

**APRIL 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

It was a successful start to the Fiji National University's Department of Environmental Science teaming up with the United States Ambassador Judith Cefkin to launch its "Clean-Up Saweni Beach" campaign.

The University team and Ambassador Cefkin launched the clean-up campaign and the planting of mangroves in Lautoka today.

In opening the event Ambassador Cefkin congratulated the University and Department of Environmental Science in coordinating the event.

Ambassador Cefkin touched on the importance to reflect on the cleanup and caring for the environment. Adding this was a lead up to Earth Day.

Ms Cefkin added that today's activity was important for a number of reasons:

- to create awareness
- Helps build resilience in communities
- Planting mangroves helps to protect against coastal erosion and Rising Ocean levels

The University's Department of Environmental Science, Associate Professor Ajantha Perera, emphasised on the need to take ownership in caring for the environment especially the beaches, parks and surroundings areas.

Prof Perera said the event was leading up to celebrating Earth Day. Adding FNU was playing its part in instilling in its students the importance of caring for the environment.

"We cannot stop climate change but we can slow the rate by planting more trees, mangroves and caring for our environment," Perera said.

The clean-up campaign took off with students from the Bachelor of Science programme majoring in Environmental Science teaming up with villagers from Lauwaki and the neighbouring community the District Office (Lautoka/Yasawa), the Department of forestry, the Department of Environment and the Lautoka City Council.

In full gear equipped with plastic gloves and biodegradable plastic bags, the teams were dedicated to collect the maximum amount of trash.

The event also witnessed the planting of 2000 mangrove seedlings with the assistance from the Department of Forestry.

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