

Fresh is Best

Hawaii will forever remember Clarence T.C. Ching's vision, "belief in hard work, and strong commitment to the welfare of his community." Fulfilling his father's prophecy, he pulled his family out of poverty. The fruits of Clarence T.C. Ching's great diligence also flowed into his bigger "*ohana*", and the community. His legacy of love for those in need motivates me to help create a better Hawaii.

A considerable problem in Hawaii today is the high cost of healthy food. My friends and relatives struggle to have fresh fruits and vegetables on their dining table. It saddens me to see grocery carts filled with high-calorie processed foods that are linked to serious health issues. I believe that Clarence T. C. Ching would care that healthy food is accessible to all, as much as he cared that housing and medical care would be within the reach of many.

A 2013 USDA report shows that the average cost of a thrifty healthy diet for a family of four is \$ 551 on the mainland and \$1081 in Hawaii. Such high cost is a major reason why only 19% of Hawaii adults and 18% of high school students are able to eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. A diet lacking in fruits and vegetables, but rich in processed foods contributes to overweight and obesity and problems of more than half of Hawaii adults and a quarter of high school youth.

Accessibility to healthy food is a problem that needs immediate attention. By 2020, transporting food from the mainland will be very costly. More families will rely on fatty, or sugary processed foods. Health issues, such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, and

cardiovascular disease will worsen. Costs of medical care will skyrocket and society as a whole will suffer.

I propose three solutions that will help make fresh foods accessible to all. First, vegetable and fruit gardening must be included in the school curriculum. This activity is an effective learning tool on growing food, organic environmental practices, and nutrition. Research studies found that students involved in gardening began to like fruits and vegetables.

The second solution is expanding the community garden program to provide fresh produce for low income families. Currently, there are only ten community gardens in Oahu and quite a few in other islands. The various municipal governments and the Clarence T.C. Ching foundation could help finance the lease of vacant lots to be used for planting.

The third solution is helping Hawaii farmers by lowering the taxes they pay on the sale of their harvest. Farm produce will then be available to Hawaii's people at a lower price.

Clarence T.C.Ching's generosity allowed many families to live with dignity by having a roof over their heads, medical care, and educational opportunities. His passion inspires me to think about improving the lives of less affluent members of the community. Enabling families to have wholesome food on their dining table not only supports Clarence T.C. Ching's vision to meet man's basic needs but also builds stronger and healthier generations.

References:

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