



ENTREPRENEURS Lynsey Beth Futa

Educating Girls Through Lady Sunglasses Line

After watching the documentary *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, Ashley Mariko Johnson, owner and creator of Mohala Eyewear, was inspired to make a woman-forward brand that would help girls around the globe receive the education they deserve. More importantly, the business venture — which launched toward the end of last year — prompted Johnson to take a closer look at the female role models in her life who have impacted her, a journey that would eventually push her to become an influential figure herself.

In the Hawaiian language, *mohala* means, “To bloom, to blossom, to shine and to be free,” according to Johnson.

In an online letter to supporters, she writes, “An educated girl in the developing world will stay healthier, live longer, empower herself against violence, help her family and community, lift her country, and perhaps, build a business of her own.”

In the midst of the global #MeToo campaign, Mohala Eyewear is more relevant than ever. Johnson’s business not only empowers women through education — every sunglass purchase buys a girl a week of education through the Room to Read Girls’ Education Project (roomtoread.org) — but it also gives consumers a chance to take a stand and make a difference.

“These shades make girls’ futures brighter,” she says.

As for the actual product, Mohala Eyewear is made



Ashley Mariko Johnson
MOHALA EYEWEAR PHOTOS

with Italian-designed premium acetate frames that are hypoallergenic, lightweight

and flexible. Each pair is scratch-resistant, and a few even come polarized. You can purchase your pair at Fighting Eel stores, pop-up events and online at mohalaeeyewear.com.

“We really focused on fit and flattering a woman’s face,” Johnson says. “So not doing designs that are going to overpower, but more classic, timeless (designs) that are going to enhance a woman’s beauty.”

Her sunglasses are even named after the fabulous women she credits for her success, including “Pikake” for her mom Jane and “Mei” for her sister Laura, as well

as “Lina” for her best friend Lynn.

Johnson also attributes her accomplishments to her years working for local grocery store giant Foodland — where she continues to work full-time — as well as the company’s inspirational female owner, Jenai Wall.

“I could not have started Mohala Eyewear as strongly without all I have learned in business through my education at Foodland over the last 10 years,” Johnson says.

And of Foodland’s owner, Johnson notes, “It really helps to have a woman to look up to who is an incredibly successful entrepreneur

and is also able to have a beautiful marriage, family life and friendships. She’s the kind of leader that I want to be.”

Johnson’s ultimate goal is to give 770 years of schooling to disadvantaged girls by 2022, in the hopes of seeing these young women flourish into strong, educated, confident human beings.

lfuta@midweek.com

A model shows off Mohala Eyewear’s “Pikake” sunglasses in Amber Tortoise frames.



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