

Hawai'i Forest Institute Awarded Hawaii Life Charitable Fund of the Hawai'i Community Foundation Grant

The Hawai'i Forest Institute (HFI) has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from Hawaii Life Charitable Fund (HLCF) at the Hawai'i Community Foundation through the Mealoha Kraus People's Choice Award Program.

Mealoha Kraus was a well-loved Hawai'i Life broker and the HLCF's first Board Chair. She lost her battle with breast cancer in late 2019. Mealoha was a leader in every sense of the word, and under her leadership, the HLCF raised and distributed more than \$200,000 in 2018 to help with recovery efforts from the flooding on Kaua'i and O'ahu, and the volcanic eruption on Hawai'i Island. Mealoha remains a guiding light for the HLCF and they honor the contributions she has made to this profession, her community, family, and Hawai'i Life.



▲ Site Manager Wilds Pihanui Brawner gives a planting demonstration for students at Ka'upulehu Dryland Forest.

Each year, Hawai'i Life agents and brokers collectively choose a giving focus for the grant program. The HLCF Board of Directors makes grants available to eligible 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations across the state whose programs align with both their mission and giving focus for that calendar year.

HFI's forest restoration and education projects fit nicely with Hawaii Life Charitable Fund's focus for 2022 – Hawaiiana - Perpetuating the culture, traditions and history of our first ancestors who settled these Hawaiian Islands”.

The *Ho'ola Ka Makana 'ā o Ka'upulehu* project includes forest restoration and education at Ka'upulehu Dryland Forest and Kalaemanō Cultural Center in North Kona on Hawai'i Island. The Ka'upulehu Cultural Ecology Team shares stories of place, ancestral connections, and natural history of these rare dryland ecosystems, intertwining a forest restoration and homeland perspective into 'āina-based learning.

The *Keauhou Bird Conservation Center (KBCC) Discovery Forest* project involves outplanting native seedlings in a endemic forest canopy with *Acacia koa* and 'Ōhi'a Lehua as the pioneer species. Twenty different native species have been outplanted at the Discovery Forest since 2014. KBCC Caretaker Ulumauahi Keali'ikanaka'ole coordinates student volunteer events and inspires youth to bond with their environment through service-learning activities connecting science with culture. Birds being cared for at KBCC are the 'Alalā (extinct in the wild), Palila, 'Akeke'e, and 'Akikiki.

The *Go Native: Growing a Native Hawaiian Urban Forest* project includes producing a video series and a quick reference guide encouraging people to plant native and Polynesian-introduced seedlings. The videos will target a non-technical audience and will walk the viewer through the stages of creating or converting their landscape to native and/or Polynesian-introduced plants. The guide will teach readers to identify the native plants that are most suitable to their climate zone.

The *Pana'ewa Zoo Discovery Forest* project features a demonstration of native, cultural, and medicinal plants. Culturally significant plants that once grew in the traditional farms and native forests of East Hawai'i are featured, including Polynesian-introduced plants that arrived with migrations in voyaging canoes. These "canoe plants", along with many endemic species, play essential roles in Hawaiian culture, for food, fiber, tools, implements, building materials, and medicine. Many of these culturally significant plants have found a place in the Discovery Forest.