



Preparing Youth for Success: A look at Kahilu Theatre

Nestled at the center of Waimea is a treasure where community gathers, art is created, and talent is celebrated on the stage of Kahilu Theatre. Founded by Broadway actor and Parker Ranch heir, Richard Smart, Kahilu first raised its curtain in 1981. Since then, the theatre has grown to offer a variety of performing and visual arts and has recently expanded to create its own streaming platform: Kahilu TV.

Besides its ability to showcase exceptional local talent and demonstrate its support for multi-faceted engagement opportunities to learn from local artists, Kahilu is best known in Kūki'o for the multitude of opportunities available for youth to learn and fall in love with performing arts. Students at Kahilu study acting, dance, singing, and crafting – skills that have led to countless success stories and flourishing careers.

Beth Dunnington, Director of the Kahilu Youth Troupe and a Kahilu Performing Arts Center acting and musical theatre teacher, has seen these successes firsthand: "The Arts Ed programs at Kahilu are the heart of our theatre. I've had the great gift of watching and facilitating our young artists take what they've learned at Kahilu and become Broadway performers, theatre teachers, conductors, musical directors, composers, and choreographers."

Successes include Aidan Wharton who enjoyed performing in a Broadway tour of Wicked, Paul Gregg who is now a musical director, and Zen Kuriama who is pursuing a doctorate in conducting – each began performing in Kahilu's Youth Troupe. "There is nothing more significant than empowering our keiki to use their voices and become the artists they were meant to be. I'm honored to be part of a theatre that puts this mission in the foreground," shares Beth.



"Thank you to our generous Kūki'o donors for your support of our Kahilu arts classes and camps! You've made a substantial difference in our young artists' lives." – Sara Nealy, Kahilu Executive Director



Kahilu Theatre has received 12 grants totaling \$97,451 from the Kūki'o Community Fund since 2014.

Although there is resounding evidence that suggests that academic scores improve through participation in the arts, Hawai'i's schools have seen such programs squeezed out of classrooms for over a decade. "This makes our commitment to creating well-rounded individuals through arts experiences all the more significant," shares Kahilu Theatre Executive Director Sara Nealy. Kūki'o Community Fund's support of youth arts opportunities directly impacts youth success in school, work, and life. Your generosity makes this and many more successful youth opportunities possible. Thank you, Kūki'o!

To learn more about Kahilu Theatre, visit kahilutheatre.org

The Kūki'o Community Fund was established at the Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) in 2001 as a way for Kūki'o members to connect with the surrounding Hawai'i Island community through meaningful charitable giving opportunities. **We focus on the young people of Hawai'i Island because their success has a ripple effect on the entire community. By supporting education and youth development, the Kūki'o Community Fund increases the success of local youth in school, work, and life.**

Thanks to contributions from Kūki'o members, the Hawai'i Island community has benefited from over \$5.8 million through grants from our Kūki'o Community Fund. Currently, grants are used to support exceptional organizations that provide youth development programs on Hawai'i Island and to boost education success through Career Connected Learning, the ʻĒlama Program at Pālanuui, college scholarships for Kūki'o employees, and K-12 scholarships for dependents of Kūki'o employees.

Kūki'o members and local community leaders volunteer their wisdom, time and funds to lead the growth and oversee the grants of our fund. The committee is led and facilitated by HCF's Hawai'i Island-based staff who provide a local, professionally-managed, and cost effective mechanism for the fund's grantmaking and operations.

Learn more at hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/strengthening/kukiofund