

# Fundraiser Invited Guests to See Ability Differently

*Unique Easterseals Hawaii 'Tasting in the Dark' Event  
Raises \$22,000 for Intellectual and Developmental  
Disability Programs Across the Islands*

HONOLULU, HI, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Guests at Easterseals Hawaii's latest fundraiser experienced wine like they never have before – as a person without their sense of sight.

“

By inviting our community to experience the world in a different way, we're showing that what's often seen as a limitation can actually be a source of strength.”

*Andrea Pettiford*

Using blindfolds to enhance the senses of smell and taste, Dr. Hoby Wedler, a sensory expert who was born completely blind, immersed the wine tasters in a powerful lesson about ability, perspective, inclusion and community. The Aug. 12 event raised more than \$22,000 to support programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families across the Islands.

In a night of cheer, community and connection, attendees experienced firsthand how some disabilities, which may historically be seen as challenging, can open new opportunities and reveal remarkable skills.

A heartfelt speech given by Katie Yoshioka, whose son has received support from Easterseals Hawaii for 25 years, reinforced the need to celebrate and welcome people with I/DD. Easterseals Hawaii, she said, provides services that help participant families thrive in school, work and in their community.

“I credit Easterseals Hawaii with my ability to work and provide for my family for 40 years, and now I'm the happiest retiree in Honolulu,” said Yoshioka. “None of this would have been possible without Easterseals.”

For more than 75 years, the non-profit has helped thousands of individuals and families achieve their goals each year through a person-centered approach to care – one that is built on each participant's interests, comfort levels and culture. Easterseals Hawaii relies heavily on funding to continue providing programs and services aimed at community integration and independence. “Fundraisers like these tell an important story. Tasting in the Dark was really about shifting

perspectives,” said Easterseals Hawaii CEO Andrea Pettiford. “By inviting our community to experience the world in a different way, we’re showing that what’s often seen as a limitation can actually be a source of strength. That message is at the heart of Easterseals Hawaii’s work: creating opportunities for people with I/DD to be celebrated and championing inclusive communities.”

The evening also featured a Giving Garden, where handcrafted flowers made by participants in Easterseals Hawaii’s adult day program each represented a gift to the non-profit.

Also, in attendance to support the organization’s important work were top sponsor KAI Hawaii, a local structural engineering firm, Easterseals Hawaii Board Chair Dani Yafuso, CEO of Catalight (Easterseals Hawaii’s parent organization) Susan Armiger, Vice President of Programs, Patrick Klein and several other members from the Easterseals Hawaii and Catalight Boards. Former Easterseals Hawaii CEO Ron Brandvold also joined to celebrate the community and connect with those continuing the mission of the organization.



Katie Yoshioka, mother of an Easterseals Hawaii participant, and guests during the wine tasting. (Photo courtesy of Diane Mullin)

For more information about Easterseals Hawaii or to make a financial contribution, visit <https://www.eastersealshawaii.org>.

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Easterseals Hawaii

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