

For Immediate Release

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Community training program for school garden volunteers

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—June 4, 2012— It takes a community to raise a garden, and many community volunteer hands are needed in Hawai‘i Island school gardens. The Hawai‘i Island School Garden Network (HISGN) will offer two free school garden volunteer training classes from 9 a.m. to noon on Thursday, July 19, and on Thursday, July 26, at Nancy Redfeather’s Kawanui Farm in Honalo, Kona. To register, email Redfeather at nredfeather@kohalacenter.org or Donna Mitts, dmitts@kohalacenter.org.

Volunteers will learn to work alongside students to help maintain the gardens, to participate in the outdoor kitchen cooking, and to help teachers turn the experience into valuable lessons in science, nutrition, and environmental education.

Training topics include:

- An overview of the school garden programs in West Hawai‘i
- Engaging the Young Mind: Working with children and youth in outdoor settings
- Volunteer Protocols in School Gardens: What to expect at a school garden
- Review of Gardening Skills: Composting, weeding and hoeing, transplanting, pricking out, soil amendments, and creative projects for children and youth

“Volunteers are vital to the overall success of the school garden programs, whether it’s for an hour a week to 50 hours a month,” said Redfeather, HISGN program director. “The volunteers help to lead a small group, providing greater opportunities for the children to experience hands-on education.”

School garden programs have a diversity of ways that the community can help—create a brochure or an article for the school newsletter, brainstorm a fundraiser, fix a tool, build a fence, lay a waterline, work with a small group of children to weed, plant a bed, start seeds in the greenhouse, or help cut fruit for a healthy snack.

“School gardens are stimulating, inviting, and beautiful spaces that encourage a child’s learning across subject matters. The gardens are as diverse as the 60 communities that are part of the network. Each garden is a unique outdoor classroom designed to provide hands-on, experiential learning opportunities for K-12. This real-world learning can be integrated into all academic subject areas and has been shown to benefit children by boosting academic achievement, nurturing healthy lifestyles, cultivating life skills and promoting environmental stewardship,” Redfeather said.

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Community training program for school garden volunteers, page 2

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HISGN is a program of The Kohala Center, an independent, not-for-profit, community-based center for research, conservation, and education. To learn more about what each school partner is doing to grow young minds and nourish the next generation, visit <http://www.kohalacenter.org/HISGN/gardens.html>.