



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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KAUMUALI'I ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STEPS IT UP

LIHU'E – The Department of Health (DOH) is encouraging adults to “Step It Up” by walking at least 30 minutes a day. For children, the U.S. Surgeon General recommends at least 60 minutes of physical activity, five days a week. The kids at King Kaumuali'i Elementary School on Kaua'i have taken this message to heart by participating in a DOH pilot program that encourages kids to walk during recess and lunch recess times when they might normally be sitting.

The walking program called “Step it Up @ School” has King Kaumuali'i's 525 students logging the number of times they walk around the school's designated quarter-mile track. For every two-and-a-half miles (the equivalent of 10 times around the track) they earn a shoe shaped token that says “Start Living Healthy.” Teachers award students with different colored tokens depending on the number of miles the students have walked. The students are eager to earn the entire collection of rainbow-colored tokens. To do this, students will have to walk 20 miles in five weeks, which means walking about a mile a day, every school day till the end of the year. All levels, kindergarten through fifth grade, are participating in the five-week program.

“King Kaumuali'i School is helping students start healthy habits at a young age,” stated Director of Health Chiyome Fukino, M.D. “Walking is a simple and enjoyable activity children can do beyond the program and into their adult years.”

The project has built momentum and Kaumuali'i teachers, support staff, administrators and food service workers have joined the students in their walks around the track. Mrs. Maribel Gali's fifth grade class is determined to meet their goal of walking 20 miles in five weeks. They have started walking in the morning before school starts.

"Step It Up @ School has really brought out the best in our students and staff," explained Principal Karen Liu. "Kids that never took a leadership role before are now taking the lead in encouraging their classmates to walk. It is such a wonderful feeling to see our students being excited about something that is so good for them."

Community members are joining the walking movement too. Guest walker Ron Wiley DJ from KONG radio joined Kaumuali'i students at a special after-school walk at Peter Rayno Park and did a live radio feed.

"Walking has been a great way of bringing people together", stated teacher Devi Berg. "The students and staff are walking together. Our walking track is full of smiles."

Lt. Gov. James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr., who is leading a public education campaign to encourage residents to "Step It Up" and to live healthy lifestyles, applauded efforts by the King Kaumuali'i School to make students more health conscious.

"In addition to the health benefits of regular exercise, research has shown that kids who are physically fit sleep better and are better able to handle the physical and emotional challenges that a typical day presents -- be that running to catch a bus, bending down to tie a shoe, or studying for a test," Lt. Governor Aiona said.

This week King Kaumuali'i Elementary School wrapped up the school year and the successful pilot of Step It Up @ School.

The Step It Up @ School program is a component of the DOH's health promotion campaign called Start Living Healthy that encourages Hawai'i's residents to be more physically active, eat healthy, and live tobacco free. For more ideas on how to live a healthy lifestyle visit www.healthyhawaii.com.

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Photo of students and teachers walking online at <http://picasaweb.google.com/HawaiiDOH/PhotosForDOHPressReleases>.

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