

## **MA‘O Organic Farms**

### **21st Century ‘Auwai of Educational & Entrepreneurial Programs**

*“Love, respect and the willingness to work.”*

—Uncle William Aila, Sr.

Across many generations of working the ‘āina, the land, our ancestors have bequeathed us the abundance that is derived within the bounds of our ahupua‘a and moku, our watershed and region. These ancestors enhanced the natural waterways, building ‘auwai that intentionally managed precious fresh water within the ahupua‘a to ensure that the people and the ‘āina flourished.

Extending from the po‘owai, the headwaters, to the muliwai, the nearshore estuaries, the ‘auwai is a key organizing principle of our people, weaving producers of our crops and the caretakers of our fisheries into a sophisticated and abundant closed-loop community food system that linked people to the ‘āina through a practice. The efficacy of this model cannot be argued as our Hawaiian ancestors maintained a large, healthy population on the most remote archipelago on the face of the earth.

To affirm the resiliency of our ancestral frameworks, MA‘O and the Kauhale organizes our educational and entrepreneurial programs similar to the ‘auwai principle. By linking our ahupua‘a and moku resources and communities of practice, we are able to create an ‘auwai, a pathway for our waiwai, our precious youth, that starts from the po‘owai of pre-natal care, through through primary and secondary education institutions, and emanating in the muliwai of post-secondary education and gainful employment.

Our contemporary *‘auwai* serves to:

1. Align and effectively distribute our abundant resources of knowledge and practice;
2. Support and strengthen youth along an ‘auwai of personal and profession empowerment;
3. Reconcile and restore our ancestral abundance that will sustain the community.

## **Farm To Fork**

Farm To Fork strives to create an intentional, high-quality educational experience for teachers and students through a dynamic, hands-on, and experiential interaction with the ‘āina- that which feeds. Farm To Fork fosters and nurtures a connection of youth to their food by introducing them to the farmers who grow their food and sharing how their food is grown. Each Farm To Fork visit offers our visitors a walking tour of our organic farm, a hands on educational activity to learn about organic and sustainable farming practices, a farm to fork lesson and a food tasting to help connect participants to what the ‘āina provides. Educational visits are specially arranged for schools groups and are conducted at MA‘O every Tuesday and Thursday (some Saturdays upon request).

## **MA‘O Youth Leadership Training**

The MA‘O high school and college Youth Leadership Training internships are the Wai‘anae Community Re-Development Corporation’s first seed program and the edu-preneurial core of the ‘auwai system. In partnership and collaboration with other community organizations and Leeward Community College, the YLT addresses the generational economic and educational disparities suffered the Wai‘anae community. The YLT is a 2-year farm to college program that invests in our youth who are our waiwai, our most valuable asset and connect them to their community to instill in their kuleana and responsibility to of malama ‘āina, all while earning a college degree, an educational stipend, and contributing

positively to the local community food system. All interns making good progress in their leadership program are also eligible to participate in an Individual Development Account matched savings program.

### **MA‘O and the Kauhale**

The Kauhale is a MA‘O collaborative partnership with Wai‘anae High School’s Searider Productions and their for-profit spinoff Mākaha Studios. MA‘O expanded its Youth Leadership Training to include a digital media edu-preneurial internship at Searider Productions and Mākaha Studios in which the digital arts provides a venue from which the ancestral practice of mo‘olelo or storytelling to take root in a 21st century context. The Digital Media Youth Leadership Training empowers youth to utilize their storytelling knowledge and expertise to further our vision and mission: restoration of our ancestral abundance in perpetuity for the prosperity of the Wai‘anae moku and Hawai‘i nei.

The Kauhale also produces the Spring Break and Fall Break Youth Leadership Training for high school students. These are important opportunities to plant the seeds in the minds of youth that idea that college partnered with meaningful community work is not only possible but, necessary to be successful. High school students are selected to participate in a week long internship where youth are introduced to college knowledge, preparatory seminars coupled with instruction in professional knowledge and skill sets in the trades of organic agriculture and digital media.

### **Ho‘owaiwai Youth Leadership Training & Externships**

The Ho‘owaiwai Youth Leadership Training (HYLT) is an internship program designed to facilitate continued leadership development after youth have completed the YLT program. The HYLT works to continue nurturing and strengthening our youth’s personal, academic and professional capacity through specialized engagement in the organizational operations as well by assigning special asset building projects to complete. Interns are assigned to a staff mentor with whom they work collaboratively to accomplish the assigned tasks and overall project goals. All students are required to participate in an Individual Development Account (IDA) matched savings program to be used for their educational needs, and concurrently be enrolled college students working actively toward a 4-year degree. Upon completion of the internship, all students are eligible to apply for a position in a specially designed externship developed in collaboration with several community organizations, including the Kamehameha Schools Community Learning Centers in Nānākuli and Mā‘ili, the University of Hawai‘i at West O‘ahu, Mākaha Studios, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.