

INSIDE: WOMEN IN LODGING \* LANDSCAPING \* HOSPITALITY TECHNOLOGY

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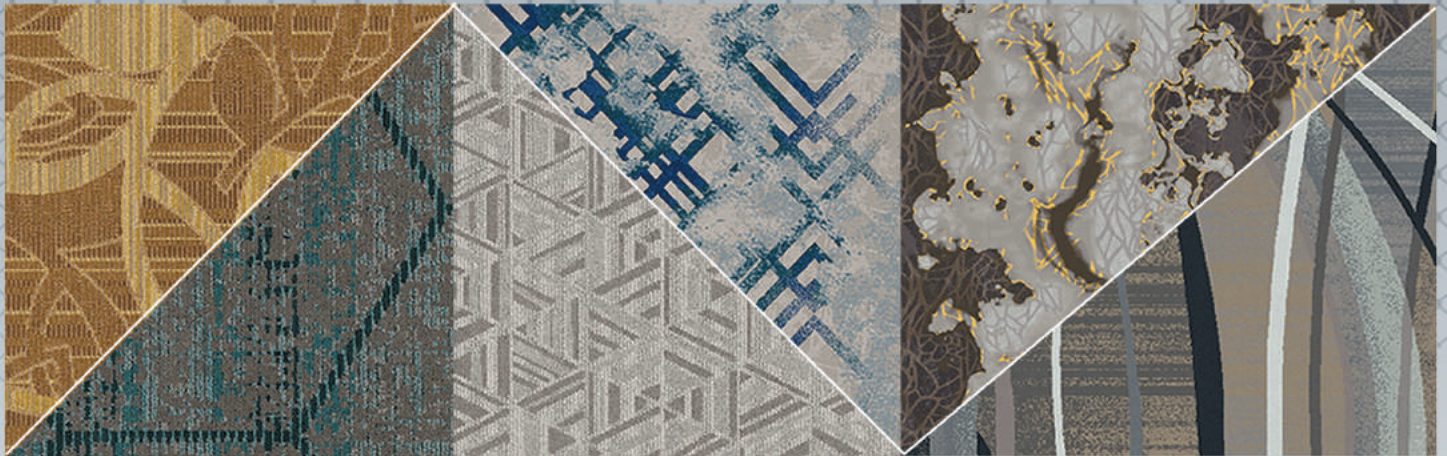
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**ON THE COVER**  
The Hawaii Convention Center is  
the gateway to Waikiki  
PHOTO COURTESY CAMERON BROOKS

## checking in

When Hawaii's hospitality industry fell under siege in March to COVID-19, concerns of losing travelers and the revenue they bring to the Islands spread quickly.

To help curb the spread of the coronavirus, the city and state have taken steps to help people keep their distance from each other and follow health officials' guidelines regarding hygiene. Government services are reduced and activities and attractions are closed or have had their operating hours drastically shortened. Not even clubs and bars were exempt, nor sports events, youth activities nor churches.

All life on the Islands has been affected in some way as local residents are wisely staying home and isolating themselves and their families as much as possible.

When the crisis passes, however, Hawaii has much to look forward to—and hopefully sooner rather than later. Our report on the Hawaii Convention Center takes a look at its lineup for later in 2020.

And the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau's new senior vice president tells us his plans to boost the Islands's standing in the global meetings, conventions and incentives market.

Also in this issue is a look at how resort landscaping is embracing the use of more native plants to enhance their visitor-pleasing aesthetics.

Our coverage also includes the latest in the ways hotels are taking advantage of technology.



Aloha!

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# HAWAII hospitality

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WIL board members at a 2019 Lunch & Learn event at the Queen Kapiolani hotel include, from left, Denise Wardlow, Dricka Thobois, Julie Arigo, Conchita Malaqui, Ashley Yonamine, Chelsea Tsuchida, Michelle Harrison and Angela Nolan.

PHOTO COURTESY WIL/HLTA

are multi-pronged in their approach to eradicating exploitation of women and children.

“HLTA has been an active supporter of Ho‘ola Na Pua, contributing financially as well as partnering with them statewide in educating its membership on human trafficking. It is WIL’s hope that our \$1,000 donation will continue to aid the organization and allow for the continuation of their valuable programs, content, seminars and volunteer work.”

WIL’s values are also in line with Chinen’s high aspirations.

“They just do so much. It’s such a broad organization that helps so many,” she says. “I plan to return home (to Hawaii), and start my career in hospitality there. I’m definitely interested in joining Women in Lodging once I have established my career in hospitality.”

WIL’s 2020 initiatives will further support the development of aspiring professionals like Chinen.

“This year, I’m hoping to grow our membership, expand our footprint on the Neighbor Islands, and inspire both aspiring and seasoned female leaders,” Nolan says. “Our membership sub-committee is hard at work to solicit new membership in an effort to expand our reach and growth in the community.” This includes the launch of WIL’s new membership e-newsletter series, Nolan says, which will “feature a brief bio and advice from our most successful leaders in the hospitality industry.”

Someday, one of those bios might profile Chinen’s auntie, who also worked in member engagement and program development.

“She got me interested in hospitality,” Chinen says. “I helped her with various things, including computer work, creating spreadsheets and other administrative duties. One thing that I thought was really

## WOMEN IN LODGING & TOURISM

# Sky’s the Limit

WIL helps launch new leaders in Hawaii’s hospitality industry

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

Camryn Chinen, now in her junior year at University of Nevada-Las Vegas, says while she was growing up, her auntie was “like my second mother.”

On days when Chinen wasn’t in school, she would join her auntie at a local hospitality organization. “I used to sit in her office and watch her do her thing,” Chinen says. “I thought it was really cool.”

These days, Chinen is doing equally cool things at UNLV. “I’m getting my degree in hospitality management,” she says, from “the number-one hospitality program in the nation. It was Cornell for a while, but now we have it.”

Chinen says a 2019 scholarship from Women in Lodging & Tourism (WIL) is helping make her degree a reality.

“My parents sacrificed a lot for me to go to a Mainland college,” Chinen says. “I was awarded \$1,000 for this past fall semester. The WIL scholarship was definitely a big help financially.”

Angela Nolan, 2020 WIL chairperson and marketing general manager at Marriott’s Ko Olina Beach Club, says WIL, a Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA) committee, was founded to help women succeed in Hawaii’s hospitality industry—particularly through access to higher education.

