

Mānoa Heritage Center Highlights 2015: Year-end Report



Mānoa Heritage Center provides an inspiring and enjoyable outdoor experience providing visitors a deeper understanding and appreciation of Hawaiian culture and the natural environment.



2859 Mānoa Road, Honolulu, HI 96822

Overview

Since the founding of Mānoa Heritage Center twenty years ago, by Sam and Mary Cooke, out of a simple desire to preserve and share a unique historic property, the organization has become an established center of learning and discovery. A family reaching out to connect to the community with a goal to inspire others has demonstrated that a nurtured and historic place holds the power to tell a meaningful story for people of all ages and backgrounds.



Mānoa Heritage Center is nestled in the ahupua'a of Waikīkī with views from the Ko'olau Mountains to the ocean.

A Welcoming landscape

The Mānoa Heritage Center is a unique site whose mission is to promote the understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of Hawai'i by caring for and sharing an extraordinary historic property. The Center includes Kūka'ō'ō Heiau, a Native Hawaiian garden, and the historic home, Kūali'i. The organization is guided by a Board of Directors who represent a broad cross-section of educators, historians and business professionals.

The Center welcomes visitors of all ages to enjoy an outdoor guided walk through a garden of Native Hawaiian and Polynesian introduced plants, broad views of Mānoa Valley, a close look at Kūka'ō'ō Heiau (ancient Hawaiian sacred stone structure), as well as the history of Kūali'i, the private Cooke family home.

A Focus On School Tours

The Center gives both schools and the community a special opportunity to enjoy a tour of a unique cultural and historical site a short distance from urban Honolulu. School visits have remained the priority since the Center's inception. Providing students from kindergarten to college with a rewarding and enlightening outdoor experience that includes environmental, cultural and historical insights is the Center's main goal. Schools visit free of charge. Tour themes and site interpretation include the geological history of Mānoa Valley, Native Hawaiian practices, ethnobotanical uses of plants, and an interpretation of the sacred Kūka'ō'ō Heiau. A concentration on small group tours that meet specific educational needs provides flexibility and a wide range of approaches. Hands-on, experiential and place-based learning that actively engages the visitor is emphasized. Cracking kukui nuts to discover the oil, performing a chant, or playing ancient Hawaiian games connects visitors to the unique location. Broader topics such as preservation, conservation, and sustainability are also explored. Guides present a narrative that is both authentic and entertaining.



The Center welcomes students free of charge and provides a bus subsidy to make it possible for all schools to visit.

Tour Count

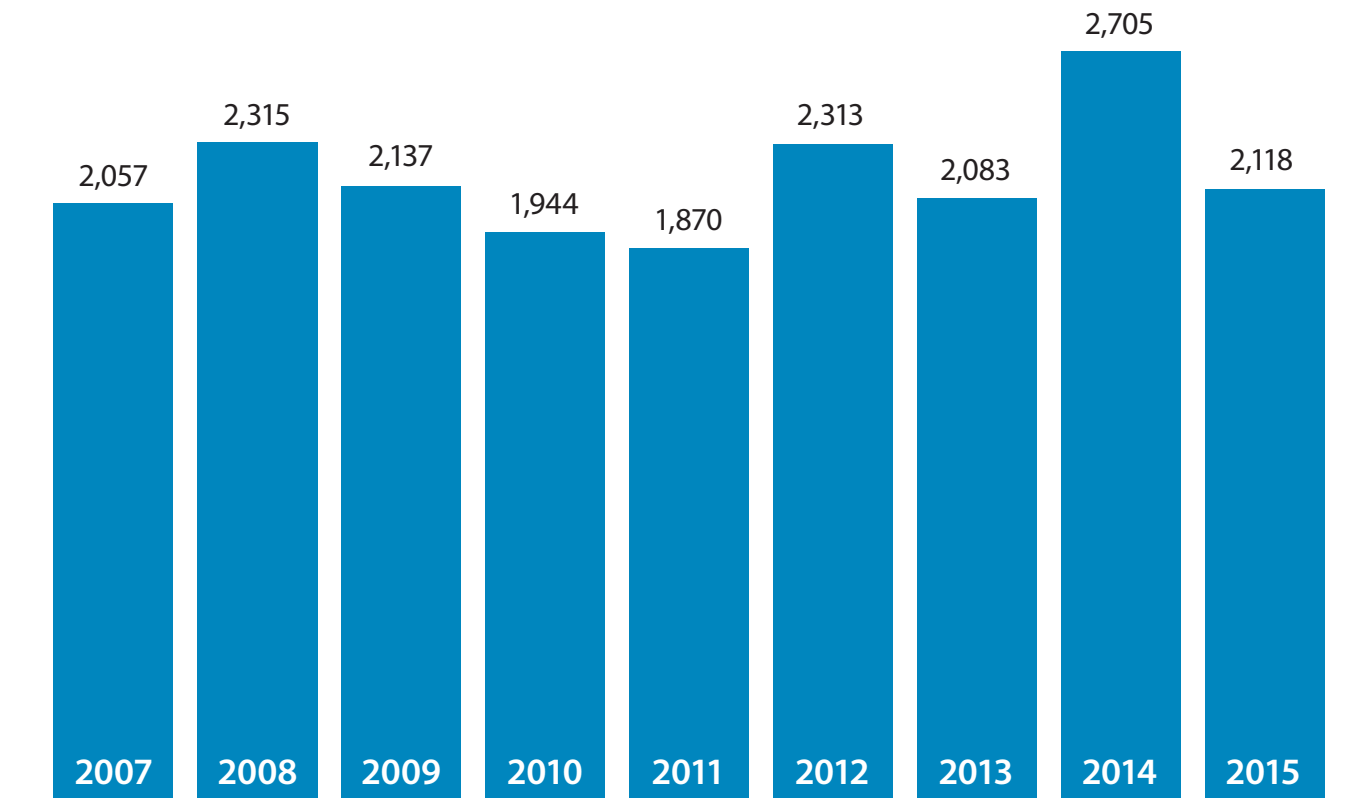
Maintaining quality by giving small group tours with well-trained guides has been the goal as opposed to seeking higher visitor numbers. Slow but steady growth has retained the intimacy of the tours and has made it possible to operate the center with a core staff. Visitor numbers fluctuate for an average of 2,200 over the last five years. MHC makes a special effort to serve Title I school students, 240 of which visited in 2015. (Title I is a federal program that aims to assist students from low-income families so they may meet challenging academic standards.)



