

MEDIA RELEASE

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Maui Residents to Continue 50-State Tree Planting Tour and Documentary Project *"Plant a Wish" to Tour 18 States Beginning March 2011*

Makawao, HI Jan 13 – The Maui-based founders of [Plant a Wish](#), a nation-wide tree planting tour and documentary project begun in 2010, have announced their upcoming return to the continental U.S. for the second installment in their mission to plant native trees in all 50 U.S. States. They are scheduled to begin this second phase of the project in mid-March and are scheduling visits to communities in [18 new states](#), which will bring their total to 43 – just seven states shy of their goal.

Founders Joe Imhoff and Sara Tekula – who are a husband and wife film making team – first announced the Plant a Wish project on Earth Day 2010, with the pair soon after traveling to 25 states in the mid-west and northeast in June and July of the same year. With a message encouraging the restoration of local native habitat, the duo depended largely on popular social media tools to raise funds and connect with local nonprofit organizations, tree nurseries, a variety of community members, and landowners to arrange tree planting events in each location. At these gatherings, participants are asked to write wishes on small scraps of paper and then plant them under a tree native to their location – hence the name, “Plant a Wish”.

“The planting of written wishes under trees began as a private thing Sara and I liked to do on our own,” says Imhoff. “As we’ve encouraged random people to plant their wishes along the tour, we’ve all come to see it as a powerful symbol of our connection to nature. Those trees are even more special to the communities we’re meeting because of that very personal, simple gesture they’ve made, and I’m willing to bet that they will want that tree to stay around.”

In March, Imhoff and Tekula will fly again to the mainland to document the road-trip across the entire southern U.S., planting trees in 18 more states, from Florida in the east to California in the west. (The full list of locations is available [on their website](#).) The Plant a Wish project founders will again connect with local land stewards and tree experts along the way, highlighting the work they do and examining the issues we are all facing such as global warming, urban sprawl, the oil catastrophe in the Gulf, loss of biodiversity, and various industrial impacts.

“Along the way, the tree-planting events are opportunities for us to meet incredible people from all walks of life,” says Tekula. “As filmmakers, we enjoy documenting their stories about the history of the land they call home, and learning how special these places are. We also seek out cultural landmarks and extraordinary historic trees and capture their beauty on film, and we interview experts who can shed some light on the importance of native trees and plants everywhere.”

Tekula is a journalist and former TV documentary producer, while Imhoff is the Outreach Coordinator for [Skyline Eco-Adventures](#), a zipline company known for its support of land restoration and watershed preservation on Maui. The two share a passion for film making, and in 2004, formed their production company, [Noni Films](#). The Plant a Wish adventure is the subject of their first feature film, to be completed in 2012.

“We wanted to take our love for the land a big step forward,” said Imhoff. “Living in Hawaii, we’re

learning about the history of this fragile ecosystem and how it's in danger because of humans' choices throughout history. This project is a reminder that each and every local landscape has a very special story to tell. Each native species is unique and special – and in most cases very useful in its home environment. One woman we interviewed called trees ‘marvels of engineering’ – and that's turning out to be very true everywhere we go. It's important for us to use the tools of film making to tell these stories.”

Imhoff and Tekula will be planting area-specific native trees everywhere they go during the tour because “native trees have the unique ability to adapt to the locations they evolved in over thousands of years,” says Tekula. “In Delaware, we learned that a single oak tree can support up to 600 different types of moths and butterflies,” says Tekula, “which means there is a lot of food for birds when there's an oak around. Birds need to eat, too.”

Imhoff adds, “The same idea holds true in every location we visit: native trees are one of the building blocks for the life we see all around us. Nowhere is this more important than in our home state of Hawaii, which has been called the ‘posterchild for extinction’ by several experts we've met on tour. Native trees need to be returned to our landscape if we want the islands to sustain us, and we've been sharing that message with everyone we meet along the way. In a way, lessons learned in Hawaii can change the world.”

To offset the costs of their project, Imhoff and Tekula are using grassroots and web-based fundraising methods. Their ability to complete a tour depends heavily on the kindness of friends and family for lodging, and sponsors to support the costs of travel and filmmaking. A contributor giving \$20 or more receives a credit in their film, and has a wish planted on their behalf. Interested community members can follow their blog at www.plantawish.org/blog, and join the Plant a Wish social networks, at www.facebook.com/PlantAWish or at www.twitter.com/PlantAWish

To become a sponsor, or for more information, please call Plant a Wish at 808-250-4030 or visit the website, www.plantawish.org

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About Plant a Wish:

Founded by Hawaii-based husband and wife team [Joseph Imhoff](#) and [Sara Tekula](#), Plant a Wish is a public awareness and documentary film project aiming to inspire the restoration of native habitats around America, engaging communities and inspiring individuals to take an active role in the health of our environment. On Earth Day 2010, they launched the project, which will ultimately visit all 50 United States – uniting each community in an unparalleled tree planting effort. With a video camera in one hand, and a shovel in another, they are traveling the country, planting trees and interviewing interesting people about their connection to the land they live on. Joe and Sara have planted trees in 25 states so far, and are hitting the road in March 2011 to visit 18 more. Check out <http://www.plantawish.org> to learn more, to contribute or get involved.

Photo attachments:

1. Plant a Wish Logo. Filename: “PAWLogoAlpha-300x298.png”
2. Photograph. Filename: “SaraJoeKoasMaui.jpg” Caption: “Imhoff and Tekula with native koa trees in their Maui backyard.” Photo Credit: howerphoto.com
3. Photograph. Filename: “OhiaTreeHands.jpg” Caption: “Imhoff and Tekula plant a young native ohia lehua tree on Maui.” Photo Credit: howerphoto.com