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## Health Organization Volunteers Spend Holiday at Schools

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Employees of Kaiser Permanente Hawaii volunteered their time today on several islands in commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Their efforts on the Big Island included helping to develop gardens at Waimea Middle School and Konawaena High School, and other efforts at the University of Hawaii at Hilo's Pacific Aquaculture & Coastal Resources Center in Keaukaha.

The work at the schools included weeding, pruning and planting crops in conjunction with the Hawaii Island School Garden Network.

According to HISGN Program Director Nancy Redfeather, the network partners with local schools to create "hands-on learning laboratories" to deepen students' understanding of science, agriculture and nutrition in an outdoor classroom.

"We welcome public contributions to our school garden program in the form of funding, shared resources, and volunteer time," Redfeather said. "Our program, schools, and keiki are grateful to Kaiser Permanente, its physicians, and staff members for continuing to partner with us through this annual day of service, and help us address the health of our community."

Kaiser Permanent said it began commemorating the holiday as a day of community service in 2005. Rather than taking a day off, physicians and staff take part in a "day on" of volunteering in dedication of the memory of the late civil rights leader.

"Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service provides everyone with a chance to start the year off right by making an impact in their community while honoring Dr. King and his legacy of service," said Margaret Hu, MD, Kaiser Permanente's Hilo Clinic chief. "Research shows that volunteering and giving back to your community can also improve physical and mental health. So, volunteering has the added benefit of helping yourself while you're helping others."

According to Kaiser Permanente, nearly 900 physicians and staff members took part in today's volunteer activities on the Big Island, Maui and Oahu.



[1]

Clinic Manager Skip White took on some weeds at the University of Hawaii at Hilo's Pacific Aquaculture & Coastal Resources Center. Courtesy photo.

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