Enthusiastic and knowledgeable guides lead groups through the gardens.

The following is a comparative look at visitor numbers over the past nine years.

Visitors Per Year



Personal small group tours allow time for questions and hands on activities.

A Bus Subsidy Makes It Possible

The Center offers a free outdoor learning experience for students from preschool to college, and provides complimentary bus transportation. Thanks to funding from a dedicated donor, the cost of transportation is covered and is not an obstacle for schools wishing to arrange an excursion. This is genuinely appreciated by the teachers. The popular free tour with bus rental costs covered by the Center helps fulfill the goal to inspire and educate all students equally.

Volunteer Guides

A group of over twenty active volunteer docent guides lead the school and adult tours. In 2015 five new guides completed the 6-week training class that includes culture, history, and botany to prepare them for leading tours. Docents are the foundation of the Center, creating an informative tour experience while establishing a personal connection with the visitors. The guides continue to learn throughout the year by attending presentations, excursions and other activities.

The Gardens

A walk through the garden is an opportunity to see varieties of plants not commonly grown in our urban island landscape. The three-acre garden of both native and Polynesian introduced plants is maintained by the Center's plant specialist and the grounds staff. A vibrant array of 30-40 species thrive in a natural hillside setting. The garden constantly evolves, creating a living laboratory for gaining an awareness of the natural environment of Hawai'i. The discovery of how plants are used is a window into understanding the Hawaiian culture.



An ancient "pre-contact" stone wall, leading to the heiau is believed to be about 800 years old.

Service Learning

Garden volunteers assist our grounds-keeping staff in planting, harvesting, weeding, mulching, and propagating. They personally benefit by learning about native plants in the process. In 2015 ten college students provided assistance and received “service learning credits” from their institution. One dedicated community member, with extensive knowledge about native plants, has consistently contributed to the upkeep of the garden for the past three years.



Garden volunteers learn about native plants while assisting groundskeeping staff.

Community Outreach

The Center has collaborated with a number of institutions this year by supporting student research, arranging service projects, creating programs, and attending meetings and conferences. The Center maintains close relationships with many organizations, including the Hawai'i Museums Association, Honolulu Museum of Art, Kapi'olani Community College, Mālama Mānoa, Lyon Arboretum, the East West Center, Hawai'i Environmental Education Alliance, Science Teachers Association, Hawaiian Historical Society, the Garden Club of Honolulu, the Schofield Wellness Center, as well as several University of Hawai'i departments: Museum Studies, the School of Hawaiian Knowledge and Environmental Studies.



Tour activities are varied, depending on a teacher's request, and can include chanting, storytelling, performance, and traditional crafts.

Media Coverage

Several noteworthy publications highlighted the Center this past year. Kikaha, Island Air's Inflight magazine presented, “Beneath the Eaves” in summer 2015 and the Star-Advertiser's “Manoa Dreams” appeared in the July 27 issue. Nature Conservancy's Fall newsletter included a cover story, “The Conservation Legacy of Sam and Mary Cooke.” The Honolulu Museum of Art blog headlined, “Museum Pillar Sam Cooke Steps Down from the Board of Trustees”, noting Sam's new position at the Museum as Honorary Chair Emeritus for Life.



