



Sustainability, Its Important To Me

Kynan Kawai, Senior at Kamehameha Schools Hilo, Hawai'i

Sustainability was something I never recognized till I emerged in middle school as an eight grader. I credit my mentor David Fuertes, Ka Hana No'eau, Partners in Development for sort of opening my eyes to what Sustainable Agriculture and Business is all about. As a member of David's' mentorship program, sustainability became a second nature. Many years later David nominated me to serve as a Hawaiian delegate to the Stone Soup Leadership Institute's 8th Annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development. It was held on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts for Island youth from across the U.S. Along with four other delegates we made presentations on different aspects of sustainability initiatives on Hawaii such as Sustainable Education, Architecture, Culture and Environments.

This was a true blessing. In preparation, I compiled research on how my community of North Kohala is committed to sustainable agriculture and how to incorporate sustainable business. I began with a brief history lesson of Hawaii's feats in agriculture. Before the arrival of foreigners to North Kohala (and all the Hawaiian Islands), we were 100% sustainable! Today, in Hawaii we import 85% of our food. However 80% of the land in North Kohala is actually zoned for agriculture use. While all of this was somewhat overwhelming, there was a bright light at the end of the road. What my community of North Kohala is trying to do to become more agriculturally sustainable. The North Kohala Community Development Program (CDP) states in Strategy 1.4 they would like to promote and support a community of diversified agriculture. The goal of this is for North Kohala to produce 50% of the food it consumes, and this would be a great achievement not just for Kohala but all other Hawaiian islands.

So then I traveled to Martha's Vineyard with my presentation ready to share with the youth of Martha Vineyard and Vieques, Puerto Rico. I was in awe at the support that I got from the Institute's faculty and people who don't even live on the same island as I do. They were all so impressed by our community of North Kohala. They would like to have a similar goal for their community. This gave me a confidence boost about what I support and believe in. I hurried home happy with what I'd learned, hoping I could spread some of the knowledge I learned to our important community members. Each SHYLI youth delegate was invited to develop a Sustainability-In-Action Project. I was eager to bring together our Hawaiian leaders from business, government and education to meet SHYLI youth delegates and hear about all of our exciting projects. It's a big goal! I'm now learning how to develop public-private partnerships and invite people to sponsor us so we can realize this dream. This is our Hawaiian youth chance to present our beliefs and action steps towards creating a more sustainable Island. We hope to inspire many more Hawaiian youth to join with us as well as our leaders to support our Sustainability-In-Action Projects.

I appreciate David Fuertes and Marianne Larned for aiding me in all these efforts. To David for nominating me, and instilling in me a sustainable lifestyle at a young age. To Marianne for helping to develop my ideas into something tangible. Together they are truly inspiring me to be a youth model of what we want our future to look like.

We invite all of you decision makers to the SHYLI Youth Leadership Forum. We all have wonderful initiatives and with the help of you decision makers in the state of Hawaii we could make our dreams into a reality. I hope everyone will support my vision, beliefs, dreams, and hopes.