

NOURISH LOHANA



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Connection TO Community

How MA'O Organic Farms and Hawai'i Foodbank's agency partners are working to establish deeper connections among food, community and ancestry p. 4



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CONNECT WITH US!

Reflecting on 40 years of nourishing our 'ohana



Amy Miller
Hawai'i Foodbank
President and CEO

The holidays are a great time to reflect, and this year is especially meaningful as 2023 marked Hawai'i Foodbank's 40th year of serving our community.

In 1983, John White and a local truck driver named Ron Keith opened a modest warehouse on Sand Island with the intent of providing food so that no one in Hawai'i goes hungry. All the equipment used was donated by local companies and included a flatbed truck, two refrigerated containers and a three-ton forklift. **Although their operation was small in stature, the vision was huge. Hawai'i Foodbank was born.**

In their first year, John, Ron and the team quickly developed a network of 75 agency partners (20 of which are still with us today!) and distributed 380,000 pounds of food to those in need of help. It was an incredible display of what can happen when we all gather together around a good cause. Since then, the Foodbank has continued to grow each year. Last year, we worked with a network of more than 200 agency partners to distribute food for nearly **15 million meals**, including **5 million pounds of fresh produce**.

In 40 years of service, we've learned a lot about what it means to gather. Since those humble beginnings on Sand Island, the Foodbank has worked to gather food and support from our generous community for 40 years. We've witnessed that same community gather together time and time again to uplift one another during periods of great need – most recently during the pandemic and in response to the wildfires on Maui. And every day, we continue to gather our resources to help provide every member of our 'ohana with consistent access to safe and healthy food.

Through it all, your generosity has fueled those efforts. In fact,

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MISSION: At Hawai'i Foodbank, our mission is to nourish our 'ohana today as we work to end hunger tomorrow.

Nourish Our 'Ohana is the official newsletter of Hawai'i Foodbank. This publication serves to thank our donors and inform the public about Hawai'i Foodbank events, volunteer opportunities, community partnerships and more. If you do not wish to receive a copy, please email donorservices@hawaiifoodbank.org or call **808-954-7853** to have your name removed from our mailing list.





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your support **helps us serve an average of more than 140,000 people each month** – providing important nourishment to families, kūpuna, people with disabilities, veterans and roughly **1 out of every 4 keiki across Hawai'i**. On top of that, your partnership is helping us **expand our services to provide more nutritious and culturally meaningful options for our community** while also **establishing new initiatives** that address the systemic reasons people need our services. Our vision is a future where everyone in Hawai'i has access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

I know you care deeply about our mission – just like John, Ron and **all the incredible people who have dedicated their lives to nourishing our 'ohana over the last 40 years**. As we carry our mission into the future, we are honored and humbled to be trusted stewards of their vision and your support. It is because of you that we can continue to provide immediate food assistance to those in need as we work towards ending hunger in Hawai'i for good. I'm incredibly grateful for your partnership, and I look forward to continuing our work together.



Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season,

Amy Miller
Hawai'i Foodbank President and CEO



A Holiday Story for Families Facing Hunger

The perfect gift this season might start with having enough food on the table

by Danny Schlag, Director of
Marketing and Communications



For a lot of us, one of the best parts of the season is watching the same beloved holiday movies over and over again. For me, I remember growing up watching "A Christmas Story" every year, ever since it started playing as a 24-hour marathon on television during Christmas Eve. Ever since, putting it on the TV throughout the day has become a sort of holiday tradition at our household.

For those of you who haven't seen it, "A Christmas Story" tells the tale of a young Ralphie as he tries to convince his parents, teacher, Santa Claus and anyone else who will listen that a Red Ryder BB gun is the perfect Christmas gift. Whether it was "Oh, fuuuudge," Ralphie's exchange with a shopping mall Santa or the countless adults parroting the phrase, "You'll shoot your eye out, kid" – there are so many favorite scenes.

Last year, my wife and I

had our first baby. He's now 18 months old, and I can't get over how much he's developed recently. Christmas this year is particularly exciting, as it's the first one where he is really aware of everything that is going on. He just loves looking at the lights on the tree and around the neighborhood, and he makes us laugh every time he points to us and asks, "Mele?" This is his way of telling us he wants to listen to Christmas music and show us his sweet dance moves.

We recently pulled up "A Christmas Story" the other weekend, and I'm now watching the movie with a whole new perspective. As a new dad, I realized that something entirely different stands out to me about this holiday classic. It's not the silly one-liners or outrageous twists and turns; rather, it's one very specific part of a very important scene.

