

Kaiser Permanente to "Walk the Walk" with Hawaii island school garden network

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Kaiser



Photo by Diane Koerner

Permanente Hawaii physicians and clinic staff will set aside their sterile medical garb, equipment and working environment and, instead, get down and dirty working in the dirt - volunteering in Hawaii Island school gardens to celebrate the 25th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. "Day of Service" on Monday, Jan. 17. In doing so, they hope to practice what they preach daily to patients via their "HEAL" prescription for "Healthy Eating, Active Living."

Partnering with the Hawaii Island School Garden Network (HISGN), Kaiser Permanente Hawaii physicians, providers and staff are inviting school and community friends to join them from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday, Jan. 17 at Mala'ai: The Culinary Garden of Waimea Middle School, Kahakai Elementary School, and Hilo High School. Participants will weed, prune, work compost piles and lend a hand in countless other ways to nurture sustainable learning gardens and a healthier lifestyle for the new year.

This is the second year Kaiser Permanente's medical professionals are "walking the walk" of their "HEAL" prescription for patients and the community at large on Hawaii Island, Maui and Oahu.

In addition to learning about the pleasure and benefits of gardening, the day's activities will include games to reinforce Kaiser Permanente's statewide 5-2-1-0 nutrition program to combat childhood obesity through public awareness and education. The 5-2-1-0 program encourages five fruits and vegetables or more per day, two hours of screen time or less, one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity, and zero sodas and sugar-sweetened sports and fruit drinks. Dr. Cris Ancog, a pediatrician with Kaiser Permanente, serves as a volunteer medical advisor for the program.

Community friends, students, families and faculty are invited to participate in the work and learn day, which will include delicious healthy morning snacks and lunch. Participants are asked to RSVP by January 12 by calling Nancy Redfeather (322-2801) or emailing

Tools, gloves, sunscreen and drinking water will be provided. Participants should wear comfortable clothing suitable for getting dirty and wear closed shoes. This is a zero waste event - bring a water bottle if you have one.

About Hawaii Island School Garden Network

The goal of the Hawaii Island School Garden Network (HISGN) is to help island schools build gardening and agricultural programs to significantly increase consumption of, and access to, locally produced food by involving students, their school communities, and their family networks in fresh food production. HISGN is one of The Kohala Center's self-reliance initiatives. Visit [www.hisgn.org](#) for more information.

About Mala'ai: The Culinary-Garden of Waimea Middle School

Now in its sixth year of growing real change for Waimea's children and community in a three-quarter-acre outdoor living classroom, Mala'ai's mission is to deepen Waimea Middle School students' relationship with food, their culture, and their environment by creating and sustaining an organic garden and kitchen classroom that engages them in all aspects of growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing nourishing, healthy food. Ultimately, the program intends for all food served at the school to be wholesome, fresh, delicious and just. Mala'ai, a not-for-profit working in partnership with Waimea Middle Public Conversion Charter School, is financially supported by community friends, donors and volunteers. Visit [www.malaai.org](#) to learn more about getting involved in this project and about the still-new Waimea Crop Share, funded in part by Kaiser Permanente, The Kohala Center and West Hawai'i Fund, to share surplus fresh produce grown in back yards, local farms and at the school garden - from 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m., Saturdays, Jan. 15, 22 and 29 at Mala'ai.

About Kahakai Elementary's-School Garden

The Kahakai School Garden was founded many years ago by Principal Jessica Yamazawa with the help of the Kona Young Farmers. Today, there are two garden sites. One is a teaching/market garden and the other site is the future theater, butterfly house and native garden that is under construction. The Kahakai 5th Grade hosts a Student Farmer's Market every Wednesday morning before school. About Hilo High School's Garden The Hilo High School Agriculture Program is a - wonderful, sprawling series of terraced gardens located - at the back of the Hilo High School campus. -Science teacher Steve Nemeth teaches a variety of agricultural science electives. The gardens hold an impressive diversity of native plants, fruit trees, herbs, and food crops. Of particular interest is the Hawaiian endemic garden featuring pre-contact plants as well as a canoe garden cultivated with plants and trees brought to Hawaii by early voyagers. There are also income crops and an impressive collection of citrus. Nemeth shares with his students his vast wealth of knowledge of the cultural, nutritional and medicinal uses of native plants. The program also utilizes aquaponics and hydroponics systems, which are student maintained.

About Martin Luther King Day-of Service

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for

others?" Each year, Americans across the country answer that question by coming together on the King Holiday to serve their neighbors and communities. Visit [www.kingholiday.org](#) for more information and to find a "Day of Service" event in your community.

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