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checking in

It's almost April and that means the next edition of the world-famous Merrie Monarch Festival in Hilo is just around the corner. We offer a preview of this year's competition along with a schedule of events.

The Hawaii Restaurant Association honors the winners of its 2017 Employee Appreciation and Excellence Awards this month. "Where would we be without those people that make up the faces of our companies," HRA Executive Director Gregg Fraser tells Hawaii Hospitality. Take a look at the impressive list of finalists in this issue. The awards luncheon will be held on March 20 at the Kahala Hotel & Resort.

Whether visitors to Hawaii hail from Montana or Tokyo, restaurants at Hawaii's hotels and resorts are ready to offer them special dining treats. Three properties across the Islands gave us an inside peek at some of their most requested dishes.

The Hawaii Tourism Authority's Virtual Reality tours can take you sailing off Kauai, performing hula on the Big Island or paddle-boarding around Oahu. The use of VR by Hawaii hotels for consumer promotions, however, remains in the planning stages, according to our report.

And columnist Don Chapman talks story with longtime Hawaii hotel general manager and entertainer Randy Ahlo, currently GM of the Waikiki Yacht Club.

We also take a look at some evolving tourism trends that keep travelers to the Islands coming back for more.

Aloha!

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Randy Ahlo. A Hero in Front or Back of House

From the front of the house to the back, there are few jobs in Hawaii's hospitality industry that **Randy Ahlo** hasn't done. And it's all because of a guitar and a school carnival.

Randy, a longtime Hawaii hotel general manager who is currently GM of the Waikiki Yacht Club, recalls:

"I was going to Saint Louis, class of '65, and they were planning a carnival. So I told my friend **Benny Gonzalez**, 'Eh, why don't we make a band?' Believe it or not, in a roundabout way, that's really where my hospitality career began."

They called themselves The Renegades, and if you are of a certain age, you recall when they were the hottest thing in a town full of hot young bands. In those days before social media and self-produced music videos, a preferred way of breaking into the music scene was at a "Battle of the Bands."

With Randy on lead guitar, having rocked crowds at the carnival, the Renegades finished third in their first "Battle of the Bands."

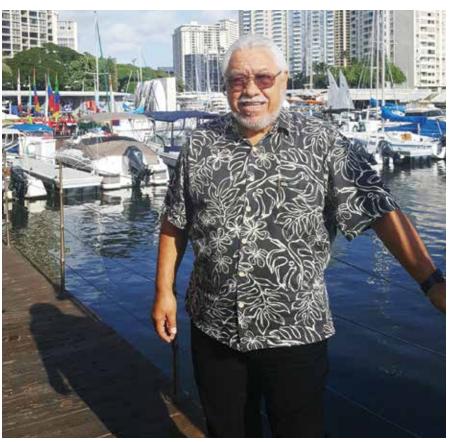
Wearing custom-made red velvet suits and black "Beatle boots," they "won the second one, sponsored by **Ted Sax** at KORL radio," Randy says. They were so popular, Sax promoted a dance featuring The Renegades, paying them a few thousand dollars.

"That was just before we left for college," Randy says.

He went off to San Mateo Junior College to play football, then transferred to the University of San Francisco, which promptly dropped football. With his father Abe experiencing health problems, Randy returned home, not sure what to do. Family friend Leina'ala Kalama—she would later marry and add Heine to her name, and go on to become the featured hula dancer for the Brothers Cazimero—suggested he "go see Al Lopaka." Handsome and talented, Al was attracting crowds to Waikiki.

"So I went down, and Al calls me up on stage, and I played piano and sang a few songs," Randy says. "And he hired me."

Soon they were performing in the



Randy Ahlo dockside at the Waikiki Yacht Club.

back room at Don Ho's Hana Ho club, drawing 9,000 to what is today known as the Blaisdell Arena, and opening the Polynesian Palace.

"That's where I developed my personality," Randy says. "And I learned people—it was inbred in me by my Mommy and Daddy to love and respect people. . . . Al would say, 'Go into the audience, talk with people—they'll stay for the next show.' And so I could share how much I love my Hawaii, that's my soul."

That attitude would serve him well as he soon embarked on a career change. Though he loved the musician's life and the pay—"I was making \$500, \$600 a week!"—he was also newly engaged and understood he needed something that offered more long-term stability, and fewer temptations.

"So I went to work as a part-time as-

sistant manager at the Captain's Galley at the Moana, making \$595 a month," he recalls. "One of the waitresses was **Nancy Bahouth**, who was married to **Nick Bahouth**, GM at the Hanohano Room. He recruited me to Sheraton."

Nick wasn't yet a hospitality legend in Hawaii, but he was on his way—and so was Randy. When Nick moved to the Sheraton Maui, Randy became GM of the Hanohano Room. He aspired to be a food and beverage manager, but a Sheraton executive told him flatly, "You will never be a food and beverage manager—you know nothing about the kitchen." Funny, then, that after a stint as manager of Top the I at the Ilikai he became F&B manager at Waiakea Village on the Big Island.

While attending a conference of F&B executives, he just happened to be paired in a work session with that same

guy who said he'd never be there.

"I love it when people tell me I can't do something," Randy says.

He would change companies—Ironwood and Castle among them. He would become general manager of the Imperial on Lewers. (That, by the way, is when we first met. With Randy also

or" rating for the first time—and then repeated it the next year.

Along the way, he served on the board of directors of the Hawaii Hotel Association.

I had to ask his thoughts on success. "One of the biggest things is to treat

people with respect," Randy says. "Yes,

"Al would say, 'Go into the audience, talk with people—they'll stay for the next show.' And so I could share how much I love my Hawaii, that's my soul."

- RANDY AHLO

running the showroom and booking acts such as **Ray Charles**, that provided good fodder for my daily column in The Advertiser.)

He would eventually become GM of the Airport Holiday Inn, making an impression on company bigwigs with the Kona coffee, pineapples and macadamia nut candies he always brought to the national convention. Even more impressive, the hotel earned a "superiyou have to understand numbers, but you can learn that. And I was detail-oriented. At the Hanohano Room, end of the night, cleaning up, I would get out this long string and stretch it across the room to make sure the tables were lined up exactly straight—it drove people crazy, but that's the way it was. And I believe in teams, developing teams. When we do well and things go right, the team wins. If we had a mistake,

that's my mistake. It's always we, us, ours, never I, me, mine."

And in the same way that he would go out into the audience during music breaks, he always liked to greet guests at his properties.

"It's the best feedback," he says. Which brings us full circle back to

music, and a possible next chapter in his hospitality career.

"I have this idea," Randy says, eyes twinkling. "Maybe a hotel would put me in a corner with a guitar, and I could sing and play and talk story, and share with people how much I love Hawaii. It's more than just beautiful beaches. It comes from here." He taps his chest.

> His heart. "To share my Hawaii."

Have a good story about a good person in the Hawaii hospitality industry? Please e-mail me at don@tradepublishing.com.







What Guests Order at Popular Hotels

Vistors seek culinary thrills ranging from classic Hawaii fish dishes to creative new entrees and desserts

BY CATHY CRUZ-GEORGE

hat do out-of-town guests eat when dining at some of Hawaii's most popular hotels? Do they seek unusual flavors, or opt for

tried-and-true classics?

Hawaii Hospitality asked three properties—The Kahala Hotel & Resort, Moana

Surfrider A Westin Resort & Spa and the Hilton Waikoloa Village on Hawaii Island—to name their most popular dishes.

At the Moana Surfrider, guests prefer simple and classic menu items that don't shock the senses.

"We service global

guests but know that many will gravitate to foods they can relate to, which is why Japanese come to Hawaii to eat ramen, and domestic travelers line up at Cheesecake Factory (and other familiar restaurants)," says Ryan Loo, director of food and beverage at the Moana Surfrider.

Ryan Loo

Hotel guests that venture outside of their gastronomic comfort zones seek the thrill of poke and mahi mahi, and drinks such as the classic mai tais and Blue Hawaiis. "Our brand is conservative, and we need to accommodate despite our eagerness to be

creative," Loo says.

The Surfrider's tea service, featuring mini sandwiches, pastries and classic teas, continues to draw hundreds of patrons every afternoon to The Veranda, an oceanfront venue shaded by a big banyan tree.

At The Kahala Hotel & Resort, guests from the U.S. Mainland prefer regional foods, such as the "signature Ahi Poke Musubi, the fresh-fish catch of the day, local tropical fruits, harvested vegetables and farm-totable items," says Dara Lum, director of public relations for The Kahala. International guests at The Kahala prefer "Hawaiian fusion" cuisine, blending local ingredients with global flavors.

And of course, diners from all corners of the globe like locally crafted beers and traditional island cocktails, such as the mai tai and Lava Flow. For dessert, the Kahala's Sweet Bread Pudding with caramel sauce and crème anglaise appeals to both international and domestic diners. "We receive a lot of feedback that our bread pudding is 'the best' in Hawaii," Lum says.

Overall, the Kahala's top-selling food item is chocolate-covered macadamia nuts, individually dipped by hand then wrapped in a beautiful box. For *omiyage*, Japanese guests buy boxes by the dozen.

At the Hilton Waikoloa Village, the Kamuela Provision Company (KPC) is a fine-dining venue noted for its fresh seafood and steaks, locally sourced ingredients, and



dramatic views of the ocean and sunset.

The Two-Pound Keahole Lobster is a highly acclaimed dish at KPC, followed by Prime Kona Coffee Crusted Paniolo Cowboy Rib Eye with oyster mushrooms and Maui onion rings, and Prime New York steak with Okinawan sweet mashed potatoes.

