

ROTARY CLUB OF HONOLULU
ZOOM MEETING, 12 – 1 pm
DATE: July 14, 2020
PRESIDING: PRESIDENT RICH PROCTOR

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In lieu of missing inspiration speaker Rich flexibly adlibbed with one of the many COVID 19 jokes that cross his inbox regularly. I never thought “I wouldn’t touch him with a 6 foot pole would be national policy”. The “Pledge of Allegiance” was led by **Sally Mist**. The singing of “God Bless America,” was led by **Al Linton**. **Rich** introduced visitors: **Kenyon Lum Yee**, and **Lisa Fallau** guests of **Jessica Rich**; **District 5000 Asst. Governor Laine Kohama**; and prospective member **Karen Glasser**.

Birthdays this week include:

Kent Reinker on 15 Jul , **Terry George** on 18 Jul, **Ludwig Seidl** on 19 Jul, and **Rob Hale** 20 Jul

Club Anniversaries:

This week’s anniversaries are:

Haumea Ho	8 years	sponsor: Linda Coble
Nancy White	20 years	sponsor: Jim Gary
Chris Cloward	10 years	sponsor: Kerry Cloward

Breakout Session: **President Rich** sent all the Club participants to separate breakout rooms of approximately 5-6 members for talk story on the question: **What is the first place you would like to visit when travel restrictions for COVID 19 are dropped and you feel safe to travel again?**

Speaker Presentation: **Jessica Lani Rich** President & CEO Visitors Aloha Society of Hawaii (VASH)

Bob Sigall introduced Jessica, who has worked in the tourism industry for over 20 years, 16 years at the helm of VASH, an organization that has its roots in our Club. Before taking up the mantle at VASH, Jessica worked in public relations at the Bishop Museum and the Honolulu Academy of Arts. She is the author of a book entitled ***The Gift of Hawaii***, and she also has a TV show called **Inspire You and Me** broadcast every Sunday at 8 PM on Channel 11 on Spectrum TV. Currently Jessica serves as the statewide director for the COVID 19 Flight Assistance Program.

Jessica Lani Rich started her presentation with recognition that today (Jul 14th) was her 16th anniversary of appointment as CEO of VASH. She described VASH’s mission and quoted her inspiration in the words of William Butler Yeats: “There are no strangers, only friends we have not yet met.” **Jessica** used her talk to describe the changes to her organization functions and

her new state role as the Director of the COVID 19 Flight Assistance Program but prefaced it with a description of VASH. In late 1995, the Rotary Club of Honolulu became aware that Hawaii had no Travelers Aid or similar organization dedicated to ensuring that visitors of crime and other adversities were receiving appropriate follow-up assistance and Aloha. Recognizing the negative impact that crime against visitors was having on our tourism industry, the Rotary Club of Honolulu, with cooperation of Honolulu Police Department, established a volunteer Visitor Aloha Committee. The Rotary Club of Honolulu Board of Directors unanimously voted to provide \$10,000.00 in seed money and other support necessary for the establishment of the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii, also known as VASH. The Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii was recognized as exempt from Federal income tax, under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code in August 1998. It has a Budget that has grown 3-fold during Jessica's tenure to now \$375k per year plus significant in-kind donations. In the beginning, VASH was a statewide organization based in Honolulu. It later branched out with individual chapters located on Oahu, Hawaii Island, Maui and Kauai.

Since COVID 19 **Jessica** has taken over the role as head of the State's new COVID 19 Flight Assistance Program with the role of dealing with issues associated with Visitors and Quarantine. **Jessica** described the message that the State wants to consistently demonstrate is that Quarantine is very serious and that violators will be jailed and sent back home if they break it. She gave several case examples of visitors that she has been responsible to assist in spanning from: returning a quarantine breaking polygamous Cult group called Carbon Nation to the mainland; helping a mother reunite with her veteran homeless son; and assisting a Samoan family stranded here since Mar 19th. **Jessica** closed her presentation by saying that during COVID 19 and after having dealt with over 170 cases she wanted to assure that when we place someone or a group on a plane back home that there is coordination with the support services available in the areas to which they are going to ensure when they arrive there is someone available to meet them. She returned at the end to the advice of William Butler Yeats and to our Rotary motto of "Service Above Self" as the inspiration to the work that VASH and the COVID Flight Assistance Program live by. **Linda Coble** asked Jessica if there was any advice she would offer to Mayoral candidates as to how to negotiate the challenges of the current moment and those to come regarding visitor care. Jessica answered by a plea for a solid consistent message to visitors and residents and government/police officials to dispel confusion that exists. In response to a question **Jessica** described the fact that volunteers have historically been a key part of VASH but that currently they are using only those they have worked with in the past for current challenges.

Pres. Rich thanked **Jessica** for her presentation and her work and turned to give a shout out to **Sumner Howard** who with the help of **Poki'i Balaz** was able to attend his first meeting since quarantine started. **Pres Rich** announced that next week's speaker will be **Scott Nago**, Chief Elections Officer for the State of Hawaii Office of Elections

The meeting ended with a video of *Hawaii Aloha* movingly performed by our club members including **Lyla Berg**, **Erin Auerbach**, **PP Paul Saito**, and **PP Bub Wo**.

Respectfully submitted, **David M Shanahan**, Scribe