

Appeal pays off with a bang

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Parnella Tumpap



When something is important to the community, we band together to make it happen. That is what happened when it came to saving the "Fourth of July Fireworks in Lahaina" this year.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce was asked by its Westside Committee and Theo Morrison, a committee member who had spearheaded this event for years, to rescue the program this year and continue it as an annual Lahaina celebration.

The Westside Committee, composed of chamber members representing West Maui businesses, said this event is a top economic-generating activity in West Maui and must be kept to aid area businesses and provide a Fourth of July fireworks display for the entire community. They chose to make the Independence Day celebration a major focus of their volunteer work efforts this year.

The challenge to take on this event came at a time when the chamber already had an extremely full calendar and was in the midst of fundraising for several other functions, including the annual golf tournament.

However, the Fourth of July Fireworks in Lahaina celebration is too significant for Maui to lose. Therefore, the chamber's board of directors approved adding this event to the lineup, provided the money could be raised in time to order the fireworks.

A fireworks celebration is not cheap. The hard costs of the fireworks, barge, permits, and other items would run about \$28,000. Another \$8,000 would be needed to close Front Street and for safety measures. And, roughly \$8,000 more would be for coordination and promotion. While this may seem like a large amount to spend on a fireworks display, the event is much more than that. The return on investment is tremendous in terms of the impact this one day has on West Maui businesses and in the hearts of residents. This was evident the moment the chamber began coordinating the event and talking to business owners in West Maui. Despite facing challenging times, people immediately said, "It must happen," and stepped up to the plate to contribute.

Recognizing early on that in these times, businesses might not be able to give what they have in the past, Theo had spoken with the County of Maui about some assistance. With county officials' understanding of how vital this event is and their interest in supporting it, she wrote a grant proposal that the

chamber submitted to the Office of Economic Development for \$6,000.

Another huge pledge of support came from Tamara Barto of Aloha Self Storage Lahaina. She wanted this event to happen and increased her pledge from \$1,500 last year to \$5,000 this year to kick-start the fundraising drive. While she was out of town during the initial fundraising effort, she sent a \$5,000 check immediately upon her return. The needed contribution went a long way toward the fireworks deposit.

Many other businesses joined in the campaign to keep the Fourth of July Fireworks in Lahaina event, and pledges were received.

As expected, given these economically pressing times, some companies were not able to donate at the same levels as in years past. Business owners and managers had to review their budgets to see what they could give. As a result, fundraising went a bit more slowly, which the chamber also has seen with its golf tournament event. The Maui News and Lahaina News ran stories to keep the community apprised of our efforts.

In the 11th hour, as the deadline loomed to order the fireworks and to submit a 50 percent deposit for the fireworks, Expedia Local Expert emerged with a \$4,500 check and a pledge to match community contributions up to a total Expe-

dia Local Expert contribution of \$15,000.

There was a roar at the chamber office. We were overwhelmed and deeply grateful over how this event had come together. The fireworks were ordered. More fundraising is needed, but with the Expedia Local Expert match, we are confident all of the moneys needed will be received. People may mail contributions made out to Maui Chamber of Commerce, 313 Ano St., Kahului 96732.

Knowing just how essential this event is, people have dug deep and given what they can to make it happen. The collective contributions from caring businesses and individuals have kept our Fourth of July Fireworks in Lahaina an event that Maui people will enjoy. We thank everyone who made this event possible and invite the community to West Maui for one heck of a Fourth of July celebration. And, if you are appreciative, inspired and want to give back, please bring a donation of canned goods with you to the celebration. That way, we further can leverage this opportunity and help even more Maui families.

We look forward to seeing you at 8 p.m. July 4 as fireworks illuminate Lahaina's night. For more information, call the chamber at 871-7711.

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