

HAWAII SBDC SUCCESS STORY - EAST HAWAII CENTER



LIKO LEHUA, LLC

In the five years since Dawn Kanealii-Kleinfelder took over her Aunt's small fruit butter company, Liko Lehua, she has grown it into a thriving business of nearly 40 employees. Liko Lehua now manufactures and distributes gourmet fruit butter in six tropical flavors (lilikoi, guava, pineapple, Tahitian lime, and vanilla) to wholesale accounts across Hawaii, the U.S., and Japan. Products are also retailed online, in stores, and at local craft fairs and events.

In late 2012, Dawn opened Liko Lehua Café in a small 850 square foot building in upper Hilo. For the last four years, the café has served as the production facility for Liko Lehua Butter as well as a small, take-out Hawaiian food, burger, and pasta restaurant. Catering orders are taken and fulfilled out of the Kaumana facility as well. Liko Lehua Cafe has about 5 parking stalls and 2 small tables and the phone rings all day long.

In 2016, Dawn achieved her lifelong goal of opening a full service contemporary restaurant and bar. After searching for months and looking at numerous locations, Dawn found the perfect 4,300 square foot facility overlooking Hilo Bay. Dawn and her husband Matt worked tirelessly to transform the space from a dark, dingy bar into the vibrant, family-friendly restaurant that it is today. Liko Lehua at Pauahi has exceeded all projections and expectations so far, tripling the company's sales over last year.

Dawn has worked closely with the Hawaii SBDC throughout her entire journey to strategically prepare for and manage Liko Lehua's growth. From recipe costing to developing and revising business plans and financial projections to discussing leases, locations, and financing options. With the help of the Hawaii SBDC, Liko Lehua finally secured their first business loan and line of credit in 2016. In the coming year, they plan to upgrade equipment, automate manufacturing, and focus on increasing export sales to Japan.