



Food for the needy is centerpiece of many business-sponsored fundraisers



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Whole Foods Market raised more than \$67,000 for two local nonprofits after running fundraisers at the grocery chain's Kahala and Kailua stores.

The Kahala store ran a Community Support Day on Feb. 6 and raised \$7,000 for the Wahea Foundation after giving the nonprofit 5 percent of the store's net sales that day.



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Aloha Harvest, a nonprofit that gathers and delivers food to 152 social service agencies, received \$60,000 worth of food from Whole Foods Market's (Nasdaq: WFM) Grab & Give program in November and December. Shoppers could purchase \$5, \$10 or \$25 worth of food and hygiene products to help families in need.

"We picked those packages up and distributed it," Aloha Harvest Executive Director [Kuulei Williams](#) said. "We were able to spread that out among more than half of our agencies."

Williams said they were picking up items two to three times each week during the holiday months to deliver food throughout the island.

"Most people think of Hawaii as paradise, where life is easy and food is abundant," [Dabney Gough](#), Whole Foods Market Kailua marketing supervisor, said in a statement. "But the unfortunate reality is that there are people and families who are hungry and in need."

Williams said the need for services from Hawaii's nonprofit agencies is still increasing, a need that the [Hawaii Foodbank](#) and River of Life Mission discussed with me in December.

"We're still seeing an increase with people needing food," she said. "When our economy crashed, a lot of people never thought they'd go to a food agency to get food or groceries, but we've seen a lot of increase in the food pantry area. Some agencies who work with the homeless are also seeing an increase in the homeless population."

To help support increased demand, Williams said they launched three new fundraisers last year, which they plan to do again this year.

"We have our second annual Food Drive and Agency Fair coming up," she said. "We feature 10 different agencies so people can know who we deliver the food to and get to know the services they provide ... Last year we brought in 1,500 pounds of food and more than \$600. We hope to double that this year."

Other newly launched fundraisers include their Fill The Truck food drive at Safeway Kapahulu and their Compassion in Art contest, which rallies community members to enter the contest in exchange for donating money or canned goods. Grand prizes are given to finalists and winners.

Williams said they have been able to form more partnerships that help to keep pace with an increased demand for services.

"We kind of are unique in what we do because, unlike a food bank, which provides all canned goods and boxed goods, we do prepared and nonprepared meals," she said.

“So we’re reaching out to more of the restaurants and places that do prepared foods. That has really helped ... Last year we brought on 95 new food donors who were able to start donating to Aloha Harvest.”

Partnerships with restaurants benefit both parties involved, she added.

“We’re trying to educate them [restaurants] that we collect excess food that is still good for human consumption,” she said. “We provide containers and boxes — Ziploc bags, cake boxes, aluminum pans and large, clear bags — It saves them money, they don’t have to pay as much to carry it away and they can get a tax writeoff.”