U.S. Mainland diners prefer to pair their surf-and-turf with bottles of wine and endless mai tais. Asian diners—who



Dayne Tanabe

are familiar with fresh seafood always are "intrigued by the way KPC prepares its fresh local fish and the flavors that make them so ono," says Chef Dayne Tanabe of the Hilton Waikoloa Village.

Take, for example, the Ginger Infused Steamed Monchong, a zesty combina-

(Top left) The Moana Surfrider's afternoon tea service features mini sandwiches, pastries and classic teas.

PHOTO COURTESY KAREN WONG

(Left) A box of chocolate-covered macadamia nuts is among the most popular items purchased by guests at The Kahala Hotel & Resort.

PHOTO COURTESY THE KAHALA HOTEL & RESORT



tion of kabayaki, cilantro, carrot, green onions, sizzling peanut oil, sushi rice cake and toasted sesame seeds. Tanabe created the ginger monchong nearly 10 years ago. To this day, the fish dish is a top-seller.

Another favorite at KPC is the Kona Coffee Mudslide, an Oreo cookie crust topped with macadamia-nut brittle, whipped cream, chocolate drizzle and Kona coffee ice cream.

The coffee-infused dessert appeals to both international and domestic diners. "We removed the Kona Coffee Mudslide dessert a couple of years ago, but many returning guests kept asking for the dessert, so we had to bring it back," Tanabe laughs.

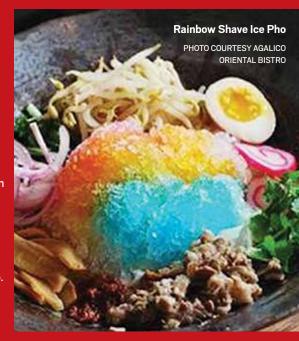
Aqua-Aston Hospitality Fills a Japanese-Food Niche

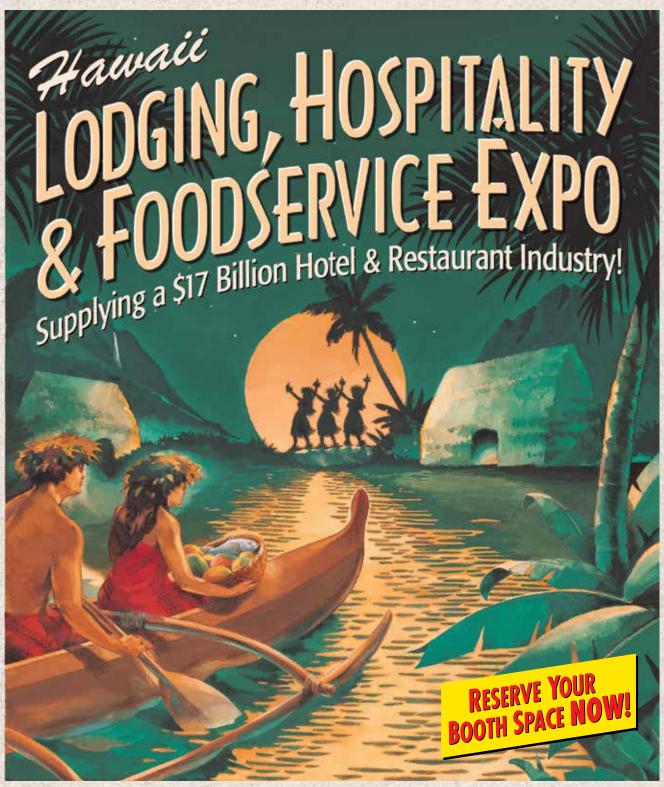
From sushi to soba, Japanese food is abundant in Waikiki. There is one group in particular, Aqua-Aston Hospitality, which has cornered a segment of the market-by partnering with popular Japanese restaurants. Here are the brands:

- Yoshitsune, in the lobby of the Park Shore Waikiki, is one of the most authentic Japanese restaurants on Oahu. Diners start their mornings with a traditional breakfast of grilled fish, rice and tsukemono; and return in the evenings for omakase, washed down with beers and sake. Yoshitsune also has a cult following with lunch patrons who know where to find fresh udon and sushi.
- Musubi Café lyasume, a cozy little shop in the Aqua Pacific Monarch on Kuhio Avenue, offers a non-traditional take on the classic Japanese rice ball. On the menu are umeboshi musubi with SPAM, spicy fried

chicken musubi with mayo, beef donburi with kimchi and egg, plus other creative concoctions. Musubi loyalists opt for the kinpira gobo, mentaiko and okaka fillings.

- Café lyasumi operates four other locations in Honolulu: On Makaloa Street and Seaside Avenue; in the basement of the Waikiki Shopping Plaza on Kalakaua Avenue; and in the Japanese Village Walk at Ala Moana Center.
- Agalico Oriental Bistro, which opened in late 2016 in the Agua Oasis Hotel, blends the bold spices of Southeast Asia with milder Japanese flavors. Nashi goreng and pad thai are on the menu, of course. But the dish that dominates Japanese social media is the Rainbow Shave Ice Pho. Agalico has multiple locations throughout Japan and South Korea and is owned by Japan-based Big Belly Co. Ltd.







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Las Vegas travel prizes provided by Vacations Hawaii



Hotel, resort construction across the Islands ramp up for a record-breaking 2017

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES AND BRANDON BOSWORTH



n 2017, tourism's winning streak is about to go platinum.

"We expect visitor arrivals will reach more than nine million in 2017," says Eugene Tian, the state's Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism chief economist.

As visitors from around the world converge on the Islands, "it's essential



Eugene Tian

that we continually re-energize our resorts and product offerings to ensure they are relevant to the interests of today's travelers," says George D. Szigeti, Hawaii Tourism Authority president and

CEO. "This is true for the repeat visitors who love coming here, as well as the first-time visitors we want to attract, especially international visitors. Global



George Szigeti

competition is a constant concern for Hawaii's tourism industry."
In response— and with substantial revenue in the offing—hoteliers

are developing, rebuilding and renovating properties from Oahu to Kauai.

OAHU

As Hawaii gains in global stature, hospitality projects in Waikiki and Greater Oahu aim to please an ever-more-discriminating international clientele.

Ritz Carlton Waikiki Beach

WATG and Wimberly Interiors de-

signed the luxury tower's new Spa, which features two levels with three treatment rooms; men and women's locker rooms; rainforest shower; eucalyptus steam room; dry cedar sauna; and retail and reception area. "We are very excited to redefine the luxury spa experience in Hawaii with the debut of Oahu's very first Ritz-Carlton Spa," says Huy Vo, The Ritz-Carlton Residences, Waikiki Beach, marketing director. "Every square foot of the spa and every spa menu item was thoughtfully designed and developed to enliven the senses of





our esteemed guests so that they can see, smell, touch and feel the healing power and the natural elements of the Hawaiian Islands."

Pacific Beach Hotel

Nan Inc. is general contractor on the renovations at this Waikiki landmark.



Rvan Nakaima

"Nan Inc.'s forecast for hospitality construction is very positive, as Hawaii properties usually renovate every six to seven years," says Ryan Nakaima, Nan Inc. vice president. "With increasing

visitor arrivals predicted for 2017-18, there is an even greater incentive for renovation and refreshment." The Pacific Beach Public Areas Renovation project's estimated completion date is September 2017.

Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki

Nan Inc. and White Sands Construction are renovating different sections of the hotel in this \$55.4 million project. Nan Inc.'s Hawaii Prince Pool Deck & Ilima Lounge Renovation's targeted completion date is the end of March.

Embassy Suites Kapolei

Layton Construction Co. LLC's \$30 million build of the seven-story,



Dale Keep

150,000-squarefoot, 180-guest suites hotel will also feature a restaurant, bar, swimming pool and meeting rooms. The project expects to wrap in September. Dale Keep, Layton Construction Co. LLC business development manager, says that Layton Construction "will start another hotel there by the end of the year."

HAWAII ISLAND

Marriott Waikoloa Ocean Club

The Marriott Vacation Club's first timeshare property on the Big Island is being constructed adjacent to the Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort & Spa. The 112-unit property, to be called the Marriott Waikoloa Ocean Club, will feature one- and two-bedroom suites. Work is expected to be completed this spring. Layton Construction is the general contractor.

Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel

Tower 3 of the Hapuna Beach



Prince Hotel is scheduled to undergo conversion to for-sale, five-star condominiums. Construction is slated to begin in November 2017 and conclude in August 2018. Swinerton Builders is the general contractor.

KAUAI

Coco Palms Resort

"We are optimistic about the visitor numbers for 2017, and believe that

they will continue to increase," says Tyler Greene, whose Greene Waters Group is re-developing Kauai's iconic Coco Palms Resort. The \$175 million renovation of the 46-acre site as a Hyatt-branded property is expected to wrap in 2018. "Our focus is to honor the past and celebrate the future so that visitors and locals will have a place to come together and share the spirit of aloha that makes the Islands so special."

Timbers Kauai Ocean Club & Residences

"Investors and developers have always seen the Hawaii market as promising, and with the record-breaking number of visitors coming to Hawaii, they understand the demand for more hotels and resorts," says Layton Construction's Keep. "The overall sense in the construction industry is there are a number of hospitality projects, whether it be ground-up construction or major renovation projects, that will be finishing or starting over the next couple years."

On Kauai, Layton Construction is raising two buildings with 47 units in the current \$60 million phase of Timbers' Lihue luxury timeshare resort. "Amenities will include a private Ocean Club restaurant, a pool with a water slide, a fitness center and spa," Keep says.

Koloa Landing at Poipu Beach, Phase III

Layton Construction's third phase of the project includes "four residential buildings (52 high-end studio, one- and two-bedroom units), a multipurpose building (with flexible space for conventions, weddings and gatherings), and a large main pool/water feature (cascading waterfalls, caves, infinity edges, water slides) and an activities center building with a full services snack bar/grill," says Keep. Scheduled

wrap was February 2017.

