

ALFH INSIDER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION OF HAWAI'I



CONTENTS

Board Note	3
ALP Class XIX Seminars 2-5. . .	4-17
ALP Alumni Events.	18
AG2026	19-20
Annual Giving	21
In Memoriam.	22-23

There is so much going on with ALFH this year! In this Insider issue, read all about ALP Class XIX's travels to O'ahu, Maui and Kaua'i this spring and summer. Check out the photos from the dinners hosted by alumni to welcome Class XIX to each island. Learn more about the upcoming ALP Alumni breakfast at the 2026 Hawai'i Agriculture Conference. AG2026 is shaping up to be an amazing event! The AGxChange is sold out, and registration is filling up fast! Don't miss out on what is sure to be a stand-out event this November as we bring the Hawai'i Agriculture Conference to the Big Island for the first time! Be sure to register today!

CONTACT

ALFH Insider is the quarterly
newsletter of the
Agricultural Leadership
Foundation of Hawai'i

agleaderhi.org

hiagconference.org

Director@agleaderhi.org

808.947.2914

**Fourteenth Edition,
September 2026**

BOARD NOTE

Aloha ALFH 'Ohana,

This has been a challenging year across Hawai'i, particularly for the agriculture sector. Throughout the islands, producers have been navigating intense weather, from excessive rain and flooding in March to a busier than normal hurricane season. For farmers and ranchers, these challenges are more than just disruptions to a growing season; they translate to lost crops, damaged infrastructure, increased costs, and uncertainty about the future.

And yet, our producers continue to demonstrate an incredible level of resilience. They adapt, innovate, help one another, and keep growing. Their perseverance is a reminder of the role leadership plays in agriculture: that we not only respond to challenges, but work to build better systems that are stronger, acclimatized, and more resilient for our future survival.

Speaking of the future, we look forward to coming together to highlight the incredible diversity, diligence, and dedication in our local agriculture industry. The upcoming Ag2026 Conference on Hawai'i Island will bring together farmers, ranchers, agricultural professionals, policymakers, educators, and community leaders from across the state to share ideas and learn from one another. In a year that has felt uncertain, gathering as a community feels especially important.

We are also excited to celebrate the accomplishments of ALP Cohort 19 as they prepare to graduate. These emerging leaders have invested in their own growth while exploring the issues, perspectives, and opportunities shaping agriculture in our state. Their commitment to leadership gives us reason to be optimistic.

Agriculture in Hawai'i has never been without challenges, but our strength has always come from within: the producers who keep growing, the leaders who step forward in new ways, and the recognition that community is the essential thread in the fabric of our islands. As we move into the work ahead, I encourage you to learn, support, and celebrate alongside the people showing up every day to grow a stronger and more resilient agricultural future for Hawai'i. See you in November!



Lisa Rhoden
ALFH President

DAYS 1-2

ALP CLASS XIX SEMINAR 2

*ALP is produced with support from Hawai'i
Department of Agriculture & Biosecurity*



CONTRIBUTED BY BO BORY

Days 1 & 2 started off with warm greetings as Cohort XIX began arriving at the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) location in O'ahu for the two-day workshop on Facilitative Skills led by **Donna R. Ching, ALFH Director** and Owner of Pacific Center for Collaboration.

The interactive workshop provided participants with skills on how to facilitate meetings, promote clear communication, practice active listening, foster inclusive engagement, and equip us with practical tools to manage group dynamics, build trust, and support collaborative, productive outcomes. There were twenty seven participants in attendance, including ALP Cohort XIX. This allowed us to meet and interact with people from all over the state and in various fields, providing for a diversity of perspectives.

Donna Ching is a warm, personable teacher; full of stories and anecdotes that provided clear examples of the lessons she was teaching. Her ability to engage with each participant and draw out ideas and conversation not only contributed to a friendly inclusive environment, but it also modeled in real time the very lessons being taught. One of the most important mottos she stressed to us as new facilitators was to “legitimize early and often”, a skill she deftly demonstrated throughout the course of the two day workshop.

Day 1 started with an emphasis on Good Beginnings and the importance of starting a meeting on time as it sets the tone for the entire meeting. Participant introductions were also highlighted as Donna explained that it allowed all the voices in the room to be heard, thereby demonstrating that all voices are important and legitimized.





O'AHU

DEC 2-5, 2025

DAYS 1- 2

After introductions, the workshop moved into the area of Collaborative Leadership which Donna defines as “the art of leading people as they work together to successfully accomplish both individual and collective goals.” Other key aspects included understanding the reasons for a meeting, as well as setting expectations for the outcomes. Next was examining the two meeting roles: Facilitator and Recorder. In a meeting, the facilitator guides the group’s process to keep discussion productive and inclusive, while the recorder captures key points, decisions, and actions to ensure shared understanding and accountability. A great deal of the workshop revolved around these two roles and each of the participants were afforded ample opportunities to practice each role. Facilitating tools such as clustering, group memory, and ground rules were also useful skills the groups got to practice with each other.