“ The feeling of wanting to give your children anything they ever wanted and to provide them with everything they will ever need. ”

It's the scene when Ralphie finally receives his long-awaited Red Ryder BB gun. I used to watch this scene through an entirely different lens. The kid in me always related to Ralphie's joy and excitement. But now, what resonates the most isn't Ralphie at all; rather, it's the look on Ralphie's dad's face. It's the look when he finally surprises his son with that perfect gift. It's an incomparable look of contentment and joy – knowing he fulfilled his son's biggest wish.

That's something I think

all parents can relate to: the feeling of wanting to give your children anything they ever wanted and to provide them with everything they will ever need.

Working at Hawai'i Foodbank, I can't help but think of the thousands of Hawai'i families who continue to struggle with hunger this time of year. This includes 1 in 4 keiki, and, for their parents, the perfect gift starts with having enough food on the table for their entire family to eat. Giving their children everything they will ever need begins with providing them with enough food to grow and thrive today.

And that's what your support does. On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank and the families we serve, I wanted to take a moment this holiday season to express our gratitude for you. Your investments in Hawai'i Foodbank's mission helped us distribute food for nearly 15 million meals this last year. In doing so, you're not only providing the important gift of nourishment, but you're also helping families rewrite their own holiday story this year with much-deserved dignity and hope.





Connection TO Communi

“ Food is a sacred act of resiliency ... Our energies go through that food and the food goes to the community.”

nity

Last issue, we introduced the work being supported by the Food Security Equity Impact Fund from Feeding America. It is granted to organizations and food banks engaged in food justice and equitable access initiatives.

In this second article of a three-part series, we'd like to introduce you to Kai Sana, whose connection to ancestry and land is helping to address systemic inequities and develop community-led solutions.

by PAUL MORELLO

Kai's Story

As the first light of day gently crests the velvet green moss rock of the Wai'analei Mountain Range, the Lualualei Valley is nearly silent below. Save for a group of friends who link hands in a circle, their native Hawaiian oli drifting past the ancient peaks of Palikea, Pu'u Kaua and Pu'ukanehoa to meet the rising sun. Kai Sana is part of this group, her voice joining the morning chorus.

"It's called 'E hō mai,'" she said. "It's a chant for our team. It's a chance for our team to focus ourselves, to get a grounding of the work and come in with good intentions and to be ready to deal with food."

Kai's team is the staff at MA'O Organic Farms, where she is the farm manager. Every day after the oli, her team checks in and determines work for the day. There's always a lot to do – the farm is 281 acres after all. On that day, romaine heads needed to be picked, a field cleared, green onions harvested and much more. But for Kai, farming isn't just growing food.

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“ They were so in-tune with their elements and their land. They knew how to manage these things – to grow food and to grow people.”

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“Food is a sacred act of resiliency,” she explained. “Being able to connect ourselves with our ancestry and our ancestral knowledge is really important to us, because our energies go through that food and the food goes to the community.”

That connection to the community is a critical part of MA’O’s mission. The farm offers a workforce training program that not only educates youth in agricultural practices, but it also connects students with the history of the land and teaches a respect and communion with the food and its cultural importance to ancient – and modern – Hawaiians, including Kauai.

“Being able to be on the land, to touch soil, to sweat and be in that kind of environment really started to shape me in getting that connection to food,” she said.

Kauai graduated from the second class of the program years ago. With the program’s help, she was able to attend college – the first of her seven siblings to do so.

Now, as farm manager, Kauai is helping steward a new cohort of students through the program. And on that sunny morning, they were picking produce, which was going to the Wai’anae farmers market the next day.

“The farmers market has been a critical part of how we connect with this community and how we get our community members fresh, organic produce,” Kauai said.

To that end, MA’O has partnered with ‘Elepaio Social Services – a Hawai’i Foodbank agency partner serving the Wai’anae community – to accept funds from ‘Elepaio’s produce subscription pilot program, which provides participants with \$250 per

month in credit to spend purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables at the farmers market.

“There are so many challenges that are happening for native Hawaiians,” Kauai said. “Health disparities, educational disparities, social disparities. And having that connection to the land is important. It’s a big part of being able to push through those challenges.”

MA’O also provides produce for food distributions that ‘Elepaio and Hawai’i Foodbank host throughout Wai’anae – all as part of their journey to recapturing food sovereignty in their community and reconnecting native Hawaiians with the legacy of the land.

“Our ancestors managed food,” Kauai said. “They were so in-tune with their elements and their land. They knew how to manage these things – to grow food and to grow people.” 🌱



2023

NOURISH 'OHANA

1983

By DANNY SCHLAG

Reflecting on the lessons of the past, Hawai'i Foodbank remains fiercely committed to creating a future where everybody in Hawai'i has access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

In 1983, John White and a group of dedicated community leaders opened the doors to Hawai'i Foodbank as a response to the hunger they had seen developing in the communities around them. Their vision laid the foundation for the work we do today. Over the next forty years, the Foodbank's

steady service to the community would establish it as a stalwart for those in need of food assistance.

