

aloha mau

NEWSLETTER



Ho'oilō • Winter • 2025

Akahai, Strength in Gentle Support

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A New Look for Our Newsletter

Our newsletter is evolving to reflect the deeper connection between Hawai'i Care Choices and the many lives we touch throughout our community.

While we continue to celebrate the compassionate care provided to our patients and their families, we're broadening our focus to share stories of community empowerment and collaboration. Stories that highlight how partnerships creates ripples of impact across East Hawai'i.

Through these shared experiences, we hope you'll see how Hawai'i Care Choices' impact extends far beyond hospice and palliative care. Hawai'i Care Choices is dedicated to strengthening the health, resilience, and well-being of our entire East Hawai'i 'ohana.

Photos from Celebration of Life 2025





Our Mission

To improve the lives of those we touch by offering support, guidance and compassionate care of body, mind, and spirit.



Lōkahi Means Unity *Aloha from Brenda*

As healthcare policies and programs continue to evolve, I want to take a moment to connect with you about how these uncertainties touch our community here in East Hawai'i.

We understand that ongoing challenges with access to food, affordable healthcare, and livable wages continue to touch the lives of many in our community. These hardships can bring worry and concern for our kūpuna and families who rely on vital services for support. Please know that our commitment to caring for you remains unwavering. As a faithful servant to this community, we remain focused on ensuring that everyone has access to quality care, meaningful support, and trusted guidance through life's most important moments.

We are working closely with our partners to make sure these changes do not lessen the level of care our community deserves. They encourage us to innovate and to invest in programs that support the well-being of all East Hawai'i residents, from keiki to kūpuna.

To our patients, families, and community partners, mahalo for your continued trust and support. Together, we will navigate these changes and continue building a future of compassionate and accessible care for our community.

Brenda S. Ho

HAWAI'I CARE CHOICES CEO

‘Olu‘olu, Pleasant Acts

Volunteer Services Spotlight

At **Hawai‘i Care Choices**, our volunteers are the heart of our mission—providing practical care, personal support to patients and caregivers, and therapies that bring comfort and joy. Whether you offer a listening ear, share your special skills, or simply lend your time, you help create moments of peace and compassion during life’s most meaningful transitions.

Different Ways Volunteers Serve Patients and Their ‘Ohana

Practical Help

- ❑ **Chores & Errands** – Light household tasks, grocery shopping, or running errands.
- ❑ **Transportation** – Help with rides to appointments or outings when possible.
- ❑ **Hands-On Assistance** – Help with safe, simple non-medical tasks under staff guidance.
- ❑ **Flower Delivery** – Bringing fresh flowers to brighten your space.

Special Programs

- ❑ **Bereavement Support** – Volunteers help families through grief support and memorial activities.
- ❑ **Veteran Recognition** – Pinning ceremonies and special acknowledgments to honor veterans.
- ❑ **Virtual Reality Experience** – from serene nature scenes to meaningful, bucket-list destinations, virtually “visit” places you always wanted to see.

Therapies for Comfort & Joy

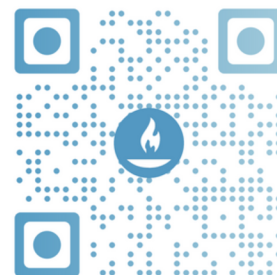
- ❑ **Massage or Touch Therapy** – Gentle massage to ease tension and promote relaxation.
- ❑ **Music Therapy** – Comfort and connection through music and singing.
- ❑ **Art Therapy** – Creative expression to reduce stress and bring joy.
- ❑ **Pet Therapy** – Visits with certified dogs to provide comfort and companionship.

Personal Support

- ❑ **Caregiver Relief** – A volunteer stays with your loved one so family caregivers can rest or take a break.
- ❑ **Companionship** – Friendly visits, conversation, reading, or simply sharing time together.
- ❑ **Vigil Support** – A calming presence at the bedside so no one feels alone during final moments.

We welcome community members from all walks of life to join our volunteer ‘ohana.

