After a three year hiatus, more than 250 guests gathered around the dinner table for a reimagined Great Chefs® Fight Hunger. Generosity was on the menu as the evening raised over half a million meals. p. 4

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808-836-3600

KAUA‘I:
4241 Hanahao Pl., Ste. 101, Līhu‘e, HI 96766
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QUESTIONS?
808-954-7858
info@hawaiifoodbank.org

CONNECT WITH US!
Building connections — and hope for the future

This year, we held our first Great Chefs® Fight Hunger since 2019. It felt so good to gather in person once again, connecting over food and our mission to nourish our ‘ohana today and end hunger tomorrow.

To be honest, being our first time back in a few years, we weren’t quite sure what to expect. But that uncertainty quickly waned, as this year’s Great Chefs® Fight Hunger sold out in less than two weeks! And your incredible support didn’t slow down one bit – all the way through the end of the event on April 15. The combined contributions from the event will help provide food for more than half a million meals to support local families.

What an incredible demonstration of how strong, resilient and supportive of one another we are as a community. Even after 40 years of service, all of us at Hawai‘i Foodbank are continually amazed by your generosity. It’s a constant reminder of how connected we all are, together, as an island community whose instinct is to always take care of one another.

This type of connection and support makes all the difference, and it comes at an important time. With summer right around the corner, it should be a time for kids and their families to take a break from the stresses of school. But for keiki facing hunger, summer can mean up to 90 days without school-provided meals. 1 in 4 keiki in Hawai‘i continue to experience hunger daily. And that is not okay.

We have a collective responsibility to nourish our keiki today and set them up for long-term success in the future. Your connection to the work we do is instrumental to achieving that. Your partnership allows us to strengthen important programs like Food 4 Keiki and connect more children with the nourishment we all deserve. Thank you for your trust and for helping get more meals to keiki facing hunger in our communities – so they can experience summer as it should be.

Mahalo for staying connected with us,

Amy Miller Marvin
Hawai‘i Foodbank President and CEO
Stronger Together
Feeding America celebrates the collaborative efforts of Hawai‘i’s Food Bank Hui

Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization, celebrated Hawai‘i Foodbank and its affiliates, Maui Food Bank and The Food Basket, at the organization’s annual conference in April. Hawai‘i Foodbank was among nine network members recognized for their outstanding work during the conference’s “Network Celebrations” event.

Known as the Food Bank Hui, Hawai‘i’s network of food banks was recognized for their efforts to invest in one another and work collaboratively towards a future where everyone in Hawai‘i has access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round. Notably, the group was recognized for its successful advocacy efforts that led to a $2 million allocation from the state.

“We cannot do this work alone, and we can achieve far more together than we ever could individually,” said Kina Mahi, director of advocacy and partnerships at Hawai‘i Foodbank. “We share the important responsibility of providing long-term food security to all of our communities. Joining forces with food banks across our pae ‘āina is paramount in our quest to make a systemic difference for people in Hawai‘i.”

As a trusted and unified voice for ending hunger in Hawai‘i, the Food Bank Hui continues to expand and share in its efforts to serve the daily needs of communities statewide, advocate for policy change, increase funding for food security and capture more resources for Hawai‘i.

Law Coalition
Hawai‘i Foodbank’s Law Coalition was able to raise nearly $64,000 during their annual Food Drive this year. This support can help provide food for more than 137,400 meals. The funds raised will be used for the purchase of needed fresh food and other pantry staples at food banks across the state. Mahalo to the Hawai‘i State Bar Association and our legal community’s efforts in nourishing our ‘ohana. Special thanks to the participating firms for their generous support: Cades Schutte; Cronin, Fried, Sekina, Kekina & Fairbanks; Dentons US LLP; and Starn, O’Toole, Marcus & Fisher.

Waimea Town Celebration
Waimea Town Celebration, hosted by the Hawai‘i Visitors and Convention Bureau, raises money for local projects, nonprofits and community groups. These include local schools, hula hālau, canoe clubs, sports teams and organizations like Hawai‘i Foodbank Kaua‘i. At this year’s event, the community rallied to donate more than 5,300 meals to Hawai‘i Foodbank Kaua‘i. Special mahalo to Stephanie Iona and Thomas Nizo for providing this opportunity.
Service has long been a cornerstone of Rina Patel-Jerls’ life. She began volunteering in high school, supporting her community through her involvement in activities such as food drives and coaching children’s sports. Rina currently works as a pediatric and prenatal chiropractor and volunteers weekly at Hawai’i Foodbank, where she helps sort donated food items.

“Food is my love language,” Rina says. “Even though this is just sorting dry goods and cans, it’s a way for me to show acts of service and give back. That’s the way I love, and that’s how I show that I care.”

