The State of Volunteerism in Hawai`i



2020



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Executive Summary

Intention of this Report

Globally, volunteerism is recognized as an essential component to community prosperity; it brings people from diverse backgrounds together to work towards achieving common goals, and has evident social, economic, environmental, and personal benefits.

Volunteerism strengthens the threads of the world's social fabric, particularly during times of crisis. The United Nations estimates that 1 billion people volunteer each year, giving time to support their home communities and beyond. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic sparked an unprecedented surge in volunteering at the local level; millions of people took initiative and shared their skills, time, and knowledge to support those in need, serving some of the most isolated and vulnerable members of their communities. In the face of mandatory lockdowns and social distancing policies, volunteers and the organizations they work with began reimagining their frameworks and pivoting their efforts. They mobilized and adapted by relocating to virtual environments and discovering novel ways to play a crucial role in the coronavirus response.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the necessity of volunteers to help provide relief during global crises. While the pandemic has highlighted our vulnerabilities, it has also reinforced the importance of partnerships and banding together as communities to remain resilient.

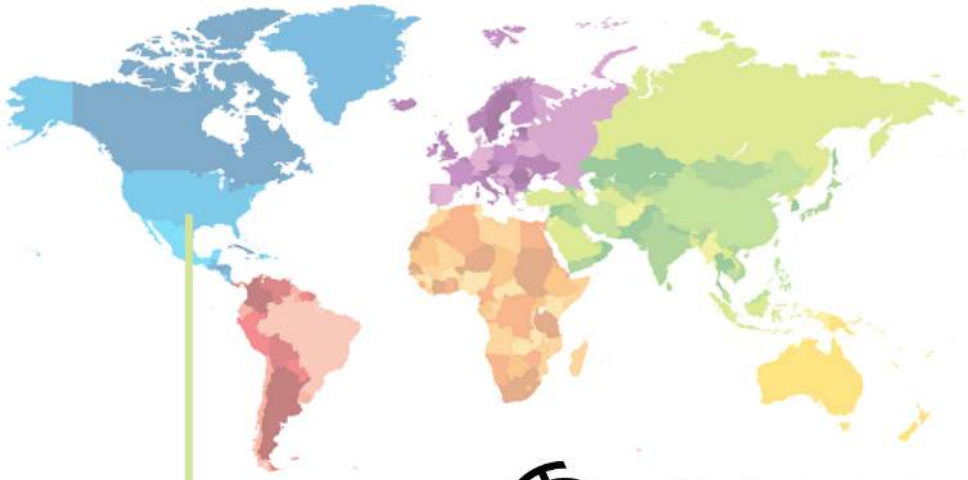
In collaboration with the Hawai'i Green Growth network, Kanu Hawaii works with the public and private sectors along with community partners to create strong, collaborative impact across Hawai'i. Through these ongoing efforts, we have captured volunteer strategies, metrics, and stories that reflect Hawai'i's aloha spirit, the need for volunteerism, resilience against COVID-19, and collective effort to meet the Aloha+ Challenge, our local approach to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and building social, economic, and environmental resilience.

In an effort to share this information with our community, we have compiled our second annual State of Volunteerism in Hawai'i report as a means to inform sustainable, evidence-based growth in the sector. We hope this report will be a useful resource for nonprofits, public agencies, businesses, community organizations, schools, and elected leadership for evaluating engagement of volunteers, supporting volunteer efforts, and reinventing ways to get involved. This series of annual reports serves as a useful baseline for tracking development of volunteerism in Hawai'i for years to come.

About Kanu Hawaii

Kanu Hawai'i is a nonprofit 501(c)3 based on O'ahu with members, programs, and partners across the state. Since our founding in 2007, we have focused on catalyzing community action, growing civic engagement, and instilling environmental stewardship as integral components to a thriving Hawai'i. Our values of kuleana, aloha, pono, and mālama 'āina are deeply rooted in our mission: to provide tools and opportunities for people to connect with one another, to take action that builds more compassionate and resilient communities across Hawai'i. We have a long history of building community networks and implementing statewide campaigns, including "I Will...," the Eat Local Challenge, the Energy Challenge, and Volunteer Week Hawai'i. Our current focus areas of community resilience and volunteerism are closely related to each other and our past work. We strive to facilitate connections among stakeholders from all sectors of society to grow collaboration, build knowledge, offer resources, and create more cohesive communities.

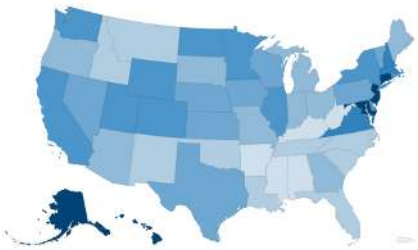
Volunteerism Across the Nation & the Globe



Globally, ONE BILLION people volunteer every year

The equivalent of 109 MILLION full-time workers





In the U.S., 77 MILLION people volunteered in 2018

57% of all volunteers globally are women

70% of people who volunteer work informally to help people in their communities

7 BILLION hours

167 BILLION in impact



30% volunteer through formal organizations

Importance of Volunteerism

Why is volunteering important, especially in times of crisis?

- Fills gaps in public and private sector services
- Essential to the prosperity of nonprofit organizations
- Saves and allows for redistribution of resources
- Connects community at all levels
- Personal benefits
  - Provides a sense of purpose
  - Helps counteract the effects of stress, anger, and anxiety
  - Offers career experience and opportunities
  - Builds community and personal connections
  - Share and develop new skills



Photo Credit: Cadencia Photography

- Fosters resilience by facilitating relationships and partnerships
- Supports vulnerable populations
- Helps protect and improve the natural environment
- Promotes civic engagement
- Provides significant economic value (U.S. average value of volunteerism in 2019 reached $27.20 per hour, up nearly 7 percent from $25.43 in 2018)

Volunteerism & Community Resilience

Just a few months into 2020, the novel human coronavirus disease, known as COVID-19, took its toll on communities near and far, resulting in the fifth documented pandemic since the 1918 flu. This modern outbreak has changed life as we know it: shifting normalcy to lockdowns, social distancing, overcrowded hospitals, unprecedented unemployment rates, and extreme uncertainty and paranoia. While the COVID-19 crisis has proved to be enormously painful and disruptive, it also invariably necessitated the emergence of solidarity, creativity, improvisation, and community resilience. It has presented an opportunity for us to build local community resilience on a global scale and tackle the economic, social, and health impacts that the coronavirus continues to impose.



Photo Courtesy of:
Pacific Gateway Center

Healthcare workers, businesses, community organizations, other essential service providers, and countless volunteers have banded together like never before to respond to this crisis. While we have seen the impact of communities uniting as a response to other natural disasters such as severe fires, hurricanes, and flooding, the collective community effort to care for others and ensure global resilience during a pandemic reinforces the importance of grassroots community connections and volunteering.

Volunteering offers meaningful opportunities for people to get involved and make a significant contribution to the empowerment and resilience of their communities. In trying times, it not only increases awareness of threats or vulnerabilities, it also unites individuals and stakeholder groups in creating wider systems of support and improving risk management. A 2019 report from the City and County of Honolulu's Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency concluded that "well-connected communities are better positioned to respond to and bounce forward from times of shock and stress."

