Aloha, everyone,

A recent message from the national union AFSCME, of which HGEA is a member, reminded us “Labor Day recognizes the strength and achievements of generations of American workers — especially union workers who fought for workplace safety, the eight-hour workday, and yes, the Labor Day holiday.” This was important to us as “Actives.” Now as union Retiree members, we have seen the benefits of fighting for better wages, supplemental rights, and pensions, so we are “able to retire with reliable health care coverage and financial security.” (AFSCME Retirees, “The Legacy of Labor Day,” September 4, 2021.)

We appreciate our previous leaders and Retiree officers for their great example in union work to serve members. This current pandemic has taught us that we are all in this together. We mask, wash, and distance to reduce COVID infection in our community. Our present leadership team intends to keep in touch via several means: Zoom meetings and activities, such as BINGO, phone trees, limited in-person gatherings, and plan ways to still be connected with you, our fellow Retiree members. Please reach out to our Retiree office, give suggestions, offer to lead/join activities, and help with functions. We are organized toward common interests to keep our minds and bodies active, and also, before you know it, support HGEA-endorsed candidates for political office. (They play a huge part in protecting our hard-won benefits.) Mahalo to our four Retiree members from each county who are current committee members on the HGEA State Board: Aileen Obina (Legislative & Political Action/PEOPLE), Tommy Oi (Member Benefits), Leticia Hedani (C.R. Kendall Fundraising) and Ethel Fleming (Finance).

All Retiree members are welcome to call the HGEA Retirees Unit as noted in the Ho’olaha. “Reach out and touch someone,” and increase activities in your lives. Due to current pandemic restrictions, for instance, have you tried any adult coloring books? This activity does the following: 1) Relaxes your brain and improves brain function; 2) Induces a meditative state; 3) Improves motor skills; 4) Improves sleep; 5) Improves focus; 6) Reduces anxiety, and 7) Relieves stress. Separately and together, we can have fun!

Weeding out the words associated with Thanksgiving:

- Autumn
- Baked Beans
- Biscuits
- Colonists
- Cornbread
- Corn pudding
- Cranberries
- Squash
- Drumstick
- Stuffing
- Giblets
- Sushi
- Gravy
- Sweet Potato
- Ham
- Tom Turkey
- Harvest
- Wishbone
- Leftovers
- Yam

HGEA members enjoy a socially-distanced event at the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life event in Hilo. Thank you to all who joined us in supporting this worthy cause!
A MESSAGE FROM YOUR ADMINISTRATOR

Through the AFSCME Strong and PEOPLE programs, HGEA and other unions are trying to level the playing field by educating our members on the importance of continuing your union membership. Collectively, we will have a stronger voice at the bargaining table and in the legislature through the collective bargaining process.

For retirees, union strength is key to maintain and not lose any benefits. Article X, Section 2 of the Hawaii State Constitution says that the State and Counties agreed to provide certain rights and benefits which cannot be diminished or impaired thereafter in any way. We know that without the union as your watchdog, and support from the union endorsed candidates, we are like one that are always challenged in one way or another. President Ethel Fleming and the State Board has made increasing membership a priority. Please reach out to co-workers, friends and neighbors to join our retiree unit.

Along with your HGEA staff, the retiree chapter boards and retiree state board of directors are all PEOPLE members. What is PEOPLE you ask? First, it stands for Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality. As an affiliate of AFSCME, HGEA receives essential monetary funds to help support campaigns of union endorsed candidates. PEOPLE is AFSCME’s political, legislative and most importantly, fundraising arm. Contributing to PEOPLE is the difference between having things happen to you and making things happen. Unions are committed to have 10% of our membership be PEOPLE members and so I am again asking each and every one of you reading this message to join the PEOPLE program. At $8.40 a month, it translates to less than 30 cents a day for protection of Family and Medical leave, Vision coverage, and taxing pensions, are battles that the HGEA Retirees Unit have fought and won. PEOPLE dollars have funded direct mail and paid media for battles across the state and the country. All retiree and active board members are MVP PEOPLE members and 100% of the HGEA staff are MVP PEOPLE members. I urge you to become a PEOPLE member and be part of this grassroots movement. I want to enlist your family and friends to join us as we continue this fight and prepare for battles yet to come.

The Charles R. Kendall and Russell K. Okata Scholarship applications are now available on the HGEA website. Awards are available to members in good standing for at least one year and their dependents. Deadline to submit your application is January 18, 2022. Selection will be in the Spring of 2022.

Chapter Presidents have cancelled retiree activities and meetings but several activities are being conducted via Zoom especially while the gathering mandates are in place. Please call Tammy at 543-0054 to receive the Zoom connection and to participate. If you are interested in conducting a specific Zoom class or can refer an instructor for an activity, please contact Tammy.

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