Day 2 was another fast paced event with an exercise in Active Listening where each participant was paired up with a partner with differing opinions on a topic. The goal was to actively listen without judgement, summarize their viewpoints, and ultimately find common ground. Next the workshop focused on Interventions and identified common facilitation challenges, breaking up into small groups to address and brainstorm solutions. Day 2 culminated in the Mauna Loa case study where participants assumed various roles and played out a real life scenario in order to find common ground and resolutions. This not only allowed the group to practice with a real life case study, but also provided much laughter and comic relief after two long days of workshopping.

All in all, the workshop was extremely valuable, with deep insights and hands-on, practical knowledge that all participants were able to process and use immediately.



DAY 3



ALP CLASS XIX SEMINAR 2

CONTRIBUTED BY JUSTIN BROWN

The day began with a visit to Hawai'i Foodservice Alliance (HFA) and a fascinating conversation with Chad Buck. He shared an introduction to HFA, its business model and what their team is passionate about.

Chad has revolutionized what food delivery and logistics can look like for Hawai'i. It is very apparent that HFA has a focus on the people it employs and the people it serves. HFA not only contributes significantly through food distributions, but also has no hesitation to extend second chances to incarcerated people. It was easy to see that HFA's focus was really on people and bringing up Hawai'i, together. This was evident as we heard about HFA's response to the devastating Lahaina fire. We were shown videos of HFA trucks being some of the first to not only enter the city while the fire was still burning, but also to begin food distribution. This visit was truly a model to how business and community can succeed and intertwine in Hawai'i.

After HFA, we made our way to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity Plant Quarantine office. Here, we met with Sharon Hurd (Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity), **Jonathan Ho, ALP Class XVI** (DAB Quarantine Branch Manager), Andrew Robinson (Loan Program Administrator), and **Dean Matsukawa, ALP Class VI** (Deputy to the Chair). We learned about the diverse services that DAB performs for the state. Collaboration with the community was stressed again and again, as state agencies cannot keep Hawai'i secure from agriculture threats on their own.

To finish the day, we spoke with Young Brothers. Here, we began to gain a greater perspective on not only transportation and logistics within the islands, but also the legislative requirements that oversee it. Hearing the often unspoken truths from Hawai'i's only interisland sea cargo company was enlightening. We intended to see more of the daily operations on the port, however, their port was closed due to state inspections of the port. This further opened discussion on the importance of state involvement with infrastructure and implications it may have with commerce.

To end the day, we enjoyed a great alumni dinner hosted by Skip Bittenbender and Donna R. Ching. This was a great opportunity to meet previous class members and gain insight into what the program not only has to offer in the short term, but also its long term impact on the individual and community.





O'AHU



DAY 4



■ ■ ■ CONTRIBUTED BY RACHEL FUKUMOTO

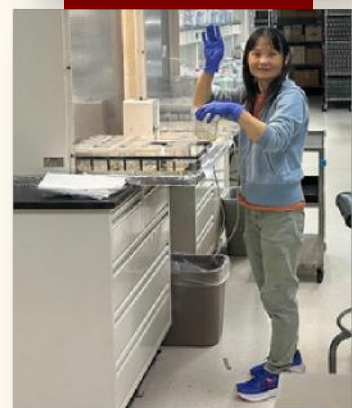
We began the day at Meadow Gold with Bahman Sadeghi, Owner, and **Kimia Sadeghi, ALP Class XVIII**, where the history of Hawai'i's dairy industry offered a valuable lesson on how external variables, from shipping logistics to feed costs, shape local food security. Previously a self-sufficient sector, Hawai'i's dairy production declined as imported milk became accessible. Now locally owned and operated, Meadow Gold is investing in on-island processing, automation, workforce well-being, and refreshed marketing to rebuild a modern vision for dairy. Their commitment to solving systemic challenges with creativity and long-term thinking highlighted leadership rooted in adaptability and strategic foresight.

Our visit to Bayer Hawai'i, hosted by **Alan Takemoto, ALP Class X**, provided a look at seed production, advanced technologies, and the role of research in global and local agricultural systems. Their mission of "Health for all, Hunger for none" framed the tour, and at both the Kunia site and their AgPark, we saw examples of how land access, innovation, and farmer support can coexist. The AgPark model especially demonstrated leadership through shared opportunity by leveraging organizational resources to create pathways for small farmers.

At our next stop at Aloun Farms' distribution office, we observed the inner workings of a vertically integrated operation. From packaging to distribution, their systems emphasized collaboration and scalability. Their vision for the future reflected a deep emphasis on relationships, demonstrating how trust, collaboration, and long-standing partnerships can unlock new markets, technologies, and meaningful community impact.

