Nonprofit Beautifies Beach Park
Bob Ress and Lori Lloyd were among volunteers at a recent workday. SEE PG. 2

FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 24, 2017

Aikahi Students Help Create A Healthy Climate

A group of Aikahi Elementary fifth-graders spent a recent Saturday morning hard at work helping to preserve Hamakua Marsh in Kailua. Students, along with their families and Aikahi teachers, replanted native plants, set up an irrigation system that they had designed themselves in science class, and covered the area with mulch and cardboard for weed control.

The workday was part of a reforestation effort spearheaded by nonprofit Healthy Climate Communities in collaboration with the state Department of Forestry and Wildlife. The marsh is a wildlife sanctuary that protects four species of native birds.

"Hamakua Marsh is an ideal location for many reasons. In terms of fighting climate change, the trees planted will not be cleared for development," explained Healthy Climates Communities founder Dr. Lisa Marten. "Also, having so many people develop a sense of ownership for this place will make them likely to protect it, which is important because Hamakua Marsh, like all wetlands, stores large quantities of carbon in its soil."

Plus, she adds, the project also provides students a chance to learn about the history of the marsh, and an opportunity to observe the birds that frequent the area. Other area elementary schools, including Lanikai, Kainalu, Enchanted Lakes, Kaelepulu, Mokapu, St. Anthony's, St. John Vianney and Le Jardin Academy, also

Dr. Lisa Marten and Aikahi fifth-grade students gather mulch to use for weed prevention at Hamakua Marsh as a part of Healthy Climate Communities' reforestation project. PHOTO BY ERIN FISHER PHOTOGRAPHY.
Marsh Project Seeks To Preserve Native Plants And Wildlife

Kailua understand what causes climate change, the problems it leads to, and what they can do to solve it before they graduate from elementary school,” Marten said. “For these students and the general community, our goal is to have them make changes that will reduce their own emissions and to speak out in the state legislature to push for larger structural changes that will reduce everyone’s emissions.

“For everyone who helps at the marsh, the goal is to have them connect to an amazing resource that is right here and to develop a connection and sense of ownership that will move them to protect this place and other natural places.”

For more information, visit healthyclimatecommunities.org.

(Above) Volunteers lay down a layer of cardboard and mulch to keep the weeds from growing at the planting site; (top left) Aikahi students plant `ahu`awa and (top right) clear invasive weeds. PHOTOS BY ERIN FISHER PHOTOGRAPHY.