

Defying The Odds

A YOUNG STROKE SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY

In 2018, Kristin Barroga was enjoying life as any 22-year-old does. She had great friends, a loving family and felt fulfilled by her job at a health foods bar where she worked while completing her associate's degree. She found joy in maintaining her physical and mental fitness, happily devoting much of her free time to training at the gym. Life was moving along as usual...until one morning when she woke with a pounding headache. No sooner had the headache started than her vision blurred and her face started to droop. ***"I had always seen and heard emergency vehicles on the road, but not once did I think an ambulance would one day come for me,"*** Kristin said. She was rushed to the emergency room where she and her family were devastated to learn the results of her CT scan: she had suffered a cerebellar stroke.

continued inside

with
**KRISTIN
BARROGA**

REHAB
FOUNDATION



TO OUR REHAB OHANA

As we reflect on the first half of the year, we're filled with gratitude for the continued support that fuels REHAB Hospital of the Pacific's mission: helping patients regain strength, independence and a sense of self after life-changing events.

REHAB has always been about people—those we care for, and those who care with us. In this issue of the *REACH* newsletter, you'll read inspiring stories of resilience and renewal. One such story is Kristin Barroga's, a former patient who overcame the unimaginable and has since returned to REHAB in pursuit of a new purpose: to become a speech-language pathologist and support others on their healing journey.

We're also proud to celebrate the exceptional staff who have dedicated decades of their lives to this work. This issue shares reflections from team members like Konane Deryke, who was moved to tears when she saw a video of a former spinal cord injury patient walking across his high school graduation stage just weeks after leaving REHAB. These aren't just careers, they're callings rooted in compassion and community.

Selma Rosa, who marks 40 years at REHAB, describes it best: "[REHAB] is a place where we help people regain their sense of self... where we all work together to help patients return to the things they love." That spirit is reflected in the care REHAB provides each day, and in the stories and milestones shared throughout these pages.

As we look ahead to the rest of the year (including our upcoming *The Joy of Food and Wine* celebration!) we're reminded that our strength as an organization comes from the deep and lasting relationships we've built over time. Whether you've supported REHAB for 40 years or just joined us last week, your presence makes a difference.

Thank you for walking alongside us in this important work.



Stanford Carr
Chairman of the Board
REHAB Foundation



Jennifer Onishi
Executive Director
REHAB Foundation

In Memoriam
DR. GENE WAI DOO

DR. GENE WAI DOO

August 21, 1939 - February 5, 2025

Dr. Gene Wai Doo's legacy is one of service, generosity and joy. A gifted otolaryngologist, Dr. Doo believed that care should meet people where they are. Over four decades, he brought his medical expertise, often free of charge, to underserved communities across Hawaii.

Passionate champions of REHAB's mission, Dr. Doo and his wife, Cecilia Doo, served as honorary co-chairs and longtime supporters of *The Joy of Food and Wine*. Cecilia reflected:

"We always felt that pairing the support and celebration of REHAB's work with excellent food and wine was our *joie de vivre*. With my late husband's vision, what began as a small, informal wine event in the '90s blossomed into a multilayered event attracting many different levels of REHAB supporters. It was our hope and dream that the next generation of REHAB supporters would continue to be inspired by this celebration."

Board member and event chair Dr. Laurie Tom shared her thoughts on the Doos' impact:

"Gene was a dear friend and colleague. He and Cecilia served as honorary co-chairs of *The Joy of Food and Wine* for more than 20 years, helping the event raise critical funds for REHAB's mission. He was enthusiastic, generous and deeply committed to its success. Gene brought heart, humor and immense passion for both healing and hospitality to everything he did. His legacy will continue to shape this event for years to come."

Dr. Thomas Kosasa, a longtime friend of Dr. Doo's, also reflected on his extraordinary dedication to care and community:

"Gene was honored as Physician of the Year by the Hawaii Medical Association not only for his exceptional skill as a surgeon, but also for his tireless work serving the underserved. REHAB Hospital was so special to him, largely because of how it helps those who need it most."

REHAB Foundation is deeply grateful for Dr. Doo's vision, generosity and enduring impact. The commitment he and Cecilia shared with REHAB and the community will continue to inspire future generations.

New Tech:

BODITRAK2 PRESSURE MAPPING SYSTEM

Thanks to the generous support of the Mike Utey Foundation, REHAB recently purchased three BodiTrak2 Pressure Mapping Systems for use at REHAB Nuuanu and our outpatient clinics in Aiea and Hilo. The BodiTrak2 Pressure Mapping System measures weight distribution, providing detailed real-time data that can improve patient comfort and reduce potential for injury while in a seated or lying position. This is particularly important for patients in wheelchairs or those healing from spinal cord injuries. By identifying areas where excessive pressure or poor support may occur, REHAB staff can better prevent secondary complications from limited mobility and customize patients' wheelchair settings to more precisely fit their specific needs.

"Being comfortable is a huge part of healing, especially when a patient is new to a wheelchair. The data we gather from the BodiTrak2 Pressure Mapping System gives us better insight into what a patient is feeling so we can eliminate unnecessary discomfort."

