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## Lanakila needs volunteer drivers

*By Mary Vorsino  
Advertiser Urban Honolulu Writer*

Lanakila Meals on Wheels needs about 25 volunteer drivers by July 1 to help it transition to an all-volunteer driving force.

The cost-cutting move comes as the organization is facing a growing waiting list and a shrinking bottom line.

"We've been looking for how we can streamline our operations and looking for wherever we can save costs," said Marlena Willette, marketing manager at Lanakila Meals on Wheels. Lanakila's six part-time Lanakila drivers will be moved to kitchen positions.

The change will save about \$77,000.

Lanakila Meals on Wheels, the largest home delivery meal service for seniors on O'ahu, has been hit hard by the economic downturn. In 2007, the nonprofit was nearly forced to cut some 230 seniors from its programs after losing a key state grant. The seniors were able to stay in the program, however, after an outpouring of donations from the community. The nonprofit made it through another tough year in 2008, after putting out another call for public help. And they're planning on a repeat this year.

Willette said the nonprofit is expecting a shortfall, which is still being calculated.

If the shortfall isn't met, other cuts could be made, including to meal service.

The move to an all-volunteer driving force is one of several changes Lanakila has made to save money.

Lanakila already has about 200 volunteers who serve as drivers on varying schedules.

Volunteers are asked to help out at least once a week, and give about two hours of their time. Lanakila has a few vehicles available for volunteers who do not have their own transportation.

Those who do drive their own cars, however, will be reimbursed for the miles they drive.

Angel Lewis, of Kalihi, has been volunteering as a driver for Meals on Wheels for about a year.

She said she decided to help out on when she turned 30 because she wanted to do something new and give back.

"I don't have the means to help out in terms of money," she said, "so I'm donating my time."

Every Saturday, Lewis visits eight homes with her 6-year-old son, delivering meals and talking with seniors.

"I would definitely encourage people to do this," she said. "It's very fulfilling."

Meals on Wheels delivers about 730 meals to homebound seniors islandwide.

Another 1,000 seniors are served through meal programs at 19 centers around O'ahu.

Meanwhile, about 300 seniors are on the waiting list for home meal delivery service.

Seniors wait an average of six months or more.

Willette said more seniors are seeking help from the program because of the economic crisis.

"Our funding has remained flat," Willette said, "while our need continues to grow."

## Additional Facts

how to help

Lanakila Meals on Wheels is looking for 25 volunteer drivers.

Volunteers can help out in the mornings or afternoons.

Volunteers are needed islandwide.

For more information, call 356-8532 or go to [www.lanakilahawaii.org](http://www.lanakilahawaii.org) and click on the volunteer tab.

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