

island scene

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BIG ISLAND MAYOR HARRY KIM

“I’m here to do some good. I owe it to the people I serve to do the best job I can.”

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A Helping Well-being

Hawai'i Island companies are helping employees be healthier at work.



Let's face it. Being healthy takes work.

Maybe if our days went exactly as we expected, we'd have the mental, physical, and emotional energy to choose broccoli instead of fries, spend quality time with the kids every night, and exercise five times a week.

Unfortunately, life never goes exactly as planned. That's why it helps to have someone in our lives who helps us prioritize our health and well-being. Suisan, a Big Island food company, is doing just that for its employees. Most people know Suisan as a local fish market that was formed in the early 1900s, but today it's also a well-known frozen and fresh produce wholesale distributor.

Because of its long history in the community, Suisan has employees of all ages working in its warehouses, office, and market. "As our employees get older, it's even more important that

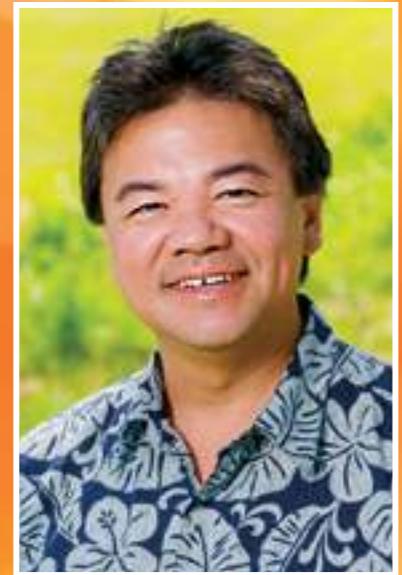
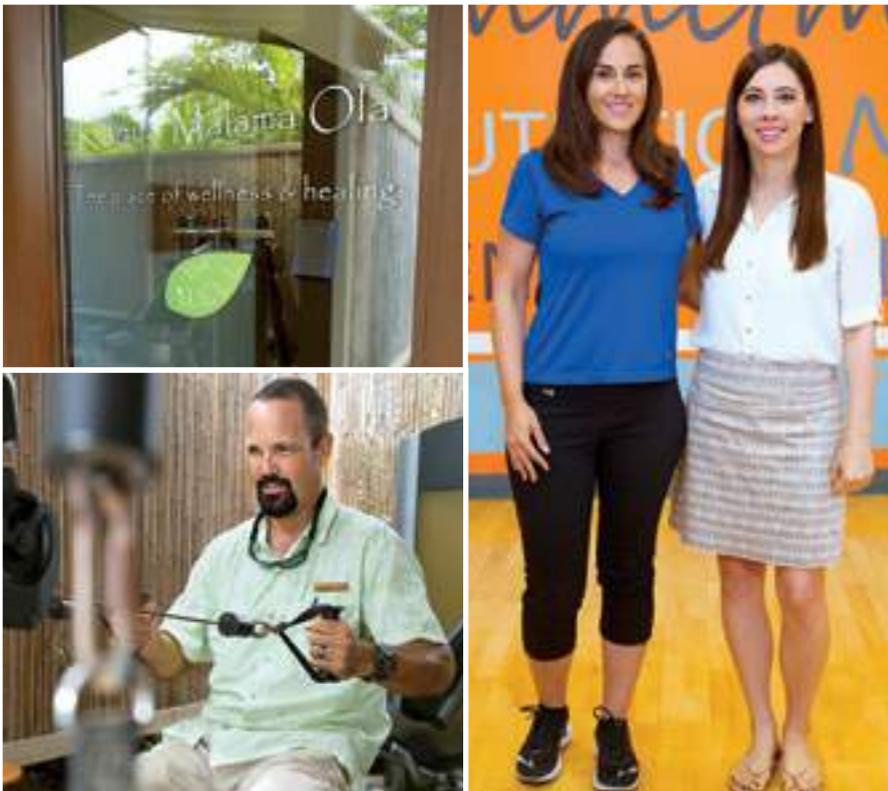
they care for their health," says Shirley Kranz, Suisan's human resources director. "We've had some long-term employees get sick overnight and just never return to work. We don't want that to become a regular occurrence, so we want to give employees more support early on for their health and wellness."

With Suisan President and CEO Steve Ueda's backing, their well-being program has started to gain momentum. "Steve's coming into his own about what wellness means to him on a personal level," Kranz says. "He's more of a cheeseburger and French fries kind of guy, but now he's starting to change his eating habits and model wellness for his employees."

