

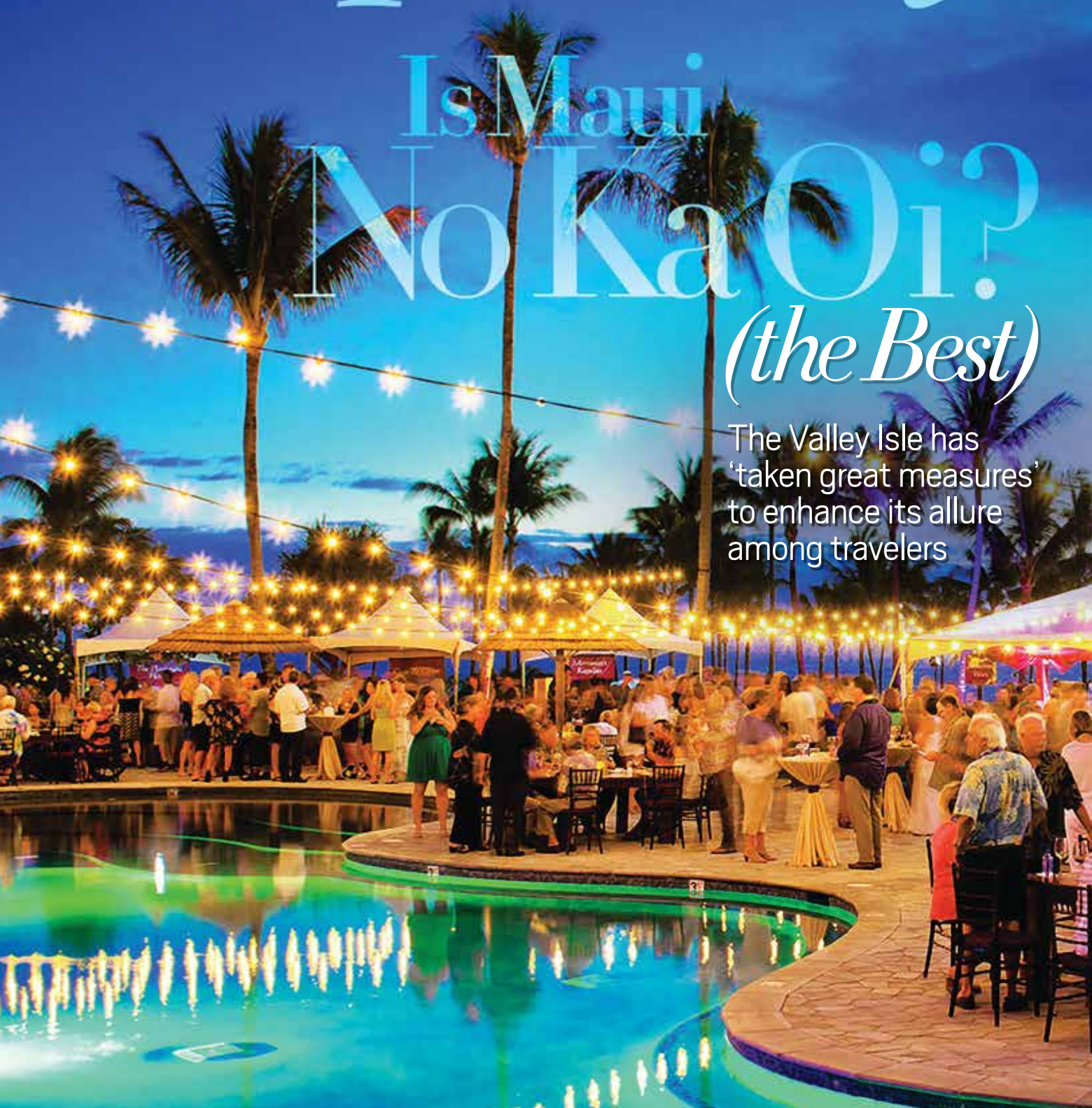
INSIDE: TWO HOSPITALITY EXPOS COMING SOON \* CONCIERGE TECH

# HAWAII *hospitality*

LODGING & FOODSERVICE | MAY/JUNE 2019

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## checking in

The Valley Isle's ability to maintain a high number of repeat visitors reflects on Maui's "diversity of choices" in lodging and activities, according to the Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau (MVCB). We also recap some festive happenings taking place on the island over the next several months, including the 20th annual Maui Film Festival.

Honolulu is in for a double treat in May and July with two tourism-related trade shows that will bring in hundreds of vendors and products for show-goers to ogle and sample. Check out our story inside for details on the inaugural Hawaii Hotel and Restaurant Show on May 29-30 at the Hawaii Convention Center and the 25th annual Hawaii Lodging, Hospitality and Foodservice Expo on July 10-11 at the Neal Blaisdell Center.

The Hawaii Restaurant Association has new leadership and is tackling such issues facing the food and beverage industries such as ways to generate skilled workers for an already-tight labor market.

Being a traditional concierge is all about going the extra mile to help ensure guests enjoy their stay, top concierges tell *Hawaii Hospitality* magazine.

In this issue we also take a look at the Hospitality Information Technology Council (HITC). Formed in 2017 by the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association, the IT Council is helping the Islands' travel industry integrate its ever-evolving tech capabilities.

Aloha!

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# There's Something About Sunflowers

## Maui fields produce gourmet kitchen oil as well as biodiesel fuel

There's something about sunflowers. Something so alluring, so compelling that **Vincent van Gogh** devoted years of his life to creating two different series of sunflower paintings. Something so timelessly beautiful that locals and visitors alike trek to the Maui Tropical Plantation to view and photograph—and be photographed with—acres and acres of sunflowers.

But there's more going on here than “purty flowers” that almost seem to smile back at you.

In partnership with Maui Tropical Plantation, Pacific Biodiesel is growing 115 acres of sunflowers at the base of the West Maui Mountains on the Island's central plain. The result might eventually be enough for Maui to change its official flower from pink roses to sunflowers. (Wouldn't that look good on a *pau* rider and horse?)

“As eye-catching symbols of sustainability, these beautiful blooms showcase Pacific Biodiesel's community-based model of agriculture, clean energy and food,” the company says. “They give us hope for Hawaii's green economy future.”

In all, Pacific Biodiesel has more than 250 acres under cultivation.

The harvest, amazingly, can be used to produce both the fuel that powers your diesel 4x4 double-cab pickup truck and the oil to stir-fry your veggies.

The kitchen oil, a new development for Pacific Biodiesel under its subsidiary Maiden Hawaii Naturals, is quickly grabbing the attention of some top chefs. **Tylun Pang** of Ko restaurant at the Fairmont Kea Lani at Wailea, says guests have commented favorably on the local sunflower oil's “freshness” and “nutty flavor,” and he's been inspired to create dishes based on



**Maui Sunflower and Hawaiian Macadamia culinary oils**

sunflower oil:

“We use this cold-pressed Maui Sunflower Oil in our fresh dressings and stir-fry dishes that we do for the restaurant,” Pang says. “It's light and flavorful, and it actually doesn't mask any of the local ingredients. It's like gold in a bowl. I actually think it's our Maui Sunshine. We call this Maui EV SO—extra virgin sunflower oil.”

