



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

Honoring Advocates Of Tourism

“We’re all in this together.” If you follow my column, you’ll know that’s the mantra at the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association. We believe strongly that everyone counts in making sure our industry stays vibrant and continues to support our state’s economy. We recognize the importance that every hotel employee has in contributing to both the success of that property and the visitor industry in its entirety.

Moreover, we have a keen awareness of the importance of hospitality-related businesses, including transportation com-

panies, hotel vendors, food and beverage providers, attractions, retail merchants, restaurants, educational institutions, news media and more, in supporting the hospitality industry and, in turn, the well-being of our state. Many of these businesses are what we call our Allied Members at HLTA, which are an essential part of our 700-member association. There is no question in my mind that they too deserve a lot of credit for the success we are currently enjoying with our state’s No. 1 industry.

At our 27th annual Na Po’e Pa’ahana Awards Jan. 12 at Sheraton Waikiki Grand Ball-

room, we honored more than 300 hardworking individuals in eight hotel categories who embody the aloha spirit at work and in the community. In addition, Sheraton Princess Kaiulani was presented with the Leadership in Sustainability Award for its innovative solutions to reducing energy usage and promoting sustainable activities. It also achieved the highest level of certification in the IUCN World Conservation Congress’ Green Hotels Initiative.

Finally, Barbara Campbell, a key executive with Outrigger Enterprises, was named Woman of the Year. This exemplary

role model helped co-found HLTA’s Women in Lodging and Tourism Chapter, and has an exceptional record of community service.

To pay tribute to our Allied Members, we honored outstanding individuals in four additional categories. These areas included Allied Member of the Year, Hospitality Educator of the Year, the Na Po’e Pa’ahana Legacy Award and Restaurateur of the Year.

This year’s Allied Member of the Year Award went to Oahu Publications Inc., which publishes *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, *MidWeek*, *The Garden Island*, *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*

and *USA Today*, among many others, for going above and beyond in measures of support and engagement of the association and its many statewide initiatives.

Through the strong leadership of its president and publisher Dennis Francis, OPI has been an outstanding advocate of tourism. They understand that it is an industry that we can’t take for granted, and they have been at the forefront in advocating for solutions to combat homelessness. As an active member of HLTA, OPI’s numerous publications have covered HLTA’s events and achievements on each is-

land, and have sponsored and participated in countless community-service events with the association.

Our first-ever Restaurateur of the Year award went to Roy Yamaguchi, who has been a pioneer and leader in developing Hawaii Regional Cuisine, one of the key attractions for visitors to our shores. He has not only masterminded the growth of his restaurant empire in Hawaii, but has expanded the Roy’s name across Asia and the Mainland, much to the benefit of our state.

Roy embraces the synergism that exists between hospitality and the culinary industry. He

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Competition Strengthens Tourism

also helped co-found the popular Hawaii Food and Wine Festival, which has become a marquee culinary event that visitors and residents look forward to every year.

The 2017 Hospitality Educator of the Year award went to Dr. Jerry Agrusa of Hawaii Pacific University's School of Tourism. Agrusa has touched the hearts and minds of many of HPU's hospitality students. He also enthusiastically has partnered with the HLTA for the annual Scholarship Golf Tournament and inaugural Generational Mentoring program. Agrusa leads by example in recruiting his students to engage with the HLTA, and to date has the highest participation of students in HLTA membership and events.

This year the Na Po'e Pa'ahana Legacy Award was bestowed upon the Society of Seven and its leader Tony Ruivivar for their instrumental role in helping to transition our industry to world-class recognitions in the field of culture, arts and entertainment more than five decades.

During their 35-year run as headliners at Outrigger Waikiki Beach Hotel's main showroom, Society of Seven performed to more than 5 million people, staged more than 100 different shows and recorded some of Hawaii's most popular hits that still resonate today. Every time the group traveled, they made sure to boost Hawaii as a visitor destination and always made time for local charities. In 1990, SOS was the honorary chair of HLTA's Visitor Industry Charity Walk.

Clearly, we had a phenomenal group of honorees at the 27th annual Na Po'e Pa'ahana Awards in both the Allied Member categories as well as the hotel categories. We are so



HLTA officials Scott Ingwers and the author with Roy Yamaguchi and wife Denise Hayashi, state Sen. Glenn Wakai and SOS's Tony Ruivivar at the Na Po'e Pa'ahana Awards. PHOTO COURTESY GREG YAMAMOTO

proud to recognize and honor these incredible individuals who live the aloha spirit and truly make Hawaii no ka oi.