The Point at Poipu

Layton Construction is also GC on this extensive renovation of 10 buildings containing 219 villas set to wrap this summer. "The Point at Poipu project is a complete building envelope renovation and upgrade on ten twoand four-story buildings throughout the resort," says Keep. "In addition to the building envelope, the condominium style units are also receiving interior cosmetic improvements and upgrades."

Capbridge Pacific LLC is development manager of the approximately \$300 million, 388-unit timeshare resort on the site of the former Maui Lu.

Phase 1 of the future Hilton Grand Vacations Club-operated property is scheduled to be complete in late 2018.

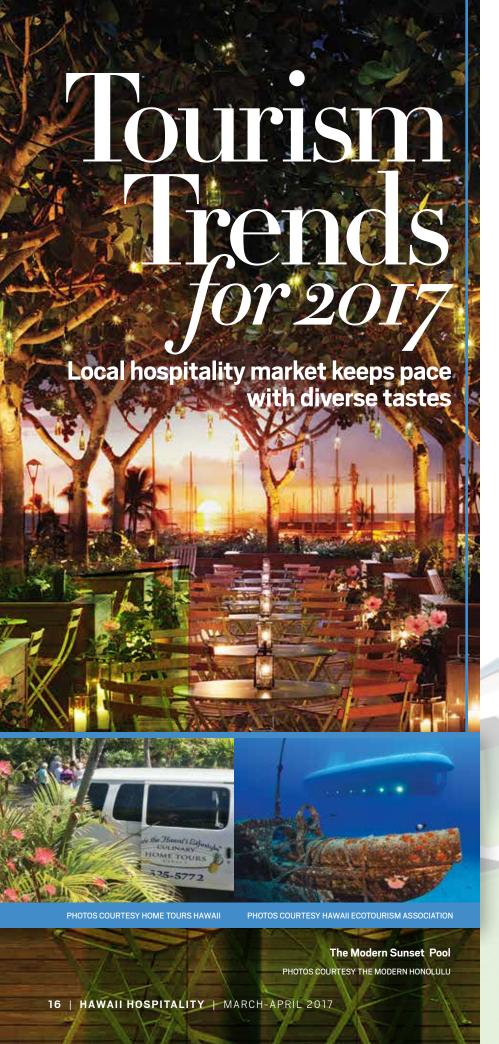
Westin Nanea Ocean Villas

Hawaiian Dredging Construction Co. Inc. is GC on this extensive redevelopment that will create approximately 350 guestrooms, a spa, retail complex and other amenities on 23 oceanfront acres. The new resort is slated to open in April.

"The continued revitalization of resort properties statewide speaks to the market's confidence in Hawaii's success at attracting visitors," says Szigeti. "These construction projects are important to keeping our residents employed, but they also elevate Hawaii's standing as a premier destination for global travelers to experience, which benefits our state's economy.

"These new and revitalized resort properties keep Hawaii positioned as an elite travel destination."





BY BRANDON BOSWORTH

Hawaii tourism, certain things remain constant. Visitors continue to flock to the USS Arizona Memorial, Waikiki Beach, the Polynesian Cultural Center and other well-known attractions. However, this doesn't mean the local hospitality industry is static. Travelers' changing tastes are reflected in three trends to watch in 2017 and beyond.

hen it comes to

Beautiful Boutiques

Lodging is a big part of any vacation experience, and more travelers are



Kelly Hoen

bypassing luxury resorts and generic hotels in favor of boutique establishments with more individual character.

"Boutique hotels are smaller and offer intimate, authentic experiences,"

says Kelly Hoen, general manager for The Modern Hotel, a 353-room luxury boutique hotel. "A boutique hotel makes each person feel special. They're not lost in a sea of other guests at a mega-resort."

One of the oldest boutique hotels in Hawaii is the Travaasa Hana, which was opened in 1946 as the Kauiki Inn. "With 70 rooms and a staff of locals –



Marni Aina

some of which are third generation workers to the resort – our people care a great deal about their community and sharing that with travelers staying with us," says manager Marni Aina. "Be-

ing able to tell them about their favorite places to visit throughout Hana and how they spend their free time rather than hearing a list of suggested recommendations from seasoned hospitality workers is something I think that separates a boutique property like us from a larger hotel."

Hoen believes people are looking for more from their hotels in 2017.

"Consumers aren't settling for the

big box, one-size-fits-all approach," she says. "They're always looking to the new, latest, greatest in technology, culinary, nightlife, culture. Travelers have smart phones and do their research. They are more savvy and expect more than a nice room. They expect authentic experiences and want to be immersed in the local scene in a way that mirrors the values and vision of a boutique hotel."

Aina concurs. "The evolution of travel and corresponding trends is something that has continued to change with the times, but we are seeing a strong emphasis on quality over quantity for travelers to the Island," she says.

Beth Churchill, chief revenue officer, Aqua-Aston Hospitality, says that "in order for a boutique property to stand apart from other lodging offerings, the most important elements it can offer are an exceptional stay experience and a commitment to personalized service where the hotel's team will go out of their way to make guests feel at home."

Hoen sees further growth in the boutique hotel market in Hawaii. "We predict a rise in niche boutique lodging statewide as guests seek intimate, im-



Beth Churchill

mersive experiences and hotels see the benefits that boutique properties bring to Hawaii's hospitality landscape," she says.

Churchill also sees plenty of room f or the market to grow.

"Hoteliers have noted the success of the boutique hotels Aqua-Aston manages in Waikiki like The Surfjack, Lotus Honolulu at Diamond Head and Hotel Renew, and this year, several larger brands are introducing independent boutique properties into the area," she says.

Culinary Curiosity

The rise of foodie culture means many tourists are no longer satisfied with eating most of their meals at hotels or familiar mainland chain. establishments.

"Our guests, specifically, are looking for the best in food, fun and flavor," says Matthew Gray, owner of Hawaii Food Tours. "They want to see, smell and taste our world-famous aloha spirit. They wish to break bread in genuine, non-touristy settings." His company of-



Hawaii's Spiritual Side

Spiritual Tours Hawaii is a new company offering a unique service: tours of Hawaii's most spiritual and culturally significant sites. The company works with individuals such as kahu Mel Ho'ala and kumu Karen Leialoha Carroll to provide crafted tours of locations such as the Byodo-In Temple, Ulupo Heiau State Historic Site, the Hare Krishna Temple and Makapu'u Point.

The company's founder and owner, Simina Van Clief-Prohor, says she has always been a spiritual person, and felt there was something missing in the local tourism industry. "Hawaii has every kind of tour but nobody was doing spiritual tours," she says. Spiritual Tours Hawaii seeks to fill that niche.

For more info about Spiritual Tours Hawaii, visit spiritualtourshawaii.com.

fers clients the opportunity to learn about and taste a variety of local favorites at hole-in-the-wall establishments throughout Oahu. Gray sees food tours as part of a general travel trend towards "more socially-engaging tours and attractions."

The Big Island's Home Tours Hawaii offers an especially intimate dining experience for visitors. Owners Pat and Lisa Christian help clients experience Island hospitality first-hand by arranging meals at private residences.

"Most guests have the opportunity to go to many of our amazing restaurants and enjoy the food, but where else do they have the chance to eat in local homes and talk story," Lisa Christian says. "There is something magical that happens when people share food together in private homes; friendships and bridges are built."

Eco Encounters

While pristine beaches have long drawn people to Hawaii, some of today's more adventurous travelers want to experience other aspects of the Islands' natural environment.

"You can tell ecotourism is fairly popular based on the number of companies offering tours," says Michael Walther, president and founder of Oahu Nature Tours, which offers tours on all four



Lisa Christian

major Hawaiian islands. "Lots of entrepreneurs are setting up great tours."

Linda Cox, Community Economic Development Specialist at the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agricul-

ture and Human Resources and adviser to the board of the Hawaii Ecotourism Association, says the term "ecotourism" was coined in the late 1970s when mass tourism reached its peak. "It is a niche market that incorporates environmentally friendly and culturally protective techniques," she says.

With its unique environment and wildlife, Walther believes Hawaii is a natural place for ecotourism, and he notes that the industry has had significant growth in the past 10 to 15 years. He finds that ecotours are especially popular with Baby Boomers.

"They came of age with Earth Day and the environmental movement and are very focused on natural experiences," he says.

Younger travelers are also interested in ecotourism, but Cox believes cost is



Linda Cox

more of an issue for them. "Young people are very interested in sustainable tourism," she says. "However, they do not have the income to pay for some ecotourism experiences that involve very

small groups and exclusive locations so they often use social media to guide themselves."

Author of the book "Extinct Birds of Hawaii," Walther sees bird-watching as a new potential ecotourism trend. He points out that the Big Island just last year held its first annual Hawaii Island Festival of Birds and is currently developing the Hawaii Island Coast to Coast Birding Trail (HICCBT), a 90-mile cross-island driving route from Kona to Hilo.



Winners of the 2016 Employee Appreciation and Excellence Awards

HRA Honors Hawaii's Best

Winners of the 2017 Employee **Appreciation and Excellence Awards** to be announced on March 20

Top workers from dozens of restaurants and food service businesses are among the finalists for the Hawaii Restaurant Association's 2017 Employee Appreciation and Excellence Awards.

Winners will be announced on March 20 at The Kalaha Hotel & Resort in both non-management and non-supervisory positions in two categories:

- Front of the House (servers, servers assistant/bus person, bartender, host/hostess, customer service and counter/cashier).
- Back of the House (chef, cook, prep cook, kitchen staffer, dishwasher, warehouse staff, janitorial and driver).

