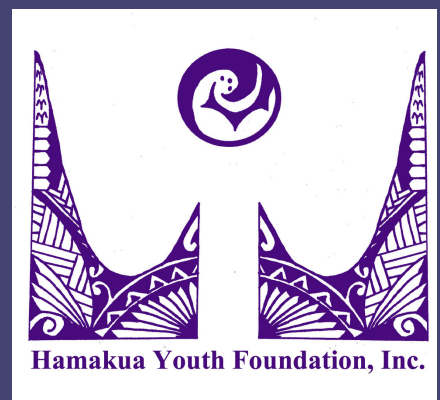


Hāmākua Youth Foundation



2021 | A Year in Review



hamakuayouthcenter.org



E K O M O M A I

Welcome

Aloha kākou,

Greetings, friends! The Hāmākua Youth Foundation is sending much aloha after a most unexpected year. With the dedication of our community both near and far, we have continued to operate the Hamakua Youth Center throughout the global pandemic by providing in-person support to vulnerable youth, digital internships for area teens, and direct food assistance to enrolled families and the wider community. **Mahalo nui loa!**



Now, in addition to sustaining these vital programs, we are excited to begin renovating the Okada Hospital. This historic building was purchased as the future home of the Hāmākua Youth Center on November 27, 2019. Our renovated building will ultimately triple the space available for HYF to provide youth programming to the keiki and ‘ōpio (children and teens) of Hāmākua. Once complete, the Hāmākua Youth Center will feature a separate wing for our local teens from Laupahoehoe to Waimea, an arts and crafts room, professional quality music studio, multimedia and game room, and a certified community kitchen.

To make this happen, we need your help.

There are many challenges ahead as we pursue our goal of opening the renovated Okada building in January 2023. From sustaining our current programs to an unexpected need for mold and lead paint remediation in our Okada renovation, community support is now essential. Your contribution will give our local youth a permanent place to grow into kind, engaged, and inspired young adults. Mahalo for your support.

t.Mahealani Maiku'i & Jeannette Soon-Ludes
Program Director Director of Operations

OUR VALUES

Our **Vision** is that Hāmākua youth have access to unconditional support and guidance in life skills essential to their growth into kind, engaged, and inspired young adults. Our **Mission** is to open doorways to the world by sharing life skills rooted in the Hawaiian values of kuleana, aloha, laulima, and mahalo.

KULEANA

Mālama i kou kuleana
Take care of your responsibilities

ALOHA

Aloha kekahi i kekahi
Love one another

LAULIMA

E kuahui like i ka hana
Let everyone work together

MAHALO

Mahalo i ka mea loa'a
Be thankful for all that you have



Our programs engage these values to cultivate the awareness necessary for Hāmākua youth to thrive both here and beyond.

OUR COMMUNITY

HYC serves the high-need populations of the rural Hāmākua census district, which suffered with the disappearance of the key economic driver after the last of the sugar plantations closed in the 1990s. The 2010 census showed an unemployment rate of 1.5 times the state average and many single heads of household (22%).

Long-standing residents continue to experience disproportionate barriers to economic opportunity. Based on the American Community Survey 5-Year 2011-2015 Low and Moderate Income Summary, there continues to be sizable pockets of LMI individuals and families who will benefit from HYC services.



In The Growing Importance of Afterschool in Rural Communities, Afterschool Alliance reports that, for rural families, afterschool programs are both “a support system for children’s academic growth, social development, and overall health and wellness” and “a critical resource for working families.” Consequently, they recommend an increased investment in afterschool programs “to ensure that all children in rural communities have the supports they need to thrive in school and beyond.”

WHO WE SERVE



HYC provides reduced-cost childcare and youth programming with a priority given to low-income families. Prior to the pandemic, HYC enrolled 41 youth in our afterschool Program. Of these, 70% were below 2019 HUD LMI thresholds based on family size and income. In AY 2020-2021, our enrollment numbers were reduced to accommodate COVID safety procedures. We currently enroll 33 full and part time youth, with 67% of household incomes below federal 2020 HUD LMI thresholds based on family size and income.

