

# HAWAII

## HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES, DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE

The Blanche Pope Elementary School Wellness Pathway is a 2017 Urban & Community Forestry (UCF) Community Grant, which supports the school's "Wellness Program," encouraging staff and students to adopt healthy lifestyles and activities. The school and local landscape architecture firm, PBR Hawai'i, partnered to plant trees and create a wellness pathway at the school for the benefit of the school and surrounding community.

Blanche Pope Elementary School is a small rural school serving a native Hawaiian Homestead community in the town of Waimānalo, on the island of O'ahu. The school and broader community are strongly grounded in Hawaiian culture, which values growing food on their land for subsistence.

To improve the health and well-being of students and staff, the school initiated a weekly walk around the campus. To support this effort, they applied for an urban forestry community grant to install an 800-foot-long wellness pathway around the campus. This shaded pathway includes exercise stations to create a complete "fitness circuit". The pathway design incorporated breadfruit or 'ulu (*Artocarpus altilis*) trees every 100 feet, so walkers and runners could measure their progress. 'Ulu, which means "to grow, to spread out" in Hawaiian, makes it a natural choice for their tree planting project. 'Ulu trees grow into tall shade trees and are a highly nutritious food source, popular across the Pacific. In addition to being a source of physical sustenance, the tree is also a source of cultural sustenance with multiple medicinal and textile uses, for example its bark is used to make barkcloth and its sap can be used as a glue to seal cracks in canoes and gourds.

Additional fruit and food trees such as banana, papaya, mango, coconut, breadfruit and citrus were planted along the pathway and perimeter of the school as part of a "food forest," which can supplement the nutritional needs of the students and families. With 67% of the school's students eligible for free/reduced lunches, this project meets an important need in the school and community.



**Planting Breadfruit trees 100 feet apart to help users of the pathway to keep track of the distance walked, and to use the pathway as a teaching tool.** *Photo Credit: Alberto Ricordi.*



**Students of Blanche Pope on the pathway, enjoying and taking care of each other and the environment.** *Photo Credit: Lily Utai.*

The grant also provided shade to playground areas and the school frontage sidewalk, as well as shaded spaces for outdoor learning activities. These changes on campus allowed for the students to regularly experience the benefits of a greener campus.

Throughout the project, the surrounding community organized "fruit tree care days" to harvest the fruits and conduct periodic tree maintenance. The Wellness Pathway helped to draw positive attention to the benefits of food, exercise, shade and health within the school and greater community.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife,  
Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Program  
<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/forestry/lap/kaulunani/>