Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation supports environmental education in Hawai‘i’s schools and communities. Our mission is to provide students with experiences that will enhance their appreciation for and understanding of their environment so they will be lifelong stewards of the earth.

2020 challenged all of us to make big changes and it was no different with Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation’s programming. We’ve adapted to serve our community and are grateful for all the educators, administrators, volunteers, partners, members and supporters who continue to contribute in so many ways. Despite the interruption in on campus learning and in person events, we were able to reach thousands of children and community members through our programs during the 2020-2021 school year.

‘ĀINA In Schools is a farm to school initiative that connects children to their local land, waters, and food to grow a healthier Hawai‘i.

Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation works directly with 23 O‘ahu elementary schools that implement the ‘ĀINA In Schools program.

With students learning at home for most of the fall semester, ‘ĀINA Lessons took different forms at each school. We’re inspired by our partner schools and teachers who created innovative ways for their students to experience ‘ĀINA lessons and concepts at home and on campus. ‘ĀINA Schools that opted to continue providing adapted ‘ĀINA lessons received soil, seeds, kalo huli, plant starters, and ‘ĀINA Student Workbooks according to their needs. Highlights include: Blanche Pope Elementary sent home kalo with students to grow; Hale‘iwa Elementary second graders received ‘ĀINA Nutrition Lessons from their teacher and also raised caterpillars at home and at school to observe the butterfly life cycle; Kahuku Elementary students received ‘ĀINA Garden and ‘ĀINA Nutrition Lessons from their school’s garden teacher and participated in a school garden club; Liholiho’s ‘ĀINA Team Coordinator taught Nutrition Lessons online from her kitchen; Wai‘alae Public Charter School’s fourth graders grew a Hawaiian Garden; SBES sixth graders visited the Kōkua Learning Farm virtually; and Waialua Elementary’s third graders received virtual ‘ĀINA Compost Lessons from a long-time ‘ĀINA Docent.

KHF staff developed videos inspired by ‘ĀINA Garden, Compost, and Nutrition lessons for teachers to share with their students. ‘ĀINA Videos were shot on location at the Kōkua Learning Farm, Keiki and Plow, Nursery Garden, and Sunset Beach Elementary School and feature ‘ĀINA In Schools staff and local keiki and were filmed and edited by local videographer Tahnei Roy. These videos feature lesson content, activities, how-tos, and recipes from the ‘ĀINA In Schools Curriculum. Videos are posted on our website.

KHF took our ‘ĀINA Chef Visits online this semester. 378 people took part in the October Farm to School Month ‘ĀINA Cooking For Change Cooking virtual family cooking series. We partnered with ‘ĀINA Chefs Ed Kenney, Dave Caldiero, Mark Naguchi, Lamont Brown, and Tiffanie Masutani to host live online workshops and the ‘Ulu Co-op to feature ‘ulu in each recipe. We also partnered with Chef Hui to distribute cooking kits to families with ingredients for each weekly recipe. In November, we partnered with Chef Hui and Whole Foods Market to distribute Mahi’ai Meal Kits to 600 families at four ‘ĀINA Schools. In December over 200 people participated in the ‘ĀINA Cooking For Change Holiday Series with Master Food Preserver Terri Langley. Chef Hui provided 150 cooking kits featuring fresh produce for workshop participants. All ‘ĀINA Cooking for Change videos are available to rewatch on our website.

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2020-2021
Mid-Year Report
Since acquiring 8 acres in the heart of Hale‘iwa in 2019, we’ve been busy working towards establishing mission driven agricultural, educational, and retail activities which benefit the community and promote local food, waste reduction, and environmental stewardship.

To see a video presentation about our vision for the Hale‘iwa property, go to kokuahawaiifoundation.org/haleiwa.

The Kōkua Learning Farm covers 7 acres with a variety of eco-zones which will showcase several aspects of our local food system. These include ‘ĀINA In Schools demonstration gardens, production fields, orchards, native constructed wetlands, lo‘i, native plants, and a compost area that all provide educational opportunities for keiki and community. It is our hope that this farm will blossom into an educational and agricultural destination, encouraging learners of all ages to actively support their local food system.