We closed the day at the Hawai'i Agriculture Research Center (HARC), a nonprofit with a 135-year legacy rooted in Hawai'i's sugar cane era. HARC's innovations in breeding, genetics, and crop development bridge the gap between laboratory research and on-farm application. Their work is grounded in scientific rigor, practical relevance, and service to farmers, despite challenges of labor, funding, and aging infrastructure.

Across all four sites, a shared theme emerged, Hawai'i's agricultural future depends on leaders who innovate boldly, collaborate deeply, and remain grounded in service to community.





CONTRIBUTED BY JUDAH LUM

Day 1 of the seminar demonstrated that agricultural leadership in Hawai'i is not defined by commodity or scale, but by the disciplined management of tradeoffs—balancing risk, reinvention, stewardship, and economic survival in service of feeding communities and protecting place.

At Waialua Egg Farm, leadership at scale was visible in system design. Biosecurity, workforce coordination, feed sourcing, and capital investment were not operational details—they were strategic decisions embedded into infrastructure. Producing food close to market requires dependence on global inputs, high capital exposure, and constant risk mitigation. The tradeoff is clear: scale increases output and market stability, but often reduces flexibility and local control.



At the Hawai'i Agriculture Research Center (HARC) and Kunia Camp Village, leadership took the form of reinvention. As plantation agriculture faded, these institutions were forced to redefine purpose, preserve land access, and sustain research capacity in an uncertain environment. Here, the tradeoff was temporal: short-term viability versus long-term stewardship. Survival required adapting the mission while holding onto agricultural continuity for future generations.

Pa'ina expanded the definition of agriculture to include regulatory precision and market access. Compliance, sanitation, and zero-failure tolerance protect both growers and public trust. The tradeoff in this space is efficiency versus assurance; added layers of process increase cost and complexity but safeguard market viability and food safety.



Sweetland Farms brought the lens back to family enterprise. As a goat dairy integrating value-added production and agritourism, Sweetland embodies intentional scale. Growth decisions are filtered through lifestyle, animal care, and product integrity. Here, the tradeoff is expansion versus sustainability; choosing disciplined growth over volume at all costs.

Across every stop, one truth emerged: leadership in Hawai'i agriculture requires absorbing risk and making conscious tradeoffs. Whether industrial, institutional, regulatory, or family-run, each operation reflects decisions about what to protect, what to scale, and what to sacrifice. Day 1 challenged the class to see agriculture not simply as production, but as responsibility carried through systems over time.

CONTRIBUTED BY CHRISTEN OLIVEIRA REPPUN

Our first stop was at Mari's Garden, a family-run business that grew from a landscaping nursery into a sustainable farming operation. Using aquaponics and hydroponics, they maintain 37,000 heads of lettuce, serving wholesale, retail, and restaurant clients. Their farm store carries fresh produce, garden supplies, and value-added goods from local vendors, while their education programs, including school tours, internships, and butterfly room teach keiki about growing food.

Just down the street, we visited the Hawai'i Agrivoltaic Research and Demonstration Site, led by **Juli Burden, ALP Class XVIII**. Launched in 2020, the site explores agrivoltaics--growing crops beneath solar panels--a practice that can be up to four times more productive per acre than conventional farming. The shade provided by the panels has reduced water needs by 50-60% in summer months, with crops like mamaki, maile, asparagus beans, strawberries, and kalo all thriving underneath.

Our third stop brought us to Hawaiian Earth Products, where **Austin Tom, ALP Class XVIII**, walked us through Hawai'i's largest green waste recycling operation. Since 1993, they have diverted over 2.6 million tons of green waste, food waste, and wood from landfills, transforming it into nutrient-rich compost, mulch, soil amendments, and erosion control products, recycling over 140,000 tons annually.

We then traveled to Mokuleia to visit Hawai'i Fish Company, one of the oldest land-based fish farming operations in the state, in operation since 1988. Pioneers in their field, they were the first to sell live fish at Peoples Open Market and continue to serve Chinatown markets and restaurants. What stood out most was Ron Weidenbach's philosophy: enjoy the work, embrace technology, and lean on strong collaboration, because the moment you stop loving what you do, it's time to move on.

Next stop was the Pacific Gateway Center's 77-acre farm which serves as a sanctuary for refugee immigrant farmers. Dedicated to keeping farmers farming, it provides resources, federal aid assistance, and support to help growers build businesses. We met a Thai chili pepper farmer who was so grateful for support and the breathtaking work view.

We closed the day at Kōkua Learning Center, where **Ramsey Brown, ALP Class XVIII** led us through the Working Genius exercise over pizza. It was a wonderful way to wind down the day and find unexpected connections with one another. All in all, it was a day that reminded us why this work matters and how much heart goes into feeding Hawai'i.



