

Hawaii 24/7

Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative Launches

December 16, 2011



The Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative was launched Wednesday, Dec. 14 at the West Hawaii Civic Center.

Hosted by Hawaii County Council member Angel Pilago, he invited Monica Pilimai Traub and her daughter Wainani to first share a Hawaiian chant and blessing.

Pilago spoke of the significance of the canoe to the Hawaiian people. He said Wainani and her mother helped build the canoe Hokulea.

“These gourds helped people navigate their course,” he explained as he held them. “Wainani is our new young navigator.”

Wainani shared her experience of being the first Hawaiian youth delegate to the Youth Leadership Summit on Martha’s Vineyard and then speaking at the APEC Voices of the Future Summit in Oahu.

“I felt such a responsibility,” she said. “I was speaking not just myself but for all Hawaiian youth as well as for all the many other young people with the same vision.”

As a parent, Mrs. Traub spoke of watching her daughter blossom into a young leader.

“As the site manager and care taker of the Oceanic Institute’s Kailua-Kona facility, Wainani was immersed in aquaculture from the moment she was born,” she said. “She attended a Hawaiian Immersion School and has been immersed in cultural practices relating to traditional farming and fishing throughout her life.”

Wainani's teacher Ben Duke nominated her to serve as the youth delegate.

"As teachers we aim to provide students with support and help them identify resources in the community to make this possible," he said. "The real story here is the creation of a youth-led organization to unite young people around the goal of sustainability. On behalf of the West Hawaii Explorations Academy, I would like to express the school's excitement about collaborating with the Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative."

During the last few months, WHEA's Green Team have had weekly sessions to develop the pilot program. Young artists Wainani and her friend Ashley Mulvihill designed the beautiful logo.

The Green Team helped produce a video sharing their dreams for their lives, their island and the world. They invited other youth to join SHYLI whose mission is to inspire young people to envision, plan and create a more sustainable future for their lives, their island and the world.

The video was premiered at the event with WHEA youth Ashley, Ivana, Skyla and Wainani celebrating. They especially enjoyed meeting the guests.

"Thank you the people there had great opportunities," Ashley said.

Honored guests included from the Department of Education, Kona Chamber of Commerce's Kuleana Committee, Hawaii Workforce Development, Friends of NEHLA, One Island, Recycle Hawaii, Ke Ola Magazine, West Hawaii Today, county Sustainability Coordinator and Recycling Specialist and residents.

The aloha spirit was alive as people offered their dreams and their support. Sue Aronson shared her birthday request to her husband 10 years ago -- to create what is now the Kuleana Committee at the Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce.

"It was a joy to meet all of you," she said. "You are a true blessing for our community."

"It was so great to be part of the launch of this amazing program on the Big Island," Barbara Garcia, Publisher, Ke Ola Magazine. "I'm really grateful -- it gives me a lot of hope for our future."

"Good job!" said Lori Sasaki, Hawaii Workforce Development Division. "I will be forwarding this article to two of the youth agencies that we work with to students who would be interested."

"The new youth leadership initiative is very powerful and timely," said Joan Ocean. "I think it will touch many people who have felt (as I have) the frustration of trying to assist the young people in a world that mostly is unaware of all they have to offer, all their intelligence and natural good sense. Thank you for honoring that."

Stone Soup Leadership Institute Executive Director Marianne Larned shared the history, progress and plans for the coming year.

"It's been an honor to work with Wainani and learn from her," Larned said. "Her presentation at the Youth Leadership Summit on Hawaii's innovative sustainability initiatives was very inspiring. The Big Island is certainly one of the world's leaders among islands."

The Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative is a local branch of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute. The Institute is a 501c3 non-profit organization that develops educational tools and trains island youth to envision, plan and create a more sustainable future.

Founded in 1997 on the island of Martha's Vineyard, the Institute's educational curriculum Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes prepare young people to address economic, environmental and social challenges of the 21st century.

Other island youth leadership initiatives are located on Martha's Vineyard, Vieques, Puerto Rico and Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands.

For the New Year an ongoing program is being launched with young people from across the Big Island. The first meeting is Jan. 4.

SHYLI's Leadership Training with the Institute's faculty is Wednesday, Jan. 11 and the first Sustainable Hawaii Tour on Friday, Jan. 13. All Hawaii youth (high school/college) are invited to attend our first meeting.

Find out more:

Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative shyli.org