

A History of the Partnership of the Lani-Kailua Outdoor Circle and the Windward Community Correctional Center

In 1999, The Lani-Kailua Outdoor Circle (LKOC) received a call from John Kellam, then warden of the Windward Community Correctional Center (WCCC) who told us of the abandoned nursery and how he had wanted to give the offenders horticulture classes but hadn't been able to convince DPS (Dept. of Public Safety) to do it. Carol Ann Ellett, the then chairperson of LKOC's beautification committee, went to meet with the warden and then wrote the head of DPS and their Education Program Manager for six months before getting a reply.

This was the start of the Environmental Sciences Vocational Training Program. A curriculum was developed so that the women would get college credits for their classes given by college faculty and accompanied by work in the renovated nursery. LKOC invested \$2,000 initially and 2 grants provided the rest of the required equipment, library books, etc. The Garden Club of Honolulu provided an additional \$13,000 grant. Thus began the enduring relationship of LKOC with WCCC that has been maintained for the past 19 years.

As of 2018 The Outdoor Circle (TOC) is a 106 year old statewide non-profit environmental organization dedicated to keeping Hawai'i clean, green and beautiful. The Lani-Kailua Outdoor Circle (LKOC) is the largest of 9 branches statewide, with over 200 members.

Since its formation in 1948, dedicated LKOC members have actively spearheaded:

- Beautification projects throughout Kailua, which involve planting and maintenance of trees and other landscaping, along public streets, school grounds, parks and in our neighborhoods
- Protecting, preserving, and restoring the Kawainui and Hamakua Marshes, where we actively pursue cleanup of the Army Corps of Engineers Ponds
- Instituting a scholarship program at Windward Community College (since 1993) through which deserving students in the fields of agriculture and environmental sciences receive financial aid in the form of scholarships.
- Fostering outreach projects to educate the next generate of stewards of our 'aina through our Learning To Grow and Community Service Work Line projects.

LKOC currently supports two very successful projects with upwards of 300 inmates involved since inception. This unique partnership includes: 1) the Community Service Work-Line (CSWL), and 2) the Learning to Grow (LTG) project. Both projects have provided valuable contributions to Windward O'ahu.

1. Community Service Work-Line (CSWL). Since 1999 this project provides inmates to maintain public areas in Windward O'ahu. Initially a Work Line of inmates was set up for Kailua Beach and LKOC provided lunch. The warden wanted the women to be part of the community so the areas were extended in 2000. Today these areas include: Kailua Road median, from St. John Lutheran Church to Oneawa Street, Alala Point plantings at the entrance to Lanikai, Pohakapu

Fountain landscape, Kawainui Marsh and Hamakua Marsh. They also maintain the LTG grounds around the hydroponic system and garden nursery.

- WCCC provides lunch for inmates and adult correctional officers
- LKOC provides training, equipment, equipment repairs, ongoing materials, and lunches (a HKL Castle Foundation Grant provided for a recent purchase of weed whackers).

The Work Line goes out with a crew of 10 for 4 hours, 5 times a month which comes to 200-woman hours per month. LKOC as an organization saves a lot it can then put into new public plantings maintenance two traffic triangles in Kailua. Imagine paying for lunch and tools for 200 hours a month as opposed to the going rate for landscaper's maintenance crews.

Because LKOC would save a lot it could use for more public plantings and maintenance, we wanted to balance the scale and give back to WCCC. The opportunity presented itself to refurbish an abandoned nursery on the WCCC grounds, which we did--with the help of the WCCC women. (Picture them tearing down a jungle of Ivy Gourd vines.)

2. Learning to Grow (LTG). Since 2008 LKOC has sponsored this project where inmates built and maintain a large hydroponic system and plant nursery where they grow organic vegetables for the prison cafeteria, saving the prison \$40,000 a year

We established a 3 way partnership: LKOC would provide the tool and materials; The Department of Public Safety (DPS) through their Education Director, Maureen Tito, would pay the salary for the Teacher to teach Horticulture and Environmental Science; and WCCC would provide the Work Line to maintain LKOC's Public Plantings and the students to learn Environmental Science and Horticulture.

It took some time to build a trust between the warden and DPS and LKOC volunteers. The warden said that so many groups had come in with a program to help the women in some manner but the help was later withdrawn and the women were greatly disappointed. Warden Kellam realized that LKOC was in for the long haul and gave his full support.

