Aloha - I would like to share a story with you. A few days before the school year ended, Jen and I had just finished cleaning the animal area, raking the leaves, feeding the animals, changing the water for the ducks and the geese – and we were talking about the meaning of what we are trying to do at the farm, the hopes, the struggles, the future, the vision, the changes during the years. As we worked, I saw a young girl, a 4th grader passing by in front of the animal area, walking towards the kitchen. A few seconds later she came back, entered the gate and came towards me. She had something in her hand. She came close and she said: “Mr. Gigi this is for the farm,” and she handed me some coins. With a big smile she gave me a hug and left. I looked at the coins in my hand. They were few. I did not count them, my eyes were teary and I could not talk. I looked at Jen, there were no words from her either. Immediately I thought about a story in the Gospel: As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. “Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty, put in all she had to live on.” Eventually I did count the coins: ten cents, truly a treasure to keep in the heart.

Another day, a 5th grader came with three small packages of seeds. “Mister Gigi he said, I wanted to give you something for the farm, and I only had enough money to buy these three packages of seeds. I hope you can use them.” To run a non-profit organization, ten cents is definitely not enough, but without the heart felt connection that was behind these gifts of ten cents and three packages of seeds, all our work would be useless.

During our 36 years as a program serving our community, many times people representing different foundations did not wait for us to apply for a grant. They too came and offered their help and in addition to the financial support they were able to provide, they have been supporting us with their advice, suggestions and have become real friends who feel part of our vision and have truly walked with us in the work we do.

There is a difference between doing something “for” someone and doing something with “someone.” When we do something for somebody we often call it “charity,” but the funny thing is, the word charity comes from Latin and actually means love… When we do something with somebody, we are becoming part of one’s life, and it truly becomes a gift of love. The ten cents from the little girl was definitely a sign of love and she truly is an important part of the life of the farm.

In January the members of the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board, together with Farm Staff, gathered to reflect on the visions, commitments and future of Hoa’Aina. The following symbol of a tree was created to summarize our vision for Hoa’Aina. We would like to share it with you.
The roots of Hoa’Āina O Mākaha connect us to the land. They have become deep through the years. They support and give food to the tree.

Inside the trunk is the CORE - HEART. Typically the inner core is soft, hot and provides the energy. It is the most important thing. The outer core is a hard, dense and protective layer to protect the inner core.

The branches are Hoa’Āina’s partners, foundations, volunteers, visitors, friends who share the same spirit, energy, and values.
THE TREE OF HOA‘AINA O MAKAHA

THE ROOTS connect us to the land. During the gathering last January we reviewed the meaning of the name Hoa‘Aina o Makaha - the Land Shared in Friendship.

Land: Aloha ‘aina is a core value of our organization. We are about developing a relationship with the land and a connection to the land. By definition, relationships require trust and require work. Stewardship is a part of our relationship to the land.

Shared: By sharing the land there is an exchange of knowledge, compassion, food, ideas, hope, joy, peace and healing.

Friendship: To share the land in friendship requires us to ensure that Hoa `Āina is a place where people feel safe; where one can grow, communicate and feel at home. It is a refuge where people feel a sense of belonging.

For the past 36 years Hoa `Āina has been firmly rooted in the valley of Makaha and has been a constant for the community and for those who have needed us. It is a place that empowers people to work for justice and peace. Hoa `Āina was described by one friend as a “thin place,” which in the Celtic traditions means a place where heaven and earth come together.

THE TRUNK is the CORE –which in Latin means the HEART. The inner core represents the people working now at Hoa`Aina, and their commitment, dedication and energy in taking care of the land. The outer core represents the people who have been part of caring for Hoa`Aina and are gone to different places or passed away. Taking care of the core of Hoa`Aina, the land, is one of our most important priorities. Without the people who care directly for the land, the programs cannot survive. Sometimes it is hard to sell the idea to the foundations on how important it is to fund the CORE.

THE BRANCHES: are the organizations, the foundations, the groups, the individuals, the local and international friends who are partners in making the tree of Hoa`Aina grow and produce fruits to share and provide shade for peace and comfort. The direction chosen by the Board is to partner with different organizations who will bring their constituents for various activities on this land. Some of the partners we are working with this year are:

• The DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, through Makaha Elementary School, is designating a full time teacher from the school to work with the 600 students from the school who come to the farm through our Na Keiki O Ka`Aina Program.

• The CATHOLIC CHURCH, through the Office of Social Ministry and Our Lady of Kea’au, is working with Hoa`Aina to involve their parishes in implementing the theme - One Ohana: Food, Justice and Spirituality. A video was produced through the OSM by Living Local with the Baraquios. Here is the link: https://youtu.be/LE471qKzAkI

• INPEACE is implementing a plan to bring children, youth, and families to the farm to enhance their programs using the facilities and land at Hoa`Aina

• Kamehameha Schools through the KA PUA Initiative is working with us to create a position to support the CORE and to work with the children of Makaha, parents and visiting schools.
• BEELIVE is an educational organization that takes care of bees. They are restoring our beehives.

