



**Agricultural
Leadership
Foundation of
Hawai'i**

99-193 Aiea Heights Dr., Ste. 300-A
Aiea, Hawai'i 96701
telephone/fax (808) 947-2914
email office@agleaderhi.org

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MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Kim Coffee-Isaak
808 947-2914

alfhoffice@hawaii.rr.com

Agricultural Leadership Foundation of Hawai'i Celebrated 25 Years with Talk Story Learning Sessions, an Alumni Reunion, a Feast at Kahua Ranch and the Graduation of Class XI

After 25 years of providing Leadership Training, the Agricultural Leadership Foundation of Hawai'i decided to celebrate with a 2-day event in Waimea on Hawaii. The goal of the event was to Celebrate, Network and Learn. All goals were accomplished with much cheer, laughter, sustained listening and meaningful conversations.

The Learning Sessions highlighted some of the best practices in collaborative endeavors in Hawaii's agricultural industry by presenting story telling sessions at sites that also demonstrate successful agri-businesses or partnerships. Learning Session Topics included: *Working Together – Strengthening Our Industry*, *The Art of Balance: Agriculture's Role in Working Green Spaces and Water Resources* and *Building Sustainable Communities: Ag Tourism, Farmers Markets, Culture, Innovation and Niche Markets*. Many of the Ag Leadership alumni were the storytellers. Judy S. Brown, a speaker and facilitator from Maryland, facilitated and helped us uncover the common ground in our work. She also helped us better understand and fully utilize the story dimension of our work. The group of 40 spent time at UH-CTAHR Mealani Research Station, Daniel Thiebauts Restaurant, Hawaiian Homestead Farmers Market in Waimea, Honopua Farm and Kahua Ranch. Billy Kenoi started the weekend off with an energetic series of stories that illustrate the unique opportunities we have in Hawaii to work together collaboratively. A 4th Learning Session facilitated by Donna Ching explored *Ag Leadership in the 21st Century*. This session was designed to ensure ALFH programs meet the needs of our community.

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Over 60 people attended the BBQ at the ranch and the setting was stunning. A 9.8 sunset with sweeping views of the mountains and coast, live music by ALFH alumni George Kahumoku, lots of cold local beer, excellent tasty Hawaii island food-cooked to perfection, and friends and family to reminisce our collective memories from 25 years of important work in our communities. Monty Richards received an award of honor as one of our founding members. While not present, we also honored Jane Yamashiro, Yoshio Watanabe, Slim Takayama and Dr. Tadashi Higaki, also founding members. Their vision 25 years ago has bourn much fruit.

And another class completed its 16-month program. A slide show, giving and receiving of gifts and certificate presentations engendered much smiling and clapping. Congratulations to Class XI: Kamaui Aiona, Garden Director, Kahanu Garden of the National Tropical Botanical Garden; Tova Callender, Agricultural Systems Modeler & Educator, Maui Land & Pineapple Co., Diversified and Organic Crops; Robert Lu'uwai, Manager, Factory Operation for Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Co.; Stephen H. Onaga, Manager, Purchasing & Inventory for Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Co; Mike Poteet, Assistant Agronomist, Hawaii Agriculture Research Center; Lani Weigert, Co-owner and Marketing, PR Director for Ali'i Kula Lavender; Kawika Winter, Director, Limahuli Garden and Preserve and George "Keoki" Wood, Livestock Operations Manager, Parker Ranch

The agricultural industry in Hawaii has gone through a tremendous transformation in the past 30 years. Many ALFH alumni have played key roles in developing an industry that continues the potential to positively impact the quality of life for all in Hawai`i. The two-day anniversary program continued our work of listening for common and important themes and searching for potential answers to our ongoing challenges. We reflected and responded. We deepened, renewed and began friendships. We enjoyed the beauty of the Waimea. But mostly we had fun.

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If you have space you may include the following information about Class XI. I also can send head shots of each if you want them.

Kamaui Aiona, Garden Director, Kahanu Garden of the National Tropical Botanical Garden. Kamaui manages this Hawaiian ethnobotanical garden and Piilanihale Heiau, a 500 year old Hawaiian temple on the garden property. He has a bachelor's degree in Hawaiian Studies and Natural Sciences and an M.S. in Botany. His primary goal is to maintain a harmonious balance between the garden operations and the appropriate management of the heiau.

Tova Callender, Agricultural Systems Modeler & Educator, Maui Land & Pineapple Co., Diversified and Organic Crops. Raised in Canada, Tova has a B.S. in Environmental Biology from McGill University and a master's of Environmental Science and Management from UC Santa Barbara. She is thrilled to be coordinating sustainable agriculture research, fostering youth's interest in farming and facilitating sustainability initiatives at ML&P.

Robert Lu'uwai, Manager, Factory Operation for Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Co., HC&S's principal businesses are the growing and milling of sugarcane (for raw sugar, molasses, and Maui Brand specialty sugar) and the generation and of sale of electricity. Robert earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Oregon State University. He currently serves as the commodore for the Ma'alaea Boat and Fishing Club, director for the Ma'alaea Ebesu Kotohira Jinsha Church and a member of Protect Kaho'olawe Ohana.

Stephen H. Onaga, Manager, Purchasing & Inventory for Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Co.. HC&S's principal businesses are the growing and milling of sugarcane (for raw sugar, molasses, and Maui Brand specialty sugar) and the generation and of sale of electricity. Steve earned a B.A. in Finance from the University of Hawaii. He currently serves on the board of directors for the Alexander & Baldwin Sugar Museum and was past President.

Mike Poteet, Assistant Agronomist, Hawaii Agriculture Research Center. Mike earned a B.S. in Agriculture from Austin Peay State University and an M.S. in Soil Science from Penn State. He is responsible for making agronomic recommendations and conducting field experiments for Hawaii's two sugar plantations. Mike's research interests include drought-tolerant crops and oilseed crops. He is a member of the Agronomy Society of America and the Soil Science Society of America.

Lani Weigert, Co-owner and Marketing, PR Director for Ali'i Kula Lavender. After working in the travel industry for 28 years, Lani helped create Ali'i Kula Lavender, as Maui's Premier Lavender Farm. Lani oversees all marketing and public relations. She is a member of the Maui Farm Bureau, founding member of the State Ag Department's Seal of Quality program, and Co-chair for Maui Economic Development Board Membership committee.

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Kawika Winter, Director, Limahuli Garden and Preserve. Kawika runs a one thousand acre botanical garden and nature preserve that is managed by the non-profit organization, National Tropical Botanical Garden. Limahuli's goal is to restore the ecological and cultural integrity of the ahupua'a of Ha'ena. Some of the major projects at Limahuli include native forest restoration, lo'i restoration, and traditional fishery management.

George "Keoki" Wood, Livestock Operations Manager, Parker Ranch. Keoki is married to Lisa a D.V.M in Kamuela, with two children, John (19) a freshman at C.S.U. and Justina (16) at Hawaii Prep. He graduated with a B.S. in Agricultural Economics from Washington State University. Memberships include the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Hawaii Cattlemen's Association, Hawaii Cattle Producers Cooperative, Hawaii County 4H Club and Saint Joseph's Catholic Mission Church.