

Hawaii FoodCorps seeks applicants for service members | Hawaii 24/7 | Hawaii247.com | Hawaii's News Now – News, Weather, Sports from the Big Island

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MEDIA RELEASE

The national FoodCorps is recruiting service members across Hawaii who are passionate about healthy food, farms, and kids to help connect keiki to real food and help them grow up healthy.



FoodCorps, a national organization addressing childhood obesity and food insecurity in underserved communities, operates in 12 states, and this year will be adding Hawaii, California, and New Jersey.

FoodCorps has selected The Kohala Center as its host site in Hawaii.

FoodCorps is accepting applications for its third class of service members, and is seeking to

hire ten service members in Hawaii. Applicants must be 18 years or older by the start of service and hold a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent.

Applications are due March 24.

More information and an online application are available at foodcorps.org/become-a-service...

Selected service members will dedicate one year of full-time (35.5 hours per week) public service in school food systems, where they will expand hands-on nutrition education programs, build and tend school gardens, and help bring high-quality, locally produced foods into schools.



Students from Punana Leo o Hilo Preschool in Keaau prepare their school garden for planting. (Photo courtesy of the Hawaii Island School Garden Network)

They will receive a \$15,000 living allowance; basic health, vision and dental insurance; potential student loan forbearance, and partial childcare reimbursements.

Those who complete their 1,700 hours of service receive a \$5,500 AmeriCorps Segal Education Award, which can be used to pay tuition or repay qualified student loans.

All service members receive two national trainings, mentoring from food system leaders, as well as local and online training on topics related to food, farming, nutrition, cooking, and public health.

“Each site and community in Hawaii is unique, but there are common qualities we will be looking for in each of the local applicants,” said Nancy Redfeather, project director of The Kohala Center’s Hawaii Island School Garden Network, who will serve as director of Hawaii’s FoodCorps program. “Ideal FoodCorps candidates will demonstrate an appreciation of local culture, values, and history; dedication and commitment to just and peaceful communities; a sense of kuleana (responsibility) to foster youth and community; the ability to engage community stakeholders toward positive action; and openness and willingness to create innovative practices around building food systems.”

In its first two years, FoodCorps gained national attention by providing an innovative, grassroots, scalable approach to solving the United States’ obesity epidemic.

Since 1980, the percentage of American children who are overweight or obese has doubled. With one in four children struggling with hunger and one in three obese or overweight, FoodCorps addresses the root cause of both: access to healthy food.

FoodCorps has expanded its reach and grown its ranks every year since its inception in 2010.

“The placements FoodCorps offers are as diverse as the country we serve,” FoodCorps Executive Director Curt Ellis said. “From urban Detroit to rural Arkansas to our new sites in Hawaii, you can find a place in FoodCorps that feels like home, or one that launches you on a new adventure.”

The first two FoodCorps classes brought important progress to the schools they served, from making local beef and lentils staples in Montana cafeterias, to getting Mississippi students excited to harvest bushels of kale; from building or revitalizing hundreds of school and community gardens, to engaging thousands of volunteers and parents in their efforts.

“Hawaii is ripe for this kind of additional support,” Redfeather said. “The movement to reconnect our children and youth to the source of their food and health, and to renew their connections to the ‘āina (land), the source of all life, is well recognized at the community level. To have the national FoodCorps also recognize that Hawaii is poised for additional support has been made possible through the work of Hawaii’s garden and classroom teachers, principals, and communities throughout the islands.”

The 2012 Hawaii School Garden Survey found that school gardens were sprouting in communities all over the state. A total of 168 schools now have school garden programs, with 21,577 students and 830 teachers maintaining gardens on nearly 30 acres of land.

The 10 FoodCorps service sites selected in Hawaii include MA‘O Organic Farms on Oahu, as well as schools affiliated with the Kauai School Garden Network through Malama Kauai, the Molokai School Garden Network through Sustainable Molokai, and the Hawaii Island School Garden Network through The Kohala Center.

All service site organizations are members of the Hawaii Farm to School and School Garden Hui, a statewide coalition of school garden networks and organizations.

The hui collaborates with government agencies, businesses, and University of Hawaii at Manoa master gardeners to build capacity, create professional development opportunities, recommend policy, engage in advocacy, and research and evaluate programs.

Kukui Maunakea-Forth, MA'O Organic Farms' site director said, "As one of the enterprises of the Kauhale O Waianae community development initiative, our goal is to create local food businesses that promote our educational mission to empower youth leaders who will in turn build food-sovereign, healthy, sustainable and resilient families and communities. FoodCorps' model of service leadership resembles Waianae's culture of stewardship and putting aloha aina (love for the land) in action by creating learning opportunities for youth and community members to malama aina (care for the land) and aloha kekahi i kekahi (care for one another)."

FoodCorps is a nationwide team of leaders that connects kids to real food and helps them grow up healthy. FoodCorps places motivated leaders in limited-resource communities for a year of public service where they teach kids about what healthy food is and where it comes from, build and tend school gardens, and bring high-quality local food into public school cafeterias. Funding for FoodCorps is provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, AmeriCorps, and a diverse array of private and public donors.

The Kohala Center is an independent, community-based center for research, education, and conservation. The Center was established in direct response to the request of island residents to create greater educational and employment opportunities by enhancing—and celebrating—Hawaii's spectacular natural and cultural landscapes.