



Capitol rally aims to keep elderly from going hungry

Lanakila Meals on Wheels calls attention to the rising demand

[By Pat Gee](#)

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For Margaret Young, the hot meal she gets from Lanakila Meals on Wheels is often her only food for the day. She divides the meal in two and eats the second portion later.

She can't go grocery shopping, cook her own meals or get around without fear of falling.

Five days a week, a Lanakila Meals on Wheels driver delivers a hot meal and a friendly chat.

"I live alone, (so) it's just perfect for me," said Young, who is crippled by arthritis. "Someone knows you're alive and is very friendly. The daily contact gives me a tremendous psychological lift."

Young is one of hundreds of seniors on Oahu who receive a hot meal from Lanakila Pacific's meal delivery program or are fed in 19 group dining rooms.

"It's a lifesaver for people on a limited income," she added.

In the face of a failing economy, Lanakila is taking measures to ensure the elderly won't go hungry. The 70-year-old nonprofit is asking the public to take part in a rally at the state Capitol tomorrow as part of a national "MARCH FOR MEALS and More!" campaign. Mayor Mufi Hannemann, seniors and their supporters will meet at Honolulu Hale at 9:30 a.m. and march to the Capitol about 10:15 a.m.

Lanakila also will collect donations, recruit sponsors and volunteers, and reveal a new online campaign and social enterprise venture.

"It's not only the meals we bring to seniors; we are linking seniors with other services, and have saved quite a few lives," said Remy Rueda, director of the meals program. She cited several instances over the 20 years she's worked for Lanakila when meal deliverers noticed unusual circumstances when they arrived at the door.

Lanakila is getting more calls for help since the economic downturn began last fall, most of them from people "isolated in their own home," Rueda said. "One senior called and said he hadn't eaten in three days and was shaking."

Lanakila receives up to 70 new requests for meals a month. Most can be helped, but more than 100 are on the waiting list, she said. The program delivers 15,000 to 16,000 meals a month to about 750 seniors, Rueda said.

For more information, call 531-0555 or visit www.lanakilapacific.org.

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