In the last several months, we have cleared debris and invasives from the fields, tested water and soil, and planted cover crops to increase soil health. We’ve experimented with different vegetable crops as we identify which varieties will grow best at the farm. We’ve grown kalo, carrots, corn, sunflowers, radishes, kale, eggplant, collards and so much more. We now have two 50’ by 125’ plots in cultivation. A major portion of our garden is currently dedicated to growing and perpetuating 26 kalo varieties to share with our students and community members in the future. This work is only possible because of the careful cultivation and maintenance of these varieties by Waimea Valley, Hui Kū Maoli Ola, Malama Lo‘i o Hale‘iwa, and the many 4th grade students and docents at our ‘ĀINA Schools.

We are grateful to have hosted Kilo Kai, a cohort of marine science students through WIRED (Watershed Investigations, Research, Education, and Design) a program of the Pacific American Foundation. This collection of students from high schools around O‘ahu visited the Kōkua Learning Farm to measure data on turbidity, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, nitrites, and more as indicators of water quality. Our hope is that after restoring this area of the property by reestablishing lo‘i and planting native plants we will see a marked increase in water quality.

Although we haven’t been able to gather large groups for community work days, we are grateful to the many people who have contributed to the farm’s growth this semester, including: 808 Cleanups, Coronacare Hawai‘i, Patagonia, our group of regular high school interns, and the many additional volunteers who have helped us clear invasive trees, weed, move soil and mulch, plant crops, and share food with the community through the past months. We send additional thanks to Hawaiian Earth Recycling for their generous donations of soil and compost for the farm that has allowed us to support school projects and community plant distributions at several of our ‘ĀINA Schools.

As we focus on providing learning opportunities and producing local food at the farm, we are also excited to share lessons beyond Hawai‘i’s shores. Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation co-founders Kim & Jack Johnson kicked off Farm Aid 2020 from the Kōkua Learning Farm. Jack played a few songs amongst the kalo with Mt. Ka‘alā in the background and shared our vision for the Kōkua Learning Farm with viewers.

The progress we’ve made with the help of our volunteers and partners so far is inspiring and we look forward to sharing the fruits of our labor soon!
Kökua Community Center will be a gathering place for the community to learn, share skills, stories and ideas, through workshops, classes and other learning opportunities.

While working to make Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation’s new Hale‘iwa home ready for our community, KHF Co-founder Jack Johnson discovered a thriving bee community living in the old walls of what will become the Kōkua Community Center. Our beekeeping friends, Katie Metzger and Jaden Pang, helped us to safely move this hive to a new home and harvest some honey. We can’t wait to have beehives at the Kōkua Learning Farm!

Our vision for the Kōkua General Store is to create a bulk, refill, low waste, and eco-friendly lifestyle products store. The Kōkua General Store will provide the community the tools they need to reduce waste in their lives.

Over three weekends in December, the Kōkua General Store hosted a series of Simplify the Holidays pop-ups as well as the Plastic Free Hawai‘i Art Show. We also sold Plastic Free Hawai‘i reusable items and sustainable gifts created by local businesses and artisans.

Kōkua Vintage will have curated collections of second-hand clothing, records, books, housewares, artwork and more; promoting second-hand over new. The Kōkua Vintage space will be a section within the Kōkua General Store.

As part of our December pop-ups, we partnered with Maitais & Rainbows, Hungry Ear Records, Rex Shanahan, and Mark Cunningham to offer vintage clothing, records, and books for sale.

At the ‘ĀINA Farm Stand we will share the bounty of local food producers. The ‘ĀINA Farm stand will sell farm-fresh produce from the Kōkua Learning Farm and other local farmers and producers, as well as value-added products, locally grown flowers & lei, and be a CSA and CSF (community supported fisheries) pick up location.

In October and December, we held a series of pop-ups at the ‘ĀINA Farm Stand, distributing ingredient kits for the ‘ĀINA Cooking for Change series. We also sold ‘ĀINA In Schools garden kits that included seeds, plant starters, garden tools, and gloves so keiki could plant their own ‘ĀINA-themed gardens at home. Mahalo to the Lowe’s Honolulu store for their generous product donations to put together these kits.

