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Meals on Wheels needs your help

By mary vorsino

Advertiser Urban Honolulu Writer

This Thanksgiving, about 800 needy seniors will get care packages, candies and cards along with the holiday meals delivered to their doors.

Lanakila Meals on Wheels is asking for donations of toiletries and household items for the packages, which will also be delivered to homebound seniors on Christmas. The nonprofit says the packages are meant to help seniors on fixed incomes get the basics during tough economic times.

"It will bring that warmth and caring to the seniors in their home during this tough time," said Brandon Mitsuda, deputy director of Lanakila Meals on Wheels. "These things are just items the seniors can't afford by themselves."

Lanakila is stuffing the packages full of toilet paper, paper towels, soap and other toiletries, toothbrushes, toothpaste and laundry detergent. Hundreds of schoolchildren have decorated Thanksgiving cards for the seniors, and assembled small goodie bags with candies and other treats.

The effort is designed to bring a little more holiday cheer to seniors on Thanksgiving, while giving them something they need and may not be able to afford this year. The donation campaign is also meant to raise awareness about Lanakila, the largest meal provider for seniors in the Islands.

The nonprofit is seeing a drop in donations because of the economic downturn, and is looking to raise \$40,000 before the end of the year to ensure it can continue meal service. The agency also has a waiting list of at least 100 seniors, and Mitsuda said more call every day looking to sign up.

Lanakila delivers hot or frozen meals to seniors islandwide.

Mitsuda said that for some seniors, the Lanakila meal is all they get to eat during the day. "Many of them are on their own," he said. "Sometimes they have to go without or they have to stretch that one meal."

Marian Tsuji, Lanakila Meals on Wheels president and chief executive, said the care package program is an easy way residents can help give a senior in need a brighter holiday — without spending a lot of money.

"This is a way that our community can give back without tapping into their pocketbooks," Tsuji said, adding that about one in three of the agency's hundreds of regular contributors haven't been able to give as much this year.

Additional Facts

how to assist

Lanakila Meals on Wheels will deliver care packages to seniors on Thanksgiving. The nonprofit is looking for donations of needed household items. Suggested donations for the packages include:

- Paper towels and toilet paper
- Soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes and other toiletries

- Unscented laundry detergent and dishwashing liquid
- Small packets of facial tissues

Donated items can be delivered to Lanakila at 1809 Bachelot St.

Lanakila also needs monetary donations and volunteers.

To help or for more information, call 531-0555.
