

# Mānoa Heritage Center Highlights 2025: Annual Report

Inspiring people to be thoughtful stewards of their heritage





Aloha,

It is with deep gratitude that I share Mānoa Heritage Center's 2025 Annual Report. This year marked a meaningful period of growth, reflection, and transition for our organization.

I am honored to return as Executive Director during such an exciting time. In 2025, much of our focus was on the engagement and project setup phase of the Kūali'i House Museum Project. This included defining our goals and visitor experience, conducting an existing conditions assessment, organizing our core project team, and beginning outreach to our neighbors.

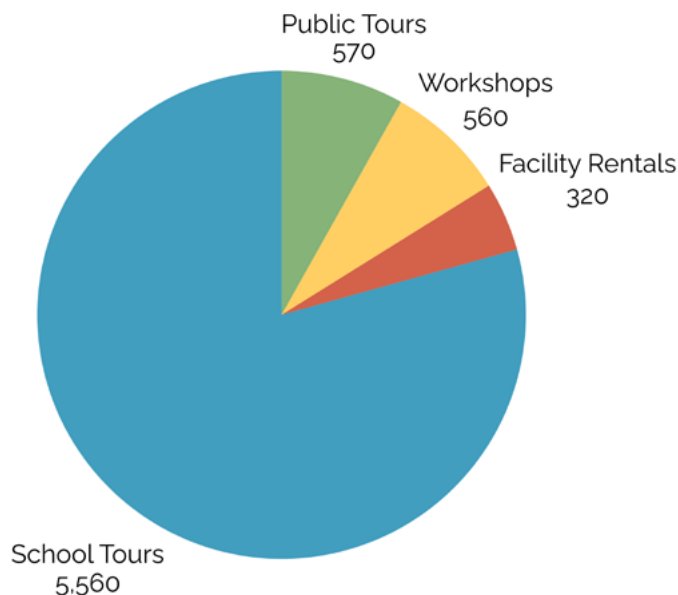
I hope the content in this report reflects not only the impact of MHC's programs, but the joy and gratitude MHC's board and staff share for the opportunity to do this work. If at any time you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

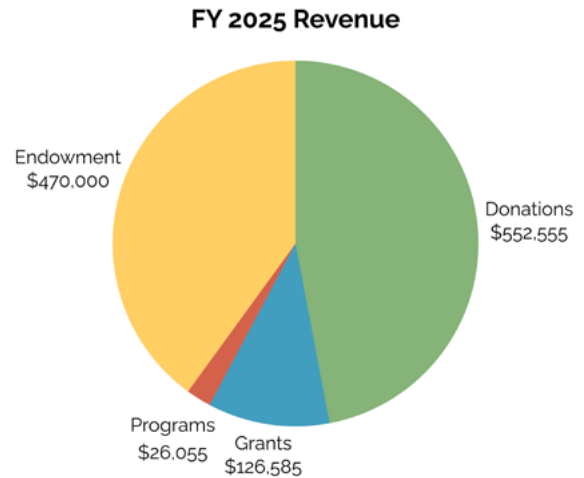
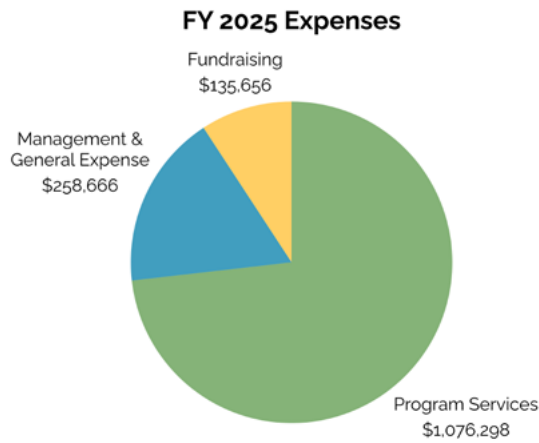
We look forward to celebrating Mānoa Heritage Center's 30th anniversary with you in 2026! Thank you for all your support and for being part of our story.

Mahalo nui,

Jessica Welch  
Executive Director

### FY 2025 Program Impact





## Goal 1: Supporting Educators and Students

MHC continues to serve as a trusted resource for educators. In 2025, more than **5,500 students** engaged in hands-on, place-based programs that fostered understanding, stewardship, and a deep connection to Hawaii’s cultural and natural heritage.

*“Thank you so much for helping us learn more about our Kuleana here in Hawai‘i.”*  
 — Mid-Pacific Institute, Grade 6 student

*“The content shared aligned with our Hawaiian Culture-Based Education practices. I especially enjoyed the ahupua‘a display. It was a fantastic way for the haumāna to connect with Hawaiian culture and the environment. Seeing their expressions of joy and curiosity while engaging with such an interactive and culturally rich exhibit is truly special.”* — Christine Enrico, Kamehameha Schools, Pre-K

### Highlight: Watershed Camp for Educators

MHC’s inaugural ‘Āina Kumu Wai: Watershed Workshop brought together 12 educators from across O‘ahu to deepen their understanding of watershed science within a cultural context. Over two days, teachers engaged in place-based activities—such as watershed modeling, kilo, and mo‘olelo mapping—designed to be adaptable to their own schools and communities. The program was funded by a grant from the Marisla Fund of the Hawai‘i Community Foundation.



Students share the results of the Hana Scavenger Hunt.



Director of Education, Jenny Engle, leads students through the ahupua‘a activity.

## Goal 2: Serving as a Community Hub

Mānoa Heritage Center continued to grow as a gathering place for kūpuna, families, neighbors, cultural practitioners, and community organizations. A total of more than 7,400 people visited MHC in 2025.

