

## iPhone app boosts Islands' festival awareness

By Shane Nelson

The Hawaii Tourism Authority launched its free "Festivals of Hawaii" app for the iPhone, iPod and iPad on Aug. 4, giving travelers access to information about more than 100 of the Islands' cultural festivals and celebrations.

"We wanted to provide both visitors and residents an easy way to find out what was going on in the community," said Michael Story, tourism brand manager for the HTA. "There are all of these different festivals and events that happen, and we just thought it was an appropriate way, because of the way technology is headed, to promote all these events that we support."

Story said the HTA spends more than \$9 million annually on Hawaii cultural festivals and community events.

"Many of these festivals are also quality-of-life-type events that we like to fund," he added. "So it provides the residents that outlet or entertainment vehicle that many times is free, and they can just go out and enjoy it."



*App users can find out information about the Merrie Monarch Festival on the Big Island.*

According to Story, the festivals and events also provide a valuable platform for visitors and residents to mix, offering travelers an opportunity to enjoy a more authentic Hawaii experience.

"More and more people aren't just coming here for the sunset and surf," he said. "They are coming here because they want to really find about the culture and the people and the traditions."

Festivals of Hawaii users can search events by island and options are broken into four major categories: Hawaiian, arts and music, cuisine and sports. The app also enables users to search by

location and choose options with the "Near Me" function, which makes use of the platform's GPS capability and provides directions via Google Maps.

Event profiles include images and brief descriptions of each happening drawn from a full range of 12 detailed subcategories, including farmers markets, eco-tourism options, ethnic festivals, art exhibits and health and wellness gatherings.

"And this is just phase one," Story said. "For phase two we are really looking to build it out so that it's available on more smartphones like the Android. We also are looking at starting to push in a few more festivals and events, so it's definitely going to grow."

The Festivals of Hawaii app is available for download on iTunes. To learn more, visit [www.gohawaii.com](http://www.gohawaii.com).

FEATURES EDITOR  
Christie Wilson  
cwilson@staradvertiser.com / 529-4778

Star  Advertiser  
**today**

SECTION G  
SUNDAY 8/7/11

### briefly



#### Tourism bureau introduces mobile app for isle events

Keep track of your favorite farmers markets, festivals and cultural events with a free mobile app launched by the Hawaii Tourism Authority. The Festivals of Hawaii app provides details on more than 100 events throughout the islands and is available for download on iTunes for iPhone, iPod and iPad devices.

Users can search by island, "near me" and category, which includes Hawaiian, Cuisine, Sports, Nature/Eco-Tourism and Arts & Music. Selecting "directions" will pull up Google maps showing the location.

The tourism agency said that while the first phase of the mobile app development features festivals and events sponsored by the HTA, the next phase will widen the searchable database to include other events.