To celebrate the spirit of service that makes our mission possible, we’re honored to share the stories of four remarkable volunteers. Each brings a unique journey that led them to Hawai‘i Care Choices—whether inspired by personal experience, a desire to give back, or a calling to share aloha through compassionate care. Their stories remind us that no matter where we come from, we can all make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. **Scan the QR code to learn more and join the team!**



Ha'aha'a, Humble Stories Celebrating our Volunteers

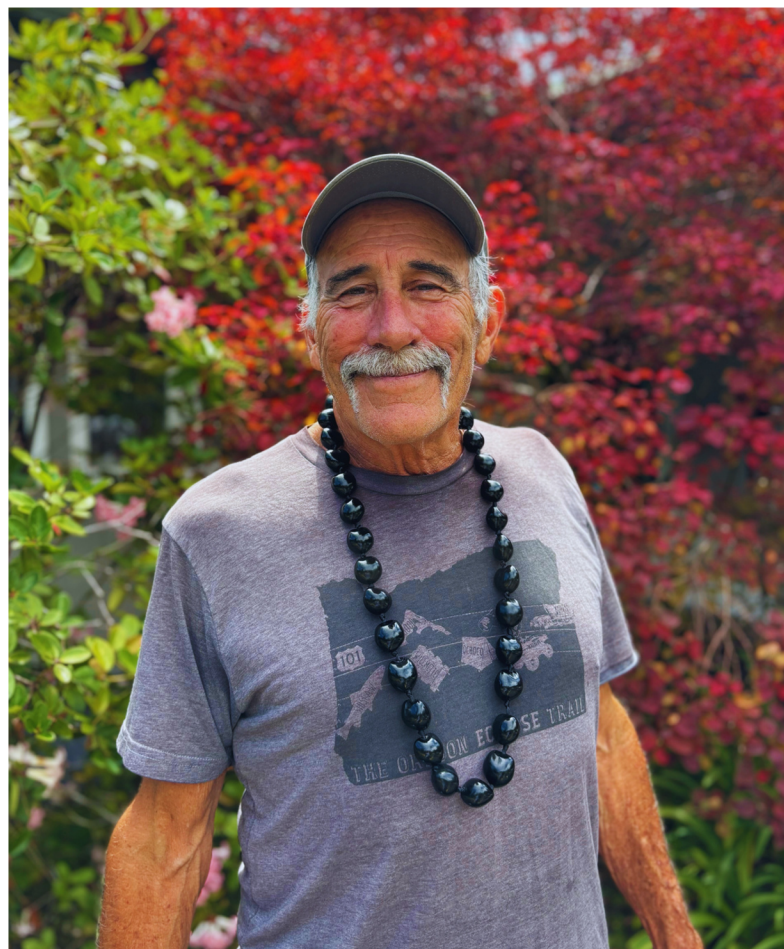
Volunteering brings **Bill** a lasting sense of belonging

After 35 years as a counselor in California, **Bill** knew he wanted to continue helping people after retirement. When he moved to Hawai'i, he explored different volunteer opportunities, but hospice work immediately stood out. The training at Hawai'i Care Choices was exceptional—professional, compassionate, and thorough—and for the past six years, it has become one of the most meaningful experiences of his life.

Bill has served in several roles, from helping in the kitchen and transporting patients to providing respite care for caregivers who need a few hours of relief. He understands how exhausting full-time caregiving can be, and offering caregivers the chance to rest or run errands feels deeply rewarding. Every patient is different—some enjoy conversation and storytelling, while others simply appreciate quiet companionship.

One of the most valuable lessons Bill has learned is the power of listening. “Many patients want to share their stories, memories, and wisdom, and those moments of genuine connection. When they speak about their life before, it is profoundly moving.” His counseling background taught him how to be present and truly hear people, a skill that translates beautifully into hospice care.

Though the work can be emotional, Bill finds it deeply human and fulfilling. He stays grounded through gardening, a practice that reminds him of renewal and growth. “Volunteering with Hawai'i Care Choices has brought new purpose, peace, and a lasting sense of belonging within this compassionate community.”



▲ Bill brings genuine connection to the patients he serves.

▼ Volunteers making lei to gift our bereavement families.



Terry finds volunteering her life's most meaningful work

After a long career in technology with IBM, **Terry** retired early and followed her heart to Hawai'i. Wanting to give back to her new community, she began helping two kūpuna who needed care and soon discovered hospice work through an ad for Hawai'i Care Choices. "As much as I give, I get back tenfold," she says. "Service to others is the most meaningful work I've ever done."

Terry began as a respite care volunteer, offering caregivers time to rest while she spent one-on-one time with patients. Moved by the healing power of touch, she pursued massage therapy training and became licensed. Now, she visits about four patients a week, combining massage, Reiki, and compassionate conversation to bring relief and connection. "I let patients decide what they need. Sometimes that's touch, sometimes it's simply being heard."