In response to the pandemic, HYC has expanded community service programs to increase food security for area families of enrolled youth, as well as the elderly and persons with disabilities. While addressing food security, this assistance overlaps with our multicultural and gardening curricula. We provide culturally relevant ingredients for families to prepare while simultaneously teaching our youth about local history and ethnic groups. In total, we serve approximately 254 individuals from 56 unduplicated households each month.

WHAT WE DO

Ike aku, ike mai, kokua aku kokua mai; pela iho la ka nohona ohana.

Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life.

- Mary Kawena Pukui

Caring for the land and our community is central to all we do. Our Keiki and 'Ōpio programs support youth from kindergarten through high school. In addition to homework assistance and leadership development, our programs establish Hawaiian wisdom and connection to place as the foundation upon which our multi-ethnic community lives and thrives.



- Our Keiki Garden invests in the **human capital** of Hāmākua by providing youth an understanding of Native Hawaiian environmental kinship and growing practices as part of a larger goal of imparting the skills needed to grow food in our community
- Our multicultural program is an investment in **social capital** that shares with youth the many ways that Hawaiians and other ethnic groups have taken these gifts from the land and transformed them into meals that feed both families and cultures
- Direct food assistance broadens youth knowledge of the **natural capital** of Hāmākua, especially when family meal bags are shared with an understanding of the local food sources that sustain communities

Together, our gardening, multicultural, and food assistance programs bring youth learning full circle, empowering the next generation to see the many connections that make each of them a valuable part of the lands of Hāmākua .

OUR IMPACT

The Hāmākua Youth Center offers low cost after school alternatives and summer programs for at-risk youth from across the Hāmākua district. Our staff and volunteers take a personal approach to every youth entering the door, with an emphasis on life-long learning and building self-esteem. Since September 2020, HYC has:

- Enrolled **33 keiki** (children ages 12 and under) in our full-day distance learning support and enrichment program during the COVID school closures
- Enrolled **28 keiki and 'ōpio** in our 2021 summer program
- Provided **enrichment programs** in Hawaiian and multicultural education, Native Hawaiian foodways at our Keiki Garden, arts and crafts, and STEM projects
- **4 virtual huaka'i from mauka to makai** (field trips from mountain to ocean)
- Distributed over **1,500 boxes of groceries, 6,000 meals, and 6,500 pounds of fresh, local produce and meat** to our youth, families, and local kupuna
- Partnered with the Kō Educational Center to provide **16 high school interns** with valuable work experience in summer 2020 and spring 2021
- Awarded **three scholarships** to Honoka'a High School graduates



Resilience Hub at Hāmākua Youth Center

September 25, 2020 – Last month the school year began unlike any other. With distance education a necessary safeguard against rising COVID-19 cases in the islands, the Hāmākua Youth Center was challenged to balance the needs of our keiki and families with the demands of public safety guidelines. The modest solution was a limited number of spaces filled by the keiki of essential workers. With this reduced class size Mahealani Maiku'i, HYC Program Director, could support their distance learning and ensure proper social distancing measures for youngsters who were simply excited to see each other after months apart.

But behind the scenes HYC was searching for ways to serve more of our keiki and families through in-person programs. An ambitious solution came in the form of the island-wide Resilience Hubs project led by Vibrant Hawai'i and funded through the County of Hawai'i CARES grant. According to Vibrant Hawai'i, "Resilience Hubs are enhanced community spaces that are designed and managed by local residents, with support from partners in local government as well as private and nonprofit sectors. At its core, Resilience Hubs are about putting power and resources into the hands of community."

Across the island this project is nurturing resilience in our communities by providing digital resources, increasing access to meals and food, and offering a range of programs for all ages. Officially launching on September 28th, the Resilience Hubs will be in operation for twelve weeks. In this time 21 sites will offer connectivity with laptops and Wi-Fi, 29 sites will distribute nearly 120,000 prepared meals, and 14 programs will be building resilience in communities through a range of scheduled and drop-in programming. The overall impact is tremendous. Through the County of Hawai'i CARES grant Vibrant Hawai'i will be directly funding 44 partners and an additional 20 local restaurants.

