

HPH Connections

EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER
FOR THE AFFILIATES OF HAWAII PACIFIC HEALTH

Volunteer extraordinaire Annette Kam, RN, brings hope to others

Story idea, initial writing, and photo contributed by Kristen Krusell, RN, Kapi'olani Mother Baby Care Unit.

"In 1998, I crashed my car totally due to total fatigue. ... Back then my day offs were basically spent in bed."

- Annette Kam, 15-year fibromyalgia sufferer

Annette Kam is truly a nurse that saves lives! She's been with Kapiolani since 1973 where she is currently a charge nurse on the Mother Baby Care Unit, is an active tennis player, and a fibromyalgia sufferer. These days, her true passion is serving as the president of a non-profit organization that she created, iFoG, which stands for informed Fibromyalgics on Guaiifenesin, that reaches out to fibromyalgia sufferers to spread hope and support.

It is a widely held opinion that fibromyalgia is incurable. One theory is that fibromyalgia sufferers build up an excess of phosphates that they are unable to excrete. The condition often goes misdiagnosed because the phosphates affect multiple systems so patients present with various symptoms from fatigue to joint pain. 80-85 percent of fibromyalgia sufferers are women.

During Annette's 15-year, debilitating experience, she searched everywhere for an answer, finally seeking treatment in California from an endocrinologist who is himself afflicted

with fibromyalgia. After finally being diagnosed in 1998, she began treatment in 2000. In August 2003, Annette and iFoG brought the doctor to Hawaii, rented hotel facilities, and hosted a free, public seminar. They expected maybe 400 people, but 700 showed up, in wheelchairs, on walkers, men, women, young, and old.

Today, Annette says, "Ninety-five percent of my symptoms are reversed and the treatment gave me my life back." The support group, which she founded in 2001, has nearly 1,000 members from ages 10 to 86 who meet on the second Saturday of each month at Kalihi Union Church. On average, 25 to 40 people show up each month. They find iFoG through word of mouth, or referral by doctors who know Annette and her work very well.

For more information on Annette's fibromyalgia support group, please contact ifoghawaii@aol.com or call her at 677-8770.



"The volunteer work I do with fibromyalgia sufferers has been my passion these last 4-1/2 years. I am blessed to be able to share the hope of relief with other fibromyalgia sufferers, many of whom have been bedridden, unable to do even the simplest things. I have hope that they, too, can find relief and get their lives back."

- Annette Kam, Founder of the iFoG Support Group