



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools**

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Maui High School to Receive National Recognition from Special Olympics for Achievements with Inclusion

KAHULUI (September 5, 2018) – Special Olympics Hawaii has announced that Maui High School, a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, is receiving **National Banner Recognition** for its efforts to provide inclusive sports and activities for students with and without disabilities. Maui High School is receiving this honor as a result of meeting national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy and respect. The school is amongst a select number of schools to receive this distinction nationwide, and the only Hawaii school recognized. An award presentation will be scheduled and conducted at Maui High School in the near future.

Maui High School is listed among the ESPN Honor Roll for 2018 -- a list of the top 30 schools from across the country as part of the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools National Recognition Program. On Thursday, September 6, ESPN will reveal five Special Olympics Unified Champion schools from their 2018 Honor Roll class that will receive a national banner presentation from ESPN.

“We could not be more excited to receive national banner recognition and to be listed as one of the top 30 schools across the country for our work with Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools,” states Jessica Adkins, advisor for Maui High’s Unified Sports program and Sabers United club. “The program that we offer at Maui High is one that is making positive changes in the lives of everyone it reaches. Inclusion is the outcome of our program but what the students are walking away with are life skills such as learning how to advocate for themselves and others, learning how to relate to others, knowing how and when to show empathy, understanding that everyone has strengths and



weakness and that their voice matters. I am extremely proud of the current and former students who have made the program thrive,” Adkins shares.

Jamie Yap, Principal at Maui High School attributes the achievement to the work of Adkins. “The growth and success of this program at our school is a direct result of the the persistence and dedication from Ms. Adkins and her students,” Yap states. “We applaud Adkins’ passion, commitment, vision and leadership in promoting inclusion and tirelessly creating learning opportunities and memorable experiences for our students that are priceless. We also thank Special Olympics Hawaii for this recognition and for their ongoing advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities through sports. We look forward to continued participation and collaboration with this wonderful organization.”

Around 50 schools are currently participating in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools programming in Hawaii, as part of more than 6,000 schools across the country engaged in the program. Special Olympics has a global goal of creating 10,000 Unified Champion Schools by 2020.

The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools model is supported by the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. This model has been proven, through research, to be an effective and replicable means to providing students with and without disabilities the opportunity to form positive social relationships and promote a socially inclusive school climate*. Key data points include:

- 84 percent of students regard participation in the program as a turning point in their lives.
- 72 percent of involved teachers believe participation in the program has increased the confidence of students with disabilities.
- 88 percent credit the program with reducing bullying and teasing in their schools.

A Special Olympics Unified Champion School has an inclusive school climate and exudes a sense of collaboration, engagement and respect for all members of the student body and staff. A Unified Champion School receiving National Banner Recognition is one that has demonstrated commitment to inclusion by meeting 10 national standards of excellence. These standards were developed by a national panel of leaders from Special Olympics and the education community.

The primary activities within these standards include: Special Olympics Unified Sports® (where students with and without disabilities train and compete together as teammates), Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole-School Engagement.



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**Evaluation conducted by the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston*

About Maui High School

Maui High School has been involved in Unified Sports since 2015. Over the past four years, Unified Sports has been able to engage over 133 students with and without intellectual disabilities in the program. The program started as an after school activity and has evolved into a school social club and leadership class. The class and club focus on implementing inclusive sports, inclusive youth leadership opportunities and whole school engagement. Maui High Schools Unified Sports program offers Unified Bocce, Basketball, Softball and Track and Field. The program is advised by Coach Jessica Adkins, Coach Kacy Licos, Coach Tiara Matsui and Coach Jennifer Hosozawa.

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, and celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, Special Olympics Hawaii has grown to serve more than 4,700 athletes and unified partners on every island in our state. With the support of more than 11,000 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.