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Photos available upon request

First-Ever Keiki Whalewatch Ecotours from Lana'i

Today, the students at Lana'i High and Elementary School (grades K-12), about 460 in all, will get to experience whalewatching from Manele Harbor – as part of the Keiki Whalewatch program offered by Pacific Whale Foundation (PWF). This marks the school's first time participating in the program, and follows the first-ever Keiki Whalewatch from Moloka'i which took place last week.

Both the Lana'i and Moloka'i trips were offered at no charge, thanks in part to a generous donation from the [Servco Foundation](#), as well as contributions from Pacific Whale Foundation members and donors. The PWF vessel *Ocean Discovery* and crew will run four scheduled trips between 7:00am and 3:30pm for the Lana'i students, and their teachers. Each whalewatch will be led by certified Marine Naturalists with college degrees in marine biology or related sciences.

[Keiki Whalewatch](#) is an innovative educational program that has been providing customized ecotours and science enrichment to school groups for over 10 years. The program is offered January through April, and is open to all grade levels. It provides standards-based and grade-level appropriate curriculum, with hands-on activities and an optional classroom session.

Our ultimate goal is to inspire the students to be stewards for the ocean," said Youth Education Specialist, Robyn Ehrlich. "For many keiki, this is their first exposure to something that's right in their own backyard. Hopefully it will encourage them to appreciate and protect the environment."

An estimated 10,000 students have gone through the program since its inception, and participation increases every year. In 2017, over 2,500 students from 32 different schools (including 17 of Maui County's 33 public schools) participated in the Keiki Whalewatch program. Since 20017, Pacific Whale Foundation has allotted more than 20,000 passenger seats to Keiki Whalewatch participants. This number reflects the fact that many school groups and students have participated multiple times.

"Our hope is that by the time they graduate high school, every child in Maui County has come through the program," said Ehrlich. "Education is a major component of PWF's mission to protect our oceans and marine wildlife for generations to come."