

Hawaii 24/7

Sustainable Hawaii's Youth Leadership Summit inspires solutions

August 6, 2013



The 9th Annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development was held from June 22 to 28. The Summit inspires, educates and empowers young people to take initiative in their lives and on their island.

The program is part of the Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative (SHYLI) and is organized by the Stone Soup Leadership Institute and Martha's Vineyard. The SHYLI's local partner is the Na Wai Iwi Ola Foundation whose mission is to preserve Hawaiian culture, language and practices.

This year's summit was dedicated to Nelson Mandela. Each day was assigned a leadership theme: connection, intention, joy, commitment, compassion, and courage. Youth delegates represented 16 countries and U.S. States.

Six Hawaii youth (ages 14 to 18) were nominated by schools, non-profit organizations, and community leaders to serve as delegates. Three of the six youth attended the summit.

During the weeklong intensive leadership training youth envisioned their personal, professional, island and planetary goals. The youth delegates career aspirations range from dermatologist to pastry chef.

Youth began with a reflective walk on Lucy Vincent Beach, where Alex Siordia led a Hawaiian chant to honor Mother Earth. Everyone silently found a "magic stone" and then designed a beach mural that represented all island youth delegates.

The Summit featured Skype video sessions: Trevor Tanaka shared his successful journey with a Sustainable Education Resolution. Hawaiian youth thanked Ian Kitajima from Oceanit for the sponsorship of their flights.

Then delegates took a Sustainable Vineyard Tour. Hawaii's youth met sustainability leaders including American Indian Wampanoag entrepreneur at Orange Peel Bakery, award winning organic groundskeeper at Vineyard Golf Course, business owner at Cronig's Market Solar Project, homeowner at green low-income community at Eliakim's Way and Thimble Farm whose 5-year plan is to feed the Island's school children.

On Sunday, youth paddled kayaks to learn about the fragile beauty of the Island's waters with the Trustees of the Reservation at Cape Poge Wildlife Refuge. They finished with lunch at the Chappaquiddick Community Center.

By learning first-hand about these green projects, Hawaii's youth were inspired to develop their Sustainability-In-Action Projects.

Youth learned about global issues and sustainability initiatives from around the world. Alex Frost, former Sustainability & Resource Coordinator for Hawaii County shared best sustainability practices from Hawaii and the global islands Island of Wight, England, El Hierro Island, Spain, New Zealand and Iceland.

Boston University graduate student Ben Thompson inspired youth by describing how the 350.org's Fossil Fuel Divestiture Campaign encourages colleges to build on the successful anti-apartheid movement divestiture movement.

Emily Nuss described how she raised resources for Kids to Kids – a program she founded in the 6th grade to help children in Dominican Republic and Rwanda, Africa.

Signe Benjamin shared the Vineyard Conservation Society's goal of encouraging people to have "Vineyard lawns" to reduce the use of chemicals that pollute our lakes.

Kaila Binney showed how Island Grown Schools ties school gardens into a classroom curriculum so youth learn to garden and promote the locally grown food movement.

After listening to these presentations, youth delegates participated in a roundtable discussion about sustainable practices in the world today.

Ideas included buying local foods; growing foods; buying smart, being aware and spreading awareness; encouraging less packaging; reducing paper at school; riding bikes and taking the bus; conserving energy; reusing clothes; promoting electric cars; creating a Pinterest for Do It Yourself projects; and supporting 350.org's Fossil Fuel Divestiture Campaign.

When Alex Frost asked the question: "How do we make green living affordable?" youth reflected on the importance of inviting those who have more resources to adopt green lifestyles (electric cars, solar panels, etc.) and to invest in green projects and companies building a sustainable world.

Mickie Hirata, a Youth Delegate, said, "The Summit presentations taught me that using your personal passions can help a community, island, and the world into being sustainable."

Youth delegates were asked to envision the steps towards their dreams – from one to five years – for their personal, professional, and island dreams. They were encouraged to think about who

they would like to invite to be on their Sustainability-In-Action Project teams – and which mentors might be supportive and strategic to their success.

Each afternoon, youth worked with seasoned leaders and college students to explore their dreams.

Three Sustainability-in-Action projects included a vineyard map, a cultural sustainability project, and a technology initiative.

The Sustainable Vineyard Map will spotlight sustainable businesses on the island.

The Cultural Sustainability Project is organizing a Multicultural Festival to showcase island- and world-wide diversity.

The Institute's Sustainable Islands Technology Initiative helps youth stay connected to other delegates at: stonesoupleadership.org

“These future leaders will be of great value to our island communities as we seek ways to preserve and integrate our unique culture with a complex modern world,” Mayor Billy Kenoi said. “It is particularly important for our isolated island communities to embrace the concept of sustainability.

“We extend a warm aloha to all the delegates and wish them great success as they embark on this journey toward a more secure future for their islands and the rest of the world.”

Learn more:

Sustainable Hawai'i Youth Leadership Initiative shyli.org

Stone Soup Leadership Institute stonesoupleadership.org