Cheri Teranishi-Hashimoto,
Director of Outpatient Therapy Programs

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Defying the Odds

A YOUNG STROKE SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY

An intense and emotional multi-week stay at Straub Benioff Medical Center followed. Kristin recalled her bleak diagnosis, "The doctors were unsure if I would survive. If I did, they warned I would be severely disabled...vertigo, hearing and balance loss, lack of control on my left side, the inability to swallow and the list went on." The severity of her situation was amplified when she learned she required a feeding tube. "Staring down at the large plastic 'noodle' protruding from my stomach, my self-esteem and sense of identity unraveled. Growing up in Hawaii, food is so much more than a meal, it is the heart of our culture. Now, instead of sharing mealtime moments of connection with family and friends, I found myself on the sidelines."

Though the odds were stacked against her, Kristin was determined to fight for herself, for the woman who loved big meals with her family and long training sessions in the gym. When she was stable enough to transfer to REHAB Hospital of the Pacific (REHAB), she held tight to the person she was before her stroke and the future she wanted to have. Gradually, she began to see progress. "The staff at REHAB were so welcoming," Kristin shared. "My biggest concern was feeling normal again, but the therapy was surprisingly fun and it helped that I felt right at home being back in a gym setting." During Kristin's time at REHAB, she applied herself to a full range of therapies, from physical and occupational to speech and dysphasia (swallowing) therapy. With REHAB's guidance, time and dedication, she was eventually able to take her first unassisted steps, and even her first delicious bites of solid food.

When her discharge day finally came, Kristin left REHAB with even more than the skills and confidence to continue her rehabilitation progress; she left with a newfound purpose.

"During my recovery at REHAB, I was inspired by my therapists and became deeply interested in the field of Speech-Language Pathology. It was at REHAB that I realized my unique journey as a stroke survivor could help future patients and encourage them to achieve their rehabilitation goals just as I had."

In 2024 Kristin returned to REHAB, this time wearing a Team REHAB shirt. After obtaining her bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and completing the Jon A. Burns School of Medicine Speech Pathology and Audiology Prerequisite Program, it felt right to be in the place where it all began to conduct her clinical shadowing. In the fall of 2025, Kristin is set to begin her master's degree with the University of Washington's Medical Speech-Language Pathology Program. **"As a fully recovered stroke survivor, I now embrace this identity as part of my mission and I can't wait to help others with communication and swallowing disorders just as I was helped,"** Kristin said. **"This is my life's calling."**



Scan the QR code to watch REHAB's most recent commercial, *Simple Pleasures*, which follows Kristin's journey to her first bites of solid food after her stroke.

MEET THE REHAB FOUNDATION TEAM!

JENNIFER ONISHI

Executive Director

As Executive Director, Jennifer leads REHAB Foundation's strategic vision and overall fundraising efforts to secure support for REHAB's mission. She loves bringing people together. Whether it's connecting hospital staff with community partners, engaging donors around a shared mission or fostering collaboration across departments, she strongly believes in the power of relationships to support something bigger than ourselves. As a mother of two, Jennifer is grateful her sons can grow up in a world where places like REHAB exist, where people are cared for with dignity, recovery is possible and we honor and care for our kupuna.

JUSTINE ESPIRITU

*Associate Director of
Development, Annual Giving*

Justine brings a deep appreciation for impactful storytelling to the REHAB Foundation team. Her priority is ensuring every supporter feels valued, connected to REHAB's mission and proud of the impact their generosity makes. She finds joy in sharing heartfelt messages from patients and donors—powerful reminders of how REHAB transforms lives. For Justine, garnering support for REHAB is deeply fulfilling because it helps secure exceptional care here in Hawaii for generations to come. When she's not reading stories from REHAB patients, Justine is likely immersed in the pages of a book, keeping up with her book club that has been going strong for 14 years!

KARA YOSHIYAMA

Development Coordinator

With a knack for organization, Kara oversees REHAB Foundation's database management and is a key part of event planning for REHAB fundraisers. The hospital has held a special place in her heart since her grandfather received care here in 2005. With a personal connection to the life-changing work happening at REHAB, Kara is even more passionate and inspired for the work she does with the Foundation. In her spare time, Kara can be found at Corepower Yoga, flowing on her mat or teaching a high energy Yoga Sculpt class!

HONORING THE HEART OF REHAB

Our dedicated staff are the heart of REHAB and the reason we're able to change lives every day. Each year during National Rehabilitation Awareness Week (September 15 - 21, 2025), we celebrate staff milestones and take the time to reflect, appreciate and recognize the impact they make. As part of this special week, the Ko Miyataki Staff Appreciation Luncheon and Service Award Presentation honors our team with aloha and gratitude.

In anticipation of the celebration, we asked a few staff members to share their favorite memories, takeaways and reflections from their time at REHAB. Here's what they had to say:

DEBBIE TAKENO

Clinical Support Services Representative



"One of my favorite memories as part of REHAB's staff was when I played for Team REHAB in a healthcare bowling league! We bowled every Monday night at Kapiolani Bowl. It was a fun way to get to know fellow staff members and meet professionals from other hospitals!"

