

High School Hikers and Me
 By Jamie Tanino
 Nov 20, 2010

<p>Founded in 1971 Under the Sierra Club's Hawaii Chapter A program like no other Opened its arms To the youth of Hawaii</p> <p>The High School Hikers Program Consists of various high schools Across the state As a junior At Castle High School I was fortunate To have partaken In this program Through the school's Hiking club</p> <p>From my hikes On Likeke Trail Maunawili Falls Aiea Loop Trail And Kuliouou Ridge Just to name a few I saw the encroachment Of invasive weeds Upon our native habitats Where monotypic stands of guava Slowly march its way upslope I listened carefully To only hear The Japanese whiteye chattering away While our endemic feathered friends Are pushed to geographic isolation</p> <p>But with the vibrant blossoms Of the Ohia Lehua Nurturing its surroundings The Koa Sheltering the forest floor And the A'alii Bending in the wind But never breaking</p>	<p>Through Fall Hikers Workshops and Ecology Camps Students mingle Friendships are formed Tent set-up is taught And practiced Ropes are knotted And hopefully untied Arts and crafts Allowed the artist to shine through First aid with Mark Lee Taught us invaluable life skills And the knowledge gained About hiking and camping gear And all the gadgets and gizmos available Kept me safe while enjoying nature</p> <p>Throughout the years With High School Hikers We've worked with Various Organizations Such as Fish and Wildlife Service Na Ala Hele Program Aha Hui Malama I ka Lokahi The Marine Corps Natural Resources Dept. And The Nature Conservancy Projects included Weeding in wetlands, loi kalo And forested areas Trail building and maintenance Picking up trash along the beach And planting native plants</p> <p>These hands-on experiences Gave me a better understanding Of what it takes to malama aina The man power involved And resources needed The sense of accomplishment After pulling weeds or cutting trail Kept me coming back for more</p>
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<p>And working along side Trail technicians, Park rangers And natural resource managers It opened my eyes to Career options that I hadn't considered</p> <p>As if all that wasn't enough There were outer-island trips Nature's wonder And cultural significance Mixed in with teamwork And a whole lot of fun We worked with Volcanoes National Park And visited Puuhonua o Honaunau Spent a week in Iao Valley And hiked Haleakala Crater On Molokai We tended loi kalo in Halawa valley And spent a day in Kalaupapa With Uncle Naia A resident who has since passed Listening to his stories As he gave us a grand tour Of the peninsula And Kauai A few days in the lush rainforest Of Mt. Waialeale At Kokee State Park We hiked alongside Dave Boynton With his passion for Environmental education And photography</p> <p>And there were also Trips sponsored by The Hawaii Service Trip Program Another awesome program Founded by Lorin Gill</p>	<p>Throughout my Junior and Senior year High School Hikers Instilled in me The love of being outdoors The beauty of Hawaii's Endemic flora and fauna The significance of our natural environment An appreciation for All that we have And a need To do all we can To preserve it</p> <p>And it didn't end when I graduated I continued with The High School Hikers Program As a hike leader and advisor And it took a while To get it stuck in my head That environmental conservation Is my calling</p> <p>After one too many years I graduated from UH With a Bachelor of Science In Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation</p> <p>I then took a year off To explore my options By joining the AmeriCorps I worked with The Forest Service and Missouri Department of Conservation I got bitten by ticks Got some close calls with poison ivy Saw some cool snakes Came across bear scat</p>
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<p>Silly me I couldn't live anywhere else but Hawaii Besides, no where else has High School Hikers Program Or the people who make it happen That I love and admire</p> <p>The High School Hikers Program Is my foundation That my conservation interest And career is built upon I am a Natural Resources Management Technician With the Oahu Army Natural Resources Program I get paid to hike, camp And pull weeds But I also get to work with Rare and endangered plants Kahuli or Hawaiian Tree snail And the Elepaio, a native flycatcher As well as work in areas With limited access And awesome views</p> <p>Unfortunately, I never met Lorin Gill But I am forever thankful To him For putting together The High School Hikers Program Which brought together A great group of leaders that Shared their knowledge with me For giving me an opportunity To expand my horizon For bringing out The nature lover in me And for bringing me home Where the Ohia blooms The A'alii stands strong</p>	<p>And the High School Hikers Program Continues to run strong</p>
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