At the Youth Center, changes will be felt immediately with more hands available to coordinate the effort. We will be safely increasing our class size from ten to 25, with four full days and an enrichment half-day each week. As part of expanded programming, HYC will digitally connect remote and in-person keiki in weekly science, culture, and art workshops in which each youth will be provided all materials needed for a fun afternoon activity. In addition, food distribution will remain integral with three dinners supplementing Friday meals at the Honoka'a Hongwanji and a weekend "meal bag" for keiki to prepare with their families.



KEIKI PROGRAM



Our Keiki Program is vital to the educational success of youth and financial resilience for our families. This program is open to youth ages 12 and under, providing out-of-school support Mondays thru Fridays, as well as twice monthly direct food assistance to enrolled and community families.

All Keiki programming is rooted in learning Hawaiian values, stories, and basic language. From this place of strength our keiki begin to explore the multicultural community of Hāmākua through food and history. Activities include homework help, growing and preparing food, arts and crafts (lei-making, ceramics, painting), music, STEM exploration, and field trips.

This program shifts deficit narratives not only by creating space for parents and caregivers to pursue the financial well-being of their families, but also by sharing with youth a vision of themselves and our district as abundant in the human, social, natural, and financial resources for a thriving Hāmākua.

Tomorrow's Innovators

April 22, 2021 – On an overcast afternoon Kean Wong of SupportHawaii pops in to the Hāmākua Youth Center to share a few “secrets” with the keiki. These secrets, he says, are the key to solving problems, both big and small. Drawing from a design-thinking model developed at the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, Wong introduces the keiki to design concepts that will help them grow into the innovators of tomorrow.

Empathize. Define. Ideate. Prototype. Test. For our keiki, practicing these skills means imagining the most fabulous birthday cake for Mahealani Maiku'i, HYC Program Director. The first step is an important one: to empathize or, as one of our keiki put it, to “know how others feel and care about their feelings.” So, the keiki ask questions about Aunty's favorites: chocolate is good but white chocolate is better, “no” to rainbow sprinkles but heart designs in purple and orange are cool, and ice cream cakes are fantastic but not with cookie dough ice cream.

After brainstorming ideas, they propose “prototypes” then test their prototypes by asking for feedback with even more questions. They learn that the perfect cake for Aunty might not be the perfect cake for someone else. In the end, there are five fabulous options, but a clear favorite has been found: a big cake (more to share!) with brownie on the bottom, layers of ice cream and cake, topped with a light layer of frosting, white chocolate chips, and purple heart sprinkles.

These beginning exercises in design thinking are made possible through partnerships in the Vibrant Hawai'i Resilience Hubs initiative and it is easy to see how these opportunities are the stepping stones for more advanced projects at the Kō Education Center. This semester the Hāmākua Youth Center is partnering with Kō EC to provide interns with real-world experience in designing creative solutions to local needs. Although the design challenge is different – redesigning and piloting a needs assessment survey to help HYC plan for the new 'ōpio (teen) center at the Okada building – the concepts are familiar: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. The impact will be better opportunities for teens, now and for years to come.



Watching the keiki and 'ōpio engage this process, from birthday cakes to real-world applications, inspires hope. Through their creativity Hāmākua and our island will have all that we need for a resilient future.

'ŌPIO PROGRAM

Our 'Ōpio Programs are open to youth ages 13 and over who attend Honoka'a High and Intermediate School or Laupahoehoe Public Charter School. We provide teens with advanced learning in Hawaiian culture and the multicultural community of Hāmākua. Alongside these opportunities, our 'ōpio programs will create space for teens to explore their identities, passions, and dreams for the future as they prepare to transition into adulthood.

