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## VILLAGE HARVEST

Year 1 Project Report ~ 10/2014 through 9/2015

The Village Harvest project is a gleaning program that captures unused produce by harvesting and distributing it to schools, afterschool programs, and food banks on Kaua'i, utilizing community volunteers. The program is a collaborative partnership established in 2014 between Malama Kaua'i and the Kaua'i Master Gardener Program. The program began through \$10,000 in funding from the HMSA Foundation by Hawaii Medical Service Association.

Malama Kaua'i's Kaua'i School Garden Network was established in 2010 and supports all schools, PreK-12, on the island of Kaua'i. They provide funding, technical assistance, volunteer support for school gardens, local food in local schools program development, and the creation of wellness committees that are able to address school specific concerns around healthy food and nutrition choices.

The Kaua'i Master Gardener Program is a volunteer program administered by the University of Hawai'i (UH) College of Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) Cooperative Extension Service (CES). Kaua'i Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who assist the University in its mission to deliver horticulture information to the public through outreach and education. Volunteers must complete a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer service per year to support this mission, and many participated in the Village Harvest program.



Produce was harvested from 4 acres of orchards at the Kaua'i Agricultural Research Station, Malama Kaua'i's Community Farm, Kaua'i Community College's GoFarm program, small orchards and trees from residents' backyards, and large farm producers including Moloa'a Organica'a. Kaua'i Master Gardeners helped to prune, fertilize, and care for CTAHR's neglected orchards to increase productivity, and gleaning processing sinks/stations were installed at CTAHR's Kaua'i Agricultural Research Station on the east side and Malama Kaua'i's Community Farm on the north shore, to provide washing and packing stations for volunteers to utilize.

***With over 450 volunteer hours from Master Gardeners and community volunteers, Village Harvest was able to collect and deliver 9,187 pounds of produce to needy children and families within the first year of the program (2014 through Sept. 2015). As of December 12, 2015 we have collected over 12,133 pounds of produce and are up to 495 volunteer hours.***

We harvested donations of star fruit, lemons, grapefruit, soursop, pomelo, oranges, tangerines, mangoes, longan, dragon fruit, bananas, kale, and collard greens. Produce recipient organizations in the first year included: Boys & Girls Club of Hawaii (3 locations, ~300 students); Native Hawaiian Public Charter Schools (4 locations, ~350 students); Punana Leo O Kaua'i and Kamehameha Kamakani preschools (~100 students); the Hawai'i Food Bank's Kaua'i Branch (which distributes to food pantries across the island and is open during school breaks), and other needy locations on a lesser basis.

## Goals & Outcomes

We measure our success through the number of programs we reach, how many pounds of food are delivered, and the number of volunteer hours accumulated to demonstrate community involvement. The previous program grant period was from October through September, although we will move to a January-December year to be in line with our fiscal calendar year. Specific measurements, goals and objectives of this project include:



Measurement	Year 1 Goals	Year 1 Achievements	Year 2 Goals
# of schools/programs served with food delivery	7	9	12
# of pounds of produce harvested & delivered	8,000	9,187	15,000
# of volunteer hours accumulated	780	450	600
# of sites donating produce *	1	10	20

As of December 12, 2015 we have collected over 12,133 pounds of produce and are up to 495 volunteer hours.

*\* We added the category of # of sites donating produce because we were pleasantly surprised by the outpouring of community and business support for the program. We originally expected to be harvesting only from CTAHR's orchards, but the community responded with additional donations from residents and farms! In 2016 we're aiming to increase our community outreach on agricultural waste and the hunger needs of Kaua'i to engage and inspire even more donors.*

## Success Stories

To say the produce deliveries were a success is an understatement!

Schools and afterschool programs utilized the fruit donations to provide fresh, healthy snacks for the children, the majority of which do not have regular access to fresh fruits and vegetables, especially the more expensive varieties. For many children it was the first time they were exposed to such fruits, even





though the island is a prolific producer of them. The food bank was also very grateful to receive surplus donations and deliveries during times when schools were not in session.

Aunty Lovey of Kapa`a Boys & Girls Club has been especially resourceful, taking even the bruised and imperfect fruit and turning them into new products such as baked goods for the children. For other schools, we helped to acquire processing tools such as juicers and blenders so they could make smoothies and juice drinks for the kids.



There were multiple opportunities to incorporate nutrition education into Village Harvest fruit deliveries as well. We utilized tangerines, mandarins, oranges, grapefruit and starfruit from Village Harvest for juicing to make popsicles and smoothies during hot summer days. Misha Taylor, owner of Aloha 'Aina Juice Bar, visited multiple times to Waimea Boys and Girls Club to do demos and give the kids a lesson on the nutritional values of the fruit, as well as how to buy local produce to support Kaua`i's sustainability.