At Maui Tropical Plantation's Mill House, Chef **Taylor Ponte** uses Maui Sunflower Oil as a primary oil in his kitchen, and the restaurant's mixology team uses Maiden Hawaii Naturals' Hawaii macadamia oil in a couple of signature cocktails.

The company expects to have 12-ounce bottles of Maui Sunflower Oil available for consumers in the near future.

(The company is also expanding into natural skincare products with its Kuleana label.)

And the way they grow these remarkably versatile flowers tells a happy eco tale of its own, good for the Island's—and the globe's—ecology while spreading economic benefits. A few key points:

- Sunflowers mature in just 100 days, “from soil to oil,” with three crops possible annually.

- The average yield is 100 gallons of oil per acre.
- They're non-GMO.
- No herbicides or pesticides are used.
- Compost is locally sourced from Maui EKO Systems.
- Machinery involved in farming, including the combines used for harvesting, runs entirely on self-produced biodiesel.
- Bee hives on-site house up to 60,000 bees each, which are used for pollinating sunflowers. Hives are maintained by Honey Hand Hawaii.
- Farming practices are informed by the ancient Hawaiian moon calendar. And it all started at the dump, er, landfill, back in 1995.

Longtime Maui mechanic **Bob King** ran King's Diesel, and while



**Bob King**

servicing the landfill's generators he noticed large amounts of used cooking oils being dumped. Seeing an opportunity, and a travesty, he began collecting used oil from Maui restaurants

and converting it into biodiesel fuel that was initially used to power those same generators.

What's the big deal with bio fuel?

Biodiesel produces 86 percent fewer carbon emissions than fossil fuels, making it the cleanest liquid fuel available on Earth. It works with all diesel engines built after 1993, either as a sole source or in a mix with regular diesel fuel. Today, Pacific Biodiesel, the first retail biodiesel supplier in the United States, annually collects two to three million gallons of used cooking oils from around Hawaii. Imagine all that yuck seeping into water supplies instead.

All those oils are transported to

**Continued on Page 9**

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# 'We Will Achieve Our Goal'

## New Executive Director Sheryl Matsuoka launches bold initiatives in 2019

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

If anybody has a full plate in 2019, it's Sheryl Matsuoka, new executive director of the Hawaii Restaurant Association.

With about 4,000 food and beverage businesses in the state and approximately 700 HRA member-locations statewide, Matsuoka is meeting the HRA's challenges—and those of Hawaii's restaurant and foodservice industry—head-on.



**Sheryl Matsuoka**

According to the HRA and its affiliate, the National Restaurant Association (NRA), one leading challenge in 2019 is a tight labor market. Taco Bell, for instance, recently hosted nearly 600 "hiring parties" to fill job openings nationwide.

"With total restaurant and foodservice employment projected to top 15 million in 2019," states a recent posting on the NRA's webpage, "recruiting and retaining employees will be among the top challenges faced by many operators."

In response, Matsuoka is pushing for more training and recruitment of the new generation of Hawaii restaurant employees.

The ProStart Program—supported by the HRA and on the curriculum of 12 Hawaii public high schools—provides two years of training in restaurant management and culinary skills.

Matsuoka believes the program can do more. HRA, she says, would like to "expand the ProStart Program into every one of our 35-plus public (high)



**HRA Incoming Chair Tom Jones, NRA Director Keith Stephenson, HRA Executive Director Sheryl Matsuoka and HRA Legislative Committee Chair Victor Lim at Tiki's Grill and Bar**

schools." She also wants to make program training available to adults.

This will likely provide more skilled employees for Hawaii restaurant and foodservice businesses, and more employment opportunities for Hawaii's graduating high school seniors.

## Skillsets and Sushi

Justine Perkins, a teacher at Kaiser High School and part-time pastry chef at 3660 on the Rise in Kaimuki, is currently holding



**Justine Perkins**

ProStart Program classes for nearly 100 Kaiser students. Perkins says ProStart training closely aligns with what she received as a culinary student at Leeward and Kapiolani Community Colleges, "but now the kids are getting it in high school."

The program teaches them the basics,

she says, which are reinforced by ProStart mentors.

"We're in a partnership with Roy's in Hawaii Kai," Perkins says. "So (the class) went there, and they did a demo and a mini-introduction to the restaurant industry."



**Lyndsey Simone**

"Chef Lyndsey at Roy's did a hand-rolled breakfast sushi—rice, *nori*, scrambled eggs, Spam or bacon. She demonstrated one, and she had the whole class do one. Then they got to eat it. That was a win all around."

A participating ProStart high school is "paired with a certain restaurant and a certain chef," she explains. Lyndsey Simone, executive chef at Roy's in Hawaii Kai, is Kaiser's official mentor.

When her students complete Pro-

**Continued on Page 10**



Pacific Biodiesel's refinery outside of Hilo on the Big Island, and then blended with other products, including yellow grease, brown grease, soybean oil, cottonseed oil, canola oil and tallow, as well as sunflower oil of a grade not suitable for human consumption, producing 5.5 million gallons of high-grade biodiesel fuel annually

## Sunflowers & Photos

- For more information on Pacific Biodiesel, go to [biodiesel.com](http://biodiesel.com).
- Admission to view and photograph the sunflowers is free, with parking at Maui Tropical Plantation, 1670 Honoapiilani Hwy. For more information, visit [mauitropicalplantation.com](http://mauitropicalplantation.com).

And with the addition of a custom-designed processor, the Big Island plant is able to supply its own boiler fuel while diverting 270 tons of trap grease from landfills each month.

One thing led to another, and now the sunflowers grown on former sugarcane land go to another part of the facility for pressing into gourmet oils for human consumption.

Not to get too geeky about it, but the difference between sunflower oil used in cooking and sunflower oil used in biodiesel is this: Biodiesel is produced through a chemical process called transesterification, which converts oils and fats of natural origin into fatty acid methyl esters. Simple as that.

Pacific Biodiesel also sells its technology to biodiesel producers, building a dozen facilities on the Mainland and in Japan, and has completed expansions of several of those plants.

The company employs about 100 people, and folks tend to stay for a while—Pacific Biodiesel was just named, again, among the best places in

Hawaii to work. It must be good working on the forefront of saving the planet. *Have a good story about a good person in the Hawaii hospitality industry? Please e-mail me at [don@tradepublishing.com](mailto:don@tradepublishing.com).*



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*Continued from Page 8*

Start, Jenkins says, “they don’t necessarily go on to culinary careers, but a lot of them will work in the foodservice industry while they’re going to school.”

And there are always the exceptions.

“I have one that started in the summertime after graduation (last year) as a dishwasher at Roy’s,” Perkins says. Now, says Simone, he is “learning some prep cook responsibilities. I was pleased that having the students over to the restaurant made an impact on him to apply.”

## Collaboration and Capital

Since 2016, says HRA Director of Membership Relations Holly Kessler, the HRA has increased its membership by 50 percent.

