

NOURISH 'O HANA

FOOD 4 KEIKI

Good Food to Someone You Love

More than just the food served, Hawai'i Foodbank's School Pantry program helps keiki feel proud – knowing they can contribute to their families by bringing food home. *p. 4*



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CONNECT WITH US!

The demand is rising, but resources have diminished.



With your help, Hawai'i Foodbank works all year to carry out our core mission of nourishing our 'ohana today while working to end hunger tomorrow. Right now, though, we need your support more than ever.

I'm proud to share with you that we've made significant strides over the past year, thanks to your support. We **opened our 50th School Pantry**, **expanded our SNAP Outreach Program** to connect people to federal benefits, and **distributed food for nearly 17 million meals** – a quarter of which was fresh produce. We're also excited to participate in Kaukau

4 Keiki for the first time this summer. Also known as the Summer Food Service Program, **Kaukau 4 Keiki will connect more children and teens with nutritious food when school is out.** Through it all, we will continue collaborating with our 225-plus partners with a focus on increasing access to safe, healthy food and helping families thrive despite the high cost of living across the islands.

As our programs grow, though, so does the need. **We are now serving nearly 160,000 people every month** – a number that rivals some of the peak food insecurity levels of the COVID-19 pandemic. More and more families are at risk of facing hunger, and it's our job to help.

As we enter the summer months, we know this time of year is when we typically see donations go down. But this year, that trend is exacerbated by a variety of factors. Philanthropic and government support is down, grocery prices remain stubbornly high, and many are still grappling with the aftermath of the pandemic and the more recent wildfires. The accumulative effect has created a gap in funding support for our regular work that needs to be done daily. **In order to meet the growing need, we must rebuild our resources** – and we must do it quickly.

It's a daunting task. However, we are up for the challenge, and I feel enormous gratitude for our supporters and partners who continue to stand with us no matter the circumstances. Mahalo for your relentless support. We know we have much work ahead of us. But **because of you, we know we are not doing it alone.**

With gratitude and aloha,

Amy Miller

Hawai'i Foodbank President and CEO



MISSION: At Hawai'i Foodbank, our mission is to nourish our 'ohana today while 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.



What Does the Farm Bill Mean for Hawai'i?

Our neighbors facing hunger need decision-makers to prioritize the Farm Bill

by Amy Miller,
President and CEO



Food serves as more than just sustenance; it connects us to our roots, our land and our loved ones. It's a thread that weaves through our cultures, memories and traditions, and is a beautiful way we share with one another in the warmth of community.

Yet, amidst the beauty of the many shared culinary traditions we have here in Hawai'i, there exists a harsh reality. While food is a source of connection and comfort, too many families in Hawai'i struggle to put nutritious meals on the table. The simple desire to provide for our loved ones – to ensure our children grow strong and our kūpuna are cared for – is often overshadowed by the challenge of food insecurity.

In Hawai'i, nearly 160,000 individuals and families rely on Hawai'i Foodbank for support each month, many of them the most vulnerable members of our community. It's estimated that 1 in 4 keiki may be going to bed hungry each night. This is why we are committed to creating a future where every member of our extended 'ohana has access to safe, nutritious food all year long.

The national Farm Bill, which was most recently signed into law in 2018 and extended by President Biden through Sept. 30, is one crucial component in our collective effort to combat food insecurity. It is the largest piece of federal legislation for food and



Hawai'i Foodbank launched its SNAP Outreach Program in May 2023. Through the course of the year, our SNAP Outreach team on O'ahu and Kaua'i helped over 3,100 people take the SNAP eligibility prescreener. Of those, the team was able to help submit 350 SNAP applications and recertifications, which is attributable to an estimate of nearly 195,000 meals.

farming, governing many nutrition and agriculture programs. The Farm Bill reauthorization process, which is currently underway, provides an opportunity to strengthen programs like The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Hawai'i Foodbank and our partners across Hawai'i's hunger relief network rely on these programs to fulfill our mission. Here's a look at how each program supports our local food assistance efforts:

- **TEFAP** enables food banks like ours to distribute surplus food from U.S.

farms and producers to families facing hunger.

