

Students feed the community through Kūki'o's generosity



"It has been a joy to watch these dedicated individuals gain in confidence and expertise, to see them skillfully grow our initial small offerings of fresh produce into larger and more consistent contributions, and to hear from our community partners the growing appreciation they have for our efforts. I feel so incredibly fortunate to witness this unfolding."

– Willie Quayle

Ulu Mālama Terrace Farm Manager

The Kūki'o Community Fund recently granted Hawai'i Preparatory Academy (HPA) \$13,000 to expand its essential Sustainable Agriculture and Community Outreach program. Created at the beginning of 2021 in response to food insecurities on island, the program has since grown more than 1,900 pounds of fresh produce that has supplied community meals and food pantries through weekly distributions.

"It's very grounding to be in the garden, with the fresh air and being able to do hands-on work," says HPA 11th grader Alexandra-Belle Ounyoung. "I have found that I am able to connect to myself and also to my classmates as we come together to grow food for our community."

The success of this outreach program has led HPA's two school gardens to join Hawai'i Island's food distribution network, providing critical support to food systems that are already taxed by the prolonged pandemic. HPA anticipates it will grow 2,500 pounds of produce annually, providing the community with quality food through sustainable agriculture, career development, and leadership opportunities for its students.

Interns are being trained to coordinate plant cultivation and garden curriculum implementation, harvest and deliver produce, and bolster community outreach strategies. This program has already inspired two HPA students to pursue professional opportunities in the fields of food, farming, and social change. For 12th grader Ryan Berger, it is a priceless experience. "Every time I am in the garden, I learn about types of produce I have never heard of, and new techniques for growing and harvesting," she says. "What I love is I never know what I am going to learn but I always take away valuable new knowledge."

Since 1949, HPA has provided its students unique educational programs like the Sustainable Agriculture and Community Outreach, which fosters stewards who *mālama kaiāulu*, care for the community of spirit, land, and people. Students connect curriculum to cultivation practices in the gardens, gaining real-world, hands-on experience.

Over the last five years, the Kūki'o Community Fund has awarded HPA \$135,000 to support scholarships for Kūki'o Golf & Beach Club employees and their dependents. This latest HPA grant is the first awarded through HCF's Community Grants Program. The Kūki'o Community Fund awarded 30 youth-focused programs more than \$400,000 in 2021 through Community Grants. Learn more at:

<https://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/strengthening/kukiofund>

