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News Release

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Kaua'i's EnhanceFitness program receives national recognition

LĪHU'E – A program aimed at improving the health of Kaua'i's kupuna was selected as a 2008 Older Americans Month Program Champion by the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA).

Kaua'i's EnhanceFitness program is being spotlighted on AoA's website, www.aoa.gov/press/oam/May_2008/program_champions.asp, along with other outstanding senior programs in celebration of May being Older Americans Month.

"We are honored to be recognized for our EnhanceFitness program, which aims to empower our older residents to make lifestyle changes that can reduce their risk of disease, disability and injury," said Kealoha Takahashi, head of the Agency on Elderly Affairs (AEA).

Participants in the low impact and strength training program have already reported tremendous improvement in their health and energy level since the program was launched last July, noted Naomi Sugihara, AEA program specialist.

"A woman who recently turned 90 shared that she had stopped participating in O-Bon dances for a few years because she didn't have the stamina and energy to dance," Sugihara said. "But after taking part in our EnhanceFitness program, she was able to get back into dancing. In fact, she danced for an entire evening during the last O-Bon dance at her church."

Currently, Kaua'i's EnhanceFitness program is offered to seniors 60 years and older at the Kōloa and Waimea neighborhood centers.

The average age of participants in the program is 79.9 years.

Classes are held three days a week at each of the centers and are taught by certified fitness instructors.

"Right now, these classes are filled to capacity so we have a waiting list of interested seniors," said Sugihara. "In about a month, we will be expanding the program to include the Hanapēpē Multi-purpose Building and Kekaha Neighborhood Center.

Hawai'i is one of 16 states that received a grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging to develop programs that empower older adults to take control of their health.

The statewide initiative is called Healthy Aging Partnership – Empowering Elders.

On Kaua'i, the EnhanceFitness program is being offered by the Agency on Elderly Affairs in collaboration with several organizations including: the state Executive Office on Aging; Department of Health; Kaua'i County Department of Parks & Recreation; Kaua'i Economic Opportunity, Inc. (KEO); University of Hawai'i; and 50+ Lifelong Fitness.

KEO is under contract with the county to run the EnhanceFitness program.

For more information, please call the Agency on Elderly Affairs at 241-4470 or KEO at 245-4077, ext. 242.

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