

RUNNING WITH ALOHA

Spc. Megan Martinez

28th Public Affairs Detachment

HONOLULU (Feb. 18, 2019) – As the 35th annual Great Aloha Run commenced, president and co-founder Carol Kai Onouye reminisced the beginnings of the Sounds of Freedom, a division within the GAR showcasing service men and women from all over the island of Oahu.

The 25th Infantry Division history states that the name, Sounds of Freedom, was coined by former Tropic Lightning commander, Maj. Gen. Harry W. Brooks. Soldiers would sing cadence throughout the community as they trained to deploy. When there was no cadence, this signified the Soldiers had gone to war to fight for America's freedom.

The SOF division became very special to both the military and members of the community.

“My entire family was in the military, so that's why when we started the Sounds of Freedom Division...it was a very special time, and we've been going ever since,” said Onouye.

Army veteran Ray Vara, local-event sponsor, said being an integral part of the community and ensuring the continuous growth of military participation is his major goal.

“We are very appreciative of their presence, and more importantly, appreciative of all they do for our country,” said Vara. “It’s so important for them to be part of this run... and for them to feel like part of the community as we go about supporting the charities that are supported by the race.”

More than 2,000 Soldiers participated in the GAR this year.

Soldiers who ran in the 8.15-mile event felt a great sense of cohesion and accomplishment after finishing alongside other members of the community, said Sgt. Justin B. Solis, an aircraft pneudraulics repairer section sergeant in Delta Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment (GSAB), 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Wheeler Army Airfield.

“A philanthropic event of this magnitude is a great honor,” said Solis. “It’s a way for myself and fellow service members to say, ‘thank you for the love and support from this great Hawaiian community.’”

Over 22,000 people participated in the historic Hawaiian run.

“The Army and the 25th Infantry Division have a long and very positive history as part of the community in the great state of Hawaii,” said Maj. Gen. Ron Clark, commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division and U.S. Army-Hawaii, headquartered at Schofield Barracks. “As Soldiers inheriting that legacy, we are proud to represent the Army alongside our great neighbors at community events like the Great Aloha Run which reinforce our roots in Hawaii as the Army's only Division that still serves where it was born... over 77 years ago.”