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People Who Make Hawaii Work

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Rachael Wong is the new vice president and chief operating officer of the Healthcare Association of Hawaii, which represents the state's health-care providers.

Born and raised in Honolulu, she attended Punahou School and holds degrees from Princeton University, the University of Hawaii Manoa and the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Her community activities have included the City and County of Honolulu Ethics Commission, Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii Public Health Fund Committee, Legacy of Life Hawaii, Kokua Market cooperative and the Hawaii Food Policy Council.

Why I took this job: As one who was diagnosed with lupus at the start of college, experienced renal failure, and was fortunate to receive a kidney transplant 10 years ago, I'm very grateful to have this second chance at life to give back to our community. Working with the Healthcare Association of Hawaii provides the opportunity to contribute in very meaningful ways: improve quality of and access to health care, shape policy and practice, and partner with others to leverage our shared work into something greater. After working in hospice and palliative care for several years, I was looking for a role that would allow me to work with a broader spectrum of stakeholders to improve health care across the continuum.

Long-term challenge: Our members are dedicated to providing excellent care in our local community even as they face a growing number of patient needs, increasing regulation requirements, and decreasing reimbursement rates. Long-term challenges include increasing access to quality care for all, funding appropriate care across health-care settings, and articulating the significance of health-care solutions in policy discussions.

Strategy to overcome the challenge: We will work with state leaders to find innovative solutions and funding mechanisms for health care, lead statewide collaborative efforts with partners to streamline existing programs and resources, and roll out a campaign that raises awareness about the role of health care in our community.

I'm inspired by: I will always be inspired by donor families who have, during perhaps their most difficult time of grief and loss, given the gift of life to others through organ and tissue donation. I survived because of dialysis, but I'm alive and well because of a kidney transplant made possible by such a family. Although we have not met, they and their loved one (whose kidney is a vital part of me) continue to inspire and stay with me.

Smartest move taken in my career: Applying for the executive doctorate in health leadership program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The program far

exceeded all my expectations, and everything I learned in the (virtual) classroom, during campus visits, and through my dissertation research directly impacted my professional work, thought processes, and personal toolkit. Juggling life, work and a return to school was very worth it, and my husband was so pleased that I was hooded in the [Dean Dome](#) under [Michael Jordan](#)'s retired jersey.

Most important lesson learned: My grandfather used to pray for "health, safety and good communication," so I was always aware of his emphasis on health. However, it wasn't until I emerged from over a decade of living with life-threatening health challenges that I truly understood how important one's health — on the physical, mental, emotional, psychosocial, and spiritual levels — is. I needed the contrast of being ill and regaining health to internalize this. Without health, it is so much more difficult to be of service to others and the larger community. What I value in my employees and co-workers: Open communication, teamwork and a commitment to ongoing learning and innovation. I am glad to have found this at HAH and can be a part of nurturing this culture.

Favorite stress reducer: I don't know if this is so much a stress reducer as it's now a part of my life: I love to wake early, go to [Egan Inoue](#)'s Bootcamp, and sometimes follow that with 60-90 minutes of yoga. This routine provides a wonderful way to start the day with energy, centeredness and clarity.

Favorite way to spend free time: I really appreciate spending unstructured time with loved ones, reading and traveling (which includes jumping into yoga classes wherever I go). Walking the dogs around the hills in Manoa is also very grounding and provides time for reflection.

When I was little I wanted to be: [Nancy Drew](#) or Harriet the Spy. I had a little notebook in which I wrote down observations and placed colorful stickers. I should dig it up and reread what I wrote!

Hawaii Pacesetters

Halekulani

The Waikiki hotel has named [Ulrich Krauer](#) general manager. Krauer, a veteran hotel executive, was previously general manager of the **Kona Village Resort** on the Big Island.

Hawaii Pacific Health

Hui-I Chen was named bone and joint service line director. She previously was rehabilitation services manager at **The Queen's Medical Center**.

[Sheryl Hasegawa](#) was named director of foundation communications. She previously was senior manager of partnerships for the National Geographic Society's education division.

Finance Factors

[Jean Savoy](#) was named business development manager. She previously was a mortgage loan officer at Pacific Access Mortgage.