



Special Olympics Hawaii Newsletter: February 2026

Support Our Athletes

Mission Partners



Year-Round Partners



ALEXANDER & BALDWIN
SPONSORS FOR HAWAII



KAISER
PERMANENTE



Year-Round Supporters



CALIFORNIA
PIZZA KITCHEN



What's Going On at Special Olympics Hawaii?

Special Olympics Hawaii Announces Team to Represent Hawaii at 2026 Special Olympics USA Games



Support Hui o Hawaii

The aloha spirit is headed to Minnesota! Special Olympics Hawaii announced its delegation of athletes, Unified Partners, and coaches selected to represent the islands as part of team Hui O Hawaii at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games in Minneapolis. These inspiring individuals will join competitors from all 50 states in a powerful celebration of inclusion and sportsmanship that will take place June 20-26, 2026.

This year's Hui O Hawaii delegation represents Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii Island and will compete in basketball, bowling and track and field, as well as two Unified Champion Schools Youth Leaders from Campbell High School. The purpose of Youth Leadership is to prepare our youth leaders to take on meaningful roles within their school setting, Special Olympics and then into the general community.

"I'm excited to be going to the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games and leading my team to gold! But, no matter what, we are giving it everything we've got," said Kaleo Carvalho, team captain of the Hui O Hawaii Basketball Team. "I want the whole country to feel the aloha spirit. All our hard work will show in the results at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games, whether we come home wearing the gold or not!"

Jersey Mike's Subs Encourages Diners to Sub-port Special Olympics Hawaii During March Month of Giving Event

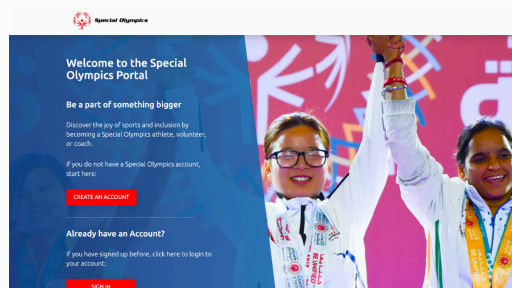


This March, Jersey Mike's Subs is joining forces with Special Olympics Hawaii to make a substantial impact on the local community during the company's annual Month of Giving campaign. Starting March 1, 2026, customers will have the option to round up their purchase to the nearest dollar or make a donation at any Jersey Mike's Subs restaurant in Hawaii — six locations on Oahu and three on Maui — as well as on the Jersey Mike's Subs mobile app. Donations will benefit our delegation travelling to the 2026 USA Games.

As a part of the Month of Giving initiative, Jersey Mike's Subs is committed to donating 100 percent of sales made at all of Jersey Mike's Subs Hawaii locations on their **"Day of Giving"** on **Wednesday, March 25.**

This March, Jersey Mike's Subs hopes to exceed last year's national fundraising total of \$30 million and help local charities fulfill their mission and make a difference. Since the Month of Giving program began in 2011, Jersey Mike's Subs has raised more than \$143 million for local charities. This year, Jersey Mike's Subs Hawaii will aim to raise \$120,000.

Online Athlete/Partner Registration System Now Open



We're excited to share that our new Online Athlete/Partner Registration System is officially open! Designed to make participation easier while still collecting essential health information. Athletes can now complete their annual renewal through a quick and simple online form.

All new athletes, school-based participants, and those whose three-year registration is expiring can get started online today. Please note that paper forms are no longer accepted, and this system is

for athlete and Unified Partner registration only (not volunteers).

Visit <https://sohawaii.org/get-involved/athletes> to review FAQs, learn about eligibility and medical requirements, and begin your registration.

Volunteers Needed: Special Olympics Hawaii Preschool Play Days!



Preschool Playdays

HONOLULU	CENTRAL
NANAKULI	WAIPAHU



Volunteers are invited to join our Preschool Play Days, where our youngest athletes — keiki with intellectual and developmental disabilities, ages 2-7 — get to play and explore in a fun, supportive environment.