ALP CLASS XIX

DAY 3

 CONTRIBUTED BY RACHEL FUKUMOTO



We closed the day by observing live public hearings that brought everything together, allowing us to witness firsthand how testimony and deliberation shape decision-making in real time. Seeing the process unfold emphasized the role and ability we all have to work together in advocating for Hawai'i's farmers, ranchers, and producers.



■ CONTRIBUTED BY JILLIAN SCHEIBE

On the final day of Seminar 3, we visited Kualoa Ranch and met with **Taylor Kellerman, ALP Class XV**, and his team. Kualoa operates at the intersection of agriculture, conservation, and high-volume tourism, and the team spoke candidly about the operational tension of hosting visitors while actively stewarding land and water resources.

Across the property, they apply regenerative methods through a diversified set of enterprises, including orchards, a piggery, small livestock areas, produce production, and aquaculture systems for shrimp and oyster farming. A key takeaway was the role of diversified revenue streams in supporting long-term stewardship, with decision-making grounded in values of legacy and community responsibility.

We then visited Kahuku Farms, where **Melvin Matsuda, ALP Class IX**, and **Kylie Matsuda, ALP Class XII**, shared the farm's evolution following the plantation era. Their reflections emphasized the importance of coordinated, community-based problem-solving to sustain agricultural production over time, including working with the state to update policies and expand allowable lease uses. One example was the addition of agritourism to their lease as a strategy to strengthen long-term viability. They also highlighted innovation as a driver of resilience; Kahuku Farms was the first in Hawai'i to grow açai, which helped build demand and support their farm café and tours. Their story reinforced that longevity is rarely attributable to production alone.

Across both visits, two themes stood out. First, resilience was enabled by strategic diversification and pursuing new opportunities without losing alignment with land stewardship. Second, both operations treated community as a core part of their operating model, through employment, partnerships, and public engagement. Taken together, the day offered a perspective on how agriculture in Hawai'i can remain viable by integrating production, public interface, and resource stewardship—while keeping the operation rooted in place and purpose.

Our day concluded with power outages that caused significant traffic, and we were unable to complete the planned visit to Ho'oulu 'Āina with Kanoa O'Connor. After a week that started with a stay-at-home order due to severe rain and flooding, we were fortunate that heavy traffic was our only setback and that everyone was able to make it home safely.



SEMINAR 4

ALP CLASS XIX
DAY 1

CONTRIBUTED BY CHESS SCOLA



From the red dirt roads of Waimea to sprawling fields that once held a sugar empire, our Kaua'i Seminar was a vivid reminder that agriculture is never just about what grows in the ground, it's about the people, the history, and the vision that sustains it.

Day 1 began at Kumano I Ke Ala (KIKa), also known as the Aloha 'Āina Poi Company, where we were welcomed by Enoka Karratti. What struck us immediately was their core philosophy: let the land teach. KIKa grounds its educational programs in the rhythms of the 'āina. Kalo, as Enoka shared, is the catalyst for everything at KIKa. That principle came to life as we learned about their poi mill operation, efforts to bring locally grown kalo into public school cafeterias, and a paid internship program designed to cultivate the next generation of farmers and community leaders.

Next, we made our way to Corteva Agriscience's Kekaha site for a deep dive into the science behind modern plant breeding from **Mark Stoutemyer, ALP Class XIII**, and the chance to tour inside their lab space with Wendy Kishida. With roots on Kaua'i dating back to the '60s, Corteva has leveraged Hawai'i's year-round growing climate to become a global hub for crop improvement research. We explored the full spectrum of breeding methods, and why Hawai'i's stable climate and regulatory environment uniquely position it for this work. It was a special visit since it's also the workplace of our cohort peer, **Justin Brown!**

We closed the day at the Kekaha Agriculture Association (KAA), where Mike Faye gave us a candid look at the complexities of keeping West Kaua'i's agricultural infrastructure alive. Founded in 2003, KAA manages over 14,000 acres, 50 miles of roads, two hydroelectric plants, and an aging network of plantation-era irrigation ditches. Silting canals, regulatory compliance, trespassers, brush fires, and the challenge of transitioning large-scale monoculture land into diversified agriculture are just a few of the realities faced daily. And yet, KAA's vision for the future, which includes community gardens, native forests, and an agricultural processing facility, reflects the nimble, long-view thinking that builds resilient systems, not just in agriculture but for our communities as a whole.

Day 1 offered a powerful cross-section of West Kaua'i agriculture: wisdom rooted in aloha 'āina, cutting-edge science, and the unglamorous infrastructure work that makes agriculture possible. Each host reminded us that strong leadership requires not just technical knowledge, but humility, community, and a deep sense of place.



