

For Immediate Release

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Renovated Kohala school building houses Hidden Jewels

KAMUELA, Hawaii—December 11, 2008—Students at Kohala Elementary are discovering Hidden Jewels in a once dilapidated auxiliary school building, which the community has transformed into a kid-friendly and colorful Science Resource Center that is a model for science education.

The Hidden Jewels curriculum, which integrates the arts, sciences, literacy and mathematics, was developed by master science teacher Susan Lehner and fine artist Peter Kowalke. For the past four years, The Kohala Center has teamed with Lehner to implement Hidden Jewels into the Kohala Elementary curriculum.

Hidden Jewels makes science relevant, accessible, hands-on and *fun*—with games, books, cards, songs and stories.

Lehner has created a novel, interdisciplinary approach to teaching students in grades one through five about the wonders of Hawaii's unique environments. The forest, ocean, stars, and earth are introduced through project-based activities expertly designed by Lehner to engage the kids' imaginations and natural curiosity. Kowalke's art projects complement the science curriculum, reinforcing learning through hands-on artwork that displays the students' knowledge of island ecosystems. Clay, paint, natural materials, movement, music and spontaneous connections are explored in the Hidden Jewels art program.

Pascale Creek Pinner, 2008 Hawaii State Teacher of the Year, is working with Lehner to formalize the curriculum into guidebooks that teachers can easily use in their classrooms. Classroom teachers are coached in new techniques for engaging their students in scientific inquiry and are assisted in the effort to integrate science content into the school's literacy and numeracy curricula.

"Showing students that science can be fun and meaningful to them is a primary goal of this team. The support and enthusiasm of the teachers and staff at the school, and generous funding from friends of The Kohala Center have helped this program grow. The students now have a first-rate facility in which to learn. Our goal is not to meet the State standards, but to exceed them," Lehner said.

And that first-rate facility is the new Science Resource Center, which will be dedicated on Monday, December 15. The building was obtained by Kohala Elementary School Principal Eleanor Laszlo.

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“The Kohala Center is honored to support Principal Ele Laszlo’s leadership,” said Roberta Chu, president of The Kohala Center Board. “It’s unusual and refreshing to work with someone who will actively forge public-private partnerships to provide the very best in educational opportunities for her students and her community.”

The renovation of the center has truly been a community effort with in-kind donations of windows, cleaning, landscaping, a new ceiling and a first coat of interior paint. Business owners Jim Sargent and Jim Keyes, Aikane Nursery, the Leos high school service group, Boy Scouts, and County lifeguards all pitched in. The new center, once a building with limited electricity, no water or supplies and badly in need of paint, is now spruced up and equipped with a wealth of resource materials, a resource library, learning stations, high-quality science kits and complete curriculum guides.

“I really like the ‘can-do’ attitude of Principal Ele Laszlo and Kohala Elementary School,” said Matt Hamabata, Kohala Center executive director. “With the right leadership and with the right partnerships, we can do anything we set out to do.”

Recent major support for expanding the program to encompass all grades and to build out the Science Resource Center comes from David Eckles and Allene Wong of Kohala and the Kahiau Foundation. The Mary D. and Walter F. Frear Eleemosynary Trust (Bank of Hawaii, trustee) provided additional support for the new educational materials that are housed in the Science Resource Center.

Jim and Lynn Lally of the Kohala Coast, who wanted to provide the best opportunities for Kohala youth, initiated this school transformation project. Joining the Lallys were Rob and Terry Ryan of Kohala and Hamilton, Montana; and Bennett Dorrance Jr. of Kohala and the Dorrance Family Foundation. Others who have contributed to the effort include the Atherton Family Foundation; Peter Sparks and Clytie Mead of Hamakua and the Pahiki Nui Fund; and a donor from New York who wishes to remain anonymous.

Vivian Moku, Dixie Adams, Raylene Kawaiaea, Punahale Svendsen, Alfonso Mitchell and Christine Morgan are members of the Hidden Jewels Community Advisory Board.

To learn more about the Hidden Jewels curriculum, visit www.kohalacenter.org/hiddenjewels. The Kohala Center is an independent, not-for-profit center for research and education *about* and *for* the environment. By respectfully engaging Hawai‘i Island as the world’s most vibrant classroom and laboratory for humanity, The Kohala Center builds teaching and research programs that enhance island environments, serve island communities, and advance the work of the academy. The Kohala Center operates in partnership with local, national, and international research and educational institutions. See www.kohalacenter.org.