



Special Olympics Hawaii Newsletter: January 2026

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What's Going On at Special Olympics Hawaii?

Ian Kahalewai Appointed to U.S. Advisory Leadership Council for Hawaii Athletes

We are proud to announce that Ian Kahalewai has been appointed to the Special Olympics United States Advisory Leadership Council (USALC). The USALC consists of Athlete Leadership Council members from across the country that empower athletes to voice opinions, guide policy, and develop leadership skills. These councils ensure that athlete perspectives influence decisions and programming, creating more inclusive environments.

"I feel privileged to be chosen to represent Hawaii's athletes on the USALC," Ian shared. "I look forward to sharing information on our Hawaii programs and bringing back insights from other states. We hope to make improvements and give Special Olympics athletes a stronger voice. I know that the training and experience I receive will help me grow and build my leadership skills."



In his new leadership role Ian will work alongside staff and volunteers to advance athlete-led initiatives, strengthening the inclusive spirit of Special Olympics Hawaii and across the United States. We are excited to see the positive impact Ian will bring to our athletes and programs!

Special Olympics Hawai'i Truck Pull and Spring Fest

It's back! Get ready for the 2026 Special Olympics Hawai'i Truck Pull & Spring Fest! Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 18, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Ka Makana Ali'i. Think pulling a semi-truck is impossible? Think again! It's absolutely doable — and the true goal is to have fun while pulling for a purpose and supporting Special Olympics Hawaii athletes.



Join us for a fun-filled day of teamwork, strength, and community spirit as teams of eight compete to pull a 40,000-pound Coca-Cola semi-truck 30 feet in the fastest time to benefit Special Olympics Hawaii athletes. Registration is now open at bit.ly/SOHI2026truckpullspringfest.

This exciting event brings together first responders, local businesses, high school groups, service clubs, and community members to “pull together” and raise funds for Special Olympics Hawaii. Create a team of eight and raise a minimum of \$2,000 or \$250 per team member. Awards will be given for the fastest times in each division.

Additional activities supporters can look forward to at this year's Spring Fest include:

- First responder vehicle display
- Celebrity dunk tank
- Local food & craft vendors
- Live entertainment
- Family-friendly activities

Admission is free and everyone is invited to attend! For more information on creating a team or becoming a sponsor or vendor, contact Sara at events@sohawaii.org.

A special mahalo to our presenting sponsor, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawai'i – The Odom Corporation; Venue Sponsor, Ka Makana Ali'i; and the Law Enforcement Torch Run for helping make this event possible!

Kauai High School Leads with Inclusion



Kauai High School demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusion through its Unified Champion Schools program, which invites general education students and students with intellectual disabilities play on the same team, emphasizing teamwork, friendship, and mutual respect.

Programs such as Unified basketball and Unified volleyball focus less on skill level and more on connection — proving that inclusion is truly a winning strategy. A standout feature of the Unified basketball program is the level of participation, welcoming students from sixth grade through seniors. Unified program showcases held during halftime games help spread awareness and

celebrate inclusion in front of the entire school community, sparking joy, school pride, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be unified.

Kauai High School continues to model what it means to be a truly unified school community.

The Guardian: Congratulations Guardians of the Flame!



We are incredibly proud to congratulate our Guardians of the Flame from the Honolulu Police Department on their recent promotions! Our Guardians stand shoulder to shoulder with athletes, leading torch runs, supporting Tip A Cop and Badges and Buckets, organizing our Surf Classic, and championing inclusion across communities. Their commitment goes far beyond the uniform, and their leadership continues to make a lasting impact on the lives of our athletes and families. Congratulations to the following officers:

Sgt Patricia Dupont
Major Matthew Kurihara
Major Kurt Ng
Sgt Greg O'Blaney
Lieutenant Kawananakoa Saul

These promotions are a true reflection of these officers' dedication, service, and heart. Mahalo for all that you do, and congratulations on this well-deserved achievement. We are honored to have you as part of our ohana and are so proud of you!



Quench Your Thirst for Fitness at Hale 'O Mauiola



SOHI FITNESS PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

"Nothing is impossible, the word itself says 'I'm possible!'"

JANUARY 2026



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Notes *Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training led by Nip Ho *Poet Workout is a strength and agility base workout.			1	2	3	4
5 *Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training - From 3:30-4:30pm *Holohelo walk - From 4:30pm	6 *POET Workout - From 3:30-4:30pm	7	8	9	10	11
12 *Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training - From 3:30-4:30pm *Holohelo walk - From 4:30pm	13 *POET Workout - From 3:30-4:30pm	14	15	16	17 *POET Workout - From 9:00-10:00am	18
19 *Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training - From 3:30-4:30pm *Holohelo walk - From 4:30pm	20 *POET Workout - From 3:30-4:30pm	21	22	23	24 *POET Workout - From 9:00-10:00am	25
26 *Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training - From 3:30-4:30pm *Holohelo walk - From 4:30pm	27 *POET Workout - From 3:30-4:30pm	28 Garden Club - From 4:30-5:30pm	29	30	31 *POET Workout - From 9:00-10:00am	

To register for any of these classes, scan the QR Code below:



LOCATION: 91-610 MAUNAKAPU STREET, EWA BEACH, HAWAII 96706

Prior to participation, please fill out the Fitness Center Waiver: [Click Here](#)



The Hale 'O Mauiola program hosted several Balance, Flexibility and Strength Training classes in January, where athletes showed signs of increased power, agility, and reduced stiffness. We'll be working to bring additional sports to our facility, such as pickleball and volleyball. We're also excited to introduce a new monthly yoga class which will begin on February 28.

