



NEWS RELEASE

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Hawaii Athletes Will Compete for Gold in 2022 Special Olympics USA Games

16 athletes and four partners from across Hawaii are preparing to compete at the national competition in Orlando, Florida scheduled to take place in June 2022

Photos and videos of the announcement: <https://we.tl/t-Srg993fymo>

Photo credit: Special Olympics Hawaii

HONOLULU – Special Olympics Hawaii athletes from Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii Island are gearing up to represent our aloha state at the national level! Athletes, Unified Partners and coaches are preparing for the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games taking place from June 5-12, 2022, in Orlando, Florida. The sixteen athletes and four Unified Partners will join other Special Olympics athletes and coaches from across the country to compete in bocce, bowling, powerlifting, and swimming.

The cost to send one individual to the USA Games is more than \$2,500. Special Olympics Hawaii is accepting tax-deductible donations to defray expenses at www.sohawaii.org.

“Our athletes have patiently waited for the chance to compete in-person for more than a year and we are excited to have them not only showcase their skills, but our state of Hawaii on a national platform,” said Special Olympics Hawaii’s President and CEO, Dan Epstein. “For many this will be a first-time experience. The first time leaving their island home. The first time competing on a national stage. Which is why we hope that the community will join us in supporting them by making a tax-deductible donation to help make their dream of competing for gold a reality.”

Athletes were selected from among more than 3,400 participants statewide. Those selected to represent Hawaii and compete on Team Hui 'o Hawaii include:

Bocce (Four Athletes, Two Partners)

- Henry Benedicto and Kurt Kendro (Unified Partner) - *Oahu*
- James Thompson and Eric Thompson (Unified Partner) - *Maui*
- Jeremy Badua and Darien-Lee Ducusin-Wong - *Hawaii Island - East Hawaii*

Coach: Ryan Carolan - *Maui*

Bowling (Four Athletes, Two Partners)

- Carleen Yamamoto, Lisa Laureta, Ana Munoz (Unified Partner), Melissa Iida (Unified Partner) - *Kauai*
- Randelle Lee - *Kauai*
- Courtney Playter - *Oahu*

Coach: Lynette Young-Pak - *Oahu*

Powerlifting (Four Athletes)

- Shawn Lehano - *Hawaii Island - West Hawaii*
- Scottie Pacheco - *Oahu*
- Daniel Saito - *Oahu*
- Quentin Wong - *Hawaii Island - West Hawaii*

Coach: Winston Ho - *Oahu*

Assistant Coach: Denise Lindsey - *Hawaii Island - West Hawaii*

Swimming (Four Athletes)

- Natasha Brice - *Oahu*
- Jamey Burkett - *Maui*
- Taralyn Fukushima - *Maui*
- Alice Webb - *Oahu*

Coach: Denise Webb - *Oahu*

Assistant Coach: Sirena LaCour - *Maui*

Also representing Hawaii at the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games is Acting Deputy Chief Ryan Nishibun with the Honolulu Police Department. Acting Deputy Chief Nishibun will join an elite group of individuals who will serve as the "Guardians of the Flame" and escort the Special Olympics Flame of Hope on a journey across Florida and their neighboring states.

Additionally, Danny Kao from American Medical Response will be joining the Special Olympics Hawaii USA Games team to provide medical support for Hui 'o Hawaii.

The 2022 Special Olympics USA Games shares the mission of Special Olympics by highlighting the abilities of athletes with intellectual disabilities, while promoting acceptance and inclusion through sports. Athletes will compete in four Olympic-type team and individual sports before spectators and volunteers.

For more information on the Special Olympics 2022 USA Games and how to donate to Special Olympics Hawaii, please visit www.sohawaii.org. Also, follow Special Olympics Hawaii on Twitter at www.twitter.com/sohawaii, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsHawaii, and on Instagram at www.instagram.com/sohawaii.

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About Special Olympics Hawaii

Special Olympics is a global inclusion movement using sport, health, education, and leadership programs every day around the world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1968, Special Olympics Hawaii has grown to serve more than 5,196 athletes and Unified partners on every island in our state. With the support of more than 10,800 coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 10 Olympic-type sports and over 50 games and competitions throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and corporate partners.

There is never a fee to any athlete or family to participate in Special Olympics programs. Engage with us on: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Learn more at www.SOHawaii.org.