"Where would we be without those people that make up the faces of our companies? A warm smile and a cheerful 'aloha' make our customers feel good about working with or frequenting your business," says Gregg Fraser, executive director of the HRA.

"Our staff make us who we are today; we need to thank them every chance we get."



HRA Awards

The 2017 Employee Appreciation and Excellence Awards, March 20, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m., The Kahala Hotel & Resort. For more information: 944-9105 or hawaiirestaurant.org

In addition to the traditional categories for its members and allied members, this year the HRA has added the New Restaurant of the Year award, which will be given to a restaurant that opened in 2016.

More than 20 of Hawaii's new restaurants are finalists for the inaugural award. Fraser says the criteria used to judge the New Restaurant of the Year category include "innovation, fresh concept, community involvement, high level of customer service and exceptional culinary offerings. There are many great new locations that have recently opened, so the selection process won't be easy."

Top workers at more than 30 restaurants have beed nominated for Front of the House and Back of the House

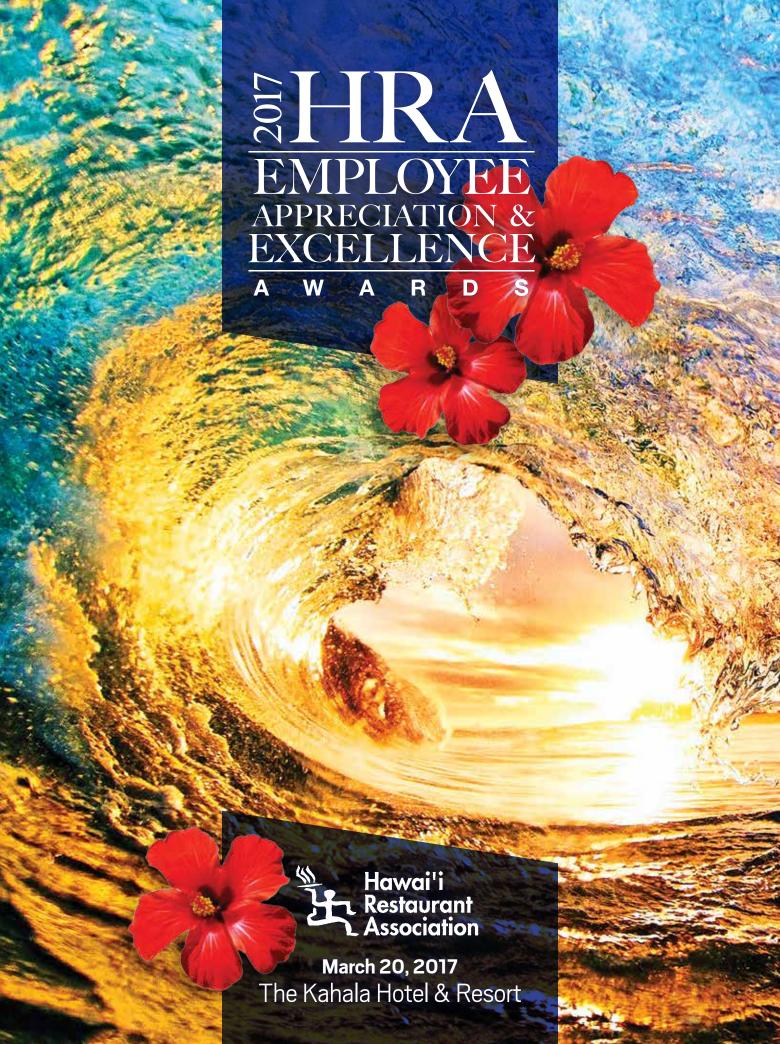
awards. Each of the nominations submitted by the member employees include high praise, indicating the esteem in which the employees are held at their workplaces.

For example, one of the Front of the House finalists is Michael Corpuz, who is listed as an "expeditor" at Hula Grill Waikiki.

"Michael is truly exceptional at what he does," Hula Grill Waikiki Assistant General Manager Nicholas Ware says in Corpuz' nomination submission. "As managers, we often talk about 'catching people doing the right thing.' Michael is constantly being 'caught' going above and beyond for our guests and his teammates. He is a commanding presence in our kitchen and ensures each plate is delivered to our guests exactly as they have requested. He has an eye for quality and detail ... Michael arrives with the same smile and a great attitude every day, which makes him an absolute pleasure to work with."

Another FOH nominee, Karina Polo Lung, who is a senior cashier at Gyotaku, "is always dedicated to exceeding our customers' expectations," says Alana Grace, assistant GM at the restaurant. "She has been working hard with keeping all training materials up-to-date and ensuring that our staff remains consistent which decreases our employee turnover."

Continued on Page 23







HRA MEMBER FINALISTS*

Jaimee Doyle

100 Sails Restaurant & Bar F&B Service Agent Front of House

Jade Velacruz

Bread & Butter Island Kitchen & Wine Bar Server – Front of House

Vonn Chee

Buho Cocina y Cantina Server — Front of House

Scott Yabui

Gyotaku Japanese Restaurant Cashier/Busser – Front of House

Karina Polo Lung

Gyotaku Japanese Restaurant Senior Cashier – Front of House

Brian Wong

Hula Grill Waikiki Bartender – Front of House

Annabelle LeJeune

Hula Grill Waikiki Lead Greeter – Front of House

Ashlet Decosta

Hula Grill Waikiki Lead Server – Front of House

Lydia Engel

Kona Brewing Company Server – Front of House

Tamara Tumacder

Outback Steakhouse Server – Front of House

Jerah Mikani

Pint & Jigger Lead Bartender —Front of House

Wade Shimizu

Shokudo Bartender – Front of House

John Romero

Strip Steak Waikiki Sommelier – Front of House

Hana Murray

Tiki's Grill and Bar Host – Front of House

Joseph Almoguera

100 Sails Restaurant & Bar Culinary — Back of House

Christine Jacinto

Bread & Butter Island Kitchen & Wine Bar Cook – Back of House

Magdalena Vazquez

Buho Cocina y Cantina Cook — Back of House

Jason Quach

Gyotaku Japanese Restaurant Cook – Back of House

Maxima Roach

Gyotaku Japanese Restaurant Cook – Back of House

Cesar Guzman

Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki Steward – Back of House

Melvin Tabudlo

Hula Grill Waikiki Cook – Back of House

Luck Katasila

Hula Grill Waikiki Cook – Back of House

Michael Corpuz

Hula Grill Waikiki Expeditor – Back of House

Krystal Kaulia

Hula Grill Waikiki Prep Cook – Back of House

Collin Brown

IL Gelato Hawaii Cook – Back of House

Stacy Rampton-Kraus

IL Gelato Hawaii Cook – Back of House

Nate Vargas

IL Gelato Hawaii Delivery Driver – Back of House

Nicole Mayer

Kona Brewing Company Line Cook – Back of House

Meghan Ellis

Palate Craft
Culinary – Back of House

Mel Ishekawi

Patisserie Baker – Back of House

Michael Ludwig

Shokudo Cook – Back of House

Zan Rivera

Strip Steak Waikiki Pastry Cook – Back of House

Richard Heine

Tiki's Grill and Bar Line Cook – Back of House

ALLIED FINALISTS*

Tami Medeiros

Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki Bartender – Front of House

Devin Arisue

Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki Server – Front of House

Adelyn Amsic

Kaiser Permanente Hostess – Front of House

Shirley Chu

Kaiser Permanente Nutrition Assistant Front of House

Shelly Kaniaupio

Pacific Beach Hotel

Cashier/Hostess – Front of House

Tod Shimabukuro

Pacific Beach Hotel
Food Runner – Front of House

Cathy Huanio

Tha Kahala Hotel and Resort Bartender – Front of House

Becky Frigge

TOBE Co.
Administrative Support
Front of House

Leila Perreira

Y. Hata Customer Service Representative Front of House

Art Aguinaldo

Hawaii Prince Hotel Banquet Houseperson Back of House

Diane Yang

Hawaii Prince Hotel
F&B Administrative Assistant
Back of House

Cesar Guzman

Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki Steward – Back of House

Rolie Bangloy

Kaiser Permanente Cook – Back of House

Alex Manog

Waikiki Parc Hotel Breakfast Cook – Back of House

Warlito Guzman

Y. Hata Forklift Driver — Back of House

*Finalists as of March 7, 2017

2016 New Restaurant of the Year Nominees

100 Sails Restaurant & Bar -Hawaii Prince Hotel

Bakery + Table

BLT Market Waikiki

Eating House 1849 - Waikiki

Encore Saloon

Fête

Flour & Barley Brick Oven Pizza

Koa Café

Kona Coffee Purveyors - Waikiki

Mahina & Suns

Maui Brewing Company – Waikiki

Moena Café - Kapolei Moku Kitchen Over Easy Hawaii Palate Craft & Eatery Piggy Smalls Senia Restaurant Stripsteak Waikiki Sushi Sho The Lanai -

Hyatt Centric

WISP Restaurant



Enjoying Growth, Facing Challenges

This is a very busy time for the restaurant industry in Hawaii. There are great new restaurants opening every month to join the great ones that have been operating for some time.

With the addition of new condo buildings comes retail space dedicated to restaurants. The west side is growing with many residential projects, followed by new malls . . . and more restaurants. Waikiki is Waikiki.

It's a great time to be working in the restaurant industry, with so many choices of where to work. Now more than ever, you can find a good restaurant job close to where you live. The economy is strong so people are dining out and frequenting more restaurants weekly.

But with all of this growth, comes challenges.

It continues to get harder for restaurant owners and operators to make ends meet. The issues topping the list: minimum wage increases (in fact, all labor costs), utility costs, inventory expenses and it goes on. Some of these in-

creases are the result of operating costs increasing in businesses that restaurants deal with. Many restaurants close because they simply can't raise menu prices high enough to offset the costs of doing business. Customers don't like to see prices go up, but there just isn't another way to make ends meet.

