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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sunday, Oct. 7, 2012

WAIMEA'S MALA'AI SCHOOL GARDEN TO INTRODUCE STUDENT-RUN 'FARM STAND' THIS WEEK FRIDAY, OCT. 12

Waimea Middle and Elementary School families and the entire community are invited to check out Mala'ai school garden's new weekly student-run "Farm Stand," beginning this Friday, Oct. 12 from 2:15 to 4 p.m. Located in the back -- or south side -- of the school campus near the entry to the ¾-acre organic Mala'ai learning garden, the Farm Stand will offer a variety of fresh produce -- most of which has been grown by students.

Mala'ai's Farm Stand will primarily operate from 2:15 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays, but this week Thurs., Oct. 11, there will be no classes at Waimea Middle School due to Teacher Institute Day. Thus, the "soft opening" was moved to Friday. The Farm Stand will continue for the next eight weeks, concluding on Thurs., Nov. 29, but it also will be moved to Wed., Nov. 21 to provide an opportunity for school families and community friends to purchase fresh produce for Thanksgiving, which is Thurs., Nov. 22.

Produce offered for sale will include a variety of leafy greens, kabocha squash, sweet potatoes, red potatoes, cabbage, green beans, herbs, organic eggs and cut flowers. There may also be some produce donated by local farmers. Not everything will be available every week, but each item listed, plus more will be sold over the course of the eight weeks that students run the Farm Stand.

"Our Mala'ai Farm Stand was conceived to provide students with the real experience of growing, harvesting, cleaning and preparing produce to sell, and then handling sales and learning all the steps and entrepreneurial skills required to manage a small business. Students will be making signs, running the market, using scales, pricing the produce, recording sales and handling cash transactions. It also will help students gain an understanding of the value of what they are growing in their school garden," said Mala'ai garden teacher Holly Sargeant-Green.

"Money is a powerful force to be managed and handled. It will be a great experience for the students," she said.

Funds raised by the Farm Stand will be used by students for a specific project to enhance their outdoor garden classroom.

"This project is something we've wanted to do for a long time but have not had sufficient volume of produce. Under the guidance of Charles Oldfather, WMS students opened up, planted and cultivated additional plots adjacent to the existing garden to increase the volume of food produced. This additional mentorship of students was made possible by a grant from the West Hawai'i Fund of the Hawai'i Community Foundation.

Mala'ai: The Culinary Garden of Waimea Middle School is a not-for-profit community organization working in close partnership with Waimea Middle School. Mala'ai's Mission is to "cultivate the relationship between students and the land through growing and sharing nourishing food in our outdoor living classroom. Our work reaches beyond the boundaries of our garden connecting land stewardship, culture, health and pleasure with lifelong learning."

For more information, go to www.mala'ai.org, or call Alethea Lai (989-7861) or email: alethea@malaai.org.

