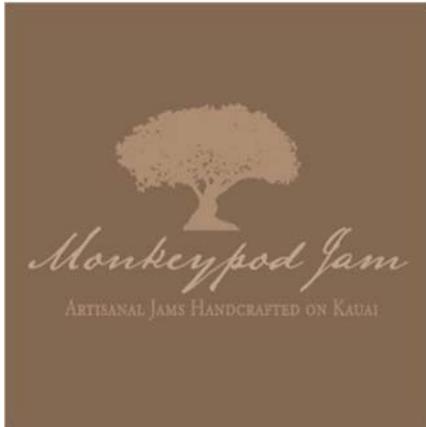


# HAWAII SBDC SUCCESS STORY - KAUA'I CENTER

## Monkeypod Jam



Aletha Thomas, a former schoolteacher, launched Monkeypod Jam in 2010, when she was placed on furlough. Each furlough Friday, Aletha would pull out her French copper pot and make jams and jellies using ripe Kauai fruit. With each batch, she was preserving the season's harvest while also preserving childhood memories of her grandmas, both of whom she remembers making jams on the farm.

Today, Monkeypod Jam works with more than 25 Kauai farmers to create 55 seasonal preserves. They use only fruit from Kauai. This is their way of sharing it with everyone. Monkeypod is committed to Kauai agriculture, green practices and impeccably high preserving standards.

Aletha continues to make her jams, jellies and marmalades by hand, cooking them in wide copper jam pots, which help heat the fruits quickly and capture the freshest, brightest flavors. Over the course of the last 7 years, MonkeyPod Jam has continued to grow reaching sales of \$500,000 + in 2016. In 2016, they moved into a storefront in Lawai and now features a variety of freshly made sweet treats and savories, first rate coffee and, of course, jams and jellies.

A recent soft spot in her cash flow led Aletha to a whole new revenue stream. In order to take advantage of her space (and pay the rent), Aletha began offering cooking classes - chocolatier classes, Korean Food classes, Hawaiian chefs' favorite comfort food classes. Those classes, in fact, became the focus of her entry into the Kauai Coffee Food and Ag Business Plan Competition held the first part of this year on Kauai. Aletha emerged from that competition as the first-place winner out of a field of 17 entrants realizing a first place prize of \$20,000 award and a first-rate business plan.

Aletha has always sought out advice. As it relates to the HSBDC, her involvement started with a Starting a Business workshop in 2010. From there, it's been an on-going relationship. As Aletha describes it, it's great to have a resource that you can go to whether that be with specific questions or just to kick ideas around. She appreciates the confidential, safe environment that she has with the Kauai office of the HSBDC. Future opportunities? Creating MonkeyPod Jam as a tourist destination, tours, private tastings and mentoring others. There's always another opportunity.