Status of Volunteerism During COVID-19

A volunteer survey was conducted in November of 2020, roughly eight months into the initial COVID-19 lockdown, with continuing precautionary measure recommendations from state and local officials. About 1,500 nonprofit organizations throughout the state were invited to participate in a survey on their volunteer efforts pre- and post-COVID-19. Invitations were extended by email and accompanied by follow-up phone calls. Organizations surveyed included Kanu Hawai'i partner organizations, member organizations of the Kupuna Food Security Coalition and Emergency & Disaster Response, and organizations active during the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery period. Some schools and government agencies that employ volunteers were also included. Houses of worship ("religious") comprised the largest sector of respondents.

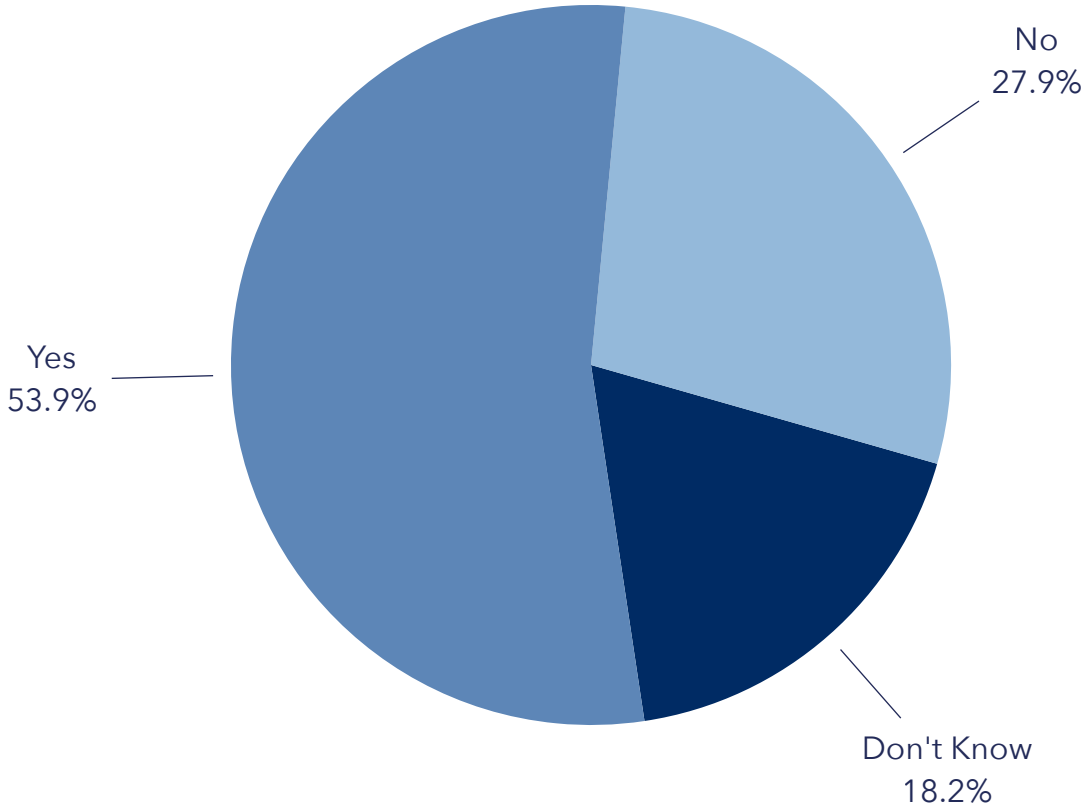


Photo Courtesy of:
Key Project

This survey helped to identify challenge areas, bright spots, and best practices among volunteer organizations following the COVID-19 outbreak in Hawai'i through questions such as: How were nonprofits impacted by the COVID lockdowns? How have community needs shifted since COVID arrived? How have nonprofits responded to community needs during this period? What supports do nonprofits require moving forward?

The results will help government agencies, community partners, and philanthropists understand the challenges and needs of nonprofits during this unprecedented time. This information below reports responses from organizations that served the island of Oahu. A total of 201 respondents from 189 nonprofit organizations on Oahu participated in the survey.

Did your organization participate in the COVID response?



Some participants responded "Don't Know" when asked whether they participated in COVID-19 response; this may have been because many of these respondents participated indirectly through various social services. While they continued to provide community networks and services in a time of isolation and social distancing, they did not perceive themselves as directly responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

Participating organizations included:

- Environmental or educational services
- Health agencies (unrelated to COVID-19 response)
- Transportation services
- Schools
- Religious organizations

Was there an increase or decrease in the need for services following the COVID-19 outbreak?

Increase	Decrease	No change	Don't know	Other
50.6%	17.7%	19.0%	7%	5.7%

- 50% of respondent organizations experienced an increase in the need for their services
- 19% experienced no change
- 17.7% experienced a decrease in need

Unsurprisingly, agencies participating in COVID-19 response experienced an increase in need for their services while agencies *not* participating in COVID-19 response experienced a decrease in need.

Increase in need for services during the pandemic:

COVID Response	<50% Increase	50-100% Increase	100+% Increase	Any Increase	Decrease	No change	Don't know	N/A	Other
Yes	15.6%	25.8%	**18.0%**	**59.4%**	10.1%	15.7%	9.0%	1.1%	4.5%
No	32.4%	8.8%	8.8%	50%	**32.4%**	**35.3%**	11.8%	0	2.9%
Don't know	7.1%	28.6%	0	35.7%	28.6%	21.4%	17.9%	0	3.6%

Among those that responded "Other," respondents noted the following:

- "Fewer new inquiries, but greater need in terms of intensity of services."
- "Type of services changed."
- "Schools stopped coming but community members wanted to come for healing."
- "Increase in outreach and food pantry/decrease in all other areas."
- "Applications for our services are down, but we believe there is an increased need in the community."
- "We had a 50% increase for the need of some services. Other areas less need."

Was there an increase or decrease in service opportunities?

Increase	**Decrease**	No change	Don't know	Other
32.9%	**44.1%**	14%	4.2%	4.2%

Service opportunities are defined as chances for both volunteers and paid employees to render the agency's services to the community. Most respondents experienced a decrease in service opportunities, largely as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. While many experienced an increase in service opportunities (32.9%), this increase did not keep pace with the overall increase in service needs (50.6%).

Was there an increase or decrease in volunteer inquiries?

Increase	**Decrease**	No change	Don't know	Other & N/A
27.3%	**42.4%**	20%	9%	1.2%

Most respondents (42.4%) experienced a decrease in volunteer inquiries; however a significant portion (27.3%) saw an increase in volunteer inquiries. Also evaluated was the amount of increase experienced by organizations that saw an increase in inquiries.

<50% Increase	50-100% Increase	100%+ Increase
60%	28.9%	11.1%

One respondent noted: "We had a major increase in college aged students looking for internships."