“Each year, we are committed to pro-

viding scholarships to deserving female students,” Nolan says. WIL, an arm of the American Hotel & Lodging Association’s Women in Lodging program, also supports HLTA’s Generational Mentoring program and partners with publications such as *Pacific Edge* magazine and its “Women in Business” articles.

WIL, Nolan explains, is comprised of female leaders across various disciplines within the visitor industry, and currently has approximately 150 members throughout the state.

“We have been very grateful for the strong support HLTA has given to WIL through the years,” she says. That support, combined with “our core values of philanthropy, education and advocacy, allow us to have a far-reaching impact in our community.”

WIL’s core values, shared by groups such as Ho‘ola Na Pua, are reaching some of Hawaii’s most vulnerable people.

Ho‘ola Na Pua, a Hawaii non-profit, “is committed to the prevention of human trafficking and works tirelessly to create awareness in our community,” Nolan says. “Their values of health, education, advocacy and reintegration





cool was that they were always communicating with different people and planning different events.”

Inspiration, mutual support and outreach? Chinen and Nolan might be on the same wavelength.

“We want to inspire our community of females,” Nolan says, “both in hospitality and those who touch our industry in some way. We will strive to be steadfast supporters of local female organizations, deserving non-profits, and lift up women to be confident and successful in the workplace.”

For more information or to join Women in Lodging & Tourism, go to the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association at [hawaiilodging.org](http://hawaiilodging.org) or call 923-0407.

## WIL'S 2020 SLATE

**2020 Board of Directors and Officers**  
Women in Lodging & Tourism 2020 directors and officers were elected in January, and are serving a one-year term ending in December:

**Angela Nolan**—Chairperson; general manager, Marriott's Ko Olina Beach Club

**Kelly Kitashima**—Lodging Member Vice Chairperson; director of sales and marketing, Residence Inn Kapolei

**Breana Grosz**—Allied Member Vice Chairperson; general manager, International Market Place

**2020 Advisory Council Continuing Members**  
WIL Advisory Council Continuing members are serving a two-year term ending in December:

**Denise Wardlow**—Advisory Council Member, Kauai representative; general manager, The Westin Princeville Ocean Resort Villas

**Kyoko Kimura**—Advisory Council Member, Maui representative; director of owner relations, Aqua-Aston Hospitality

**Dricka Thobois**—Advisory Council Member, Oahu representative; account executive, Ameresco

**Chelsea Tsuchida**—Advisory Council Member; marketing and advertising executive, NMG Network

**Ingrid Lin**—Advisory Council Member; School of Travel Industry Management, University of Hawaii at Manoa

**2020-2021 Advisory Council Members:**  
WIL Advisory Council members serving through December 2021:

**Karen Wataru Nakaoka**—Advisory Council; director of membership, Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau

**Michelle Harrison**—Advisory Council Member, Island of Hawaii Representative; executive housekeeper, The Westin Hapuna

**Pamela Yagi**—Past Chairperson; general manager, Hilton Grand Vacations

**Julie Arigo**—Past Chairperson; general manager, Halepuna by Halekulani

**Ashley Yonamine**—HLTA staff advisor; director of membership & special projects



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# COVID-19: What Can You Do?

**Hospitality industry  
advised to take precautions  
against coronavirus and  
plan for a slowdown**

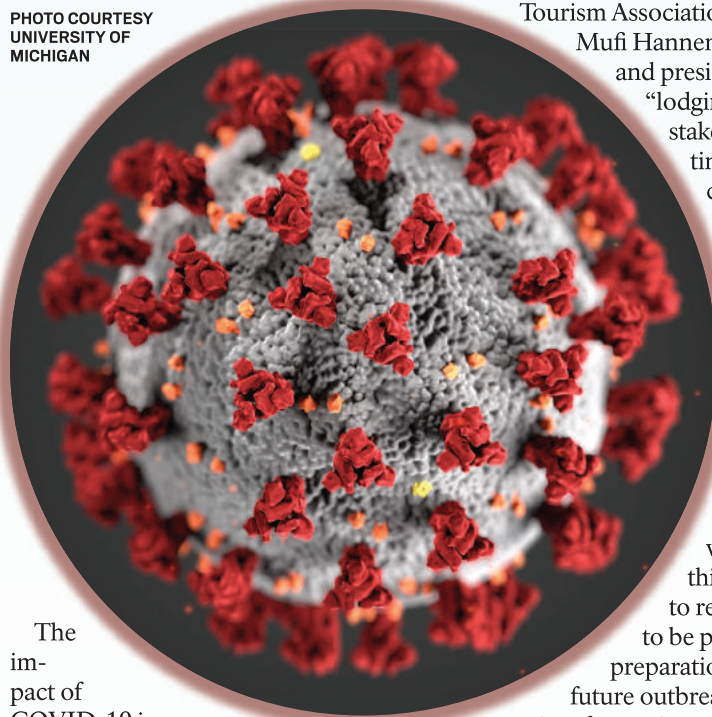
BY DAVID PUTNAM

One of Hawaii's signature attractions, the effulgent Merrie Monarch Festival, was among the first of many Island events and activities waylaid by COVID-19.

As of press time, 77 cases of the novel coronavirus were confirmed in Hawaii. On March 22, residents were ordered to stay home through April and the next day Gov. David Ige ordered a statewide lockdown.

President Trump had previously declared COVID-19 a national emergency after the World Health Organization (WHO) labeled COVID-19 a pandemic.

PHOTO COURTESY  
UNIVERSITY OF  
MICHIGAN



The impact of COVID-19 is affecting everyday lives. To help avoid a tidal wave of cases, myriad local activities and attractions—wherever there are

mass gatherings—have been put on hold.

Restaurants are urged to offer pickup, takeout or delivery services only. The shutdowns include cruise ships entering Hawaii, the Polynesian Cultural Center, the Prince Kuhio Parade, the Honolulu Festival, the Waikiki Spam Jam and University of Hawaii, high school and youth sports. College students in the UH System and at Chaminade University saw classrooms closed and were told to continue their studies online. Commencement exercises were canceled.

Some Island hotels are offering *kaimaaina* rates, which might help offset the lagging numbers of off-shore visitors, while airlines began reducing the number of Hawaii flights.

The Economic Research Organization at UH was spurred to revise its forecast for the state, stating that COVID-19 and a recent visitor falloff “lead us to lower sharply our outlook for the Hawaii economy.

“In the baseline forecast,” UHERO notes, “real visitor spending is expected to fall more than 10 percent this year and payroll jobs by 0.6 percent, with an attenuated recovery path.”