Volunteers are needed to make these days extra special (7:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.):

- March 13 – Manoa District Park
- April 2 – Mililani District Park
- April 10 – Nanakuli District Park
- April 17 – Waipahu District Park

Volunteers will help our keiki engage in a variety of activities, from arts and crafts to hand-eye coordination games and more. It's a joyful, hands-on way to make a difference in the lives of young athletes while having a ton of fun yourself! For more information and to sign up, please email volunteer@sohawaii.org.

Jenna Hasan Represents Special Olympics Hawaii at Capitol Hill Day

Jenna Hasan, an athlete leader from the Leeward Jaguars, attended Capitol Hill Day in Washington D.C. with Special Olympics Hawaii President and CEO Dan Epstein on February 9-11 where they met with Hawaii's elected officials to champion our work in health and education. Each year, one athlete from Special Olympics Hawaii is selected to join Dan in meeting with Hawaii's representatives to share how the organization impacts athletes and communities and to help ensure continued federal support. Jenna was also selected to serve on the national ACES (Athlete Content Engagement & Storytelling), which partners athletes directly with the Digital Fundraising and Donor Development team to share their voices, experiences, and perspectives. Jenna exemplifies the leadership and impact of Special Olympics Hawaii athlete leaders. Read on to learn more about Jenna's experience at Capitol Hill Day.



Our first stop was a museum called Planet Word where we learned where words come from. I found out that many English words come from other languages. New words are constantly being created and throughout time, teenage girls have been the best at shortening or combining words to make new ones. Words didn't always come easily to me. I shared this in my stories with the politicians, discussing how I didn't speak fully until the age of four. Even when I did, kids in elementary school were mean and the anxiety from that made it hard for me to talk to people. Not surprisingly, having to use my words made me anxious and I was unsure if I was the right person to speak to these high-ranking officials. But people believed in me, so I tried to believe in myself in order to represent Special Olympics Hawaii.

Day 1 began with training, including an overview of what we learned from the four Capitol Hill Day webinars and suggestions on how to speak to our representatives. We were taught about how funding from the federal government and the Center of Disease Control and Prevention supports our Healthy Athletes, Healthy Community and Unified Champion Schools programs. This funding is vital to keep these programs running for Special Olympics Hawaii. I felt a huge responsibility to say the right thing to our Hawaii representatives to help our organization and my fellow athletes.

Day 2 began with meetings with our Hawaii representatives. The first office we visited was Representative Jill Tokuda's, where I met with her legislative director, Nick Luna. Nick really liked what I had to say, and I was surprised that he found me relatable. I shared my unpleasant experience trying to play tetherball and how my slowness and poor coordination made it difficult. Kids cheered for the more athletic kid, and I was hit in the face with the ball and laughed at. I also faced bullying at an east side elementary school, and surprisingly, he had friends who went to that school and were bullied too. We also got to meet and chat with Rep. Tokuda before we left.

We then sat down with Representative Ed Case and two of his staff members. I tried hard not to look at my paper too much and make eye contact with Rep. Case from time to time. Like speaking, eye contact was a struggle for me growing up and I needed coaching on how to do it. Despite the pressure, I managed to do well, and it felt less scary when I shared that I have anxiety. It turns out Rep. Case understands what that's like and how each day can be a challenge because it's not in our nature to be public speakers, but we try to do it anyway to make some kind of a difference.

Day 3 began with a meeting with Senator Mazie Hirono's senior policy adviser Ben Strand. Senator Hirono then joined us as well. I was a bit surprised as we didn't know if we'd get to see her. I was a bit flustered since I had to start over with my athlete story for her, but I was able to pull it off and she was very receptive!

Finally, we made it to Senator Brian Schatz's office. We had the opportunity to meet with Gabrielle Schechter, Sen. Schatz's health policy adviser. She was very encouraging and supportive.

For several of our meetings, I was able to show a video from my "Strong Mind Through Art" series of short videos that give healthy tips and encourage people to draw to process, express, and understand an emotion or situation. This is my practicum as a Special Olympics Health Messenger.