Through hospice work, Terry has found peace, purpose, and a deeper understanding of life. "People nearing the end still have so much love and wisdom to share," she reflects. "They've taught me to slow down, to listen, and to live with gratitude."

Terry's experiences have transformed her outlook. Once managing teams under pressure, she now finds joy in quiet presence and service. "This work feeds my soul," she says. "If your heart is open, you'll receive more than you give. It's truly life-changing."

Volunteering nourishes **Dorothea** physically, emotionally, and spiritually

After retiring from her career as a teacher at Pāhoa Elementary, **Dorothea** began volunteering with Hawai'i Care Choices for the last 8 years. The decision was deeply personal—her father had received hospice care in San Francisco, an experience that left a lasting impact on her family and inspired her to give back.

She first supported nurses at our Pōhai Mālama facility, organizing supplies and helping at the front desk. Occasionally, she would sit with patients, including one memorable afternoon spent listening to the Christ Lutheran Church choir across the street. That moment moved her to join the church choir herself, creating a Sunday routine that blended song and service.



▲ Through hospice work, Terry has found peace,
▼ Dorothea plants seeds of kindness for future generations.





▲ Rotary Club of South Hilo helps out at Celebration of Life.
▼ Carol Ann brings joy and makes each patient feel valued.



Over time, Dorothea began assisting with patient transportation and providing respite for caregivers. Her greatest strength lies in companionship—offering quiet presence, listening, and giving caregivers a few hours of relief. “Knowing someone can rest because I’m there means a lot,” she shares.

Now in her seventies, Dorothea finds that volunteering nourishes her physically, emotionally, and spiritually. She balances her time between caring for her grandchildren, participating in choir, and staying active in community.

For Dorothea, hospice volunteering is both a way to honor her father’s memory and to live out her belief in compassion and connection. “It’s about giving back and planting seeds of kindness for the next generation,” she says with gratitude.

For **Carol Ann**, volunteering is about creating moments that matter

Carol Ann began volunteering when Hawai‘i Care Choices was known as Hospice of Hilo, and decided to come back on board in May 2024. Her spirit of service began decades earlier. Born and raised on O‘ahu, her first volunteer role was as a high school “candy striper,” delivering water and running errands in hospitals. From there, she carried her commitment to helping others throughout her life—volunteering on Kaua‘i with the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Hawai‘i and over a decade with Hospice of Hilo.

After retiring from the police department and returning to Hilo, Carol Ann felt called to serve again. Inspired by her mother’s passing and her love of connecting with others, she joined our volunteer training program.

Today, her service focuses on companionship, visiting patients in their homes or in care facilities like Hale Anuenue. She listens, talks story, and finds simple ways to bring joy. One of her favorite memories is helping a 98-year-old patient “get a tattoo”—a temporary hibiscus design that lit up the patient’s face with happiness.

For her, volunteering is about creating moments that matter. “Every patient is unique,” she says. “I try to bring joy, spark memories, and remind them they’re valued.”

Carol Ann says volunteering keeps her grounded, positive, and grateful. “I go into every visit hoping to make a difference and always leave feeling fulfilled,” she reflects. “Each visit is a celebration of life—and that’s what keeps me coming back.”



Left: Bernard with his first white pineapple! Right: Jen (top) and Laura (bottom) with Lei made for bereavement families

‘Ahonui, Patience and Compassion New Members of our ‘Ohana Get It!

Spiritual Counselor Bernard Marks

When you first meet **Dr. Bernard Marks**, one thing stands out — his calm, grounded energy. There’s a gentleness in the way he listens, a patience that reminds you it’s okay to take a breath, to just be. As the newest Spiritual Counselor at Hawai‘i Care Choices, Bernard brings with him not only experience in faith-based ministry but also a deep compassion for the human journey — in all its joys, struggles, and transitions. Through years of serving others, he learned that healing often starts with something simple — presence. “When people are in pain or loss,” he shares, “what they really need is someone to sit beside them, not to fix or explain, but to be there.”

Volunteer Manager Jen Aguilar

In her role as Volunteer Manager at Hawai‘i Care Choices, **Jen** manages diverse groups of volunteers across different ages and demographics, creating programs that not only build team morale but also foster a strong sense of purpose and connection. Born and raised on Hawai‘i Island, her kuleana for service shines clear. She develops activities that allow volunteers to engage directly with families, offering comfort and companionship, while also aligning each volunteer’s strengths with areas of greatest need.