We also had a lot of success in stretching our funding with help from the community. Although we requested funding for one sink installation at CTAHR, due to generous donations of sink hardware, we were able to install two sinks for the price of one: one at CTAHR and one at Malama Kaua`i's Community Farm, so we now have two different areas for processing and packing.

## Challenges

Originally, we aimed to provide food safety training to schools and the community as a part of this program. Master Gardeners did receive a food safety training through CTAHR Cooperative Extension Services; however, they did not feel confident enough to relay this training to school garden programs. The Hawai'i School Garden HUI, of which we are a member, is currently working on more formalized curriculum for these trainings, and once available, we would be interested in revisiting offering these food safety trainings to the community, including school garden programs. However, we did not want to



duplicate efforts by working to develop a curriculum for food safety delivery when it was already being planned.

Additionally, the Master Gardener Program lost its Program Coordinator in 2015, which prevented a new class of volunteers joining the program this year. Thankfully a new Program Coordinator started in December and a new class of Master Gardener volunteers will be trained and incorporated into the program in 2016, increasing the pool of MG volunteers.

The most difficult part of this project was running a 100% volunteer-based program, with no paid staff support whatsoever. We've had 5 staff volunteering approximately 25 total hours per week, and still had to turn down many possible harvests/donations because we ran into periods where people were too busy with work or other projects to respond to donors, attend picking and distribution events, or coordinate/outreach to volunteers. We also didn't have anyone who could dedicate consistent effort to new volunteer recruitment and community outreach. There were many weeks we could have held picks three or four times per week but only had the volunteers to do once per week. There was a realization that in order to effectively promote and organize volunteer opportunities for the community to get involved in the program we would need a staff person dedicated to such efforts; when we did put these opportunities out there, there was strong interest and response.



We also had difficulty finding volunteers who had room in their vehicles for so many boxes of produce to deliver (even we were surprised by the donations available!). We had obtained a truck to utilize in this program at our own expense, but the transmission failed, so we are hoping to replace it with future funding in order to have a dedicated vehicle that can get into farms with muddy and difficult terrain, and have enough room to store and deliver all of the harvest.

For the schools and afterschool programs, a challenge was not having the tools to transform some of the food items into something interesting after many repeat donations. The programs that did have juicers and blenders were able to get creative in making popsicles, juice mixes, and smoothies to ensure that all fruit went unwasted and children were provided a healthy snack. Thus, we would also like to purchase more blenders, juicers, and other food processing tools for the schools and programs that do not currently have them. Having these tools available also helped the children learn culinary skills and participate in hands-on nutrition education.



## Future Plans

After executing Village Harvest for a year as a small Master Gardener class project, we are humbled and enthusiastic about the community's response and the program's impact, and we are highly encouraged to expand the program significantly. One of the most exciting aspects of piloting this program has been that we've yet to fully understand the capacity of the community. There are many more donors and volunteers available than we've been able to manage to date.

A few new goals for the program to ensure that can continue be a bridge between available resources are to (1) hire a staff person to build the program's capacity, expansion and sustainability, (2) acquire needed equipment resources previously unidentified, such as a delivery vehicle and food processing supplies, and (3) meet identified needs in food tree production by planting new low-cost orchards as investments in the program's future.



Ideally, we would like to hire a Program Coordinator so that this program can not only meet the demand from interested donors, but to expand its reach to include volunteer recruitment from the broader community (including visitors) and deliver community presentations to engage more of the community around the issues of hunger and agricultural waste on Kaua'i. Most importantly, we aim to find a way to create program sustainability for staffing needs as this is an area that is notoriously difficult for us to acquire funding for.



AmeriCorps is open to a cost-sharing arrangement for a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA, which will cost us under \$8k annually, but will provide full-time program coverage for up to three years. The goal within this program would be for the VISTA to create program sustainability over the three-year period through outreach, fundraising and volunteer training as the program grows and expands into the hands of created community gleaning groups. We're excited about this proposal, as a part-time staff person would cost us more than a full-time VISTA position would.

By operating the program for a year we were also able to identify slow periods of existing food tree resources that we have access to, which will allow us to plan orchard plantings to meet the gaps in food production. We have access to land on Malama Kaua'i's Community Farm and at CTAHR's Agricultural Research Station to plant more trees, so we will be planning to plant trees that will produce during our current slow periods of fruit production.