In addition to the cost of the restaurant labor, it is getting more difficult to find qualified staff to fill the vacant positions. So many restaurant owners need to spend more time and money training staff, hoping that they will stay with them and not move on to another restaurant. Plus, when there's not enough staff to handle the job, some employees are asked to work overtime. Which is $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the normal pay rate.

This just adds to the expenses and reduces any chance of the owner to make a profit.

The food service industry is ingrained in our lives; socializing, business meetings, relaxation and just because we all get hungry. Think about the world without restaurants—not

easy to do. Let's all continue to support and understand what the restaurant owners and operators are doing. We will continue to do our part to help in the effort.

The Hawaii Restaurant Association and Hawaii Restaurant Association Educational Foundation have some great things planned in support of the industry. 2017 will be an exciting year for all of us in the food service industry. Check out hawaiirestaurant.org for information or contact us at 944-9105.

We look forward to supporting the entire food service industry for many years to come.



Gregg Fraser

Gregg Fraser is executive director of the Hawaii Restaurant Association. For more information contact the HRA office at 944-9105 or email info@hawaiirestaurant.org.



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HRA MEMBER SPECIAL OFFER!

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Continued from Page 18

Line cook Richard Heine of Tiki's Grill & Bar, who is among the Back of the House award candidates, garnered equal praise from his supervisor.

"Richard, or 'Heine' is what we call him, is one of our best BOH team members. He is always super positive and always has a smile on his face. Heine is happy to help wherever and whenever needed and never asks what's in it for him," says Sammi O'Neill, assistant GM at Tiki's Grill & Bar.

And Zan Rivera, pastry cook at Stripsteak Waikiki, "always comes to work

with a smile on her face, positive attitude and eagerness to learn," says Heather Newton, supervisor at Stripsteak Waikiki. "No matter what task is put in front of her, she tackles it 110 percent."

Fraser notes that the morale boost the employees get from receiving an award "in front of their peers or other industry workers and icons will also make others strive to achieve the same."

The competition involves allied members such as Y. Hata, the Waikiki Parc Hotel, Kaiser Permanente, the Pacific Beach Hotel, The Kahala Hotel and Resort and Tobe Co.



Gregg Fraser

The judging for the awards, Fraser says, was performed by "an independent committee tasked to evaluate nominations for performance and service that goes above-and-

beyond the nominee's normal job responsibilities, outstanding and unusual service to the restaurant, to the guest, and/or to the community."



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ON THE TABLE: Mandatory Food Handler's Training

DOH's proposed safety code amendments could go into effect in mid-April

BY DAVID PUTNAM

Proposed amendments to Hawaii's food safety regulations that will require eateries across the Islands to undergo more formal training could take effect as soon as April.

Public hearings on the Hawaii Department of Health's Hawaii Administrative Rules, Chapter 50, "Food Safety Code" will conclude on March 17, with another week allowed to receive written comments concerning the proposed seven code changes.

"We then address all formal testimony received at the hearings and



Peter Oshiro

address it to the governor for his review," says Peter Oshiro, environmental health program manager for DOH's Sanitation/Food and Drug Branch. "If he feels that we have adequately

addressed all concerns," Gov. Ige will sign off on the regulations with an effective date, possibly by mid-April, Oshiro adds. "We do not control the governor's timetable once submitted, but we do not anticipate any delays."

Tom Frigge of Tobe Co. Food Safety, which offers training to Hawaii restau-



Tom Frigge

rant employees, points to one of the proposed codes that "will definitely have a huge impact to foodservice, as it affects literally every permit-holder in the state."

That amendment, No. 2 on

the Food Safety Code list, "requires mandatory food handler's education for the person(s) in charge at all food facilities to reduce the frequency of food borne illnesses in the state,"

according to the DOH.

"This means that any time a restaurant is open, there has to be a person working who has been certified in food safety," Frigge says. "That means there are thousands of restaurants around the state that will have to get at least one or two people trained in food safety.

"While there are many restaurants that want to do what's right and already have been sending workers to our food safety classes, for the vast majority this is something new."

Regarding mandatory food safety education, Oshiro says "all food facilities must have at least one person in charge that has formal food safety education. Peer reviewed studies have shown the obvious, that food facilities with food safety educated managers have fewer violations that are directly linked to causing food illnesses."

He adds that the mandatory food safety education rule "also codifies and allows a more robust 'homemade' or 'cottage food' industry by removing the 20 days of sale in a 120-day period restriction and allowing a max of one year. They must also have formal food safety training, and their products must be clearly labeled that the product is produced in a facility not inspected by the DOH."

Food handling and safety training firms like Kaneohe-based Tobe Co. are already gearing up for the new Food Safety Code. "Once the new regs are in place we will also offer to the public the basic food handler course," Frigge says.

"The DOH is trying to make this as easy as possible for restaurant managers by allowing just about any kind of training," he says. "Instead of first requiring ServSafe Manager Certification (a full-day course and a 90-question test graded by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation) like every other jurisdiction in the country, here even the basic ServSafe Food Handler course (a two-hour basic course) will be accepted.

"While basic training is a good first step, in the coming years the DOH has said that Manager Certification will be required."

Proposed Food Rules

The proposed amendments to the Department of Health's Hawaii Administrative Rules, Chapter 50, "Food Safety Code" are:

- 1. Near verbatim adoption of the 2013 FDA Model Food Code.
- 2. Requires mandatory food handler's education for the person(s) in charge at all food facilities to reduce the frequency of food borne illnesses in the state.
- 3. Will allow the DOH to deny renewal of food establishment permits for facilities that are in arrears to the state for late, or non-payment of fines and/ or penalties imposed by the DOH.
- 4. Allows for the posting of a "Closed" red placard on food establishments operating without valid DOH issued food permits.
- 5. Allows for a more robust "homemade" or cottage food industry by removing barriers that limit frequency of sales while at the same time requiring easy and low cost food handlers' education for these operators and labeling requirements that notify the public that these homemade foods were done in a facility not inspected by the DOH. The DOH reserves the right to investigate, embargo, seize and to halt the sales of any food product, including homemade foods, deemed to be a public health risk.
- 6. Removes the limit of 20 days of sale in a 120-day window for temporary of "special event" food permits. "Special event" permits will now have a maximum length of one year as with all other food permits.
- 7. Clarifies and consolidates previous HAR sections on mobile food establishments and temporary food sales into the rest of the food code as food establishments.

MORE THAN MORE THAN MORE THAN

Famous Hilo festival again beckons thousands of visitors from around the globe to celebrate hula

BY BRANDON BOSWORTH

he 54th annual Merrie Monarch Festival, which begins on April 16 and concludes on April 22, is in many ways perpetually rainy Hilo's moment in the sun as it draws thousands of attendees from around Hawaii as well as the Mainland and overseas.









Discovering Hilo

There's quite a bit more to Hilo than the Merrie Monarch Festival and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

University of Hawai'i - Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawaii: The Imiloa Astronomy Center seeks to advance the integration of science and indigenous culture through diverse exhibits, programs and events. For more information, visit imiloahawaii.org.

Lyman Museum and Mission House:

Originally built for New England missionaries David and Sarah Lyman in 1839, Lyman Museum and Mission House features the restored building as well as a collection of artifacts and natural history exhibits plus special exhibitions, archives and a gift shop. For more information,

visit lymanmuseum.org.

Liliuokalani Gardens: Located on Banyan Drive, Liliuokalani Gardens is a century-old, 30-acre Japanese garden originally dedicated to the Japanese immigrants who worked in the Hawaii Island sugar cane fields. The park features arching red bridges over fishponds, rock gardens, pagodas, Japanese stone lanterns and a teahouse. For more information, visit gohawaii.com.

Pana'ewa Rainforest Zoo: The only U.S. zoo located in a rainforest, the 12-acre Pana'ewa Rainforest Zoo has more than 60 species of animals on display, and the grounds feature more than 40 species of plants, flowers and trees. For more information, visit hilozoo.com.

(Top) Hilo's Imiloa Astronomy Center seeks to explore the connections between Native Hawaiian cultural traditions and astronomy.

(Center) Liliuokalani Gardens is a 30-acre Japanese garden located in Hilo.

(Bottom) Lyman Museum and Mission House in Hilo features a restored 1832 building as well as a collection of artifacts and natural history exhibits.

PHOTOS COURTESY ISLAND OF HAWAII VISITORS BUREAU



For George Applegate, former executive director of the Big Island Visitors Bureau (now the Island of Hawaii Visitors Bureau) and currently a consultant to The Grand Naniloa Hotel Hilo – a



George Applegate

DoubleTree by Hilton, the Big Island's largest city is the perfect spot to celebrate hula and Native Hawaiian culture in general.

