According to the COPD Foundation, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is an umbrella term used to describe progressive lung diseases including emphysema, chronic bronchitis, refractory (non-reversible) asthma, and some forms of bronchiectasis. This disease is characterized by increasing breathlessness and affects over 30 million Americans.

“I was healthy and active before I got COPD, but I was a smoker until I quit in 1998,” says Lori Thompson who used to work at Imiloa Astronomy Center. “I was so shame when I first had to wear my oxygen. I stayed home and was really lonely. I lost my friends. People were afraid to come around me like they could catch what I had.”

“But then I realized that I didn’t want to be stuck at home and got inspired to meet others so we could encourage each other to continue living,” says Lori about asking Hilo Medical Center to start the COPD Support Group. “I am the same person. I just have this pineapple that I carry around to help me breathe.”

The COPD Support Group will be addressing a variety of topics, including medications, exercise, diet, and respiratory therapy and is open to people living with COPD and their loved ones.