

# Building international bri

Building international bridges — HPA Sea Turtle Research Program hosts students from Okinawa

Four middle school students from Okinawa recently learned how students at Hawaii Preparatory Academy are helping a threatened species — the Hawaiian green turtle.

On Aug. 9, HPA's Sea Turtle Research Program hosted the Okinawan students for a day of turtle tagging at the Mauna Lani Bay Hotel, in conjunction with the National Marine Fisheries Service. The Okinawan students were winners of an essay contest, "What Can You Do to Help the Environment?" sponsored by the Okinawa Times. Takashi Ishihara, a researcher with the Sea Turtle Association of Japan, accompanied the group from Okinawa along with a reporter and videographer from the Okinawa Times.

Thirteen-year-old Yoshiji Kameshima, of Fukugen Junior High School, 13-year-old Momoka Kina, of Kitanaka Gusuku, 14-year-



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old Atsuki Maemitsumori, High School, and 12-year-old Miho Sunagawa, of Ohama Junior High School, assisted in tagging turtles and conducting turtle health assessments along with HPA



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Middle School students Bo Bleckel, Kimi Cantyne, Caylin Kojima and Maiah Police.

The group was directed by leader George Balazs, of the Marine Turtle Research Program, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, and Marc Rice, director of the Sea Turtle Research Program at HPA.

"It was fun, but challenging because they don't understand English and we don't understand Japanese," Police said. "It was fun teaching them how to hold the turtles. I used hand motions and they learned quickly."

This was the first trip to Hawaii for the Okinawan students, who spoke through an interpreter.

"I enjoyed working with the turtles because it is something I can't do back home," Kameshima said.

The students conducted health assessments on 17 turtles. The Okinawan group later toured Kiholo and visited Hilo and Mauna Kea before traveling to Oahu.