"It's a beautiful, unspoiled city and an incubator for Hawai-

ian culture," he says. "Hilo is where the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance began." Glenn Kelena Vasconcellos of Hilo's Halau O Ke Anuenue has been involved



Glenn Vasconcellos

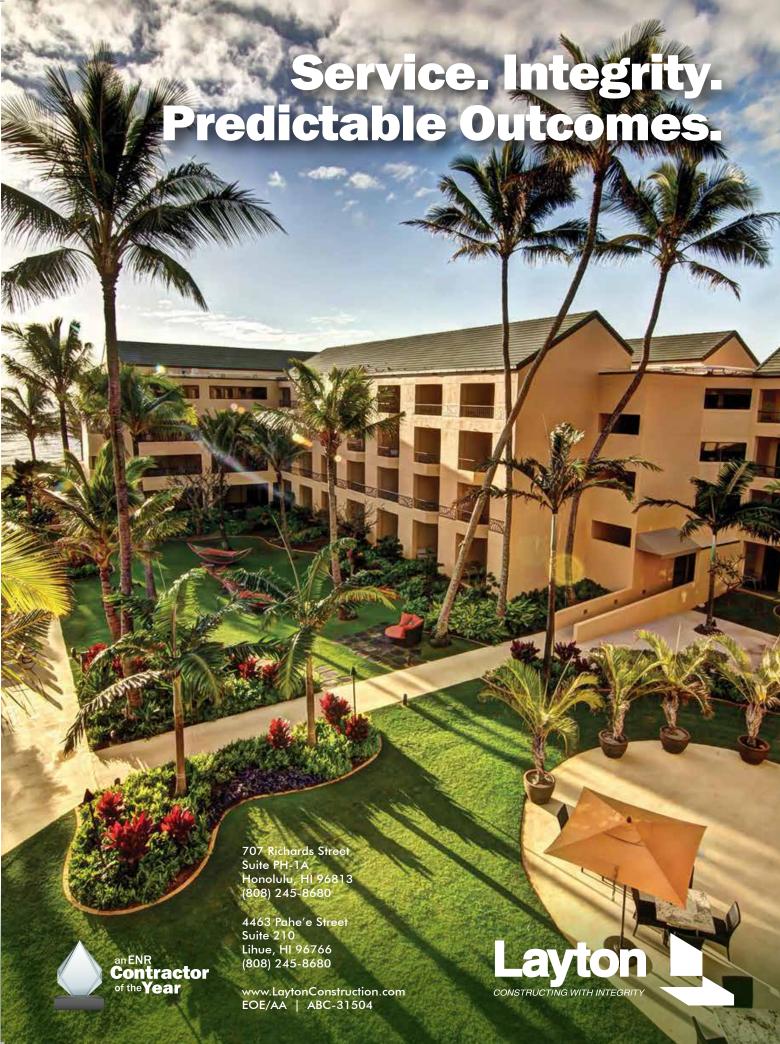
with the Merrie Monarch Festival off and on since 1977 as both a kumu hula and as hairstylist for the Royal Court. He agrees the event plays a "tremendous" role in the preservation and appreciation of

Native Hawaiian culture.

"The festival has grown a lot and brought back the true values of hula," he says. "Everything needs to be researched, especially when it comes to hula kahiko (traditional hula). You learn so much."

Applegate has always known the tourism potential of Hilo and the Merrie Monarch Festival, but is also well-aware of potential pitfalls.

"We in Hilo want tourism, but we don't want it in a way that will spoil the place we love," he says. "Keeping that sense of Hilo values is why I joined up with The Grand Naniloa Hotel Hilo."



Lavaman Triathlon Turns 20

Events marking the 20th anniversary of the Lavaman Triathlon begin March 31 at Waikoloa Beach Resort. Activities commence with a free, two-day health, sports and fitness expo and end on April 2 with a triathlon consisting of a 1-mile swim, 25-mile bike ride and 10K run.

Last year's Lavaman drew more 1,700 participants from nine countries and 39 states. About two-thirds of racers are from outside of Hawaii. "It's a hard race but a fun race," says Gerry Rott, who founded the Lavaman Triathlon in 1998.

Relying on word-of-mouth instead of advertising, Rott says the race has continued to grow in popularity. "It just took off," she says. "The first year we only had 83 participants. This year we have about 1,800."

The triathlon raises upward of \$50,000 a year for local charities. It is also a major source of fundraising for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's "Team in Training" program, helping them to raise over \$18 million since 1998.

Two races are scheduled in addition to the triathlon. On March 31, there will be a 5k sunset run. On April 2, the 15th annual

Lavakids Aquathlon takes place. The Lavakids Aquathlon features both swimming and running. More than 200 kids are participating this year.

Other upcoming Big Island events include:

April: The sixth annual Big Island Chocolate Festival runs April 28-29 at the Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel. This year's theme is "Worth Its Weight in Gold: The History of Chocolate." For more information, visit bigislandchocolatefestival.com.

May: AstroDay—A Celebration of Astronomy & Hawaiian Culture, will be held May 6 at Prince Kuhio Plaza. The event coincides with Astronomy Day, an international movement to share the joy of astronomy with the general population. AstroDay in Hilo will feature over 40 exhibits, demonstrations and activity areas as well as musical performances. For more information, visit mkaoc.org.

May: The Kona Orchid Society holds its annual plant and craft show on Mother's Day weekend, May 12-13, at the Old Airport Events Pavilion. For more information, visit konaorchidsociety.org.

August-September: The 46th annual Queen Lili'uokalani Race is the world's largest long distance outrigger canoe race. The race is set for Aug. 31-Sept. 4 and takes place along the Kona Coast. For more information, visit kaiopua.org.

November: The annual Kona Coffee Cultural Festival is scheduled for Nov. 3-12. The 10-day Festival offers a firsthand look at growing this world-famous crop as well as tastings, music,



"It's a beautiful, unspoiled city and an incubator for Hawaiian culture. Hilo is where the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance began."

—GEORGE APPLEGATE



Vasconcellos says the Merrie Monarch has a very positive effect on his hometown's economy. "The festival helps the vendors, the merchants, everyone in Hilo," he says. "People come and need a place to stay and they go out and spend money around town."

Dedicated to the memory of King David Kalakaua, the first Merrie Monarch Festival was held in 1963. Then and now, the major purpose of the festival is the perpetuation, preservation and promotion of the art of hula and the Hawaiian culture through education. The week-long festival includes art exhibits, craft fairs, demonstrations, performances, a parade that emphasizes the cultures of Hawaii and a three-day hula competition.

During the Merrie Monarch Festival, Applegate says The Grand Naniloa Hotel Hilo invites hula halau to use its facilities to practice and prepare for the big event. The hotel completed an extensive \$30 million renovation late last year. Located along Hilo Bay, the 70-acre property features more than 300 refurbished guest rooms and suites, two restaurants, an entertainment venue, and curated, rotating exhibits that highlight aspects of Hilo's history and Hawaiian culture.

While the Merrie Monarch remains the main draw, Applegate says visitors are staying longer in Hilo and experiencing more of what the city has to offer.

"They are going downtown and eating at local restaurants and enjoying the hospitality we're famous for,' he says. "Hilo is on a roll."





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TOUCHIT-THEN BOOK IT

Virtual reality (VR) takes the lead in hospitality marketing

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

A young Japanese visitor boards a catamaran. Instantly, the deck tilts under her feet. Shifting her weight, eyes wide, she glides past Kauai's spectacular Na Pali Coast.

"Amazing!" she cries, joining the shouts filling Nagoya's Chuden Hall: "It's beautiful!" "Wow!"

And, most critical to Hawaii's No. 1 industry: "I want to go!"

Mitsue Varley, vice president of Hawaii Tourism Japan, an arm of the



Mitsue Varley

Hawaii Tourism Authority, says 90 percent of the 444 college-age invitees at the Nagoya December tourism promotion have not been to the Islands.

But after viewing the HTA's

Virtual Reality (VR) tours of activities like the Na Pali sail, she says, "100 percent of the audience raised their hands (to show) that they wanted to come to Hawaii."

The VR tours, launched in September, are a worldwide hit, says Leslie



Leslie Dance

Dance, HTA's marketing and product development vice president.

The tours were wildly popular at a recent World Travel Mart in London, Dance says. "There's a lot of people in

Europe, in the UK, who have not been to Hawaii." HTA VR tours are available in "Japan, Europe, the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China—we use

them in China quite a bit—Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia ... in each of the major markets where we're trying to attract people to Hawaii."

Each VR tour—such as the Kauai sail and a hula performed on the Big Island of Hawaii—is a high-impact introduction to one of the four main islands: "On Oahu, you're paddle-boarding with a professional surfer with Diamond Head in the background," says Dance. "On Maui, you're with one of the original crew members of Hokulea swimming under a waterfall in Hana."

Irresistible?

Not yet—at least for some industry professionals.

"For a time, we had links to VRX 360-degree virtual hotel room photos," says Mike Brown, Panda Travel online travel services supervisor, referencing a recent VR prototype. "There was a fee to link to them, and because there were so few, they were not being utilized enough to justify the fee."

The HTA's VR tours can be downloaded for free and are tailored for Samsung Android headsets. And while VR is not yet a consumer-marketing staple, it has shown its value elsewhere.

"Our primary use of virtual reality

has been in design, not in consumer promotions," says Avi Mannis, Hawaiian Airlines senior vice presi-

The Hawaii Tourism

PHOTO COURTESY
HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY

Authority's Kauai Virtual Reality tour off the Na Pali Coast includes a song composed during the sail.

dent of marketing, in reference to a



Avi Mannis

recent Hawaiian Airlines' product introduction. "As we have redesigned much of our cabin product, we have been able to leverage consumer-oriented products like the (VR) Oculus to help

visualize cabins and spaces and refine our designs."

Mannis says the airline has often re-used its VR "for consumer and trade promotion. There's a lot of hype in this





HTA's VR tours are offered on high-profile webpages. Tabippo, for example, claims 2-3 million page views and 20,000 to 30,000 readers per online article.

That's in addition to events like Nagoya's Chuden Hall promotion. Nearly 6,000 university students attended recent promotions throughout Japan, says Varley. Of those, 1,276 students experienced HTA's VR tours.

The result? "It is early to say, but (the promotions) definitely changed the perception of Hawaii's image," says Varley. "Most of (the students) think Hawaii is like Guam or Okinawa, which it is not." Moreover, she says, the tours created a reason to visit the Islands, and created a spike

on social networking services' sharing/ likes and exposures.

