



## Hawaii ~ AccesSurf Hawaii

[Film: 10 minutes](#)

*The spirit of Hawaii comes alive in this film about AccesSurf, an organization dedicated to giving everyone the chance to experience the magnificence of the ocean. By providing therapeutic instruction and making Hawaii's beautiful beaches accessible to anyone, regardless of disability, AccesSurf exhibits the true essence of aloha.*

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### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Grades 3-8  
Health & Civics

**Health – Standard 4** Know how to maintain mental and emotional health

- Know the relationships between physical health and mental health
- Know behaviors that communicate care, consideration, and respect of self and others (including those with disabilities or handicapping conditions)

**CIVICS - Standard 10** Understand the roles of voluntarism and organized groups in American social and political life

- Understand the importance of voluntarism as a characteristic of American society (e.g., people should volunteer to help others in their family, schools, communities, state, nation, and the world; volunteering is a source of individual satisfaction and fulfillment)
- Know volunteer opportunities that exist in one's own school and community

**Resource** - [McREL Content Knowledge – Standards & Benchmarks](#)

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 🗣️ *Do you think AccesSurf is a good name for this organization? What does it mean to have “access” to something?*
- 🗣️ *What are some reasons people might not be able to access the beach? Do you know anyone who can't access the beach? Why not?*

☞ What are some things that AccesSurf does to help people enjoy the beach and the ocean? Have you ever seen anything like this done at a beach that you've visited? Or perhaps at another place in your community?

☞ Have you ever helped someone with a disability do something they couldn't have done without your help? How did it feel?

## ACTIVITY

### Create your own "Access" organization

What are some other places that people with disabilities might have difficulty having access to? What could be done to help them? Draw a picture and name your organization. Make a list of the services you will provide for people who otherwise would not be able to visit this special place.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Excerpts from interview at [explore.org](https://www.explore.org)

**Mark Marble is a therapeutic recreation specialist who truly exhibits the Hawaiian spirit of "pono," or righteousness. Through AccesSurf he is helping people with disabilities enjoy the ocean through beach access, adaptive surfing instruction, and other water activities.**

### What is AccesSurf?

AccesSurf empowers people with disabilities by providing adaptive surfing instruction and therapeutic educational programs on water recreation and enriches lives by assisting families to access the beach and ocean in a barrier free environment.



### How did it start?

After moving to Hawaii in 2004, and being a recreation therapist working with people who have disabilities for more than 20 years, I was surprised to learn that there were no programs that focused on helping people access the beach and ocean. Hawaii is the capital of surfing and yet the people of Hawaii who had some sort of disability are unable to enjoy an activity that is such a huge part of their culture. I wanted to try and bridge

that gap by providing a solution to those families who desire to unite with their families near and in the ocean.

### What are three things about AccesSurf you want people to know?

AccesSurf has very strong values that affect the way in which it operates, from major decisions to day-to-day interactions:

- ☀ We strive to be *pono* (Hawaiian word that means being righteous, doing what is right, being open and honest, listening to your heart, and always considering what is best for all involved).
- ☀ We are all inclusive. We try our best to help anyone with any type of disability and make sure that we do not lose sight of our mission and vision.

- ✿ Safety and quality first. The safety of our participants, families and volunteers come first. We consistently look for ways to improve our programs to ensure activities that are of exceptional quality.

***What is the average age of your students?***

Ages vary. We've have participants who range from 3 to 83 years old.

***What is the average (i.e. most common) disability?***

Participant impairment varies as well. We assist people with all type of cognitive or physical disabilities — from paraplegics and quadriplegics those who have suffered from strokes, Down syndrome, muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy. We also work with autism and post-traumatic stress disorder.

***How do you think their life has changed when they leave?***

This is difficult because each month we receive wonderful stories and testimonials from not only participants but also volunteers.

Here are a few:

- ✿ "Prior to starting with AccesSurf, (our son) was terrified of the ocean and had little to do with it. We are so very grateful for AccesSurf's contribution with helping our son heal from all of the terrible anxiety and fears that were controlling his life. It has given him the confidence to face each fear, one by one and regain his life back. His Dr has noticed huge and significant improvements that are attributed directly to learning how to surf. All of you guys are such kind hearted people who give so much. You are truly an inspiration to my family each and every day and are excellent role models for our children to see."
- ✿ "Though we live a stone's throw from the beach, we rarely go since it is difficult to get my son to the beach without extra help. ... I thank you very much for supporting this! It means a lot that people like us have not been forgotten and that the quality of our lives matter."
- ✿ "After losing my legs in 2005 I figured my surfing days were over. Back to boring beach vacations! But the wave ski opens all of this up again. Thanks so much for giving me, and many other people, the ability to get back to doing the things that we love."

