



(Above) Hilo Hattie brought a little cheer to keiki. (Top) Gov. John Burns was a staunch advocate for kids with disabilities. (Opposite page) An Easter Seal client flashes her shaka of approval.

Let's Grow Together

Easter Seals Hawai'i celebrates its 70th year of community service

by Kristen Nemoto

It was a year after World War II had ended. And five years since the smoke from the bombs of Pearl Harbor blanketed O'ahu. It was a time for healing and persistent focus to get back on a routine. A general sense of normalcy in Hawai'i was the goal, or at least sought. Those who couldn't keep up were unfortunately left to figure it out for themselves. If you didn't have the help and support from family or friends, the world was that much more difficult to please and control. Although the signs of the times were hopeful for those able to stand on their own two feet, it was especially bleak and doubtful for family's whose children were suffering from a disability.

It was during this time that led advocates Dorothy Devereux and John A. Burns to travel to Washington, D.C., and lobby for services for Hawai'i's disabled children. Soon after their visit, the Hawai'i chapter of the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults was established and contributions from philanthropists Edward and Olga Sultan were used to create the Sultan Foundation Nursery School. With the efforts of business leaders, parents and volunteers, and after expanding to include helping adults with disabilities, Easter Seals Hawai'i was born.

"There's such great history here," says Jennifer Norton, Easter Seals Hawai'i's youth services program manager, as she points to old photos that line the entrance wall of Easter Seals Hawai'i's Kapolei location. Black-and-white photos of Duke Kahanamoku and Hilo Hattie warmly watch over the 10-year-old facility as rambunctious laughter echoes throughout the space. "The kids love coming here," Norton continues. "Parents would tell me that their kids are up and ready to come here. School is another story, but when it comes to getting them here, they love it."

Unlike most schools, where there's a clear separation of kids with and without disabilities, Easter Seals Hawai'i strives to create an "inclusive" space where people of all ages and abilities are celebrated.

"It's great for kids with disabilities because we include everyone together in all our events and activities," Norton says. "It teaches patience and acceptance. I don't think they even notice once they all get to know each other."





(Above) Families have a variety of programs from which to choose. (Right) Easter Seals helps clients with job training.

Easter Seals Hawai'i's programs that run from an early age through adulthood help transition many to success. These include services for speech, occupational and physical therapy; afterschool programs; day camps; social clubs; autism; parental and community support; military and veteran services; employment training; and medical rehabilitation.

Although Easter Seals Hawai'i has existed since 1946, not many people know exactly what the nonprofit does. And those who do know about the organization assume it will be in perpetuity because of its current status. Easter Seals Hawai'i's director of development Kelly Ikeda Ellis says she's grateful for the amount of community support that she's seen throughout the years, and hopes to continue her work in creating awareness for those who are in great need for their services.

"The need is there and always will be," Ellis states. "Developments throughout a person's life is consistently changing so we need to be sure we're there for those who really need the support. It's continuous support though. Easter Seals Hawai'i has been around for a while but that's because we continue to strive for awareness and opportunities. I hope we



can continue to do that so we can help be a part of people's lives and their goals."

Norton agrees. She says the best part of her job is getting to be a part of accomplishments that many of us would otherwise take for granted. From a child's first ride on a boat to a young man's first dance with a girl, Norton is happy to be a part of every experience and hopes, with community support, to continue to do so for the kids who need it the most.

"We're a big company but we each do our part to see that one succeeds," she says. "The early intervention workers want to see their babies walking and talking. I want to see my kids socializing and getting along with each other and eventually being able to get their own jobs and be independent. The community helps with donations and providing business opportunities for our kids to work and learn. We all work together to make this possible, which is really great." *

For more information and to learn how to help volunteer or make a donation, visit easterseals.com/hawaii



Not to Miss

A quick glance at events and celebrations during September and October. Mark your calendars and enjoy an annual festival, a concert to remember, some tips on clean energy living and an opera about love and tragedy.

COMING SOON

AND ... ACTION!

November 3-13

Featuring the best of Pan-Pacific and international films, the Hawai'i International Film Festival now marks its 36th year.

hiff.org

THREE, TWO, ONE!

December 3-31

Since 1985, the annual tradition of the Honolulu City Lights has attracted thousands of onlookers. Bring the whole family and check out Shaka Santa, Tutu Mele and the Electric Light Parade.



NEVER FORGET

December 7 Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Pacific Aviation Museum presents the Pearl Harbor Memorial Parade in Waikiki.



Say Aloha

September 3-24 The month of September will celebrate the island's cultural heritages with the 70th annual Aloha Festivals. This year's theme is Treasured Memories, which will help tell the story of Hawai'i's rich history and culture. alohafestivals.com

French Quarters

October 14-18 Before the word "bohemian" was dubbed a style trend and headlined across today's fashion magazines, four young starving artists had made an attempt to live the shunned lifestyle. Hawai'i Opera Theatre will tell its tale of love, art, individualism, poverty and tragedy in its rendition of *La Bohème* at the Neal S. Blaisdell Concert Hall. hawaiiopera.org

Exposed Elements

September 27 Fans of Earth, Wind & Fire will definitely remember this night in September as they will take the stage at the Neal S. Blaisdell Arena. In addition to the group's musical success over the course of four decades, they've recently earned a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. blaisdellcenter.com



Be Green

October 1 Enjoy a day of live music, games, activities, contests, giveaways and prizes as the Hawaiian Electric Company presents its annual Clean Energy Fair at Kahala Mall near Macy's wing. hawaiianelectric.com

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY (HTA)/TOR JOHNSON; COURTESY HAWAIIAN ELECTRIC COMPANY; ©PEARL HARBOR