

## Hawaii Association of the Blind Newsletter

**January 1, 2023**

### Hawaii Association of the Blind New Year's Appreciation Party

It's almost that time of year when the folks of Hawaii Association of the Blind come together to celebrate the ringing of a new year. It's a wonderful opportunity for members and guests to mingle, play games, and start off another year with fellowship and good cheer.

One thing we wanted to share with everyone is that HAB has held its new year's tradition for over fifty years. It began as a thank-you to its members for the dedication and hard work done throughout the year. By providing fun, top-notch food, and fellowship, it was the best way to say mahalo to its members. Not to mention get everyone fired up by shouting "bingo!"

So, we hope with this nostalgic reminder that everyone will come join us and P-A-R-T-Y! We are only strongest when we are one, so let's celebrate and help build a better tomorrow for HAB!

You are cordially invited to the Hawaii Association of the Blind's New Year Buffet and Bingo Party!

Date: January 21st, 2023 (Saturday)

Time: 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Place: 801 South Street - Meeting Room B

Members: \$20

Guests/Ho'opono students: \$25

Children 12 years or younger: \$10

Please bring Bingo prizes.

RSVP by Jan. 14th, 2023 to Sajja Koirala via email at: [Classicalsajja@gmail.com](mailto:Classicalsajja@gmail.com) or by phone at: 808-255-2206

Safety note: HAB encourages all participants to wear their mask and practice CDC Covid guidelines. Masks may be removed when eating or drinking, also do feel free to bring your own hand sanitizer or wipes. As a safety precaution food service volunteers will wear gloves and be masked while serving food.

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The Hawaii Association of the Blind Annual State Convention

Date: March 3 and 4, 2023

Where: Ala Moana Hotel

The HAB Convention committee is working hard to ensure that everyone has a fun and informative Convention. This will be the first time we will all be getting together for an in-person-only meeting in three years. It is critical to note that there will be no virtual access to this convention.

The first night of the Convention will be on Friday, March 3rd. We have plans to get together and have a fun evening with awesome entertainment, like a talent show. We will simultaneously play bingo. Pupus will be provided during the evening.

Friday Hospitality Night

Costs:

Members: \$25

Guests: \$35

Saturday:

Registration: 8 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Morning Continental breakfast.

Free to all. first come first serve.

Lunch: 12:15 to 1:15 p.m.

Costs:

Members: \$15

Guests: \$25

Banquet

Costs:

Members: \$25

Guests: \$40

Please let us know if you plan to attend the Friday night hospitality by Tuesday, January 3rd.

A minimum of 50 folks must attend for us to get the room free.

Jodi Asato, the Convention Chair, can be reached at: 808-284-7030.

Or via email at: 808hab@gmail.com.

You can also call or email Vickie Kennedy at: 808-222-8862.

Or at: vreikok@gmail.com.

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### Celebrating Hawaiian Honeycreepers with Master Woodcarver Haruo Uchiyama

Previously HAB was involved in two programs done in partnership with the Bishop Museum. All of the Hawaiian Honeycreeper carvings have been completed by Master Woodcarver Haruo Uchiyama and we have been invited by the Bishop Museum as members of the blind community to a special event to celebrate and interact with the carvings.

This presentation is intended for blind, visually impaired and low vision individuals as well as Teachers for the Blind and visually impaired and other community allies. So please be mindful of this if you are a sighted individual. All audiences are welcome to attend any of our other programs, so please refer to the Events calendar for the schedule of opportunities.

To RSVP, please either email [PublicPrograms@bishopmuseum.org](mailto:PublicPrograms@bishopmuseum.org) or call 808-847-3511 to confirm your participation. You must provide your name, email, and phone number. Upon receiving this information, we will email you detailed instructions for how to arrive on the day of the event.

Please note that capacity is limited to 50 people. We will take RSVPs on a first come, first served basis.

Hawaiian Honeycreepers with Master Woodcarver Haruo Uchiyama

Date: Saturday, January 14, 2023

Time: 2 to 4pm

Location: Atrium of Hawaiian Hall, Bishop Museum

Admission: Free admission with RSVP. (Please refer to instructions below)

to interact with Bishop Museum's Hawaiian Honeycreeper carvings in conversation with Master Woodcarver Haruo Uchiyama and Molly Hagemann, Bishop Museum's Vertebrate Zoology Collections Manager.

