

Hawaii 24/7

Kona Student Joins Leadership Summit on Martha's Vineyard

July 15, 2011



Taylor Wainani Traub served as a youth delegate to the Stone Soup Leadership Institute 7th Annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development. It was held June 18-24 on the island of Martha's Vineyard at the Captain Flanders Inn.

Traub, of Kona, was nominated by the West Hawaii Exploratory Academy PCS Green Team Advisor Ben Duke and the One Island Sustainability Center.

This is the first year a Hawaiian youth delegate has attended the Institute's Youth Leadership Summit. Other island youth delegates include Jamaica, Nantucket, Vieques, Puerto Rico, Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands as well as Martha's Vineyard.

Youth are nominated by their schools or non-profit organizations because of their service to their community and their leadership potential.

During this weeklong intensive leadership training program, delegates (ages 15-22) envision their personal, professional, community and planetary goals, and develop action plans to implement sustainable development projects. The Institute's faculty includes people featured in the book and educational curriculum, "Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes."

This year's Youth Summit featured key issues and speakers on sustainable agriculture: Sidney Morris, The Farm Institute and Noli Taylor, Island Grown Schools and the grandson of the great Latino hero, Cesar Chavez who is featured in the Institute's book. Sustainable business: Johnny Cupcakes and Rubin Cronig; sustainable business, Ben Kelley, Building Shelter Inc. and Cultural Sustainability.

Sustainable Island presentations were made by island youth delegates. Everyone was impressed with Traub's presentation on West Hawaii Exploratory Academy and on innovative sustainable development projects on the Big Island.

Alex Perkins and Will Horyn, co-founders of Sustainable Nantucket Club, shared how they organized the building of a windmill at their high school.

Feliza Fenty, co-founder of the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative spoke of the Environmental Stewards program teaching local children about endangered sea turtles while snorkeling, many for the first time in their lives.

Josue Cruz, co-founder of the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative presented VYLI's 2020 Report on Sustainable Development. The first winner of the Walter Cronkite Award in 2010, this year he served as the Youth Leadership Summit Director.

Prior to the Youth Leadership Summit, delegates complete an application asking them to express their dreams for their life, their island and the world.

During the summit, they work along side other youth delegates, including previous graduates who share their progress towards their five-year action plans.



Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative graduates made presentations on their year-round programs including their Job Shadow Day, Business Internship, College Preparation and Field Trips and Cultural Health.

MVYLI artisan business youth Courtney Minnehan led the Sustainable Business project with Beads for Life, to support impoverished women in Uganda while supporting their own college dreams.

"Since my mother was the site manager and care taker of the Oceanic Institute's Kailua-Kona facility, I was immersed in aquaculture from the moment I was born," Traub said in her application. "She carried me to work daily as she took care of running a shrimp and fish maturation, hatchery and grow out facilities. As I got older I helped to catch, weigh and count shrimp during harvests. Being raised at an aquaculture facility I naturally embraced the aquaculture-agriculture based curriculum at West Hawaii Explorations Academy."

Traub has been a member of the WHEA Reef Teach research project educating snorkelers at Kahaluu Bay on the importance and fragility of coral. She presented this project at the Annual Hawaii State Science Fair and won the Hawaii Conservation Alliance (HCA) Award for

presenting the project most related to the protection, maintenance, and restoration of Hawaii's Biodiversity.

"I am a 'green' enthusiast and would love to learn what other people my age are doing in their communities to be more sustainable," Traub said. "I would like to share with others how the Hawaiian culture is very much influenced by its environment and how much the Hawaiian people love their aina (land)."

She got her wish: on the first day of the Youth Summit, delegates participated in a Sustainable Vineyard Tour to see some of island's 27 farms, green building projects, shellfish hatchery as well as Eco-Tourism Adventures to experience the island's beauty and fragility.

The first stop was at Lucy Vincent Beach, where author Marianne Larned found the original "magic stone" that inspired her to write the book and found the Institute.

Since it Traub's first experience of the Atlantic Ocean, her first act was to pay her respects before finding her "magic stone." She then taught youth delegates the importance of this practice.

"At the Youth Summit I met people with inspiring stories that really made me realize what one person can accomplish. I've met leaders of the future. I feel I am a part of a network of people who have and will continue to bring change to their communities and eventually to the world," Traub said.

"I now understand that in this world it's also who you know that gets things done. MVYLI youth inspired me to be a leader in my community," she said. "They made me realize my full potential."

Martha's Vineyard Commission mapmaker Chris Seidel worked with MVYLI youth leader Emma HallBilsback and her team to develop the Sustainable Vineyard Map. HallBilsback is the MVYLI youth representative to Massachusetts Governor's Youth Council.

On July 17, she will make a presentation at the 2nd Annual Walter Cronkite Awards Ceremony. In September, she will present it to Town of Tisbury Selectmen, as part of the federal Green Communities Plan.

In November, she will travel to Hawaii to join Traub and Cruz at the APEC (Asian Pacific Economic Council) meeting to share their vision a more sustainable world and invite business and world leaders to support their projects.

"The Annual Youth Leadership Summit provides a unique opportunity for young leaders committed to finding innovative solutions to our environmental challenges, to gather and exchange ideas," Gov. Deval Patrick said. "With a focus in sustainable building, sustainable economics, cultural sustainability, and sustainable agriculture, this year's Vineyard Youth Summit will continue to tackle the most difficult problems our world community faces."

Learn more:

Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative mvyli.org