Here in the Islands, VR is increasingly indispensible for real estate developments targeting global customers.

"VR technology has been an essential tool for our sales team and has resulted in increased lead generation and sales," says Lauren Salzer, real estate marketing director at Kauai's ultra-lux-



Lauren Salzer

ury Timbers Resorts-Hokuala. "We are always looking to invest in the newest technology and practices that buyers are looking for when purchasing a luxury second home."

Preferred by young, educated travelers and luxury homebuyers? VR is starting to look like solid marketing.

"It's becoming more mainstream," says Dance. "Everybody that experienced (HTA VR) and heard about it got very excited—not only because it showcases the Islands in a beautiful, culturally-astute kind of way," she says, "but also because it provides a great new marketing tool for those of us in the industry to promote the Islands."

Varley agrees. "To capture a future audience," she says, "high technology contents and online reach are key."

Going Virtual?

Download Hawaii Tourism Authority VR tours from the Google Play App Store and play them on Samsung Android phone headsets (requires Android 4.4 and up).

As a promotional tool, the HTA has also produced green cardboard Google headsets that can play the VR tours.

Go to Google Play » App Store » Let Hawaii Happen:

https://play.google.com/store/apps/ details?id=com.framestorevr.hawaiivr&hl=en

space, though, and when you strip that away it's still not clear to us that there's a return on these technologies."

Tech-savvy twenty-somethings, though, are eating it up.

"We have a project called 'VEBOSS' in the Japan market to capture its young-generation, first-time-traveler target audience," says Varley. Along with other online programs, she says,



\mathbf{HIP} at SKY Waikiki



Dean Nakasone, Benjamin Rafter, Mufi Hannemann, Everlyn Kidani, Irvin Kidani, Evelyn Shiroma, Matthew Bailey

PHOTOS BY NATHALIE WALKER

The Hawaii Lodging and **Tourism Association** honored Everlyn Kidani of Aqua Oasis Hotel as its March Kahiau awardee during the Hospitality Industry Pau Hana (HIP) at SKY Waikiki.



Kahau Manzo, Relana Teasdale, Felmar Yadao



Elton and Nadine Murata



Melissa De Franca, Berit Aljand, Martina Kostalova, Kevin Rivera, Isabella Brostrom Heidi Kalepa, Janice Wakatsuki, Judy Conching, Douglas Okada





Cristina Hunt, Karen Yonemoto, Marlon Henobio, Brian Kovaloff, Craig Matsuura



Alyson Wee, Marie Moore-Dailey, Chris Ching, Pilita Winchatz, **Jacqueline Emery**



Will Caraway, Dricka Thobois



Robin Graf, Lisa Reddinger, Karen Wataru Nakaoka, Matt Pickett



Jennifer Batara, Donna Schmidt



Andrew Smith, Adam Miyasato, Ian Yoneshige, John Quijano



Angela Momiyama, Corey Quinones, Melissa Viveros, Jason Rego, Martha Seroogy, Terry Dowsett





Rob Robinson, Chelsea Tsuchida, Sean Knox



Irvin Kidani, Everlyn Kidani, Jason Rego, Chris Dela Calzada, Daryllynn Gandaoli



Kolia Moua, Elizabeth Churchill, Lisa Weir Vines

HLTA's Na Po'e Pa'ahana Awards

Andy Ishimine, Doma Ferreira, Eileen Rosaro, Kawika Maeda, Fernando Siliezar

PHOTOS BY NATHALIE WALKER

Outstanding employees in Hawaii's hospitality industry were honored by the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association at the 27th annual Na Po'e Pa'ahana (the hard-working people) Awards. A total of 14 awards were presented and almost 1,000 employees, family members and industry gathered for the luncheon ceremony on Jan. 12 at the Sheraton Waikiki Resort.



George Julian, Carissa Suguitan, Travis Waltman, Arnold Bala Jerome Dumpit, Danielo Balantac





Scott Ingwers, Alexandra Roth, Mufi Hannemann, Malia Kahale, Dean Nakasone, Jared Higashi



Marsha Kapu, Simeon Miranda, Carol Lopes, Sheryl Tsugawa



Roldan Blando, Jocelyn Rubonal, Peter Colburn, Ronnie Rodriguez, Jezer Gadiano, Pat Radona



Brandon Kaya, Reid and Casey Obatake, Tomo Kuriyama

Ramelb Joins Hilton Hawaiian Village

Deborah Ramelb has joined the Hilton Hawaii Village Waikiki Beach Resort as the assistant director of human resources.



Deborah Ramelb

Ramelb joins the resort from Hawaii Pacific University, where as the HR director-staff relations, she was a strategic business partner to the president, vice president and deans while handling a variety

of other HR responsibilities.

Prior to that she was with Kamehameha Schools as its client services manager, human resources, working closely with the division vice presidents and senior leadership to meet compliance regulations and financial goals. She has also held HR positions at Hilton Grand Vacations, Wyndham Vacation Ownership, Maui Community College and Hawaiian Electric Company.

Ramelb holds a bachelor's in business administration from the University of Hawaii - West Oahu as well as a master's in human resources management from UH-Manoa.

Pletcher Joins MVCB

Leanne Pletcher has been named director of public relations for the Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau (MVCB) where she will be responsible for managing media relations,



Leanne Pletcher

promotions and special events for Maui, Molokai and Lanai.

She will focus on developing and executing strategic communication programs that align with MVCB's parent company, the Hawaii Tourism

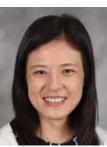
United States managed by the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau, the Hawaii Tourism Authority and Maui County.

Pletcher brings more than 28 years of experience in communications and marketing to MVCB. She most recently served as director of marketing communications at the Hilton Waikoloa Village from 2003-2017. Previously she was executive director for the Kona Association of Performing Arts in Kailua-Kona and was director of communications at Holy Cross Resources Inc. in South Bend, Ind.

Hasegawa Promoted at Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki **Beach Resort**

Yan Hasegawa has been promoted to director of revenue management wholesale at Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort.

Hasegawa, who holds a master's



Yan Hasegawa

in business administration, began her career with Hilton properties in 2000 at Hilton Waikoloa Village as assistant director of Far East sales and service and later became the property's director of Far

East sales and service. She joined the Hilton Hawaiian Village revenue management team in 2013 as the ADRM of planning and analysis before transitioning into ADRM wholesale.

"She has proved to be indispensable in controlling inventory, pricing and managing wholesale markets which account for a significant amount of business for the Hilton Hawaiian Village," says Debi Bishop, managing director of the resort.

6 Join Pacific **Beach Team**

Pacific Beach Hotel has named six new appointments: Joseph Yamaoka as director of operations; Edward "Kahau" Manzo as food and beverage director; Ryan Nomura as director of outlets; Alexandra Nagelvoort as assistant director of finance; Rhoderika Miranda as senior catering sales manager; and Leon Bolivar as marketing manager.

The 839-room hotel that opened on Waikiki Beach in 1969 is currently undergoing a \$115 million redevelopment to become the 'Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach this fall.

Yamaoka will oversee all operating departments. He was on the opening team at Four Seasons Resort Oahu at Ko Olina and served as general manager of Agua Hotels & Resorts and Marc Resorts in Honolulu.

Manzo will lead all culinary operations for the resort's new F&B outlets. Previously he was director of F&B at Sheraton Kona Resort and Spa at Keauhou Bay on the Big Island.

Nomura oversees all front-of-house operations. Nomura previously worked for HFM Foodservice and at Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa.

Nagelvoort is responsible for the dayto-day finances of the property. She previously was an accounting manager at Aqua-Aston Hospitality where she oversaw the Surfjack Hotel & Swim Club and the Kauai Beach Hotel.

Miranda comes to her new post after serving at Wailea Beach Marriott Resort and Spa on Maui.

Bolivar will manage the strategic planning and execution of all hotel marketing and promotion initiatives and projects. He was a digital advertising specialist at Hawaii News Now.



Turnout for HLTA's Tourism Day Tops 300

More than 300 people attended the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association's second annual Tourism Day at the Capitol on Feb. 21.

The event included a Tourism Expo with exhibits by the HLTA, hotels and other tourism businesses, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions.

HLTA President and CEO Mufi Hannemann and his staff presented an educational session. Also offering remarks were Senate President Ron Kouchi, Tourism Chairs Sen. Glenn Wakai and Rep. Richard Onishi, former Speaker of the House Calvin Sav. Rep. James Tokioka and Department of Transportation Director Ford Fuchigami.

Continued on Page 23

Honolulu Festival Showcases Arts, Exhibits, Parade and Fireworks

The 23rd annual Honolulu Festival features performances at the Hawaii Convention Center, Waikiki Beach Walk and Ala Moana Center on March 11 and 12.

Since 1995, the Honolulu Festival has brought tens of thousands of visitors to Hawaii from Asia-Pacific. This year an estimated 5,000 people will participate in the festival, comprising more than 150 groups from the Pacific Rim and Hawaii.

The celebration, open to the public, includes music, dance, crafts, arts, exhibits and special presentations and culminates in Waikiki with a parade and fireworks show.

"We are proud to bring the Honolulu Festival to the people of Hawaii and provide them with the opportunity to experience and interact with the cultures of Asia and the Pacific," said Tsukasa Harufuku, president of the Honolulu Festival Foundation which hosts the event. "With free admission and a variety of entertainment and events, the festival is perfect for families and children of all ages."

The festival's goal is to help perpetuate cultural and ethnic ties between the people of Asia-Pacific and Hawaii, a commitment conveyed in this year's theme: "Cultural Harmony, Journey to Peace."





