



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO M.D.
DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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HAWAII STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR ADDRESSING SMOKING, OBESITY, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, NUTRITION

HONOLULU – The federal government has honored the Hawai`i State Department of Health (DOH) with the *Innovation in Prevention Award* as the best state agency in the nation to address the issues of tobacco use, obesity, lack of physical activity and improper nutrition.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt presented the award for DOH's Healthy Hawai`i Initiative, which takes creative approaches to encouraging positive lifestyle changes among residents.

Using tobacco settlement funds, DOH created the long-term, statewide initiative to reduce chronic ailments such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. The initiative focuses on physical activity, obesity, nutrition and smoking because these are behavioral factors related to disease prevalence and longevity. Hawai`i is one of the few states that allots a percentage of tobacco settlement funds for health promotion.

"Rising healthcare costs place a significant burden on residents, so any steps we can take to educate people on how to prevent disease and health ailments will benefit our entire community," said Governor Linda Lingle. "We need more programs like the Healthy Hawai`i Initiative that support smart lifestyle choices, keep healthcare costs down and add productive years to our lives."

"The Healthy Hawai`i Initiative pushed the chronic disease prevention issue to the forefront," said DOH Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D. "It is important for us to have people who understand and care about the prevention message," she added. "We are fortunate to have a strong team that champions health promotion and works hard so people hear our vital messages over and over again."

Since its creation in 1999, the initiative has focused on projects such as offering healthier vending machine options at schools, developing a Coordinated School Health curriculum, funding a walking trail at the Old Kona Airport and supporting the Great Kaua`i Weigh Out. DOH also launched a statewide health promotion campaign called Start.Living.Healthy, which included the "1% or Less is Best Milk" campaign that prompted 65,000 people to switch to low-fat milk.

Current projects include creating county and statewide coalitions of stakeholders and community members to help carry out the State Plan for Physical Activity and Nutrition. DOH also has a nutrition education program to assist people who use food stamps, and an online toolkit employers can use as a guide for worksite wellness interventions (available at www.healthyhawaii.com).

The Innovation in Prevention Award is part of the federal government's *Steps to a Healthier U.S.* initiative that advances President George W. Bush's goal of helping Americans live longer and better lives.

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For more information, contact:

Janice Okubo
Communications Office
Phone: (808) 586-4442