

A Day of Culture, Community, and Connection

Reliving the Magic of May 17th, 2025

What an incredible day! On May 17th, the air at Mansell and Visitacion Streets was filled with the sound of the conch, accompanied by community & the vibrant colors of our heritage, as we officially kicked off the **San Francisco Pacific Islander Cultural District Inaugural Celebration**.

To every volunteer, performer, and community member who joined us: **Vinaka, Mahalo, Fa'afetai, and Thank You**. Your energy turned a formal unveiling into a true celebration of our ancestors and our future.

Highlights from the Celebration

- **The Historic Unveiling:** We kicked things off at 9:00 AM with powerful words from our community speakers and the official unveiling of the street sign—a permanent marker of our presence and pride in this neighborhood.
- **A Procession of Pride:** The march was a breathtaking sight. From traditional cultural attire and waving flags to the roar of motorcycles and the shine of lowriders, the procession moved as one heart toward Visitacion Valley Middle School.



- **The Sound of Welcome:** As we reached the gates, the band welcomed us in a traditional cultural way, setting the tone for an afternoon of unity.

- **A Vibrant Marketplace:** Our courtyard came alive with local vendors and vital community resources, showcasing the talent and support systems that make our district thrive.
- **The Main Stage:** Starting at 11:30 AM, our artists and performers took the stage, filling the afternoon with music, dance, and storytelling that kept the celebration going until the sun began to set.

Stage Highlights: A Journey Through the Pacific

Relive the performances that moved us at the Inauguration Stage

The heart of our celebration was the main stage, where the "Mana" of our islands was on full display. From ancient traditions to modern hits, here is the show flow that defined our historic day:

The Morning of Honor & Tradition



The afternoon began with the powerful **Tongan Fellowship Band Moui Fo'ou**, followed by a deeply moving tribute to our history.

The Royal Tapa: We were privileged to witness the display of a historic Tapa cloth—the original welcoming mat used for **King Taufa'hau Tupou IV**. This sacred piece, which once graced the Tongan airport tarmac and a 1993 49ers halftime show, symbolized our welcome to the nation's very first Pacific Islander Cultural District.



- **Legacy Awards:** We honored pioneers like **Kimo Baird (Spirit of Polynesia)** with Mayor Daniel Lurie and **NT Deanie Lum (Kumu Hula Association)** not pictured, who have spent decades preserving our cultural arts in the Bay Area.



Auntie Deanie on Live in the Bay

- **Gift to Mayor Daniel Lurie:** Handcarved placard from the San Francisco Pacific Islander Cultural District



Rising Stars & Vocal Powerhouses

The stage then transitioned into a showcase of incredible vocal talent:

- **Keniyé:** Brought her soulful blend of Chamorro and Tongan R&B and Reggae to the crowd.



- **Téa Elani:** The Samoan/African American pop sensation wowed the audience with her "high C's" and unique pop beats.
- **Chris Niu:** Representing East Palo Alto, Chris brought raw emotion and Island Reggae vibes that had everyone moving.

Cultural Excellence & Community Support

We didn't just celebrate the past; we invested in the future:

- **Scholarship Awards:** In partnership with **Islands by the Bay Festival**, we awarded dance scholarships to the **2025 Manahere** and **2026 Kiki Raina** Tahitian competitions, supporting the next generation of dancers. There were many applications, but you must be present to win, so thank you dancers for coming and supporting the community's Pacific Islander District Inauguration!

Congratulations to:

- Jaelynn Faatuga – Merahi O Tehani in white
- Verdandi Baguot – Merahi O Tehani in yellow
- Malia Hitiana – Mareva Productions in plum
- Kealanie Baltazar – Merahi O Tehani in red
- Kalea Baltazar – Merahi O Tehani in green
- Olivia Pierce – Merahi O Tehani (not pictured)



NOT Pictured: Olivia Pierce

Special Performances: * Jaelynn-Isabel Fa'atuga (Merahi O Tehani) performed a beautiful, custom Siva Samoa.



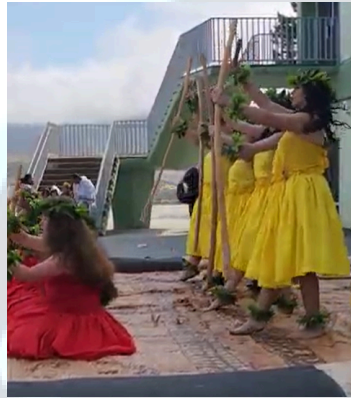
As well as dance groups from the district such as **Mixed Persuasion** doing Samoan series including Samoan Fire Knife dance.



Sililo He Faiva Tala shared the storytelling art of the Tongan Tau'olunga.



E Honu Iti E brought a powerful multi-island performance spanning Hula, 'Ori Tahiti, and Haka.



A Moment of Magic: Make-A-Wish Reveal

One of the most emotional moments of the day was the **Make-A-Wish reveal for 5-year-old Kaeden**. Supported by **Hotua Ori**, the community cheered as Kaeden learned he was heading to Aulani in Hawaii! 🌴 ✨



Closing the Day

As the sun began to set, the energy remained high with:

- **Ata Mai Cultural Arts:** A stirring Samoan Tauluga.
- **K'Nova & Tenelle:** Bringing those signature Island Reggae and Pop sounds that define our modern culture.



- **Mix Persuasion:** Closing out the live sets with a beautiful fusion of Samoan, Fijian, and Maori traditions.



We ended the day with a community dance session led by **DJ Joe King**, sending everyone home with full hearts and a renewed sense of pride.

A Special Thank You to Our Volunteers

This event would not have been possible without the dedicated team that arrived as early as 8:00 AM to set up stages, coordinate vendors, and guide our elders and families. Your "behind-the-scenes" magic is what made the day run so smoothly.

"We are extremely excited to have shared this moment with you all! We send our heartfelt appreciation for signing up to make this day extra special. 🙏💖"

With gratitude,

In Partnership, S.A.L.T. Association and Legacies of the Pacific



