The Bi-Annual Master Gardener Conference "Celebrating 100 Years of Extending Knowledge and Changing Lives" ran October 24th to the 26th in Maui. Attending from East Hawaii Master Gardener Association were Daghild Rick, David Henry, Kate Burroughs and Dawn Garlich. Daghild and Dawn attended the conference free through scholarship from the O‘ahu Master Gardeners after submitting essays on sustainability. Also attending was Sharon Motomura from the Extension Office. Sharon did a lot of behind-the-scenes work making sure everything was ready for us.

Friday night, we went upcountry to the Pukalani Community Center. We enjoyed a veritable feast of delicious food and drinks, played bingo and saw a glorious sunset from the slopes of Haleakala. There were a few displays set up including one of our eggplant test garden.
Saturday was tour day.

After enjoying a continental breakfast at UH-Maui, we set out on a school bus to visit a side of Maui not usually seen by anyone. Originally, we were given three tour options in different zones of Maui, but no one complained when we all set out to explore Upcountry.

First stop was the Maui Farm with its Family Strengthening Program (FSP) which is an innovative farm-based residential program serving families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic violence and economic issues. As we walked to the farm, we passed the 4 duplexes currently housing 6 families. The adults are able to work on the farm for income and the families enjoy the bounty the farm provides.

The second stop was the Kula Botanical Gardens. The owners, Warren and Helen McCord, lovingly constructed these beautiful gardens beginning in 1968 largely with donations of plants around the county. Warren is a retired landscape architect whose offices turned into a gift shop over the years as he could not keep visitors out of the office and display gardens. He charged admission thinking it would deter visitors, but they happily paid.

Lunch was at Rice Park overlooking a corn maze and pumpkin patch filled with families. From there, we went to the Native Plant Nursery; Greenleaf farms, an organic farm
that provided produce for Oprah Winfrey’s farm 10 miles upslope; and Kula Estates, a relatively new coffee farm that had previously been a protea farm and is owned by a master gardener.

The banquet that evening was at the beachside restaurant of Cary & Eddie’s Hideaway. We enjoyed a buffet dinner, silent auction and awards ceremony. Daghild Rick received her East Hawaii Leadership Award to great acclaim.
Sunday was advanced education day, with many great choices. Prior to the classes, there was a nice continental breakfast and a self-guided tour of the UHMC gardens.

It was, all in all, a great experience and opportunity to learn. Make plans to attend the next conference, which will be held on Kaua’i in 2016. Perhaps, two years after that it will be our turn.

Recipients of statewide awards.