Linda Cox displays a few of the many learning materials she's developed for young entrepreneurs.
For nearly two decades, I have had the pleasure of being the leader of CTAHR’s Community Economic Development Program (CEDP). Our program has been at the forefront of integrating extension and research to provide communities with up-to-date information to assist in planning and decision-making. The program focuses primarily on extending science-based content to clients (aka Extension work), but also supports research on resource management, looking at current practices and future uses. This close integration of the research and extension programs within CEDP makes up-to-date information available on a variety of topics to community members, at times when this information is critical to community, industry, and resource planning. The research agenda for the CEDP generally examines various aspects of market and non-market valuation, although the specific subject matter ranges broadly from landscaping to value-added beef products. Current efforts are concentrated on five topics: Hawaii spinner dolphins, the Hawaii livestock industry, “Green roofs,” ecotourism, and community-business matching. At this time, only one researcher in NREM is involved with CEDP, but a wealth of collaborative relationships has been forged with researchers across the campus, across the state, and across the nation. While challenges sometimes arise from the wide dispersion of these researchers, the program is significantly enhanced by the breadth of knowledge provided by these experts.

One of current research topics that CEDP is exploring is the susceptibility of Hawaii’s spinner dolphins to human influence. Spinner dolphins are not considered an endangered species, and are therefore not protected the Endangered Species Act, and not under the protection or regulation of the NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). However, many community members feel that local tour boat operations that provide wild dolphins excursions have
gone the past point of “Maximum Sustainable Yield” (MSY), resulting in damage to Hawaii’s wild dolphin populations. MinLing Pan (NOAA Fisheries and a graduate of CTAHR) and Wuyang Hu (University of Kentucky) lead the team that collected and analyzed data. NREM graduate students, Lara Kozloff (PhD candidate) and Katya Boehle (MS candidate), round out this research group. Ms. Kozloff will be evaluating alternative management plans and Ms. Boehle will be estimating the market and non-market valuation of dolphin excursions.

CEDP is also focusing on Hawaii’s livestock industry. The Hawaii livestock industry is facing many challenges as shipping calves to the US mainland – the industry’s predominate practice – becomes increasingly less cost-effective. The industry has made significant progress in the development of a market for local beef, particularly since the “CTAHR Beef Initiative” became operational a few years ago. Unfortunately, many challenges to fully develop this market still remain, and the CEDP has been an integral part of finding a solution. CEDP has organized two working groups to look at various aspects of this problem. Mark Thorne (HNFAS), Jonathan Deenik (TPSS), Harold Keyser (Maui County) and I are the team involved in pasture remediation research (featured in CTAHR’s 2006 Impact Report). In the second working group, I am joined by Soojin Jun (HNFAS) and Alvin Huang (HNFAS), and we are involved in a new effort to develop a value-added beef product from less desirable cuts of Hawaii beef. This new beef product can be set on the grocer’s shelf in a flexible retort pouch, like those that hold tuna and chicken. Using this design, visitors could easily take
home Hawaii beef, prepared as part of our delicious, and unique, island cuisine.

CEDP aims to be at the forefront of the “Green roofs” development project. Green roofs incorporate ecological or vegetative surfaces that are part of a human-made structure like roof gardens and new high-tech, thin profile options. Green roofs, common in many U.S. mainland and European cities, are rarely found in tropical areas. Six months ago, Andrew Kaufman (TPSS), Tomoaki Muira (NREM), Roxanne Adams (UH Landscaping), Dawn Easterday (Belt Collins), Leyla Cabugos (Botany graduate student) and I formed a team to investigate the possibilities for green roofs in Hawaii. The preliminary assessment indicated that green roofs have the potential to provide a host of benefits to Hawaii, including improved aesthetics, rainwater management, noise reduction, improved air quality, heat reduction and energy savings. The team is now working on the development of a long-term research agenda and pilot projects to gather data on tropical green roofs.

Alvin Huang, Linda Cox and Soojin Jun take 5 from their work on Hawaii beef-in-a-pouch.

Linda Cox is joined by the UH Environmental Center’s Scott Burch and John Cusick, and Harold Richins of UH’s Department of Travel Industry Management.
Ecotourism has long been a topic of interest for the CEDP and for our team of researchers: John Cusick (UH Environmental Center), Harold Richins and Juanita Liu (Travel Industry Management), and Shirley Daniels (Shidler College of Business Administration). In order to develop a long-term research agenda and gather preliminary data to begin work, a 2007 grant from the Center for International Business Education and Research was obtained. Work has just begun and the team is excited about the possibilities.

With the help of CEDP, the Community Business Matching (CBM) project involves helping a community define their development goals. The process first involves determining what assets are available to attract the desired development. Then, the requirements of various businesses are investigated and the CBM model pairs or matches the community’s goals and assets with the businesses’ requirements. Work in this area has been partially funded by the Western Rural Development Center and the team includes Tom Harris (University of Nevada at Reno), Wuyang Hu and Alison Davis (University of Kentucky). Our team has completed two pilot projects in Nevada and Montana, and is preparing a search for funding to develop a larger business database in order to fulfill requests from other communities.

The Community Economic Development Program demonstrates that integrated research-extension efforts are the best approach to helping Hawaii’s communities. We are looking forward to many more years of research that makes a difference in Hawaii and elsewhere. If you would like to contribute your time or expertise to any of CEDP’s ongoing research and extension projects, please contact me <mailto:lcox@hawaii.edu> for more information.