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Aloha e na hoa Ho’okua‘āina (greetings to our friends),

It’s vitally important to sit down in the midst of seasons of change to reflect on the big picture. This past year definitely marked a season of transition for our organization. Twelve years in, we are about to embark on a new journey expanding all operations, programming, and vision to an additional 116 acres in Maunawili Valley we are calling Palawai (the original ʻili name).

We invite you in to take a look under the hood, so to speak, at our 2022–2023 fiscal year of growth and impact. This has truly been a rewarding exercise to reflect on where we started and how far we have come.

Shout out to Rebecca Croft and all who contributed to the beautiful images for capturing the essence of what we do in this report.

Me ke aloha pau ‘ole,

Michele and Dean Wilhelm
Executive Co-Directors
Mission

Ho’okua‘āina cultivates a culture of individual wellbeing and community waiwai through aloha ʻāina.
Overview

Ho’okua‘āina is a non-profit nestled in the ahupua’a of Kailua at Kapalai in Maunawili on the island of Oahu. It is the manifestation of a vision to create a gathering place for people in the community to connect with and care for the ‘āina, perpetuate Hawaiian culture through the cultivation of kalo, and ultimately be a place of healing, especially for at-risk youth. For the last 16 years, Ho'okua‘āina has delivered ‘āina-based programming grounded in cultural values and practices to thousands of families, youth, and communities.

PROGRAMS

Kūkuluhou (mentorship)
The flagship program provides internships, college apprenticeships, and alternative learning opportunities for youth ages 12–23 facing challenging life circumstances. Immersed in all aspects of cultivating kalo, participants deepen their understanding of Hawaiian culture and environmental stewardship while growing in healthy self-concept and life skills.

Kupuohi (education)
ʻĀina-based education program provides opportunities for K-12 students to deepen their connection to place and culture. College students have opportunities to conduct research projects, service learning hours, and class visits.

Kaiāulu (community)
Weekly opportunities for volunteers, from keiki to kūpuna, to mālama ‘āina while making meaningful connections to ‘āina and one another.

Kalo Production
Through the production of 23 lo‘i patches, culturally and nutritionally significant food is distributed to the local community while restoring healthy ‘āina.

GOALS

1. Promote the personal development of youth ages 8–24 on O‘ahu by improving self-esteem, leadership skills, pro-social behavior, connection to place, and understanding and appreciation of Hawaiian culture.

2. Strengthen connection to culture and community in youth, students, volunteers, ‘ohana, and kūpuna participants.

3. Create a self-sustaining regenerative agriculture system for the community to access local produce, participate in workshops, and gather for events.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kūkūlhou</th>
<th>41 Participants</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 80% of evaluated participants demonstrated improved self-esteem and connection to place.  
100% of evaluated participants demonstrated improved leadership skills and pro-social competence.  
90% of evaluated participants demonstrated an understanding and appreciation of Hawaiian culture.  
80% of evaluated participants demonstrated growth in agricultural skills and natural resource management. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kupūōhi</th>
<th>1,875 Students 88 Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 94% of surveyed students had a good, very good, or excellent experience.  
81% of surveyed students increased their connection to Hawaiian culture.  
81% of surveyed students increased their connection to ‘āina, or sense of place. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaiāulu</th>
<th>1,667 Volunteers 105 Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 100% of surveyed participants had an excellent experience.  
92% of surveyed participants increased their connection to Hawaiian culture.  
98% of surveyed participants increased their connection to ‘āina, or sense of place. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Produced</th>
<th>Sold</th>
<th>Donated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RAW KALO</td>
<td>31,897 LBS</td>
<td>$88,061</td>
<td>$14,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAU</td>
<td>3,879 LBS</td>
<td>$5,380</td>
<td>$2,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POI &amp; PA’A</td>
<td>5,451 LBS</td>
<td>$27,624</td>
<td>$5,100</td>
</tr>
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COMMUNITY DONATIONS

Kulanakauhale Maluhia O Na Kūpuna Waimānalo kūpuna housing 1,324 lbs poi
Hui Mahi ‘Ai ‘Āina Waimānalo houseless community 275 lbs poi, 142.5 lbs kalo, 93 lbs lau
Hui Mālama o Ke Kai Waimānalo ‘ohana kalo drive 300 lbs kalo

