


ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

'Project Cool' Helps Beat The Heat

At Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association, our mission, for all intents and purposes, is about education and advocacy on behalf of the hospitality industry, which translates into being a strong voice for the state's No. 1 provider of jobs. But philanthropy and mentorship also are deeply valued and emphasized, and are part of what we practice daily as a nearly seven-decade-old association.

At HLTA, we always come together to support our annual Charity Walk, which raised a record \$2 million statewide to support nearly 350 charities this year. Our visitor industry has been very keen to help with our state's homelessness challenge, as we have donated more than \$775,000 toward homeless relief efforts over the past three years, not including the successful Hawaii for Hawaii benefit concert for IHS Oct. 23 that brought in \$747,000. Each of our statewide chapters and committees also does its part in hosting community service projects and awards thousands of dollars in scholarships annually, including a Citizen-Scholar luncheon, where an outstanding senior from every public high school is rewarded with a college scholarship.

Our latest project in helping our public schools, dubbed "Project Cool," was a collaboration with Jefferson Elementary School in Waikiki to donate and install 32 air conditioning units in 16 classrooms, which broke



Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association's 'Project Cool' donated and installed air conditioning units at Jefferson Elementary School, much to the delight of teachers and students. Pictured are (back, from left) Eric Au, Stephen Weldon, Harzali Hashim, Chris Spencer, Bert Takahashi, (middle) principal Garret Zakahi, Dennis Maher, the author, Scott Ingwers, Jared Higashi, teacher Amanda Jones and (front) student Jacklyn Oasay **PHOTO COURTESY GREGG HIRATA**

new ground in how HLTA helps public education.

It all started when one of last year's Charity Walk beneficiaries, Charity Buy Line, submitted a grant proposal to install air conditioning units into Jefferson Elementary. This organization was led by two parents whose child went to Jefferson and understood how difficult it was for students to learn in classrooms that had reached sweltering highs of 87 degrees.

The proposal was timely, as the DOE was pressing the governor and Legislature to fund air conditioning for overheated schools. HLTA took it upon itself to help Charity Buy Line follow

through with its task, and worked with Jefferson Elementary's dedicated principal Garret Zakahi and the state Department of Education to make this project a reality.

From the outset, it was clear to me and Jared Higashi, who is in charge of the Charity Walk in my office, after touring the school's facilities, that we needed to focus on where we could bring immediate relief to the students and faculty. Zakahi, therefore, steered us to 16 classrooms that were plagued by either broken or malfunctioning air-conditioning units.

Thus, to launch "Project Cool," we recruited our

HLTA Engineers Council, chaired by Trump Hotels International Waikiki director of facilities and security Dennis Maher to take the lead in retrofitting air-conditioning units for those classrooms.

HLTA Engineers Council is a professional group of engineers, maintenance personnel, and trades and crafts workers who are employed at member hotels and allied businesses. To their credit, they were quick to say, "We're in" to volunteer their time and talent — a genuine testament to their character and values.

In Synergy Engineering, a private company, also was instrumental to the project,

assisting with the design and approval process.

In the first phase of the project, labeled as a test case, Maher, Higashi and their cohorts installed four units in two classrooms. Then, Saturday, Aug. 27, about two dozen volunteers from HLTA member hotels and businesses removed the old units and installed 28 more new units in several classroom buildings. The final phase was completed Oct. 1 with the installation of intake fans.

Principal Zakahi, the students and the teachers naturally were very grateful for the work we accomplished. The students and teachers showed their joy and hap-

piness by presenting our Engineers Advisory Council, HLTA chairman Scott Ingwers and me with heartwarming letters and posters expressing their appreciation at a recent chickenskin schoolwide assembly, that was also witnessed by some parents. We, too, conveyed our appreciation for their patience and understanding with the length of time it took for us to complete our mission, especially in getting our government permits and approvals. They gratefully countered by stating, "It was worth it." One parent, who was overcome with emotion, jokingly stated, "Yes, Santa Claus lives in Waikiki." A teacher proclaimed, "I used to have daily heat rash — not anymore, since new AC's were installed in my classroom." Ebullient third-grader Jacklyn Oasay stated it succinctly on behalf of her fellow students in an interview with HLTA and KITV4 News: "I have eczema and I scratch a lot ... (Now) we can be comfortable in the environment around us, as we don't have to scratch and drink water, scratch and drink water, and not focus on our work."

Rest assured, all of us involved in the "Project Cool" experience with Jefferson Elementary always will feel that this is one of the coolest things we have ever done to enable our kids to beat the heat.



On the topic of mentoring, HLTA recognizes the

Cultivating Millennial Leaders

importance of developing and nurturing future leaders of our state's visitor industry. That's why we recently introduced a new program called Generational Mentoring (GM), which pairs some of the top hospitality students in Hawaii with some of the best hotel general managers in the state. As a firm believer in mentoring through programs with which I have been associated, such as the Pacific Century Fellows program, which boasts 15 classes of fellows locally and three classes in the Marianas region, or the newly formed Hawaii's Young Professional Entrepreneurs, which is poised to start another chapter on Kauai, I believe you cannot do enough mentoring in today's professional work environment.

Learning to cultivate, educate and prepare millennials for leadership and executive positions in your organization should be a priority goal for all executives in every type of professional and civic endeavor.

At GM, we envisage a formalized mentoring program that encourages students to learn a variety of topics around leadership, such as emotional intelligence, personal branding and leading through change, from a seasoned cadre of general managers with whom they are matched.

We're very fortunate to have Art Sarkissian of Here and Now Consulting sharing his ideas and experience in designing and facilitating more than 160 executive retreats and development programs across the world. He'll help our general managers view this exercise as a mutually beneficial under-

taking through the unique bond arising from the discussions, debates, and sharing of professional and personal experiences that will take place over the next seven months, culminating in a graduation ceremony.

In summary, 12 of our top-flight general managers from across the state of Hawaii have been linked with 12 hand-selected scholars from travel industry-management programs at University of Hawaii at Manoa, Hawaii Pacific University and Brigham Young University-Hawaii. Dean Thomas Bingham, head of UH TIM School, is anxious and excited about the prospects and potential of what GM can do for hospitality students aspiring to be leaders in Hawaii's tourism industry. We concur, Dean Bingham, and HLTA is poised and raring to go!

The following are the 12 general managers by island: Hawaii island: Craig Anderson, Mauna Kea Beach Hotel, and Phyllis Branco, Naniloa Hotel

Kauai: Paul Toner, Kauai Marriott Resort and Beach Club, and Denise Wardlow, Westin Princeville Resort Villas

Maui: Thomas Foti, Wailea Beach Marriott Resort and Spa, and Angela Nolan, Westin Ka'anapali Ocean Resort Villas

Oahu: Julie Arigo, Waikiki Parc Hotel; Lynette Eastman, The Surfjack Hotel; Kelly Hoen, The MODERN Honolulu; Niel Mason, OHANA East; Charles Young, Hyatt Centric; and Cheryl Williams, The Royal Hawaiian Resort.

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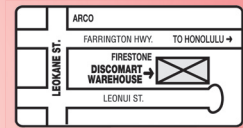
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