

**Grantee Spotlight:  
Atonio Tongia**

Raised in Tonga, Atonio was the seventh of 11 children in his family. At the young age of seven, he was stricken with polio. The disease attacked his legs, but never kept him down. In 1980, he came to Hawaii as part of a church choir and never left. Even with his physical challenges, he's remained positive and determined. In fact, at the ripe age of 54, Atonio just finished his first-ever 70.3 Ironman.



Earlier this year, CAF paired Atonio and the race director of the Rattlesnake Triathlon – Jim Flint. Jim had a used racing chair in great condition and wanted to give it to someone in need. Once CAF made the connection, Jim shipped the chair directly to Atonio in Hawaii. This was a huge blessing for Atonio. Now for the first time, he has all the equipment he needs to compete, and his dreams are coming to fruition.



Atonio's long-term goal is to earn a qualifying spot to the Ironman Triathlon World Championship. This has been a dream of his since moving to Hawaii and seeing the race. In an effort to help get him there, CAF gave him a travel grant to compete in the 2007 Buffalo Spring Lake 70.3 Ironman qualifying event.

Atonio's "Iron-clad" determination pushed him to the finish line of Buffalo Springs course – considered to be one of the most difficult due to its rolling hills and hot, humid weather. He finished just 2 minutes and 54 seconds past the cut-off time of eight hours, but wasn't disappointed.

"I learned a lot from [the] experience," Atonio said. "I'm not going to quit and I will keep trying until I qualify."

Atonio draws strength from his motto, "God gave us another day, live it!" CAF is proud to support an athlete who is living life to the fullest everyday and not taking anything for granted. As a special guest at the 2007 Ironman Revisited, CAF honored Atonio's fortitude by presenting him with a 2XU wetsuit and a trip to compete in the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Sempra Energy San Diego Triathlon Challenge.