- **Experiential Summer Camp:** A week-long experiential program that shares Hawaiian cultural and technological practices in the historic Waipio Valley
- **Leadership Development:** Opportunities for teens to mentor intermediate and elementary-aged youth
- **Internships:** Opportunities for teens interested in learning about work in nonprofits, including areas such as website design and social media outreach
- **Scholarships:** HYF Big Dave, Jaquelyn McCandless, and Disney Scholarships are available annually to recent graduates of Honoka'a High school



The Hāmākua Youth Foundation is currently undergoing a large capital improvement project that will include a teen center in the renovation of the historic Okada Hospital. This separate space just for teens will enable the expansion of the HYC 'Ōpio Programs.

More Than Just Food

August 20, 2020 – There is something so meaningful in sharing food with each other. As with many cultures around the world, Hawaiian culture values coming together in a shared meal. Cultural historian Mary Kawena Pukui preserved dozens of ‘ōlelo no’eau, or Hawaiian proverbs, about the significance of food. She wrote, “Ko koā uka, ko koā kai,” meaning that from mountain to ocean, all come together and share in abundance. This is what the Hāmākua Youth Center strives to impart in our programs.

Last year the Hāmākua Youth Center piloted a program with Honoka‘a High School to host a small circle of youth in an alternative peer mentoring program. The vision was to create a safe and nurturing space for teens to work through their daily issues. The hope was teens would leave the program with life skills essential to their growth into kind, engaged, and inspired young adults. The rules were simple: no cell phones, no work, just good food and good conversation.

Mahealani Maiku‘i, HYC Program Director, hosted the pilot program and recalls that the teens started as virtual strangers, refusing in some cases to even acknowledge their peers. She explains what the program was really about: “Not only the food, but the conversation and the feelings. That’s actually what you’re taking in. You’re not just consuming food, you’re consuming the whole atmosphere with the connections you’re making with different kids, and you laugh and you play. That’s why the next day they stay, ‘Okay, aunty, what we going eat?’ And I think that’s what excites them. Food draws them in and conversations keep them.”

Although the pandemic has changed the ways we share food with each other, these practices remain an important part of all that we do at the Hāmākua Youth Center. For a year our families have taken part in the weekly Friday meals at the Honoka‘a Hongwanji Buddhist Temple Kitchen and more recently through food delivery programs with Queen Lili‘uokalani Trust, Kamehameha Schools, and Hawai‘i Activate Aid. And food will continue to shape our future.

HYC is also “cooking up” plans for a community kitchen in our soon-to-be-renovated facility at the historic Okada Hospital. Once complete, the new HYC will have a fully certified community kitchen that literally connects our keiki with ‘ōpio (teens) as the middle ground between separate spaces for kids and teens. It will also be a space for anyone wanting to share their culinary talents with the Hāmākua community. Our vision is that through this kitchen local youth will learn and value the sharing of food as a practice that binds us with each other.



PARTNERSHIPS



U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

County of Hawai'i

State of Hawai'i

Atherton Family Foundation
Betsy Gordon Foundation
Cooke Foundation
E Olson Family Trust
Friends of Hawai'i Charities
Hawaii Community Foundation
HMSA Foundation
Hawai'i Island United Way
Hawai'i People's Fund
John Ross Foundation
Kō Education Center
LLH/LHM Foundation
McInerny Foundation
Office of Hawaiian Affairs
Russell Foundation
Vibrant Hawai'i
Walmart
Weinberg Foundation
Women's Fund

OUR LEADERS

Program Staff

Māhealani Maiku'i, Program Director
Shelbie Kaholoa'a, Activity Specialist
Summer Ah Choy, Activity Specialist
Stasha La'a, Community Liaison

Administrative Staff

Jeannette Soon-Ludes, Operations Director
Lori Beach, Financial Director

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Rick Sifuentes

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Visit us at the Hāmākua Youth Center
45-3396 Mamane Street | Honoka'a, HI 96727

Mailing Address: Hāmākua Youth Foundation
PO Box 381 | Honoka'a, HI 96727
(808) 775-0976