- **CSFP**, more commonly known as the Senior Food Box Program, provides monthly boxes of pantry staples to low-income kūpuna.
- **SNAP** plays a crucial role in helping families afford groceries, ensuring millions of Americans can put food on the table. In Hawai'i, SNAP is especially beneficial in helping families stretch their food budgets, as the cost of living here is among the highest in the nation, and food prices have surged by more than 25% over the last few years. These federal nutrition

programs, along with our partners Maui Food Bank and The Food Basket, work in tandem with Hawai'i Foodbank's other hunger relief efforts to help ensure everyone in Hawai'i has equitable access to the food and resources we all need to thrive. However, the efficacy of these programs hinges on the reauthorization of the national Farm Bill.

As we stand at the crossroads of opportunity and challenge, we thank our elected leaders, U.S. Senators Hirono and Schatz and Representatives Case and Tokuda, for prioritizing the reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Their support to expand TEFAP funding



Senior Food Boxes contain supplemental foods such as produce, meat, rice, cheese, cereal, peanut butter and more. Last year, our Senior Food Box Program on O'ahu and Kaua'i provided food for more than 475,000 meals.

and ensure the inclusion of culturally important foods in hunger relief programs helps ensure the well-being of our 'ohana and the resilience of our communities.

Food insecurity not only affects physical health and wellness; letting our neighbors go hungry erodes the fabric of our society. Together, let us reaffirm our commitment to nourishing our 'ohana and building a future where no one in Hawai'i goes hungry. Let's stand united as a community in our pursuit of food security and ensure that every member of our Hawai'i 'ohana has access to the sustenance we all deserve.

Want to LEARN MORE?

The Farm Bill is the centerpiece federal legislation for food and farming. It impacts access to nutritious food for the millions of people facing hunger in the United States. Read more about Feeding America's Farm Bill reauthorization priorities:



Our Community >>> AT WORK



Waikiki SPAM JAM®

Saturday, April 27, marked the 20th anniversary of Waikiki SPAM JAM®. Leading up to this year's event, the SJ foundation and Alaska Airlines came together to offer a special \$35,000 SPAM JAM® Match Opportunity. The community responded with passion and generosity. Collectively, the support from the festival, donors and match will help provide food for nearly 260,000 meals. SPAM JAM® has become a cultural tradition over the last couple of decades, and it reminds us of our community's creative, collaborative and versatile spirit – the same spirit we see every day at Hawai'i Foodbank.



Foodland's Project Keiki

In April, Foodland launched Project Keiki to support the efforts of food banks statewide in providing Hawai'i's children with nutritious snacks and meals when school is not in session. During the month of April, Foodland shoppers were invited to participate by rounding up their purchase at checkout, donating change, donating 250 Maika'i points, or purchasing a set of Pin Pals in support of Project Keiki. Donations will remain on the island in which they were collected, and the preliminary results on O'ahu and Kaua'i will support our Food 4 Keiki programs with food for more than 33,000 meals.





Good Food

TO SOMEONE YOU LOVE

by DANNY SCHLAG

In April, Hawai'i Foodbank opened its 50th Food 4 Keiki School Pantry. Since its launch in 2018, the program has provided food to roughly 140,000 keiki and their families. Even more than the food served, the School Pantries help students feel proud — knowing they can contribute to their families by bringing food home.

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Author's Note: The following was originally published in May 2019, shortly after the Food 4 Keiki School Pantry program celebrated its first full school year. Five years later and after now opening our 50th School Pantry location, the sentiment of feeding good food to someone you love rings truer than ever.

Just take a drive through town, and it's easy to see; we truly live in a melting pot of culture and cuisine. From fine dining and dim sum to potluck and plate lunch – so many things we do in Hawai'i are centered around food. Food connects us, and there may be no better feeling than feeding good food to someone you love.

But, what exactly *is* good food?

"Good food means something different to different people," explains Alicia Higa, director of health promotion at Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center. "For someone who has

a lot of money, good food might mean organic or grass-fed. But, for someone who is facing hunger, good food is just any food at all."

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet up with Alicia and her co-worker Moulika Anna Hitchens. We planned a visit to Wai'anae Elementary School, where Alicia and Moulika helped set up one of Hawai'i Foodbank's Food 4 Keiki School Pantries.