Whether organizations were engaging in the COVID-19 response did not impact the rate of volunteer inquiries; all agencies – those participating in the COVID-19 response and those not participating – experienced a decrease in volunteer inquiries overall; however, agencies involved in the COVID-19 response experienced less of a decrease in volunteer inquiries.

A "State of Volunteerism on Oahu" report has been publicly released and is available in its entirety on the Kanu Hawaii website. This study details additional information about changes in volunteerism prior to and during the first 10 months of the COVID -19 pandemic in Hawaii. As a result of this study, we have a better idea of potential challenge areas for organizations post-COVID-19; we will be offering support to the sector based on these findings, including marketing and educational opportunities for capacity-building.

Reinventing Volunteering During COVID-19

Despite several pivots as a result of COVID-19, organizations continued to build volunteer capacity to ensure long-term sustainability, retention of volunteers, and continuation of events when conditions allow. Leaders from local nonprofit organizations shared their insights on best practices for this during a webinar on "Managing Volunteers Before and During COVID-19" hosted by Kanu Hawaii in December 2020, as well as through the 2020 City and County of Honolulu Volunteer Survey.



Photo Courtesy of:
Blue Zones Project

Although many respondents said their organizations discontinued use of volunteers during the pandemic, others experienced an increase in activity as a result of COVID-19. Many nonprofits continued their work by: (1) Implementing preventative health measures (utilizing smaller groups, offering remote services, and providing hand sanitizer, masks, temperature checks, and pre-arrival questionnaires); (2) Moving their volunteer recruitment and engagement online (increasing social media presence and email communications and offering virtual events, online meetings, and online tracking tools); (3) Thinking creatively about how to meet service needs (responding safely and being flexible); and (4) Offering more personalized engagement (engaging more individual volunteers rather than mostly groups, sending regular emails and thank you's to volunteers, and recognizing birthdays and service anniversaries).

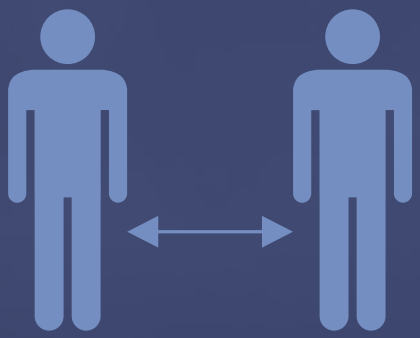
The global pandemic has forced a significant change to "business as usual." It has also shown that adapting to the times and making operational adjustments can be beneficial to organizations and their volunteers. Kanu Hawai'i will be offering future webinars, volunteer coordinator socials, volunteer opportunities, and pau hana networking events leading up to Volunteer Week Hawai'i 2021.

Tips for Volunteers to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

Stay Home if Sick



One of the best ways for volunteers to protect others is to stay home if they are not feeling well. Staying home when sick is a necessary precaution to avoid potentially transmitting the coronavirus (or other illness) to others. Even though nonprofits are in need of volunteers, it is counterproductive for sick volunteers to fulfill opportunities. Organizations can assist in stopping the spread of COVID-19 by communicating this information with volunteers.



Practice Social Distancing

Volunteers can keep themselves and others safe by practicing social distancing when volunteering. Many organizations have incorporated social distancing measures within their volunteer opportunities and work spaces. The CDC and other health organizations recommend staying at least 6 ft (1.83 m) away from other persons during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Keep a Clean Work Environment & Hand Washing

Volunteers can contribute to stopping the spread of COVID-19 by maintaining a clean work environment. Frequently and consistently cleaning surfaces can help protect volunteers and others. The CDC recommends cleaning surfaces with soap, water, and disinfectant before and after use. Additionally, volunteers should practice hand washing, before, during, and after a volunteer shift, using soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds.



Everyone Should Play a Part

Everyone plays a role in protecting each other and stopping the spread of COVID-19. Nonprofits can reduce risk for staff, volunteers, and clients by implementing safety regulations. Volunteers can contribute by staying home if they are sick, practicing social distancing, and keeping their work environment and hands clean at all times (Volunteer Hub, 2020).

Volunteerism in Hawai‘i

Hawai‘i’s rich history of perpetuating the land and living aloha undoubtedly sets the stage for a culture of volunteerism. Hawai‘i’s nonprofit sector contributes roughly 10% of Hawai‘i's GDP and employs 56,000 people across the state (HANO PULSE Report, 2020). Volunteers play a vital role in the health and success of this sector, providing essential services on every island and in every community. Without volunteers, we would not only lack the resources and energy to put into these essential services, but also the donors that provide funding and support, and tens of thousands of additional community members and visitors that lend their sweat equity to making Hawai‘i a better place.


Photo Credit:
Hali Summer

The Hawai‘i Giving Study (2015) found that 57% of Hawaii households reported volunteering for a charitable cause in 2014. Hawai‘i residents and tourists alike have no shortage of volunteer opportunities to participate in across the state, and nationally recognized days of service such as Martin Luther King Jr. day, National Volunteer Week, Volunteer Week Hawai‘i, and 9/11 offer opportunities to get involved throughout the year. Whether volunteering for a day or making it an ongoing effort, there are unlimited ways to give back, with volunteer opportunities in Hawai‘i being just as diverse as the islands themselves. By volunteering in Hawai‘i, you can help protect our fragile island ecosystems, learn about Hawaiian culture, uplift underserved communities, and foster connections with the land, sea, and local communities.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” **— Mahatma Gandhi**

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” **–Anne Frank**

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?” **— Martin Luther King, Jr.**



Photo Credit:
Cadencia Photography

By the Numbers: An Overview of Volunteer Week Hawai'i

In 2017, Volunteer Week Hawai'i was officially recognized through resolution by the state legislature as Hawai'i's local take on National Volunteer Week. This paved the way for the first opportunity to celebrate Volunteer Week Hawai'i in April 2018. The primary goal for 2018 was to raise awareness of the need to grow volunteerism across the state.

The success of the campaign in its first year set a precedent for making Volunteer Week Hawai'i 2019, and every year beyond that, even bigger and better. In 2019, statewide engagement increased to include: support from over 90 partner organizations, 131 hosted volunteer events, and over 5,000 volunteer participants throughout the Week. The significant growth of Volunteer Week Hawai'i in just two years demonstrates the value of having an annual campaign focused on volunteerism.

In 2020, there was anticipation that the numbers would be even higher as awareness around the event increased among sectors, organizations, and individuals in the state; however, activities, participation, and events looked much different as a result of the worldwide pandemic that hit just weeks before the annual event. Volunteer Week Hawai'i took a sudden and unprecedented pivot, but one that still had an impact. Volunteer opportunities were made available virtually and with social distancing measures in place. Despite having completely different and unforeseen volunteer opportunities, we believe the level of participation in volunteering to answer our communities' needs were even more far reaching than could have been planned.

The upcoming Volunteer Week Hawai'i campaign will take place from April 18th – 24th and will include a blend of virtual and in-person volunteer events. Organizations and volunteers across sectors and islands are encouraged to participate in this Week to give back to their communities and recognize volunteers for their service. Despite the challenges and setbacks that 2020 brought, our goals for this year include partnering with 100 nonprofits, community organizations, local businesses, and schools in hosting 100+ volunteer events, engaging 5,000 volunteers in service.