HERE IS A REPORT ON THE MAJOR ACTIVITIES FROM THE PAST YEAR

NA KEIKI O KA ‘AINA

One day when we were planting taro with the 4th graders, I asked the children: “Are you happy to be here?” Everyone said: “Yes!”

With a lower tone of voice I asked: “Why?” A girl raised her hand and said: “Because I am at peace and it is fun”. Everyone was so quite.

During the school year, 654 students from Makaha Elementary School participated in weekly hands-on lessons at the farm led by our garden teacher in the Na Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Program. Throughout the year, we taught approximately 2,100 lessons for the K-6th grade students at the farm. Each grade had their own garden. There they learned about soil, compost, seeds, and how to care for their plants. The vegetables they grew they would either take home or cook them in our kitchen. They also learned how to care for the animals, cook with solar ovens, raise butterflies, and practice Hawaiian culture through planting and harvesting taro, making poi, laulau, and discovering the use of the different native plants.

CONTAINER GARDEN

“I love that the farm gives so much back to the community. I love that the gardening classes are free. This workshop was a great opportunity for my son and I to do something together. Together we are learning how to be healthier and bring the ‘āina to the table”

Last year we worked with 116 individuals and 196 families in our Container Gardening Program. A grand total of 920 people were served in either our 4-class workshops or our one-time, introductory classes. Our total served included two diabetes groups, one from the Wai‘anae Coast Comprehensive Health and the other from Ke Ola Mamo. The participants in our workshops learned how important it is to care for the land and how to plant their own container gardens with seedlings, soil and fertilizer. They also learned about aquaponics systems and vermiculture, how to plant their own seeds in trays, and how to make their own organic fertilizer. A cooking lesson also showed them how to use some of the different vegetables they raised.
Due to the costs involved in field trips and the lack of funding resources, we were forced to discontinue in a big way, the Ke Ala Program for visiting schools. This greatly reduced our ability to engage more students from the Wai‘anae Coast and greater O‘ahu in our ʻāina-based, hands-on lessons. In the previous years we had been able to reach out to more than 3,000 students per year. This year we were only able to serve 440 students and 77 teachers from the Waianae Coast.

NUTRITION – FOOD CORPS

Kindergartener, before tasting roasted ʻulu: “No thank you. I don’t like this.”
After tasting: “That was really good! I want more!”
2nd grader, tasting baby kale salad with sesame lime dressing: “That was the best snack I’ve ever tasted!”
4th grader, tasting baba ghanoush on a lettuce leaf: “This is the best thing I’ve ever tasted, and I would know, I’ve tried a lot of things.”

FoodCorps is a national team of recent graduates and emerging leaders who work with kids in school gardens to help them grow up healthy. Service members focus on increasing student knowledge around food and nutrition, engaging them in hands-on activities like cooking and garden work, and improving their access to fresh food. The FoodCorps service member at our farm has spent the last school year focusing on four major goals: 1) serving healthy snacks to students during their visits to the farm, 2) teaching cooking and nutrition classes to students during the school day, 3) working with interns from a local high school to grow food for the snack program and care for the farm, and 4) leading cooking classes for local families that are part of the Container Gardening classes. Snacks were cooked or served raw, depending on the featured ingredient, and served to students from Makaha Elementary during their farm visits. Each of the 600 students at Makaha Elementary tasted a new vegetable each month as part of this program.
PALS PROGRAM

Twenty students from Makaha Elementary were part of PALS, an outdoor learning opportunity focused on creating peaceful and healthy communities. This “Program for After-School Literacy Support” is a University of Hawaii project funded through the U.S. Department of Education’s, Native Hawaiian Education Program.

NANAKULI HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIP

The three senior interns came to the farm once a week for 4 hours throughout the school year. They learned about soil preparation, planting, irrigation systems, tending a garden, and the harvesting of produce that was then served to MES students as healthy snacks. Our interns not only showed improvement in their gardening skills, but were willing to taste new, healthy foods. They quickly began choosing more meals from the farm over their 7-11 quickie mart lunches.

OTHER EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 20, 2014 – FUNDRAISER
200 people joined in a celebration and a fundraiser for the 35th anniversary of Hoa‘Aina O Makaha.

DECEMBER 6, 2014 – CANDELIGHT CELEBRATION
A simple, quite and moving celebration was held to remember those who passed away and are in our hearts especially during the Christmas Season.

MAY 22, 2015 – ANNUAL SCHOOL AND FARM OPEN HOUSE
More than 1,700 people attended the Open House with children performances, food, games and educational activities.

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THIS IS A SHORT SUMMARY OF DAYS FULL OF GREAT SURPRISES,
INTERESTING CHALLENGES,
WONDERFUL PEOPLE
AND DEEP EMOTIONS.
WE FEEL THANKFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND FRIENDSHIP.
IF YOU HAVE THE PATIENCE TO READ ALL OF THIS REPORT
WRITE A NOTE TO US,
IT WILL MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN OUR DAY.
MAHALO!

Gigi and the Hoa‘Aina Staff, the Board of Directors and our Advisory Board