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## **Historic \$3.2 Million Donation from Helmsley Charitable Trust Enhances Healthcare Access in American Samoa**



The Office of the Governor, Lyndon B. Johnson Tropical Medical Center (LBJ TMC), and the American Samoa Community Health Centers (ASCHC) are pleased to announce a generous donation of over \$3 million from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust. This partnership aims to increase access to healthcare services for the people of American Samoa.

A ceremony to announce and present this donation was held this morning at the Goat Island Café, Sadies by the Sea conference room.

Representative Faimealelei Anthony Allen welcomed the special guests and local healthcare leaders. As a member of the LBJ Hospital board, he expressed his gratitude to the Helmsley Charitable Trust for its significant impact on the lives of the people of American Samoa. Representative Allen then introduced Walter Panzirer, a Helmsley trustee and grandson of Leona Helmsley. Walter Panzirer was joined by his wife, Tina Panzirer, and Media Lead, Michelle Tsai.

In his remarks, Walter expressed his joy at being among the people of American Samoa. He recalled his visit last year to better understand American Samoa's healthcare system and was moved by the challenges faced by its people and the rising costs of care. He emotionally recounted that "American Samoa has been forgotten as one of the U.S. territories. There is a greater need for improved healthcare systems."

Walter also shared that American Samoa will be one of the focus areas for the Helmsley Trust. He announced \$3.2 million in grants to provide a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine, portable X-ray capabilities, and portable ultrasound equipment to LBJ and ASCHC. Walter stated, "We're partners. We don't write checks and walk away. We want to work to improve healthcare in American Samoa." He believes that these grants will address the critical gap in healthcare by increasing access to care for the local residents of American Samoa.

Chief of Staff Loa Tuimavave Laupola was present and spoke on behalf of Governor Lemanu P.S. Mauga. The Chief of Staff expressed, "We are humbled by your generosity. The words of apostle Paul about faith, love, and hope resonate with the presentation today. We cannot thank you enough for elevating our healthcare services and for reaching out." Chief Loa shared the difficulties of transferring patients off-island and the associated costs. He presented gifts to Walter and his group as a sign of respect.

Following Chief Loa, LBJ CEO Dr. Ledua gave his remarks. He recounted that in 2023, LBJ had 77 approved off-island referrals for MRI. Of the 77, 21 individuals chose not to travel off-island because it was too expensive. Dr. Ledua thanked the Helmsley group and expressed, "Because of you, this state-of-the-art diagnostic care will be available here at home." Dr. Lauvao, Chief Medical Officer for Public Health, echoed thanks from Dr. Ledua. She added, "Because of the Helmsley Charitable Trust, our patients will benefit from the convenience of diagnostics close to home, timely treatment plans and medical interventions, and follow-up care." Mr. Solomona Moala, a guest and a patient, shared his experiences about having to travel off-island for MRI scans and the difficulty that posed for others.

This partnership marks a significant step forward in improving healthcare access for the people of American Samoa, ensuring a healthier future for all.

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