And, as our Health Messengers remind us, hydration is key to good health before, during, and after workouts. Here are some helpful tips for staying hydrated:

- Drink five refillable 16-20 oz water bottles throughout the day.
- Before an activity, drink one 8 oz glass of water:
 - The night before
 - Four hours before
 - 15 minutes before
- During activity:
 - Under one hour: Take water breaks to energize and quench thirst.
 - Over one hour: Drink one to two 8 oz glasses of water every hour.
 - Intense activity (workouts/activities over 45-60 minutes): Consider sports drinks with no high-fructose corn syrup.
- After activity:
 - Drink an 8 oz glass of water every three hours until the next day to replenish fluids.
 - Incorporate water-rich fruits as a snack after practice or games.

Have fun and remember to stay hydrated!

Staff Spotlight: Denise Lindsey

Get to know some of the names and faces that help make Special Olympics Hawaii run.

Denise Lindsey, West Hawaii Area Director, is celebrating 30 years with Special Olympics Hawaii this year! With a passion for inclusion and empowerment, she works closely with coaches, volunteers, and community partners in West Hawaii to ensure athletes of all abilities have opportunities to train, compete, and thrive. Her leadership and commitment over three decades have strengthened programs and fostered lasting connections throughout Hawaii. Read on to learn more about Denise.

What high school did you graduate from?

I graduated from South Hills High School in Covina, California.

What's your go-to plate lunch order?
I usually order kalbi ribs with mac salad.

Your favorite memory from a Special Olympics Hawaii event?

The Summer Games Opening Ceremonies are always unforgettable for me. Seeing athletes and volunteers from across the islands, especially those who have moved away from the Big Island, brings back so many memories. When the Law Enforcement Torch Run brings the torch into the stadium, the energy is electric and emotional all at once. It's one of those moments that reminds me why Special Olympics Hawaii is so special — plus, you never know who you'll end up getting a photo with.



If you could compete in any Special Olympics sport, which one would it be and why?

Number one would be powerlifting because I'm still competing in the sport and coaching it.

If you could share one thing about Special Olympics Hawaii with the community, what would it be?

If there's one thing I want the community to know about Special Olympics Hawaii, it's that it's so much more than sports—it's a family. The athletes are my friends; they make me laugh, keep me feeling young, and constantly remind me what joy and determination look like. Through Special Olympics, I've also gained an incredible network of families, friends, sponsors, businesses, and a supportive community that continues to teach me so much. I've been involved since 1996, and after all these years, what keeps me here is the love, connection, and sense of belonging that Special Olympics Hawaii creates for everyone.

Volunteers Needed: Honolulu Play Day!

Get ready for one of our cutest events of the year! Special Olympics Hawaii is looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help at our Honolulu Play Day for young athletes — and we need a BIG team to make it happen!

Date: March 13
Location: Manoa Valley District Park
Time: 7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

We are aiming for around 70 volunteers to help create a fun, safe, and supportive environment for our youngest athletes.

Play Day gives children the chance to build confidence, movement skills, and social connections through games and playful activities. Volunteers are what make this day so magical.

Volunteer roles may include:

- Assisting with activity stations
- Encouraging and guiding young athletes
- Helping with set-up and clean-up
- Supporting families and staff

No experience needed — just patience, positive energy, and a big smile. It's a joy-filled morning of high-fives, laughter, and big accomplishments from our littlest champions.

Come be part of something special — we'd love to have you! Contact us at volunteer@sohawaii.org to sign up.



Sponsor Feature: Kaiser Permanente



Since 2010, Kaiser Permanente has been a dedicated partner of Special Olympics Hawaii, supporting athlete health and helping us achieve our mission of providing access to quality health care. As a Year-Round Partner, Kaiser Permanente contributes more than \$50,000 in in-kind services annually through hosting MedFest events statewide – an event where athletes receive free medical exams from Kaiser Permanente physicians. They also provide clinical directors across multiple health disciplines, along with clinician volunteers who generously give their time and expertise to support our annual Healthy Athletes event.

We are so grateful to have Kaiser Permanente as a health agency partner for our Inclusive Health Needs Assessments and as an active participant in our Inclusive Health Focus Groups, working alongside us to further inclusive health within the Kaiser system. Our latest collaboration involved Dr. Benjamin Chun, who joined our Health and Wellness Manager, Kris Nakasone, in Denver, Colorado, as part of a Health and Wellness Learning Cohort to help improve partnerships between healthcare systems and Special Olympics. Both returned feeling that Special Olympics Hawaii is doing an exceptional job educating health professionals on ways to improve care for their patients.

Mahalo to Kaiser Permanente and the many physicians, residents, and volunteers whose dedication continues to strengthen the health and well-being of Special Olympics Hawaii athletes.



Special Olympics Hawaii in the News

Check out the latest headlines featuring Special Olympics Hawaii!



**Create a legacy of giving:
empower future athletes**

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Planned Giving

One of the most important gifts you can give to your family, friends and community is a future where each person is accepted and

- ["Forging Friendships" on Hawaii News Now](#)
- ["Annual Fundraiser Assists Special Olympics Hawaii" in Midweek Central Oahu Voice](#)

appreciated for their unique strengths. Learn more about how you can leave a lasting impact when you include Special Olympics Hawaii in your will, by visiting bit.ly/plannedgivinghawaii.

Forward to a Friend

Connect With Us!

Share your Special Story

If you have a story about your involvement with Special Olympics Hawaii – such as a volunteer, coach, official or family member – we would love to hear from you! Please email your story to our PR team at crystalclearcomms@gmail.com. We can't wait to see what kind of stories you'll share!

Special Olympics Hawaii | 91-610 Maunakapu St | Ewa Beach, HI 96706 US

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