

THE MAUI NEWS

MAUI'S NEWSPAPER SINCE 1900

OLOWALU OF OLD

making a comeback

Story by CLAUDINE SAN NICOLAS, staff writer

POSTED: September 21, 2009

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About 70 volunteers including 17 keiki turned out Saturday to clean out invasive species and to replant native Hawaiian plants in an effort to restore the Olowalu Cultural Reserve.

"It feels good to be able to put the land back in shape," said 70-year-old John Duey of Iao Valley.

Saturday's turnout was the largest so far for the Olowalu Cultural Reserve, a nonprofit with a mission to restore the ahupuaa, an administrative and economic district that typically ran from the mountains to the ocean in Old Hawaii.

The 75-acre reserve within this particular ahupuaa sits mauka of the Olowalu General Store and takes about five minutes to reach by car. The reserve's mission is to restore the land as it was in the late 1800s, prior to its conversion to sugar cane, according to project coordinator Nani Santos.

The ahupuaa's restoration features would include taro patches, native Hawaiian flora and heiau and archaeological sites. Long-term goals include the establishment of a Native Hawaiian charter school and the construction of two double-hulled canoes.

The motto of the reserve's current Kanu (planting) Project is "From the Present to the Past."

This summer, the Hawaii Youth Conservation Corps completed the restoration of an ancient loi (taro enclosure). In the last year, 100-plus kukui nut trees have been planted, and about 30 varieties of native Hawaiian plants have been purchased with a \$5,000 grant from the Atherton Foundation.

This weekend's work concentrated on about 4 to 5 acres of the property's midsection where new taro patches are thriving. About 15 4th- and 5th-graders in Kamehameha Schools' "Mohala Ka Liko" program uprooted taro, cleaned it and then made poi, all in one morning. The program involves Native Hawaiian youths who are not enrolled at Kamehameha Schools.

"The best part of this was watching the keiki experience the life of the land. I was bubbling over because they were bubbling over," Santos said.

Duey, who is Santos' father, said he got involved because of his love for taro and the opportunity to share the Hawaiian culture and traditions, particularly with children.

"It's just exciting to be a part of this project and to see the keiki learn about

Article Photos



The Maui News / AMANDA COWAN photo
Betty Criste of the Old Lahaina Luau shares a smile with colleagues as they create a new taro patch at the Olowalu Cultural Reserve late Saturday morning. About 70 volunteers cleared invasive species and placed native Hawaiian plants in an effort to restore the area.

their roots," he said.

In addition to the Mohala Ka Liko youths, Kamehameha Schools Maui student Desmond Machado brought along Boy Scouts to help the restoration work as part of his senior project for school.

A third community group rounded out the volunteers - Michael Moore of the Old Lahaina Luau and about eight employees from his reservations department.

"It was the biggest turnout we've ever had, and it had the best energy," Santos said.

The reserve hopes to conduct public tours of the property sometime next year.

In the meantime, community workdays are held on the third Saturday of each month. The next event will start at 7 a.m. Oct. 17. Volunteers first gather at Olowalu Store. Ground transportation can be provided from the store to the reserve. In addition, volunteers are treated to lunch.

For more information, call 214-8778 or e-mail Santos at lihauolowalu@live.com.

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