Japan's master woodcarver Haruo Uchiyama collaborated with Bishop Museum to create exquisite life-like carvings of Hawaiian Honeycreepers to raise awareness of Hawai'i's native forest birds. Having evolved in isolation from a single ancestor over a span of five million years, these birds are known as the "jewels of Hawai'i." As of today, more than half of the known honeycreepers have gone extinct, and the remaining twenty birds are classified as endangered. Mr. Uchiyama carved unique hand-painted sculptures to create deeper connections between people and native forest birds with the hope that this will inspire communities to take action to save their native habitats. This project began in 2016, and we invite you to join us in celebrating the completion of the first stage of this ongoing initiative. This January, Mr. Uchiyama joins us in person to deliver the final carvings of the forty-one historically known honeycreepers.

In Japan, Mr. Uchiyama is passionate about working with the blind community to educate people about the form and function of birds. We continue the tradition in Hawai'i by inviting participants to touch the carvings and experience the full diversity of honeycreeper shape and sizes.

#### About Mr. Haruo Uchiyama

A master woodcarver from Japan and an artist-in-residence at the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, Haruo Uchiyama has carved birds from around the world. But he was enthralled by Hawai'i's native species in 2016, when he visited O'ahu. Since then, he has been creating a set of exquisitely lifelike Hawaiian Honeycreeper carvings that can be used to educate the public about these amazing birds.

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Santa "Cane" to Town Event

By Michelle Arakawa, Educational Specialist

I wanted to send a big Mahalo for your donation of 245.00 for the "Deaf Santa" and "Santa "Cane" to Town" event that occurred on 12/8/22. We were able to purchase Santa hats, tactile toys, and other treats to go in their goody bags for the children. The event we planned for our visually impaired students went well! Southwest flew the students, staff, and families from the Big Island and Kauai for free. At PearlRidge Center the children were able to go on a scavenger hunt, ride the train (some for the very first time), ride the monorail (some for the first time), visit Santa, and then have a pizza lunch together. It was a group of 12 participants. Some of the comments we heard were, "My son was so excited he couldn't sleep last night," "I got to eat with my friend that I haven't seen for a long time," "I want to do this again," and "It's so nice to see my son eating with friends just like him."

Please know your donation meant a lot, not only to the students with visual impairments but the deaf and hard of hearing students too. We would not have been able to do this event without the many contributions from our community partners like you.

I look forward to continue working with the Hawaii Association of the Blind.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year!

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Maui kids and parents of the visually impaired thank you HAB

By Jodi Cambra and Anthony Akamine

Our Maui friends finally got together after 2 years for our holiday cheer and BINGO fun filled with gingerbread making, food, laughter, and even fresh shave ice with all the favorable toppings. Thank you HAB for bringing Kenny Johnson, Vicky Kennedy, and Buddy to be a part of the engaging festivities in addition to the generous treats. The relationship between HAB and KAPVI continues to grow through the years. It had been too long since we had gotten together in-person. It was a delight to see everyone enjoy themselves and their time together. Although it was a smaller gathering the fun and laughter

were in big measure as it could be felt throughout the event. We were grateful Terri-Lynn was able to come as well as she puts on her Christmas hat of creativity helping folks to bring their gingerbread cookies to life.

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Problems frustrate people relying on Oahu's TheHandi-Van

By Jack Truesdale, The Honolulu Star-Advertiser

December 26, 2022

[https://www.yahoo.com/now/problems-frustrate-people-relying-oahu-170500824.html?guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAG1KJB0ZW9qjkalMmcALY6LxLUX\\_PBj\\_WIOuuv-KuuzMIMz9m1aqeRzhDvT0Tm-YLx8A2u0OREig2VYNwqaVIRfMHhDw20xJ2Reyn9Ti\\_aL6i-sx6lSglwbkE1Zff5OaOCPb39bvVGJyqZFCePYjsLSEGGVZzIN-1klLGnnzvO-](https://www.yahoo.com/now/problems-frustrate-people-relying-oahu-170500824.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAG1KJB0ZW9qjkalMmcALY6LxLUX_PBj_WIOuuv-KuuzMIMz9m1aqeRzhDvT0Tm-YLx8A2u0OREig2VYNwqaVIRfMHhDw20xJ2Reyn9Ti_aL6i-sx6lSglwbkE1Zff5OaOCPb39bvVGJyqZFCePYjsLSEGGVZzIN-1klLGnnzvO-)

Deborah Braiman uses Honolulu's TheHandi-Van service to get her where she needs to go—except when it doesn't.

Two weeks ago Braiman, who is blind, waited with three others outside Guide Dogs of Hawaii on King Street for TheHandi-Van vehicles to pick them up.

