

Nonprofit groups deserve donations to help the aina

For year-end tax planning, why not give a little green to some nonprofit groups that are striving to make the world a more sustainable place?

There is a wide range of "green" nonprofit organizations -- both in Hawaii and on the mainland -- that work to keep our beaches and water clean and our natural habitats alive, and to prevent another oil disaster from happening.

If Greenpeace and the Sierra Club are not your cup of tea, there are many others, such as the Kokua Hawaii Foundation, BEACH and Blue Planet Foundation (blueplanetfoundation.org).

Even the Institute for Human Services (www.ihshawaii.org/sustainability) counts, given its efforts toward making Honolulu a greener city.

The shelter is home to a collection of vertical wall gardens that grow herbs and vegetables for the kitchen. Besides providing food, the gardens cut down on cooling costs. Community volunteers help tend the garden, but shelter residents pitch in as part of an employment program that may land them jobs in farming or at a nursery.

It's all part of an urban farming project that also teaches children at the shelter about sustainability, according to IHS director Connie Mitchell.

Last year, IHS installed solar water heaters on the women's shelter, and is getting bids to install them on the men's shelter this year. Mitchell says IHS hopes to eventually install a rooftop garden and launch a master gardening program.

IF THERE'S any hope for a greener future, it's with the next generation.

The Kokua Hawaii Foundation (www.kokuahawaiifoundation.org) focuses on hands-on environmental education in schools, with the belief that keiki are the "seeds of change to preserving and protecting our beautiful islands."

The Malama Learning Center in Kapolei (www.malamalearningcenter.org/donate.asp) has a vision for a "green" building, complete with a rooftop garden on three acres that will bring art, science, conservation and culture together to promote sustainable living throughout Hawaii. While there is no building yet, Malama offers workshops and outreach programs.

Besides organizing beach cleanups, the Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawaii (BEACH) (www.b-e-a-c-h.org) conducts educational presentations at schools. This year, the group sent marine debris collected from Kahuku shores to Sweden to be made into an Electrolux vacuum cleaner.

Marlu West, president and founder of Save the Sea Turtles International (www.seaturtlesinternational.org), which also runs Adopt-A-Beach Hawaii, says that every month, volunteers meet on North Shore beaches, even on Christmas Day, to clean and tally litter from the shoreline.

BLUE PLANET Foundation, the nonprofit launched by video game entrepreneur Henk Rogers, aims to end the use of fossil fuels and develop a clean energy future, starting in Hawaii.

Last year, the foundation donated up to 90,000 CFLs (compact fluorescent lights) as part of a light bulb swap program on Molokai. That was enough for pretty much all the households on the island, where it will save an estimated \$200 over the lifetime of each bulb.

Blue Planet is accepting donations online, and offering clean-energy gifts, including a solar-hybrid flashlight.

The Environmental Working Group (www.ewg.org) protects public health and the environment. EWG conducts research on pesticides in produce, chemicals in cosmetics, and, most recently, chromium in drinking water.

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDCGreenGifts.org) takes donations, large and small, that can be specifically designated for causes ranging from protecting polar bear cubs to planting a tree in Costa Rica.

Donations to 501(c)(3) nonprofit groups are tax-deductible. You can research nonprofits and obtain financial reports at www.guidestar.org.

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