While we are on the subject of Allied Members, Island Air, another active HLTA member, ushered in the new year with some exciting news by introducing a new aircraft to its fleet. The Bombardier Q400 not only has larger capacity, but is newer and more efficient. This development should put Island Air in the position to expand its flight schedule, such as commencing service from Honolulu to Hilo and its role as a major interisland air carrier.

The new aircraft is the latest example of the leadership of Island Air president and CEO David Uchiyama. He is taking the bold steps to make the once-fledgling airline a major player in the local market.

"Island Air is like the little engine that could and all of our team members are the drivers, and they can and they will ensure that our company is successful in serving the people of these islands," stated Uchiyama.

The ascent of Island Air in no way detracts from the excellent record that Hawaiian Airlines, another engaged member of our HLTA ohana, has com-

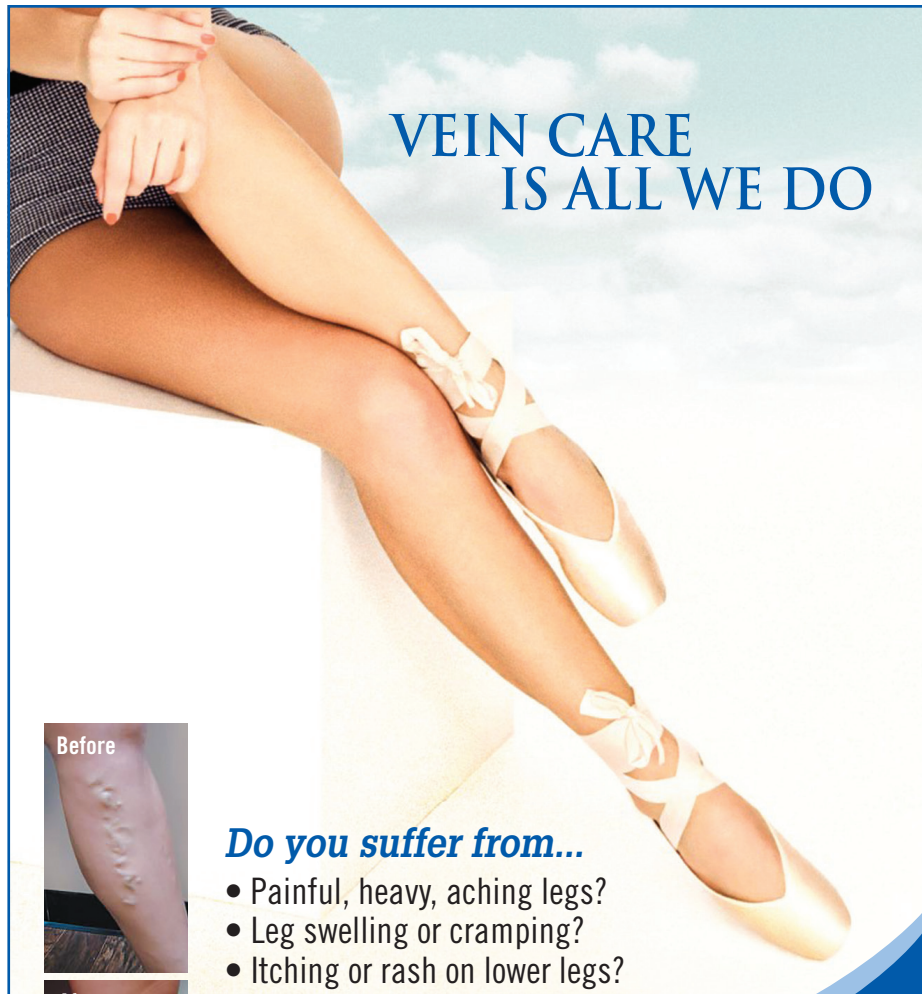
pleted. I recall in the early '90s, as a DBEDT director during the Waihee administration, how we were charged with developing a loan guarantee plan for Hawaiian Airlines, which was then on the verge of bankruptcy. The plan, supported strongly by Waihee, was approved by the Legislature and not only staved off the creditors, but was never used, thanks to the remarkable turnaround led by the company's executives led by Mitch D'Olier, and the resilience of its employees.

Steered by its current visionary president and CEO Mark Dunkerley, Hawaiian Airlines since has become the dominant carrier between our islands, and has evolved into a popular global carrier for traveling to Mainland destinations, with many stops in Asia and the Pacific. Its on-time record continues to be second to none.

Bottom line is that competition always is healthy and consumers inevitably benefit when there are viable choices. Island Air's new aircraft and the measures it's taking to expand its corps of frequent fliers is welcome news for residents and visitors alike.

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