Meanwhile, the Islands' hospitality industry is working to prepare for any potentially adverse effects of COVID-19.

In a message to Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association members, Mufi Hanneman, HLTA CEO and president, notes that “lodging industry stakeholders are continuing to meet and collaborate with state officials to ensure that we are well-aware of any updates to the situation.

“We continue to emphasize that Hawaii is a safe place to visit. The main thing at this time is to remain calm and to be proactive in our preparations for a possible future outbreak. This is not a time for panic, nor is it a time for complacency.”

In a statement, Teri Orton, general manager of the Hawaii Convention Cen-

ter, said that “providing a safe environment for our clients, visitors, guests and staff is our top priority.

“This is an evolving situation, and rest assured that any actions we take will be consistent with guidelines from these agencies,” she adds, pointing to such organizations as the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) and the WHO as well as state officials.

The CDC issued advisories against travel to countries it has given Level 3 designation, which include China, South Korea, Italy and Iran. Level 2 designation was given to Japan.

## Tips for Safety

The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) notes that the best way to prevent transmission of any respiratory illness, including COVID-19 and flu, is to follow basic preventive actions:

- Get a flu shot. With current seasonal influenza activity, it is likely there will be confusion as persons with influenza will exhibit similar signs and symptoms such as fever and cough.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

## Who To Call

**If you know of someone with symptoms and travel history consistent with the COVID-19 outbreak, contact the Hawaii Department of Health, Disease Outbreak Control Division at 586-4586.**



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# Hawaii ‘Deserves’ Status as Top Convention Destination

HVCB’s new vice president aims to expand Islands’ MCI business

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

When the current uncertainties surrounding coronavirus are resolved, Hawaii will be looking to claim an increased share of the global meetings, conventions and incentives (MCI) market. John Reyes, the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau’s new senior vice president and chief MCI sales officer, is already on it.

“One of the things that is very clear from the Hawaii Tourism Authority and our stakeholders is they want new business,” he says. In February, three weeks or so into his new post, Reyes submitted his plan to boost MCI bookings, both city-

wide and single-property, to the HTA.

New business is Reyes’ forté, and has been for 30 years at leading MCI cities including San Francisco, San Diego and, most recently, Sacramento. “John brings a strong track record of building successful global MCI programs wherever he goes,” says John Monahan, HVCB’s president and CEO. “We’re excited to see how his efforts will bolster business at the Hawaii Convention Center and at hotels statewide.”

Currently, “leisure” visitors—individual or “free and independent travelers” (FIT)—account for 96 percent of Hawaii’s annual visitor count. However, a leisure visitor typically spends \$199

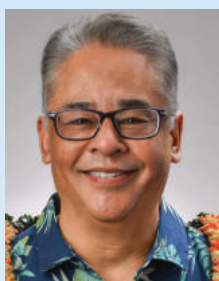
per day compared to the \$245 spent by an MCI visitor. MCI visitors usually stay longer, too—rarely fewer than four days, and often six or seven, says Mary Neister, the HVCB’s Meet Hawaii vice president, statewide hotel sales.

To substantially move Hawaii’s MCI visitors above 4 percent, Reyes says, Hawaii needs to begin a “city-wide” journey.

“When customers are looking to book a city-wide convention, they are looking at three things,” he says. “They’re looking at the facility—what is the size of the facility, will it fit my program—what is the hotel inventory, and what are the entertainment activities for our attendees?”

Many customers are looking at MCI fa-





**John Reyes**

cilities on the West Coast. Two years ago, as San Francisco's newly expanded Moscone Center prepared to reopen, the city could expect as much as \$500 million in economic impact from just one of the new,

larger conventions that might book the facility in 2019.

"What are we going to do to put Hawaii back on the map when it comes to being considered a convention center destination," Reyes asks. "As a new senior vice president, chief MCI sales officer, (my focus) is on the Convention Center. We have an outstanding building, we have an excellent product. But there's a formula or model that destinations like San Francisco, San Diego and Chicago use.



**Mary Neister**

"I think what everybody's saying, from the HTA to the community—including our stakehold-

ers—is, should we look at the model (used by) competitive destinations. San Francisco, San Diego, Chicago, Seattle—all have selling and marketing by the destination-marketing organization, and the building being operated (separately). That's the transition we're going through."

Reyes says research shows MCI destinations attract city-wide business by harnessing "collaborative energy." This means destination-marketing organizations like the HVCB and the stakeholders—such as hotels—all work together.

"Customers look for cohesiveness," he says. "If (your event) needs a solution, you have a team behind you."

To build Hawaii's MCI team, Reyes says he is "going to be out in the community. They're not coming to us, we're going to them. With a destination like Hawaii, which is 96 percent leisure and doesn't have an occupancy issue, we have to be surgical. As a new leader, I want to come in and respectfully say, are you open to this change?"

"We are on a city-wide journey. And we've got to be targeted. I need everybody involved. I need everybody to be committed to be a leader."

In addition to the Convention Center



transition, Reyes says "one of the things we're really trying to build is a more effective processing system. So I'm reviewing that, as well as making sure we communicate with our stakeholders based on that collaboration."

Stakeholders may also review Mainland marketing plans. "Sophisticated destinations ask, by each calendar year, how many events do you want," Reyes says. "What's the type of event, and when do you want those events?"

Sustainability is another concern. "We've got 10 million visitors," he says. "How many more visitors do we want? Other destinations like Monterey and San Francisco are (also) asking, what type of visitors do you want? Because residents from cities that support tourism want people to come with respect."

MCI visitors tend to fit that profile, says Neister. Besides spending more, MCI visitors also provide "use of more facilities and a known itinerary. It's more contained." The sponsoring organization "does the overarching of the event with the hotel rooms and perhaps food and beverage. So the individual traveler actually spends more with a group, (and) there's a tighter footprint. So it really is more sustainable."

Some of Hawaii's top MCI bookings come from medical, scientific and technology associations, Reyes notes. Meet Hawaii's Elele Program, which has Hawaii residents and subject-matter experts in many fields, facilitates MCI bookings

**The Hawaii Convention Center is the gateway to Waikiki.**

PHOTOS COURTESY HTA/ DANA EDMUNDS

by elite groups, including medical, scientific and technology.

"The other part of our expanded role in taking on the global MCI *kuleana*," Neister says, "is taking on and helping with the coordination and execution of promoting MCI coming out of each of HTA's global marketing teams. So whether it's Taiwan, Oceania or Canada, I will be coordinating with each of those teams to sell MCI coming out of those regions, to coordinate the messaging, to help them shortcut any issues that they have in trying to bring groups here."

