

For Immediate Release

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Hawai‘i FoodCorps connects children with fresh, healthy food

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—December 26, 2014—In its first year, the [FoodCorps Hawai‘i](#) program served 1793 school children in West O‘ahu and on Moloka‘i and Hawai‘i islands, working to change their attitudes about eating healthy food by creating classroom and school garden activities combined with culinary and marketing experience.

[FoodCorps](#), a national non-profit program in partnership with the AmeriCorps service network, addresses childhood obesity and food insecurity in underserved communities. [The Kohala Center](#) serves as the host site for the state of Hawai‘i’s FoodCorps program. The [Walmart Foundation's State Giving Program](#) in Hawai‘i has recently become a funder, joining the [Ulupono Initiative](#), [The Bill Healy Foundation](#), [Hau‘oli Mau Loa](#), [CyanoTech](#), [AmeriCorps Hawai‘i](#), and [WHH Foundation](#).

The Food Corps Hawai‘i program is committed to building garden-based nutritional education programs and expanding the connections between hands-on learning and core curriculum to help students adopt healthier lifestyles, improve academic performance, and obtain real-life learning experiences about sustainability and eco-literacy.

Activities included different types of classes and lessons, from soil biology to Hawaiian studies, agricultural practices to multiplication, and the importance of nutrition through planting and culinary activities. Some of the activities students participated in included:

- Creating cultural salad at Honaunau Elementary School in South Kona. Fifth graders learned about cultures around the world, and designed a salad using ingredients grown in the garden that reflected their own culture or a culture of their choosing.
- A weekly student farmer's market at Māla‘ai: The Culinary Garden of Waimea Middle School, South Kohala, Hawai‘i Island. Students ran the market selling garden produce to the community.
- Classroom lessons about soil texture, particle size and water retention at Maunaloa Elementary School on Moloka‘i.
- Classroom and garden lessons in nutrition at Makaha Elementary School by preparing healthy snacks from the garden at Hoa Aina.

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Statewide, students harvested more than 1,400 pounds of produce from their school gardens, averaging nearly 15 pounds each week. Of this harvest, 301 pounds was donated to those in need and the remainder was cooked, tasted, and eaten by the students.

For FoodCorps Hawai'i's second year, 12 schools Hawai'i schools on three islands have been selected as service sites. Service members are selected each year to work as garden and nutritional educators in these schools. The nine service members for 2014-2015 are:

- Tasia Yamamura, [MA'O Organic Farms](#), O'ahu
- Lacey Phifer & Jameil Saez, [Sust'ainable Molokai](#), Moloka'i School Garden Network
- Kaylie Pickup, [Kua O Ka Lā PCS](#), Puna, Hawai'i Island
- Kalu Oyama, [Nā'ālehu Elementary School](#), Ka'ū, Hawai'i Island
- Jessica Sobocinski, [Hōnaunau Elementary School](#), South Kona, Hawai'i Island
- Seri Niimi Burch, [Māla'ai: The Culinary Garden of Waimea Middle School](#), South Kohala, Hawai'i Island
- Kayla Sinotte, [Kohala Elementary School](#), North Kohala, Hawai'i Island
- Jen Urban, [Hoa 'Aina O Makaha](#), O'ahu

These service members dedicate one year of full-time (35.5 hours per week) public service in school food systems, where they 1) expand hands-on nutrition education programs, 2) build and tend school gardens, and 3) help bring high-quality, locally produced foods into schools. When these three pillars of FoodCorps' approach are implemented together, there are changes in children's attitudes toward the consumption of healthy food.

Applications for the 2015-2016 cohort of Hawai'i FoodCorps service members will be available from January 9 to March 30 on the [FoodCorps](http://www.foodcorps.org) website (www.foodcorps.org).

Nancy Redfeather, FoodCorps Hawai'i Program Director, said, "We are very appreciative to the Walmart Foundation for their support for FoodCorps Hawai'i and the thousands of children and families that will be connected to increased opportunities for healthy eating and healthy living. Lifestyle changes are necessary to decrease childhood obesity, and in-school programs are the place to make the difference."

About FoodCorps

FoodCorps (<https://foodcorps.org/>) is a nationwide team of leaders that connects kids to real food and helps them grow up healthy. FoodCorps places motivated leaders in limited-resource communities for a year of public service where they teach kids about what healthy food is and where it comes from, build and tend school gardens, and bring high-quality local food into public school cafeterias. Funding for FoodCorps is provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, AmeriCorps, and a diverse array of private and public donors.

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About The Kohala Center

Founded in the year 2000, The Kohala Center (<http://www.kohalacenter.org>) is an independent, community-based center for research, conservation, and education. We turn research and traditional knowledge into action, so that communities in Hawai‘i and around the world can thrive—ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially.

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