

EXTRA!

A special edition to benefit
Parents And Children Together **PACT**



The Honolulu Advertiser

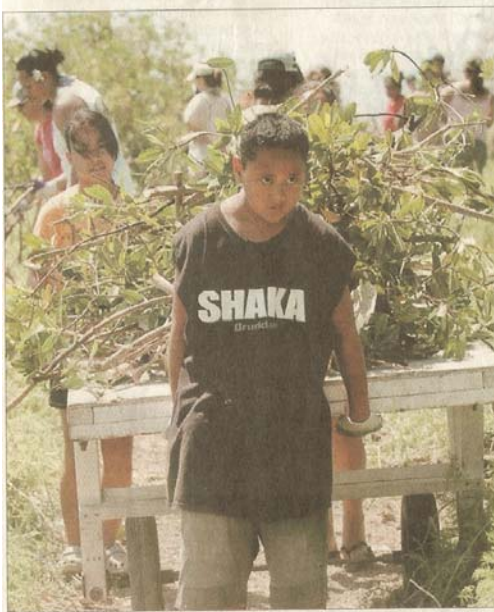
WEDNESDAY | May 7, 2008

HAWAII'S NEWSPAPER

SPECIAL EDITION
\$1.00

BREAKING NEWS 24/7 AT HONOLULUADVERTISER.COM

Kids Day



REBECCA BREYER | The Honolulu Advertiser

Justice Fau, 10, of Kalihi, helps clear invasive mangrove trees on Mokauea Island. The PACT program holds a monthly field trip to the ancient fishpond on Mokauea, site of O'ahu's last fishing village.

Mokauea cleanup helps kids give back

On small island that has seen better days, kids help — and learn

BY MARY KAYE RITZ
Advertiser Staff Writer

It sounded like fun and games at the beach: teens spending the hottest part of a Saturday at the ancient Hawaiian fishpond at Mokauea, the island off Sand Island. And what's not to like: sunshine ... kayaking across the channel ... hanging with your pals.

But this was not fun and games. This was work.

"Watch out for eels," called out a paddler who'd been ferrying a bus full of members of the Teen Program of Parents And Children Together to the island.

Those trudging through the mucky waters to reach land stepped a little more gingerly after that. And not far into the path at the fishpond, one girl stopped to pull an inch-long thorn out of her half-inch-thick rubber slippers.

Once they'd arrived on the tiny island, which had seen better

COMMUNITY TEEN PROGRAM

Kūhiō Park Terrace Community Resource Center
1485 Linapuni St., No. 47,
842-1843

Makalapa Community Center

199-102 Kalaloa St.,
2nd Floor, 488-6705
teen@pacthawaii.org
www.pacthawaii.org/teenprogram.html

days in its earlier incarnation as a fishing village, the group split in half to help clear mangrove from the periphery of the fishpond. The older ones grabbed loppers — tools that looked like super-sized pliers, but the business ends look like large-mouthed bass — to chop down the mangrove; the younger ones dragged the debris to the nearby beach landing, where it would be hauled away later.

The island became a catch-all for junk washing up from the Waikiki side of O'ahu, but that didn't stop the dedicated band of youngsters and their PACT leaders from digging into the duties at hand.

"When the 'āina gives to you, cleaning up is like giving back," said Kahea Hooehuli.

The 16-year-old Kahea, a sophomore at Farrington High, has been coming since the PACT group began its Mokauea project many moons ago.

She surveyed the progress made, recalling the days when the rubbish and foliage was so thick, you couldn't even see from one side of the island to the next.

"You couldn't see the ocean," said Kahea, pointing across a pond the width and breadth of a school cafeteria.

She gave a satisfied nod: "It turned out pretty good."

The 18-year PACT program doesn't just take field trips like these, of course. Director Cheryl Johnson said the program offers after-school refuge to more than

450 who live in or near low-income or public housing at two sites, including Kūhiō Park Terrace and Pu'uwai Momi.

Besides the cleanup, there are field trips — incentive trips for those who take part in study hall — that are all about the fun and games. The Teen Program takes them to the water park, or out for pizza or to the ice-skating rink.

The "power hour" (imagine study hall with tutoring) is a big draw, including healthy afternoon snacks — edamame, smoothies, yogurt and fruit.

"We have a big new resource center," explained Johnson, describing a gymnasium with a basketball court and a main room with a pool table, foosball and video game setup.

Here, students stop in after school to get their homework done during "power hour," then can reward themselves with a snack. After that comes a bit of Rock Band or Guitar Hero video games. Madden Football is also popular, but don't expect to find

SEE CLEANUP, PAGE 2

Cleanup

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

violent games like Streetfighter.

There's also a computer lab to help with the homework or surf the 'Net, though there are strict rules about that. Plus, clubs meet there, too.

The first part of the afternoon has more activities for the younger set. By about 5 p.m., the older crowd moves in.

"On a regular afternoon, about 60 (students) come and go," Johnson said.

There were about half that at Mokauea during the most recent field trip, however.

Back at the fishpond, a dreadlocked Christine Everett, who has served as program coordinator for 14 years, called to a young man with loppers to take a break. Half the tree came up the shore with him as Daniel Vaina, 17, made his way to a tree stump to take a load off and chat.

No one who ever saw him would be surprised to learn that Daniel, a senior at Farrington, is a football player. Tight end. He's been at the Teen Program since he was 8.

It hasn't been easy to stay out of trouble for some of Daniel's pals. And a little trouble has found its way to him, too, on occasion, but the young Catholic who attends St. John the Baptist in Kalihi with his parents is glad for the Teen Program.

"It's safe, and they help out a lot," he said.

And he's happy for the Saturday field trip: "I'd have nothing to do at home except clean house."

Reach Mary Kaye Ritz at mritz@honoluluadvertiser.com or 525-8035.



REBECCA BREYER | The Advertiser

Kathleen Labuguen, 13, of Kalihi, at work on Mokauea Island.