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I met them on a warm Tuesday afternoon next to a lone, portable classroom on the edge of campus. As we waited for the 2 o'clock bell to ring, we took refuge beneath a large monkeypod tree that gently hugged the classroom beneath it. It was fitting. Just as that tree provided us refuge from the sun that afternoon – that small, modest classroom was about to provide nourishment to dozens of keiki and their families.

As I looked up at that sunlight peering through the leaves, Alicia and Moulika described the ensuing parade of children we were about to witness.

"The need is great, especially on the Leeward Coast," said Moulika. "Our whole coast is eligible for free or reduce-priced meals. The percentage of kids who can actually pay for lunch is so small that they just decided to have the whole coast receive free breakfast and lunch. Wai'anae Elementary School is no different. Here, more than 90% of the student population has need."

"It's really eye-opening," added Alicia, "Before starting the School Pantry, I've driven past food distributions on our coast and just thought, 'Ah, they got it.' But to hear so many kids are still going hungry, you realize there's a whole new layer of people who are not getting food."

Wai'anae Elementary School serves students from working households, three public housing complexes, as well as several homeless shelters in the area.



“You see,” emphasized Alicia. “A lot of the kids come to school with sore tummies, or they’re really tired, or they have trouble concentrating. We need to be a part of the solution. We need to get the food directly in the hands of the kids.”

This touching affirmation was interrupted by the ring of the school bell, and a flood of keiki raced out of their classrooms. Filled with anticipation, the majority lined up outside the School Pantry. Each student received after-school snacks along with one or two bags of food to take home to their families. Emblazed with smiles, the keiki tore into their snacks and carried away their bags of food.

As we watched, Moulika leaned over and whispered, “These kids are so awesome. They are so appreciative for anything that we can provide. I feel like they’re proud to go home with food and contribute. Kids don’t always get the chance to feel like they can contribute – especially in a

“ They’re proud to go home with food and contribute. Kids don’t always get the chance to feel like they can contribute – especially in a stressful environment. ”

stressful environment.”

She paused. “It makes them feel good ... Proud.”

I was blown away by how quickly everything was happening. In less than 30 minutes, the School Pantry efficiently served the entire school. As I watched the commotion settle, I noticed a lone, small girl timidly make her way towards the School Pantry. She inched her way up the portable’s stairs, where she was warmly greeted with a smile and a handful of snacks.

Her shyness vanished and was quickly replaced with a smile bigger than her backpack. With a humble “thank

you,” she put her snacks in her bag, rushed down the stairs and eagerly ran towards a different monkeypod tree in the distance.


Once there, she pulled out two fruit snacks – one for herself and one for her older brother. He was waiting quietly at the tree to walk her home.

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I’ll never forget the image of this young girl – maybe only five or six years old – as she looked up at her brother. Her arm was extended, ready to feed good food to someone she loves. 🐼

“ Connection to food is everything. When you’re talking about a community that has a majority of indigenous people, you have to approach it through a cultural lens.”

Land, Legacy AND FO



Over the last two issues, we've covered 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 third article of a three-part series, we'd like to introduce you to Jesse Mikasobe-Keali'inohomoku, who is serving the community that raised him by addressing social issues and providing access to food.

by PAUL MORELLO

Jesse's Story

Land, legacy and food. Every day, Jesse is putting those pieces together to help build a better community in Wai'anae and throughout the Leeward coast of O'ahu.

"I grew up in Wai'anae, and I got to learn and experience a lot of things here," he said. "Through those experiences of growing up in an underserved community, you start to understand the importance of

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a lot of things, especially food.”

Jesse manages food systems work at ‘Elepaio Social Services, one of Hawai‘i Foodbank’s agency partners that supports the Wai‘anae community.

As a child, he was part of a fishing family and had access to high quality seafood. But when Jesse got older, he quickly saw that, outside his home, very little fresh food was available in the community. That’s not how it used to be.

“In ancient times, Wai‘anae used to be a stronghold for food,” he explained. “We had places called local he‘eia, or fishponds, where you could get fish. And Wai‘anae Valley was loaded with kalo. We had an abundance of food.”

