



#### IN THE NEWS

## COVID-19 hits home

2020-08-25

**\*\* To learn more about or to donate to the family of Willie Talamoa, click [here](#). \*\***

To our IHS Ohana,

Thank you for all the ways you've supported us these past few months. As Oahu has entered a new phase of the COVID-19 crisis, so too has IHS. From many months of active prevention and preparation, we were called upon to respond and contain the COVID-19 within our walls.

With support and guidance from the State's Department of Health, as of Friday, August 14th, our Men's Shelter on Sumner Street is now operating as a temporary quarantine facility. This decision was made in the best interest of our guests, our homeless community, and our island residents at-large. Although it has tested our operational infrastructure beyond what it was designed to do, times of crisis have no respect for the best of intentions. Our IHS team and community partners have risen to the challenge, immediately mobilizing for action to care for the ill and convert the shelter into a make-shift medical center.

The men's shelter is now a place for respite, medical care, meals, and any additional support our COVID-19 positive guests need as they recover in isolation. We have medical staff onsite around the clock and an ambulance stationed outside in the event any guests take a turn for the worse. The guests who tested negative, but were exposed to COVID-19, also remain onsite where they are on a separate floor quarantining for 14 days as we monitor for symptoms and conduct regular COVID-19 testing. We are on track to be out of quarantine and isolation by the end of the first week of September, if we have no more conversions to active COVID-19 infections.

While not immune to the anxiety that comes with proximity to the dreaded COVID-19, our staff were in good spirits, anchored by an exceptional team of close-knit warriors and reinforcements in PPE, medical staff, and supplies.

But late Friday, August 21, we lost one of our own to COVID-19. We are mourning across our organization, even as we continue to serve homeless individuals who have need for quarantine and isolation. The loss of our comrade Willie Talamoa brought home that critical risk that is being faced by all frontline workers across our State, and a sober fact that the COVID-19 does not discriminate when it comes to age. It can strike anyone down at any age. We have recommitted to the disciplines of social distancing, mask wearing, and hand hygiene. We are doing onsite COVID-19 testing at least twice each week across our organization. We have turned more focused attention to how we can better care of ourselves and each other as we stare down the COVID-19 surge on Oahu everyday.

Despite the changes to our men's shelter, all of our additional shelter locations, including our Kaaahi Street Women's and Family Shelter, housing navigation center at Sand Island, VET house, Kalihi-Uka Recovery Home, and three Tutu Bert's medical respite homes continue to accept new guests after screening and testing. Our outreach, housing, employment, and administrative teams are also operating at full capacity.

In our sustained efforts to contain the spread of the virus to our island's vulnerable homeless population, we also continue to support the Department of Health's Kaaahi Temporary Quarantine and Isolation Center (TQIC) and Provisional Outdoor Screening and Testing (POST) site at Keehi Lagoon. Together these efforts ensure that unsheltered individuals have additional safe spaces to land away from the streets, and the supportive services to move them to their next destination.

Thank you again for all of your support now and always. We couldn't do this important work without you.

With gratitude,



*Connie Mitchell*

Connie Mitchell, MS, APRN, BC  
Executive Director

Learn more about Willie Talamoa and how to support his family [here](#).