



Kōhiamau Farms

Eden, Mike, Dane, Duke, & Dorian Carney

Kawela, Molokai

By: Molokai Cooperative Extension
Kristina Cacpal, Farm to School & Kyle
Franks, DHHL

In 2020, COVID hit the world. Grocery stores were limited. On the island of Molokai grocery stores were completely closed for a

period of time. The Carney 'Ohana quickly realized that if the world stopped they wouldn't have food, thus began their farm journey in Kawela. As the name suggests, this area is hot, dry, and rocky. Eden (mom), Mike (dad), and boys; Dane, Duke, and Dorian started humbly with four grow bags. They planted squash, baby watermelons, tomatoes, and herbs to get them going. They began to expand by turning an old enclosed dog pen into their raised garden bed area. Little weekend projects turned into a choice to become more sustainable and less dependent on the markets for food through gardening, hunting, and fishing. More planting ensued and a few egg layers were added to the family. It was then that their choice for sustainability turned into a lifestyle. Mike mentioned that, "it became our lifestyle and there was no turning back".

A major turning point in their journey occurred when the family was gifted kalo huli. Immediately, work began in order to prep a bed large enough to fit 150 huli. They began removing rocks and pick-axing large bunching grasses all in a span of two days. The growth of the kalo seemed to mimic the love for the land as it stretched tall and large enough to tickle the road. Along with the kalo, the Carney 'Ohana began adding egg layers and meat birds to their farm. Quickly, space on the land and their schedules began to fill, but instead of seeing it as a burden, they all viewed it as opportunities and doors opening.

The decision to begin homeschooling their children in 2021 proved to go hand-in-hand with their choice to grow their own food and start homesteading. It was an opportunity to create a safe learning environment for the boys while getting in work and exercise. For Mike, the aspects of being a father were greatly broadened as his kids view him also as a mentor and teacher and also someone who is constantly learning, experimenting, and meeting challenges with opportunity. Mike and Eden say they are not only growing food, but more importantly they are growing their kids into well-rounded young men who can meet the challenges of a more sophisticated world - a

priceless investment! Dane, the oldest child, mentions that working on a farm and homeschooling allows them the opportunity to “have an idea, see the job through, and say I thought of that and it worked.” Although it doesn’t always work out that way, they are learning to problem solve and make adjustments as needed. It is a constant state of creativity, while learning how to be resilient as challenges arise.

The challenges continue to present themselves, but that has proven to be their greatest teacher. “Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new” is a quote by Albert Einstein. The Carney ‘Ohana embody this philosophy through their welcoming of mistakes. One “mistake” that resulted in a learning opportunity was leaving lettuce flower stalks in a bucket that filled with rainwater. With nothing else to lose they poured it out onto some soil and hoped for the best. Then, “poof,” an incredible germination. After separation, it resulted in 350 lettuce heads that were shared amongst friends and neighbors. Nowadays, this serves as their base principle of germinating lettuce - many seeds in one pot then transplanting to the garden.

Today, the Carney ‘Ohana has expanded into a ½ acre fully organic production area, which includes avocados, mangoes, citrus, and ‘ulu trees. They are also cultivating sweet potatoes, bananas, papayas, dragonfruit, and a polyculture of vegetables that include, but are not limited to: kale, lettuce, beans, collards, eggplant, and tomatoes. “Grow what you would like to eat”, says Eden. Additionally, they are experimenting with cover crops to feed the soil and provide forage for their ducks and chickens. Composting and mulching has also become common practice for soil building. Their approach to pests include crop rotations, observation, and the allowance of pests to run their course. They see pests as a part of the ecosystem and understand their role. Minimal intervention is practiced, which includes hosing aphids off their kalo with water.

Their intimate relationship with their ‘āina reflects their internal family unit of learning as a legacy and cultivating health of mind, body, and spirit. This has served as their buffer in a pandemic and in an unpredictable fast-paced and sophisticated world. Their hope for others taking on this journey is learning through perseverance, adaptability, applicability of what works for you, and simply enjoying the process.

If you would like to follow their journey check out **@kohiamau_farms** on Instagram