SELMA ROSA

Outpatient Clinical Documentation Specialist



"To me, REHAB means teamwork and family. It is a place where we help people regain their sense of self and learn new ways of doing things, where staff can grow to be the best they can be and where we all work together to help patients return to the things they love."

DAWN NAKAMURA

Senior Inpatient Therapist, Physical Therapy Services



"A memory I will never forget...one of my former stroke patients did not think that he would ever be able to walk again. But during his time at REHAB, he kept surprising himself by walking to the bathroom, then getting to the gym, every day a bit further. Eventually we went out into the community where he was able to walk toward the ocean at Kakaako. Using his cane, he stepped out onto the rocks where he used to go fishing. I will never forget the smile on his face."



KONANE DERYKE

Senior Inpatient Therapist, Occupational Therapy Services



"I've had a lot of patients that have touched my heart over the years. I had a patient who came to us with a spinal cord injury after a dirt bike accident. He wasn't able to move his legs, but by the time he left, he was walking. His high school graduation was about a month after he was discharged and his family sent us a video of him walking up the stairs and across the graduation stage without a device. Seeing that brought me to tears."

ROBIN PALAMA

Senior Inpatient Speech-Language Pathologist



"Even after all these years, there is no better feeling than hearing a person speak for the first time or take a bite of food after being tube fed for months. I love getting updates on their progress or when they visit just to say 'hello' and 'thank you.' Playing even a small part in helping someone feel like they can still contribute to their family and community after facing a terrible event in their life is what it's all about."

THE JOURNEY FORWARD

Stroke Survivors Healing Through Art

Mahalo to all who made it out to see REHAB's latest art exhibition, *The Journey Forward: Stroke Survivors Healing Through Art*. On view at Downtown Art Center April 12 through May 4, 2025, the show featured a series of paintings and collaborative monoprints created by stroke survivors and their caregivers. The artworks explored the complexities of a stroke survivor's journey, illustrating both the struggles and triumphs of stroke rehabilitation. Each piece told a different artist's story through their own interpretation of color, texture and imagery!



Missed the exhibition? Scan the QR code to watch the making of *The Journey Forward*, then stop by to view the artworks onsite at REHAB's Nuuanu campus starting in November!



30th Annual REHAB GOLF Challenge

Whether you joined us on the course, cheered us on from afar or supported the event as a generous donor or dedicated volunteer—you helped make this year's milestone event truly unforgettable.

Thanks to the incredible support of our community, the 30th Annual REHAB Golf Challenge, presented by First Hawaiian Bank, raised over \$208,000 in support of REHAB Hospital of the Pacific. These proceeds are already hard at work helping patients restore function, regain independence and return to their communities with confidence and dignity.

This tournament is about more than just golf. It's about community, compassion and coming together to make a lasting impact. Together, we make a difference.

Mahalo nui loa for your continued support!



Scan the QR code or visit rehabhospital.org/golf2025 to view highlights from the day and relive the memories!



Photos by Andrew Lee and JonT Media Hawaii

SHARE YOUR REHAB STORY

Everyone who comes through our doors has a story to tell. If you or a family member had an impactful experience at REHAB, we'd love to hear from you!



Scan the QR code or visit REHABhospital.org/myREHABstory to share your story.

REHAB FOUNDATION

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ISSUE 2 2025

REACH

Stories of Inspiration from *REHAB Hospital*

Support REHAB when shopping at Foodland

SEPTEMBER 1-30, 2025

During the month of September, donate to REHAB Hospital of the Pacific Foundation at any Foodland, Sack N Save or Foodland Farms during checkout! Foodland Super Market, Ltd. will be matching a portion of donations made at checkout.

USE CODE #77557

to support REHAB's mission of
rebuilding lives, together.



27TH ANNUAL the JOY of Food & Wine

SEPTEMBER 19, 2025 | 5:00 P.M.

PRESENTED BY
REHAB
FOUNDATION



NAMI KAZE
HAWAII



SOUTHERN GLAZER'S
WINE & SPIRITS

Join us at Halekulani for *REHAB Foundation's 27th Joy of Food and Wine!* Each year this impactful event brings our community together for an unforgettable evening in support of REHAB Hospital of the Pacific.

Mahalo to our Event Chair, **Dr. Laurie Tom** and returning Title Sponsors, **Stanford and Kathy Carr and Clyde and Holly Kaneshiro**. We are pleased to present the culinary talents of Chef Jason Peel and Chef Beverly Luk of Nami Kaze Hawaii, a modern izakaya known for its innovative use of local ingredients and Japanese-inspired cuisine. Paired with curated wines by Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits and special appetizers by Chef Kealoha Domingo of Nui Kealoha, it will be an unforgettable evening of bold flavors and artful pairings.



Support The Joy of Food & Wine
REHABHOSPITAL.ORG/JOFW2025

For more information, please email
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call 808.566.3750