

November 2008

Happy Holidays to you and your family. May you have a joyous and safe Christmas or Hanukah.

As our Waipio and Ewa Beach Little Leaguers have proven, Hawaii has a lot of talented baseball players. Team Hawaii is another group of these star athletes. For the last nine years, Coach Duane Eldredge has gleaned the cream of the crop of high school juniors and seniors and taken them to show their stuff to college and pro baseball scouts. A devoted LDS member, Coach Eldredge's belief in the wholesome development of young people's natural gifts has driven his voluntary efforts to bring our athletic talent to the attention of those who can reward it with college scholarships or the notice of the big league.

Five boys from Ewa made the team this year: Michael Memea, junior, Damien High School, outfield; Moses Samia, junior, St. Louis High School, catcher / third baseman; Kale Kaalekahi, junior, James Campbell High School, pitcher; Allyn Oliva-Respicio, junior, James Campbell High School, outfield; and Keanu Kapana, senior, James Campbell High School, pitcher / catcher. Douglas "DJ" Andrade, from Waipahu, infielder / outfielder, also made the team.

Team Hawaii is forty boys, split on two teams: Team Hawaii Blue and Team Hawaii Gold, and three volunteer coaches for each team. Coaches from high schools across the state were polled on who were the "best of the best," try-outs were held, and the forty hopefuls were selected. The team practiced together and the coaches took them up to Arizona to a tournament for scouts to check out the team's baseball skills. Recruiters from more than 138 universities and colleges and some professional teams watched the boys play baseball games on twelve fields and a stadium that comprise the spring training site for the Seattle Mariners and San Diego Padres.

Fifty teams across the nation, primarily from the west coast, participated in the annual Senior Fall Classic held in Arizona. The tournament, run by a head scout for the Seattle Mariners, is held at the Peoria Sports Complex, just outside Phoenix. The boys not only got the excitement of playing at a national level, they also got the thrill of playing at a real, professional spring training site.

True to the spirit of aloha, Coach Eldredge makes sure the team represents Hawaii to the rest of the country. Not only does he put out the effort to get the team together and ready to play well, he and the boys' parents find sponsors for donated omiyage. The Hawaiian gifts are given to every boy that Team Hawaii plays against during the tournament, so they will remember the warm, friendly magic that is unique to our state. Their families also are involved in providing the social and financial support for the boys to play in the annual tournament.

On another note, I recently had an opportunity to attend the JUSTSAP - PISCES conference on the Big Island last month. JUSTSAP is the Japan - U.S. Science, Technology and Space Application Program and PISCES is the Pacific International Space Center for Space Exploration Systems located at U.H. Hilo. This conference brings together experts from Japan and the U.S. involved in space exploration. A highlight of the conference was the field testing being conducted by NASA and other individuals from Canada and Germany. Using robotic machines and proto-types which could be used on the moon one day, oxygen and water was extracted from volcanic soil on the Big Island simulating the process which will be needed one day when astronauts land on the moon. This is the first time this experimentation was done outside the laboratory, and NASA was extremely pleased with the results.

The importance of this experiment in Hawaii is the establishment of our state as a key player in the global aerospace industry. Highly skilled and high paying jobs come with this industry, and as we continue to diversify our economy, research and development involving our universities and local companies will provide more opportunities in the future.

In 2007, my legislation created the Office of Aerospace Development in the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, and the conference I attended on the Big Island is a great opportunity to partner and collaborate with the world around us.

If my office can assist you in any way, please call 586-6360 or e-mail us at [senespero@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:senespero@capitol.hawaii.gov).