"This provides them a point of support to help them expand their efforts, and increases their knowledge of how to bring more MCI to Hawaii."

Just since Reyes arrived in the Islands, he says, MCI customers have told him that when city-wide conventions are in Hawaii, "scientists or anything medical, they relax more. A lot of times, when you're meeting someplace else, the attendee is rushed. You come here, and planners say, 'it's interesting, people are more relaxed, they're open to learning.'"

"Hawaii deserves to be a top convention destination," he says. "This is a magical place."



**The Hawaii Convention Center is "an outstanding building," says John Reyes.**

PHOTOS COURTESY HTA/ DANA EDMUNDS



# FULL HOUSE

2020 Hawaii Convention Center bookings approach 400,000

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES



The Hawaii Convention Center anchors new towers springing up along Kapiolani Boulevard  
PHOTO COURTESY DAVID CORNWELL

event at the HCC each year.

Julie Morikawa, ClimbBHI founder and president, says this event and similar programs throughout Hawaii host hundreds of high school and college students each spring. Due to COVID-19 precautionary measures, she says, spring 2020 LEI programs will be postponed to the 2020-2021 academic year.



Julie Morikawa

During the Oahu event, students are hosted for site visits at partner hospitality companies throughout Waikiki, such as hotels and restaurants, to explore career

opportunities. When they return to the HCC, Morikawa says, they network with educational institutions and businesses, and typically connect with approximately 100 peers and mentors in all occupations—police, firemen, doctors, lawyers, you name it—who share their stories and contact information. For students looking to build their network, Morikawa says,

**T**eri Orton, general manager of the Hawaii Convention Center, doesn't look like a hostess with nearly 400,000 guests on the way. She's beaming.



Teri Orton

While some Spring 2020 events have been canceled for 30 days, starting March 30, to follow the COVID-19 precautionary guidelines provided by the state of Hawaii

and public health organizations, Orton is looking forward to continuing scheduled city-wide and locally focused events as health and safety measures permit.

"We regret any inconvenience this may cause to our clients and guests, and we look forward to a robust schedule of city-wide and local events for the remainder of 2020," she said in a statement in mid-March.

Still, she notes, "we're super excited" about the remainder of the 2020 schedule. "We are seeing a slight drop in attendance numbers from offshore events that are confirmed, but nothing alarming yet."

Given Orton's success in securing larger and more varied bookings since she became the HCC's manager a few years back, some enthusiasm is in order.

"This year in 2020 we have over 10 offshore or city-wide conferences, large conferences, with over 4,000 delegates," she says. "Some of the big ones are Rotary International (28,000 expected attendees) and National Letter Carriers."

Courtside thrills are also in store. The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) is adding new events to its roster of annual high school basketball and volleyball qualifying tournaments. Approximately seven to nine of these events—AAU tournaments as well as competitions sponsored by other athletic organizations—are booked at the HCC in 2020. One is the Pacific Rim Championships 2020 in July, with 2,500 expected.

AAU's Hawaii tournaments, an early Orton initiative, just makes sense, she says. "My vision was, if you're going to Detroit for a qualifying tournament, why wouldn't you come to Hawaii and turn it into a family vacation?"

"It's funny," she smiles, "you find a lot of families come and drop their kids off (at the center) and then go off and come back when they know their kid is going to play."

For other groups, the Hawaii Convention Center is equally magnetic.

"I think our location certainly is a benefit for us," Orton says. "I know a lot of meeting planners who (book) business on the West Coast or the East Coast usually sacrifice attendees from Asia, because it's so far."

Planners like these who book Hawaii for the first time, she says, "have been really, really happy with their choice. Because they find their attendees from Asia have tripled." Scientific and medical conferences in particular, she says, are booming.

The Hawaii Convention Center also supports Hawaii's hospitality industry at the grass-roots level. ClimbBHI, a Hawaii-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit that encourages students to finish high school and advance to post-secondary education or employment, holds its main Oahu Leadership Exploration Inspiration (LEI)

## By the Numbers

Some of the Hawaii Convention Center's biggest 2020 bookings to date include:

**3,000** IMMUNOLOGY 2020 TM  
(May 8-12)

**28,000** Rotary International (June 1-10)

**2,500** Pacific Rim Championships 2020  
(July 3-5)

**6,500** NALC 2020 Biennial Convention  
(Aug. 10-22)

**3,000** PRiME 2020 (Oct. 2-9)

**14,000** The International Chemical  
Congress of Pacific Basin  
Societies 2020 (Dec. 15-20)

With thousands of Hawaii Convention Center bookings scheduled for 2020, "providing a safe environment for our clients, visitors, guests and staff is our top priority," HCC General Manager Teri Orton said in a March open letter. The Hawaii Convention Center, Orton said, is closely monitoring COVID-19 developments and enhancing cleaning and sanitary measures throughout the facility.





Chris Tatum, Hawaii Tourism Authority president and CEO, addresses a "Train the Trainer" session for CTE's Hospitality Pathway Service Excellence Certificate developed by ClimbHI.

PHOTO COURTESY CLIMBHI

## A New Pathway to Success

Hawaii workforce development nonprofit ClimbHI in January launched a new Hospitality Pathway Excellence Certificate for high school students under a statewide contract with the Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE), and with support from the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA).

The Certificate curriculum was exclusively developed in partnership with the School of Hotel Administration at the Cornell SC Johnson College of Business, one of the world's leading hospitality administration programs.

The curriculum is part of the DOE's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. After completing it, students will receive a Service Excellence Certificate of Achievement from Cornell University and the HTA.

The program will be available for CTE students starting in the second half of the DOE's 2019-2020 academic year.

"you've now got a whole new *ohana* here to help you."

In addition to ClimbHI and other outreach—the Ho'omaluku Conservation Program, the Hawaiian Legacy Reforestation Initiative and Sunset Mele celebrations, among others—the HCC expects to attract Kapiolani Boulevard's revitalized neighborhood as new towers like Sky Ala Moana and Mandarin Oriental open their doors.

"We are pleased to have additional options for our guests so close to the Hawaii Convention Center, adding to the tens of thousands of rooms available in Waikiki," Orton says. "The ability to offer such a diverse array of lodging options is one of the reasons the center is such a desirable destination for so many major conferences from around the world."

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# THINKING OUTSIDE THE APP

## In the city, the hotel and the room

BY PRISCILLA PÉREZ BILLIG

Digital transformation is looming large for the hospitality industry—especially hotels. Demanding mobility, seamless digital customer experience and connectivity through the Internet of Things, customer experiences are combining to create the hospitality industry’s digital version of aloha.

