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NEWS RELEASE

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FARM TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE PILOT PROJECT DEVELOPS RECIPES WITH MORE FRESH FOOD

Students participate in taste testings to create an experimental school menu that includes more local produce

HONOLULU — The Lieutenant Governor's pilot project for the Farm to School Initiative is well underway in the Hawaii State Department of Education's (HIDOE) Kohala Complex on the island of Hawaii. Chef Greg Christian, president and founder of Beyond Green Sustainable Food Partners has been selected to work with Cafeteria Manager Priscilla Galan and her staff to bring delicious local, fresh scratch-cooked food to students.

Chef Greg and Cafeteria Manager Galan have been working to develop recipes that incorporate more fresh food that kids both love and are familiar with into the daily menu as well as revamping favorites such as pizza and kalua pig with cabbage.

Taste testings on the experimental menu based on recipes co-created by the cafeteria staff and Chef Greg are conducted daily at the Kohala Complex schools. Some dishes that a number of classes have taste tested include a new pizza recipe, pork adobo with ulu/garlic crisp, chicken adobo sliders with green papaya, and more. Produce for the experimental menu is being sourced from various local farms and markets.

"We are excited to be working with the Kohala Elementary, Middle, and High schools in bringing more local home-style cooked meals into the cafeteria," said Chef Greg.

"The integration of locally produced foods into the lunches of area schools is a wonderful way to connect students with their farming community," said Scott Enright, Chairperson of the Hawaii Board of Agriculture. "When students are exposed to Hawaii's farm fresh agricultural products and learn to appreciate the taste and freshness, they will help the State grow the demand for local agricultural commodities."

Along with creating a menu, Chef Greg, and his team are also collecting data, analyzing costs, inventory and purchasing systems as well analyzing kitchen staff efficiencies versus inefficiencies, among other things.

"This is a significant step forward for the Farm to School Initiative," said Lt. Governor Shan Tsutsui, who spearheads the initiative. "It took many years to get to this stage, especially for our many community stakeholders, such as The Kohala Center, who had already been working on bringing more local food to our school menus."

The goal of the initiative is to positively influence the relationship our keiki have with their food and the aina by increasing breakfast and lunch participation, boosting the purchase of locally grown food for school meals, and cultivating connections between our schools and local agricultural communities.

In early November, Lt. Governor Tsutsui, HIDOE, Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA), State Procurement Office (SPO) and The Kohala Center (TKC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to allow for policy to be created to guide Farm to School activities in all HIDOE schools, including but not limited to purchasing locally grown food and ingredients, menu modifications, kitchen staff training on scratch-cooking, food waste, and growing food for cafeteria use, among other key components. This pilot program tests localized purchasing and seeks to change the way food is purchased, prepared and delivered.

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“This pilot is an exciting opportunity for the Hawaii State Department of Education where we prioritize purchasing local products as a food resource,” said Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi. “We look forward to learning from this collaborative initiative that is focused on our Kohala schools in hopes of bringing it to more schools across the state.”

While executing farm to school strategies that improve student nutrition, supports local businesses and expands agricultural career opportunities for our students, the pilot project will serve as a learning laboratory that conceptualizes a statewide farm to school program within the DOE by December 2018. This project reaffirms the state’s commitment to improving student wellness and aims to further invigorate Hawaii’s agricultural communities. The next phase of the project will begin next school year in a larger school complex area on Maui island.

“The pilot project is an opportunity to test innovations in school food preparation, menu development, and buying fresh, local food to improve child nutrition,” said Anna-Lisa Okoye, chief operating officer of The Kohala Center. “By transitioning to student-approved, scratched-cooked meals, the pilot will enhance the quality, nutrition, and taste of school meals while also supporting local agriculture. We appreciate the farm to school advocates from the public and private sectors who have made this pilot possible.”

Across the nation, farm-to-school programs are reconnecting students to a better understanding of the food system and where their food comes from. Farm to school programs introduce students to healthier eating habits and help them become familiar with new vegetables and fruits that they and their families will then be more willing to incorporate into their own diets.

The Farm to School Initiative is a public-private partnership with the Lt. Governor’s office, HDOA, Hawaii State Department of Health, HDOE, Dorrance Family Foundation, Hawaii Appleseed, Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, The Kohala Center and Ulupono Initiative.

For more information, go to <http://ltgov.hawaii.gov/farm-to-school-initiative/>

Photos Courtesy: Office of the Lt. Governor

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