Volunteer Week Hawai‘i 2020

Last year, Volunteer Week Hawai‘i sparked a more urgent response to support community needs related to COVID-19. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Kanu Hawai‘i recognized the need to continue to engage volunteers in a safe and creative manner.

We are humbled by the cooperation of nonprofits, businesses, and volunteers in making a difference in our community through Volunteer Week Hawai‘i 2020. Although organizations’ service needs were limited due to COVID-19 social distancing measures, participants were able to engage with the community through service opportunities listed in our virtual Volunteer Week Hawai‘i kick-off including…

- ***Respond With Aloha***: Our online platform encouraging community engagement through a listing of service needs, opportunities, and resources for those in need of assistance due to COVID-19;

- ***Kokua Exchange***: Our local take on timebanking in which members participate in community development as they contribute to social, economical, and cultural equity through reciprocity;

- ***Volunteer Week Hawai‘i BINGO***: Participants were asked to complete service opportunities listed on a BINGO card for a chance to win prizes donated by our sponsors;

- ***Virtual Volunteer Week Hawai‘i***: A partnered program with Blue Zones Project Hawai‘i activating youth (grades K-12) to #RespondWithAloha by creating their own projects servicing the community.

Respond with Aloha

As a response to the COVID-19 crisis across the globe, island community leaders have been mobilizing to ensure the most vulnerable in our communities have the necessary care, food, and connection needed during these times. Those that have available time and energy have been volunteering in various ways to address those needs.

As a community-focused organization, Kanu Hawai'i has pivoted into a COVID-19 response entitled *Respond with Aloha* to connect organizations and the community to ensure needs are met, whether it is giving or receiving donations, giving or receiving volunteer hours, or supporting local businesses in other ways.

Respond With Aloha started as a volunteer response to support community needs and address economic impacts related to COVID-19 with partners across Hawai'i. COVID-19 hit Hawai'i just weeks before our annual Volunteer Week Hawai'i event, so this was not only an opportunity to support our community in a time of crisis, but an avenue to expand plans for Volunteer Week Hawai'i into an on-going effort through the Aloha+ Challenge. As COVID-19 continues to affect Hawai'i and the global community, it is important to support each other and #respondwithaloha.

This online platform is designed to help essential service providers, businesses, community organizations, groups, and individuals in connecting volunteer efforts taking place across various communities and to coordinate, raise awareness of key issues, and safely direct support where it is needed most. Please sign up online to list your virtual volunteer opportunities or at-a-distance needs: www.respondwithaloha.org.



Kokua Exchange

One of the other ways Kanu Hawai'i is working to respond proactively to the COVID-19 crisis is by creating an Oahu-focused timebank opportunity: the Kokua Exchange. Timebanking is a skill-share opportunity that allows the community to 'barter' services indirectly with other people by logging their trade/barter hours into the 'bank' so that they can then "cash-in" on those opportunities in the future.

Timebanking is a fun and engaging way to value time, energy, and skills that moves beyond our standard money-focused transactions. It is acknowledged in timebanking, that everyone has skills to share and trade with others. We know that each person has unique talents to offer, and that the overall community is strengthened when neighbors help one another. In this type of trade, everyone's skills are as valuable as others: whether you provide child care, prepare food, help in a garden, do yard work, help deliver goods, give business advice, or teach a yoga class, all time given is valued equally.



The core values of timebanking include: **Asset, Redefining Work, Reciprocity, Social Networks, and Respect.** Timebanking is practiced around the world as an alternative economic platform that facilitates the exchange of services using time as the currency and creates opportunities for members to:

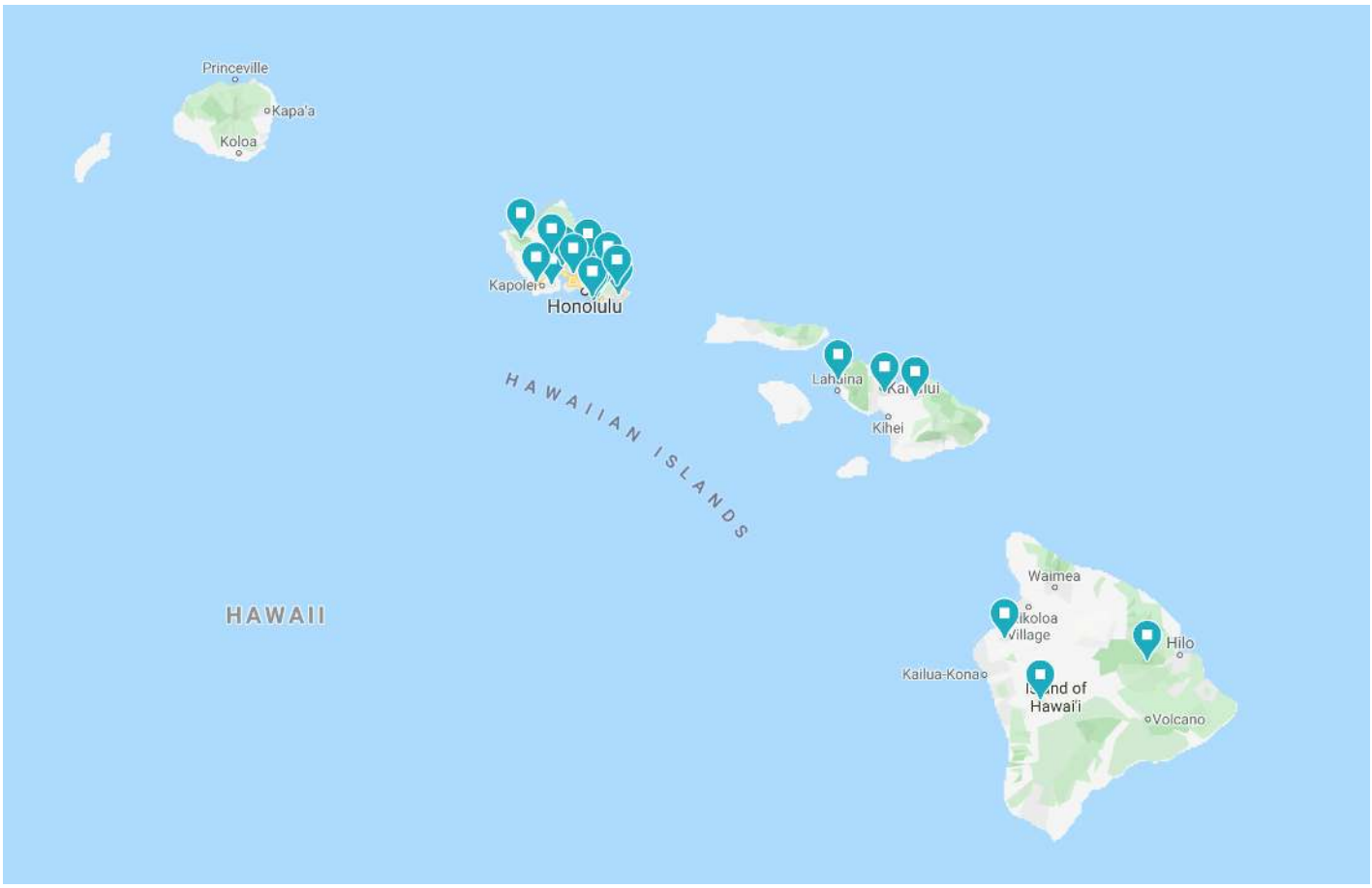
- *Strengthen* the fabric of our community;
- *Serve* people and give them a means to serve;
- *Establish* new relationships and meet vital needs of our community members.