POI CUSTOMER STORY

“Poi from Ho’okua’aina was a huge part of our youngest keiki’s life. While hapai with her, I ate a lot of poi, kalo pa’a, and cooked lu’au stew with luau from Ho’okua’aina. I remember feeling so warm and nourished at that time. After she was born and able to eat solids, she had poi on the regular from you folks. She is still my keiki that loves kalo the most. As an ‘ohana, we received some huli back in 2019. We started with planting in 5-gallon buckets, and when we moved to our own home, we were able to plant the keiki from the same huli into the ground. Now, years later, we still have the keiki from those original makua feeding our ‘ohana regularly. My keiki have learned how to care for them, harvest, and replant. We are so thankful to have the food that was shared with us from Ho’okua’aina for so many years. We are grateful for the mana’o shared on how to grow and take care of our kalo, and for the love extended to our ‘ohana from your caring hands and hearts.”
Through the Kūkuluhou program, Hoʻokuaʻāina provides internship opportunities for youth ages 12-23. Immersed in all aspects of cultivating kalo, participants deepen their understanding of environmental stewardship and Hawaiian culture while growing in leadership skills and self-esteem. We offer mentorship programs at varying levels: Pōkiʻi (entry), Kaikaina (internship), Alakaʻi (co-farm manager/peer mentor), and Apprenticeship (college & career pathway).
POKI’I
Alternative Learning Program supports youth, ages 13-18, experiencing family and societal difficulties. Each visit consists of a value-based lesson followed by hands-on learning and mentorship. This program builds self-esteem, social competence, cultural connection, and a sense of belonging. Activities occur across bi-weekly farm visits for 3-12 months. Tasks are assigned between visits to reinforce the value-based lesson.

AHUPUA’A SYSTEMS APPRENTICESHIP (ASA)
Program collaboration with Windward Community College (WCC) provides students earning a two-year associate’s degree with opportunities for mentorship, financial and community support, professional ‘āina experience, and participation in cultural practices. In 2023, we established partnerships with peer ‘āina organizations across Ko’olau’poko for participants to gain a comprehensive understanding of a sustainable ahupua’a system. Activities take place during 2 days per week for 3, 10-week sessions.

KAIKAINA
10-week internship for young adults, ages 18-23, seeking ‘āina-based leadership development, professional training, and a deeper understanding of Hawaiian culture.

ALAKA’I
Leadership program provides 3-5 days per week of year-round employment for interns who have demonstrated initiative to assume greater responsibility in the program, and in turn are promoted to positions as leaders, peer mentors, and farm managers.
ASA Partnerships:
Windward Community College – Program Collaborator
Nā Hokua, University of Hawai‘i – Academic Mentorship
Hale Kipa – Trauma Informed Care Workshops
Papahana Kuaola – Partner Site
Kāko‘o ʻŌiwi – Partner Site
Paepae o Heʻeia – Partner Site

Participating Pokiʻi Schools:
Campbell-Kapolei Complex Area ALO
Olomana School

Participation

5 Alakaʻi Participants
5 Kaikaina Participants
8 Pōkiʻi Participants
23 ASA Participants
5 ASA Partner Organizations
10 Professional Development Days

Participants

ASA

Pukiʻi

Professional

Development

Days
Kūkuluhou
Evaluation

METHODS
- Group Circle Discussions
- Participant Interviews
- Participant Self Evaluation Survey
- Farm Progress Report Scores

FARM PROGRESS REPORT

3.34 Improved understanding of Hawaiian culture

3.58 Developed leadership & pro-social skills

3.19 Growth in agriculture & natural resource management

3.23 Strengthened self-esteem & connection to place

3.24 WCC GPA
ASA Participants scored well above the 2.5 GPA Windward Community College minimum threshold requirement to remain eligible for the program.

3.33 End-of-Year Farm Score
Staff evaluate ASA participants starting and ending each year of the program. Expected outcomes are scored on a 4-point rating scale: 1-rarely, 2-sometimes, 3-most of the time, 4-consistently. The group baseline average improved from 1.61 to 3.33, meaning participants initially scored rarely-sometimes and now score mostly-consistently across all outcomes.
“My mental health has gotten better. Being out here and having the reset every week with a good group of people opens up my mind... My will to wake up in the morning has improved. I just wake up with energy, get dressed, and go. I like going to school. Before I didn’t want to go to college, and I didn’t see it as a necessity at the time. But now I want to be there.” – ASA Participant

“Now I have a connection to the land: knowing the place names, knowing the cycles of growth, knowing how to farm to eat and sustain the community.” – ASA Participant

