



Special Olympics Hawai'i Newsletter: July 2026

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What's Going On at Special Olympics Hawai'i?

**Special Olympics Hawai'i Celebrates 35 Years of
Tip A Cop with Newly Rebranded Tip A Hero Event**



In celebration of its 35th year, Special Olympics Hawai'i's Tip A Cop fundraiser is entering a new chapter as Tip A Hero — a rebranded event that brings together more first responder agencies, restaurant partners and community supporters while continuing its mission of supporting Special Olympics Hawai'i. The event takes place Friday, August 7, through Sunday, August 9, at six California Pizza Kitchen locations, three Goma Tei locations, two Olive Garden locations, one Maui Brewing Company location, and The Counter on O'ahu.

During Tip A Hero, first responders around the island serve guests at participating restaurants by delivering meals and busing tables to raise awareness and resources for Special Olympics Hawai'i athletes and programs. The event will take place during the following dates and times:

California Pizza Kitchen – Ala Moana Center, Ka Makana Ali'i, Kahala Mall, Kailua Town, Town Center of Mililani and Pearlridge Center

- Friday, August 7: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- Saturday, August 8: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- Sunday, August 9: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Goma Tei – Ala Moana Center, Kahala Mall and Pearlridge Center

- Friday, August 7: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- Saturday, August 8: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- Sunday, August 9: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. (Kahala Mall and Pearlridge Center — 5 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.)

Maui Brewing Company – Kailua Town

- Friday, August 7: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. (Dinner only)
- Saturday, August 8: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. (Dinner only)
- Sunday, August 9: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. (Dinner only)

Olive Garden – Ala Moana Center and Ka Makana Ali'i

- Friday, August 7: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- Saturday, August 8: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- Sunday, August 9: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.

The Counter – Kahala Mall

- Friday, August 7: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- Saturday, August 8: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- Sunday, August 9: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.

"We are excited to introduce Tip A Hero, a new name and expanded vision for an event that has brought our community together for 35 years," said Tracey Bender, Director of Development for Special Olympics Hawai'i. "While the name has changed, the heart of the event remains the same — bringing our community

together to support Special Olympics Hawai'i athletes. We are deeply grateful to the off-duty, volunteer first responders who not only make this event possible but who bravely serve our community every day. We invite everyone to join us for a great meal while making a meaningful impact for our athletes."

Since its inception, Tip A Hero has raised \$603,518 for Special Olympics Hawai'i. Proceeds from this fundraiser will help Special Olympics Hawai'i continue to provide year-round sports training and competition and health, wellness and leadership programs for more than 3,000 athletes statewide with intellectual disabilities, free of charge.

Unified Spotlight: Youth Leaders Return Inspired from 2026 Special Olympics USA Games



The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games were more than just a sporting event. It was an unforgettable experience offering inspiration, leadership development, and new friendships for our youth leaders.

Aiden Apolinario, one of the local youth leaders who attended this year's USA Games, shared, "One of my favorite parts of the USA Games was seeing how every athlete competed with confidence and teamwork, no matter the sport. I watched how coaches and volunteers encouraged athletes without taking over. They allowed the athletes to lead. I learned that good leaders listen first, then support." Aiden plans to bring these lessons back to his school by leading his Unified team and creating opportunities for every student to participate and have their voice heard.

Aha'ilono (Lono) Isaia also reflected on the impact the USA Games had on him, "My experience at this year's USA Games was fun and I met lots of new people." Lono's reflection captures one of the greatest strengths of Special Olympics: bringing people together through friendship, inclusion, and shared experiences. Now home, these youth leaders will share their new friendships, stronger leadership skills, and a commitment to building more inclusive school communities where everyone belongs.

The Guardian: Ben Moszkowicz's Journey at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games



This summer, Hawai'i Law Enforcement Torch Run volunteer Ben Moszkowicz represented Hawai'i in the Final Leg Torch Run for the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games, joining law enforcement officers and Special Olympics athletes from across the country on a 10,000-mile journey carrying the Flame of Hope. Here is his experience:

Last month I had the privilege of representing the Hawai'i Law Enforcement Torch Run by participating in the Final Leg Torch Run for the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games. The Flame of Hope was lit in Chicago on May 29 and began a 10,000-mile, coast-to-coast journey through 13 states. On June 15, the entire Final Leg team met in Minneapolis to begin an unforgettable six-day trip across Minnesota, spreading the message of inclusion.

Along the way, I met Amy Spotts, an amazing young woman from New Hampshire. Amy is an avid runner who has competed in several half-marathons and will run her first full marathon this fall. On paper, Amy and I could not be more different. She is a lovely young woman while I am a grumpy old man. We live on different sides of the country. I love to travel, while Amy would rather stay near home. We have different political views and very different interests (I break a sweat walking to the corner while she runs marathons). But our shared journey across Minnesota brought us together. As the miles passed by, Amy and I became friends.

