



**Hawaiian  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Hawaiian Electric grants to help strengthen Waimānalo community by advancing resilience initiatives**

*Two community nonprofits awarded a total of \$50,000*

**HONOLULU, June 10, 2021** – Hawaiian Electric has awarded \$25,000 grants to Waimānalo-based nonprofits Hui Mālama O Ke Kai Foundation and Waimānalo Learning Center for initiatives aimed at building community resilience. Their programs are rooted in community engagement, educational excellence, and Hawaiian culture, which also are foundational to Hawaiian Electric’s sustainability and resilience initiatives.

**Hui Mālama O Ke Kai (HMK)**, which facilitates positive youth development with a focus on Native Hawaiian population, will use the Hawaiian Electric grant for its Pili ‘Ana or Connecting Community Project that will expand its space to meet new physical distancing guidelines. In selecting HMK, Hawaiian Electric recognized the economic impact and mental stress caused by the pandemic – especially on families in disadvantaged communities – and acknowledged the nonprofit’s well-established role in addressing the Waimānalo community’s priority needs.

Central to the Pili ‘Ana project is a 3,312 square-foot covered deck that can serve as the physical heart of the community with spacious accommodations for after-school cultural, craft and other activities by pre-teens, young adult and adult participants in HMK’s programs. The space also can be used by more than 400 community members in Waimānalo, providing a safe place to gather and connect as a community.

**Waimānalo Learning Center (WLC)** is a community-driven program that provides educational outreach and training based on Native Hawaiian cultural knowledge to improve food security, health, and holistic wellness of community members. WLC will use the Hawaiian Electric grant funds to continue its education, outreach and engagement activities through a Community Coordinator. Hawaiian Electric believes WLC and its community coordinator can serve as an innovative model of community resilience and engagement, especially during a global pandemic in which self-sufficiency and community wellness are critical.

“This grant means I can continue to serve, teach, learn from and share ‘āina-based education with my community,” said Ilima Ho-Lastimoso, WLC’s community coordinator and a lifelong Waimānalo resident. Under Aunty Ilima, as she is affectionately known, involvement in WLC programs has grown exponentially from less than 100 to about 9,000 members as participants’ interest in learning to grow to their own nutritious and culturally relevant food through aquaponics, egg production and gardening has increased. Aunty Ilima, who went back to school at age 42 years to earn her degree from Windward Community College, also is a community

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leader, Native Hawaiian cultural and medicinal practitioner, and Master Gardener. Her deeply rooted ties and understanding of the Waimānalo community’s needs combined with an inclusive approach are key to the success of WLC’s programs, from keiki to kūpuna.

WLC is a program under the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), which runs 18 agricultural research stations across the state. WLC was established in response to Waimānalo community leaders’ requests that the CTAHR Waimānalo Research Station support community engagement and programs that promote food security, resilience and access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The coordinator position was created in 2014 to meet the community’s needs and promote community-based agriculture and food production.

“I can’t express how much it means to be able to live, work and play in the homestead where I grew up, the place I cherish, and where I raised my children,” added Aunty Ilima. “It’s priceless.”

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Hale Limu Lipu'upu'u is one of the cultural spaces that was built at the Waimānalo Learning Center through Aunty Ilima’s partnerships and its many community volunteers. Photo courtesy of Dr. Jane Chung-Do, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Office of Public Health Studies.

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