Kokua Exchange is our local take on timebanking in which members participate in community development as they contribute to social, economic, and cultural equity through reciprocity. This platform is designed to serve diverse populations and sectors (e.g. government agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals) throughout Hawai'i and supports creating a sharing community by providing accessibility to free community assets and resources.

Join Kokua Exchange and offer a skill you have in exchange for a service or resource you may need at kokuaexhange.timebanks.org. Give one hour of service to another, and receive one time credit. Use the credits in turn to receive services – or donate them to others in need.

Volunteer Week Hawai‘i BINGO

The BINGO challenge was created by Kanu Hawaii to support individual and socially-distanced participation in Volunteer Week Hawai‘i during a time when gatherings and events were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.



Map of BINGO opportunities

25 BINGO Square Volunteer Opportunities Listed
35 Individual Participants
217 Volunteer Opportunities Completed
7 BINGO Challenge Winners

BINGO Board with Volunteer Opportunities

Make your own DIY plastic-free hygiene products	Unplug unused electronics to save energy	Participate in a phone tree - call someone who needs support	Support local farmers by purchasing Hawai'i-grown produce	Donate to your local Food Bank
Pick-up trash around your neighborhood	Start an at-home garden or plant a tree	Write a letter to a kupuna or someone in the hospital (doctors and nurses included)	Create an at-home compost bin	Make your own DIY reusable bags from old t-shirts
Sign-up for timebanking on kokuaexchange.org	Explore eating plant-based meals for a day - or a week to reduce your carbon footprint	FREE (Create your own volunteer opportunity)	Sign an environmental petition or pledge	Raise awareness about a conservation issue (share a pic, video, or link with others)
Volunteer to help pack or deliver food to those in need	"Just Give One" - one can of food, one roll of tp, one mask, etc. to someone in need	Watch an environmental movie, documentary, or docuseries	Enter Sustainable Coastlines Hawaii's #antisocialcleanup challenge on instagram	Register to vote in the 2020 election or encourage a friend or family member to register
Make face masks for your family, friends or to donate	Participate in the Census	Learn the story and history of your home and community	Sign up to donate blood or become an organ donor	Learn how to recycle materials, appliances and electronics locally

BINGO Impact Highlights

Below are the top three most participated-in BINGO opportunities for 2020:

Support local farmers by purchasing Hawai'i-grown produce - Hawai'i currently imports the majority of its food, fertilizers, energy, and seeds, leaving the islands particularly vulnerable to economic disruptions, fuel price fluctuations, catastrophic natural disasters, water scarcity, and other climate-related events. Increasing Hawai'i's capacity to produce and sell local food will help reduce Hawai'i's vulnerability to these external pressures. A sustainable food system in Hawai'i can support both traditional farming practices while creating new economic models for marketable products. Local food production is on a downward trend; this may be attributed to environmental factors such as soil conditions, drought, and natural and manmade disasters. Other factors include the availability of farm and labor workers, land for farming, and associated costs of water and electricity.



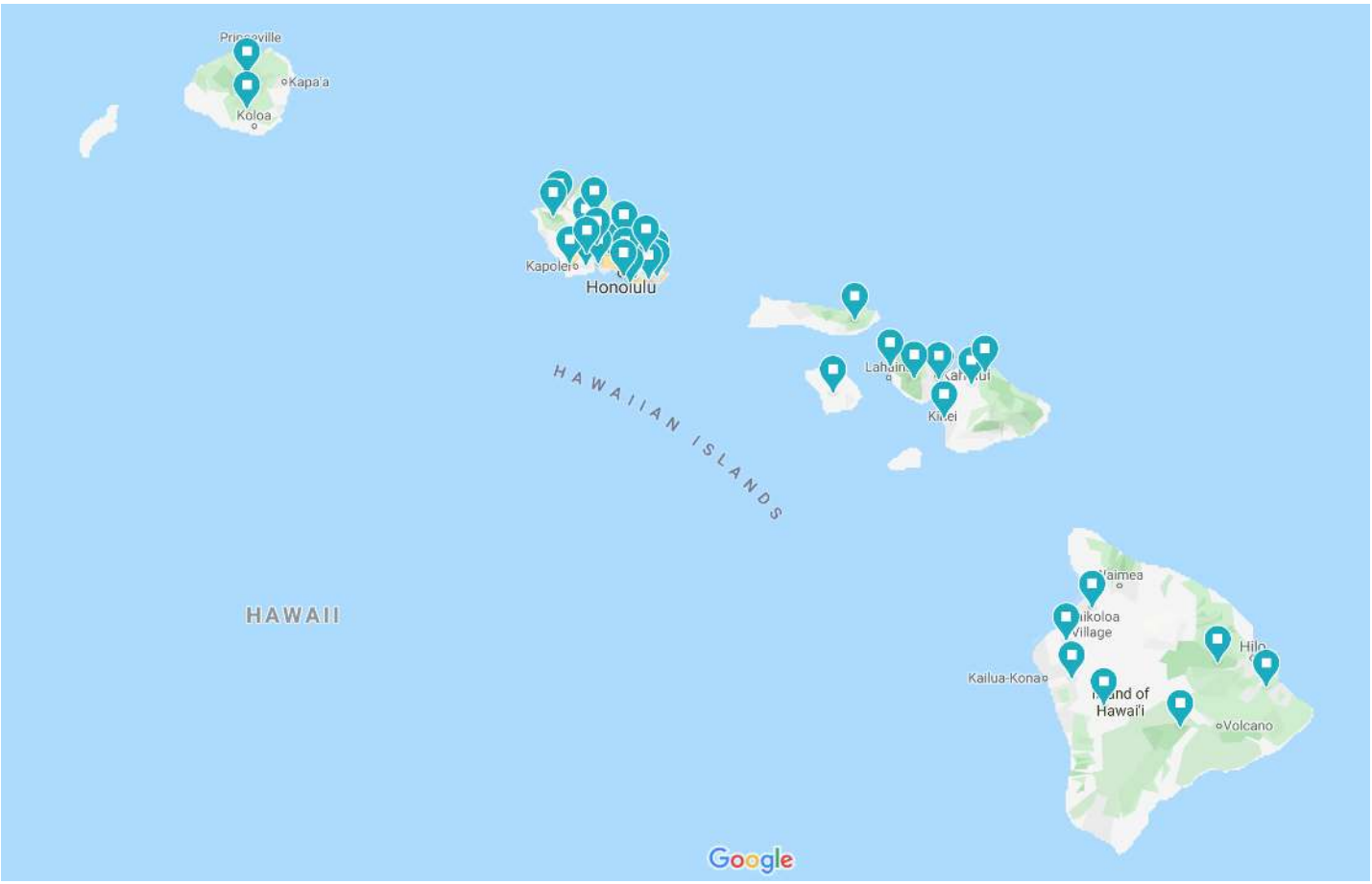
Photo Courtesy of:
Blue Zones Project

Explore eating plant-based meals - Eating a plant-based diet is not just good for our health, it is good for the Earth's health. There is extensive research behind the harmful effects of food production on human health and the environment. Animal agriculture produces more greenhouse gas emissions than the transportation sector, utilizes more water than growing plants, takes up more wild animal and plant habitats, and significantly pollutes our air and water. Eating a plant-based diet can reduce your carbon footprint by 73% and help minimize the above mentioned negative effects. It also reduces the risk of obesity and many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, Type-2 diabetes, inflammation, and cancer. A dietary shift toward plant foods and away from animal products is vital for promoting human health and the health of our planet.