Programs such as hula camp and a range of cultural workshops created opportunities for meaningful engagement, intergenerational learning, and cultural connection. Rather than one-time experiences, these programs foster ongoing relationships and a deeper sense of belonging within our community.



MHC Garden Educator Lilia Lorenzo teaches students from Kahuku High School how to make cordage.



Dianne Ige leads her popular kokedama workshop.



MHC Garden Educator Kanoa Nakamura shares his mana'ō under the 'ulu tree during our Watershed Workshop.



Archaeologist and historian Ena Sroat leads a tour as part of MHC's Mānoa Through Time program.



Participants of Dianne Ige's Kokedama workshop proudly share their creations.



## Goal 3: Stewarding Place and Collections

In 2025, we advanced our commitment to steward MHC's gardens and preserve the collections that come with the Kūali'i House Museum Project. In the gardens, the team transformed the Ka'aha'aina Garden into a hands-on space where students of all ages and physical abilities can learn about medicinal plants and lā'au lapa'au.

Moving inside, we were delighted to welcome Jenny Leung (back) as temporary Director of Collections. In her first month on the job, she worked with Kevin Prior (Facilities Manager) and Kelsey Hara (Collections Assistant) to activate collections storage spaces and consolidate the collections onsite for improved stewardship and accessibility.

## Goal 4: Organizational Strength and Sustainability

2025 marked progress in strengthening our organizational capacity. In 2025, we::

- Welcomed six new board members: Edi Cooke, Noelle Kahanu, Jon Lee, Glenn Mason, Aloha McGuffie, and McKibbin Mist
- Extended gratitude to outgoing board member Jack Gillmar for his many years of service as an MHC board member
- To manage growth and support financial systems, we welcomed our first Finance Manager, Cedar Soberman, to the team
- Streamlined board committee structure, establishing clear purpose, roles, and meeting cadence to improve efficiency and strategic alignment

# Kūali'i House Museum Project

The Kūali'i House Museum Project remained one of our most significant strategic priorities in 2025. Engagement and project setup began in January 2024 with community visioning sessions and continued through 2025, with the following:

- Defining visitor experience goals
- Conducting existing conditions assessment and completing topographic survey work
- Organizing the core project team including both board and staff members
- Beginning strategy development for outreach to immediate neighbors and the broader community
- Initiating interpretive planning around audiences, themes, and visitor journey. For instance, MHC's Director of Education, Jenny Engle, began developing the interpretive plan by touring Kūali'i with close friends and family of Sam and Mary Cooke.



## 2025 Board of Directors

We extend a warm mahalo to our board members for their leadership and wisdom.

Scott Power - President

McKibbin Mist - Vice-President

David Lee - Treasurer

Glenn Mason - Secretary

Beryl Blaich

Mark Burak

Cathy Cooke

Edi Cooke

Julie Cooke

Jack Gillmar

Noelle Kahanu

Jon Lee

Aloha McGuffie

# Mahalo 2025 Donors

We are deeply grateful to the following donors who supported MHC's operations, programs, and the Sam Cooke Endowed Fund with contributions of \$1,000 or more during the period January 1 – December 31, 2025.

## Sam & Mary Cooke Circle (\$50,000+)

- Monica W. Chun
- Cooke Foundation, Limited
- Harold K. L. Castle Foundation

## Benefactor Circle (\$10,000 - \$49,999)

- Robin Freeman Bernstein, Nat Bernstein & Matthew Bernstein
- The Clementina Foundation
- Hawai'i Tourism Authority Fund
- David A. Keliikuli & Ronald R. Bunn
- Louise and Y. T. Lum Foundation
- Marisla Fund of the Hawai'i Community Foundation
- Ohuokalani Charitable Foundation
- Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts
- State of Hawai'i
- In Memory of Karen Stockton
- TSK Charitable Foundation

## Patron Circle (\$5,000 - \$9,999)

- Anonymous (2)
- Mary Dobson
- Jane Marshall Goodsill & Bruce Kelly
- Michael & Linda Horikawa
- John R. Halligan Charitable Fund
- Scott Wilson & Christine Yano

## Guardian Circle (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

- Tanya & Paul Alston
- Roger Brossy & Rona Elliot
- Mark & Mary Anne Burak
- George Diskant & Busaba Williams
- Larry Johnson
- Lynne Johnson & Randy Moore
- Julia K. Muller & Earl K. Shreckengast
- Peter G. Drewliner Foundation
- Ambassador Charles B. Salmon
- Jeri & David Simons
- Deborah L. Young

## Century Circle (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

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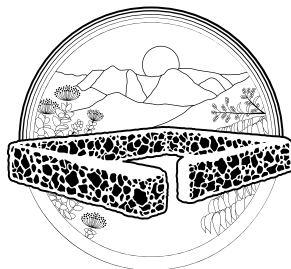
## MHC STAFF

Back row:

Kevin Prior - Facilities Manager  
Jenny Leung - Director of Collections  
Cedar Soberman - Finance Manager  
Jenn Juarez - Historic House Housekeeper  
Emily Fay - Development Officer  
Kanoa Nakamura - Garden Educator

Front row:

Lilia Lorenzo - Garden Educator  
Keala Wong - Education Manager  
Kelsey Hara - Collections Assistant  
Jenny Engle - Director of Education  
Kawai Souza - Education Assistant  
Jessica Welch - Executive Director



Mānoa Heritage Center

2856 O'ahu Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822 | Phone (808) 988-1287  
[contact@manoaheritagecenter.org](mailto:contact@manoaheritagecenter.org) | [www.manoaheritagecenter.org](http://www.manoaheritagecenter.org)