We're proud of what we've accomplished over the last four decades – providing critical food assistance to those facing hunger daily, creating a variety of programs to make it easier for families and

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individuals to access food, helping establish food banks as integral disaster response organizations, and expanding the quantity and variety of foods sourced and distributed.

Through it all, the Foodbank has remained steadfastly focused on one thing: keeping people at the center of everything we do. With this ideal in mind, the Foodbank has built an incredible 40-year history while also recognizing the importance for investing in new initiatives to reduce hunger for future generations. Let's take a closer look back:



1983



HAWAI'I FOODBANK WAS BORN

With support from his community, John White founded Hawai'i Foodbank with the intent of providing food so that no one in Hawai'i goes hungry. All the equipment used was donated by local companies and included a flatbed truck, two refrigerated containers and a three-ton forklift.

In the first month of operation, John and the team distributed 4,000 pounds of food. By the end of its first year of operation, Hawai'i Foodbank distributed 380,000 pounds of food while working with 75 agency partners.



1993

1997



BREAKING GROUND

Hawai'i Foodbank opened the doors to its new warehouse in Māpunapuna, making it the largest and most efficient food bank facility in the state.

The National Association of Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive and Check-Out Hunger were both held for the first time – and both continue today.



'OHANA PRODUCE PLUS

Hawai'i Foodbank launched the 'Ohana Produce Plus program with the goal of salvaging and distributing a more diversified, healthy and balanced selection of food to the community. In its first year, the volume of fresh fruit and vegetables offered by the Foodbank tripled.



1989 1992



FOOD DRIVE DAY

Hawai'i Foodbank launched the inaugural Food Drive Day at Restaurant Row to help gather more food for those in need. It brought in 25,000 pounds of food and \$5,500 in monetary donations. One year later, the event gained sponsorship and began expanding towards the statewide event it is today.



HURRICANE 'INIKI

Hawai'i Foodbank's response to Hurricane 'Iniki helped set a model for food bank disaster relief across the country. Over the course of the next year, Hawai'i Foodbank distributed roughly 5 million pounds of food to an average of 12,000 people each month on Kaua'i – a quarter of the population of the Garden Island.



2000-2006



EXPANDING PROGRAMS AND IMPACT

Laying the groundwork for what would become Food 4 Keiki, Hawai'i Foodbank began taking steps to address childhood hunger by developing a partnership with Lanakila Elementary School in 2000 and launching Feeding Our Future, a summer lunch program, with Waiālae Elementary School and the Sodexo Foundation in 2005.

Hawai'i Foodbank created signature events like the Golf Classic and Great Chefs® Fight Hunger to help develop relationships in the community and create new sources of funding.

In 2006, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program was initiated to provide more fresh, local produce to qualified kūpuna.



2009-2018

BROADENING REACH



Hawai'i Foodbank launched the Food 4 Keiki Backpack Program, the state's first backpack feeding program, at Princess Ka'iulani Elementary School during the 2008-2009 school year. A decade later, Food 4 Keiki would expand to reach more students and their families through the School Pantry Program.

Hawai'i Foodbank Kaua'i officially opened its doors in 2011 to begin serving the people of Kaua'i directly.

Hawai'i Foodbank launched the Senior Food Box program in 2015, providing nearly 1,200 seniors with supplemental food boxes.



2021-2023

RESILIENCE, GROWTH AND ONGOING SUPPORT



Hawai'i Foodbank worked to establish a new baseline for operations, building upon the lessons of the pandemic and integrating best practices throughout the organization. Initiatives created during the pandemic continued to thrive and evolve, including the Farm to Foodbank produce purchasing program and Kūpuna Fresh. Hawai'i Foodbank also secured important funding to launch its SNAP Outreach Program.

Following catastrophic wildfires on Maui, Hawai'i Foodbank began providing immediate and long-term assistance to its partner Maui Food Bank – sending emergency food and staff support, coordinating local and national food donations, and more.



2018 2020



STATEWIDE DISASTER RELIEF

Hawai'i Foodbank responded to multiple disasters across the state, including record-breaking rainfall and flooding on Kaua'i and the eruption of Kilauea on Hawai'i Island. This work continued to establish Hawai'i Foodbank as an important disaster relief organization.



COVID-19 RESPONSE

In the first year of COVID-19 response, Hawai'i Foodbank distributed food for more than 21.7 million meals – more than doubling food distribution.