CONTRIBUTED BY CHELSEA TAKAHASHI

Day 2 highlighted the depth and diversity of agriculture by grounding it in culture, community, and resilience. Our visit to Waipā Foundation reinforced that agriculture extends far beyond commercial production; it is deeply tied to ‘āina, identity, and collective responsibility. As Kauī Fu, noted, “even if you don’t grow food, you can still be part of agriculture,” emphasizing the broad spectrum of roles within the system.



At Waipā Foundation, we learned how a community-driven model can sustain both cultural practices and food access. Their long-standing poi production, distributing over 1,200 pounds weekly, serves as both a food justice initiative and a cultural anchor. The operation strikes a balance between tradition and innovation—from early morning production workflows to modern solutions like repurposing wastewater to enhance soil health and orchard production.

The history of Waipā Foundation also illustrates the power of community advocacy. What was once slated for resort development became protected agricultural land through the persistence of Native Hawaiian families and activists. Today, the site integrates farming, education, conservation, and small business incubation. Waipā Foundation is demonstrating how their role as a food hub is successfully supports economic opportunity, cultural preservation, and community engagement.



Resilience emerged as a consistent theme throughout the day. This was reinforced by insights from Āina Ho’okupu o Kīlauea, where Yoshi L’Hote challenged us to rethink how we support farmers. He likened current expectations to “asking a doctor to build the hospital,” highlighting how farmers are often expected to not only grow food, but also develop the infrastructure, markets, and systems needed to sustain their operations. The metaphor resonated strongly with our cohort and underscored the need for community investment in agricultural infrastructure.

Our visit to Lydgate Farm offered a complementary perspective, showcasing how agriculture can be elevated through experience, storytelling, and value-added production. The farm stood out as a benchmark for experiential agriculture done well, with a thoughtfully designed tour that connects visitors emotionally to place and product. By translating cacao production into an engaging narrative, Lydgate turns guests into ambassadors while maintaining authenticity and transparency. The visit ended with an alumni dinner event to be remembered as the expected storm hit Kaua’i.

Together, these site visits underscored that successful agricultural systems in Hawai‘i are not defined solely by production, but by their ability to integrate culture, community, storytelling, and shared investment into a cohesive and resilient model.



■ ■ ■ CONTRIBUTED BY SHAUN WILCOX

As Day 3 dawned, the ground remained saturated from two back-to-back Kona Lows. Phones buzzed with National Weather Service alerts as an extratropical low lashed the island with wind and sporadic rain. But the weather couldn't dampen the spirits of ALP Cohort XIX. Everyone accounted for, the convoy headed toward Kaua'i Coffee Company (KCC).

Upon arrival, we were greeted by Orchard Manager **Bronson Yadao, ALP Class XVIII**. The visitor center was a hive of activity; despite the erratic weather, tourists were busy sampling brews and snapping photos of the largest coffee estate in the U.S. With four million plants across 3,100 acres, KCC's fully integrated "seed to cup" operation is truly world-class.



But beneath the surface of this perfect blend lies a challenge familiar to farmers across the islands: land tenure. While dealing with pests, weather, and labor is standard, the uncertainty of active lease negotiations weighs on everyone. Investing in the future—like their new \$400,000 harvester—is a leap of faith when your goal is a 15-year lease that isn't yet signed. KCC graciously hosted us in their conference room, where we debriefed as a group over a delicious lunch from Kuulei's Gourmet. After a quick pit stop to refuel the convoy, we headed to Kilohana Plantation for the highly anticipated Koloa Rum Safari.



Stepping into Kilohana felt like stepping back in time. The infrastructure—from the creak of the hardwood floors to the luxury furniture lining the hallways—exudes the elegance of a bygone era. Our guides, Bruce and Tanji the mixologist, met us on the lanai to discuss the powerful collaboration between farming and agritourism. As Tanji prepared our first drink using farm-sourced ingredients, he shared a sobering reality: Kaua'i has only a 14-day food supply if the barges stop running. This underscored his plea to support local growers like the four independent farms on the property.

After boarding a safari-style truck to tour the estate, we eventually found ourselves in the middle of a lo'i (taro patch) for our second farm-to-glass cocktail. Observing the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle damage to the coconut palms made this second drink much sourer than the first.

By this point, the long day had caught up with us. Rather than asking technical questions, Class XIX simply soaked in the moment, bonding through laughter and quiet camaraderie. The visit served as a vital reminder of how agritourism drives revenue and visibility for local farmers, so they can do what they do best...grow our food! As the rain finally subsided, it was time to head to the airport, exhausted but inspired, for the journey home.



Two months after our last huaka'i together, our cohort reunited on Maui. Jr picked us up at the airport with a big Mahi Pono van, and just like that, we were catching up and settling into the rhythm of learning together again. Our first stop was Pacific Biodiesel, where we stepped into a story decades in the making.



