

For Official Release  
PR 001-05152024  
Office of the Governor  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
May 15, 2024



## **ASG-HI Hosts Town Hall Meeting in Preparation for Samoan Heritage Festival**



On Thursday, May 09, 2024, the American Samoa Government- Hawaii (ASG-HI) office convened a monthly Town Hall meeting at Kanana Fou Hall in anticipation of the upcoming Samoan Heritage Festival. The meeting saw a gathering of prominent figures including religious leaders, youth leaders, military representatives, local leaders, community partners, local businesses and private sector individuals, all coming together to receive crucial updates and plans for their respective roles in the Samoan Heritage Festival.

Key highlights of the meeting included Kesimale Fano providing a detailed rundown of the festival's schedule for each day, along with confirming participation of various organizations. Notably, the Cultural Games event will see involvement from ten organizations, leading to the establishment of a dedicated Cultural Games committee composed of active community volunteers and youth leaders to ensure smooth coordination.

During the question and answer session, Reverend Elder Falelua Lafitaga raised inquiries about the Parade participation listing, stressing the importance of individual consent for involvement. ASG-HI office Director Tuiafono reaffirmed the office's commitment to engaging and inviting participation from the Samoan Community and religious sects, emphasizing that participation is at the discretion of each organization or individual.

Engagement in community outreach was extensively discussed, including representation at the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC). Guest speakers, such as Felea'i Tau from the Hawai'i Governor's Office, shared valuable insights about the Home Energy Rebates program along with FestPAC community Liaison Toalua Samifua sharing volunteer opportunities at the upcoming Festival. Additionally, John Niko Patu, a PhD student in the Hawaiian and Indigenous Language Program at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo highlighted initiatives aimed at promoting Samoan language literacy and cultural preservation with Patu offering free online Samoan language classes.

The evening concluded with Herman Monico from the Blood Bank of Hawaii as the last speaker, encouraging the community to get involved in the ASG-HI office blood drive and give back by giving life through blood donation emphasizing our collective effort to combat the national blood shortage crisis. The partnership with the Blood Bank of Hawai'i aims to collect twenty five (25) pints of blood with 40 open appointments, emphasizing the importance of community support in this initiative.

For more information about the free Samoan language classes, email [info@samoanamedia.com](mailto:info@samoanamedia.com) or visit their website at [www.samoanamedia.com](http://www.samoanamedia.com). To learn more about the ASG-HI blood drive and Samoan Heritage Festival updates please visit our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/asgov.hi> or contact the American Samoa Government - Hawai'i office at (808) 847-1998.

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