



HMSA employees choose different paths to feel their best.

By Danielle Douglass

Photos by Rae Huo

If you walk the halls at HMSA and listen carefully, you'll hear the word "well-being" often. What's even more noticeable is that you'll see employees actually walking the well-being talk.

Well-being isn't a new concept at HMSA. Our employee well-being program, Mālama Ola, was launched three years ago. Last year, we became

the first Blue Zones Project® Demonstration Worksite in the state. This year, we're working toward Blue Zones Worksite™ certification.

There are over 1,600 HMSA employees statewide who have many well-being stories. These are just a few tales of how well-being has taken flight at work, home, and in the community.

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Johnie Bernard had a big health scare on October 24, 2014. While at home during her lunch break, the Administrative Services quality assurance coordinator suffered a heart attack. That event changed her life and started her on a well-being journey.

She can pinpoint the moment she knew she had to change. In the hospital, Bernard saw two people who'd come to visit her at the end of the hallway, crying. She realized she didn't want them to remember her that way.

Bernard returned to work in January 2015, after completing rehabilitation therapy and learning to identify how much stress her heart could

take. The rest and rehabilitation paid off and she now has more energy, recognizes her personal limits, and is more willing to accept help.

These days, she shares her well-being enthusiasm with others. She's a positive influence for healthier eating and loves to walk. She's lost 20 pounds, cut down on red meat, quit smoking, keeps her department stocked with healthy snacks, and posts nutritional information for others who may be interested.

Bernard, who's been at HMSA for 40 years, insists her well-being is here to stay. "I'm going to continue with it until I walk out the door, and I'll be here to make 45 years!"



Shredding the debt

Greg Hester, 49, used to have a considerable amount of debt. The vice president and chief technology officer realized he had to clean up his financial well-being in 2013 when he was faced with a huge tax bill for his business. This event brought him to “financial whoa,” in which he and his wife, Hali’a, took a critical look at how they were living.

At one point, Hester’s physical well-being was also suffering because of his finances. He had canceled the family gym membership and admits he turned to comfort foods and time-wasting activities.

Using the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University program, which he teaches as a pastor of the New Hope Town congregation, he embarked on a journey to stronger financial well-being. One of Ramsey’s books, *Total Money Makeover*, lays out seven baby steps to revamp your finances.

Hester says Ramsey advises people not to carry credit cards. “There are two reasons for this. One is that statistically, if you have a credit card, you’re going to use it and aren’t going to pay it off,” he says. “The number-two reason is that if you start with a credit card, you might have a reasonably good interest rate, but if you miss one payment or you’re late, it jumps.” Hester has cut up 15 credit cards.

In just over a year and a half, Hester and his family managed to get rid of all their debt. They’ve simplified their lives by downsizing their home and selling other assets. They have emergency savings, a tax plan, and use the envelope system to manage finances. All this contributes to less anxiety and better well-being.



Senior Testing Consultant **Nancy Wildes**, 53, loves the concept of moais at HMSA. Moais, or social groups with a shared interest, are a tradition in Okinawa.

"It's a break away from the work and all the to-dos," Wildes says of the moais she belongs to. "We're meeting with people who aren't part of our team or people we're not working directly with on projects, so the chat is more about other topics," she says.

She's in potluck, walking, and faith-based moais. In fact, many of the people in those moais also belong to other moais. Wildes acknowledges that doing activities with others increases accountability and makes it easier to take care of her well-being.

"The social aspects have helped my well-being and help me de-stress. Just getting away from my desk and not talking shop during lunch helps. You're away from it, you get a break, and then you come back refreshed."

It's not only her social well-being that has flourished from her involvement with moais. Wildes has lost weight, eats and feels better, and recently completed a half marathon with others from her moais.





A satisfied volunteer

Darren Cantrill, 45, volunteers so much it's like a part-time job. Cantrill probably spends an average of 20 hours per week volunteering. A conservative estimate would put his overall yearly total at 1,040 hours.

The computer operations manager especially enjoys working with young people and finds personal satisfaction knowing he's making a connection with youth and serving as a role model. "I was taught from an early age that we're put on this Earth for a very short time, so we might as well spend what time we do have helping others," says Cantrill. "I love working with kids because everything they learn and accomplish is so amazing to them. Their pride and smiles really makes it worth it."

Cantrill's volunteer experiences span the Boy Scouts, City & County of Honolulu's Department of Emergency Management (formerly Civil Defense), and involvement with HMSA's Rooftop Garden Committee. He's most involved with Boy Scouts, which he's been immersed in since 2009. Since then, he's influenced the lives of thousands of scouts, units, and volunteers. In 2014, he received the Cubmaster of the Year award.

His experiences have improved his well-being and brought him closer to his family. He's followed his 11-year-old son through Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts journeys. Cantrill acknowledges he couldn't do his volunteering, which is truly his passion, without the support of his wife, Jeni.

Aside from a genuine desire to help others and give young men the same experiences he had growing up, Cantrill explains why volunteering is so important to him. He says that if he were to die suddenly, he'd want to feel satisfied knowing he's leaving a legacy and led a good life being a positive influence and role model to others.





Rick Oliver has a good sense of humor and likes to make others laugh. In fact, he discovered those were two of his strengths at a workshop about finding your purpose. His other strengths are getting to the heart of the matter and having an awakening spirit.

Oliver, who considers himself an ordinary guy taking small steps for his well-being, says he uses his strengths daily. He doesn't need to "try;" he just "does" because it's a part of his makeup and it just happens.


The quality assurance analyst has lost 35 pounds, is working on kicking his smoking habit, walks twice a week, has begun working out at the company's fitness center, surrounds himself with people and uplifting music, and watches what he eats.

"Exercise is an amazing thing," he says. "I noticed something when I first started walking. I'd come home and I was energized and found myself doing household chores, which I'd usually wait to do until the weekend.

"Everyone knows what they need," says Oliver. "It's about taking that initial step and asking somebody for a little help." He explains that knowing someone is concerned about him makes all the difference in the world.

Ever changing, ever evolving

Something really great about well-being is that it's not a constant state. Your well-being changes as your life changes. That's really good news because we can

all improve and feel better at any point in time. It also means we need to be mindful of our well-being when it's high and find opportunities to keep it that way. 

How's your personal well-being journey? If you'd like to share your story with us, we'd love to hear it. Please email us at feedback@islandscene.com.

Check out more personal and inspiring stories of well-being at HMSA's new health and well-being blog (wellbeinghi.com).