We ended the day with a lei-making session led by Brit, Jr's wahine. She grounded us in the cultural significance of lei, reminding us that each one carries intention, emotion and ancestry, and honors both the giver and receiver. With Hawaiian music playing, the room shifted from quiet concentration to laughter and encouragement. It was a beautiful and grounding way to end the day.

CONTRIBUTED BY JESSE MIKASOBE-KEALIINOHOMOKU



Through visits to Maui Nui Venison, Kula Country Farms, Maui Agricultural Research Center, Oko'a Farms, Waikulu Distillery, and Da Market/Maui Food Bank, we gained a deeper appreciation for the challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities that come with feeding our communities while stewarding our natural resources.



At Maui Nui Venison, we witnessed how leadership requires balancing competing priorities. Their innovative approach to managing invasive axis deer demonstrated how conservation, food production, technology, and regulation can work together. Equally impactful was their investment in employees, reminding us that successful organizations are built on people as much as process.

Kula Country Farms shared the realities of operating a family farm in an ever-changing environment. From shifting markets and labor shortages to deer pressure and weather events, the farm's success has depended on its ability to adapt while remaining rooted in family values and community.



Our visit to the Maui Agricultural Research Center reinforced the importance of research and collaboration. Their work serves as a bridge between science and practice, providing farmers with tools and knowledge that support informed decision-making and long-term resilience.

At Oko'a Farms, we saw how thoughtful planning and diversified systems can strengthen farm viability. Their journey toward organic certification, investment in solar, and commitment to efficient resource management demonstrated both their values and vision.



Waikulu Distillery offered a unique perspective on creating opportunity through place-based agriculture. By understanding Hawai'i's growing conditions and leveraging the strengths of the land, they have built a sustainable enterprise around agave production. Their story highlighted the importance of recognizing potential where others may not.

Across every site, a common lesson emerged: leadership is about adapting to challenges while staying committed to purpose. Each organization demonstrated that resilient communities are built through collaboration, innovation, and stewardship. These lessons will continue to guide us as we work to strengthen Hawai'i's agricultural future.



Mahalo to Mahi Pono's **Mark Vaught, ALP Class IX** and Director, Water Resources and **Justin Teixeira, ALP Class XVIII** for hosting the alumni dinner under a beautifully lit tent in the quiet, dark agricultural fields of Mahi Pono. These dinners are such a valuable time for networking and encouragement.

CONTRIBUTED BY LEHUA ABRIGO

Day 3 began with the comfortable Maui routine we'd fallen into: early breakfasts, dawn bike rides, and all of us piling into the Mahi Pono van. Having the whole cohort together made the day feel easy, kept the conversations flowing, and helped us build even more pilina.



We started off at Da Market in Lahaina, where Kawehi Kina and the Maui Food Bank team welcomed us with genuine aloha. Their cultural grounding and strong sense of place made their work feel even more meaningful. Through more than 120 partner agencies, Maui Food Bank supports food access across Maui County. They reminded us that food security isn't just about growing food, it's storage, transportation, sourcing, distribution, partnerships, emergency response and ensuring 'ohana are supported with dignity. The Lahaina wildfire reinforced how essential these systems are. Maui Food Bank's work is clearly a cornerstone of community resilience.



From Lahaina, we headed to Kīpuka Olowalu, a place that already carries a deep sense of healing and history. We began with protocol, grounding ourselves in the space before a panel discussion on agriculture's role in recovery after wildfire. The conversation expanded the idea of recovery beyond physical reconstruction. It's about restoring 'āina, strengthening food access, caring for watersheds, uplifting cultural knowledge, and reconnecting people to place. We saw how agriculture can be the foundation for community resilience, especially when paired with cultural stewardship.



We ended the day at the Maui Food Innovation Center (MFIC), Hawai'i's first college-based food business incubator. Chef Instructor Douglas Paul and Echo Yu led us through their impressive facility, showing us equipment that could peel, grind, bake, dehydrate and package almost anything you can imagine. Beyond the tools, MFIC provides technical training, industry consultation and a shared-use commercial kitchen that helps transform ideas into safe, scalable, market ready products.



This was our last interisland seminar together and as we said aloha for now, we reflected on how far we've come. Over the past year, we've leaned on one another, shared resources, built partnerships and celebrated wins. Along the way, we've watched each other grow... with a baby, a marriage, a news feature, guest presenters, a trainer and so many personal milestones woven into our journey. We now look ahead to our final chapter in Washington DC and Maine.





AG2026

Hawai'i Agriculture Conference

Proudly hosted by the AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION OF HAWAII



In cooperation with the State of Hawai'i
Department of Agriculture & Biosecurity



We're grateful for the enthusiastic response to this year's gathering on Hawai'i island

We know that there are many practical reasons to delay registration. We also recognize that in past years we've been able to accommodate last-minute additions. This year is different.