Community Bereavement Counselor Laura Davis, MDiv, MAPT

When you are cared for by **Laura**, you soon feel an outpouring of love and compassion: friendly eye contact, a sweet smile, a warm hug. You immediately know that you are welcomed into the Hawai‘i Care Choices ‘Ohana, accepted for who you are and where you are on your journey towards healing. There ain’t no mountain high enough or valley low enough to keep her from meeting you. All are invited to experience her calm, non-anxious presence, and the maluhia she brings to the community.



Mālama is Caring for Community Focus on Bereavement Support

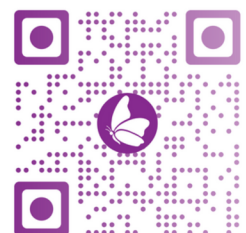
At Hawai'i Care Choices, we know that grief is a journey best walked together.

Our community bereavement programs offer free support to people of all ages, including children, teens, and adults. Unlike traditional hospice bereavement programs who only service those connected to patients under hospice care, our Community Bereavement support is year round and open to anyone in need.

Our programs provide a safe and nurturing space where individuals can process their loss, share their stories, and find hope. From adult grief groups to activities for children and teens, each program is designed to meet people where they are, both emotionally and geographically.

Check out the list on the next page to check out our current programs.

Scan the
QR code
to learn
about our
bereavement
services.





Alaula, Lights the Pathway to Hope Grief Support

Individual Bereavement Services

Personal and Family counseling sessions are available by appointment at no cost to the participants.

Adult Grief Support Groups

- **Holiday Potluck Gathering** – December 2, 5-6:30 PM at Hilo office.
- **General Adult Groups** – Tuesdays at our Hilo office
 - Daytime: 10-11:30 AM
 - Evening: 5-6:30 PM
- **Suicide Loss Group** – Tuesdays at Hilo office with Erin Sakakibara
 - Evenings from 5-6:30 PM
- **Men's Adult Grief Group** – Every other Thursday at Haili Church, Hilo
 - Evenings from 6-7:30 PM

Teen Grief Support Groups (Grades 7-12)

- **Free Bi-Monthly Activities** – hosted every other month with snacks and chaperones provided. Just a fun space to laugh, talk story, and meet other teens who get it. Check our website for events not yet scheduled.
- **Secret Santa + Holiday Party** – Dec. 12 from 3:30-5 PM at the Hilo office
- **Back to School Pizza Party & Karaoke** – Jan. 24, 2026 from 12-3 pm

Keiki Grief Support Groups (Grades K-6)

- **Secret Santa + Holiday Party** – Dec. 12 from 3:30-5 PM at the Hilo office
- **Keiki Support Group** – Thursdays at Hilo office, activities and friends
 - Afternoons from 3:30-4:30 PM

Community Events

- **Season of Light Memorial Candlelight Service**
 - December 10, 2025 from 6-7 PM at Wailoa River State Park
- **Keiki Holiday Party**
 - Dec. 12, 2025 from 3:30-5 PM. Secret Santa and festivities for kids of all ages held at our Hilo office.
- **Lei-Making Remembrance** – Jan. 18, 2026 from 1-3 PM
- **Remembering Valentines & Talk Story** – Feb. 15 from 1-2:30 PM
- **'Ohana Night: Support for Families** – Spring 2026 (Date TBD)
- **Bereaved Men's Day Fishing Trip** – March 28, 2026
- **Honoring Parents: Preparing for Mother's & Father's Days** – April 26 from 1-2:30 PM





Ulana, Weaving Together to Support Community *It's a Kākou Thing!*



Your generosity keeps our community events and programs thriving — from Season of Light and Celebration of Life to our community bereavement support groups. We can't do it without community!

The stories and reflections shared by our volunteers in this newsletter show how far-reaching the impact of our community outreach truly is through the valuable programs at Hawai'i Care Choices. Your support uplifts families and strengthens the spirit of Aloha Mau that connects us all!

Scan the QR code above to donate directly on our website. Thank you for helping us continue to care for our community with compassion and love!

Mahalo to our
Hawai'i Care Choices' Board

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Mai ka lā hiki a ka lā kau

From the sun's arrival to the sun's rest

‘ŌLELO NO’EAU #2062