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GIVES

TY HELPS DISABLED KIDS AND ADULTS ENJOY SAND AND SURF

WRITTEN BY LISA LIEBMAN



LEFT: Ty gets ready to ride a wave with Casey McKinley. "His family is all about surfing," says Ty. "Now he doesn't have to be left out." ABOVE: Ty with Casey and Gina McKinley on the beach in Hawaii. BELOW LEFT: Mark Marble founded AccesSurf Hawaii to make adaptive surfing available to the disabled.

The sun is rising on another typically gorgeous day at White Plains beach in Kalaheo, Oahu. What's less typical is the army of people erecting tents and laying down a mat that will stretch across the sand to the water's edge. On this Saturday, like every first Saturday of the month, 60 volunteers from AccesSurf Hawaii—a nonprofit group dedicated to making the islands' beaches accessible to the physically and mentally challenged—are eliminating barriers between the disabled and the ocean. By late morning, kids and adults who usually can't take part in water activities will be swimming, surfing, canoeing and kayaking under the guidance of trained therapists like Mark Marble.

Ty met Mark, the brains behind AccesSurf, through Jason and Gina McKinley, parents of 10-year-old Casey, who has cerebral palsy. Casey used to watch with envy as his brother surfed. Now, thanks to AccesSurf, "he feels safe on a board, even with someone



like me!" jokes Ty, an avid surfer, who not only rode the waves with Casey, but also pitched in to push children and adults in specially designed beach wheelchairs, lifting them onto surfboards and into kayaks and canoes. "Seeing kids with autism and Down syndrome experience the freedom of being in the water is amazing," he says.

"When the day was over, Ty came up to me and said, 'I've been to Hawaii six times, and this is the first time I've understood the true meaning of aloha,'" says Mark, who dreams of the day when no one with a disability is left out.

"I want to go from beach to beach and leave the adaptive equipment behind—much the way playground equipment is set up in parks—so the water is accessible to everyone."

Ty's goal is to get back to Hawaii so he can take part in another Saturday at the beach. "What I saw, especially with the kids like Casey, was joy, laughter and life running back into their veins," he says. "The ocean truly reinvigorates people."

For more information, go to accessurfhawaii.org. ■