The Kōkua Backyard Garden will be a welcoming edible and native landscape where the community can come to learn and draw inspiration to cultivate household food production and composting skills.

The vision for this space was created in partnership with WATG as part of their Deserving Designs Award. We are excited to break ground in 2021!

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3R’s School Recycling Program empowers students to engage and educate their school community about the 3R’s—reduce, reuse, recycle.

KHF currently supports 107 schools with their on-campus recycling, waste auditing, and composting solutions. KHF hosted 5 Aloha Āina Recycling Drives from August to December, where nearly 60,000 pounds of metals, electronics, beverage containers, paper, batteries, household items, and oil were collected and diverted from the waste stream. Fifty adult volunteers assisted at these recycling drives, with proceeds from the sale of select recycled materials going directly back to the host schools.

Plastic Free Hawai’i seeks to minimize single-use plastics by educating and empowering schools, businesses & community members across Hawai’i.

In July PFH partnered with Sustainable Coastlines Hawai’i for their Socially Distanced Island Wide Cleanup. A total of 3 sites on the North Shore were facilitated by PFH, with over 1,000 pounds of debris collected at Mokule‘ia Army Beach, Camp Mokule‘ia and Kahuku Golf Course Beach. 65 Community members volunteered, including the Waialua High School Eco-Club, Family Promise, and Girl Scouts Troop #789 from Kāne‘ohe, who also donated 12 sand sifters that the troop made from recycled materials.

PFH made 3 virtual school presentations to a total of 82 students. Presentations included Farrington High School’s Science Podcast which is sponsored by the Hawai‘i Science Teachers Association and classes held at UH Mānoa’s Sustainability Department and College of Education.

PFH participated in 10 socially distanced community outreach events on O‘ahu, supported by 10 PFH volunteers reaching over 570 community members. They included Hawai‘i’s Nature Center; Art Explorium’s Creative ReUse Open Houses; Bishop Museum events; Ocean Voyages Institute at Kewalo Basin; Punahou Operation Leadership Program; and the Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Take Action Summit. PFH is proud to be a mentor for the Hawai‘i Youth Sustainability Challenge and has been paired up with St. Andrew’s Priory’s “Mālama Āina at the Priory” team! PFH has donated 150 bamboo sporks to the team to help grades 7-12 and faculty of St. Andrew’s Priory to minimize their single-use plastics at school. Additionally, over 300 bamboo sporks were donated at community outreach events. The Bishop Museum continues to house one PFH Water Refill Station averaging 350 attendees per week.

6 PFH retailers continue to carry our PFH merchandise, including Kailua Beach Adventures, Cove Collection, Hale‘iwa Bottle Shop, Guava Shop, Just Kiddies, Kai Ku Hale, and Global Village. PFH continues to support these local businesses during these most challenging times. PFH merchandise is also available through our online store.

Ko-kua Hawai‘i Foundation Project Grants support teachers and students from Hawai‘i schools in advancing their environmental education goals and pursuing innovative stewardship projects in and out of the classroom.

Teachers have applied for 16 KHF Project Grants this semester. Grants include funding for school garden teacher trainings, outdoor learning spaces, and seed packet distribution to students for garden lessons happening at home via distance learning. 36 students from 13 schools are implementing their Hawai‘i Youth Sustainability Program projects through funding and mentorship support from KHF in partnership with Kupu.

Ko-kua Hawai‘i Foundation Field Trip Grants give schools the financial assistance needed to bring students to outdoor sites where they can experience hands-on learning about Hawai‘i’s environment.

With the shift to distance and blended learning, no in-person field trips occurred this past semester. Grade 6 students from Sunset Beach Elementary attended a virtual field trip to the Kōkua Learning Farm. We encourage teachers to reach out regarding virtual and in-person field trips.

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P.O. Box 866, Hale‘iwa, HI 96712  *  info@kokuahawaiifoundation.org