*Hospitality Technology* reports in its “2019 Customer Engagement Technology Study” that 72 percent of guests are more likely to return to a property when technology is part of the experience. In 2020, guests put the greatest emphasis on instant messaging (45 percent), mobile payments (44 percent), public Wi-Fi (36 percent), chatbots (36 percent) and mobile apps (36 percent).

The study also states that to keep pace with guests’ digital expectations, hotels fully expect that artificial intelligence will be a transformative technology. A large majority (72 percent) believe AI will yield the most benefits in serving and marketing to tech-savvy, or even semi-tech-literate, guests.

*Hotel News Resource* reports the average traveler spends 13 percent of their online

time searching for travel-related activities. Employee Value Proposition Strategist Margaret Mastrogiacommo writes that luxury hotel strategies include website personalization, marketing personalization,



Margaret Mastrogiacommo

data-driven design, loyalty program integration and context vs. content and a hotel’s website as a concierge.

### The Innovation-Enabled Hotel

According to the American Hotel & Lodging Association, hotels support more than 1 in 25 jobs. Approximately 1.3 billion guests stay in American hotels every year, which contributes nearly \$660 billion to the U.S. GDP.

Hotels must evaluate three key criteria for technology investment that enhance operational efficiency: purpose, proactivity and profitability, reports *Hospitality Technology*’s “2020 Lodging Technology Study, The Acceleration of Innovation-Enabled Hospitality,” which also predicts an increase of 63 percent in hotel IT spending.

According to Jady West, director of strategic sales at Cox Communication and a contributor to the study, hoteliers should plan a network strategy that creates an exceptional guest experience but also ensures a sufficient return on investment. With technology foundations,



Jady West

such as guest facing/enterprise apps, in-room entertainment systems, digital signage platforms and custom-managed Wi-Fi networks in place, new tools and solutions can be delivered.

“Guest-facing wayfinding, guestroom check-in and out, guest messaging, advertisement offerings, e-commerce for show tickets and room service, employee panic button safety tools, inventory tracking and much



more can be delivered,” West writes.

Co-founder and CEO of Hotel Communication Network’s Richard Carruthers poses the question: “Why,

with an estimated 17 million guestrooms worldwide, are less than 100,000 rooms equipped

with these smart devices?”

The “2020 Lodging Technology Study” cites some barriers that remain within the hospitality industry. These include difficulties keeping up with the speed of technological innovation; identification of new sources of revenue and profitability;



Richard Carruthers

anxieties for hotels underfunded in technology; importance of cloud-based systems; and importance of technology for optimal guest experience. “I believe at this time Hawaii hotels are exploring options with digital technology,” says Jerry Agrusa, an associate professor at the University of Hawaii School of Travel Industry Management.



Jerry Agrusa

Agrusa says the challenge is maintaining the strong ties with the guest and the service provider and balancing technological innovation with the expectation of personalized service—the aloha spirit.

An emerging technology is virtual reality, or VR, which can digitally transport potential guests who wish to explore a property or visitor destination. This immersive experience may be accessed through a hotel’s website,

making the property more exciting and competitive.

Mostly used in the gaming and entertainment industries, VR engages the five senses in a simulation of an environment: 360-degree images with virtual wind, heat and mist emanating from the travel destination.

Tech advisor DigiCapital estimates the worth of the VR

industry will reach \$30 billion this year. Goldman Sachs suggests it will reach \$110 billion by 2025.



## The Intelligent Room

Once settled in their room, guests can do away with phone apps. Statista, a provider of market and consumer data, estimates there were approximately 230 billion app downloads in 2019 or roughly 630 million app downloads each day. The company predicts that number will grow to 258.2 billion by 2022.

Considering that the average U.S. consumer spends more time using apps than watching TV or engaging on social media—the average person spends 3.3 hours per day—hoteliers may be challenged to make their apps worth downloading and compete for travelers' attention.

Most consumers engage with apps for personal choices involving social media, music, video and gaming. None of those elements can be found on a hotel's app. Enter the in-room tablet—a communication device that provides information on the city and the hotel landscape, plus myriad guest services.

An in-room hotel tablet serves as the command center to access curated city guides that offer the best attractions, restaurants, in-room dining, events and exclusive deals from local partners, not to mention facilitating communication between concierge and guest.

In-room tablet technology can increase average room dining revenue by 20 percent to 30 percent; earn revenue by offering dining from local restaurants; easy guest billing; and charge to room or by credit card. For a return on investment, a 400-room hotel running 75 percent occupancy and realizing 8 percent of guests ordering in-room dining could increase room service revenues by \$10.95 per room per month which totals \$4,380 per month or \$52,560 per year, according to the Hotel Communication Network.

By 2021, Statista reports that 1.28 billion people will be using tablet computers daily as communication devices. For hoteliers, this trend should not go unnoticed, as travelers continue to demand a seamless experience, which includes having fingertip access to hotel and local area services in the privacy of their rooms via tablet computers, according to Hotel Technology News' website.

Commanding communication, hyper-connectivity means convenience for the guest who wishes immediate access to all amenities, entertainment systems, room service, check out, housekeeping, room environment control, alarm clocks—all connected to a single, secure and automatically managed intelligent network.

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# Embracing the Green

Resorts offer an enhanced sense of place by landscaping with Hawaii plants

BY PRISCILLA PÉREZ BILLIG

Hui Ku Maoli Ola Native Plant Nursery  
PHOTO COURTESY HUI KU MAOLI OLAI

**T**he philosophy of “right plant, right place” is at the crest of Hawaii’s latest “green” movement.

As calls mount for the Islands’ resorts to introduce more native and non-invasive plants into landscape designs to push out harmful invasives, the “ugly” stigma borne by native species is slowly fading away.

“Native plants, such as *Hibiscus arnottianus*, are stunning plants to design with because of their beautiful flowers, interesting textures and multiple hues of greens,” says Bernice Fielding, project manager for the landscape architecture component of WATG’s Honolulu studio. “I have used these plants in many of my landscape designs, not just for their beauty but because they require

less maintenance, less water and have less issues with pests and disease.”

Christian Renz, president of the Hawaiian Island Landscape Association, says sustainable land practices are more than just not planting invasive species. “It’s in regard to proper irrigation techniques, proper plant placement and, of course, not using plant material that is imported where you could utilize natives,” he says.