“Goals for 2020 are to continue to grow membership, which is possible with many strong partnerships we have worked to establish over the past three years,” Kessler says. “One such relationship is through the NRA Unified Partnership Agreement, which allows us to include national chain restaurants in our membership base.”

Matsuoka says her prior experience as executive director for several Hawaii trade associations has taught her to “leverage ‘social capital’—a concept of building, nurturing, serving and supporting others to build an expanding network of contacts able to share knowledge and skills to the benefit of all.”

***“We would like to ... extend our programs to adults looking to enter the hospitality industry.”***

— SHERYL MATSUOKA

In this spirit, she says, the HRA is pursuing its goals in collaboration with the Hawaii Foodservice Industry Association, the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association, Chamber of Commerce Hawaii and the Retail Merchants of Hawaii.



Culinary students at Kapiolani Community College

“One of (the HRA’s) major accomplishments this year is our Hawaii Hotel & Restaurant Show on May 29 and 30,” Matsuoka says, adding that the show will help to build stronger relationships within the community and the restaurant industry.



Mufi Hannemann

“The Hawaii Hotel & Restaurant Show is the perfect opportunity to bring local and national vendors from both the hotel and restaurant industry under one roof,” says Mufi Hannemann, president and CEO of the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association. “The HRA has been very active in helping plan the show and working closely with my organization (HLTA) and Star Events, *Star-Advertiser*’s new events division.”

According to a news release, the HRA has also “established an Educational Foundation, a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focused on bolstering workforce development beginning at the high school level.”

“Through business networking, the sharing of knowledge and best practices among members, and community engagement,” says Matsuoka, “we will achieve our goal of providing advocacy to keep the Hawaii restaurant industry moving forward.”

## Help for Culinary Students

Sheryl Matsuoka, executive director of the Hawaii Restaurant Association, says the HRA, industry stakeholders and the community are working to expand the ProStart Program and build a strong foundation for Hawaii’s culinary students by:

- Supporting schools with their immediate needs: paper towel dispensers, kitchen mixers, chef jackets, pots and pans and other equipment.
- Creating a state competition which will feed into the National ProStart Invitational, a source of culinary scholarships.
- Assisting schools with limited funding so that these schools can purchase ProStart Program textbooks.
- Aiding instructors’ professional development through training, mentoring and other efforts.

Justine Perkins, a ProStart teacher at Kaiser High School, says HRA-allied sponsorships and partnerships “have been great about donating. It’s been fantastic for us.”



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BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

**B**uyers for Hawaii's hospitality, restaurant and other foodservice businesses have two top trade shows coming up—the Hawaii Hotel & Restaurant Show and the 2019 Hawaii Lodging, Hospitality & Foodservice Expo. Between them, the shows will present more than 800 booths featuring products and services from leading Hawaii, national and international vendors, and will likely attract about 10,000 attendees.

## Hawaii Hotel & Restaurant Show

Founded by the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA), the Hawaii Restaurant Association (HRA) and Star Events (a division of the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*), the brand-new Hawaii Hotel & Restaurant Show makes its debut on May 29-30 at the Hawaii Convention Center.

Mufi Hannemann, president and CEO of the HLTA, says the show will



**Mufi Hannemann**

technology and best practices through a comprehensive trade show, seminars and educational workshops.”

“bring Hawaii's leading industries together, and offer decision-makers the opportunity to meet with vendors (showcasing) their innovative services, products,





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The HLTA, HRA and Star Events, Hannemann says, have “contributed their ideas, have shared their respective vision for the show, and are working vigorously to bring exhibitors and attendees an event they’ll be proud to be a part of.”

Tom Jones, president and incoming chair of the HRA, is spearheading the association’s efforts, and says “we have a variety of vendors, we have a variety of employers and there’s also the educational component” that will tackle top issues in the Hawaii market.



Tom Jones

One hot-button issue is sustainability, says Hannemann.

“We have a dedicated room that will host a number of educational seminars on this topic for both the restaurant and hotel industry leaders,” Hannemann says.

“We have partnered with a variety of stakeholders from around the state who will not only discuss, but demonstrate, the importance of local sustainable practices, particularly in the realm of food, farming and the culinary arts.”

Other workshops cover such topics as Cyber Security, How to Gain a Competitive Edge in Marketing, Radical Innovation and Lawsuit Protection and Prevention.

The show’s Tech Pavilion also presents cutting-edge technology that supports Hawaii’s hospitality and food-service businesses.

As a preview, attendees will soon have a “Star Events” phone app. Gerald Shintaku, events manager at Star Events, says the *Star-Advertiser* and Star Events “went out and secured an app for the show (that includes) a lot of information, not only the agenda and the robust seminar schedule.

“We’ll have event maps that will show all the logos of all the exhibitors and sponsors” along with some biographical information.

“People who want to know more about the companies can just tap the icon, and it will take them to a website so that they can get phone numbers and email addresses,” Shintaku says.

The app will also securely connect attendees and show vendors in real time. “We really want to make this a B2B situation,” he says, adding that the app is currently “in process, and will be delivered in the days ahead.”

E Noa Corp.’s Waikiki Trolley will shuttle Waikiki show-goers to and from

the event, says Shintaku. As of press time, “we haven’t finalized the schedule,” he says, but emphasizes that the shuttle will transport Waikiki attendees “in a timely fashion” during peak and off-peak hours.

Since the Hawaii Hotel & Restaurant Show is a collaboration, Jones says, it’s “just a lot of fun. This is our first year, and we’re looking forward to a really spectacular event.”

## Hawaii Lodging, Hospitality & Foodservice Expo

Celebrating its 25th year, the 2019 Hawaii Lodging, Hospitality & Foodservice Expo will be held at the Neal S. Blaisdell Center Exhibition Hall and Arena on July 10-11.

“The Expo is a business-to-business trade event,” says Ken Kanter, director of the HLHFS Expo. The annual trade



Ken Kanter

show presents the latest goods and services for Hawaii’s hospitality and food-service industries and other sectors, Kanter says, and “serves to expand business networks, economic activity

and marketing, product development and community welfare in many ways.”

Peter Pa’o, who represents firms including The Vollrath Company LLC, a national commercial kitchen equipment supplier, will launch more than one new product at the 2019 Expo.

“I’ll be showcasing delivery bags,” Pa’o says of a new offering. “After doing our homework, we see a huge percentage of food service business going toward the delivery side in numbers upwards of 50 percent (occurring) very shortly.”

Timing is everything. A recent CBRE U.S. Food & Beverage report sees “further growth in demand for prepared food at grocery stores, delivery from restaurants and other time-saving devices.”

After buying a bag manufacturer, says Pa’o, “we improved the bags.” Along with adding reflective colors for evening delivery, he says, the bags now have “a heating pad that you put into the bag, so the food is actually kept warm en route.”

Of the thousands of Expo attendees



The Hawaii Hotel & Restaurant Show will feature many attractions at the HCC.

PHOTO COURTESY THE HAWAII HOTEL & RESTAURANT SHOW



who stroll past his booth, Pa'o says, "I will potentially have around 500 to 600 people who I may actually engage with. At the end, I will have somewhere around 100 good leads and I list the important people that I talked to, and the leads."