Now, fresh food and local produce aren’t easy to find, even though Wai‘anae remains a strong farming community. Much of the produce grown in Wai‘anae is sold to restaurants

“ When you talk about connection to food, you’re talking about the participation of our people in the food system process. And you’re talking about them eating healthier food. That’s the important thing. ”

or hotels, and what is available is often too expensive.

So, how is Jesse starting to change that?

“Connection to food is everything,” he said. “When you’re talking about a community that has a majority of indigenous people, you have to approach it through a cultural lens.”

Part of that connection is understanding the legacy and history of the food they eat.

“Native Hawaiians knew there was an essence and a function to the food they were growing,” Jesse said. “We gave food names, place and kuleana.”

The second part of nourishing connection to food is creating access to culturally-preferred produce.

In his role as food access manager, Jesse manages the food distributions for ‘Elepaio Social Services. With multiple distributions each week, the organization, in partnership with the Hawai‘i Foodbank, served nearly 4,500 households last year.

“When you talk about connection to food, you’re talking about the participation of our people in the food system process. And you’re talking about them eating healthier food. That’s the important thing,” he said. 🌱

GREAT CHEFS Fight Hunger

Hawai'i Foodbank's signature culinary fundraiser raises nearly three quarters of a million meals

Story by DANNY SCHLAG

Photographs by ERIK KABIK PHOTOGRAPHY

For the second year in a row, the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Ho'okupu Center hosted the 15th annual Great Chefs® Fight Hunger. Generosity flowed, as the signature culinary fundraiser for Hawai'i Foodbank capped off with news that the event collectively raised funds to provide food for more than 720,000 nourishing meals, thanks to passionate donors and community partners.

This year's event recognized the important role food plays in our lives – not just how it nourishes our bodies but also how it brings us closer to each other, our families and the community. All of this can be wrapped up in the legacy of Hawai'i Foodbank founder John White, whose family was in attendance to celebrate his vision for the Foodbank.

"He was always driven by his work," said Pua Auyong-White, his wife of 27 years. "He understood why there was hunger, and it comes from his understanding of how agriculture works in this country."

White grew up on a farm in Illinois before coming to Hawai'i in the 1980s to pursue a political science graduate degree. In Hawai'i, his passion for sustainability ignited a desire to support the community around him – ultimately leading to the creation of Hawai'i Foodbank.

"He wanted to do something that incorporated the components of recycling, reclamation and doing something great for people," Pua described. "He did a lot for a lot of people, and that is a great legacy to have."

Building Connections and Celebrating 'Ohana

The theme of connection was woven into each dish of the evening's meal, as well, which included thoughtfully crafted courses from some of Hawai'i's top chefs, including:

- Allie Chu, Hopena Pokipala and Julie Chu of Oysters Hawai'i;
- Nick Erker of Pili Group by Under My Umbrella;
- Chef Sean Priester of Kupu Culinary;
- Chef Kealoha Domingo of Nui Kealoha;
- Chef Vikram Garg of UMI By Vikram Garg;
- Chef Roy Yamaguchi of Roy's® Restaurants; and
- Chef Jamon Harper of Mugen.

Highlighting local ingredients from some of Hawai'i Foodbank's farm partners, the chefs created a meal that recognized our collective responsibility to cultivate and reciprocate the

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Mahalo!



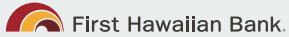
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nourishment we receive – reflective of White's values that continue to resonate with the Foodbank today. In doing so, they provided guests not only with a delicious, multi-course meal but also an opportunity to examine how food connects us.

The theme of connection inspired many throughout the evening, itself, as well as in the weeks leading up to the event. The combined contributions from table sponsors, ticket sales, Cellar Door and Lucky Draw participants, individual donors, and a match opportunity generously sponsored by an anonymous donor provided just over \$420,000 in support of Great Chefs® Fight Hunger. These gifts will help support Hawai'i Foodbank's mission to nourish our 'ohana today while we work to end hunger tomorrow. As Hawai'i's largest hunger-

relief organization, the Foodbank is committed to serving the daily needs of our communities, increasing equitable access to food, expanding our services to provide more nutritious and culturally meaningful options, and establishing initiatives that address the systemic reasons people need our services.