Renz adds that landscape designers understand the importance of introducing natives at the beginning of the project. For established landscapes, since esthetics is a strong driving force, resorts can start to phase out certain plant material while integrating more natives or endem-

through continuing education and public awareness about the sustainability movement, it will become a more commonly accepted practice,” Renz says.

City, state and most federal projects are required to have at least 10 percent native plants in their designs, says Russell Galanti, extension agent with the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources.

He adds that the increase in demand for native plants for other design/install projects has helped build a supply of these species that can spill out into other industries—like the resort industry.

“It also gives examples of native plant species’ vigor in different environments. Plants that are becoming more commonplace are the natives that tend to be bulletproof in the landscape,



Bernice Fielding



Christian Renz



Russell Galanti





**Hibiscus arnottianus**  
PHOTO COURTESY BERNICE FIELDING

such as pohinahina, naupaka and kupukupu.

“Increased awareness of the different effects that natives versus alien plants have on our ecosystems has changed perspectives on what should be planted,” Galanti says. “A shift in the perception of esthetics is changing as well. Native plants are being seen as much more appealing for their unique characteristics. This is especially true for Hawaii, where there is a pointed focus on conserving ecosystems and encouraging a sense of place.”

SGS Hawaii Inc. manages several Maui resort landscapes using what President Sidney Sparkman calls “stealth” landscaping practices using battery-powered,



**Sidney Sparkman**

zero emissions equipment that have minimal noise. Sparkman says SGS is striving to go totally natural in terms of fertilization and pest/weed control. SGS is the only Hawaii affiliate of LandOpt, a national network of landscape contractors that shares ideas to improve the landscape industry.

“One of the biggest concerns is water usage, so we encourage architects and developers to utilize ‘smart’ irrigation control systems along with drip where feasible,” Sparkman says. “The majority of Hawaii’s resorts are located on the leeward side of the islands which has relatively low rainfall, so irrigation is a necessity. We also encourage the use of drought-resistant native plants, as well as salt-tolerant grasses like seashore paspalum.

“We believe that landscaping should tell a story. It is vital that design considerations are made available to offer an

zero emissions equipment that have minimal noise. Sparkman says SGS is striving to go totally natural in terms of fertilization and pest/weed control. SGS is the only Hawaii affiliate of LandOpt, a national network of landscape contractors that shares ideas to improve the landscape industry.

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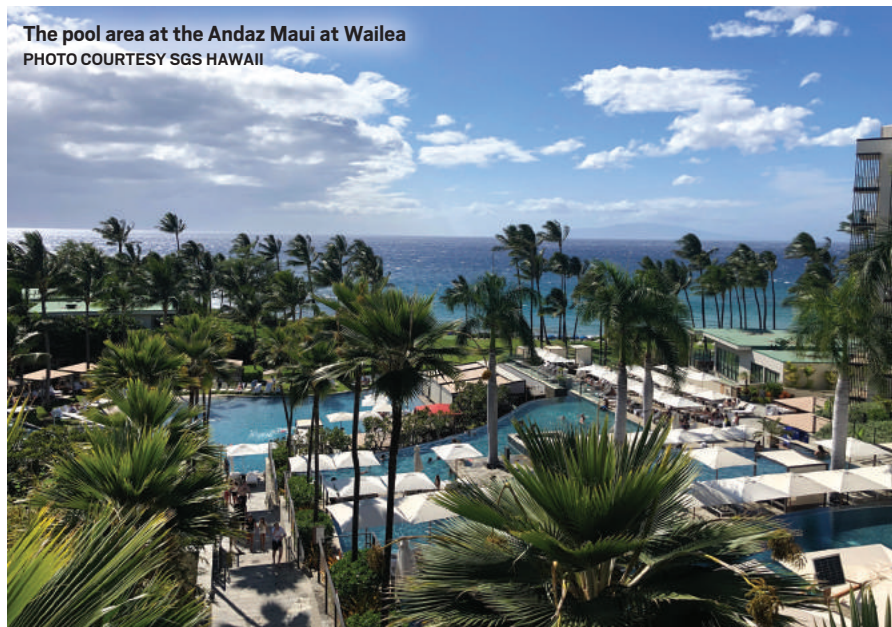


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The pool area at the Andaz Maui at Wailea  
PHOTO COURTESY SGS HAWAII



Landscaping at the Westin Kaanapali Ocean Resort Villas on Maui  
PHOTO COURTESY SGS HAWAII

authentic education about Hawaii.”

SGS Hawaii’s Elaine Malina adds that implementing organic landscaping products into the soils has been proven to reduce water usage and create a healthier environment for plants and lawns, reducing the use of pesticides (fungicides, insecticides and herbicides). She says



Elaine Malina

go anywhere else but here to see these Hawaiian plants,” says Rick Barboza, co-owner of the 8-acre Hui Ku Maoli Ola Native Plant Nursery with a total of 82 acres of land between the nursery in Heeiea and their new space in Waimanalo.

Barboza points out that understanding the *aina* on which a resort property is built, its history and environment that

the end result is a healthy, beautiful “Earth friendly” landscape.

“A lot (of native species) are so unique because there is such a high rate of endemism in Hawaii that you can’t

embodies the land, then trying to fit in all the manipulated and created environments or microhabitats that are made from the resort itself—such as shade, wind tunnels, soil fill, etc.—typically these are the hardest situations to landscape.



Rick Barboza

typically these are the hardest situations to landscape.

“We’ve really lost our sense of identity because we’ve just homogenized tropical landscapes for most of Hawaii’s resort landscapes that speak nothing of what Hawaii is,” Barboza says. “Instead they paint the false picture of what Hawaii is not and never reveals what it has to offer.”

But Galanti counters that resort industries can be a great proponent of eco-

logically sound landscaping. He says he sees this as an opportunity to be lobbyists for research, education and outreach for using native plants in the landscape.

“Understanding the environmental characteristics of the site is important for choosing the right plants,” says Galanti. “This means evaluating rainfall, temperature and soil characteristics for the microclimate that is being created by the architecture. Choosing the right plant for the right place is key and that means having a knowledge of the plants and the place.”

A landscaped walkway along the Marriott’s Wailea Beach Resort.  
PHOTO COURTESY SGS HAWAII



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**Hale Koa Hotel's new aquatics complex**  
PHOTO COURTESY HALE KOA HOTEL

# Resort Redux

**W**ATG created the landscaping concept design for the Hale Koa Hotel's new aquatics complex. Fielding was previously director of grounds and, later, director of operations at Hale Koa Hotel, where she says she focused on incorporating native and canoe plants

(Polynesian introductions) into many of the garden spaces around the hotel and Fort DeRussy Park, specifically the luau gardens and the new pool complex.