Last year, Pa'o shared that list with a couple of colleagues. "They were

***"The Expo serves to expand business networks."***

**— KEN KANTER**

stunned, not only at the quantity, but at the quality of the leads," he says.

Pa'o recalls a leading Waikiki chef who walked past his booth during a recent Expo, liked what he saw, and hired Pa'o to design a buffet.

"Projects like this take two-plus years to go back and forth," Pa'o says. "But there's something in the pipe now that's probably close to \$200,000 that comes from that chef walking past my booth."



On the floor at a recent Hawaii Lodging, Hospitality & Foodservice Expo

PHOTO COURTESY DOUGLAS TRADE SHOWS

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# Is Maui Truly *No Ka Oi?* (the Best)





# The Valley Isle has 'taken great measures' to enhance its allure among travelers

BY BRANDON BOSWORTH

While the local tourism industry has gotten off to a rocky start this year, the Valley Isle looks to maintain its luster as a top destination for travelers.

"What separates Maui from the other islands is our consistency in being



Sherry Duong

named number one in a variety of travel categories by reputable media sources," says Sherry Duong, executive director of the Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau (MVCB). "Maui has also

taken great measures to create and sustain a solid brand for itself as a premier destination.

"With such a diversity of choices in resort activities that appeal to a broad visitor profile, our repeat visitor percentage is a very respectable 68.4 percent. For first-time visitors to Maui, the percentage is 31.6 percent."

For many around the world, the word "Maui" conjures up images of a tropical paradise, which is no doubt why brands such as Maui Jim and Maui and Sons incorporate it in their company names.

"Having these popular national brands utilize the highly recognizable name of 'Maui' definitely has its advantages in terms of organic brand marketing," Duong says. "It's not only a subtle reminder of what makes Maui special, it also gives fans of Maui a way to associate with their favorite island by owning something with its name."

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“MVCB has been partnering with the Maui Jim Maui Invitational basketball tournament since 1984. To also prove the strength of the Maui brand, when the ‘Kuleana’ movie from the 2017 Maui Film Festival was released in theaters in late 2018, the name was changed to ‘Maui.’”

According to the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA), 2019 has seen Hawaii hotels statewide reporting decreases in both average daily rate and occupancy. Maui is no exception, though the news isn’t all negative.

“Maui tourism numbers are looking positive with regard to length of stay, visitor spending and average daily rate (ADR),” Duong says. “Maui’s ADR is consistently the strongest among all the Hawaiian Islands.”

According to the HTA’s Hawaii Hotel Performance Report for 2018, Maui County hotels led the state in RevPAR (revenue per available room) at \$292, driven by a 9 percent increase in ADR. Maui hotels ranked third in highest RevPAR internationally, with hotels



**A night under the stars at the annual Maui Film Festival.**

in the Maldives ranking the highest, followed by French Polynesia.

ADR figures don’t tell the whole story, and Duong notes that “properties with under 20 lodging units—such as small bed-and-breakfasts, vacation rentals, cottages, condominiums and sold time-share units—are not part of

the ADR calculation.”

According to Duong, “the decrease in RevPAR and visitor spending at the start of 2019 that Maui, or Hawaii in general, is experiencing is being attributed to the perception of the Kilauea activity on the Island of Hawaii affecting all the Hawaiian Islands.

## Valley Isle Events

“Maui has so many choices when it comes to annual events, from culinary to cultural to sports,” says Sherry Duong, executive director of the Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau. “These events give our visitors an opportunity to have a true local experience within our resorts and in our small towns.”

### Among the planned events:

#### JUNE

- **The 38th annual Kapalua Wine & Food Festival** takes place June 6–9 at the Kapalua Resort. The event brings together oenophiles, gourmands and enthusiasts of the good life to celebrate, learn and experience the leading culinary trends and viniculture. For more information, visit [kapaluawineandfoodfestival.com](http://kapaluawineandfoodfestival.com)

- **The 20th annual Maui Film Festival** runs June 12–16 at the Grand Wailea Resort. Nicknamed “Cinema-Under-the-Stars,” the festival has grown from attracting fewer than 2,500 attendees to more than 17,500. Sheri Linden of “The Hollywood Reporter” called the Maui Film Festival “the embodiment of relaxed elegance providing ample opportunity to enjoy stargazing of both the Hollywood and heavenly varieties shoulder-to-shoulder with its

A-List honorees.” For more information, visit [mauifilmfestival.com](http://mauifilmfestival.com)

- **The Na Kamehameha Commemorative Pau Parade & Hoolaulea** will take place in Lahaina on June 18 on Front Street. Following the parade is a hoolaulea at Kamehameha Iki Park. The hoolaulea consists of a pau awards presentation, food booths, local crafts and entertainment. The festivities are scheduled to last until sunset. For more information, visit [facebook.com/NKCPH](https://facebook.com/NKCPH)

- **The 28th annual Ki Hoalu Guitar Festival** will be held June 23 at the A&B Amphitheater in Kahului. Kihoalu means “loosen the key” in Hawaiian, and this event will feature some of the state’s best slack key guitar players. The festival is free and family-friendly. For more information, visit [mauiarts.org](http://mauiarts.org)

#### SEPTEMBER

- The annual **Chinese Moon Festival** will be held Sept. 14 at Wo Hing Museum in Lahaina. This event pays tribute to the island’s harvest of locally grown produce as well as honored traditions from China. The festival will feature cultural activities, traditional music and mahjong lessons. For more information, visit [lahainarestoration.org](http://lahainarestoration.org)

- The fourth annual **Maui Ukulele Festival** takes place Sept. 29 at the

Maui Arts & Cultural Center in Kahului. Since 2006, the Maui Ukulele Festival has featured Herb Ohta Sr. (Ohta-San), Jake Shimabukuro, Holunape, Raiatea Helm, Manoa DNA, Paula Fuga, Richard Ho’opi’i, Brittini Paiva, Kelly Boy Delima, Derek Sebastian and more, including local kupuna and keiki players. For more information, visit [ukulelefestivalhawaii.org](http://ukulelefestivalhawaii.org)

#### OCTOBER

- The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua hosts the **XTERRA World Championships** on Oct. 27. The off-road triathlon combines a 1.5-kilometer (1 mile) swim, a 32-kilometer (20 miles) mountain bike race that climbs 3,500 feet up and down the lower slopes of the West Maui Mountains, and a 10.5-kilometer (6.5 miles) trail run that traverses forest trails and sand. For more information, visit [xterraplanet.com/worldchampionship](http://xterraplanet.com/worldchampionship)

#### NOVEMBER

- Maui County’s largest products show, the sixth annual **Made In Maui County Festival**, features over 140 vendors offering locally made products, including food, produce, art, crafts, jewelry, fashion, furniture, gifts, collectibles and more. The festival takes place Nov. 1–2 at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center in Kahului. For more information, visit [madeinmauicountyfestival.com](http://madeinmauicountyfestival.com)





and sustainable tourism. The videos cover ocean health, ocean safety, astute renting and culture. The videos are appearing directly on visitors' social news feeds through Facebook and Instagram. We are pleased that our Maui resorts see the value of these messages and are also incorporating the videos as part of their in-room TV programming and guest communications."

