



Piha me ka Hau'oli

Full of Happiness

HAWAII MEALS ON WHEELS NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2026

Delivering Meals and Mele to Shirley

Shirley has spent her life moving to the rhythm of music. Raised in Kalihi in a family rooted in hula and performance, she began dancing as a child and went on to entertain across Hawai'i, throughout the US, and overseas. Her mother ran a hula hālau, and Shirley followed in her footsteps, earning recognition as one of the top Tahitian dancers in the 1950s.

Now 88, Shirley's sharp mind and spirit remain vibrant. She can remember specific dates and recall memories like the bombing of Pearl Harbor with incredible clarity. But being homebound and managing chronic pain makes everyday tasks - especially cooking - harder than they once were.

That's where Hawai'i Meals on Wheels has become essential.

Finding a New Rhythm

Shirley grew up with four brothers, with a strict but protective father. Dance became her outlet. She performed at major venues and alongside the well-known, local band – The Surfers – traveling extensively and living a life filled with movement, music, and community. She also supported her family as a nurses aide.



When she turned 60, after decades of being constantly on the go, Shirley slowed down. Her body was tired. The rhythm of her life shifted — from performances to rest, reflection, and learning how to care for herself in new ways.

Before receiving meals from Hawai'i Meals on Wheels, Shirley often relied on whatever was easiest to prepare – sometimes just a peanut butter sandwich. **Independence has always been important to her, which made asking for help difficult.**

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"I'm so thankful for the meals," Shirley shared. "It's a big help for me. I've always been independent, so this means a lot."

Because of your generosity, Shirley now receives nutritious meals delivered to her home — meals that help her stay nourished, safe, and independent.

Food That Supports Her Health

Managing diabetes means Shirley must be careful about what she eats. Hawai'i Meals on Wheels provides meals that address her dietary needs while still offering comfort and enjoyment.

"The food is wonderful," she shared. "Recently I received beef stew! I love the milk. And they bring pudding and cookies. I'm so grateful."

More Than A Meal

For Shirley, these meals provide more than nourishment. They bring reassurance that someone is looking out for her.

"I'm so glad I have you folks," Shirley said. "I don't know what I would do without you."

"Kyle – he's such a happy person. That's how I am, and that's how I was. I'm drawn to people who are kind and friendly," she says of her meal delivery driver.

Accepting help hasn't always been easy for someone who spent her life caring for others, including raising six children. But today she sees these meals as a true blessing.



Hawai'i Meals on Wheels client Shirley dances hula to "Hanalei Moon" played by the HMoW Band – Myron, Keoki, JP, and Kyle.

A Moment of Musical Connection

As part of our new **Mele Meals Program**, the **Hawai'i Meals on Wheels Band**, whose members are meal delivery drivers and musicians, stopped by Shirley's home. As the music played, she danced hula, her hands remembering what her body once did effortlessly.

"You guys are marvelous," she said. "My favorite was Hanalei Moon. I was overwhelmed."

That moment captured Shirley so perfectly – a dancer, a performer, a woman whose life has been shaped by music, movement, and connection. **Also, Shirley is a kupuna supported, nourished, and valued by her community.**

Mahalo for your kindness to kūpuna like Shirley, who remain nourished, independent, and connected because of your generosity.

A note of friendship from Michelle Cordero-Lee



This past year marked our second year delivering more than **200,000 meals**. That's more than twice what we were delivering just five years ago! That growth represents hundreds more kūpuna staying nourished, independent, and safely at home thanks to your support!

We're also grateful for our **300 dedicated volunteers**. Their commitment powers every delivery, and we're able to care for over 1,000 kūpuna islandwide because of their dedication. Next month, we can't wait to celebrate their milestone anniversaries at our annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.

Mahalo HMoW hui for your generosity!

Michelle Cordero-Lee
CEO, Hawai'i Meals on Wheels

Make an difference in 2026!

- Join the Gold Plate Club by making a monthly donation! \$45 will help provide one week of meals to a homebound kūpuna.
- Become a volunteer on a holiday or deliver meals whenever your schedule allows.
- Learn more about Mele Meals by scanning the QR code and consider sponsoring our next Mele Meals home visits!

Congratulations to our volunteers!

30 Years

Tammie Ackerman

25 Years

Barbara Huonker
Jennifer Shintani
Waiokeola Church

20 Years

Reynold Choy
Faye Miyamasu
Jake Murakami
Julie Teruya
Easter Seals Hawaii

15 Years

Kaipo Alameida	Robert Putes
Carol Kokame	Margery Sheehan
Mary Marko	Katherine Warner
Jill Oda	Adele Wilson

10 Years

Jill Carter	Martha Mcdermott
Dennis Irie	Peter Mota
Patsy Irie	Linda Nagamine
Amy Jampel	Sam Suen

Scan to view
five-year volunteer
honorees!





2025 *at a glance*

1,242

clients

12

kitchen partners

200,386

**meals delivered
(homebound and congregate)**

70%

**medically tailored
(customized) meals**

767

**average meals
delivered daily**

96

**meal delivery
routes**

58%

female clients

80

median age

1,553,909

spent on meals



Feeding Kūpuna, Strengthening Community



Photos courtesy of Bowers + Kubota

Giving back is part of Bowers + Kubota Consulting's DNA. Every state holiday, employees volunteer with Hawai'i Meals on Wheels. Forty team members of the local construction management, architectural/engineering design, planning, and project management firm have delivered meals on routes in Waipahu, Waikale, and Kunia.

"Serving kūpuna and individuals with disabilities in neighborhoods near our office is especially meaningful. It allows us to give back right where our team works," shared Kim Castillo, Director of Marketing and Business Development, Bowers + Kubota.

