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**HAWAII FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL RAISES A RECORD \$394,000
FOR 14 NONPROFIT BENEFICIARIES**

HONOLULU, HI – The Hawai'i Food & Wine Festival (HFWF), the state's premier culinary event, raised a record \$394,000 for local beneficiaries following another successful year. Fourteen nonprofit organizations received checks during a Mahalo Reception for the 2016 festival held on March 7th at Neiman Marcus' Mariposa Restaurant. The \$394,000 contribution brings the total giving from HFWF to nearly \$1.7 million in six years.

“We're proud that Hawai'i Food & Wine Festival not only shines a spotlight on Hawai'i as a culinary destination, but pays it forward through contributions for nonprofit charitable organizations that support local food sustainability, cultural, and educational programs” says Denise Yamaguchi, HFWF Chief Executive Officer. “The tangible impact of the festival is far-reaching, with funds supporting local culinary colleges, grants for Hawai'i chefs to learn in the kitchens of the world's culinary masters, programs to help small farms get their produce to consumers, and curriculum to teach children how to grow their own food in school and make healthy dishes at home.”

2016 HFWF beneficiaries include:

Culinary Institute of the Pacific- \$80,000
Hawai'i Agricultural Foundation- \$70,000
Imua Family Services- \$50,000
Kapi'olani Community College Culinary Arts Program- \$50,000
Ment'Or BKB Foundation- \$29,000
Kapi'olani Community College Hospitality and Tourism Program- \$25,000
Leeward Community College Culinary Arts Program- \$25,000
Maui County Farm Bureau- \$20,000

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Hawai'i Island Community College Culinary Arts Program- \$10,000
Paepae o He'eia- \$10,000
Papahana Kuaola- \$10,000
Maui Culinary Academy- \$7,500
Hawaii Seafood Council- \$5,000
Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation- \$2,500

In six years, HFWF has expanded from a 3-day festival with 30 chefs in Waikiki to more than 20 events spanning 3 Islands. HFWF16 welcomed 8,765 attendees from around the world to signature events on O'ahu, Maui and Hawai'i Island featuring 114 top chefs, 50 wine makers, and 10 mixologists. That's up 1,365 attendees from 2015. More than 200 Hawai'i culinary students gained priceless experience working side-by-side with culinary masters.

“We wanted to make sure the chefs that we invited were going to be world class, at the same time have a real deep feeling about what Hawai'i means to them” explains HFWF Co-Founder Roy Yamaguchi. “In that sense, we were looking for something to become big because we felt that we wanted to reach the entire world and we needed to have a quality festival and large enough festival to capture that.”

HFWF garnered nearly \$11 million in publicity value from media coverage including Good Morning America, FOX News, USA Today, Fiji Times, Food and Wine, Eater San Francisco, Delta Sky Japan, The San Jose Mercury News, and Hawaii Chinese TV. Of the worldwide exposure, HFWF Co-Founder Alan Wong stresses, “The most important thing is, the spotlight has been put on Hawai'i- on our tourism, our people, our culture, our food, what we grow here. It's a win win win.”

The non-profit mission of the festival sets it apart from other notable food and wine events. “I think that really comes from the hearts of the chefs who got this going in the beginning” shares Dean Wong, Executive Director for Imua Family Services, a Maui beneficiary that received a check for \$50,000. “They all wanted to give back to the community as well to support Hawai'i and the tourism and the food industry in Hawai'i. That speaks volumes of the Hawai'i Food & Wine Festival.”

HFWF is a program of the nonprofit, Hawai'i Ag and Culinary Alliance. Its mission is to attract national and international attention to the extraordinary culinary talent, as well as the diversity of quality locally grown products to ensure Hawai'i maintains its competitive edge as a world-class destination.

The seventh annual festival is set for October 20 – November 5, 2017. For updates, visit HawaiiFoodandWineFestival.com or follow HFWF on Twitter/Instagram (@HIFoodWineFest) and Facebook (facebook.com/hawaiifoodandwinefestival).

HFWF co-chair Alan Wong was featured at the Mahalo reception, along with chefs Mark Freiberg of Neiman Marcus, Chef Alan Takasaki from Le Bistro, and Chef Vikram Garg.

For a photo of the check presentation, the HFWF mission video and highlight reel, go to :
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vchmxj4hijhral3/AADwGSnSqnNsAoSYromS5OA4a?dl=0>

Photo & Video Courtesy: Hawai'i Food & Wine Festival

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