

The Maui News

Trotto a role model on and off track

People Who Made a Difference: Sports Edition

LOCAL SPORTS

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Mary Trotto competes in the shot put during a Valley Isle Track Club meet on May 15. Trotto spends her days as the special events leader of Hale Kau Kau, a program of St. Theresa's Church that supports the unsheltered and feeds the hungry, while also volunteering with other Kihei groups. — The Maui News / MATTHEW THAYER photo

People Who Made a Difference: Sports Edition is a special series recognizing those in the Maui County sports community who have made significant impacts. Stories will run periodically this summer in The Maui News.

KAHULUI– Mary Trotto is passionate about giving back to those who need it most.

In between her training sessions for masters track and field meets, she dedicates nearly 200 hours a month to supporting the community, raising funds and helping to distribute about 150 meals each day.

Though retired, the longtime South Maui volunteer spends her days as the special events leader of Hale Kau Kau, a program of St. Theresa's Church that supports the unsheltered and feeds the hungry, while also volunteering with other Kihei groups.

“When you live in a small community, you realize how important it is to get involved and how so many other people are also involved,” Trotto said Monday.



Mary Trotto, shown warming up on May 15, is set to compete in several events this summer, starting with the USATF National Masters Outdoor Championships in July. — The Maui News / MATTHEW THAYER photo

The 74-year-old has been the lead fundraising coordinator since 2010, but for many years prior, she was an active volunteer in the church's kitchen, prepping meals and also helping to deliver food to those home-bound— Hale Kau Kau now has six routes with 42 drivers, plus a team of back-up drivers, that bring meals to those in need.

“I was just interested in helping out and then when I realized what was going on and how much help they needed, I got a lot of other people involved,” she said. “I got my brother involved as a substitute driver. ... Some of the drivers have been driving for about 20 years now, they just love it.”

When families and individuals struggled to put food on the table amid the COVID-19 pandemic, it was *“our drivers who were the only ones coming to their doors bringing them dinner and making sure they were OK,”* Trotto said. *“We never missed a day.”*

Over the years, she has organized fundraisers like the Mulligan’s Golf Tournament, the Easter Bread Sale, charity walks, the Stomp Out Hunger 5K and 1-Mile Walk, and many more, as well as helped to host the annual Thanksgiving feast and Christmas at Stawasz Hall.

Trotto said that they *“got creative”* during the pandemic with virtual fundraisers and drive-thru meal distributions to make sure that the unsheltered community received nonstop care.

Hale Kau Kau program director Jeff Naumann said that Trotto is *“our true fairy godmother.”*

“No way would we be here for 30 years, feeding the homebound and food insecure without her astounding fundraising efforts,” Naumann said. *“We have provided almost two million meals due to her unfailing support and hard work. It’s safe to say that South Maui owes her more than any other one person for this program.”*

During a Maui County virtual news conference earlier this month, Trotto was recognized as the 2021 Female Outstanding Older American.

Mayor Michael Victorino honored her alongside former council member Robert Carroll, saying that they are *“shining examples of people who have given so much to this community for so many years and still go up and beyond of what is asked of them.”*

Trotto has also helped to track the homeless population and trends surrounding homelessness with the Kihei Community Association, as well as discuss relevant topics like housing, traffic, environmental concerns and tourism.

Other community service involvement includes helping to collect and report litter at Kamaole Beach Park I through the Pacific Whale Foundation and build fencing and ramps at beaches as well as restore sand dunes with South Maui volunteers.

In 2022, Trotto will be joining Maui County's new Homeless Commission, which consists of 11 members from each of the nine council residency areas and two members appointed by the mayor. The commission is established to focus on healing solutions for homelessness and promote public health, safety and welfare.

"I do think it's a community effort to come up with solutions," she said.

Trotto has said that she is *"very proud to serve Maui County"* and help with projects that need to be done around the island.

Though she spends many hours volunteering with various programs, Trotto said that she still finds time to train for her track and field events, showing that sport can be a *"lifetime of fitness."*

Prior to the pandemic, she would work out alongside the Baldwin High School team twice a week at the Yamamoto Track & Field Facility, where she would practice pole vault, triple jump or shot put and *"get pointers from the coaches."*

The other days of the week, Trotto can be found weight training, sprinting and swimming, or getting in some distance runs or hill repeats on Saturdays.

When War Memorial Stadium was closed for about a year due to construction on the parking lot, Trotto said that she would meet with a small running group to stay active and fit.

"It's been hard," she said. *"It's been a tough year for athletics and sports in general."*

During the last few months, she has been participating in the Valley Isle Track Club meets, prepping for a string of events she plans to compete in this summer on the Mainland.

"Her positivity at track meets is a constant source of inspiration for all of the athletes of every age around her," said Lahaina masters athlete Cynthia Monteleone, who is ranked No. 1 in the world in the 400 meters in the women's 45-49 division. *"She gives each of her many events her all and that makes her a true champion."*

Trotto will first travel to Ames, Iowa, to the USATF National Masters Outdoor Championships from July 22 to July 25. She signed up for the 100 and 200-meter sprints, hurdles and steeplechase, pole vault, triple jump, shot put, hammer, weight throw, javelin and discus.

Then she'll head to the Alaska Senior Games in Fairbanks, where she signed up for 50, 100, 200, 400, and 1,500, as well as the throwing and jumping events, followed by the USATF National Combined Events Championships in August in Fort Collins for the decathlon.

Towards the end of the summer in August, she plans to compete in the USATF Mid-America Region Masters Outdoor meet in Colorado and the USATF National Throws Championships in Washington.

Trotto said she continues to compete for the joy of the sport, but to also show others that they can stay active and pursue athletic goals at any age.

“Part of my goal is to be a role model for the kids,” she said. “I think it’s important that they know they can continue practicing, and to just try to be as good as they can.”

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