Employees give of both their time and their treasure. In 2025, they raised an inspiring **\$19,262** for nutritious, home-delivered meals. The previous year, they prepared care packages filled with essential items.



"It's incredible to see everyone come together, volunteering and raising funds with heart and purpose for such an important cause," Kim shared. "We take pride not just in building great projects, but in building community. Helping kūpuna reminds us why service matters. It strengthens our team and brings greater meaning to our work."

"Bowers + Kubota truly understands how to make a meaningful impact in alleviating hunger and restoring connection for those we serve. Their creative and strategic approach to giving reflects deep compassion for kūpuna and genuine respect for their employees," **Michelle Cordero-Lee, CEO, Hawai'i Meals on Wheels.** "Because of their partnership, more kūpuna can remain safely in their homes. We are immensely grateful to their employees for their generosity."

Bowers + Kubota is excited to serve on more delivery routes this year! Thanks to their commitment, kūpuna will continue to receive the nourishment and care they deserve. **Mahalo, Bowers + Kubota!**

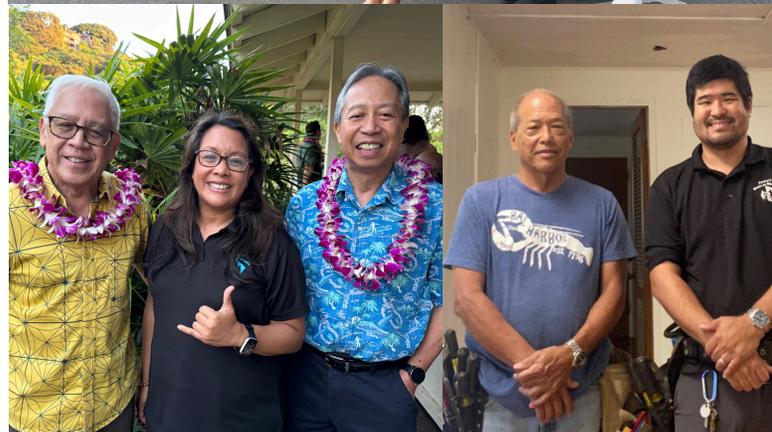
Celebrating Our New Office in Nu‘uanu

After more than four decades of calling Mānoa Valley Church home, we moved to our new headquarters – a cottage and office space leased on the campus of Community Church of Honolulu in Nu‘uanu. This marked the first move in our organization’s 46-year history!

This effort was powered by dozens of dedicated volunteers and partners:

- Volunteers from **Aloha United Way’s Day of Action** helped sort and pack storage areas, easing the workload for staff in preparation for the move.
- **Boy Scouts Troop 42** rolled up their sleeves to prime and paint the interior, tackle yard work, and power wash the exterior — bringing new life and brightness to the space.
- **Brad Akamu**, HMoW’s Volunteer and Outreach Director, and his father **Peter Akamu**, former President of IBEW Local 1186, spent weeks fixing up the home in preparation for air conditioning installation.
- **Carrier Hawaii** generously donated a new AC unit and **Cool Living Hawaii** installed the unit.

We are so grateful for the incredible support that helped make this transition possible. It was a true community effort!



Top: AUW Day of Action volunteers and HMoW staff on packing day.

Middle left: Meal delivery volunteers Ed Chong, Owner of ONE Pacific Realty, and Robert Pascua, Vice President at Carrier Hawaii, with Michelle Cordero-Lee, CEO at the blessing of the Nu‘uanu office.

Middle right: Brad and Peter Akamu

Bottom: Before and after photos of Troop 42’s work on our Nu‘uanu office cottage

Volunteer with Heart: Michelle Herrera

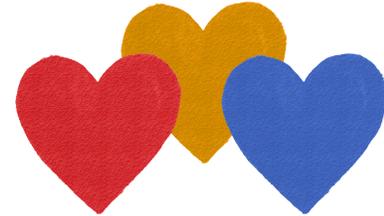
For **Michelle Herrera**, Wednesdays aren't just another day of the week — they're meal delivery days. Since 2020, Michelle has dedicated her day off from work to homebound kūpuna, becoming a constant, caring presence for those on her McCully route.

"I absolutely plan everything around Wednesday's meals," Michelle shared.

A Southwest Airlines Customer Service Agent, Michelle has logged more volunteer hours than any other Southwest employee based here in Hawai'i. But for her, it's never been about the numbers.

"It's so gratifying," she shared. "My life is blessed—why not share with those who can't get out of their homes?"

Week after week, Michelle shows up knowing that a warm meal and a familiar, caring face can make a real difference. She often goes the extra mile by making handwritten cards for kūpuna on special holidays and adding cheerful stickers to meal containers to brighten their day.



In recognition of her service, Michelle earned five airline tickets through **Southwest Airlines' Tickets for Time** program and generously donated them to Hawai'i Meals on Wheels. The tickets will help our team attend the Meals on Wheels America Annual Conference in Las Vegas this summer, bringing new ideas and inspiration back to our community.

Michelle hopes others will give volunteering a try.

"You don't really know what it's like until you do it," she says. "Coming up on year six, it's been one of the most rewarding experiences I've had."

Mahalo, Michelle, for the heart, joy, and care you bring to the kūpuna you serve every week!



Meal delivery volunteer Michelle Herrera delivers meals every Wednesday to client Darlene.



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Save the Date

Thanksgiving Drive-Thru Fundraiser

Thanksgiving Day – Thursday, November 26, 2026

Skip the cooking! Enjoy a delicious holiday feast with some amazing fixings! Scan the QR code below to join our email list and be the first to place your order online.



Stay up to date! Scan to join our email list.