



MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani was published in MidWeek's Central Oahu VOICE section on Wednesday, September 16, 2015.

Recognizing language skills

Hawaii high school students will soon have new opportunities to be recognized for their language abilities thanks to a new policy adopted this summer by the State Board of Education. The Board has approved the award of a Seal of Biliteracy to graduating seniors who show that they are proficient in English and another language – as demonstrated by testing through Advanced Placement exams or other means.

The ability to communicate in more than one language is a highly valued skill and can even be an important advantage when applying for many career opportunities. Some students may already be proficient in a language other than English if it's spoken in the home. The new Biliteracy program could serve as a real incentive to study that language more formally to reach a higher level of communications expertise.

I sponsored Senate Bill 900 in this year's legislative session to make sure Hawaii joins the increasing number of states who issue the Seal of Biliteracy, and I'm pleased that the Board and the Department of Education have moved so quickly to follow up on this new program. A DOE task force is working on an implementation plan to be completed by the end of the year, and it should be ready for formal introduction for graduates in the Class of 2017.

Board of Education member Patricia Halagao shepherded this initiative through to approval. As she and her colleagues adopted their new policy, a big picture statement of our goal provides an important reminder about Hawaii's unique society. "Hawaii has historically been a culturally and linguistically diverse state," they said. "This not only honors the many cultures that have made Hawaii their home, but also positions our students to be successful in an increasingly globalized world."

What a kick!

For many families, a youngster's first experience with organized athletics is on our community soccer fields. We can thank the hundreds of volunteer coaches, referees, league organizers, and team moms and dads for that as AYSO kicks off the fall season. I joined teams and leaders at the Region 119 opening day ceremonies a couple of weeks ago at 16 Acres Park, and the enthusiasm among the youngsters was contagious. Being a member of a team and wearing a uniform, learning and playing by the rules, and – thanks to AYSO's "everyone plays" policy – being guaranteed a chance to run and kick in real games, is a nearly universal positive experience for our families.



*Fair skies, flags flying ~
Opening Day for the fall
season of Region 119
AYSO—Mililani/Wahiawa*

(continued . . .

Region 119 encompasses the communities of Mililani, Wahiawa and the local military communities of Wheeler and Schofield, along with families from other Oahu neighborhoods who choose to play in Mililani. The numbers are impressive – 1,500 families with 3,300 players and literally hundreds of volunteer leaders. And while there are two main “seasons” – fall and winter/spring – flex scheduling offers team opportunities all year ‘round.

Senator Donovan Dela Cruz and I provided free popcorn and shave ice for the day. Former radio personality and Mililani resident Shannon Scott was MC for the official part of the program. Our hosts were Region 119 Commissioner Jayson Correa, and league president Jamie Kahalewai. They are both looking forward to next year’s 40th anniversary season and are on the lookout for community and business partners. If you’d like to get involved and support our youngsters, contact them at RC@mililaniayso.org.



Lending our support . . .

From left, program MC Shannon Scott, Representatives Beth Fukumoto and Ryan Yamane, Senator Michelle Kidani, Honolulu City Council Chair Ernie Martin, Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, League President Jamie Kahalewai and Regional Commissioner Jayson Correa.