

Honolulu, Hawaii families launch the first Ohana Undoukai sports festival

Kazuo Takami

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While Unificationists on the East Coast were celebrating the annual FamilyFest in New York, Honolulu families launched the first Ohana Undoukai sports festival on May 28, 2017.

Ohana means “family” in the Hawaiian language, and the term includes all relatives and close friends of a family. Undoukai is a popular school sports festival in Japan that almost all Japanese schools hold as an annual event.

Linda Nagai, who first brought this idea to the Honolulu Family Church, explained her inspiration behind the festival:

“When our family lived in Japan, I fell in love with the Japanese way of education, and I fell in love with Undoukai. There is nothing comparable in the American education system. Undoukai is colorful, exciting, competitive, fun and sometimes funny. But the greatest thing about it is that everyone comes out for this great event—siblings, parents, aunts and uncles, and even grandparents!”

Linda’s idea became a reality on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. Under the shade of the beautiful trees at Honolulu’s Paki Community Park, the local Unificationist community held an early Sunday Service. The stunning Diamond Head Crater rose high above the Honolulu Unificationist community as District Pastor Rev. Kazuo Takami delivered a timely, relevant message in which he emphasized the importance of the family ideal in living a fulfilling life.

The end of the Sunday Service marked the beginning of the Ohana Undoukai, starting with a parade and team cheers. Every family was on one of three teams: the Pink “Crane” Team, the Green “Sea Turtle” Team, and the Yellow “Pikachu” team.

Various games were organized—from competitive ones to very funny ones—so that all ages of participants could enjoy the program. The Green Team received the highest score and won first prize.

The participants thoroughly enjoyed the festival. Hiromi Takami, a Unificationist mother, said, “It was very nice to see people of all ages together enjoying the games. It was heartwarming to watch young people competing so hard with each other and elderly couples playing joyfully.” She continued, “Undoukai provided a unique experience to build a deeper connection among family members, which cannot be easily done in a regular Sunday service.”

Hiromi’s daughter, Nana Takami, also appreciated the festival, remarking, “This [festival] helped the church come closer as a family.”

Mimi Mitchell joked, “For the first time, I saw my husband enjoy and participate in an outdoor game!” (Mimi’s husband is over 70 years old.)

Thanks to the overwhelming positive response, the Honolulu Family Church has decided to hold this Undoukai again and to use this family sports festival to invite their neighbors and Honolulu community groups.

