

# 'That's why we're Rotarians'

Program highlights Hanalei Bay club's contributions, commitment to public schools



Some of the Rotary Club of Hanalei Bay Angels and Sponsors, from left, Rick Gerding, Ric Cox, Michael Dexter-Smith, Jonathan McRoberts, John Young, Ai Hashigiwa and Chick Lanphier gather after the Rotary meeting Thursday.

The Garden Island, Feb. 16, 2014, Bill Buley

**Since the January 2013** launching of the Adopt a Classroom program, the Rotary Club of Hanalei Bay has raised \$227,000 for schools. That's a whole lot of money that's had a huge impact on Hanalei Elementary School and Kilauea School. But the club's influence stretches far beyond the financial gifts.



"More than just a monetary contribution, this program was a lesson for every student at our school," said Jessica Kerber (center), technology coordinator at Hanalei Elementary. "It showed them they are surrounded by a community that loves and supports them."

Kerber, speaking at the Rotary Club of Hanalei Bay luncheon Thursday at the St. Regis Princeville Resort, said students and staff have been "blown away" with the fact that people they had never met were willing to donate not just money, but time, too. "For some kids, this act of caring and generosity will make all the difference in the world," Kerber added. "You are helping kids reach their potential."

About 75 people attended the presentation, which, fitting on that day before Valentine's Day, was entitled, "We Love Our Schools!" No doubt, the Hanalei Bay Rotary Club and its members love local schools.

Of the \$227,000 the club has donated to schools, roughly \$90,000 was spent by teachers at a half-dozen participating schools for supplies and field trips for their students. Another \$73,000 was, or will be, used to buy iPads

for the schools at Kilauea and Hanalei and \$62,000 will be used to provide a new Reading Wonders curriculum at Kilauea. Funds have also gone for books, a digital camera, a DVD player, magazine subscriptions and prizes.

Rotarians have also spent time in classrooms. In the past year, 40 volunteers spent hundreds of hours working with students in three North Shore schools. "Whether we are sharpening pencils, grading papers, struggling to explain complex concepts or just encouraging a discouraged student, our message is clear: 'We care about you,'" said Rotarian Ric Cox. He said 175 individuals contributed money, time or both.

Angels like Rotarian Rick Gerding were glad to do all they could for students and teachers. If it means providing money for pencils and paper, so be it. If it means working one-on-one with a student, they'll do it. "We're trying. In this big world of ours, that's the best we can do. That's why we're Rotarians," he said. "It's really a crime in this day and age our teachers don't have everything they need to take care of the kids," Gerding added.

Rotarian Jonathan McRoberts sponsors two classrooms at Kilauea School. He said he wanted to do what he could to ensure students receive a quality public education. He was concerned that more people who can afford it are sending their children to private schools. The success of public schools, he said, is critical to the country's future. "I just don't want to see this segregation of our society get worse and worse," McRoberts said.

Mayor Bernard Carvalho Jr. said the Rotarians' efforts are a model for the rest of the country. "You guys are rocking and rolling," he said, smiling.

Cox praised Hanalei Bay Rotarians for their commitment to local schools and providing the best public education possible. "Without those of you in this room, Adopt a Classroom would be nothing more than an idea," he said. The program has become a tremendous success.

Of the 31 classrooms available for adoption this year, 13 at Kilauea, 18 at Hanalei, all but four at Hanalei had been adopted again — most by the individuals or businesses that adopted them last year. By the end of Thursday's presentation, the final four were adopted, no surprise to Cox. "With your support, it has become a powerful force for good in our community and one of the most successful programs in the 20-year history in the Rotary Club of Hanalei Bay," he said.



Sherry Gonsalves (left), principal at Kilauea School, thanked the club for going above and beyond in their support for students and staff. "While the teachers are provided with additional funds to purchase classroom supplies, another huge gain comes from the positive impact a volunteer has on the life of a child," she said. "These relationships are priceless."

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