Suisan's well-being program is in its experimental phase, with Kranz and her wellness

Hand

By **Christa Hester** • Photos by **Earl Yoshii**



Far left: Employees at Four Seasons Resort Hualalai focus on their breathing in Kahua Malama Ola, a wellness and fitness space created especially for them.

Left: Kili Bloss (left) and Dr. Cheri Wood team up to provide wellness coordination and management, respectively, to employees at Four Seasons Resort Hualalai.

Above: Like his employees, Suisan's Steve Ueda is learning how to improve his well-being.

committee continuing to learn about employees' needs and how well-being fits into the company's culture. "We're really focused on educating our employees about health and well-being, why it matters, and how it impacts their lives," Kranz says.

The committee has begun to introduce healthier foods to company potlucks and events, organize health seminars and cooking demonstrations, and offer employee discounts on health and well-being products and services. "We offered employees massively discounted memberships to Penn Training & Fitness Center, which was a big hit," Kranz says. "Because we have such a diverse workforce, it can be difficult to develop a program that fits everyone's needs. But we're committed

to finding what resonates with employees so we can give them the well-being support they need."

Four Seasons Resort Hualalai also has a diverse workforce. Regional Director of Human Resources Mitch Sipiala envisioned a comprehensive wellness program that encourages well-being and enhances the employee experience. His vision became a reality when Kahua Malama Ola, a wellness and fitness space for employees, opened in 2014. Kahua Malama Ola, which means "the place of wellness and healing," has an outdoor gym and indoor fitness studio that offers free fitness classes and 15-minute massages. The wellness team consists of Cheri Wood, N.D., the wellness manager; and Kili Bloss, the wellness coordinator. Wood, a naturopathic doctor, meets one-on-one with patients, combining conventional and holistic medical philosophies to provide individually centered care. Bloss, a personal trainer, certified nurse assistant, and health coach, helps employees with their fitness, diet, and more.



Dr. Cheri Wood combines conventional and holistic medical philosophies to help employees achieve their healthy best.

easy to just go to the wellness center after work and get my exercise in.” That exercise includes going to Kahua Malama Ola three or four times a week to use the treadmill or stationary bike or attend an exercise class.

The help Govier has gotten from Wood made a true difference in reaching her health goals. “She takes her time with me,” Govier says. “I can email her or come in and talk with her every week about how I’m doing and how to stay on track. Dr. Cheri’s really there for me. And she’s teaching me the healthy way to lose weight, not just putting me on some fad diet.”

Since she enrolled in the wellness program, Govier has lost nearly 30 pounds and plans to lose 16 more. With Wood’s guidance, it’s more than possible. “The goal is to feel good,” Wood says. “Optimal health is not just feeling good at work, but also having enough energy to pursue hobbies and spend quality time with family and friends outside of work. If I can help employees achieve that through our wellness program, then I feel like I’ve succeeded in my role.”

Want to improve your company’s well-being? Here are some key lessons Four Seasons Resort Hualalai and Suisan learned while building their well-being programs:

- Executives have to be invested in well-being. “Our CEO is determined to make our employees’ health and well-being stronger,” Kranz says. “His commitment to health is what makes change happen.”
- Education drives engagement. “We’ve found that the more employees understand their own health and how foods, exercise, and other lifestyle behaviors affect them, the more willing they are to change and put in the effort to be healthier,” Wood says.
- It’s OK to experiment. “For us, there isn’t a one-size-fits-all solution,” Kranz says. “We’re continually putting out new wellness initiatives and services to see which one works best for our employees.” 15

To promote healthy eating, Kahua Malama Ola serves up menu choices like fresh produce and local organic meats and seafood. There’s no high fructose corn syrup, trans fat, or artificial sweeteners in the food. All ingredients and nutritional information are displayed so employees know exactly what they’re eating and can make good choices.

What makes the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai well-being program different is the lack of incentives. “We’ve chosen not to have any incentives or force people to participate in the program,” Wood says. Instead, they wanted to create a program that employees would want to join because it was meaningful and useful. It seems to be working since over 60 percent of the employees have chosen to participate.

After having a baby a little over a year ago, Sarah Govier, pastry cook at Four Seasons Resort Hualalai, wanted to get back in shape, but didn’t know where to start. “Dr. Cheri sat down with me and we developed this plan to get me back on track,” Govier says. Plus, she appreciates the flexibility of the program. “It’s so