The pandemic forced the Foodbank to evolve its operational model and develop new partnerships – serving nearly 60% more people compared to before.



2024-



In its 40 years of service, Hawai'i Foodbank has distributed food for more than 288 million meals.

END HUNGER TOMORROW

Focusing on the following, Hawai'i Foodbank launched a five-year strategic plan in 2023 that will advance work towards a future where everybody in Hawai'i has access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food:



- **Nutrition Insecurity and Health:** Ensuring those we serve receive food for healthy, nutritious meals and investing in local agriculture through the Farm to Foodbank program.
- **Disaster Preparedness and Response:** Partnering with our agencies, DEM, KEMA, HiEMA and FEMA to support emergency feeding needs.
- **Cultivating Partnerships and Networks:** Better supporting our agency partners and affiliated food banks across the state and engaging in collaborative food security efforts.
- **Expanding Efforts to Combat Hunger:** Broadening our approach to address the root causes of hunger, focusing on equitable access and filling gaps in service.

Our Community

>>> AT WORK



Credit Union Coalition

Hawai'i Foodbank's Credit Union Coalition was able to raise over \$51,000 during their annual food and fund drive this past fall. This support makes it possible to provide food for more than 110,000 meals. The funds raised will be used for the purchase of much needed fresh food and other pantry staples for our communities across the state. Mahalo to the Hawaii Credit Union League and participating credit unions for their generous support! Pictured above is Hickam Federal Credit Union President and CEO Scott Kaulukukui and team.



5K Turkey Trot & Shoot

Hosted by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority's Community Enrichment Program, the 5K Turkey Trot & Shoot took place Thanksgiving morning, Nov. 23, at the Ocean Course at Hōkūala. The annual event aimed to provide healthy holiday fun for the community while also raising support for Hawai'i Foodbank Kaua'i. The community raised \$1,200 from Turkey Trot registrations and gathered 400 pounds of food through the Kiele Club 9-Hole Turkey Shoot. Collectively, this can help provide food for nearly 3,000 meals.



WAYS TO GIVE IN 2024

A different kind of resolution



by Danny Schlag

Volunteering is a great way to have fun while helping the community. But did you know it's also a meaningful way to build and strengthen team camaraderie? In August and October, the LA Clippers visited Hawai'i Foodbank during a team training camp in Hawai'i. For shooting guard Terance Mann (pictured left), inspecting food donations became a way to bond not only with teammates but with the community.

Resolutions that give back allow us to do better while helping our community be better.

Each new year, people all over Hawai'i are filled with a new-found optimism in their ability to do better. We see it every January and February – we make resolutions centered around things like losing weight, kicking old habits and taking up new hobbies.

As we finish 2023, we still have some time to consider our resolutions with all the good intentions of the new year. No doubt, the typical resolutions of weight loss and healthy eating are great forms of self-improvement. They are full of merit, and it is important for us to take care of our own personal well-being.

However, perhaps this year we can also incorporate resolutions that give back to our community as a whole. Here are three different kinds of resolutions you can make this year that will help nourish our 'ohana.

1. Teach Keiki About Giving Back

Involve the keiki in your plans to give back. Whether it be organizing a community food drive, spending the morning volunteering at our warehouse or even reading them "Lulu and the Hunger Monster" – there are many age-appropriate ways to introduce children of all ages to the concept of kōkua. Another great way is to bring them to a Hawai'i Foodbank event like Food Drive Day or Stamp Out Hunger.

Resolution: I will volunteer at a Hawai'i Foodbank event this year that my whole family can attend!

2. Sign Up for Fight Hunger Hui

For many of our donors, recurring gifts are a practical and convenient way to give back. Fight Hunger Hui is a group of dedicated donors who make monthly or quarterly gifts to help nourish our 'ohana. These gifts allow us to focus our resources more on programs and less on raising necessary funds. Just \$10 can make a big difference – helping provide enough food for more than 20 meals. To learn more about Fight Hunger Hui, please contact Shannon Li'ilii'i, individual giving manager, at **808-954-7875** or shannon@hawaiifoodbank.org.

Resolution: I will make my donation a recurring one by joining Fight Hunger Hui!

3. Get Your Company Involved

Our partners and supporters are instrumental in the work we are doing. Hawai'i Foodbank is actively seeking multi-faceted partnerships. Through charitable giving campaigns, cause marketing, event sponsorship, volunteerism and more – we can make a meaningful impact together. To learn more about ways to engage your team and get your company involved, please contact Jennifer Onishi, director of corporate relations and partnerships, at **808-954-7874** or jonishi@hawaiifoodbank.org.

Resolution: I will reach out to see how my company can support Hawai'i Foodbank!



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