I gave each of our representatives a handmade gift that I made for them, which I believe they enjoyed. Overall, the meetings went very well and I sincerely hope Special Olympics continues to receive support and funding from the federal government for our critical Health and Unified Champion School programs!

Health and Wellness Corner: Cultivating Strength Inside and Out



SOHI FITNESS PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

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

FEBRUARY 2026



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 *Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training 3:30-4:30pm *Holoholo walk 4:30pm	10 *POET Workout 3:30-4:30pm	11	12	13	14
15	16 *Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training 3:30-4:30pm *Holoholo walk 4:30pm	17 *POET Workout 3:30-4:30pm	18	19	20	21
22	23 *Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training 3:30-4:30pm *Holoholo walk 4:30pm	24 *POET Workout 3:30-4:30pm	25 Garden Club 4:30-5:30pm	26	27	28 *Yoga w/ Sarah Sheppard 10:00 - 11am Young Athletes SOHI Facility

*Balance, Flexibility, Strength & Training led by Nip Ho

*Yoga with Sarah Sheppard from Kakou Club

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




CORE-FLEX

AGILITY Motivation
YOGA COMMITMENT
Determination TRAINING

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



The Hale 'O Mauiola program continues to promote agility, balance, flexibility and strength training as key components of athletic performance and overall well-being. Our February fitness classes highlight movements that blend functional, explosive power with mobility while helping minimize the risk of injury. On Saturday, February 28, we are excited to welcome Sarah Sheppard, a yoga instructor at Kakou Club, to lead a class for athletes, Unified Partners, and family members at the Special Olympics Hawaii Health and Wellness Sports Complex. Additional fitness activities including pickleball, tennis and volleyball, are also being planned for the coming months.

The Guardian: Hawaii Law Enforcement Paddled with a Purpose



On February 15, first responders from Oahu and Maui gathered at Fort DeRussy Beach in Waikiki to compete in the 35th Annual Hawaii Law Enforcement Canoe Regatta. Current and retired members of the Honolulu Police Department, Honolulu Fire Department, and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation competed in men's, women's, and mixed crew races. This event, which rotates annually among Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii Island, continues to strengthen relationships across agencies, while honoring the spirit of service that unites them.

Special Olympics Hawaii is honored and grateful to be a beneficiary of this event. Through sponsored race entry fees and team contributions — including support from the Hawaii Police Department and the Kauai Police Department who were unable to attend in person but continue to support our mission — the event raised more than \$10,000 to support local athletes and programs statewide.

Beyond the competition, the day served as a powerful reminder of our shared purpose. Hawaii's law enforcement community and Special Olympics Hawaii continue to be strong partners in promoting acceptance and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities.

We want to thank the members of Team Glen for coordinating this event. Team Glen is named in honor of fallen HPD officer Glen Gaspar.

We are incredibly grateful to all the teams and supporters who helped make this year's regatta a success and for their lasting dedication to Special Olympics Hawaii.

Sponsor Feature: Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawai'i – The Odom Corporation

This month, we are proud to highlight Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawai'i – The Odom Corporation, one of our Year-Round Partners. They generously donate water, sports drinks, and soft drinks at area and state competitions, as well as for our fundraising events. Their support helps athletes, volunteers, families, and supporters stay hydrated, refreshed, and ready to participate. Over the years, they've increased their commitment by serving as a table sponsor for Cheer for Champions and participating in Over the Edge. 40 Coca-Cola employees also took part in the inaugural Truck Pull & Spring Fest, an event planned with support from Vice President and General Manager, Joe Carter, who further strengthens this partnership through his service on our Board of Directors.



This year, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawai'i will return as the Presenting Sponsor of our annual Truck Pull & Spring Fest. On Saturday, April 18, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Ka Makana Ali'i, teams of eight will compete to pull a 40,000-pound Coca-Cola truck 30 feet in the fastest time. The event also includes retail and food vendors, entertainment, family-friendly activities, a first responders vehicle display, and a celebrity dunk tank. Spectators are welcome and admission is free.

