

Mysterious bins invite recycling

Origin of wire baskets that suddenly appeared traced to UH professors

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When small wire baskets with blue and white signs proclaiming "HI-5, Take, Leave, Whatever" began showing up at Windward O'ahu bus stops, no one knew where they came from.

City recycling coordinator

Suzanne Jones said she didn't know. Neither did the city Road Maintenance Division that removes trash from the bus stops.

"Chronic drug users trying to make money," ventured Troy Salas, who was waiting at a bus stop outside King Intermediate School.

"I think it might be a test," said Shaienne Kealoha, a Kamehameha Schools seventh-grader. "That's why it's only small."

Now, with dozens of them

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The wire recycling bins are found in Windward O'ahu. They've also shown up in Mānoa and McCully.



Recycling bins appear in Kāne'ohe. Watch a report at

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Recycle

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spreading from Kahalu'u to Mānoa and more on the way, it's not a mystery anymore.

Two University of Hawai'i professors tracked down through a Web site listed on the signs acknowledged that they are behind the campaign.

Gaye Chan and Mandita Sharma believed all along that the state's recycling program needed to be simpler and more accessible, and they came up with the baskets idea.

They unveiled the baskets and signs at an art show in April and gave them away to anyone who asked, Chan said.

Since then, the two have placed some of the baskets themselves, and others have showed up courtesy of those who received baskets at the art show and people who have contacted the pair for more.

The baskets are small, no more than 2 feet tall, made of wide wire mesh, and include an invitation to take or leave recyclable bottles or cans.

About 80 baskets have been distributed. More than 20 are at bus stops on Kamehameha Highway through Kāne'ohe town. Castle High School has 10 of them and Windward Community College has a couple. There

ABOUT THE BASKETS

To learn more about the baskets, how to donate to the cause or how to get them, visit www.nomoola.com.

are several at the Chinese cemetery in Mānoa, one at the corner of Date and McCully streets and one in Kahalu'u at the Waihe'e Road bus stop.

Chan said they represent a host of issues that need to be addressed.

"First and foremost we're sick and tired of people throwing that stuff away and want to create a system to encourage people" to recycle, Chan said. "Secondly, to really look at how the state has implemented a system that is untenable. ... They've made the recycling system so onerous that it's very difficult for people to recycle."

ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVE

Recycling could become an economic alternative to residents, especially in light of government threatening to not pick up recyclables, and the loss of jobs, she said.

Jim Wood, who has pitched the idea of recycling bins at bus stop before, said the project was great news. He said it had always upset him that the city hadn't embraced the opportunity.

"It responds to people's desire to recycle," said Wood, with the Wind-

ward Ahupua'a Alliance, an environmental group.

He said on many occasions he has noticed that bus riders sometimes leave their containers on the side of the trash can and he always took that to mean they felt bad about throwing them away.

"But there's no other options for them," Wood said.

Jones, the city recycling coordinator, said the take-or-leave concept is the only one that would work in public recycling.

"The challenge of the public recycle containers is that sometimes they get trashy unless they're designed and set up in such a way that makes it really clear to everybody exactly how to use them," Jones said.

It's not uncommon for people to leave refuse in recycling containers, she said.

Chan said she has seen no problems, and people have been keeping the baskets clean.

Their design makes it easy to see what's in them and they are not so big that it's difficult to remove containers.

"They're working because they're simple," Chan said. "We've also noticed that other people maintain it as well."

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