Coast Guard Rises to the Occasion

When the Maui Food Bank received a request from Molokai for insulated coolers to help safely transport freshly caught fish, game and produce to those in need, the Food Bank responded immediately and was able to procure the coolers quickly. “It was essential to expedite this request,” reported Keith Wright, the Food Bank’s Director of Operations. Wright further stated, “We are preparing to send 23 pallets of food to Molokai this week for those who are food insecure. This will be our second shipment of food to Molokai during the month of April.” Wright reached out to Coast Guard: Air Station Barbers Point on Oahu, who offered to fly the coolers over to Molokai in their C130 H #1706 aircraft.

In record time, the plane landed at Kahului Airport and crew members from the Coast Guard, and two Food Bank employees loaded the coolers onto the plane. The much-needed cargo was flown to Molokai Airport, where Maui Food Bank agencies were standing by to receive the shipment. Maui County is a close-knit community, and everyone watches out for each other. A special Mahalo to the Coast Guard for their generosity in helping the hungry on Molokai.

Setting Sail to Neighbor Islands

Maui County is made up of three islands — Maui, Molokai, and Lanai. Because the Food Bank serves all of Maui County, we regularly ship pallets of food to our sister islands of Molokai and Lanai. This requires logistical assistance, and Young Brothers serves as our neighbor island partner, handling the receipt and delivery of precious food cargo to people in need on Molokai and Lanai.

In addition to their regular on-going support, during various times of the year, Young Brothers has generously sponsored special shipments to Molokai and Lanai, making it possible for those in need of hunger relief to gain access to safe and nutritious food.

A big Mahalo to Young Brothers for their continued community support!
Aloha,

To all our friends, I want to say Mahalo for the generous support you have extended to the Maui Food Bank during the trying times of the last few months. 

Your food and financial donations have made such a positive impact on the lives of the people we serve.

As this situation has unfolded, the everyday need for food assistance in our community persists. We are actively working with our network of 160 partner agencies to ensure that Maui’s kupuna, keiki, low-income families, and the homeless have access to safe and nutritious food.

The Maui Food Bank never slows down in our mission to provide food for those in need of hunger relief. We are now seeing new faces of hunger at the forefront—the unemployed, more families on the brink of poverty, even people who once volunteered at the Food Bank now need help themselves, all because of the COVID-19 crisis.

Our Agency Director, Tita Kaiwi, just reported that “Food Bank agencies are working hard to continue food distributions throughout Maui County as well as providing meals at soup kitchens for those experiencing a food crisis.” And one of our larger agencies, Coleen Rishovd of Calvary Chapel South Maui Food Pantry, recently told me, “Our church is readily available to help anyone in need of food, including families affected by the extra-long school closures. We’re now calling our church a ‘Resource Food Center.’”

Due to sharply increased demand during the pandemic, Keith Wright (the Food Bank’s Director of Operations) and the entire warehouse crew found themselves anxiously awaiting ocean-going shipping containers coming from the mainland, carrying essential food cargo to be distributed to food-insecure people in Maui County.

In addition, the Food Bank regularly purchases fresh produce from Maui farmers. This provides fresh food for Maui’s hungry, while also helping support our local farmers.

We are very grateful to the many businesses, individuals, and foundations who rose to the occasion during this critical time to help fill the Food Bank’s empty shelves through their generous financial and food contributions. Maui is a very close-knit community, and everyone does their best to watch out for each other.

Richard Yust
Executive Director
Hope Chapel Steps Up to Help the Hungry

Across the island of Maui, locals have been pulling together resources to help those in need during the coronavirus pandemic. Many food distribution sites are operating, including one at Hope Chapel in Kihei.

“Hope Chapel is thrilled to partner with the Maui Food Bank to help meet the needs of the community with food and encouragement,” said Hope Chapel’s Lead Pastor, Ben Prangnell. He further explained that Hope Chapel has the capacity to serve over 300 families each week.