Start an at-home garden or plant a tree - Planting trees reduces the effects of climate change as they purify our air. Starting an at-home garden encourages food sustainability and self-sufficiency as you grow your own food. Both services also reinforce the importance and practice of land stewardship.

Virtual Volunteer Week Hawai'i

Similar to the goals of the BINGO challenge, the Blue Zones Project Hawaii created a mini-campaign aligned with Volunteer Week Hawai'i to engage students and their parents in volunteer activities. Each of these were centered around the core theme that individuals can still do their part by taking small actions in their everyday life that make a difference in a big way.



Map of virtual events

Participation by the numbers:

310 K-12 students participated

239 guardians participated alongside their students

Total of **549** volunteers

6 islands represented - Big Island, Maui, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, O'ahu, and Kaua'i

Over **100 schools** were represented alongside many homeschooled students

96% of volunteers were new to Volunteer Week Hawai'i

Virtual Volunteer Week Hawai‘i: Impacts & Highlights

Volunteer project themes:

- 51% COVID-19 response (e.g. making masks)
- 16% educational (e.g. helping the elderly transition to the virtual environment)
- 16% environmental (e.g. beach cleanups)
- 17% social (e.g. food drives)

We saw a few trends in the service projects that students chose, including making face masks, packing sandwiches to give to those in need, writing letters to healthcare workers and kūpuna, picking up litter in neighborhoods, and supporting local organizations responding to COVID-19.



Photo Courtesy of:
Blue Zones Project



Photo Courtesy of:
Blue Zones Project

The impacts from these service projects were far reaching and had a significant effect on vulnerable populations within our community. The start of the pandemic resulted in many people being isolated, without resources, and in need of support and a morale boost. Students, parents, and volunteers used Volunteer Week Hawai‘i to band together and demonstrate the meaning of aloha as Hawai‘i has always known it.

YOU CAN STILL PARTICIPATE!

The concept of Volunteer Week Hawai‘i does not end when the week is over. In fact, we see this week as a catalyst to help people create new habits and make a positive difference in their daily lives. We are leaving our BINGO card and Respond With Aloha opportunities up as resources to be used continuously throughout the year to help make a difference within our local communities.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) are a framework of 17 interconnected strategies to address social, health, environmental, and economic challenges that impact populations across the world. Each of the SDGs has specific targets and indicators that aid in formulating action and tracking progress toward meeting the Goals by 2030. Since initial implementation in 2015, nations and municipalities around the world have developed more specific and/or localized sets of actions to more directly support achieving the Goals.

Aloha+ CHALLENGE





In Hawai'i, the Aloha+ Challenge our the local version of the SDGs, shaped by community needs and sustainability challenges. During Volunteer Week Hawai'i 2019, host organizations and/or Kanu Hawaii staff assigned UN SDGs and Aloha+ Challenge Goals to each volunteer opportunity based on alignment of activities. Our intention in identifying this overlap was to better understand the global impact of our local actions and to directly tie volunteerism to both frameworks.

Local Action, Global Impact

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Aloha+ Challenge present high-level goals and strategies to achieve global change. A key component of Volunteer Week Hawai'i is bringing awareness to the fact that individual actions, when scaled across communities, have the power to lead to impactful, collective change.

Local actions create global impact, but for people to attain global understanding and impact, it is important to first comprehend the circumstances and conditions of their own environment and the impact of their local actions.

While local and global issues are intimately related, fostering an understanding of the cumulative global effects of individual local actions remains a challenging task (Bridging the Gap Between Local Acts and Global Effects, 2016).

An article from ArcNews suggests that it is important that people open up to new geographic world views that take into account each of these four items:

- The diversity of sociocultural ways of interpreting natural conditions
- The creativity of different ways of living
- The plurality of pathways to global sustainability
- The local and regional particularities of globalized living conditions

"Only then can humans establish the necessary setting for this bridge-building exercise" (Bridging the Gap Between Local Acts and Global Effects, 2016).

Voluntourism

Volunteer tourism ("voluntourism"), is one of the fastest growing travel trends according to the 2019 report: "Voluntourism: The Economic Benefit and Societal Costs of Short-Term Mission Trips." Voluntourism contributes roughly $2 billion dollars each year to the global economy from the estimated 1.6 million tourists who travel to volunteer. A large portion of voluntourism takes place in developing nations with a primary focus on infrastructure development, agriculture, and education.

Tourism plays an integral part in Hawai'i's social structure and economy as it generates the largest number of jobs among the major economic sectors, provides the most significant source of the state's private capital, and has helped lead the state to economic recovery. To meet the growing demand for visitor experiences that are authentic, intimate, and altruistic, voluntourism has emerged as an important trend in Hawai'i. Visitors contribute their time to helping nonprofits, government agencies, and businesses to create positive change in social, economic, and ecological spheres, contributing more than just monetary capital to the islands.

Voluntourism can include half-an-hour or multi-day excursions involving beach cleanups, forest conservation, wetlands restoration, and farm stays. Kako'o Oiwi, a community-based nonprofit that seeks to perpetuate Hawaiian culture and the values of land stewardship, holds large-scale community workdays in its lo'i, during which volunteers gain access to its 405 acres of private wetlands while weeding and clearing invasive vegetation. Voluntourism has grown so popular that travel agencies, such as Travel2change, coordinate experiences suited to visitors' interests and time. A subset of voluntourism, agritourism, helps educate visitors about the significance of farms and specific farming practices; it helps local farms generate another revenue stream and supports the larger mission of strengthening Hawai'i's economic and food security.

In addition to these efforts, the Hawai'i Tourism Authority has taken action to encourage visitors to give back to their destination through the Malama Hawai'i campaign. Over 30 businesses have agreed to participate in this effort and many have already started creating incentives for their guests. Alaska Airlines made the commitment to plant one tree for every flight arriving in the Hawaiian Islands; participating hotels, such as the Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort and the Prince Waikiki, offer specials for guests if they choose to learn about and contribute to the local community.

