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Initiative aims to get kids outdoors more

By Star-Advertiser staff

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Federal and city officials announced a partnership on Monday with nonprofit groups on an initiative aimed at encouraging Oahu's youth to spend more time outdoors.

The YMCA of Honolulu has been selected to create a community coordinator position to help pull together resources from throughout the community to get more youths and other Oahu residents to participate in outdoor programs. That announcement was made at Ala Moana Beach Park during a news conference by Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell, U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Interior Secretary Kristen Sarri and YMCA of Honolulu Chief Executive Officer Michael Broderick.

Honolulu is one of the first 50 U.S. cities to take part in the Let's Move! Outside movement spearheaded by first lady Michelle Obama.

The first step of the initiative will be to bring together local conservation, educational, recreational and public service stakeholders to brainstorm and identify existing programs that encourage youths to head outdoors. A community survey will then be conducted and a summit held to discuss strategies, priorities and potential partnerships.

The American Express Foundation has committed \$5 million nationally to the first two years of the initiative. The YMCA of Honolulu will receive \$20,000 in each of the two years.

Separately, Sarri announced that the Department of the Interior has issued a \$57,000 grant to the local youth and environmental nonprofit group Kupu to provide work experience for 20 young people in Haleakala National Park next summer.

After the announcement, more than 70 youth volunteers from the YMCA and Kupu participated in a pond cleanup and restoration project at the park.

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