

HOSA Opportunities in the Aloha State

By Jenna Maligro, Hawaii HOSA State President

HOSA can be contagious in your state, as it has in ours. As Hawaii's current State President, I am proud to report our fourth year of national affiliation and continued membership growth, which has now reached 911. How have we done it? Being from Hawaii, that small bunch of specks on the map, it is not often that we leave this rock-like paradise we call home. Traveling to different places and meeting other people interested in health care professions and participating in competitive events is such a life-changing opportunity for all of our delegates. In order to attend, we know we must place at state competition or become a state officer in order to have a valid reason for our school and parents to help fund the trip. To reach our destination, it takes roughly 5-1/2 hours to reach the West coast since we cannot drive across the Pacific Ocean, and another 6 hours to reach the East coast, so it's extremely expensive to bring ourselves and our aloha spirit. Some of us want to get there faster so we can go shopping or catch the sights before the conference begins, so we take direct flights to Dallas for over 8 hours and another shorter 2 hour flight to reach our destination. However, we have high expectations from ourselves and love when we win anything, such as the Membership Increase and Most Enthusiastic State awards. I remember we lost our voices screaming with pride. Looking back, it all began when I signed a simple application to join HOSA.

As a freshman in high school, I was excited to be involved with an organization that fit my interest in health care. I agreed to join a Medical Reading Team, unsure of how difficult competition would be. Amazingly, my team placed first at the state level, and became Hawaii's first Medical Reading Team to compete nationally. Although we didn't make it to the second round, the experience of attending a national meeting changed my perspective dramatically. I saw others had similar aspirations and started becoming serious about learning as much as possible from the professional judges, workshops, and each other. My interest

in HOSA began to escalate. I was inspired to be involved in HOSA in every aspect through involvement at the chapter, community, state, and national levels. To make a difference with Hawaii HOSA, especially in the area of membership increase, I decided I was going to run to become a state leader and get as many as I could to change their mindset about HOSA and become involved themselves. I also wanted another opportunity to compete and was ecstatic upon being called up to receive a bronze medal in the Extemporaneous Health Poster category. Besides that, I attended a leadership academy and State Presidents' reception, waved our flag during the opening ceremony, visited the local with other state presidents in Dallas, and accepted a membership increase award plaque for our state. This past September, I was fortunate to attend the Washington Leadership Academy along with my chapter and state advisor. The workshops were helpful in improving my leadership skills, and I nervously lobbied Hawaii's Congressional representatives. Upon our return and after sharing our experiences, I inspired three of my chapter's officers to run for state office.

As thrilling as all of this can be, I am reminded that Hawaii has a serious shortfall of health care professionals due to our high cost of living, with many leaving to practice on the mainland. Thus, it is important for us to build a network in our state, and get students interested at a younger age. Our strength is in our delegates and leaders who express their excitement as they tell of their experiences and desire to want to attend again. We are fortunate to have dedicated advisors who travel each year to support their students. As they learn and see us in action, they are able to get excited about HOSA and support those of us who have big dreams like myself. Now in my third year in HOSA, I am looking forward to my senior year as State President, running as a national officer candidate in Nashville, and experience all that HOSA has to offer. So remember—spread the word and watch membership grow in your state, too!



Michael Brody, National HOSA President-Elect, Jenna Maligro, Hawaii HOSA State President, and Luis Baez, National HOSA President