This effort recognizes the important role of nonprofits and how volunteer opportunities have the capacity to contribute to visitor experiences. There is potential to build this into a visitor segment that encourages and normalizes sustainable behavior and attracts conscientious travelers to the islands. Together, these voluntourism experiences satisfy visitors looking for an immersive experience, allowing them to learn about practices in Hawai'i, give back, make connections, and have experiences that are oftentimes more memorable than typical touristic experiences. "It's more than where you go. It's how you stay" (Hawai'i Tourism Authority, 2020).

Green Passport

In response to the growing awareness of the impact that tourists have on the environment in Hawai'i, a visitor green fee has emerged as a viable solution to combat the degradation caused by tourism. Visitor green fees, which have been levied in fourteen other destinations around the world such as Palau, New Zealand, and the Galápagos Islands, help preserve the locale's natural environment, demonstrate care and respect for the environment, and signal access to a place visitors would not normally have access to. Visitor green fees, which vary from $1/night to a $100 set entrance fee, are used to offset visitor impacts and help support visitor education and environmental restoration efforts (Green Passport, 2019).

Senate Bill 2696 states that Hawai'i's reefs, beaches, oceans, and forests provide billions of dollars to the local economy, supporting the well-being of our communities and visitors alike (State of Hawai'i, 2020). Natural ecosystems are vital to Hawai'i's culture, livelihood, and the tourism industry; the bill further states that: "even though these natural resources are critical for the visitor industry and resident communities, Hawai'i invests less than one percent of its state budget into those assets." The total gap in conservation funding has been estimated to be as high as $360 million annually, "constituting a major unfunded liability that poses a significant risk to our business climate and our economic resiliency" (State of Hawai'i, 2020).

The Green Passport initiative aims to establish a visitor green fee in Hawai'i to fund conservation efforts and raise environmental awareness amongst residents and visitors while also funding the gap for agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations serving environmental, cultural, and community-building initiatives. This initiative operates in tandem with another initiative called Pledge to Our Keiki, which brings together local organizations across Hawai'i to empower youth in taking the lead to preserve the islands. Students from Malama Honua Public Charter School in Waimanalo and Aka'ula School on Moloka'i produced a pledge capturing the views and hopes of how the youth of Hawai'i would like visitors to experience and treat their island home, which was inspired by the Palau Pledge, written by the children of Palau.

The Pledge to Our Keiki campaign was originally presented at the Executives Conference by students from these two schools and was immediately signed by top business leaders. Moreover, the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation has been a key supporter of this effort and a trusted philanthropic force in Hawai'i since it was founded in 1962. As the initiative continues to gain more recognition through Senate Bill 2696, Kanu Hawai'i and partnering organizations aim to engage youth across Hawai'i with Pledge to Our Keiki through creative expression and service learning opportunities with local organizations serving community resilience, environmental, and cultural initiatives. To learn more on this program in Hawai'i see: Green Passport Report: Innovative Financial Solutions for Conservation in Hawai'i and Kanu Hawai'i's Pledge to Our Keiki site.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Voluntourism

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted tourism and travel like never before. Government restrictions on counties, states, and countries around the world to reduce the spread of COVID-19 effectively shut down global tourism, leading to a drastic decline in voluntourism opportunities and devastating many projects that depend on voluntourism for support.

As COVID-19 cases began to emerge in Hawai'i in March of 2020, the governor restricted the movements and activities of Hawai'i residents outside of their home except for "essential" businesses. That same week, the state of Hawai'i also required a 14-day quarantine for all in-bound visitors to the Hawaiian Islands (Hawai'i Travel Restrictions, 2020). Following this restriction, visitor arrivals plummeted by 99.5% from the previous year (Hawai'i Visitors Statistics for April 2020). The combined effect of business closures, lockdowns, and reduced visitor arrivals have complicated operations for Hawai'i's businesses, including its nonprofits and voluntourism industry, many of which offered essential services during the pandemic and rely on volunteers for their prosperity.

Restrictions on global travel as a result of the pandemic have provided an opportunity to consider how we can provide experiences for travelers that benefit Hawai'i and the global community. As we strive to heal from COVID-19 and engage in preventive strategies to mitigate future disasters, it can be argued that service-learning and international volunteer experiences should be of greater importance and an integral part of the tourist experience.

In the future, voluntourism can benefit communities and organizations by attracting individuals who are interested in supporting local efforts tied to impactful, sustainable economic and social development.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a model that helps businesses contribute to societal goals by supporting ethically-oriented practices, volunteering, or giving back to communities in other ways. Examples of this model have been demonstrated through acts of charitable giving, fair wages, volunteering, sustainability efforts, and utilizing ethical business practices. Many businesses offer opportunities or time-off in their CSR agenda for their employees to volunteer, which studies have shown has numerous benefits in the workplace (America's Charities, 2019). Creating a culture of volunteerism in the workplace can help employers boost employee morale, foster better connections and relationships between colleagues, improve employee retention and workplace atmosphere, and enhance brand perception.

A study of 1,000 full- and part-time employees who volunteered over a period of 12 months showed that 89% of employees believed that the overall work environment was superior with organizations that offered volunteer activities; 70% believed that volunteer activities boosted employee morale more than company-sponsored happy hours, and more than three-quarters of survey respondents said volunteering is essential to the overall well-being of staff members (Business News Daily, 2020). Additionally, a 2018 report on "Corporate Social Responsibility: The Case for Collaboration in New York City" found that 1.13 million volunteer hours were completed by New York City employees of 78 member firms in 2017; 60% of respondents matched their employees' charitable donations and 49% of respondents offered employees paid time off to volunteer, demonstrating many companies' commitment to and interest in CSR.

COVID-19 has made this aspect of workplace volunteer culture more challenging. An estimated 42% of Americans are now working from home full-time and about 33% are not working at all (Stanford, 2020); however, good deeds are still being spread as businesses around the world are finding ways to give back and lend support to those who need it most. Some of these actions include helping create and supply personal protective equipment for healthcare workers, donating to local food banks to feed families struggling to find a nutritious meal due to job disruptions and school closures, offering free learning resources for students, such as audiobooks and online curriculum, donating to support domestic violence organizations, and offering monetary and product donations to support researchers in vaccine development (The Muse, 2020).

Our upcoming Volunteer Week Hawai'i 2021 campaign can be utilized as an outlet for businesses to build meaningful connections with local organizations and exercise their CSR commitments. This statewide, community-centric campaign offers matchmaking services for businesses to partner with local organizations that align with their mission, focus area, and/or geography. This provides a functional and accessible way for long-term, cross-sector relationships to develop, ultimately strengthening the fabric of the entire community.

Volunteer Opportunities in 2021

Volunteer Week Hawai'i 2021 is just around the corner and we are excited to engage residents, visitors, nonprofits, businesses, schools, and government agencies in this cross-sector campaign to take grassroots action that serves and supports our communities. This annual event will take place from **April 18th through 24th**. We are planning for it to include virtual and small scale, socially distant, in-person events offering a variety of opportunities for people to get involved in.