Duong says the Maui visitor demographic has remained consistent in recent years, with the strongest market being the U.S. West Coast. "Our current marketing strategy, in conjunction with HVCB, is to target the avid explorer/never been."



**The Made In Maui County Festival is the Valley Isle's largest products show.**

"Over the next few years, the forecast for tourism is expected to be on a positive trend, especially with Southwest Airlines entering the Hawaii market."

The MVCB isn't resting on its laurels. "In line with HTA's current initiative of managing tourism, MVCB created a new Kuleana Maui educational video series to capture the attention of our visitors while on-island," Duong says.

"Maui is the forerunner of the Islands to create these videos in delivering messages about our *kuleana* for safe



**(Top) The 38th annual Kapalua Wine & Food Festival takes place June 6-9 at the Kapalua Resort. (Above) The annual Kihoalu Guitar Festival features some of the state's best slack key guitar players.**

PHOTOS COURTESY KAPALUA WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL AND MAUI ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER



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# Accommodating to Change

## Islands' concierges adapt to new technology and expectations

BY BRANDON BOSWORTH

**P**rofessions throughout the hospitality industry are affected by the tech explosion of the 21st century, and concierges are no exception.

"As technological tools have become more accessible, the work of the concierge has changed from educating guests to helping them filter their research," says Fabrice Ollivier, concierge at Four Seasons Oahu and vice president of The Concierge Association of Hawaii.



**Fabrice Ollivier**

"Despite that change, one of our most essential services remains the same: Saving the guests' time. Rather than spending their time on the web, we offer in-depth knowledge of the Island through our personal experience and the use of established relationships built over years of service.

"Experiences we recommend," adds Ollivier, "are tailored based on each guest's individual interest and their family dynamics, thus creating a more memorable experience. Our ability to preserve guests' valuable time on vacation cannot be replaced by any application or automated booking system."

Concierges have a special term for this type of service, says Cameron



**Cameron Frithsen**

Frithsen, concierge at the Kahala Hotel & Resort.

"Traditional, or true concierges, offer what we call in the hotel industry as 'high-touch' service," Frithsen says. "The term refers to a personalized standard of service that can only be achieved through human-to-human interaction and insight. As concierge, we provide suggestions based on our own experience and what we think is best for our guests. Our suggestions are non-biased as we want to ensure our guests have the best experience possible and that level of service cannot be replicated or automated."

Vanessa Greene, concierge at Halekulani Hotel and president of The Concierge Association of Hawaii, describes a key aspect of high-touch service is "filtering information from our guests to find out their preferences. It is our goal to pair the specific activity, attraction



**Vanessa Greene**

or restaurant that complements the guests' specific interests and likes.

"The art of being a concierge," Greene adds, "is about getting to know each guest and what will turn their short time on vacation into a lasting memory."

For many travelers, the word "concierge" has positive connotations. "When you hear the word 'concierge' it infers a certain standard of service and hospitality," says Erena Takekawa, a concierge at Halekulani Hotel. "Hotels that value that level of service are distinguished, and by having a true concierge desk they are showing their guests that they value their guests' experience."



Some properties attempt to capitalize on the goodwill generated by the word. "Recently, there has been the popularization of the term 'concierge' and we are seeing the marketplace flooded with information desks calling themselves

'concierge,'"

Frithsen says.

"The influx has helped to re-established the word 'concierge' as a household term, increasing our approachability, but also has made it more important than



**Erena Takekawa**

ever for us to distinguish our level of service. True concierge services refer to a human connection and personalization, not just information distribution."


Then there are the "virtual concierges"—electronic kiosks and apps.

"Impersonal machines and outsourced information desks are unfortunately replacing true concierge and the genuine services we provide," Takekawa says. "The main goal of a true concierge is to form lasting relationships with their guests and create memorable experiences."

While virtual concierges might seem like a money-saving option, Greene says something is lost when the human touch is missing.

"The concierge department is the heart of a hotel," she says. "We are the liaison between the guest and the hotel as we work closely with every department in the hotel. We are the 'one-stop shop' for anything a guest may need. That level of service is a direct benefit to the hotel through guest experience. A guest's time on vacation is precious and a concierge helps protect that."





***“The main goal of a true concierge is to form lasting relationships with their guests and create memorable experiences.”***

**— ERENA TAKEKAWA**

On the plus side, technology is expanding the scope of what a concierge can do for a guest, Ollivier says.

“Increased communication with guests is one of the most prominent changes we’ve seen,” Ollivier says. “The new technological era has made it easier for concierge to interact with guests at any point during their stay in a timely manner.

“We now have guests who, while enjoying their time at the pool, text us and within minutes we are able to provide recommendations and even confirm a dinner reservation for them. Confirmation details get sent to the guest without them even needing to leave their pool chair.”

Ollivier adds that more connectivity means a concierge can start working with guests before they arrive at the hotel.

“Nearly all luxury hotel concierges have begun to reach out to guests prior to their arrival and offer services before they even realize they need them. Providing pre-emptive dining and activity information lowers any barriers guests may have to contacting their concierge, allowing us to begin building trust with guests that may not have traditionally utilized a concierge service,” Ollivier says.

As to the value of concierge service, Greene says “guests of all ages utilize our services. However, the differenc-

es are when they approach us. Older guests tend to reach out prior to arrival and then follow up upon check-in, while younger guests tend to stop by after they have checked in and have settled into their room. The older guests prefer recommendations while the younger guests prefer us to narrow down their finds, leaving the final decision to themselves.”

Frithsen notes older guests “are looking more to relax and visit the ‘tried and true’ local favorites” while younger guests “are looking for an adventure. As social media continues to grow, our guests are seeing photos and videos of experiences on-island that have gone viral and are now must-do’s for both younger and older guests. They’ll come to our desk to inquire about these experiences and we are here to make it possible.”

When it comes to what guests want from a concierge, things have changed over the years.

“With the influx of guests researching their destination before arrival, we are no longer just providing recommendations; now we are creating memories,” Greene says.

“We strive to accommodate guests’ requests down to the last detail. Beginning with renting them a car, we will provide directions to a beautiful waterfall, pinpointing a stop on the way for bug spray and make sure to share the best photo angles. We even go beyond the call by recommending they bring a change of shoes and upon their return, work with housekeeping to clean their muddied sneakers.”

Human guests aren’t the only ones to benefit from Greene’s hard work. She says her “most recent memorable task was to track down a very rare cat food for a guest whose cat has kidney failure, arrange for this food to be imported to Hawaii and then wrapped so they were able to hand-carry it back to Japan.”

Twenty-five years ago, Takekawa says a concierge’s main focus was reserving restaurants and tours. Not now.

“Today, we see an array of diverse requests, from booking private yachts to planning surprise engagements and weddings to shipping rare Hawaiian artwork,” Takekawa says. “As guests are more informed with the availability of information on the internet, they ask more challenging questions.