Ben continued, “Food is a basic need, and no one should have to be worried about not having enough food to feed their family. The Bible reminds us in Deuteronomy 15:11 that we are to ‘Give freely and spontaneously.’ We are challenged to always be generous and help our neighbors who are experiencing tough times. With so many people out of work, it is the right thing to do to help make sure that no one in our island ohana goes to bed hungry. Mahalo to the Maui Food Bank for making it possible for Hope Chapel to do our part in helping the hungry on Maui.”

Volunteer HI-Light

Austin Henry, a Youth Pastor at Kihei Baptist Church here on Maui, has recently become a volunteer at the Maui Food Bank. In addition to packing the Food Bank’s Senior Mobile Pantry food bags that are delivered to over 800 seniors, Austin also helps assemble and distribute family food boxes to local families who have been struggling to make ends meet.

Originally from Torrance, California, Austin has been a resident of Maui for seven years. As well as being a youth pastor, he is a Physical Education teacher at Kihei Elementary School.

Austin explained, “Many of the kids in our youth group come from families who have been struggling due to their parents being laid off of work because of the COVID-19 virus.” Wanting to assist, Austin approached Keith Wright at the Maui Food Bank and asked how he could get involved in helping people who were food insecure. Keith was impressed with Austin’s enthusiasm, and immediately put him to work volunteering.

Soon, Austin’s friend Jess Chamberlain also hopped on board, saying he wanted to help the community, too, and that he thought the Food Bank was the most obvious and effective way to get involved. Both Austin and Jess observed that as they have helped families by providing food, they have also built relationships with the families they are serving.

Jess is an intern at Hope Chapel, where he works in the facilities department. He noted that this process of helping the hungry had taught him that not having food affects every part of a person’s life. Jess continued, “I’ve learned the importance of doing things for others. I’ve also found that focusing on their need and not mine is surprisingly rewarding. Food is a blessing, and it is a privilege to be able to hand a bag of food to someone in need.”

Both Austin and Jess have discovered the joy that comes from serving others, and it’s changed their lives. For information on volunteer opportunities at the Maui Food Bank, call Chelsey (808) 243-9500.
The last few months have been an unprecedented time in our island community’s history. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the health of our loved ones, the businesses and jobs we rely upon, and the way we live our daily lives. Thousands on our island have faced new challenges, and many who always had food on their tables have experienced a new need for the very first time – hunger.

Working together, we all learned to navigate through these evolving changes. During the last several months, over 1 million pounds of food have headed out the doors of the Maui Food Bank into the community and into homes of people who may not have known where their next meal was coming from. Together Maui residents found creative ways to help their friends and neighbors who were facing hardship, including dropping off meals on doorsteps, passing out emergency food bags and grocery store gift cards.

Even mainland food distributors got on board to hasten the process of Maui receiving containers of food in a timely manner. One such example: Matson’s Maui County District Manager, Buzz Fernandez, was instrumental in helping the Maui Food Bank by donating the entire cost of shipping a refrigerated 40-foot container of food from Long Beach, California through Honolulu Harbor, destined for Kahului, Maui.

The Food Bank is both grateful and inspired by the untiring commitment of businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals like you who have generously contributed in so many ways to get us all through this unprecedented time.

“Making life better for people has always been the heart of the Maui Food Bank, but it’s the consistent support of donors and partners that forms the life of the Food Bank, enabling the vision of solving hunger to become a reality.

Local Companies Join Forces to Fight COVID-19

Anyone who was trying to buy hand sanitizer during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic found that the store shelves were completely empty – it was nearly impossible to find hand sanitizer anywhere on Maui!

To help alleviate this shortage, a consortium of local companies pitched in to produce and provide 28,700 bottles of hand sanitizer, which the Maui Food Bank distributed to people in need – absolutely free of charge.

Mahalo to Ocean Organic Vodka, Hawaii Sea Spirits, Maui Babe, Mokulele Airlines, Spicers Paper, and Printers Inc. for coming together to selflessly serve the Maui community.