



What is Aloha?

We all know Aloha as a Hawaiian greeting, but there are very few people who understand its true meaning, and fewer still who have adopted the Aloha Spirit as a guiding philosophical principle.

One of our favorite references to the Aloha Spirit comes from Hawaiian state law: "In the contemplation and presence of the life force, 'Aloha', the following unuhi laula loa may be used:

Akahai, meaning kindness, to be expressed with tenderness;

Lokahi, meaning unity, to be expressed with harmony;

Oluolu, meaning agreeable, to be expressed with pleasantness;

Haahaa, meaning humility, to be expressed with modesty;

Ahonui, meaning patience, to be expressed with perseverance."

While it may be impossible for a non-Hawaiian to grasp the full meaning of the word, Aloha, we all know the Aloha Spirit when we see it. Many cultures have concepts that are similar to Aloha, such as "Ubuntu" in Africa or "Bula" in Fiji. The Aloha Spirit lives in random acts of kindness, large and small, performed without the expectation of anything in return. It manifests itself across a broad spectrum of selfless acts, from putting one's own life at risk to save another human being to sharing a smile or a kind word with a complete stranger.

The Aloha Award

Founded in 2018 by Mark Hartmann, the purpose of the Aloha Award is to recognize, reward and support exceptional individuals in the global surf community who, in addition to cultivating and sharing their joy of surfing with others in the water, are making meaningful contributions to the well-being of their communities. Typically, these individuals are involved in, or leading, organizations whose mission is to protect the ocean or to harness its healing powers in the service of others (e.g., surf therapy, ocean conservation). Such organizations may be large, registered non-profits or small, grassroots community-based initiatives. There are no strict eligibility criteria for the Aloha Award other than a demonstrated commitment to living a life consistent with the principles of the Aloha Spirit. However, most successful

nominees have: (a) a demonstrated commitment to spreading joy and stoke in the line-up; and (b) a track record of social or environmental activism, typically (but not exclusively) in the surf therapy or ocean conservation arenas.

Nomination Process

Nominations are accepted from the general public during a 3-month open nomination period between January and March each year. The deadline for nominations for the 2024 Aloha Award will be March 31, 2024. The call for nominations is publicized in the media and promoted by the judges and the award sponsor. You may submit a nomination by clicking on the [Nomination Form](#) on our website. Nominations should make the case for why the nominee deserves to receive the award (e.g., attitude in the water, community engagement outside the water) and typically include relevant links to websites and social media profiles. A nominee may receive multiple nominations, but that will not necessarily increase his/her chances of winning the award or being named a finalist.

Judging Process & Judges

At the end of the nomination period, nominations are submitted to our five-member judging panel, which narrows the list of nominees to the top 5. Each of the top 5 nominees is interviewed by at least one judge, who records and shares the interview with the remaining judges. In addition to questions aimed at determining each finalist's suitability for the award, the interviewing judge asks each finalist about the charity / charitable endeavor to which they would apply the cash award. The judges then select (by majority vote) a winner and runner-up from among the 5 finalists. The winner, runner-up, and three remaining finalists are announced within 60 days of the end of the nomination period.

Our diverse panel of judges (whose bios can be found on our website [here](#)) consists of: Greg Bertish (Chairman), Kris Primacio, Jesse Richman, Chris Dennis and Brisa Hennesey.

Prizes

The winner of the Aloha Award receives a one-week, all-expenses paid trip (i.e., flights and accommodation) to Fiji's premier water sports resort, **Namotu Island**, a donation of \$10,000 to a charity or charitable endeavor of his/her/their choice, and a \$2,500 stipend to either attend the International Surf Therapy Organization (ISTO) conference or pay for education-related expenses (e.g., online classes) intended to help the winner develop the capacity to scale his/her/their organization. The runner-up also receives a one-week, all-expenses paid trip to Namotu Island, a donation of \$5,000 to a charity or charitable endeavor of his/her/their choice, and a \$2,500 stipend to either attend the International Surf Therapy Organization (ISTO) conference or pay for education-related expenses (e.g., online classes) intended to help the runner-up develop the capacity to scale his/her/their organization. Each of the three remaining finalists receives a donation of \$2,500 to a charity or charitable endeavor of his/her/their choice plus one online ticket to attend the ISTO conference. The winner, runner-up and remaining finalists all receive personalized commemorative trophies.