“There is a great need to be current on all the popular restaurants, trendy activities, and everything interesting. News changes by the minute, and we must stay relevant and keep up with the times.”

## **So You Want to Be a Concierge?**

Vanessa Greene, concierge at Halekulani Hotel and president of The Concierge Association of Hawaii, says “it can be difficult” to attract new concierges from other industries or straight out of college.

“Some of our strongest recruiting efforts come from within our individual hotels as coworkers from other departments start to understand the challenge but also the rewards of our profession.”

According to Cameron Frithsen, concierge at the Kahala Hotel & Resort, the difficulty younger concierges face is “not having as strong of a network as our most established concierges.” He says concierges “share an interest in keeping current with their community and fellow concierge, so it is vital that we lean on each other since the knowledge of a group is always more insightful than yourself alone.”

For recent graduates interested in becoming concierges, Fabrice Ollivier, concierge at Four Seasons Oahu and vice president of The Concierge Association of Hawaii, recommends joining another hotel front office department first. “This will allow them to strengthen their customer service skills and acquire a more complete understanding of how that specific hotel operates,” he says.

“Concierge work changes every day; it is never boring or predictable. Those who like to meet and work with people, are very organized, and enjoy challenges are the best candidates.”

“Being a concierge is a tough job that takes a certain type of person to embrace its challenges,” says Erena Takekawa, a concierge at Halekulani Hotel. “My recruitment speech would read something like this: ‘Do you just love people? Are you organized and passionate about sharing your local knowledge and your culture? You may be the perfect fit as a concierge.’”



# The TECH Side of TOUR

IT Council shares expertise on issues ranging from cybersecurity to analytics

BY DAVID PUTNAM

In its second year, the Hospitality Information Technology Council (HITC) has been showcasing the collective talents among its members to help Hawaii's travel industry resolve tech-related issues.

"The goals of the hospitality industry providers are to create the conditions for happiness and desired experiences for their guests," says HITC Chair Ty Tynan. "The current state of IT focus in the hospitality industry is on IT infrastructure integration, and most are not utilizing the 'future' capabilities which are already available to achieve more happiness for their guests," adds Tynan, chief operating officer and principal of Choice Technologies LLC.

Formed in 2017 by the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA), the IT Council is comprised of 25 technology professionals in the industry who, according to the HLTA, focus "on producing learning, leadership, networking and community service events which provide opportunities to create long-term positive impact through IT in the tourism industry."

Membership in the Council is open to "active" members of the HLTA at no charge; "allied" members pay a minimal annual fee.



IT Council members at the Hospitality Analytics event at the Outrigger Reef in April 2018

PHOTO COURTESY HLTA

According to the HLTA, the HITC serves as a "neutral connector for all of Hawaii's hoteliers and ecosystem stakeholders to openly share best practices to advance learning, leadership and community service to maintain Hawaii's world class position as a hospitality leader, protect our unique lifestyle and advance our technological tools and capabilities in service of growing our thriving industry."

Tynan says that "as the hospitality industry starts to advance from infrastructure integration to business

intelligence—data insights, automation and predictive analytics—and IT becomes more embedded in human processes—Google/Apple—guests will have customized experiences that seem to happen with little to no effort.

"Artificial intelligence already extracts from global big data sources, providing insights on what we would like to do or experience and at what price before we ask. Moving forward, this data will allow for providers to facilitate customized experiences at new levels."

Current topics the Council is work-





ing on include cybersecurity, emergency preparedness and alerting, GDPR (general data protection regulation), employee and guest safety, IT leadership in the board room and workforce development, engagement and retention in the hospitality industry.

The HITC held its first hospitality-related cybersecurity event in October at the Kahala Hotel & Resort. The Council aims to make the cybersecurity seminar an annual event, and is planning to hold the event in the third quarter of this year.

Along with conducting a workshop on Hospitality Analytics, HITC held a research-based workshop in March hosted by Hawaii Pacific University and the University of Hawaii and included IT, human resources, engineering, housekeeping and management representatives from within the hospitality community. The professionals worked with students conducting research on industry issues and discussed ways to bolster the number of skilled workers now and in the future.

IT Council also is working toward establishing a philanthropic partnership which will help to reduce "e-waste," as well as providing technological resources, such as access to computers for keiki and those in need.

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Oahu organizations that serve the homeless were awarded a total of \$113,000.

## Visitor Industry Presents \$113K to Oahu Organizations Serving the Homeless

The Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association, in partnership with the Hawaii Tourism Authority, in April distributed \$113,000 to 21 nonprofit organizations on Oahu that serve the homeless.

"These matching grants were the result of a very productive public-private partnership of the state Legislature and administration, Hawaii Tourism Authority, and visitor industry, as represented by the HLTA," says HLTA President and CEO Mufi Hannemann. "All of the money from the state, both tax revenues and matching funds, were generated by our top industry, tourism. Moreover, it's going to a cause that addresses a long-standing concern for our entire community, not just the visitor industry."

The organizations, which serve Oahu's homeless in tourism-impacted areas, were

all selected by the HLTA based on county chapter input and subject to final approval by the state board.

"Homelessness affects the experiences of our millions of visitors, employees in resort areas, and the general public. Any measures we can take to find solutions are needed and welcome, and I'm encouraged that we'll be seeing more work in this regard in the months ahead," says HTA President and CEO Chris Tatum.

The recipients include Corvette Center Ministries, Surfing the Nations, The Salvation Army Hawaiian & Pacific Islands Division – Oahu Corps, Hawaii Foodbank, Aloha Medical Mission, People Attentive to Children (PATCH), Mental Health Kokua, Hale Kipa, Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, Family Promise of Hawaii, Aloha Harvest, United Church of Christ Transition House,

River of Life Mission, Young Women's Christian Association of Oahu, Hawaii Youth Services Network, Project Vision Hawaii, United States Veterans Initiative – Hawaii, Friends of the Children's Justice Center of Oahu, Hawaii Arts Alliance, Hooala Na Pua and The Institute for Human Services.

"The HLTA has donated more than \$2 million to date to homelessness service providers, most of it through our annual Visitor Industry Charity Walk," Hannemann says.

"This latest endeavor enables us to expand our charitable endeavors with the support of the state government. We're especially grateful to Chris Tatum and his HTA team for their supportive partnership."

Presentations were also made to groups on Kauai, Maui and Hawaii Island.

### Keller Joins Pure Kauai

Chef **John Keller** has joined Pure Kauai, which offers guest stays in luxury vacation homes on the Garden Isle.

As private chef for residence guests, Keller will prepare custom menus and dishes at their request.

After training at the New York Restaurant



**John Keller**

School, Keller worked at the city's renowned Nobu restaurant. He has since opened many kitchens in the U.S. and Polynesia.

### Yamane Heads Communications at HTA

The Hawaii Tourism Authority has appointed **Marisa Yamane** as director of communications and public relations at the state tourism agency. Her new position starts on May 6.





**Marisa Yamane**

stories of Hawaii,” says **Chris Tatum**, president and CEO of HTA. “Among her responsibilities, Marisa will be essential to supporting the wonderful work being done in our neighborhoods by community groups dedicated to perpetuating Hawaiian culture, protecting the environment and showcasing festivals and events.”