Due to strict capacity limits for our meeting venue, we expect this year's conference will sell out—but we can't say with certainty how soon.

If you plan to attend and haven't yet registered, we recommend securing your registration as soon as possible since there won't be much we can do to accommodate folks after the available tickets sell out.

The Regular registration rate (\$400) is available until Sep. 30—if we aren't sold out by then!

**REGISTER AND FIND ALL DETAILS AT
HIAGCONFERENCE.ORG**

The AGxCHANGE is officially full!

Here's a peek at what you'll find and who you'll meet in this year's sold-out exhibit hall:

Āina Momona
Agriculture Stewardship Hawai'i
American Ag Credit
American Farm Mortgage & Financial Services
ChangeMakers Community Economic Development Corporation
GoFarm Hawai'i
Hawai'i Agriculture Research Center
Hawai'i Cattlemen's Council
Hawai'i Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity
Hawai'i Farmers Union Foundation
Hawai'i Foodservice Alliance
Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization
Hawaiian Earth Recycling
Island Grower Supplies LLC
Johnny's Selected Seeds
Makali'i Metrics
Natural Resource Data Solutions Inc
North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership & UH Farm Food Safety Program
Parker Ranch
USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service
UH College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resilience
Academics and Student Affairs
Cooperative Extension
Research
West Coast Drone Application
Young Brothers

Mahalo to our sponsors!



DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS



American
AgCredit

Your future grows here



Kamehameha
Schools®



CORTEVA™
agriscience



LYDGATE FARMS
HAWAIIAN GROWN



BE A CONFERENCE ALLY



There's still time to build
a sponsorship package
that best aligns with *your*
mission and resources

Contact us today

ALP ALUMNI EVENTS

HAWAI'I AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

AG2026

Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort and Spa

ALP CLASS XIX GRADUATION

*Join ALFH as we celebrate the newest
Agricultural Leadership Program
Graduates, Class XIX.*

- Monday, November 9, 2026
- 5:00 PM
- Naupaka 4 Ballroom
- Conference registration not required

ALP & GOFARM HAWAI'I ALUMNI BREAKFAST

**ALP and GoFarm Hawai'i Alumni are
invited to a private breakfast event**

- Tuesday, November 10, 2026
- 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM
- Paniolo Ocean Terrace
- Conference registration not required
- RSVP by November 1st - invite coming soon

Sponsored by Corteva Agriscience

ALUMNI DINNERS



O'AHU December 4, 2025
Ching/Bittenbender Home



KAUA'I April 9, 2026
Lydgate Farms



MAUI June 4, 2026
Mahi Pono



MAKE A
DONATION



DONATE

DONATE TO ALFH'S GIVING CAMPAIGN

Show Your Support!

Help us continue our important work
of developing ag leaders for Hawai'i



Find out more at agleaderhi.org/support

ALFH is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, tax ID# 99-021890. Your donation is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

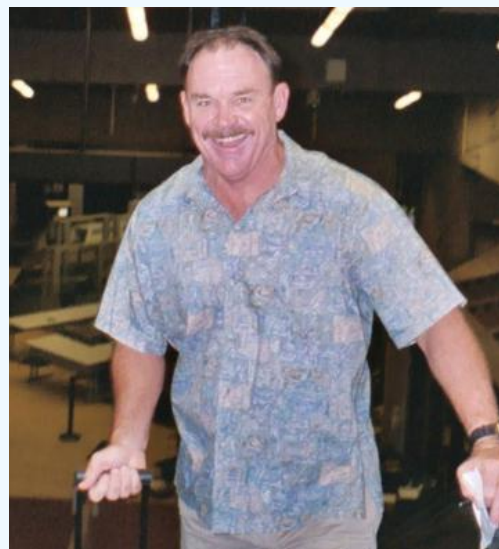
IN MEMORIAM

A TRIBUTE TO JAMES “RENY” PLATZ, ALP CLASS VI

■ ■ ■ CONTRIBUTED BY AVERY CHUMBLEY, ALP CLASS III

Today, we celebrate the life of Reny Platz—a man whose adventurous spirit, unwavering work ethic, loyalty, kindness, and generosity touched the lives of so many.

Reny devoted his life to agriculture, a profession that was far more than a career—it was his passion and his calling. He understood the value of hard work, the patience required to nurture the land, and the importance of leaving things better than he found them. He earned the respect of colleagues and friends alike through his integrity, knowledge, and tireless commitment to agriculture and the people whose lives depended on it.



Beyond the fields, Reny embraced life with courage, curiosity, and enthusiasm. He found joy in exploring the world, from the grandeur of Mount Everest Base Camp and Glacier National Park to the summit of Mount Whitney and the breathtaking landscapes of Haleakalā, Mauna Loa, and the hidden treasures of Maui.

