

NW men hope to cut starvation

Key is local knowledge and world of plants



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A LOCAL club and a Burnie agro-ecologist have unlocked a key that could assist in preventing world starvation.

The Learn Grow project is a collaboration between Food Plants International and the Rotary Club of Devonport North.

Burnie agro-ecologist and Learn Grow author Bruce French said the project is all about helping starving children in developing countries by providing information to them about the most suitable local edible crops to grow.

The information is distributed in books and posters.

"We're forever taking Western foods over to these countries, so why not show them what they can grow," Mr French said.

As part of the project, a representative from the Solomon Islands has travelled to the Coast to improve his agricultural skills



SOWING THE SEED OF SELF-SUSTAINABILITY: Henry Gwao (right), from the Solomon Islands, with Professor Steve Willatt (left) and Learn Grow author Bruce French. Picture: Jason Hollister.

and learn more about the project.

Henry Gwao, from the island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands, received the Royce and Jean Abbey Agricultural Scholarship from the Rotary Foundation.

The Rotary Club of Devonport South East is the local nominator

for Mr Gwao's three-month program and member Steve Willatt said: "Henry and I first met in 1995. His name came up when I was given the information for the scholarship application, so I knew he fitted the bill."

Mr Gwao is a lecturer at the School of Natural Resources at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education.

He plans to take the information back to the school to pass on to his students.

Upon his return, Mr Gwao will

THE SCHOLARSHIP

ABOUT the Royce and Jean Abbey Agricultural Scholarship —

■ Since 2001, the Rotary Foundation has awarded scholarships to eligible people in neighbouring developing countries to help and improve their agricultural skills.

■ The scholarship provides up to three months' training in a suitable location in Australia.

also hold a number of seminars around the country for the community, in particular for women and farmers.

"It's primary they teach the students, but it's equally important they teach the women who do the work," Mr Willatt said.

Mr French is also the creator of Food Plants International, a database which collects information on edible plants from all over the world.

He said the information has been converted into the series of Learn Grow books.

"There are 62 languages used in the Solomon Islands, so we've illustrated the information in plain English, so people can understand what can be grown and eaten in certain areas."

■ For more information about the project, visit www.learngrow.org