Yamane has served as news anchor at KHON and its sister station KHII, and has received numerous reporting awards. She graduated from Iolani School and holds a bachelor’s in communication studies from the University of California, Los Angeles.

## Fairmont Orchid Names New Director of Hawaiian Culture

Fairmont Orchid has selected **Ka’iulani Blankenfeld** to serve as its director



**Ka’iulani Blankenfeld**

of Hawaiian culture and will lead a strategic initiative to create and enhance the property’s Hawaiian programs and practices.

An experienced hula practitioner, lei maker and storyteller,

Blankenfeld embraces the *kuleana* (responsibility) of sharing the rich cultural heritage of Hawaii with visitors.

“It’s an honor for me to share our *mo’olelo* (stories) with our guests to preserve and perpetuate the Hawaiian culture,” she says. “Today’s travelers want to learn and grow through authentic cultural experiences and I’ll work closely with our Hui Holokai Beach Ambassadors to offer them ways to embrace the depth of our traditions, such as developing new ceremonies that honor our *kupuna* (ancestors) and cultural tours for those who want to learn about the *‘aina* (land). I

also look forward to partnering with local hula halau, musicians and practitioners to further enhance the presence of Hawaiian culture at our property.”

Blankenfeld joined the staff of Fairmont Orchid in 1999 as the assistant director of human resources. In 2006, she became the director of recreation and in 2009 was the director of learning, where she led and managed a hotel-wide training plan and new-hire orientation. In 2011, Blankenfeld became director of guest services before being appointed to executive housekeeper in November 2012, her most recent position.

## Perez Heads Business Development at Oahu Extraction

**Ruben Perez**, an 18-year veteran in the flood and mold remediation and restoration industry, has joined Oahu Extraction LLC as business development director.

His background includes positions in claims adjusting, sales and construction and brings residential and commercial property loss-adjusting experience, including nine hurricanes.



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Ruben Perez

clients,” says Marco Lima, co-owner of the Honolulu-based flood remediation and restoration services company.

## Dailey Heads OLS Hawaii Sales

OLS Hotels & Resorts, which operates five Hawaii properties, in March appointed **John Dailey** as Hawaii

director of sales.

Dailey, with more than 20 years of local hospitality experience, will develop the company’s Hawaii sales strategy and Asia presence.

“We are very pleased to

welcome John as part of our expanding Hawaii-based team,” says Ben Rafter, chief executive officer of OLS Hotels & Resorts. “John’s sales experience and knowledge of the Hawaii hospitality market will be a valuable asset as we continue to grow OLS into Hawaii’s premier and only true local hotel management company.”

Previously, Dailey served as senior director of sales at Aqua-Aston Hospitality and its portfolio of more than 40 properties. He also directed sales at the Pacific Beach Hotel, Outrigger Hotels and Resorts and Hilo Hattie.

OLS Hotels & Resorts’ Hawaii properties include Hotel Renew and Royal Grove in Waikiki, Plantation Hale Suites and Banyan Harbor Resort on Kauai, and Ainamalu at Waikoloa Beach Resort on Hawaii Island.

The company manages 23 properties nationwide.

## HCC Taps Lentz as Top Chef

**Hans Lentz**, appointed executive chef by the Hawaii Convention Center in March, will lead the Center’s dining and hospitality team.

“Ruben’s dual expertise in claims adjusting and sales combined with his extensive industry knowledge will be a great addition to our rapidly expanding business and a terrific value-added benefit for our



Honolulu City Councilmember Mike Formby, HTA President and CEO Chris Tatum, HPD Deputy Chief Mike McCarthy, HPD Chief Susan Ballard, HLTA President and CEO Mufi Hannemann and Rep. Richard Onishi.

# Tourism Industry Hosts 2nd Public Safety Conference

Nearly 200 attended the second annual Visitor Public Safety Conference on March 28 at the Prince Waikiki.

The event was hosted by the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association, in partnership with the Hawaii Tourism Authority, the Waikiki Improvement Association, the Waikiki Business Improvement District Association and the Hawaii Hotel Visitor Industry Security Association.

Nearly 200 attendees heard opening remarks by HLTA President and CEO Mufi Hannemann, HTA President and CEO Chris Tatum, House Tourism Chair Richard Onishi and Honolulu City Councilmember Mike Formby of District IV.

Honolulu Police Chief Susan Ballard and HPD Deputy Chief Mike McCarthy also addressed the audience.

“Our goal today is to continue to develop a community-based discussion regarding our ongoing public safety, especially in Waikiki,” says Hannemann. “We just want to ensure that Hawaii remains a safe

destination for locals to live and work and for visitors to vacation. We’re all in this together, and we know all it takes is one criminal act to disrupt and bring harm to our hospitality industry.”

Another panel featured Bob Finley, chair of the Waikiki Neighborhood Board; Jerry Dolak, president of HHVISA; John Norris, security co-chair from the Retail Merchants of Hawaii; Jessica Lani Rich, president of the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii; Supervisory Special Agent Oliver Scammell of NCIS; Deborah Spencer-Chun, president and CEO of Adult Friends for Youth and Justin Phillips, homelessness outreach manager for the Institute of Human Services.

“It’s humbling to be credited for helping to sponsor this important conference. It is taxpayer dollars that HTA is stewarded with, by the legislature, and we hope that these monies will help to ensure that visitors continue to view our Islands as a safe and secure destination,” says HTA President and CEO Chris Tatum.



Hans Lentz

Lentz has nearly three decades of experience in culinary management, working at internationally renowned resorts and convention centers in Hawaii, Dubai, Oman, Africa, the U.S. Mainland and Puerto Rico. In his new role, he will oversee the Center’s 20,000-square-foot on-site kitchen and develop menus for HCC events.

“Hans has a proven background in managing culinary needs for large, high-profile gatherings,” says Teri Orton, general manager of the Center, operated by AEG Facilities. “His internationally influenced

background and multifaceted experience serving gatherings of all sizes will further strengthen our highly experienced food and beverage team at the Hawaii Convention Center, ensuring fresh, dynamic and exciting culinary experiences for our guests.”

Most recently, Lentz served as executive chef at Jumeriah Hotels & Resorts in Dubai. Previously, he served as executive chef of the Hilton Waikoloa Village and the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel.

Lentz studied at The Hotelschool The Hague Performance Management BV, and at the Perlen Graben School of Culinary Arts in Cologne, Germany. He holds numerous national and international culinary awards, most recently the Highfield Level 3 Award in Food Safety and Catering in 2018.

Lentz will direct the Center’s culinary efforts under AEG partner Levy Convention Centers.





# 5 Things to Do to Prepare for Hurricane Season

Hotels, resorts and restaurants in a hurricane-vulnerable state like Hawaii know that having a plan isn't just a good idea—it is a must. Check out the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Ready Business Hurricane Toolkit for help developing a plan.

Hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30. The Naples Hotel Group offers these five tips for hurricane preparedness:

## 1. Don't Just Have a Plan. Share It.

The core of any preparedness plan should be how you'll maintain the safety of guests and employees, how you'll protect your building and business records and how you'll resume business. But beyond the checklists, how will you share your plan if the power goes out or employees are displaced?

Experts suggest keeping several printed copies of your plan, property site maps and other important documents in a water-resistant emergency supply kit on-site.

But don't stop there. You should also keep your plan at an off-site location such as an emergency management center.

## 2. Get to know your Local Emergency Management Center.

If you haven't already, pay a visit to your local Emergency Management Agency. This government-run office is an offshoot of FEMA and will be ground zero for communication during serious weather, as well as emergency workers and federal representatives.

This is where evacuation orders will originate as well as re-entry plans. Determine what phone numbers you can call for updates, and a contact for any questions you may have.

## 3. Make Mutual Aid Agreements.

This is an arrangement made with other businesses to assist in the event of an emergency. If your property is ordered to evacuate, having mutual aid agreements in place can ensure safety for your displaced guests.

Prior to storms, a hotel for example, should contact other hotels in non-evacuation zones to establish agreements. Also consider establishing mutual aid agree-

ments with retailers to purchase supplies at a discounted rate or for transport of workers. Those agreements can assist in opening sooner once a storm passes.

## 4. Have a Two-Way Communication Plan.

Two-way communication is integral during a hurricane. Text messaging and mobile app push notifications are ideal for quick messages to staff before and during a storm. It's also a good idea to consider keeping at least one source of communication that does not require power or the internet on-site, like a land-line phone or a HAM radio.

## 5. Practice a Run-Through.

Set a date to practice your hurricane plan with staff by holding a mock storm drill. Practice carrying out your plan during different storm scenarios, including running through the chain of command and testing out communication systems.

Practice both planned and impromptu drills to ensure your staff is primed and ready for a disaster if and when it strikes.



# Skål Congress in Waikiki



George Bentley, Kara Bentley, Mary Pignalberi

PHOTOS BY ANJJ LEE

Skål International Hawaii hosted the 2019 North American Skål Congress (NASC) at the Sheraton Waikiki on April 25-28 for travel and tourism industry professionals. Skål, which represents all branches of the travel and tourism business, has nearly 14,000 members in 354 clubs throughout 83 nations.



Kili Agres, Kaleo Pinto, Kylee Kamalani



Phil Sammer, Susan Weander, Simeon Miranda



Paul Durand, Brigitta Ammann, Vincent Ammann



Jim Dwyer, Robert Lowell, Doug Okada, Tim O'Neill, Ted Sakai





**Serena Ochoa, Jose Manuel, Carol Fox, Kathleen Wheeler**



**Jeff Galon, Doreen Parno, Lynn Flury, Sharon Kaendo, Karen Lloyd**



**Lillian Butchart-Lividini, Xavier Lividini, Georgina Raso**



**Lisa Conway, Doug Okada, Pam Davis, Lavonne Wittmann, Holly Powers, Jennifer Chun**



**Barry Biggar, Katie Doherty**



**Arthur Allis, Bettye Allis, Kathy Pidgeon**



**Karen Chalmers, William Tullmann, David Ryan, Anne Lawlor**



# Visitor Industry Charity Walk and Its Impact After 4 Decades

As May rapidly approaches, I find myself frequently explaining the virtues of our annual Visitor Industry Charity Walk. This statewide initiative spans six islands over the first three weekends in May each year, and is a landmark event in the industry calendar.

You'll often hear me say that this is "the only walk where you actually gain weight"—and though it's said in jest, the spirit of that statement is true: We always have incredible food and fellowship. But as I contemplate our legacy, and now entering our 41st Visitor Industry Charity Walk, I wonder how our flagship fundraiser is perceived, and whether the public fully comprehends the scope of its impact.

Hospitality is our number one industry; there can be no disputing this fact. We take seriously our *kuleana*, and endeavor to continuously give back, especially through Charity Walk. Last year alone, we supported over 350 local nonprofits and raised over \$2.6 million.

## How It Works

Everyone is encouraged to donate to Charity Walk, whether it's the minimum donation to walk, a sponsorship for someone else to walk or a contribution in any denomination. The bulk of the monies come from the Visitor Industry, as hospitality employees have embraced this tradition of giving. But Charity Walk is open to all who wish to walk—locals and tourists alike are encouraged to enjoy the *ono* food and special surprises at each of the Charity Walks.

## Who Receives the Money?

All funds raised for the Visitor Industry Charity Walk are donated through the Hawaii Hotel Industry Foundation, the nonprofit arm of HLTA. Regardless of the source, all monies are placed in a communal "pot."

Beneficiaries of these Charity Walk grants must be local 501(c)3s who



**The HLTA's Mufi Hannemann greets participants in the Visitor Industry Charity Walk.**

qualify and are eligible because they are suited and fit one of our eight pillars. They are all carefully vetted, and we host allocations ceremonies in each respective county to award these grants after the walks are completed.

The eight "pillars" that form the basis of our Charity Walk contributions are homelessness, keiki and education, kupuna, crime, veterans, healthcare/physical fitness, the environment and culture and arts. Other elements that factor into the amount that is granted are volunteer involvement, number of walkers, total amount raised, year-over-year involvement or past funding received.

## Further Reach

Forty-four homelessness-focused groups from last year's Walk were especially fortunate. Following their grants from Charity Walk in the summer of 2018, we at HLTA, as well as our partners at the Hawaii Tourism Authority, worked to create a mechanism for state homelessness "matching funds" from Act 86 (2018).

Act 86 stems from House Bill 2010, which was championed by House Tourism Chair Richard Onishi and Senate Tourism Chair Sen. Glenn Wakai, strongly supported by the budget chairs of both chambers Rep. Sylvia Luke and Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, and signed into law by Gov. David Ige.

This enabled the appropriation of up

to \$1 million from the general revenues of the state to go to nonprofit organizations addressing homelessness in tourism-impacted areas. These monies were granted via a memorandum of agreement signed by the Hawaii Tourism Authority and the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association.

That means that those 44 nonprofits working to address homelessness received their Charity Walk grant and then got that same amount again, through Act 86. HTA President and CEO Chris Tatum joined me in awarding these state matching funds in each county, and commented that "the Hawaii Tourism Authority is very pleased to join with the visitor industry, through the HLTA, in contributing to helping the homeless and supporting those organizations that are serving this population throughout the state."

Lt. Gov. Josh Green, who has the lead role in the Ige administration on homelessness, attended the Oahu distribution ceremony and commended the nonprofit groups for "the significant contributions" they make each and every day to help people.

Homelessness is a systemic issue facing our Islands, and we as an industry will continue to do our part because we believe in our credo that "we are all in this together." Between the Visitor Industry Charity Walk grants and these state matching funds, it is our hope that we will make an even more impactful difference for our community through the good work of these dedicated nonprofit organizations.

For more detailed information on the Charity Walk, go to [charitywalkhawaii.org](http://charitywalkhawaii.org) or call (808) 923-0407.



*Mufi Hannemann is president and CEO of the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association.*





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