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**MĀLAMA LEARNING CENTER AND DUPONT PIONEER
BREAK GROUND ON A HAWAIIAN CULTURAL GARDEN**

Outdoor classroom will provide plants to local hālau

Kunia, O‘ahu – November 2, 2014 – Mālama Learning Center, Hālau ‘O Kaululaua‘e and DuPont Pioneer today held a blessing ceremony at a garden site that will be used to teach area students how to propagate native and traditional plant materials, which will be harvested for lei making and cultural activities.

“This garden will enable us to engage our young people in hands-on approaches to learn about conservation of their environment and their culture, promoting sustainable living to the next generation,” said Pauline Sato, executive and program director, Mālama Learning Center. “We are very grateful to DuPont Pioneer for making the land available to us and generously offering to help us and our partners care for the garden.” She added, “In times like this when there are strong and conflicting opinions on different forms of agriculture, we don’t take sides but rather want to work together on a positive project that serves a community need.”

The nearly one-acre garden will give life to approximately 600 plants of about 20 species, including ‘a‘a‘li‘i, ‘uki ‘uki, kukui, kī (ti), and plumeria, which are frequently used by hālau hula and native Hawaiian cultural practitioners. The plants were grown by the Mālama Learning Center and students at Kapolei High School. A local hālau hula based in Kapolei will volunteer to plant and care for the garden, and then gather the plant materials it needs for its performances.

“Historically, hālau hula have looked to the natural areas around them to gather flowers, leaves, and ferns for lei making and other cultural practices,” said kumu hula Miki‘ala Kanekoa of Hālau ‘O Kaululaua‘e. “Today, these materials have become difficult to find and can be quite expensive to purchase, creating a heavy burden for our hula families.

“The native plants cultivated in this garden will help us reconnect with the traditional gathering practices of our ancestors by providing easily accessible materials in a safe environment for our young dancers,” Kanekoa continued. “We are very grateful for the opportunity to be part of this wonderful program.”

“We are pleased to be able to make a contribution to the community that will produce bountiful harvests for years to come,” said Mark Stoutemyer, site manager, DuPont

Pioneer Kunia Research Center. “Once proven successful, we hope to replicate this garden concept at our other locations on O‘ahu and Kaua‘i.”

Today’s blessing ceremony included a traditional native Hawaiian blessing and chants by cultural practitioner Sam ‘Ohukani‘ōhia Gon, III. Members of Hālau ‘O Kaululaua‘e celebrated with a hula about water and the vibrant life cycle of our natural resources.

About Mālama Learning Center

Mālama Learning Center (MLC) is a private non-profit organization focused on teaching and inspiring communities to create healthy living environments. MLC does this by bringing art, science, conservation, and culture together through education to promote sustainable living throughout Hawai‘i. MLC largely serves West O‘ahu communities and has developed a strong partnership with Kapolei High School since its inception.

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