Honolulu Festival Highlights

Cultural Performances. Events and Exhibits

March 11, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., March 12, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Cultural music and dance performances will be held at three locations: the Hawaii Convention Center, Waikiki Beach Walk and Ala Moana Center. In addition, the Hawaii Convention Center will feature a wide array of cultural activities, arts, crafts, exhibits, and foods appealing to all ages, including:

- Ennichi Corner: Designed specifically for children, the Ennichi Corner will offer fun, hands-on activities inspired by the traditional Japanese Saints Day festival. Children will be introduced to customary Japanese games, crafts and traditions.
- Craft Fair and Exhibitions: Crafters will display a wonderful variety of cultural art and exhibits.

Story and Movie Presentation: "Persona Non Grata"

March 11 and 12, Noon-3:30 p.m. Movie-lovers will enjoy the fascinating story of a new film about a Japanese diplomat during World War II who helped save over 6,000 Jewish refugees from the Nazis. The movie premiered in U.S. theaters earlier this year and will be screened at the Hawaii Convention Center following a story presentation by Akira Kitade. Admission is free.

Grand Parade

March 12, 4 p.m.

Following Sunday's cultural performances, Kalakaua Avenue will take center stage for the Grand Parade. Festival groups and performers from Asia Pacific and Hawaii will dance, sing and stage cultural demonstrations for the delight of residents and visitors lined along the sidewalk. The highly

entertaining parade will also feature marching bands and floats, highlighted by the fire-breathing dragon Daijayama. The Grand Parade is recognized by the City of Honolulu and will be presented with a Legacy Award for its achievements and continued service as a mediator between the City of Honolulu and its sister-city, Nagaoka City (Japan).

Nagaoka Fireworks Show

March 12, 8:30 p.m.

The Honolulu Festival will conclude with the spectacular Nagaoka Fireworks Show over Waikiki Beach. The fireworks will be shot from barges positioned off the midpoint of Waikiki Beach.

Educational **School Tours**

March 10, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. (by invitation only), Hawaii Convention Center Hawaii school students will take a cultural field trip to the Hawaii Convention Center to interact with visiting performers and artisans. Students will get an exclusive behindthe-scenes look at many of the Festival exhibits and activities, including taiko drumming, calligraphy, and storytelling.

Friendship Gala

March 10, 7-8:30 p.m., Hawaii **Convention Center**

The Friendship Gala features exciting cultural entertainment by Honolulu Festival performers, along with delicious cuisine from Oahu's premier restaurants. Funds raised by the Friendship Gala support the Honolulu Festival Foundation's educational and cultural programs in Hawaii. Tickets: \$90 per person (\$70 under age 21; free for age 6 and under). Available at honolulufestival.com.

HLTA Broadens Reach with Crowdfunding

The first half of the year equates to several flagship events for the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association, including the Na Po'e Pa'ahana Awards in January, the Citizen-Scholar Awards in April and the Visitor Industry Charity Walk, which is held statewide throughout May. This annual walk is one of Hawaii's biggest hospitality industry events, where hotels, HLTA Island Chapters and members as well as our county offices and police departments all come together to give back to our communities.

Since it began in 1978, the Charity Walk has raised over \$30 million, which has helped hundreds of local charities throughout the state. Last year, more than 14,000 walkers participated to help the Charity Walk raise a record \$2.2 million plus and helped 350 of Hawaii's nonprofit organizations—another record number. Now the Charity Walk is in its 39th year, and the HLTA is taking our fundraising efforts to new heights by introducing a new online platform that will bring our fundraising campaign almost entirely online and help the Charity Walk reach a wider audience.

This new platform will allow participants to register or donate to the Charity Walk through Peer-to-Peer Crowdfunding, which empowers supporters to fundraise through their networks of family, friends and social networks. Supporters can easily sign up or donate using a mobile phone, iPad or computer. Many national organizations have used P2P crowdfunding platforms for their runs/walks and events, including Relay for Life, American Heart Association, Susan G. Komen, etc.

Crowdfunding is best visualized by a pyramid, where the statewide Charity Walk fundraising goal is at the top, followed by each island's walk, then the large groups of hotels, business and nonprofit organizations that participate, down to the individual donors and walkers. When an employee registers to walk through their employer, their donation supports the fundraising goals of the organization or business they are affiliated with, which contributes to the island's overall goals, and finally the

entire Charity Walk campaign.

They can donate via a link that the hotel or department sends out, or they can visit the donation page for the island they want to support, which will be located on the Charity Walk website, charitywalkhawaii.org. That same employee can also fundraise among their family and friends by sharing the donation page linked to the same department, hotel or business and island.

For the past 12 years, the HLTA, in partnership with the state Department of Education and Honolulu Star-Advertiser, has honored one outstanding senior from every public high school in Hawaii who best exemplifies citizenship in the classroom and community at the Citizen-Scholar Awards. These exceptional students are recognized not only for their scholastic or athletic achievement, but also for their contributions to making our state a better place for all. Each student will be awarded with a \$1,000 scholarship for their continuing education, recognition in the newspaper and a luncheon on April 27 at The Modern Honolulu to acknowledge their accomplishments and future endeavors.

Last year, HLTA presented an additional \$2,500 scholarship to the top student from Oahu as well as the top student representing the Neighbor Islands to help them advance their studies. This year, in recognition of our 70th anniversary, we will revise the format by presenting additional \$2,500 scholarships

Mufi Hannemann

to the top student from each countv: Oahu, Hawaii Island, Kauai and Maui. Mufi Hannemann is president and CEO of the Hawaii Lodging

and Tourism Asso-

ciation (HLTA).



Community Programs Vital to Hawaii's Future

Each year, the Hawaii Tourism Authority proudly supports community groups dedicated to sharing Hawaii's distinctive legacy with the rest of the world.

In 2017, HTA is providing more than \$3.3 million in funding to 128 organizations statewide as part of our Kukulu Ola, Aloha Aina and Community Enrichment programs.

These programs serve a specific purpose, supporting groups committed to perpetuating Hawaiian culture (Kukulu Ola), preserving Hawaii's natural resources (Aloha Aina), and showcasing festivals and events (Community Enrichment).

Kukulu Ola supports community groups, practitioners, craftsmen, musicians and artists who are fostering a greater understanding of Hawaiian culture through activities that engage the public. The program helps these groups and individuals share Hawaiian values inherent to their respective practice. HTA is supporting 31 groups with funding through Kukulu Ola.

Aloha Aina supports efforts that manage, protect and revitalize Hawaii's natural resources by means of a community-based approach. The program focuses on restoring the value of stewardship and instilling a greater sense of respect, awareness and responsibility to care for Hawaii's environment. HTA is supporting 30 groups with funding through Aloha Aina.

The Community Enrichment Program supports projects, festivals and events in the areas of cultural tourism. eco-tourism, agri-tourism, edu-tourism, techno-tourism, health and wellness and sports. These programs provide quality experiences for residents and visitors, and also strengthen and diversify Hawaii's tourism industry. HTA is supporting 67 groups with funding through the Community Enrichment Program.

We applaud these community groups, organizers and volunteers for their commitment to making the Hawaiian Islands a more meaningful place for present and future generations of residents and visitors.

All of these programs connect the significance of Hawaii's heritage to the potential of our future, nurturing a broader appreciation for the Hawaiian culture and our natural environment, and an unparalleled community spirit.

Tourism, Hawaii's No. 1 industry and leading provider of jobs, benefits from these programs. Visitors come here to experience the collective and individual uniqueness of our remarkable islands, and be invigorated by a culture, people and way of life unmatched by any other destination.

The 128 community programs HTA is supporting this year are delivering on that promise. We know from our research the importance visitors place on programs that celebrate Hawaiian culture, Hawaii's environment and community festivals.

First-time visitors dream of a Hawaii vacation and want to experience the authenticity of our Islands, communities and people as much as they do our beautiful beaches and sunny weather.

This is especially true for millennials, the younger generation of global travelers Hawaii needs to reach and entice into becoming repeat visitors who will keep our tourism industry strong and vibrant.

Repeat visitors keep coming back because they realize how much more there is to experience in the Hawaiian Islands, and how much more our communities, people and culture want to share with them.

Mahalo to the organizations who make these community programs thrive, and help make the Hawaiian



Islands such a magnificent place to live and visit.

George Szigeti is president and CEO of the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA), the state's tourism agency.

Continued from Page 18

Nordstrom Named LUANA Manager

Lisa Nordstrom joins Fairmont Kea Lani as manager of Luana, the Maui resort's lobby bar. Nordstrom will oversee all



Lisa Nordstrom

Luana operations as well as its ongoing series of special events.

"We are thrilled to welcome Lisa," says Charles Head, Fairmont Kea Lani general manager. "Lisa's experience running top-

notch bars and restaurants across the country combined with her passion and enthusiasm for service excellence is the perfect match for the energy of LUANA's bar."

Most recently, Nordstrom was restaurant manager at Tommy Bahama Restaurant in Wailea, Maui, She brings more than 20 years of progressive restaurant management positions with establishments including Kingfish Kitchen and Cocktails, Copeland's New Orleans and Chopstix, A Dueling Piano Bar.

Parade to Honor **Prince Kuhio**

The Prince Kuhio Festival, a series of events, ceremonies and activities celebrating the birthday of Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole, will include the annual Prince Kuhio Commemorative Parade at 10 a.m. on March 25 on Kalakaua Avenue. After the parade, the Prince Kuhio Hoʻolaule'a and Hoʻike'ike will be held at Kapiolani Park.

Kuhio was a prince of the reigning House of Kalakaua when the government of Queen Lili'uokalani was overthrown in 1893. He later assumed the highest elected position in Hawaii as delegate to the U.S. House from 1902 to 1922, and led the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921. He also founded the first Hawaiian Civic Club on Dec. 7, 1918.

March 26 has been designated as a state holiday honoring his birth.

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