In addition to the faculty who would teach the women, we requested and got a staff nursery position, Juan who was a master at running a nursery.

In 2003, the WCCC class designed and landscaped the grounds of St. Christopher's Windward Senior Day Care Center. Then they went on to design and install a project at the Kailua library with a landscape artist volunteering his assistance. This was a way to give to their community and the women expended enormous energy on these projects. They also earned college credits.

This three way partnership thrived until August, 2008, when early State Budget Cuts took the funding for the Horticulture Teacher and DPS bowed out of the partnership.

Fortunately, WCCC and LKOC restructured the partnership with all volunteer LKOC teachers and WCCC gave us students from the Total Life Recovery (TLR) program, the cream of the crop.

In those early years LKOC also started a tree planting project. Eventually a donated monkey pod tree, a half dozen shower trees and 400 hibiscus plants and irrigation system for the hibiscus were installed with assistance from the city parks department just outside the fences. The women planted the hibiscus and cared for the landscape.

In 2008 LKOC recruited Chuck Glenn, who had been teaching Hydroponics at Windward Community College, if he would come to one meeting with Warden Mark Patterson. Chuck jumped in enthusiastically and taught our original 10 women how to build and run the Hydroponics system. Chuck was at the Garden every week for a year, volunteering his time. A lifelong teacher and counselor, he said he had never had such committed and enthusiastic students. He continues as a consultant for the hydroponics system and classes today.

Now a LKOC volunteer teaches inmates in hydroponics, plant maintenance and management skills. A HECO grant provided funds to restore electricity lost in a 2015 storm to the hydroponic system and the garden classroom and a HKL Castle Foundation grant provided funds for the inmates to build a 5th hydroponic line to grow lettuce to sell to help the program become self-sustaining.

Today we still have committed and enthusiastic volunteers. Our aim in "Learning to Grow" is to expose our students to the joys and responsibilities of working with plants, to provide them a supportive atmosphere where they learn to self –heal.

In 2016 we have provided the first of two sets of classes where they can earn three separate certificates to help them secure employment or start their own business after release: Hydroponics, Horticulture and Starting Your Own Small Business. The HKL Castle grant provided funds to hire a horticulture instructor and cover some of the costs of Starting Your Own Small Business with the help of The Small Business Association providing some in-kind donations towards course preparation, materials and instructor. The Castle Foundation grant provides for two sets of each certificate course to allow more women to participate.

The inmates also grow plants which are sold at several plant sales each year, usually Spring and Fall, to raise funds to support the "Learning to Grow" project.

LKOC pays a monthly stipend of 50 cents an hour to the women who are in the LTG program which gives them some pocket money.

Historically LKOC has paid for pruning 4 Exceptional Trees of Hawaii on WCCC grounds every 2 to 3 years. The record looks like this:

1. 8/28/04 \$2,000. 5 trees
2. 10/23/06 \$1,562. 2 trees
3. 4/30/07 \$4,188. 4 trees

4. 8/27/09 \$5,529. 4 + 4 coconuts (\$70 each)
5. 5/11/11 \$1,257. 2 (Warden Mark paid for 1/2 of this one.)
6. 11/30/11 \$5,235. 5 (Banyan over Armory)
7. 8/14 \$6,283. 5 trees

We have a tradition of meeting with the Warden monthly.

Because LKOC spends considerable funds on the WCCC/LKOC Partnership (approximately \$11,000 per year) and because most people have never been to a prison and don't know what it is like, a written report is provided monthly to the Board, and articles are occasionally included in the LKOC newsletters.

Volunteer Jobs

One of the ongoing jobs is to call the facility at 6:30 AM every M-W-F to determine if we can go to the Garden that day--that is if there is an escort available that day. This avoids the problem of volunteers showing up only to be turned away, not able to enter for lack of an escort—which discourages volunteers.

Another job is recruiting new volunteers and getting them screened for entry. When new volunteers show interest, we talk in detail about the program with them. If they think it will fit in with their schedule and be interesting, we invite them to come to visit once or twice so they can decide if they want to contribute. Before they are allowed to enter they need to be cleared, which requires providing full name, date of birth and Social Security number to the Sergeant in charge. There is also a dress code and rules about what cannot be brought into the prison to go over with guests and new volunteers.