The Center's founders, Sam and Mary Cooke, have enjoyed sharing their historical property with the public.



The new Visitor Education Hale will provide ample space for exhibits, activities and visitor comforts.

Visitor Education Hale

A major project is underway at the Center to construct a new LEED-certified ADA-compliant Visitor Education Hale. The structure presently being used to greet guests was originally built to be a private home and does not fit the specifications of a visitor center.

The new facility will provide a bus turn-around, increased convenience for visitors and a wider variety of activities. The design by Geoff Lewis Architects and landscaping plans by James Nakata have been approved and work has begun. New garden trails and plantings will allow for additional opportunities for discovery and learning. The groundbreaking for the new Visitor Education Hale was held in November 2015 and a grand opening is planned for 2017.

Thanks to the generosity of numerous donors, the Visitor Education Hale is on its way to becoming a reality which will make it possible for Mānoa Heritage Center to provide not only an inspiring outdoor experience but indoor exhibits as well, with enhanced quality and improved service.

Supporters and MHC Board members attended the groundbreaking for the new Visitor Education Hale in November, 2015. Among those present were Judy Pyle, Wayne Pitluck, Sam and Mary Cooke, and Jan George.



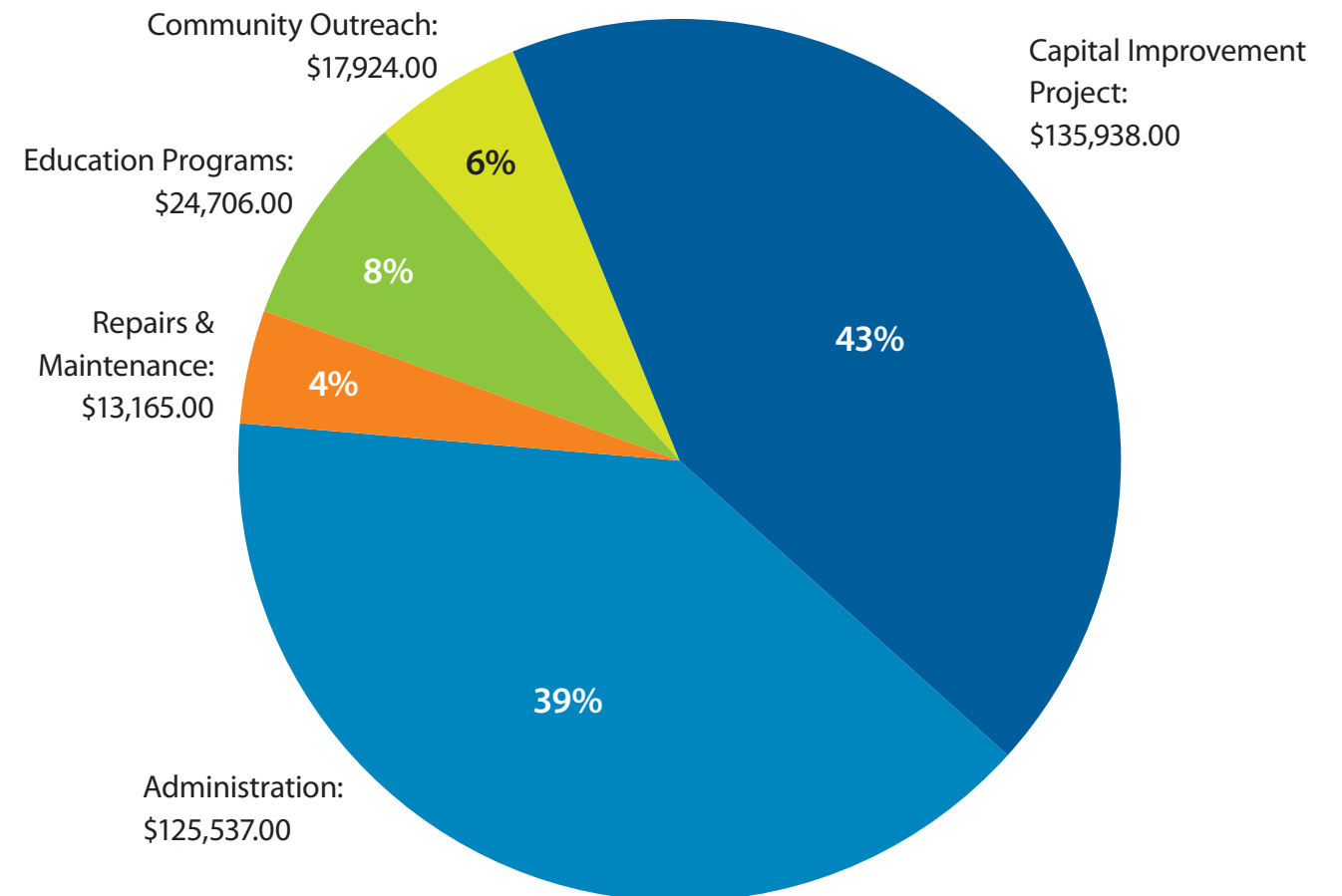
Regular Events

Mānoa Heritage Center's programs are based on a solid foundation of cultural, historical and archaeological research that make up the interpretative plan, upon which the present day tour information is based. Educational programs, activities and events supplement and reinforce the garden tours. Annual events include a teacher's workshop, training classes for new guides, as well as lectures and presentations. Donors are celebrated at the Donor Appreciation party and enjoy the festive Kūali'i Christmas. Cultural and musical groups highlight the events. Staff meetings take place weekly and board meetings are held every other month. Presentations designed for the enrichment of staff, volunteers and Board included: Hidden Treasures of Kūali'i by Jenny Leung, Kalo and Culture by Kuki and Nicholas Navales, Plants and Their Uses by horticulturalist Heidi Bornhorst and Lauhala Weaving by Caroline Affonso. The enrichment program also arranged excursions to the Hawai'i State Archives and Kumuola Farm.



Native Hawaiian practitioners share their traditional skills with docent guides, and visitors.

2015 Expenditures - \$317,271





Expanding Primary Programs

A significant new event was added to our programs in 2015 aimed at reaching out to a younger donor base to carry on the legacy of Mānoa Heritage Center. The focus was on engaging outstanding community and business leaders who have an interest in Hawaiian history, culture and the environment. The MHC Advisory Circle, formed in 2014, organized their first “friend-raising” event, “Spring at Kūali’i.” It was attended by 66 potential donors who were introduced to the Center and its goals, and who over time will be inspired to support the Center.