A special mahalo to the amazing chefs, sponsors, partners, vendors, donors, guests and everyone else involved with making this year's Great Chefs® Fight Hunger such an overwhelming success. In all, more than 70 local companies, organizations and partners joined Hawai'i Foodbank staff and volunteers in lending their support to the 15th annual Great Chefs® Fight Hunger. For more photos and a complete list of sponsors, partners and acknowledgements, visit HawaiiFoodbank.org/Great-Chefs.

Four Myths about Hunger in Hawai'i

Debunking these common myths can help destigmatize food assistance, nourish our 'ohana and end hunger

Hunger is closer to a lot of us than we might realize. With the aftermath of the pandemic and record inflation rates, 1 in 6 people in Hawai'i continue to struggle with hunger daily. Food insecurity impacts our neighbors, our friends, our family, our keiki, our kūpuna and many more.

A lot of misconceptions can exist when it comes to hunger in our communities. If we can debunk these four myths about hunger, we can help raise awareness of the problem and loosen its grasp on our neighbors in need.

Myth 1: Most people experiencing hunger are unemployed and/or homeless.

The truth is, many of those struggling with hunger come from working middle-class families. These households make too much money to receive government assistance but still not enough to cover all the daily necessities. With continued inflation, Hawai'i's high cost of living, and recent events such as COVID-19 and the Maui wildfires, it has become more and more challenging for many Hawai'i residents to keep food on the table. An average of nearly 160,000 people have been turning to Hawai'i Foodbank for help each month, and that number continues to trend upward.

Myth 2: Food banks only provide unhealthy, processed options – like canned and boxed goods.

False! A quarter of the food Hawai'i Foodbank distributes is fresh produce. Understanding the importance



Food rescue is an important part of Hawai'i Foodbank's business model. We work with retailers, distributors, wholesalers and community members to donate excess food that might otherwise be thrown away. Each year, we rescue more than 10 million pounds of good food from going to waste – and distribute it to those facing hunger in our community.

of having nutritious options available at all times, we are heavily focused on increasing accessibility to safe and healthy food, both perishable and shelf-stable. When budgets are stretched thin, though, fresh produce is one of the first things to come off the grocery list. Accordingly, many end up resorting to cheaper, processed options that often lead to long-term health consequences like cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer.

In 2020, we established our Farm to Foodbank program, through which we purchase fresh, healthy, Hawai'i-grown food directly from local farmers and then distribute that food to those in our community facing hunger. Since the program's inception, we've distributed nearly 8 million pounds of fresh, locally grown produce while investing

in more than 40 local farms, farm hubs and producers.

Myth 3: Food waste and hunger are different problems with different solutions.

Actually, food waste and hunger are closely related. Within the U.S., 72 billion pounds of good food go to waste each year. At the same time, 44 million people are struggling with food insecurity. Organizations across the nation, including Hawai'i Foodbank and Feeding America, are working with food companies, farmers and other partners to gather some of this food before it goes to waste for distribution to families in need. Rescuing food is a key component to solving the hunger problem, especially in Hawai'i.

Myth 4: I can't help our community to overcome challenges like hunger and food waste.

Completely false! There are so many ways you can make a difference in our community – whether it be out in the field with one of our hunger relief partners or by yourself from the comfort of your own home. Monetary donations are a simple but great way to support Hawai'i Foodbank. It allows us to purchase exactly what our community needs.

Your dollars go even further with us, as our deep discounts let us purchase food in larger quantities at a lower cost than the average person shopping at the grocery store. A \$25 donation can provide food for more than 50 meals. In addition to monetary donations, you can support our mission by volunteering, hosting a food drive, donating food, advocating and reducing your own food waste. For more ideas, visit HawaiiFoodbank.org.



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HAWAII FOODBANK NEWSLETTER



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Donate
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When families are fed, futures are nourished

Nourishing our 'ohana isn't just about filling plates. When you feed someone, you're also sharing aloha, extending dignity and providing hope for a better tomorrow. And that better tomorrow starts with increasing access to safe and nutritious food today. Learn more and see how you can help at HAWAIIFOODBANK.ORG.