One was scheduled to arrive at 3 p.m., another a half-hour later. Both times came and went ; the vans didn't. The paratransit service didn't call. Braiman and her three fellow riders waited.

"I have no sight whatsoever. Everything is black, " Braiman said. "To stand outside on King Street, you don't know who's walking by. And I have to wait outside on the street for the van."

"We're sitting out there like sitting ducks to get mugged, raped and robbed because they don't have a van, " she said. "And they don't even tell us ?"

More than an hour later, the vans turned up.

The delay wasn't new for Braiman, who has experienced over recent months the City and County of Honolulu's TheHandi-Van service grow less and less responsive to the needs of people who are blind and disabled, who depend on the vehicles for mobility and, most of all, autonomy.

The vans take 5, 000 users on almost 78, 000 rides each month, according to DTS data. The service has 207 paratransit vehicles in various conditions, Transportation Director Roger Morton said in an interview. About 84 of them are out of commission, DTS spokesperson Travis Ota said. To be "sustainable " the service would need to purchase 40 vans every year because they last five to six years, Morton said.

The service's unreliability can have harsh consequences for those who need it, according to Donald Sakamoto, a longtime advocate for TheHandi-Van riders.

"Late pick-ups and drop-offs for : Chemo, dialysis, and other treatments ; crucial medical appointments ; and most importantly employment, is unacceptable and inexcusable !" Sakamoto wrote in testimony to the City Council on Nov. 15.

Braiman attributes the poor service to the shortage of vehicles.

In the past few weeks, she has been dropped at the wrong Christian institution—Sacred Heart Church, not Sacred Hearts Academy—had a ride canceled, and was dropped off at Magic Island and told to wait by a bench that wasn't the usual spot.

"I said, 'Look, I'm blind. I don't know where I'm going, '" Braiman recalled telling the driver. "She said, 'I'm sorry. I have to go.' And she left me."

"They're not answering the call. They're not showing up. They're not telling people they're going to be late. They're booking vans that aren't available, " she said.

In light of these recent hang-ups, the city's Department of Transportation Services asked TheHandi-Van riders to fill out a survey. "The feedback provided by riders will help DTS continue to improve the quality of TheHandi-Van service, " the DTS said in a news release.



(The survey can be accessed online at. Feedback also can be given at 808-768-8300. Riders also can request a survey in English, Chuukese, Ilokano, Japanese, Chinese or Tagalog be mailed to them, and they can be submitted to handivan @honolulu.gov, faxed to 808-768-1986 or mailed to Paratransit Service and Operations Branch, Department of Transportation Services, City and County of Honolulu, Pacific Park Plaza, 711 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1600, Honolulu, HI 96813.)

During the pandemic, the program's ridership dropped, and the number of on-time or early pickups rose 10 %, to 98.1 %, Morton, the DTS director, told the City Council on Nov. 15. But riders have been coming back this year, to about 80 % of the pre-pandemic amount, he said. (Only 0.36 % of vans arrived more than 30 minutes after the scheduled time, his presentation said.)

The call center has struggled to staff the phones, making it harder for people to book rides.

In 2021 almost all callers looking to make a reservation would be answered within five minutes. This year that number shrank to 36 % from 98 % in September. It rose to 68.8 % in October.

The long wait discouraged riders. Almost 3 % of people abandoned their calls in September 2021, but this past September, 17 % did.

"Frankly, our record is unacceptable, " Morton told the Council. "It just takes too long to get through." The call center suffers from "excessive absenteeism " among staff, he said.

Meanwhile, the rate of vehicles available for rides has been decreasing since April. The service needs 80 % of its vans available to meet peak demand in the afternoon, Morton said. The rate went below that figure in August and descended to less than 75 % in October, DTS data shows.

"When we see the availability going down below 80, that's a warning sign to me that something has to be done, " Morton told the Council. "Supply chain issues " are delaying necessary parts, he said. And the local van dealer, Soderholm Bus & Mobility, "will not honor the low-bid price, " he said, alluding to the shop's need to adjust to rising costs.

Gabi Soderholm, assistant operations manager at Soderholm Bus & Mobility, said earlier this month that the family business originally proposed a \$9.7 million contract for 65 vehicles at \$149, 377

apiece. Now the company is asking for a 34.72 % increase to \$201, 234 per vehicle—a \$13 million contract if the count remains, she said.

Soderholm said that his company's bank's interest rate has doubled in the past year, and Ford has "arbitrarily increased " the price of the E450 chassis that Soderholm Bus & Mobility uses—cab, rails, axles and wheels—by more than \$10, 000, possibly because of the global semiconductor shortage. A company owned by Berkshire Hathaway, Forest River, builds the part of the van where passengers sit.

