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## **Samoan Heritage Initiative Program festival Kicks off with a Cricket Tournament**

*“Your identity lies within your Heritage”*



The Samoan Heritage Initiative Program (SHIP) festivities officially launched today with the start of the Cricket Tournament held at Ke’ehi Lagoon Park. The Cricket Tournament, aimed at promoting Health and Wellness, brought together community members to celebrate the long standing initiative to perpetuate the Samoan Culture and cheer on their favorite teams. It also provides a chance for players to showcase their skills and experience the game, and for spectators to witness the excitement of this dynamic game.

In attendance were Reverend Malaeotofiga Levaula, Hawai’i Methodist SEA Reverend Elder Koneferenisi Nu’usa, American Samoa Government (ASG) representative Tavita Amani Savea, American Samoa Government-Hawai’i (ASG-HI) staff and local members of the community. Guests and players were welcomed by SHIP Sports Chairman Kesimale Fano, following the welcoming remarks, Pastor Malaeotofiga Levaula led an invocation and shared a scripture from Lamentations 3:22. The moving scripture spoke to the importance of knowing that the steadfast love of the Lord is unchanging and everlasting; available to all who seek it. He reminded us that

God's love is eternal. "Your identity lies within your Heritage." said Levaula. "Ua ta'oto le fa'asinomaga ma lau Aganu'u." Our lands are a Heritage from God to our ancestors. We are a heritage to the Lord and he is mindful of each and every one of us. "Regardless of how far we've traveled from Samoa, may we always remember our identity; who we are as a people and value our Health (Soifua Maloloina), the future (Lumana'i), our Language (Gagana), and our Culture (Aganu'u)." Reverend Levaula expressed his appreciation and gratitude to all who played a vital role in making the tournament a success. He ended his speech with a reminder for everyone to remain humble and refrain from being quick to anger. American Samoa Government representative Tavita Savea and Reverend Elder Koneferenisi Nu'usa also shared a few words of encouragement to all the Teams. The inaugural ball was hit by the Hawai'i Methodist SEA Koneferenisi Nu'usa signifying the start of the Tournament.

The Tournament brought together 8 teams to compete for the trophy. This initiative is being supported by a range of sponsors, including prominent businesses and entrepreneurs. Contributions will help the Samoan Heritage Initiative Program organize and fund several health and wellness programs and workshops for the Samoan Community. According to the SHIP Sports Chairman Kesimale Fano, "We are thrilled to be organizing this tournament, as it embodies our commitment to the well-being of our people. We believe that through community engagement in sports, we can help address some of the long standing health concerns in our community."

The next games will be held at Ke'ehi Lagoon Park on Saturday, April 22, 2023 at 9:00am. All are invited to come and witness this excitement live. For more information about the Cricket Tournament and the Samoan Heritage Initiative Program, please visit [shipasghi.org](http://shipasghi.org)

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