



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

HLTA Helps With Kauai Homelessness

In Hawaii's endless summer, the start of autumn is associated not with colorful leaves and fall coats, but with new school-year traffic and pumpkins in the grocery store. For HLTA, the last quarter of the year marks the season for our annual general membership meeting (GMM). Once held up to four times a year, it is now an annual event that rotates through the Islands, and is one of the highlights of HLTA membership, as it provides the perfect opportunity to form long-lasting connections with fellow industry colleagues and to immerse oneself in all things

topical about tourism.

HLTA's 189th GMM was held at Sheraton Kauai Resort last week. Over the course of the conference, members learned about the association's past accomplishments and future initiatives, as well as tips and trends in today's hospitality landscape. This year's educational sessions were top notch, bringing up themes such as generational diversity, leadership building, the millennial generation and hospitality in the media. Attendees also were given a preview of what kind of activities and initiatives are in store for 2017, when HLTA, the state's largest

private visitor-industry organization, turns 70 years old.

One of the highlights of the GMM was a special presentation regarding homelessness at the opening reception. At last year's GMM on Maui, HLTA worked with Mayor Alan Arakawa and IHS to donate \$25,000 to Maui Family Life Center to support its airline relocation program and help reconnect homeless transplant individuals with their families on the Mainland. This year we continued our "tradition of giving" by presenting \$25,000 to Kauai Economic Opportunity Inc. (KEO), which has been highly regarded by

Mayor Bernard Carvalho, as a result of its efforts to help alleviate Kauai's homelessness situation. This is in keeping with my long-standing view that homelessness is not only a major challenge and struggle on Oahu, but it is pervasive and statewide, and is a huge and growing problem on all the Neighbor Islands. Hence I was keen to kokua the Garden Island.

"This generous grant is a prime example of an important partnership between the tourism industry and nonprofits that will undoubtedly benefit our entire community. Mahalo to HLTA for thinking

of us," said an appreciative Carvalho.

In addition to using part of the grant to repatriate some of the homeless to the Mainland, provided family or loved ones are prepared to assist with their transition, MaBel Fereiro-Fujiuchi, the highly energetic CEO of KEO, intends to utilize the grant to provide assistance to eligible clientele who are ready to relocate to a safe shelter and pursue sustainable employment. Fujiuchi and her staff also were extremely touched by the unexpected contribution. "It's like an early Christmas present," she remarked.

With this latest donation, HLTA and its local chapter affiliates in every county over the last three years have donated a staggering \$775,000-plus to numerous community nonprofits to combat homelessness. And much more is to come, as Hilton Hawaiian Village's benefit fundraiser and live telethon, an event co-sponsored by HLTA and headed by Hilton executive Jerry Gibson, gets ready to kick off in grand style this Saturday evening on the Great Lawn. With a stellar lineup of entertainment led by Henry Kapono and Friends and fireworks added to the mix, the

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Mayor's Race Needs Hype

extravaganza will be televised live from 6 and 9:30 p.m. on Hawaii News Now. For more information and how you can help, visit hawaii.org and click on Hawaii for Hawaii Benefit Concert.

The general election is less than a month away, and talk is rampant among Oahu voters that, in the marquee race for Honolulu mayor pitting incumbent Kirk Caldwell against challenger Charles Djou, there's very little excitement and interest to make people want to get out and vote. Both Dan Boylan in *MidWeek* and Lee Cataluna in *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, in particular, and some recent television reports have accentuated this point. I truly hope that's not the case — after all,

it is the most important elected position in the state's largest county with a lot at stake.

Exacerbating the situation is that it is highly unlikely that any of the major television stations have plans to sponsor a televised debate. Let's face it: As important and informative community forums are (HLTA, for example, sponsored the first forum of this mayoral election back in July at the Blaisdell), there's no substitute for a statewide televised debate.

This is an unbelievable scenario, given the controversy surrounding issues such as rail, transit-oriented development, homelessness, fire and police departments, the ethics commission, Honolulu Zoo, affordable housing and the



Mayor Kirk Caldwell
FILE PHOTOS



Charles Djou

like. I can't recall a single instance in a race for mayor in recent memory when a televised debate was not a given in the campaign schedule.

My recollection starts with

the '84 election, when incumbent Mayor Eileen Anderson and newly converted GOP candidate former Mayor Frank Fasi squared off at Punahou School in a live de-

bate that had a lot of folks in town abuzz in conversation. I had some memorable televised faceoffs against Mayors Fasi and Jeremy Harris, and City Councilmembers Ann Kobayashi and Duke Bainum that fueled conversation and generated hype in the community about politics at City Hall.

Perhaps the harshness and negative tone of the presidential campaign and how that has played out is not helping things locally. So, to mitigate against this voter indifference and apathy, Caldwell and Djou should step up their game. Both need to pump up some genuine enthusiasm and excitement in their race by offering more detailed responses focused on solutions and recommendations, rather

than only on the problems and weaknesses of their opponent's record. They should share the "vision thing" with voters by emphasizing bold and creative ideas for Honolulu's future. How about just injecting some levity or humor into their joint public appearances that will be all over the "coconut wireless," social media and part of the infamous "water cooler" chatter about the election? Who knows? This may provide the spark to motivate more people to vote — period.

Is this wishful thinking? I hope not ... for in the words of legendary Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill: "All politics is local."

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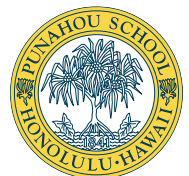
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