When Rina relocated to Hawai’i three years ago, the pandemic shutdown made it difficult for her to meet people. So, she became active by volunteering with her church. This experience helped shed light on the level of need in her community – especially with those affected by hunger. “I work on the West Side, and I see the struggle of [people] working two or three jobs and having such a hard time to just pay for basic needs,” Rina explains.

Rina’s heart for service shines through in everything she does. In high school and college, she always made time for community service, and she carries that same dedication into her current role as Miss Ala Moana Plus in the Miss Hawai’i Plus pageant.

Rina continually finds herself searching for opportunities to utilize her platform in a way that positively impacts others – whether it is making new friends, promoting self-care and love, or sharing her volunteer experiences with organizations like Hawai’i Foodbank. Her advice for those considering volunteering is to invite a friend to double the impact and make the experience even more gratifying.

“Even if it’s just something small like this, volunteering two hours, it shows a great impact of how much you can get done in that time,” says Rina. “Honestly, it’s really rewarding to see. You might not even see the people who receive the food, but you see how much you’re moving in such a short amount of time. We fill multiple pallets organizing meals and other foods, and you see how much that can help.”

While volunteer service is a part of the Miss Hawai’i Plus pageant, contestants are encouraged to continue volunteering after the competition is over. For Rina, there’s no question that she’ll keep her weekly schedule at the warehouse. This dedication has inspired other Miss Plus contestants to join her in volunteering, as well.

As for her own inspiration, Rina credits her family for teaching her the importance of giving back to her community early on. It makes her smile as she now gets to share this opportunity with other young people.

“It’s opened my eyes to so many different opportunities, especially the kids who come in. They help out, too, and they have all this energy,” she explains as she watches the middle school class that she often volunteers alongside. “It’s good to see them giving back – because everything starts at an early age. And if I didn’t have that instilled in me when I was younger, I probably wouldn’t be this way today.”

As a child, Rina’s mother told her to never skip a meal and to make sure she always took care of herself. It’s a lesson she’s never forgotten, and one she now extends towards others, too. “That has always stuck with me,” Rina reflects. “If I’m full, why not make sure someone else is, too?”
Culinary KŌKUA

After a three year hiatus, more than 250 guests gathered around the dinner table for a reimagined Great Chefs® Fight Hunger. Generosity was on the menu as the evening raised over half a million meals.

Story by DANNY SCHLAG

Cheers filled the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Ho’okupu Center as emcee Kelly Simek announced that the 14th annual Great Chefs® Fight Hunger raised more than 580,000 meals to help nourish Hawai‘i families facing hunger. This exciting news capped off a campaign that started months prior with the unveiling of a new theme for Hawai‘i Foodbank’s signature culinary fundraiser – the first in-person Great Chefs® Fight Hunger since 2019. This year’s event aimed to celebrate our relationship with ‘āina, and the Foodbank’s 40th anniversary set the perfect backdrop for guests to reflect on what it means to gather and connect.

Great Chefs® Fight Hunger – Reimagined

For 40 years, Hawai‘i Foodbank has gathered food and support from our generous community. We’ve witnessed that same community gather together time and time again to uplift one another during periods of great need. And every day, we gather our resources to provide every member of our ‘ohana with consistent, equitable access to safe and healthy food. Fittingly, the reimagined Great Chefs® Fight Hunger provided us with another opportunity to gather – this time, to share a specially curated, locally

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sourced meal that highlighted how food empowers us to gather and build connections.

With the help of Great Chefs® Fight Hunger Co-Chairs Chef Jeff Vigilla and Pam Davis, some of Hawai‘i’s top chefs came together with the community to support Hawai‘i Foodbank and make this new vision a reality. Participating chefs included:

- **Allie Chu, Hopena Pokipala** and **Julie Chu** of Oysters Hawai‘i;
- **Chef Eddie Mafnas** of Kupu Culinary;
- **Chef Kealoha Domingo** of Nui Kealoha;
- **Chef Keaka Lee** of Kapa Hale;
- **Chef Nae Ogawa** of natuRe Waikīkī;
- **Chef Ed Kenney** of Mud Hen Water; and
- **Executive Pastry Chef Pauline Lam** of Halekulani.

### Building Connections

Highlighting local ingredients from some of Hawai‘i Foodbank’s farm partners, the chefs created a meal that recognized our collective responsibility to cultivate and reciprocate the nourishment we receive. In doing so, they provided guests not only with a delicious, five-course meal but also an opportunity to examine how food connects us.

Reflecting on that notion, Hawai‘i Foodbank President and CEO Amy Miller Marvin connected with guests by sharing one of her favorite food memories during dinner.

