

Chamber of Commerce accomplished much in '08

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



Looking back on 2008, much was accomplished in spite of some very challenging times.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce offered a host of events that enhanced networking. Seven major luncheon events were held, including annual luncheons with Gov. Linda Lingle and Mayor Charmaine Tavares; three economic updates; the Small Business Administration awards presentation; and a program on "Hospitals, Health Care and Economic Opportunities." A visitor-industry-update breakfast was added to share current information on this key industry. New-member socials were conducted quarterly; our annual golf tournament took place in May; and fun and engaging monthly Business After Hours sessions were convened at various locations islandwide.

Chamber members engaged in civic activities by participating in one or more of the following committees that typically meet monthly — Business Education & Training; Chamber of Maui Political Ac-

tion (reviewing the chamber's candidate endorsements, and monitoring and reporting on the performance of elected officials); Executive; Government Action (addressing legislative happenings); Small Business Action; and West-side.

We partnered with various organizations to hold nine business-education programs that delivered an annual labor-law update; information and resources on importing and exporting; and training on leadership, sales, the Disney Keys to Excellence, and revenue retention and expansion.

On average, the chamber delivered three or four activities monthly in which members could engage, including events, training and committee meetings.

We provided advocacy on a number of legislative issues throughout the year. County issues included water, plastic-bag reduction, bed-and-breakfasts, transient vacation rentals, home-based businesses, development, the General Plan process, and draft Maui Island Plan. State-level issues concerned workers' compensation, and caregiver and health care bills. We adamantly opposed the Card Check bill and endorsed the fact that the Legislature did not override the governor's veto of this bill.

Your chamber held a TVR workshop in March to help bring the community together to further discuss transient vacation rentals. The workshop led to industry and community recommendations for our mayor and County Council to consider.

A subcommittee of our Government Action Committee continues to review the draft Maui Island Plan to make recommendations on this critical document.

Much time was spent on the elections this year. The Maui Chamber of Commerce continued to encourage residents to participate in the election process and vote. We also endorsed candidates in the primary and general elections, and actively supported our endorsed candidates.

We collaborated with Paradise Television to run television commercials on Made in Maui products for a year on The Visitor Channel 7, and held our annual Made in Maui Day at Queen Ka'ahumanu Center.

At the annual installation luncheon, Everett Dowling was awarded the coveted T.S. Shinn Award for 2008 for his many outstanding contributions to this community.

The chamber's Maui Quarantine Fund, managed by The

Hawai'i Community Foundation, awarded \$15,000 to the Friends of the Maui Drug Court to support direct services to Maui Drug Court clients; and \$5,000 to Planned Parenthood of Hawaii to fund a reproductive-health screening and treatment project for uninsured and underinsured clients.

We continued to share information on business, the economy and community matters with our members through our quarterly Connections newsletter, weekly eNews and our Web site.

New programs also were initiated, like a Member to Member discount program, a discounted Business After Hours annual pass, and regular Business Builder Tips through our weekly eNews.

In 2009, your chamber will tackle important business-related issues, including a slowing economy, tourism decline, the high cost of doing business, infrastructure needs, health care and the proposed Young Brothers rate increase.

We will roll out several new beneficial programs: a health care option that can increase insurance availability to small businesses and reduce health insurance costs; our small business blogs to foster dialogue on and understanding of important business topics; in-depth marketing, business and strategic-planning programs to strengthen businesses by getting back to basics; and cost-effective advertising and promotional opportunities to help businesses reach their target markets.

From any challenges faced

in 2008, let us emerge with renewed energy, optimism and a proactive plan for a positive future.

May we always remember that we live in the Aloha State, with a law about the aloha spirit — and show that spirit of kindness, unity, harmony and perseverance in 2009.

May we continue to stand strong and united to tackle challenges and work to build a stronger business sector, economy and community to keep Maui no ka oi.

From the Maui Chamber of Commerce ohana to yours, we wish all a healthy, happy and prosperous new year.

■ *Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*