



**Kaua‘i’s Healthy Aging Project – EnhanceFitness Program
County of Kaua‘i Agency on Elderly Affairs**

EnhanceFitness (EF) is an evidence-based, physical activity program designed for older adults 60+, administered by Project Enhance/Senior Services. EnhanceFitness helps to empower Kaua‘i’s older adults to make lifestyle changes that can reduce their risk of disease, disability, and injury. Regular physical activity in the older adult population can decrease the risk of developing high blood pressure, osteoporosis, heart disease, diabetes and depression, and decreases falls and injury.

The County of Kaua‘i Agency on Elderly Affairs (KAEA) has been participating in a statewide Healthy Aging Project (HAP) initiative since 2003 to improve the health status of older adults through improved nutrition and increased physical activity. Partners include: State Executive Office on Aging (EOA), Dept. of Health, University of Hawai‘i, Area Agencies on Aging, and other key organizations.

At the community level, the KAEA has developed collaborative partnerships to address healthy aging. Partners include: Kaua‘i Economic Opportunity, Inc. (current service provider), Kaua‘i District Health Office, County of Kaua‘i Dept. of Parks and Recreation, 50+ Lifelong Fitness. In 2006, the KAEA was awarded the first of a 3-year AoA funding opportunity, through the State EOA, to implement the EnhanceFitness program. This effort led to the launch and implementation of the program on July 9, 2007 at two sites in the first year of the grant.

Objectives for the first year in 2007 included the development of the local Healthy Aging Project partnership, participating on the statewide steering committee; replicating the program with fidelity in 2 nutrition/recreation sites; and supporting 40 older adults in completing the program and evaluation protocol (20 older adults per site – 2 sites year 1, 4 sites year 2, 6 sites by the end of year 3).

Sites are located at the Waimea and Kōloa Neighborhood Centers, which are collocated senior centers and nutrition sites in Kaua‘i’s rural community. Classes are one hour, 3 days a week, taught by certified fitness instructors who have received training in EnhanceFitness protocols. During this second year of the grant in 2008, efforts are being made to expand to two additional sites and to support 80 older adults.

The target audience includes seniors 60+ who: participate in the congregate meals program and/or senior center; need a regular physical activity program to decrease the risk of developing chronic disease or help to improve their chronic diseases; are frail and can benefit from a regular fitness program; or are in greatest economic or social need. There are currently a total of 45 ethnically diverse participants enrolled at the two sites. 53.85% have hypertension, 36.5% have arthritis, 19.23% have diabetes, and 15.38% have heart disease or other diseases. The average age of Kaua'i's participants is 79.9 years old, which is significantly older by 5 years compared to all other sites throughout the U.S.

Fitness Checks measure functional fitness and progress and includes: 1) the up and go, measuring agility and balance; 2) arm curls, measuring upper body strength; and 3) chair stands, measuring lower body strength. Kaua'i's participants improved in all areas after 4 months, with significant improvement in the up and go and chair stands and also showed significant improvement in both the chair stands and arm curls as compared to other sites.

The seniors say it best, attesting that their "health improved, more energetic; better balance; I can climb into the tub, walk on tightrope and breathe, all in the guise of coordination (and) balance; this class has been very enjoyable and beneficial." One senior, who just turned a young 90 years old, shared her story that for the past few years, she stopped participating in an annual O-Bon (Buddhist) cultural dance observance during the summer because she was getting older and didn't have the stamina and energy to dance. Thanks to EnhanceFitness, she was able to participate at her church's O-Bon dance for the whole evening and enjoyed being able to get back to her dancing! Kaua'i is committed to celebrating Healthy Aging and the theme for its Older Americans Month, "*Working Together for a Strong, Healthy Kaua'i*". For more information about this program, contact Mrs. Naomi Sugihara at (808) 241-4475 or by email at nsugihara@kauai.gov The Web site is www.projectenhance.org