To Reny, every journey was an opportunity to discover something new and create lasting memories with family and friends.

JAMES "RENY" PLATZ

ALP CLASS XIX

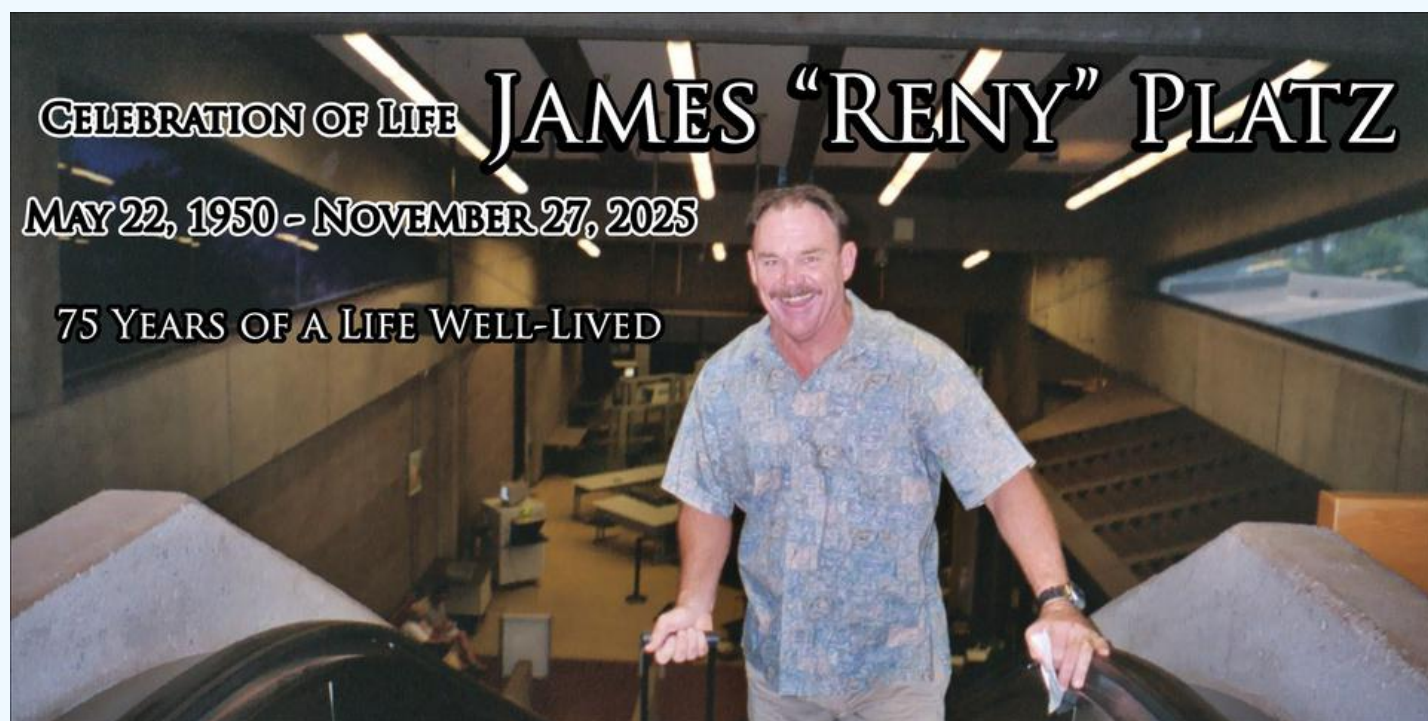
He had a remarkable ability to make every person feel welcome and every moment meaningful. His warm smile, quiet strength, sense of humor, and unwavering integrity earned the respect and admiration of everyone fortunate enough to know him.

Whether cultivating the land or climbing a mountain, Reny believed that the greatest rewards came through dedication, perseverance, and a willingness to embrace life's challenges. He approached each day with optimism and purpose, inspiring others by both his example and his actions.

Reny will be remembered not only for the places he traveled, but also for the fields he helped cultivate, the agricultural community he faithfully served, the friendships he nurtured, the kindness he shared, and the positive impact he made throughout his life.

Although he is no longer with us, his legacy of hard work, adventure, compassion, and friendship will continue to inspire those whose lives he touched. His memory will live on in every mountain trail, every sunrise over the fields, and every heart that was privileged to know him.

May he rest in peace, forever remembered with love, gratitude, and admiration.





Agricultural Leadership
Foundation of Hawai'i

**44 years of growing
ag leaders**

ALFH INSIDER

14TH EDITION

© 2026, ALFH

☎ 808.947.2914

✉ director@agleaderhi.org



agleaderhi.org
hiagconference.org