“One of my favorite memories centers around Japanese New Year, Oshōgatsu. At the heart of my memories is this incredible sense of connection,” said Amy. "That day, for me, is indelibly intertwined with food, with family, with a connection to our past and with good wishes for our future."

She added, "And that’s what Great Chefs® Fight Hunger is all about, as well – these connections with each other, this ‘āina, our ‘ohana, our past, our present and planting seeds for the future. To the amazing chefs, sponsors, partners, vendors, donors, guests and everyone else involved with making this year’s Great Chefs® Fight Hunger such an overwhelming success – thank you all so much for gathering with us."

### A Community Effort with Big Impact

The theme of connection inspired many throughout the evening, itself, as well as in the weeks leading up to the event. Among the highlights were:

- Table sponsorships and ticket sales that sold out in less than two weeks;
- A $40,000 Matching Gift Challenge sponsored by a generous anonymous donor;
• Governor Josh Green and First Lady Jaime Green honoring Hawai‘i Foodbank’s 40th anniversary by presenting a $40,000 check from the Huliau Inauguration Event; and
• A generous amount of support from individual donors, Cellar Door participants and Silent Auction bids.

These combined efforts provided just over $325,000 in support of Great Chefs® Fight Hunger. These gifts will help support Hawai‘i Foodbank’s mission to nourish our ‘ohana today while we work to end hunger tomorrow. As Hawai‘i’s largest hunger-relief organization, the Foodbank is committed to serving the daily needs of our communities, increasing equitable access to food, expanding our services to provide more nutritious and culturally meaningful options, and establishing initiatives that address the systemic reasons people need our services.

More than 100 local companies, organizations and partners joined Hawai‘i Foodbank staff and volunteers in lending their support to the 14th annual Great Chefs® Fight Hunger. For a complete list of sponsors, partners and acknowledgements, visit HawaiiFoodbank.org/Great-Chefs.

“That’s what Great Chefs® Fight Hunger is all about – these connections with each other, this ‘āina, our ‘ohana, our past, our present and planting seeds for the future.”

Amy Miller Marvin, Hawai‘i Foodbank President and CEO
At Great Chefs® Fight Hunger last month, attendees were greeted by the rich aroma of sumptuous dishes prepared by Hawai'i’s top chefs. Before digging in, the opening remarks by Chef Kealoha Domingo turned to the concept of hānai, which, simply put, means “to nurture.” This concept of hānai — the idea of taking care of one another — is at the heart of everything we do at Hawai'i Foodbank. We believe that, together, we can nourish our ‘ohana and create a healthier, more sustainable Hawai'i. We understand that hunger is not just a physical issue but also a deeply emotional and spiritual one.

When we come together as a community to support one another, we are embodying the spirit of hānai. I see this spirit in the compassionate supporters of our Fight Hunger Hui program, who are not only helping to provide much-needed food assistance to those who need it most but are also nurturing our community as a whole.

The Current Need:
As we continue to serve 50% more people than pre-pandemic, the need for hānai has never been greater. Increased food costs and reductions in pandemic-era federal support have left many families struggling to make ends meet, and the number of people experiencing food insecurity continues to grow.

How It Works:
The Fight Hunger Hui program allows supporters to make a monthly donation to Hawai'i Foodbank, providing a reliable source of support for our mission. These donations help to ensure that individuals and families have regular, equitable access to healthy food. Every dollar donated can help provide food for over two meals — meaning that a gift of any amount can make a significant difference.

Sustaining Programs:
Hunger is an ongoing issue that affects many in our community, and we need consistent support to continue providing food and resources to those in need. Monthly giving is an incredibly important way to support our work, as these gifts ensure that we have a steady stream of funding to sustain our programs and services year-round.

Long-Term Impact:
But it’s not just about sustaining our operations; monthly gifts also allow us to be proactive and plan for the future. With predictable funding, we can invest in long-term solutions to address food insecurity in our community, such as expanding our Food 4 Keiki programs or new initiatives that address the systemic reasons people need food assistance.

Join Us!
That’s why programs like Fight Hunger Hui are so important. By joining the Fight Hunger Hui, you become a part of a dedicated group of supporters who are committed to ensuring that everyone in our community has access to the nutritious food we all need to thrive.

Your monthly gift allows us to continue our critical work of nourishing our ‘ohana today as we work to end hunger tomorrow.

I encourage you to join me in becoming a Fight Hunger Hui member today.
At Hawai'i Foodbank, we are committed to providing our communities with equitable access to safe and healthy food all year round. Your support empowers us to nourish our ‘ohana today and end hunger tomorrow. Learn how you can help at [HAWAIIFOODBANK.ORG](http://HAWAIIFOODBANK.ORG).