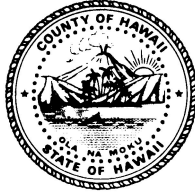


William P. Kenoi
Mayor



Robert A. Fitzgerald
Director

Clayton S. Honma
Deputy Director

County of Hawai`i

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

101 Pauahi Street, Suite 6 • Hilo, Hawai`i 96720
(808) 961-8311 • Fax (808) 961-8411

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Pana`ewa Covered Play Courts, Renovated Family Center Opened

Hundreds of keiki, parents and kupuna attended Saturday's grand opening of the \$3.1 million Pana`ewa Covered Play Courts and rededication of the Pana`ewa Family Center during a public ceremony at Pana`ewa Park in Hilo.

While being serenaded by local musicians, community members toured the 26,000-square-foot, gym-like structure offering three regulation high school basketball courts that can be converted into regulation volleyball or tennis courts.

A roof and partial sides protect the playing areas from rain, providing the community with its first indoor athletic venue in the 34-year history of Pana`ewa Park. Young athletes quickly benefitted from the facility's design that sheltered them first from Saturday's hot sun and then from passing showers that would have left outdoor courts unusable.

"This wonderful place, this pu`uhonua, is going to serve our community for generations to come," Mayor Kenoi told audience members. "This project is about love and family and taking care of our kamali`i and our haumāna."

Mayor Kenoi said Saturday's dedication was one of his proudest days serving the people of Hawai`i Island because it meant delivering on the vision of providing a facility where keiki can exercise out of the rain while learning the value of teamwork and sportsmanship.

"I want to thank so many people who put so much aloha, so much love into this project," Mayor Kenoi said, adding the completion would not have been possible without the hard work of numerous community volunteers, contractors and County personnel. He then read their names to deliver a personal mahalo.

Contractor GW Construction built the facility for \$3,065,980. GW Construction, fellow contractor Roger Hill Ltd., community volunteers, and County staff also installed a new scoreboard to serve the park's main softball field and football field.

A retractable, overhead netting system allows the facility's three courts to be used simultaneously. Modular interlocking tiles, specifically designed to reduce impact-related injuries without sacrificing athletic performance, were used for the playing surface.

“I look at this facility, and it’s like a dream,” Hilo Councilman Dennis “Fresh” Onishi said.

Significantly cheaper than a traditional gymnasium, the covered play courts use an open-air design and ceiling insulation in place of costly air conditioning. Energy-efficient LED lights and translucent skylights further reduce operating costs.

Engineering plans developed for the Pana‘ewa Covered Play Courts are owned by the County of Hawai‘i and will be used as a template to provide similar facilities to other communities, Mayor Kenoi said.

Kumu Moses Kaho‘okele Crabbe delivered a traditional pule or blessing before the public, led by keiki basketball players, entered the covered play courts and prompted tested their basketball skills.

Saturday’s celebration also included reopening the park’s newly restored and expanded Pana‘ewa Family Center. Located adjacent to the new play courts, the Pana‘ewa Family Center includes bathrooms meeting accessibility requirements, an administrative office and an expanded multi-purpose room measuring more than 1,400 square feet. The center, which replaces a former center damaged by fire, provides the community with an accessible public meeting and gathering space that will be home to a computer lab and future Summer Fun programs.

Construction was a collaborative effort between County staff and volunteers from the Pana‘ewa Hawaiian Homestead Community Association and The Men of Pa‘a.

Pana‘ewa Park was originally opened July 17, 1978. It was built for \$201,809 by Isemoto Contracting Co. Ltd.

For more information, please contact Jason Armstrong, Public Information Officer, at 345-9105, or jarmstrong@co.hawaii.hi.us.