



December 31, 2007

People Who Made A Difference:

Maui Long Term Care Partnership

By MELISSA TANJI, Staff Writer

In just a few years, the Maui Long Term Care Partnership has put its motto, "aging with aloha" in place for Valley Isle senior citizens now and in the future.



Rita Barreras (left), project director of the Maui Long Term Care Partnership, stands with other members of the group, including, (front row, left to right) Sarah Shim, Eileen Miranda, Gerri Shapiro, Jo Reyes, Vanity Tuquero, May Fujiwara and Patricia Duckworth; (middle row) Rick Medina, Joan Yokoyama, Judy Robeck and Rob Leigh-Clark; and (back row) Barry Gay, Rosemary Robbins and Dana Fraser.

Led by Project Director Rita Barreras, the coalition of at least 60 entities has:

- Developed a local Web site with information on long-term care.
- Reached out to six regions on Maui (West, South, Central, Upcountry, North and East) to get input about long-term care.

- Developed programs for high school and college students who are interested in careers in long-term care.
- Pushed for and enacted changes in local government for the benefit of senior citizens, including initiating a program to get seniors into home care programs, saving federal programs thousands of dollars as well as putting seniors into more tailored care.

“I’m very proud,” Barreras said of her group. “It’s just astounding at how much has been accomplished.”

The partnership depends on Hale Makua as its fiscal agent. The partnership is also in transition to Maui Community College, which will become the fiscal agent for the partnership as it implements the next four-year strategic plan.



Rita Barreras

Several years ago, Barreras was hired by Tony Krieg, chief executive officer at Hale Makua, as a consultant to serve as the project coordinator to form a broad-based coalition and to look at long-term care and supportive services.

Krieg is the chairman of the partnership.

The partnership, which was formed in 2003, has also received Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds. Robert Wood Johnson built the family company of Johnson & Johnson.

“It’s so exciting to think that people are helping create a new future for the tsunami of baby boomers aging that is not based in nursing homes with walls but with nursing homes without walls,” said Hermine Harman, a retired medical social worker who serves on the Maui Health Care Initiative Task Force, on which Barreras is chairwoman.

“It’s just an amazing thing they have put together,” Harman added.

In its several years in existence, the group has reached its four goals, which were to improve access to information about long-term care services; to increase awareness and knowledge about aging and care; to provide long-term care education and training to today's generation and future generations; as well as to influence change in the long-term care infrastructure for Maui.

Some of their projects also include: long-term care shadowing programs at senior care facilities and Maui Memorial Medical Center for four high schools on Maui; increasing volunteers working with senior citizens, as well as helping the elderly age in place in Hana where students from Hana built ramps and raised toilets to better assist the seniors in their East Maui community.

The group has also received funding from the county to continue its work after its Johnson foundation funds run out next year.

Anne Trygstad, co-chairwoman of the partnership's policy and advocacy committee, said the partnership enacted a paradigm shift from facility to home- and community-based care and the partnership is being used as a model for grass-roots community groups.

"Maui No Kai Oi. We are leading the way for the state in aging," she said

The partnership can be reached at 871-7749, via e-mail at info@mauiongtermcare.org or see the Web site at www.mauiongtermcare.org .

■ Melissa Tanji can be reached at mtanji@mauinews.com.