Prior Aloha Award Winners

Prior Aloha Award winners include:

- Ben Brondsema (2023), for his mission to create awareness on the positive effects of surf therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and provide free sessions for veterans, first responders and care workers with PTSD through Netherlands based non-profit organization Surfivor.
- Mike Castro (2022), for providing surf therapy to at-risk youth in Costa Rica through his non-profit organization, Olas y Sonrisas (Waves & Smiles);
- Chris Dennis (2021), for his work with Waves for Hope, which offers youth development programs utilizing surfing, group discussion, and mentorship to empower and provide positive psychology education to underserved youth in Trinidad;
- Nigel Savel (2020), for his work with 9 Miles Project, which provides supplementary education, literacy classes, learning adventures, life skills, leadership training, and surf classes to low-income, at-risk youth in coastal settlements in South Africa;
- Tasha Mentasti (2019), for her work with disabled individuals in the adaptive surfing community in South Africa; and
- Ian Glover (2018), for his work teaching surfing to disadvantaged youth in San Francisco, California.

More details on our prior winners can be found on our website [here](#).

ISTO Partnership

In October 2022, the Aloha Award announced the formation of a joint venture with the [International Surf Therapy Organization](#) (ISTO). ISTO is a collective of the world's leading surf therapy practitioners, clinicians, researchers, and influencers. As the #1 resource for the surf therapy sector, ISTO sponsors, develops and disseminates research, evaluation, and training tools, programming, and conferences on surf therapy for the benefit of its 135 surf therapy member organizations and the general public. The Aloha Award is thrilled to partner with ISTO, given its wide reach and extensive expertise in surf therapy. All five prior winners of the Aloha Award, along with most runners-up and finalists, are individuals who run surf therapy organizations that prioritize disadvantaged youth, people with physical disabilities, or people with mental health challenges or disorders.

The joint venture with ISTO provides the Aloha Award with access to ISTO's global network of surf therapy practitioners across 50 countries on 6-continent, extensive technical expertise in surf therapy, and a credible and efficient fundraising platform anchored by ISTO's non-profit 501(c)(3) status. The joint venture enhances the Aloha Award's reach and capabilities, providing Aloha Award recipients and nominees with access to technical assistance and training, and allows us to accept tax-deductible donations from individual donors and corporate sponsors. The Aloha Award gives ISTO a vehicle to recognize, reward and support surf therapy practitioners who are doing exceptional work. As such, the joint venture helps ISTO and the Aloha Award achieve their common goal of helping surf therapy organizations scale, operate more efficiently, and achieve greater impact.

Under the terms of the joint venture, ISTO will become the legal sponsor of the Aloha Award and will receive and keep custody of donations specifically earmarked for the Aloha Award. ISTO will co-manage the Aloha Award in partnership with Aloha Award founder, Mark Hartmann. ISTO's Executive Director, Kris Primacio, has joined the Aloha Award's 5-member

judging panel, and Mark Hartmann will join ISTO's board of directors. There will be no changes to the Aloha Award's eligibility criteria or judging process.

With support from ISTO and our corporate sponsors, the Aloha Award intends to: (a) increase the total amount of prize money available to the Aloha Award winner, runner-up and finalists; and (b) provide an expanding suite of technical assistance and other support services (e.g., training manuals, safety protocols, volunteer/mentor access, ISTO conference attendance) to Aloha Award alumni and other like-minded organizations (e.g., ISTO members). In short, we intend to expand our capacity to help support and scale small, community-based organizations that share our goal of protecting the ocean and harnessing its healing power in the service of others, so that such organizations can reach a bigger audience and expand their positive impact.

Our Sponsors

Aloha Award sponsors include [Plaza Home Mortgage Corporation](#), [Namotu Island](#) and [Fiji Airways](#). We are actively seeking additional corporate sponsors, as well as funding from foundations and individual donors to help support our work. We would welcome the opportunity to speak to you more about the Aloha Award, and discuss the ways in which we could make a sponsorship/partnership work for you.

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