“I first came with a false sense of confidence. It was a front. Now I feel a lot more pa’a (solid) in myself. Every time we get together, talk, and hana (work), I am growing. I am learning how to be a young adult. I am more social with my classmates who I have never met before. I am forming a lot of good connections.” – ASA Participant

“This place and these beautiful people gave me the structure and love that I needed, so I had the strength to believe in myself and ask for help.” – ASA Participant
“I could have never anticipated how this summer would transform my life… I wasn’t just caring for the kalo, I was also caring for myself—something I haven’t ever practiced consistently… While I only spent over 8 weeks in the patches, I felt that an eternal pilina was established… Now, I feel purposeful, complete, reenergized, and reinvigorated for the long life ahead of me… I know that I will continue to grow just like the kalo I helped to cultivate this summer.” – Kaikaina Intern

“I appreciate the work ethic here. It motivates and inspires me to work harder. I feel accomplished after a long day of work. That surprised me.” – ASA Participant

“I could have never anticipated how this summer would transform my life… I wasn’t just caring for the kalo, I was also caring for myself—something I haven’t ever practiced consistently… While I only spent over 8 weeks in the patches, I felt that an eternal pilina was established… Now, I feel purposeful, complete, reenergized, and reinvigorated for the long life ahead of me… I know that I will continue to grow just like the kalo I helped to cultivate this summer.” – Kaikaina Intern

“This place has opened my eyes and allowed me to feel who I want to be.” – ASA Participant

“My interest in environmental sustainability has blossomed because of the connections I’ve made and learned from Kapalai.” – ASA Participant

“I can honestly say I have never felt so safe and loved in a group of people… I knew I was accepted here and I could be myself. I feel like I’ve just made a bunch of amazing lifelong friends who know me for me and love me, and I will be so grateful for that forever.” – ASA Participant
Kupuohi vi. To flourish, grow vigorously, mature early, as an adolescent

Through the Kupuohi program, Hoʻokuaʻāina provides ʻāina-based education for K-12 students visiting multiple times throughout the school year, including ʻohana days where families are invited to join students, teachers, and Hoʻokuaʻāina staff for a workday in the loʻi. Our educational program focuses on Hawaiian values-based lessons, exposure to all stages of the kalo growth cycle, and opportunities for keiki to connect with ʻāina and community. We also have partnerships with colleges and universities, including internships, service learning opportunities, field trips, and research projects.
Kupuohi Participation

During 2022–2023, Ho’okua‘āina hosted 1,875 students and 88 educational events, the most in program history.

Students per Academic Year

- 2019-20: 500
- 2020-21: 1,000
- 2021-22: 1,500
- 2022-23: 2,000

Schools that participated in multiple visits:
- Aikahi Elementary School
- Kailua Elementary School
- Ka‘ala Elementary School
- Mālama Honua PCS

‘Ohana days for students, parents, and teachers:
- Kailua Elementary School
- Mālama Honua PCS

College research projects:
- Stanford University
- Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- Brown University
- Windward Community College

1875 Students
19 Schools
29 Classes
50 K-12 Visits
7 College Visits
31 Exchange & Outreach Events
Kupuohi
Evaluation

METHODS
- Teacher and Student Surveys
- Teacher Virtual Interviews
- Creative Student Reflections

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS
52 students shared a meaningful memory from the lo‘i and identified how their story made them feel...

- 92% strongly agreed or agreed they felt connected to themselves
- 95% strongly agreed or agreed they felt connected to place
- 82% strongly agreed or agreed they felt connected to people of the past
- 95% strongly agreed or agreed they felt connected to people of today
- 79% strongly agreed or agreed they felt connected to Hawaiian culture
Kupuohi
Student Stories

“I have been coming here since kindergarten, I have seen all the stages of kalo growing and all the different things the kalo needs. I feel like I know what is happening here. Every time I come here I see something new.”
- Mālama Honua Public Charter School, 5th Grade Student

“I learned that there is a lot of knowledge in experiences like this, where you learn things but not in the classroom.”
- ‘Aikahi Elementary School, 4th Grade Student

“Something that I learned was the importance of knowing your roots. These lo‘i patches truly were the life support of the native Hawaiian community and it is so vital to understand the story of the kalo and its relationship to the kanaka.”
- Punahou School, 9th Grade Student

Leaves look like big hearts
The sun hugs us with its warmth
Care for the Lo‘i:

Ka‘ala Elementary School, 4th Grade Student
“My proudest teaching moment came when my students learned about ahupua’a and investigated the role of the mahi’ai or farmer. This research came to life as they used their hands and feet to hehi the lepo. They loved the mo’olelo of Hāloa and how they could see the lau quivering in the wind; they could finally see how Hāloa got his name. Essentially, what we learned on paper suddenly sprang to life in front of them and it was a beautiful thing.”