The front entrance of the Hale Koa Hotel's new aquatics complex is packed with native plants, such as palapalai fern, mixed with non-invasive non-natives. The design includes nanu, carex wahuensis,



**Rob Hoonan**

akia, pohinhina, pohuehue and aeae.

"The palette of Hawaiian and tropical plants provide our guests with a true sense and feel of Maui," says Director of Engineering

Rob Hoonan at the

Wailea Beach Resort. "We also are proud to provide this cultural experience while conserving precious water resources with advanced irrigation practices and drought-resistant plant materials."

At the Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa at Ko Olina, the property is shaped like an *ahupuaa*, the traditional Hawaiian land division. The layout showcases how Hawaiians have historically approached and used the land and natural resources in this mountain-to-ocean region, says Kahulu De Santos, cultural advisor for the Aulani Resort.

"The landscaping is key," De Santos says. "Disney is a storytelling company, and we do this by fully immersing guests into the world of the story we are telling,



**Landscaped area at the Aulani Resort at Ko Olina**  
PHOTO COURTESY SGS HAWAII



## Where Can I Find Native Plants?



A view of Hui Ku Maoli Ola Native Plant Nursery  
PHOTO COURTESY HUI KU MAOLI OLA

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plantpono.org

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Home Depot (except Hilo)

Navy Exchange

and paying attention to even the smallest details. At Aulani Resort, we immerse our guests into the stories and culture of Ha-



Kahulu De Santos

waii. In doing this, we have made a commitment to portraying Hawaiian culture as authentically as possible. We make a conscious effort to stay true to Hawaii and use native and Polynesian-intro-

duced plants as much as possible.”

De Santos adds that some of the various plants that can be found at Aulani Resort are indigenous, like naupaka, native to Hawaii, or are heritage plants like kukui, ulu, ki and wauke.

“Because Hawaiians have such a deep-rooted connection to the land, it’s imperative that Aulani Resort’s landscaping continues to support and help visually illustrate this concept for our guests,” De Santos says. “In fact, one of the first things that guests see upon arrival at Aulani is our *loi kalo* (paddy of taro). It helps to represent Hawaii’s deep connection to nature, and welcomes all who come to Aulani to experience Hawaii.”

Rick Quinn, a landscape architect and vice president and partner at HHF

Planners, says he increasingly sees more commercial and government projects emphasizing the use of native and culturally significant plants.



Rick Quinn

Quinn has spent 10 years creating an ecosystem garden at the Shidler College of Business compound. It boasts more than 70 different species of native plants in a naturalistic restoration approach.

With the demonstration garden designed as a teaching tool for architectural landscape students, Quinn says, “I’ve created a very special native garden.”

Galanti adds that he sees resorts as important properties in Hawaii because they are some of the most-viewed landscapes by visitors.

“Incorporating native plants into resorts will help visitors understand more about the at-risk ecosystem they are experiencing,” Galanti says. “It can be a platform to advocate for environmentally conscious tourism.”

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## Resort Property: Master Planning Stage

Properly match native plants with soil and climate conditions of site:

- The choice of plants depends on the location of the landscaped area (e.g., use coastal plants that tolerate salt and wind at the beachfront).

- Identify plants commercially available from nurseries. Some native plants may not be available at this time.

**Identify the type of landscape design (naturalistic vs. manicured):**

- Some native plants prefer to be left alone (e.g., less/minimal pruning, leading toward a more naturalistic design).

- A few native plants can tolerate hedging.

- Some plants last long and some need to be replaced every 2-3 years.

**Do not plant too densely to make an instant garden:**

- Give enough space for plants to grow.

- Design the garden so it looks beautiful at installation and in 5-10 years.

- Design a garden that "evolves" with time.

**Consider maintenance aspects of the design:**

- Plant the right plant in the right place. Do not plant something that can lead into problems 5-10 years from planting (e.g., space the trees enough so they don't overcrowd later).

- It is a myth that native plants are maintenance- and pest-free. They still need to be managed, if not as much as conventional landscape plants.

- Although native plants require less care in general, special aspects are needed to maintain them. Train maintenance personnel about the plants' needs.

- Avoid overwatering. Have a plan to minimize watering after the plants are established five years down the road. Overwatering can lead to weed issues, rotting and disease issues.

**Don't Over Water:**

- Most installed landscapes are over-watered and can lead to weed problems.

**Don't Prune Improperly:**

- Some plants are aggressively pruned (e.g., beach naupaka should be pruned judiciously and not cut back extensively. Cutting it back delays recovery, making the plant look ugly for a longer period of time).



Orville Baldos

*SOURCE: Orville C. Baldos, assistant professor/researcher, Sustainable Ornamental Production, UH Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences*

## CHECKLIST FOR A RISK-FREE PROPERTY

- ☐ Review housekeeping practices to ensure busy walkways are kept clear of debris, and surfaces are kept dry.
- ☐ Highlight changes in elevation like curbs and stairs. If warranted, post signs to prevent slips and falls.
- ☐ Check deliveries that come to your property for cockroaches and other pests that might come with the goods.
- ☐ Inspect hotel beds for black markings and smudges created by bed bugs, usually around the rim of the mattresses.
- ☐ Keep security systems such as access cards, security cameras, fire panels, and fire systems (extinguishers) in working condition.
- ☐ Keep shrubbery, bushes, and trees at least two feet away from any structure. Redirect sprinkler heads away from the structure.



Chad Lindsey  
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# HRA Chili Cookoff

The Hawaii Restaurant Association hosted “The Great Hawaiian Chili Cookoff” on March 7 at Koko Marina Center.

