

Ma'o Farms Video Transcript

(upbeat music)

- My name is Derrick Alan Ikaika Parker. Started at the farm back in 2008.

And so, I started as an intern, and I recently interviewed for a job as the Food Processing and Quality Control Manager.

I check and manage their sales, so directly with Down to Earth as well, and kind of manage our packaging facility.

Somewhat of the expediter of that shed, kind of controlling or managing the structured chaos with food processing.

The founders, Gary and Kukui Maunakea-Forth.

Gary from Aotearoa and Kukui from Nanakuli, little over that mountain over there.

But basically, they kind of seen two deficits in our community.

One was the lack of access to healthy food.

Having that opportunity to have healthy food and kind of like the lack of I guess, education.

Or the lack of the opportunity to be able to educate yourself.

And so what the farm was, they seen the farmers that this could be the vehicle where we could get people to go to college for free, debt free and also produce food for our community that's safe for not only the people, but also for the 'aina as well and for the land.

College interns are majority of the workforce.

And so, college interns-- they come on the farm, they work three days a week.

They got a full tuition waiver at LCC.

And so they're able to learn how to grow food, learn these skills and then apply that as well as they're going to school for free, debt-free, along with going with a group of people having that kind of support system.

The farm kind of like what we, what we call it as a Youth Leadership Training Program and that's basically like the wild tea and that's a program that kind of incorporates the school portion along with a farm portion.

And we call it leadership is, necessarily we just, we're not necessarily training managers.

You know what I mean by training leaders of our community.

If you don't already know, y'know Waianae.

We don't necessarily have the best reputation.

We have a lot of diet-related diseases in our community, a high high school dropout rate, a low college retention rate.

A lot of these deficits incorporates our youth in our community.

So like the median age I guess, of our community is roughly 17 to 24.

That's the large demographic.

And so understanding that as an asset, yeah.

We have this like the next generation is growing in our community

It's like, how do we be that positive influence?

How do we create opportunity for these people?

That are gonna potentially be leaders of our community.

And that was kind of like the farms take on it, and kind of why we wanted to implement that youth leadership training program.

But initially when the farm started, it was a farm apprenticeship.

It was just to kind of like teach people that was interested in farming.

Yeah, it kind of molded into this thing where you didn't necessarily need to be interested in farming, but we wanted to provide the opportunity to go to college.

If you wanted to be a farmer, that's cool too.

That's kinda like I kinda sit in data.

I kind of pack it. Yeah.

I didn't know what I wanted to do when I first started.

Apparently I wanted to be a farmer so.

I mean the biggest benefit is supporting the local economy.

I mean, this is kind of like a perfect time to sort of talk about it, you know, especially during, you know, just the shifts in the world that we've had. Yeah.

I feel like our world has kind of like flipped upside down, you know, due to COVID and due to this scare

But you're really realizing how fragile our economy is--especially when a lot of our economy is being stimulated by tourism, you know, which almost completely shut down, you know, for the most part.

And so understanding what other areas do we need to support and definitely the food system.

For us being an Island and our dependency on imports, you know, I'm not saying like importing, everything is bad.

Cause there's some imports that like, you know that's good.

But realizing that there is a need to support local. Yeah.

And realizing that we need to build our food system here to be, if we ever want to reach, you know, sustainability or self-sufficiency.

And another thing too, it's like supporting stores, like down to earth that are supporting farmers.

You're, you're directly supporting the farmer.

You know, and you're supporting stories that are, you know, being aware, being cognizant of that importance as well.

You know, I was thinking about this last night and I was like, we get so much, it's okey

I'm going to say two things though, because they're both different-- but favorite thing is definitely a Down to Earth burger.

I believe it's the big one, but it's like, it's so good.

I always have like a real specific craving for that specific burger.

But then the second thing that's kind of really in line with that is vegan peanut butter smoothie or ice cream shake, but with kale and cocoa nibs. Oh my.

If you could name it after me, whatever, like that'd be so awesome. No... that's my favorite.

That's my favorite drink and I always go after working out.

Usually I have that, like that vegan, peanut butter creamy.

(upbeat music)