– ‘Aikahi Elementary School, 4th Grade Teacher

“Every time I asked for chaperones, I had to turn them away. We had too much interest. Every parent was supportive of multiple site visits. Everyone is starting to see the value of ‘āina and learning outside of the classroom… Going four times, students were able to make connections throughout the year. Not just in school content, but in a growth mindset.”

– Kailua Elementary School, 3rd Grade Teacher

“The community day was attended by a diverse group of families. Some of them had lived in the area all their lives and yearned for a way to teach their children the importance of Kalo and sustainable farming to their cultural heritage but weren’t sure how to do it… We also had families attend that were new to Hawaii and they came to gain an understanding of the cultural values and practices of this special place. It’s not often that we give families an opportunity to learn alongside their children.”

– Kailua Elementary School, Family Engagement Lead
Kaiāulu  

n. community, neighborhood, village

Through the Kaiāulu program, Hoʻokuaʻāina hosts community gatherings for keiki to kūpuna to mālama ʻāina and build pilina to culture and place. This includes: volunteer workdays, educational walking tours, and cultural exchanges. For kūpuna (participants ages 60+), we also host virtual workshops and walking tours in collaboration with the St. Francis Healthcare System, and donate poi to those living at Kulanakauhale Maluhia O Na Kūpuna. We also facilitate workday exchanges with peer organizations, coming together to work on each other’s ʻāina, learn from recent collective challenges, and discuss opportunities for future growth and partnership collaborations.
**Kaiāulu Participation**

**Regular Community Visits:**
- Salvation Army Women’s Way
- Habilitat Rehabilitation Center
- American Medical Response
- Hula Grill

**‘Āina Partner Exchanges:**
- MA’O Organic Farms
- Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation
- Waiale’e Lako Pono

**Who participated in our community days?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Visits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Military Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports Teams</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>State Agencies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Industry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>First Responders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Āina &amp; Climate Organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Foundations &amp; Clubs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical &amp; Mental Health Centers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra Curricular Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Ohana and Individuals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Participation**
- 1667 Participants
- 71 Community Workdays
- 6 ‘Āina Partner Exchanges
- 5 Kūpuna Events
- 34 Exchange & Outreach Events
- 2 Cultural Exchanges

Number of visits:
- 0
- 5
- 10
- 15
- 20
- 25

**Regular Community Visits:**
- Salvation Army Women’s Way
- Habilitat Rehabilitation Center
- American Medical Response
- Hula Grill

**‘Āina Partner Exchanges:**
- MA’O Organic Farms
- Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation
- Waiale’e Lako Pono
“It was great getting to experience the hard work that goes into the lo‘i and keeping the Kalo healthy and growing. It provided me with an even deeper respect for the Hawaiian Culture, something I’ve always loved and appreciated, grew up around, and am blessed to know.” – Community Volunteer, Age 26-59

“The feeling of CONNECTION between so many different aspects—the Land, the Learnings we acquired, the group experience of working together.” – Community Volunteer, Age 26-59

“I learned that a loving home starts with the community.” – Community Volunteer, Age 5-15

“This experience bought joy to my heart, to be able to connect with the part of myself that has been yearning to get back to nature, time to appreciate the simple things in life, time to reflect and be grateful for all that we are blessed with.” – Community Volunteer, Age 26-59
“Sitting in the hale with kupuna listening to Dean and Michele share about the background and progress of Ho‘okua‘aina, hearing the voices of keiki, and observing hale maintenance going on in real time made me happy and hopeful for our community... There is a deep sense of peace and purpose in this place.”

– St. Francis Healthcare Senior Community Center Program Administrator

“Picked up the poi today. LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT... All the love that you folks put into making the poi makes it more ONO AND MORE MEANINGFUL to us who partake of it... Another plus for me when picking up the poi—is interacting with the kids—LOVE LOVE their care and aloha shown to all of us. Makes it a REAL FAMILY AFFAIR.”

– Returning Kūpuna Poi Customer

“I have hope for the future now after sitting here and listening to these young people share.”