Our first Volunteer Week Hawai'i event in 2018 set the precedent for engagement goals the following year and when those numbers were easily doubled, we predicted in 2019 that 2020 would prove the same; however, with an unexpected pandemic on the rise just weeks before the event, our efforts and community engagement strategies took a major shift and our predicted model of doubled engagement quickly fell. Many organizations struggled to keep operating and adapt to a rapidly changing environment; those who could still accommodate Volunteer Week Hawai'i showed up and made the week-long event a success in a different way.

As we plan for Volunteer Week Hawai'i 2021 and years after, we strive to discover the different ways our community can work together and how we can facilitate those collaborations. Beyond our normal volunteer audience, we also want to engage more youth, which the Virtual Volunteer Week Hawai'i micro-campaign catalyzed. In addition to continuing to grow volunteer engagement through Volunteer Week Hawai'i, we aim to better understand volunteer backgrounds, characteristics, experiences, and strategies, and even more so during and post-COVID.

We endeavor to help nonprofits re-enter the volunteer space; grow virtual volunteerism efforts; harness professional volunteerism to assist businesses in continuing their CSR and volunteer efforts safely; expand voluntourism through efforts like Pledge To Our Keiki and the Green Passport; provide annual opportunities to engage new volunteers with sector needs; and offer more trainings and educational opportunities through peer to peer webinars, volunteer coordinator socials, and pau hana events to foster a stronger connection and network among volunteer coordinators and managers.

We hope to continue evaluating these experiences and the evolution of volunteer engagement to provide further insight, tools, and knowledge for our community members to strengthen and support volunteerism in Hawai'i.

Resources

Recognizing that Volunteer Week Hawai'i is an annual, week-long campaign that brings attention to the importance of volunteerism, it is imperative to make volunteering throughout the rest of the year just as accessible. Similarly, it is essential to support and resource organizations and volunteer coordinators on an ongoing basis. The list below includes resources for both volunteers and organizations.

Event Listing Sites

Conservation Connections - comprehensive, up-to-date listing of environmentally- and culturally-focused volunteer events, internships, jobs, and events statewide

808 Cleanups - extensive statewide calendar of beach and park cleanup opportunities hosted by 808 Cleanups and partner organizations and adopt-a-site program (mobile app also available)

Aloha United Way - listing of ongoing and repeat volunteer opportunities statewide across focus areas (e.g. social, environmental, cultural) for all ages, interests, and ability levels

Other Resources

Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO) - variety of resources related to nonprofit operations, funding, education, and policy

Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) - resources aligned with HCF's CHANGE Framework, including community engagement, funding, data, networks, leadership, and best practices

Hands In Helping Out (HIHO) - provide trainings for volunteer coordinators and assist in placing skilled volunteers with local organizations

Kokua Exchange - Our local take on timebanking in which members participate in community development as they contribute to social, economic, and cultural equity through reciprocity by providing accessibility to free community assets and resources

Respond with Aloha - Kanu Hawai'i's online platform that connects community organizations with individuals wishing to volunteer to help minimize the spread of COVID-19 while supporting community efforts

Mahalo to Our Partners

Mahalo nui loa to our partners for Volunteer Week Hawai'i 2020. Without their unwavering support, this annual event would not be possible.

808 Cleanups
Aloha Harvest
Aloha United Way
Alternative Structures International
American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer
Anthology Marketing Group
Be The Match Hawai'i
Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawai'i
Big Island Sailing Foundation
Bikeshare Hawai'i
Blood Bank of Hawai'i
Blue Planet Foundation
Blue Zones Project
Blue Zones Project 4M
Blue Zones Project- Kapolei & 'Ewa
Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Chamber of Commerce
Child and Family Service
DLNR State Parks: Diamond Head State Monument
Down to Earth Organic & Natural
Elderly Affairs Division of the City and County of Honolulu
Family Promise of Hawai'i
Farmer's Markets (statewide)
Friends of the Library of Hawai'i
Girl Scouts of Hawai'i
Gregory House Programs
H5 - Hawai'i Helping the Hungry Have Hope
Hale Kipa Inc.
Hapa Mana
Hawai'i Island Group Sierra Club
Hawai'i Nature Center
Hawai'i Foodbank
Hawai'i Green Growth
Hawai'i Health Harm Reduction Center
Hawai'i Meals on Wheels
Hawai'i Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)
Hawai'i Youth Services Network
Hawaiian Reforestation Program
Help is on the Way
Helping Hands Hawai'i
Hina Mauka
Ho`omau Ke Ola
Ho'okua'āina
Holomua Na `Ohana
Honolulu Community Action Program
Housing Solutions Inc.
Hui o Ko'olaupoko
Institute for Human Services
Institute for Climate and Peace
Junior Chamber International (JCI) Honolulu
Kahikolu Ohana Hale O Waianae (KOHOW)
Kalihi-Palama Health Center
Kanu Hawai'i
Kealahou West Oahu
Keiki to Kupuna Foundation
Koolau Mountains Watershed Partnership
Kupuna Kokua
Lanakila Meals on Wheels
Leeward Housing Coalition
Legal Aid Society
Letters2OurKupuna
Love the Sea
Lyon Arboretum
Māla'ai
Malama Kauai
Mālama Maunalua
Malama Meals
Masks4Hawai'i
Masks4Hawai'i (FB group)
MaskUP Hawai'i
Maui Food Bank
Maui Nui Botanical Garden
Maui Rapid Response
Maui Sustainable Solutions
Mauka Lani Elementary School
Mental Health Kokua
National Tropical Botanical Garden
North Shore Community Land Trust
Oui Tour Maui
Our Kupuna
Panasonic Avionics Corporation
Parents and Children Together
Partners In Care
Project Hawai'i, Inc
Project Vision Hawai`i
Recycle Hawai'i
River of Life Mission
Roman Catholic Diocese of Honolulu & BSA Aloha Council Troop 39
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Hawai'i
Royal Hawaiian Catamaran
RYSE
Sanctuary of Mana Ke'a Gardens
St. Francis Healthcare Systems
Steadfast Housing Development Corporation
Target
The Food Basket
The Pantry
The Salvation Army
The Salvation Army Kroc Center in Hawai'i
U.S. Veterans Initiative
Vegan in Hawai'i
Vibrant Hawai'i
Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center
Waimānalo Health Center
Wasabi International Tours
Women in Need
YWCA
Zero Waste O'ahu

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Hawaiian Electric
'Olelo Community Media
Residence Inn by Marriott Oahu Kapolei

About the Author:

Laura Bailes is the Director of Volunteer Engagement for Kanu Hawai'i. Her passion is to promote environmental awareness through engaging people in fun outdoor activities. As an avid conservationist and nature enthusiast, she actively volunteers with a local nonprofit organization, Sustainable Coastlines Hawai'i, to help keep Hawai'i's beaches clean and educate community members about plastic pollution. Laura received her Bachelor's in Marine Ecology and Conservation from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and her Master's in Conservation Biology through Miami University of Ohio's Global Field Program. When she is not at work, studying, or volunteering, you can most likely find her outdoors: at the beach, in the water diving or surfing, or hiking up a mountain. Her love of and interest in taking care of the environment around her stems from being born and raised on O'ahu.

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