

Core Commentary: Jaecey Suda

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Jaecey Suda practicing what she preaches on the Maliko Run, Maui.

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Jaecey Suda is on a mission: to make downwind paddling more accessible. The southern Californian fell so in love with downwinding after her first trip to Maui that it changed the whole course of her life. Now, three years after moving to the island, Suda not only runs the [Maliko Shuttle](#), but has also partnered with respected Maui waterman Ralf Sifford to launch the Maliko Readiness Program,

intending to make, "downwind standup paddling accessible and safe in the wild and varied conditions off Maui's North Shore." We caught up with Suda to hear more about the program, how it's run and how SUP changed her life. --WT

My teaching mission right now is learning how to better verbalize the nuances of downwinding to help our students achieve more glides with less effort. When I started to think about teaching downwind, I'd taught so many beginner and intermediate lessons that I'd honed in on how to give teach the basics. It helped that before I began instructing, I took several SUP instructor courses. But there were no downwind instructor course available. In order to be able to share information, I really had to think about and the "how" and "why" of the movements I was making. That helped me formulate a foundation that combined with my formal training, makes up our program. It's all based on what the students can take away. We really want to continue to define what makes up the basics of downwind surfing.

Our goal is teach students to be self sufficient in negotiating everything from gear to conditions in downwinding. For students not already on Maui, we provide pre-visit training. After our sessions, we send a review to participants in so they have it as a reference. We want to support the downwind industry and the brands that support us.. We want to create more downwind paddlers. That's our ultimate goal.



Suda's original inspiration: the SUP Chicks.

The best way for me is to show (new students) how to catch bumps is a demo on our butts. Most paddlers on the Maliko Run for the first time, regardless of how fit they are, are not expecting the amount of movement in the water. Sitting on a board takes a big part of the balance out of the equation, so more attention can be focused on "when" to paddle.

We're doing a "Talk Story," off-course lesson in for our new participants where we will provide Maliko course specifics, safety information and downwind techniques and tips. We will do some maneuvers in the wind to simulate offshore conditions and practice the strokes and safety needed for a successful downwind run.

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Ralf (Sifford) is like all downwinders that are really fast: once you launch, you only see him for the first 30 seconds of the run. But most of the people at that level couldn't even tell you what they're doing. Ralf can. Ralf's standard answer is, "Good job," and a smile. Ralf is in a position in authority over here but he's so humble. It couldn't have been a better decision (to go into business with him) because he has so much aloha. He loves downwinding, he goes everyday. He's open to every single thing. He's a pretty amazing person.

I have experienced so many different activities, lifestyles and fitness crazes. Nothing did it for me like SUP.

I started paddling with a group of ladies in North County everyday called the SUP Chicks, driving up from Pacific Beach to Cardiff everyday. Every woman that came through that group was mighty. The stoke and love the women in the group showed and shared with me changed my path forever.



Ready for a run in front of the Maliko Shuttle.

Once I started paddling, serendipitous things started happening. I ran into (Maui-based shaping legend) Jimmy Lewis three days in a row in Southern California at different surf spots. He loaned me a board. He said, "If you ever really want to do a downwind run you should come over to Maui and I'll take you." I had a ticket booked a week later.

One of my besties told me to watch video of downwinding before bed and when I got up to get ready for paddling on Maui. I watched (an) aerial video of SIC riders on Maliko maybe 150-200 times in a week.

I was still real leery when I got to Maui. I met Buzzy Kerbox, Victor Lopez, Gavin and Jimmy and Kanaha (Beach Park). I was trying to be cool as a cucumber, my friend told me I could learn through a movie and I believed her. And honestly, I was fine. I did fall many times and Jimmy stopped and waited for me a few times, but it was hooked after the first mile.

Jimmy is an amazing guy and he has, in a very nonchalant, un-public way supported me and so many people on this island. He's so frigging humble. He's the man. Everyone knows that over here.

When I moved to Maui, I lived in a twin bed in a closet for a year. Just to downwind.



“The women that helped change my life.” Suda, second from right and the SUP Chicks.

When you first move to Maui, the first thing everyone asks you is, "What are you doing here?" I would try to give the whole thing in less than a couple paragraphs. I'm 53 have gray hair and I don't look that sporty. When I told people my story they would look at me like I was crazy. So I started telling people, "I'm working on keeping my head where my feet are." That is what downwinding has done for me: taught me to live in the moment. It's the only thing that turns my brain off and I'm completely present and wholly attached to the universe and my surroundings.

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This business is from my heart. I could make a living other ways but I want to give people the chance to experience something that could change their life. I'm a sensitive person and downwinding brings me balance. It's like yoga, you're learning to breathe through life.

The Maliko Run is more than an achievable goal for paddlers. It allows you to live in the moment and provides a sense of accomplishment that can only be achieved in this wind, in this place. It's the reason Maliko is the world's best downwind run.

Check out [Maliko Shuttle](#) for more info or contact Jaecey Suda at (808) 868-1114 or email at malikoshuttlemaui@gmail.com.