In Alexandria and Stillwater, Amy and I had the opportunity to run side by side with the Flame of Hope. After the ceremony in Stillwater where we both spoke, we convinced the organizers to let us run briefly into Wisconsin by crossing the historic Lift Bridge over the St. Croix River. Between runs, we spent time talking about life. We hung out at the Mall of America and shared rhubarb pie (a Minnesota delicacy). It didn't matter that I was retired and Amy had a full-time job, or that I was a volunteer and she was a Special Olympics athlete. We were both Torch Runners, united by a common goal. And that, my friends, is the power of the Torch Run.

Health & Wellness: Special Olympics Hawai'i Introduces New Class of Health Messengers

We're proud to welcome our 2026 class of Health Messengers! These dedicated athlete leaders have completed specialized training designed to advance the overall health and wellness of our sports community. Our 2026 Health Messengers are:

- Anthony McLeod - Moloka'i
- Alexandra McClurg – Kaua'i
- Casey (Kina'u) Gamiao - O'ahu
- Jenna Hasan – O'ahu
- Maja Gonya – East Hawai'i
- Noa Mano'i – West Hawai'i
- Rayni Heyes – Maui

We look forward to the positive impact they will make as leaders and advocates for health and wellness across Special Olympics Hawai'i.



Sponsor Feature: First Hawaiian Bank



In 2026, we proudly celebrated another year partnering with First Hawaiian Bank, whose continued commitment strengthens the mission of Special Olympics Hawai'i. As the title sponsor of the First Hawaiian Bank Troy Barboza Law Enforcement Torch Run for 28 years, they have helped unite law enforcement agencies and thousands of officers across the state to carry the Flame of Hope and raise awareness and resources for our athletes.

As a Year-Round Mission Partner, First Hawaiian Bank has contributed more than \$1.7 million to Special Olympics Hawai'i since 1992. Their support extends beyond the Torch Run through employee giving campaigns, event sponsorships, volunteer opportunities at Summer Games competitions, and unforgettable experiences for our athletes, including throwing the ceremonial first pitch at University of Hawai'i baseball games. Mahalo to First Hawaiian Bank for continuing to make a lasting impact in the lives of our athletes and their families.

Dedication, Sportsmanship At State Summer Games

Hundreds of Special Olympics Hawaii athletes and coaches from across the state gathered for the 2024 State Summer Games (July 7 - 14, 2024) at the University of Hawaii Mānoa. The games featured a variety of sports including swimming, basketball, and track and field. Athletes showed great dedication and sportsmanship throughout the event.



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Special Olympics Hawai'i in the News

Check out the latest links for headlines featuring Special Olympics Hawai'i:

- ["Dedication, Sportsmanship at State Summer Games" in Midweek Honolulu Voice](#)
- [Special Olympics Hawai'i Central O'ahu Terminators in Midweek Central Oahu Voice](#)



Nip & Adrienne Celebrate 30 Years with Special Olympics Hawai'i!

Mahalo to Nip and Adrienne for their 30 years of dedication and support for our athletes and mission! Nip Ho, Senior VP of Programs, and Adrienne Laurion, Maui Area Director & Neighbor Island Regional Director, have played an integral role in helping advance Special Olympics Hawai'i's programs and create impactful experiences for athletes statewide. Their passion, leadership and commitment have touched countless lives, and we are grateful for the lasting difference they continue to make in our Special Olympics Hawai'i 'ohana.



Over the Edge Early Bird Registration Ends Soon

Don't miss your chance to take advantage of our early bird discount for Over the Edge! Early bird registration is available through August 1 for a reduced fee of \$50 per participant. After August 1, the registration fee increases to \$100, while team registration is available for \$25 and returning participants can register for free. Sign up today at bit.ly/sohiote2026 and take to new heights for our athletes!



Hawai'i Law Enforcement Golf Classic

On April 30, law enforcement officers, first responders, and community supporters gathered at the Hawai'i Prince Golf Club for the 2nd Annual Hawai'i Law Enforcement Golf Classic. The event raised \$4,345 in support of Special Olympics Hawai'i. Mahalo to everyone who participated, volunteered, and sponsored the tournament, with special thanks to Gregg Aarii and his team for creating another wonderful event that supports our athletes.



Thank you for
spreading the love.

Mahalo Target Circle

Thanks to your support, more than 61,332 votes were cast for Special Olympics Hawai'i through Target Circle, resulting in a \$4,376.28 grant to support our mission and programs. Mahalo to everyone who voted and helped create more opportunities for our local athletes!



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Connect With Us!

Share your Special Story

If you have a story about your involvement with Special Olympics Hawai'i – 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!

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