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[Print this page](#)

### Features

- [Melveen Leed: The Molokai Tita Holds Court](#)
- [Free Fun in the Hawaiian Sun](#)
- [Smile!](#)
- [Restaurateur Celebrates 25 Years](#)
- [Footloose](#)
- [Angel Food Network](#)
- [New, Effective Treatment for Wet AMD](#)
- [How to Prepare for Retirement When There's Little Time Left](#)
- [Maximize Your Income and Impact with a Charitable Gift Annuity](#)
- [Life is Beautiful](#)

### Columns

- [Settling for More: A Life of Significance After Success](#)
- [Eddie Sherman: Didja Know ... ?](#)
- [Legal Briefs: Legal Issues Facing the Sandwich Generation](#)

### Departments

- [Editor's Note](#)
- [Advertiser Contacts & Index](#)
- [Bookshelf](#)

### Information

- [Media Kit](#)
- [Survey](#)
- [Complimentary Subscription](#)



*Remy Rueda, director of the Lanakila Meals on Wheels program, carries a lunch tray typical of those served in the 19 on-site meal locations, as well as those delivered across the island.*

lunch is free.

Founded in 1971, Meals on Wheels delivers hot food to shut-in seniors. This program also relies on volunteers. The 120 volunteer drivers deliver meals to 730 clients in every part of Oahu. Besides the daily hot lunch, each client also receives five frozen meals once a week to heat as needed.

The meals are cooked and assembled at the kitchen in the headquarters building in Liliha near Kuakini Hospital. Head Chef Frank Chun prepares 3,000 meals a day using a 90-day rotating menu. The packaged meals are then transported to various pick-up and meal sites.

The delivery drivers range from students to seniors. "Some work during the week and only can deliver on Saturdays; some are on welfare and do this as community service," notes Rueda. "Without them, we could not deliver all the meals." Drivers are paid mileage.

When Harriet Yamaguchi retired at age 62, she wanted to do something besides stay at home and watch television. She found a place to go where she meets new friends and helps out.

That place is one of 19 meal sites operated by Lanakila Meals on Wheels. Yamaguchi leaves her home in Aiea every weekday at 5:30 a.m., so her grandson can drive her to the Susannah Wesley Community Center in Kalihi. She gets things set up for the day and makes the coffee and tea.

Now 88, Yamaguchi is one of many seniors who find refuge at the centers. Besides serving a healthy lunch, the Lanakila program offers socialization and activities such as hula and lei-making classes. These are taught by volunteers.

"We always need volunteers with special skills who can share their expertise," says Remy Rueda, program director. "It's one way the community can help."



These volunteers may be the only happy face the senior sees, she adds. "Our goal is to make the (client) smile."

*Workers assemble meals in the Lanakila kitchen in Liliha*

One of the drivers is Karen Wakuzawa, who has been delivering meals for eight years. She was recruited by her sister, Joyel Horita, who started delivering meals on holidays. Two years ago, Wakuzawa, 47, who works in the family's wholesale produce business, decided to commit to a once weekly meal delivery. She now delivers every Thursday to 16 people in three different buildings, helped by her brother, Neal Otani. During the holidays, she brings her 14-year-old daughter, Sela, along as a way to meet her community service requirement at school.



*Helping to plan the meals are Chef Alan Cabebe (left), Director of Food Service Terry Leong, and Manager and Chef Frank Chun.*

Wakuzawa says drivers become very close to their clients and she looks forward to seeing each of her 16 recipients on Thursdays. Losing one is hard to deal with. The drivers also serve as eyes and ears for any problems or issues involving the recipients. If any are noted, they are reported back and appropriate service providers are contacted.

Rueda calls Wakuzawa "very mindful of her responsibilities and very consistent." In fact, the only Thursday she missed was for her grandmother's funeral. The more drivers the program gets, the more seniors it can help, adds Rueda.

For more information or to volunteer, call 531-0555 or visit the Web site,

[www.lanakilapacific.org](http://www.lanakilapacific.org).