

Hana Hou!

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The Summer Fashion Issue

The next wave of Island chic

The Sweet Smell of the Islands

How the plumeria found a home in Hawai'i



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O'AHU Hydrotherapy

The first time Kenji Momohara got on a surfboard, he wasn't sure what to expect. "Are there fish?" he asked his AccesSurf instructor Tom Chorman, who was teaching him how to stand. "Are you ready?" asked Chorman. "I'm ready, Uncle!" Kenji replied. With a little push from Chorman, the 10-year-old with Down syndrome caught not only a wave, but also what surfers call the "stoke," the high that comes from riding the energy of the sea. "Let's go faster!" he cried as they paddled back out for another wave.

Now Kenji looks forward to the first Saturday

of each month the way some kids look forward to Christmas. That's the day that dozens of trained therapists and volunteers gather at O'ahu's White Plains Beach with adaptive equipment to help those with mental and physical disabilities enjoy the water. Not only do they open Hawai'i's aquatic playground to those who can't get in the water themselves, they make it possible for families and friends to enjoy the experience together.

"Simply going to the beach can present a lot of obstacles," says AccesSurf founder and recreational therapist Mark Marble. People with special needs often have to ask others to push them through or carry them across the sand, he explains. "It's too much hassle. Instead, when they go to the beach with their families, they just watch from the grass because they don't want to be a burden."

Since its first beach day in November 2006, AccesSurf has helped more than 500 people into the water, ages 6 to 96, and its momentum continues to build. Hawai'i state Sen. Fred Hemmings and songwriter Jimmy Buffett have signed on as supporters. Crocs and Crazy Shirts have designed custom shoes and shirts to benefit the program. The goal for 2008, Marble says, is to set up a permanent adaptive aquatic facility.

"People with disabilities want to be a part of our society," Marble says. "For many of them, the tradition of gathering with 'ohana at the ocean was taken away. That aspect of their life doesn't have to stop just because they've had an accident. I wanted to find an opportunity to bring that back to them." —Catharine Lo

www.accessurfhawaii.org



Sergio Goes