

Hawaii's Aloha Harvest rescues record 15M pounds of food to date



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Aloha Harvest has salvaged 15 million pounds of food donated and delivered since the Hawaii nonprofit's inception in 1999, and more than 2.2 million of those pounds were delivered in 2014 alone.

Aloha Harvest salvages perishable and nonperishable food from restaurants, hotels, caterers, food distributors, and individuals across Oahu, seven days a week.



COURTESY ALOHA PETROLEUM

Aloha Petroleum Ltd. is one of the companies that has donated funds to Aloha Harvest to support the Hawaii nonprofit's efforts to feed the hungry in Hawaii.

More than 175 recipient agencies receive the donations each year. An average of 134 of those agencies receive donations every month.

The organization's operating budget has doubled over the past seven years from \$300,000 to approximately \$640,000 this fiscal year.

The growth is positive, but comes with challenges, says Aloha Harvest Executive Director Kuulei Williams.

"We're almost maxed out," she said, noting that Aloha Harvest is looking into purchasing a third truck and bringing on additional staff. "The organization has grown so quickly that we are kind of working internally to try to catch up."

With just four drivers and two trucks, the nonprofit manages to schedule 70 to 90 pickups each day. Approximately 15 agencies may receive the food that same day.

Williams, who starts her day as early as 4 a.m., says two on staff at the office work hard to organize pickup and deliveries.

"When you see it on paper you don't get the real picture — the logistics and coordination it takes to make this happen," she said. "One year we got like 20 something pallets of kidney beans so we had to work and figure out which agencies could use the kidney beans."

Businesses and new donors are often concerned about liability, but they needn't be, she said. Donors and recipient agencies are protected under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act and the Hawaii Good Samaritan Donation of Food Act, as long as they're donating to a nonprofit.

Once companies realize this, they regret not getting involved sooner, Williams said.

"The whole concept is to reduce waste," she said. "People are grateful for even a box of bagels. Nothing is too small and nothing is too big."