PHOTOS BY ANJJ LEE



Roy Angelo Francisco, Jeremy Barayuga, MJ Macaspac and Jena Santiago, Kohala High School



Jennifer Grossman, Hide Sakurai and Merielle Tomas, Sky Waikiki



Jeannie Yukitomo, Hawaii USA; Marcus Fikse and Holly Kessler, HRA Education Foundation (HRAEF)



Rosell Barroja, Brandon Hanagami and Blessie Isneq, Leilehua Culinary Arts Academy



Shankar Pitchiah, Darryl Fujita, Junko Faumuina and Jill Lee, Foodland



Angelina Pizarro, Auli'I Peahi and Melanie Nuibe, Foodland



Jasmin Lee, Kevin Carvalho, Johei Takahashi and James Crowell Jr., Dean & DeLuca Hawaii



Lee Watanabe, Kalae Peahi, Nathan Okinaka and Maria Balanza, Foodland





Paul Yokota, Lyle Matsuoka and Sheryl Matsuoka, HRAEF; Jennifer Ackrill, Pint & Jigger; Ryan Woodward, HRAEF



Janice Respicio, Harry Nakashima Jr. and Michael Ganotice, Gyotaku Japanese Restaurant



Mason Hundhausen, Moku Kitchen; Jessica Hamad, Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden; Ben Sobel, Moku Kitchen



Brianna Souza, Ala Serenity, Leilehua Culinary Arts Academy; Margaret Pearlman, HRAEF; Tammy Nakamura, Ala Serenity, Leilehua Culinary Arts Academy



Hunter Young, Alicen Young, Krysten Nakamura and Jodie Otani, Kaiser High School



Eric Salassa, Bree Yankowski and Raymond Orozco, Triple-F



Christine Yasuma, Kimmie Caruba and Manabu Sakurai, 102.7 DA Bomb



# HVCB Membership Meeting

The Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau held its annual membership meeting on Jan. 29 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort.

PHOTOS BY ANJJ LEE



Sherry Duong, Sue Kanoho, Ross Birch, Noelani Schilling Wheeler, John Monahan



Tom Mullen, Jay Talwar, Sen. Glenn Wakai, John Monahan, Barbara Okamoto



Tiffany King, Debbie Tada, Lindsay Schedler, Andrew Bailey



Will Collie



Cheyenne Matezo, Danielle Thomson,  
John Monahan, Jay Talwar, Erin Khan



Lormona Meredith, Kalisi Mausio



Dean Nakasone, James Karabelas, Rhonda Khabir, Wendi Ichinose



Andrew Koh, Linda Leung, Shaylen Chang, Kim Gallagher, Kainoa Daines



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## Outrigger Buys Sheraton Kona

The Outrigger Hospitality Group has purchased the Sheraton Kona Resort & Spa at Keauhou Bay, an oceanfront property on the Island of Hawaii.

The transaction is expected to close this month and the property will be rebranded as an Outrigger Resort.

The 22-acre resort is perched prominently atop lava-rock cliffs and includes 509 rooms and suites, spa, wedding chapel, traditional Hawaiian cultural center, fitness center, kid's club, oceanfront pool and waterslide, two restaurants and four indoor meeting venues—including a 10,000-square-foot convention center, the largest on the Kona Coast.

## Sheraton Kauai Welcomes Machorek as GM

Sheraton Kauai Coconut Beach Resort has appointed **Chris Machorek** as general manager.

Machorek brings over 25 years of senior leadership experience in the hospitality industry and will oversee operations for 314 guest rooms, five F&B outlets, including a twice-weekly luau, and 8,000 square feet of event space. Machorek's most recent position was managing director of the Renaissance Westchester Hotel in



**Chris Machorek**

New York. Previously, he spent over two decades on Kauai where he served as general manager and director of operations at Koloa Landing Resort at Poipu; director of marketing for Kauai Beach Club, Waiohai Beach Club and Kauai Lagoons Kailanipuu; and resident manager at Kauai Marriott Resort and Beach Club.

## Fairmont Kea Lani Names Houston F&B Director

**Thomas "Tom" W. Houston** takes the reins as director of food and beverage for the Fairmont Kea Lani in Wailea, Maui, where he oversees all F&B operations at the resort's multiple dining venues and banquet program along with beach and pool operations.

Houston brings nearly 20 years of experience to the position, beginning his career as a dishwasher with Canadian Pacific Hotels. Since joining

Fairmont, he has held a series of roles, including Fairmont Banff Springs, Fairmont Southampton in Bermuda and most recently Fairmont Hotel Vancouver.

He is a member of the Accor North & Central America Food & Beverage Council and Chaine Des Rottisseurs.



**Tom Houston**

Tom's energy, creative vision and passion for creating unique culinary and beverage experiences with our global guests."

## The Ritz-Carlton Appoints Two Managers

The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua has appointed **Robert Blackborough** as the new executive assistant manager, food and beverage, and **Philip Hoy** as executive assistant manager, rooms division.

Blackborough joins The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua from the Asia-Pacific region where he recently served as the general manager for the W Hotel Chang'an Beijing and hotel manager at The



**Robert Blackborough**



**Philip Hoy**

Hoy returns to The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua after working as lodging manager and partner services manager for Blackberry Farm in Tennessee, a Forbes-Four Star luxury retreat. Previously, Hoy was the assistant rooms executive at The Ritz-Carlton, Denver and was also assistant front office

manager at The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Lake Oconee and The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua where he was promoted to director of Housekeeping and Laundry.

## James Beard Award Honors Hawaii Chefs

Hawaii culinary talent has landed square on the James Beard Foundation's list of Restaurant and Chef Award semifinalists. The announcement is in advance of the 30th annual James Beard Awards.

Bar Leather Apron was chosen in the Outstanding Bar Program category. **Mimi Mendoza** of Senia was selected among Outstanding Pastry Chef. The Best Chef: Northwest & Pacific semifinalists include **Chris Kajioka** and **Anthony Rush** of Senia; **Keiji Nakazawa** at **Sushi Sho** of Waikiki Beach; and **Sheldon Simeon** of Lineage in Wailea.

More than 600 judges—leading regional restaurant critics, food and wine editors, culinary educators and past James Beard Award winners—will present the winners on May 4 in Chicago.

## Hannemann 2019 Salesperson of the Year

Sales and Marketing Executives Honolulu (SME Honolulu) has named **Mufi Hannemann**, president and CEO of the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA), its 2019 Salesperson of the Year.

Each year, SME Honolulu recognizes one member of the community who greatly enhances the image and quality of life in Hawaii.



**Mufi Hannemann**

of Honolulu in 2004 and was re-elected to a second term in 2008.

Hannemann's accomplishments include leading the Visitor Industry Charity Walk, which raises \$2.7 million annually to help nonprofit organizations throughout the state. He is the founder of the Pacific Century Fellows, modeled after the White House Fellows, of which he was one, which mentors future generations of local leaders in Hawaii and the Pacific.

The Salesperson of the Year event, set for April 3 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, was postponed until November. For reservations, go to [smehonolulu.org](http://smehonolulu.org) or email [spoy@smehonolulu.org](mailto:spoy@smehonolulu.org).





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