

## **A-maize-ing: Kohala Mountain Farm creates island's first corn maze.**

By Carolyn Lucas-Zenk

Lend me your ears: There's a corny new attraction opening this fall at the Kohala Mountain Farm.

With flags, paint and grass killer in hand, Braden Bair began mapping out and creating passageways for a giant labyrinth Thursday in a roughly 3-acre cornfield at the picturesque farm, located makai of Kahua Ranch on Kohala Mountain Road between Hawi and Waimea.

The 25-year-old Brigham Young University student works as a consultant for The MAiZE, a cornfield maze consulting and design company based in Spanish Fork, Utah. Since the company was founded in 1996, it has created more than 2,000 corn mazes worldwide.



Bair has created more than 200 mazes — including at least 75 mazes this summer — since getting into the business in high school. The Kohala Mountain Farm's maze was expected to take about three hours to complete, but the grass killer takes about a week to work, he said.

This is the first corn maze on the Big Island, and Kohala High School junior Daylan Higa designed it, said Stacy Hasegawa, Kohala Mountain Farm project coordinator.

Higa won a maze design contest, which had 23 entries from local high school students in the Hawaii School Garden Network Program. His winning design features the Hawaiian Islands, taro leaves, a poi pounder, the star Hokulea and the word "Kohala."

As the first place winner, Higa will receive \$1,000 for Kohala High's garden from MacArthur & Co. Sotheby's International Realty and a helicopter tour of his creation, compliments of Blue Hawaiian Helicopters. The runner-up, Makalii Bertelmann of Kanu o ka Aina Public Charter School, will get a zip-line trip, compliments of Hawaii Forest & Trail.

Both students and Kohala High teacher Adriel Robitaille will receive the prizes at 2 p.m. Sept. 2, which is also when the public will have an opportunity to walk through the stalks, following a ceremonial blessing of the farm.



“This event kicks off new beginnings for Kohala Mountain Farm and our island,” Hasegawa said. “The beginning of new community partnerships focused on promoting agriculture, of learning and recognition opportunities for our children, a sustainable future for our island, and of a fall event that will be a tradition for Big Island families for years to come.”

The next time the public will get to navigate through the maze is in October. The farm will

then be open on the weekends, from Oct. 13 to 28 or until the farm sells out of pumpkins. The field corn will be harvested and used for cattle feed for Kahua Ranch, Hasegawa said.

With the help of two full-time farmers, numerous volunteers and sponsors, Hasegawa provides a place where the public selects and picks locally grown pumpkins. For many, it’s become a way to create family traditions and memories of autumn over the past four years. It’s also a chance to visit a working farm and explore the wonders of agriculture.

The farm has expanded from 1.5 acres to 9 acres this year. In June, 4 acres of pumpkins were planted. Sweet corn and Indian corn, which will reach 6 feet in height, were planted a month later, Hasegawa said.

Adding a corn maze was always part of Hasegawa’s vision for the patch. She felt such an attraction was important for the community because it offered families a unique adventure that everyone could do together.

Tours for local students are offered, with priority given to those in elementary school. The cost per student ranges from \$6 to \$12. Depending on the type of tour selected, participants receive information about the farm, plant families, corn and honeybees, as well as explore the corn maze and go on a hay ride. The farm will begin taking reservations, which are required, Sept. 1 at [kohalamountainfarm@gmail.com](mailto:kohalamountainfarm@gmail.com).

For more information about the farm, visit [kohalamountainfarm.com](http://kohalamountainfarm.com).