

Rotary Club of Honolulu Zoom meeting March 8, 2022

I enjoy zooming in 15 minutes before our on-line meeting begins. It is a virtual hug among our Ohana, joyful interaction, and a unique way to engage before the bell rings. **President Gwen Yamamoto Lau** called us to order at noon and was pleased to see our guests from across the globe. **Don Anderson** continued the enthusiasm when he shared the blessings in life that 47 years of club membership have brought him. Don's inspiration noted the giving souls, leaders, quiet supporters...members here and beyond...working together is, indeed, an inspiration. He concluded by sharing a quote: "It is nice to be important, but more important to be nice".

Eileen Hilton recited the Pledge of Allegiance, and **Lee LaBrash** led us in singing America the Beautiful. **Peg Jackson** reminded us that volunteers are still welcomed to weed the Centennial Park Saturday, March 12, from 8 to 10 a.m., and she noted last Friday's work there was a fun success. President Gwen greeted guests, and welcomed **President-Elect Lyla Berg** back from California, where she spent 3 days of President-Elect Training with other incoming club Presidents from around other Rotary Zones. Lyla shared that Rotary International is speaking up for the people of Ukraine and continuing to offer needed support and demands for immediate cease fire and withdrawal of Russian invaders. President Gwen then invited us to recall what we wanted to be when we grew up, when we logged into discussion groups.

Past President Paul Saito introduced our speaker, fellow RCOH club member and President and CEO of Catholic Charities Hawaii **Rob Van Tassell**, who has been at the helm of the remarkable non-profit since 2019. It was nearly a century ago, when Catholic nuns began helping Oahu plantation workers with health and housing and the dedicated service evolved to the creation of Catholic Charities 75 years ago, and services expanded statewide in the 70's and 80's. Rob shared that in this special anniversary year, here are more than 45 programs serving at least 80,000 people. Rental assistance, family and therapeutic services, prevention of homelessness, housing for young adults exiting foster care, mental health, domestic violence, immigration services and other life enhancing and life saving opportunities !

What's the vision for the future of Catholic Charities Hawaii? Rob said "to enhance the services we already have". A Client Centered approach, sharing information via smart phones, providing services such as affordable housing until clients' goals are met, setting up offices to reach potential clients in outlying areas, and gathering the government, other non-profit providers and new supporters together in support of this strategic plan. Catholic Charities Hawaii wants to assist the ALICE population working to learn skills, hope, connections and social networks.

I am sure our members who already have supported Catholic Charities projects in the past and currently will agree with Rob that "we are all pulling from the same end of the rope" ... and will help mark it's 75th Anniversary at a celebration event September 10th in Waikiki.

With Aloha,
Linda Coble, Scribe