

Kahaluu Beach Park to get fresh coat of paint

Volunteers needed for the next two thursdays

by Carolyn Lucas
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clucas@westhawaii.com
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Kahaluu Beach Park's main pavilion is getting a facelift this week.

Hawaii County Department of Parks and Recreation recently gave The Kohala Center and University of Hawaii Sea Grant Extension Service permission to paint the building, benches and tables.

Cindi Punihaole Kennedy of The Kohala Center said the county did not have the funds to do the improvements.

"The University of Hawaii Sea Grant and The Kohala Center have been working on a program to education our visitors on reef etiquette -- how to take care of our land and ocean," she said. "As reef teachers spend a lot of time at the pavilion, we see that we need to upgrade the site, making it a more pleasant place for the community and visitors to visit."

Volunteers are needed from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday and March 29 to help with the project. Those interested are asked to bring roller paint handles, pliers, hammers, putty knives, ladders and screwdrivers. Lunch will be provided.

Staff from HPM Building Supply and Home Depot has already offered their assistance. But at least, 15 more people are needed, Punihaole Kennedy said.

Seven people spent several hours last Thursday removing staples from the walls and prepping the area for paint.

Punihaole Kennedy described the pavilion as "rundown," "old" and "makeshift." She thinks its appearance has an effect on the overall experience at Kahaluu and that everyone should do what he can to preserve or better the area's image.

"We're at a turning point. You can see the differences. But we can change things that are happening around the world by just caring and taking action," Punihaole Kennedy said. "Do this so your children's children can have the same opportunity you have now to enjoy this place. Let's teach the keiki how to take care for this area by being examples."

Kahaluu is a shore many adore. Hundreds of visitors flock here daily to snorkel and surf in the tiny bay's exceptionally clear water or lounge on the white sand speckled with black lava fragments. Reef fish riding currents form brightly colored chorus lines underwater.

Five years ago, Bonnie Sell and her husband, Doug, moved from California to the Big Island because she fell in love with Kahaluu. These Kailua-Kona residents now snorkel here daily.

Sell was pleased and thankful, but not surprised that volunteers are going to be fixing up the pavilion. She recalled several instances where the community banded together to replace a lifeguard tower, fix the sidewalk, replace signage and repair tables. She even mentioned a man, approximately in his 80s, that regularly picks up cigarette butts.

"Unfortunately, we cannot rely on county to get the necessary funds or manpower to do improvements," Sell said. "If people are willing to fix up the pavilion and make the area look good, more power to them."

Oregon resident Marilyn McKee thought it was nice that so many people use the pavilion and would gladly volunteer to fix it up. She said the transformation might cause residents and visitors to take more pride in it.

Kailua-Kona resident Margareta Prince visits Kahaluu at least three or four times a week. She said the pavilion is in dire need of repair and offered Saturday morning to help paint.

"This wonderful place should be taken care of," Prince said.

How to sign up

- To sign up or for more information, call Cindi Punihaole Kennedy of The Kohala Center at 895-1010 or send an e-mail to cpunihaole@kohalacenter.org.



One of the rusted support poles holding up the Kahaluu Beach Park pavilion. - Photo By Baron Sekiya | West Hawaii Today