Before the pandemic, delivering a vehicle took a half-year, but now it can take more than a year and a half, Soderholm said. "So you have to predict what your pricing is going to be in 1-1 /2 to two years, " she said.

Reached by phone, Morton said, "While the city and Soderholm are negotiating, it would not be helpful to have those negotiations within the public discussion."

"The big picture is the small-van market has been consolidated from eight manufacturers to one, and the number of vehicle chassis the Ford Motor Co. has put out this year is 38 % less than they did last year, " Morton said. "That is the root of the problem."

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## Kellogg Rolls Out New Packaging for Blind and Visually Impaired

For millions of shoppers, NaviLens technology makes navigating the cereal aisle more accessible.

December 19, 2022

By Amy Reiter

NaviLens-equipped boxes of Kellogg's Corn Flakes®, Special K Original®, Rice Krispies®, and Crispix®

Shopping for cereal at U.S. grocery stores just got easier for people who are blind or have low vision. Kellogg's has just announced that it is launching new packaging for four of its most popular cereal brands — Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Special K Original, Rice Krispies and Crispix — that features an innovative technology for the visually impaired called NaviLens.

The front and side of cereal box will be printed with a NaviLens code, which looks kind of like a QR code but with high-contrast blocks of color set against a black background. Shoppers can use their smartphone cameras to sweep across the grocery store aisles. When their phone is pointed in the general direction of a cereal box featuring a NaviLens code, even while in motion from as far as almost 40 feet away, the NaviLens app or NaviLens GO app will offer verbal directions to help them navigate to the cereal boxes.

The voice on the apps, which are free, can also convey the product names, package sizes and nutritional information — in as many as 36 different languages.

Previously piloted on food packages and transport systems in Europe, including by Kellogg's on cereal boxes in the U.K., the technology is being introduced in the U.S. by Kellogg's as part of the company's Better Days Promise "to create better days for 3 billion people by the end of 2030." (There are an estimated nearly 12 million adults in the U.S. who are blind or have low vision, according to Kellogg's.)

While Coca-Cola has also just rolled out NaviLens technology on its beverage packaging in the U.K., Kellogg's says it is the first food company to introduce it in the U.S. The company is also rolling out the use of NaviLens codes in its U.S. corporate facilities in the U.S. to increase accessibility and ease of navigation for blind and low-vision employees.

"The heart of Kellogg's Better Days Promise ESG strategy is the advancement of sustainable and equitable access to food. We work hard to think outside the box to ensure our products are accessible to as many people as possible," Charisse Hughes, chief brand and advanced analytics officer at the Kellogg Company, says in a news release. "Thanks to the hard work of our cross-functional teams, we're able to adapt and leverage this technology to ensure we're living by our purpose — to create a place at the table for everyone."

NaviLens-equipped boxes of Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Special K Original, Rice Krispies, and Crispix can be found at retailers nationwide — and you can learn more about them at: [https://www.kelloggs.com/en\\_US/NaviLens.html](https://www.kelloggs.com/en_US/NaviLens.html).

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## A Guide Dog's Night Before Christmas

- By Guide Dogs for the Blind puppy raiser, Jill Savino Nieglos

'Twas the night before Christmas, the kennels were still,

with most dogs asleep, having eaten their fill.

The labs were sprawled out, quite snug in their beds,

While visions of milk bones danced in their heads.

The Golden Retrievers and Labs were curled up on the floor,

some twitched in their sleep and some even snore.

The dog food was stacked in the feed room with care,

in hopes that a trainer soon would be there.

Off by the window, a kennel cat lay,

surveying the lawn at the end of his day.

Something was different, that little cat knew,

something would happen, it had to be true.

That day as the workers had left to go home,

they'd wished "Merry Christmas" before starting to roam.

The dogs had all noticed that during their walk,

the trainers seemed happier and eager to talk.

In the mall where they worked amid people and stores,

there were decorations, music, distractions galore!

Most dogs pranced along without worry or fear,

some barked at the man with those fake-looking deer.

The cat was near sleeping when he first heard the sound,

a whoosh through the air and a jingle abound.

The sound of a collar when an animal shook,

but the sound just kept growing - he'd better go look.

From the ceiling there came a kind of a thunk,

As the kennel cat climbed up on a pile of junk.

But the dogs were still quiet, all sleeping so sound,

as this man dressed in red made his way to the ground.

To read the poem in its entirety, please visit: <https://www.guidedogs.com/blog/a-guide-dogs-night-before-christmas>