– Kūpuna Virtual Presentation Attendee
The need for foundation grants decreased in 2022 due to an unexpected contribution in 2021 by Alaka‘ina Foundation and the rise in donations and earned revenue in 2022.
During the years most impacted by covid (2020-2021), our number of events and visitors decreased. Most of our outreach events were offered virtually. The number of youth in the mentoring program remained consistent during those years because of the need for safe spaces and mental health support. Kalo sales soared as the community became more aware of their local food resources.
After years of thoughtful and collaborative engagement with members of the community, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation and Trust for Public Land (TPL) have entered into an agreement in which TPL will purchase 1,084 acres of land for conservation in Maunawili Valley. TPL will transfer 116 acres of the agricultural lands to Ho'okua'aina and 59 acres to Kauluakalana, both ‘āina-based nonprofit organizations in Kailua. The remaining conservation and forest lands will be under the stewardship of the State Department of Land and Natural Resources to protect the ‘āina in partnership with our community for future generations.
This project is part of a decades-long effort by community organizations to ensure Maunawili Valley can resume its vital traditional role in the ahupua’a of Kailua as a source of free-flowing fresh water and a place of abundant agriculture and rich cultural resources.

Key partners and community members with long–standing ties to the land are working together toward intentional stewardship of this important place.

The goal is to return these lands to community stewardship so they can be revitalized ‘āina momona (fertile, abundant land) to support food and water security, native forest restoration, stream and spring health, habitats for endangered water birds, restoration of cultural sites, ‘āina-based education, kalo farming, agroforestry, and pono management of trails for cultural and recreational use.
Partners

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

MA’O Farms
Kauluakalana
Hui Mālama o Ke Kai
Kōkua Kalihi Valley
Papahana Kuaola
Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi
Paepae o Heʻeia
Kōkua Hawaiʻi Foundation
Waialeʻe Lako Pono
St. Francis Healthcare Systems
Kulanakauhale Maluhia o Na Kūpuna
Hui Mahiʻai ʻĀina
Hale Kipa
Koʻolau ʻĀina Aloha
Nā Hokua, University of Hawaiʻi
Windward Community College
Kapiolani Community College
Chaminade University

FOUNDATION PARTNERS

Alakaʻīna Foundation
Atherton Foundation
Harold K.L. Castle Foundation
Hauʻoli Mau Loa Foundation
Hawaii Community Foundation
Johnson Ohana Foundation
Kosasa Foundation
McInerny Foundation
Office of Youth Services
Weinberg Foundation
Staff
FY 2022–2023

Dean Wilhelm
Executive Co-Director
From Kailua, O‘ahu

Michele Wilhelm
Executive Co-Director
From Tulelake, CA

Kaulana Kealoha–Hanawahine
Alaka‘i Lo‘i
From Waimānalo, O‘ahu

Benji Ah Sing
Hoa‘āina Farm Operations Specialist
From Ko‘olaupoko, O‘ahu

Kazu Akiona–Banan
Hoa‘āina Farm Operations Specialist
From Kailua, O‘ahu

Kau‘i Nichols
Operations Manager
From Kaimukī, O‘ahu

Ari Lunow–Luke
Program Coordinator
From Kailua, O‘ahu

Becca Croft
Outreach Coordinator
From Buckinghamshire, UK
Board of Directors

Tara Flynn, President
Managing Member of Aonalu, LLC

Deborah Pope, Vice-President
Founding Member, Hui Maunawili-Kawainui

Ka’anohiokalā Kalama-Macomber, Secretary
Office of Hawaiian Education, Hawaii State Department of Education

Mark Kunimune, Director
Program Director Emergency Medical Services, Kapi‘olani Community College (RET)

Kathy Thurston, Director
General Contractor (RET)

Brook Emanuel, Director
Co-Founder & Strategist Hele Fitness

Lisa Maruyama, Director
Director President and CEO Hawai‘i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO)

Mike Wilson, Director
Supreme Court Justice (RET)

Ryan Young, Director
Retired Fire Chief, Contractor
Mahalo nui for your ongoing support of Ho'okua'āina in our journey of cultivating a culture of individual well-being and community waiwai.

Report produced by
Becca Croft, Ari Lunow-Luke, Michele Wilhelm

Evaluation conducted by
Kau'i Nichols, Becca Croft, Michele Wilhelm

Photography by

Ho'okua'āina
916E Auloa Rd.
Kailua, HI 96734
808-234-9597
info@hookuaaina.org
https://hookuaaina.org/
@hookuaaina