

Planting 'Seeds of Hope' in the future - WATCH VIDEO!

By Terrie Henderson

Wednesday, October 21, 2009 10:40 AM HST

School gardens on the Big Island are growing in popularity, and educators



People with tickets to Hawai'i Island School Garden Network's benefit luncheon head to the entrance of the Golden Princess cruise ship on Oct. 16 at the Hilo Bay dock. - Terrie Henderson

spearheading these initiatives hope that today's keiki will hoe the row towards a future of sustainability.

Nancy Redfeather, Hawai'i Island School Garden Network project director, said hopes more will pop up and continue to blossom.

"Forty-nine schools all across Hawai'i Island have garden programs, which provide outdoor living laboratories for students to develop ecological literacy, provide hands-on learning experiences, develop healthy lifestyle choices and participate in environmental stewardship," Redfeather said.

On Friday, Oct. 16, the Kohala Center celebrated the 26th Annual World Food Day with a benefit "Seeds of Hope" luncheon for the Hawai'i Island School Garden Network program. The benefit was held aboard the Golden Princess cruise ship docked at Hilo Harbor. The school garden network is one of The Kohala Center's projects and part of the center's food self-reliance initiative.

"Building gardens, preparing and nurturing the soil, planting and harvesting food, preparing and eating healthy foods that grow well on our island will help to prepare our young citizens for building a more sustainable world for our island's future," Redfeather said.

Redfeather said children succeed in garden programs.

"Our children are facing so many challenges today," Redfeather said. "Our children are expressing to us the stresses of modern life... I think it's time to make a change in the way we are teaching and in our emphasis and curriculum."

Redfeather said not long ago, every school on Hawai'i Island had a garden, according to elders in the community who remember the gardens -- the goal, Redfeather said, is to get back to that.

School gardens, Redfeather said, can serve as places where whole communities can reconnect with the land. Waimea Middle School, for example, has a program that offers classes for parents on how to start gardens at home.

"I really think this might be the first generation that is teaching their parents about sustainability," Redfeather said.

Mayor Billy Kenoi said the Big Island should not only be able to feed itself, but also feed the rest of the state. The Big Island, he said, could also be a model for energy sustainability.

"If any place can power itself... it's the island of Hawai'i," Kenoi said.

State Sen. Russell Kokubun said when he was a young boy, his mother used to say, "that kid just likes to play in the dirt," when describing him to others.

"She always had a garden at our home," Kokubun said, adding he remembers the awe and wonder he experienced as a child working the land. "She would take me out in the garden to help her... The lessons that you learn from that experience (gardening at a young age), they carry over with you no matter what you do."

Kokubun said the more self-sufficiency the island can achieve, the better off the people living here will be.

Kokubun's message of sustainability was echoed by fellow lawmaker, State Sen. Dwight Takamine.

"Our common ground is that we are all part of this island," Takamine said.

His message of sustainability, however, came with a serious warning.

"As long as we keep importing 80 to 85 percent of what we consume, sustainability will not be of value," Takamine said, adding that a change of attitude is needed, and residents need to realize how important it is to grow their own food.

"I thank you for planting the seeds," Takamine said to all the leaders of the school garden projects.

An eight-minute trailer of Hawai'i filmmaker Danny Miller's "Seeds of Hope" documentary was shown at the luncheon. It was filmed for Hawai'i Public Television and features teachers and students in the island's school garden programs.

The trailer highlighted some facts about food in Hawai'i. Only 15 to 17 percent of food in the state is grown locally. Without planes and ships bringing goods from elsewhere, the islands' populations would not survive long. The trailer also addressed hunger in the state. Right now, one-third of families here do not have enough food.

The movie trailer states that the average farmer in Hawai'i is 60-years-old, implying a new generation of farmers has not sufficiently sprouted up. For more information, visit [. . .](#)

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