"Supporting Special Olympics Hawaii and their incredible athletes through events like the Truck Pull and Spring Fest is a great way for our team and the community to come together and make a meaningful impact," said Joe Carter, Vice President and General Manager of Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii – The Odom Corporation. "Being a part of the community is important to us. We're proud to stand alongside local businesses, families, and volunteers to support Special Olympics Hawai'i and their programs that create opportunities for athletes across our state."

For more information about the event, visit bit.ly/SOHI2026truckpullspringfest. Mahalo to Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii – The Odom Corporation for their continued partnership and for helping to make our Truck Pull & Spring Fest possible.

The Anderson Family Inspires Inclusion Through the Ohana Task Force



Ohana truly means more than family at Special Olympics Hawaii. USA Today's special magazine insert, "Disability Empowerment," featured a story about our Ohana Task Force, highlighting how unique the program is. The article focused on the Anderson family — both parents have served on the task force for many years and recently stepped into leadership roles.

At the heart of the story are twin siblings Luke and Jaycee, who have participated in Special Olympics together as a Unified Team since joining our Young Athletes program at four years old. Luke, now in college, returns each summer to play Unified Bocce with his sister and teammate, Jaycee. Read the full article at bit.ly/soh-ohana-task-force-2026.

Unified Spotlight: Unified Schools Brought Teamwork to the Field

On February 2, Unified Champion Schools on Oahu brought the excitement to the field with a flag football competition hosted by Mililani High School.

Four high schools came together to celebrate inclusion, teamwork, and school pride:

- Campbell High School
- Kailua High School
- Kaimuki High School
- Mililani High School

A total of five teams took the field, showcasing strong partnerships between athletes and Unified Partners. The day was filled with great plays, positive sportsmanship, and powerful moments of inclusion.



Unified Partner Jerzzielyn from Campbell High School shared, "Our athletes bring so much heart and joy to the game. Playing with them makes every touchdown mean more." Athlete Chase from Kaimuki High School added, "I love playing with my team. We work together, have fun, and never give up."

Mahalo to all the schools, coaches, and supporters who make unified sports a meaningful and inspiring experience for students across the state!



Special Olympics Hawaii's Truck Pull and Spring Fest

Get ready to pull for a purpose with the return of Special Olympics Hawaii's Truck Pull & Spring Fest, Presented by Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, which will take place on Saturday, April 18, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., at Ka Makana Ali'i. The event invites teams of eight to compete to see who can pull a 40,000-pound Coca-Cola semi-truck 30 feet in the fastest time. Register for the event now at bit.ly/SOHI2026truckpullspringfest.

Teams and spectators are welcome to enjoy food trucks, a First Responders vehicle display, vendors, family-friendly activities, entertainment, and more at the Spring Fest! Admission is free!



Maui Law Enforcement Serves Up Support at Tip A Cop Fundraiser

Special Olympics Maui is teaming up with local law enforcement for its annual Tip A Cop fundraiser on March 6 and 7. Community members are invited to dine at Fuego in Kahului and Maui Brewing Company in Kihei from 5 to 9 p.m. each evening, where off-duty officers will step into the role of guest servers.

Throughout the night, officers will collect tips that directly benefit Special Olympics Maui's sports, health and leadership programs. The event offers a fun and meaningful way for the community to enjoy great food and drinks while supporting athletes with intellectual disabilities as they train, compete and thrive.



Special Olympics Hawaii in the News

Check out the latest headlines featuring Special Olympics Hawaii:

- ["Special Olympics Hawaii sends 30-person delegation to 2026 USA games" on Hawaii News Now](#)
- ["Special Olympics Hawaii delegation set for 2026 USA Games" on KITV News](#)
- ["Gonya, Okinaka to represent Big Island in Special Olympics USA Games" in Hawaii Tribune Herald](#)



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 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**](mailto: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

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)