

LCPCS Adds Compost Area to Garden Complex



Leroy Jose, Justin Jose, Jessica Jose and Kayla Andrade work on the new compost yard fencing.

As part of its thriving agriculture program, LCPCS has recently added a large compost yard up by the school garden. On Earth Day, which is April 27, LCPCS 'ohana will be invited to come up and take a look at the new composting area, along with the garden, the greenhouse, and some other interesting improvements.

"We're practicing organic agriculture," said Jenny Bach, the school Farm to School Program coordinator, "and composting is a major component in organic gardening." But the first thing garden educator Donna Mitts noticed when she arrived on campus several years ago was a lack of composting capability. So she and Ms. Bach applied for a grant from the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, and received \$1,000.

Enter Dave Molenaar, a community member and regular LCPCS supporter who was instrumental in pulling together supplies and labor to fence the LCPCS cow pasture (Hilo-side of the school campus). Mr. Molenaar donated the hog wire for the compost yard, and brought in posts left over from the cattle pasture fencing effort. Grant funding paid for weed barrier cloth, gates, miscellaneous wire, and some dozer work by Patrick Burke, grandparent of an LCPCS student.

Next, Ms. Mitts, Mr. Molenaar and LCPCS students laid down the weed matting. Then, Laupāhoehoe alumnus Leroy Jose, his son Justin (also a Laupāhoehoe grad), his daughter Jessica, Jessica's friend Kayla Andrade and Mr. Molenaar spent a Saturday putting up the fence. (The missile alert made things a little exciting for awhile.) "Those guys were just great, they volunteered their Saturday," said Mr. Molenaar about the Jose contingent. The whole effort is "a story about team work, community effort, and alumni getting involved and helping to inspire others," he continued.

Organic waste from the school garden, pre-meal vegetable waste from the school kitchen, banana leaves and leftovers from cooking classes and the school vegetable/fruit snack program will make up the compost, which will be organized in windrows. The great thing is that not only will the compost be used to provide nutrition to plants in the garden, it will serve as



The 4th grade gathers in front of some compost in the new compost yard.

a foundation for some serious science. Students will be learning about microbes, pH, carbon/nitrogen/moisture and oxygen balance, aerobic vs. anaerobic conditions, and the role of fungus, bacteria and invertebrates in composting. In fact, lessons on composting are incorporated in the Common Core Next Generation Science Standards.

“A significant amount of waste in our local landfills [is] food waste,” said Ms. Bach. “Unfortunately, landfill waste never really decomposes.” During the Earth Day celebration at LCPCS on April 27, Ms. Bach and Ms. Mitts will lead an explanation for parents on how to build a simple home compost system, and how to use worms to help break down the compost. See you there!

LCPCS is once again asking for help in collecting the Box Tops for Education labels that appear on so many items we purchase every day. It is such an easy way to raise money for the school!!

You can either clip out the label the old fashioned way (see tips below) or you can download the Box Top for Education app on your smartphone, and scan the receipt on which the item(s) appears. The school's reward will go directly to the school account. Download the app at: <http://www.boxtops4education.com/offers>. (You will find the link on the LCPCS.org website in the article on Box Tops under the Announcements tab.)

If you want to submit your Box Tops the old fashioned way, here are a few things you can do to make it easier for school staff.

- *Check the expiration dates on your Box Tops and make sure they are current.*
- *Make sure the expiration date and full product code are visible.*
- *Send your Box Tops to school on a collection sheets (available at <http://bit.ly/2Ahv31H>: again, on the website) or in bundles of 50. If you don't have 50 Box Tops, just put your stragglers in a baggie and label it with the number of Box Tops within.*

Thanks for helping to make our school's Box Tops program a success!



Seasider Spotlight



Donna Mitts

Donna Mitts works with the Hawai'i Island School Garden Network, a program sponsored by the Kohala Center. From that base, she works extensively with three different schools on the windward side of the Big Island, including LCPCS. In addition, she holds vermiculture workshops (that's that whole worm and composting thing), and during the rest of her time, she's a professional farmer, raising asparagus and mixed orchard crops on her Pa'auilo farm.

Ms. Mitts has lived in Pa'auilo since 1989, and raised two sons there. When the boys were in elementary school, Ms. Mitts volunteered to start the Pa'auilo School garden, and ended up staying 12 years before moving on to the Kohala Center. LCPCS thanks her for bringing her knowledge and enthusiasm to its students!