. We do so by creating a culture that's smart about mental health through education and community programs, research and advocacy, and support for those affected by suicide. Thank you for your partnership and investment in our life-saving work.

Thousands of people are engaged in AFSP's mission every day.



VOLUNTEERS

33

People donating their time to #StopSuicide



WALKS

643

People attended one of our two Out of the Darkness Walks



SOCIAL MEDIA

1,994

Followers across social media

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers and funds raised, we've delivered on our mission.



EDUCATION

130

People reached through seven prevention, loss, and healing education programs



LOSS & HEALING

36

People attended one of two International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day events

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ADVOCACY

175

Volunteer Email Advocates who are fighting for state and federal policy change



RESEARCH

$8.5M

Funding for 36 new research grants, bringing AFSP's investment to $25 million over the last 5 years

Behind every number is a person, and because of you, more people in our chapter and across the country are finding support, connection and hope when they need it most.

afsp.org/impact

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

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