

Harvesting Hawaii

Clarence T.C. Ching was, "an important, prosperous and outstanding man," and strived to make Hawaii a better place to live. He grew up with his family, without water or electricity, raising their own livestock, and learned the value of hard work and integrity at a young age. Mr. Ching is truly an inspiration. He had a vision to make Hawaii a better place, not only for his family, but for Hawaii's entire community. Hawaii is a special place, a land rich in culture, and nourishing Hawaiian styled foods. I believe its people and children can prosper, becoming an even more self-sufficient state by relying on locally grown foods.

A persistent problem in Hawaii is its dependence on imported foods. Only 15% of all our vegetables and fruits are grown locally. The other 85% are imported from outside of Hawaii. From the reserve food supply we have, Hawaii would only last about seven days, even though we have some of the best weather to grow foods. Food dependence in Hawaii is important because healthy local food at lower prices is beneficial for everybody. I know Mr. Ching would want the same because he would want to help Hawaii move toward greater food self-sufficiency. He would want to support local farmers, just as he helped Hawaii's people gain low cost housing. Hawaii prospers when people buy local products and support small businesses, which also brings about camaraderie in the community.

There are solutions! I will create an after-school program called "Resilient Hawaii," where we can educate and bring awareness to children beginning in kindergarten on how to grow and maintain fruit and vegetable gardens. This program will include planting gardens around the school and neighborhood, community service

projects, and making appealing posters that support local farmers and advertise the advantages for local foods. We will also create T-shirts with the slogan, "Resilient Hawaii," that will be sold at farmers markets with all proceeds to go to young farmers.

My second plan is to speak with my school's student council and gain signatures to send as a proposal to other schools to make "Resilient Hawaii" go statewide. Finally, my third plan is to ask farmers to offer fun, easy, and interesting cooking classes using their indigenous foods.

It's time to start making this change. By 2020, without adjustments to the way we eat, or access food, an increased population will further strain the reserve food supply. If our agricultural land is not used for farming, others might decide to build more homes instead of generating more food from the land.

Clarence T.C. Ching paved the way for courageous change in Hawaii. What better way to do that than in our own backyards? I think an important lesson to carry on is to be grateful for what we have, and never take anything for granted even the dirt in our backyards that can be used for growing food.

Sources

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