The MHC Advisory Circle was formed to connect to new supporters who are active members of the community.

The addition of three new staff in 2015 brought in new talents and capabilities. With the hiring of a Hawaiian Language Specialist, tours can now be enjoyed in Hawaiian upon request. A Collections Manager assists with the documentation of artifacts in the historic home, Kūali’i, and a new IT staff created the Center’s first FaceBook page and launched an updated and expanded Mānoa Heritage Center website.



Kū’ka’ō’ō Heiau is the last remaining intact heiau in the ahupua’a of Waikiki. This sacred site is visited by over 2,000 people every year.

A Positive Impact

Mānoa Heritage Center recognizes the historical and cultural value of the site and is devoted to maintaining and sharing it with the public. The MHC mission guides the board and staff with the knowledge that the site continues to make a positive impact on the community. Testimony from teachers, students and community members reflect that programs are providing a stimulating educational opportunity that reinforces school curriculums. The benefits of learning through first hand personal experience at a place with special significance cannot be overstated. Activities and events are designed with the mission clearly in mind... to promote understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of Hawai’i.



In Memory of Sam Cooke

Samuel A. Cooke, co-founder of Mānoa Heritage Center, passed away on December 2nd, but his legacy in the community will live on, thanks to his and his wife Mary’s dedication, vision and generosity. They established the Mānoa Heritage Center in 1996, to preserve and share with future generations the Kūka’ō’ō Heiau, the botanical gardens and Kūali’i, the beautiful Tudor Revival house built by Sam’s grandparents in 1911.

Sam and Mary’s contributions to Hawai’i and Mānoa are many and varied, including longtime, dedicated efforts with the Honolulu Museum of Art (founded by Sam’s great-grandmother), Nature Conservancy, and Punahou School (Sam and Mary’s alma mater), as well as numerous other local organizations.

Sam’s roots were firmly planted in the islands and he was always unassuming, friendly and gracious in the true Hawaiian manner. He loved to share his knowledge of Hawai’i and things Hawaiian and to tell stories about growing up on O’ahu and Moloka’i. An avid and expert collector of early artwork depicting Hawai’i as well as books about Pacific exploration, Sam took great pleasure in sharing his knowledge of them.

His vision, interests and care for the environment and the community will be carried on by Mary, his family and the staff of Mānoa Heritage Center.



MHC Staff

Margo Vitarelli, Education Director
Aloha McGuffie, Program Manager
Jenny Leung, Collections Manager
Emily Fay, Development Coordinator
Keala Wong, Hawaiian Language Specialist
Cameron Lynde, IT Specialist
Anthony Ortiz, Native Plant Caretaker
Excie Batangan, Groundskeeper
Adrian Sanchez, Maintenance

Mānoa Heritage Center

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