Readers who follow this weekly column know I often focus on the importance of true hospitality in our industry. It is hard to believe, but each of us has the power to make an extraordinary impact on almost every guest we meet and significantly influence how they feel about their visit to one of our properties not only at that moment but for years to come.

Remember what I have written about the “Golden Minutes” – the first five minutes or so, when guests arrive at curbside or the front desk, weary, hungry and often suffering from the frustrations inherent in a long journey from a distant point of origin. Those Golden Minutes are our golden opportunity to transform a guest’s possibly sour mood into delight at being treated in kindly, considerate and attentive fashion.

Similar opportunities arrive in day-to-day occurrences throughout a hotel – in a restaurant, around the swimming pool or in organized activities where members of our ‘ohana interact with guests from widely different backgrounds and levels of experience.

I was recently reminded of the power of true hospitality when Dr. Chuck Kelley and I received a couple of glowing messages from a guest who was absolutely delighted with her experience at Castaway Island, Fiji, an Outrigger Resort.

Jojo Watumull, a family friend, spent four days there recently with her young son, Subash. As is evident in messages she then sent to Dr. Chuck and to me, it was the vacation of a lifetime.

She wrote to Dr. Chuck, “Subash and I had the most wonderful holiday at Castaway!!! … We arrived home yesterday after 4 nights in our oceanfront Bure (bungalow). It was a magical vacation. The staff was extremely wonderful and warm. Subash was sobbing when we left and I had to promise him we will visit again soon.

“If you ask Subash what his favorite part about Fiji was, he says, ‘The people.’ That’s true testament to Outrigger’s warm and welcoming ‘ohana. I especially want to recognize Lingbo and Daniel, Jerry in Ocean Activities, and Iva in the Kids Club who made our stay extra special. We went snorkeling to the outer reef, jet skiing, hiking, shelling, banana boating, night snorkeling, to a neighbor village, had a private kava ceremony, and so much more! Thank you for helping us create memories for a lifetime.”

Jojo also wrote to me saying, “Subash and I just returned from the most amazing trip to Fiji. … From the moment we landed on the beach till the time we departed, we had the most magical time. I can’t say enough about your staff. … In all my travels, I have never experienced such authentic hospitality. We were greeted with hugs and music when we arrived that was so special and a moment I will never forget.”

Those are great letters, reflecting the spirit and actions of the truly wonderful people who are part of our ‘ohana at our properties across the Pacific and Indian oceans as far west as Mauritius and as far south as Australia. So I am not surprised that the readers of Australia’s Out and About With Kids magazine honored three of our properties with prestigious awards. (See article on Page 2.)

On the other hand, I am sure many readers will agree that some days life does not go the way we’d like it to. In the Travel & Tourism industry, it often gets either very hectic or, at the other extreme, very quiet and boring. At times like that, I am sure almost everyone asks themselves if what they are doing makes any difference at all.

If that happens to you, stop for a moment and recall what a big difference the members of our ‘ohana at Castaway Island made in the lives of Jojo and Subash.

Yes, each of us can make a difference. And we do. Many times. Every day.

To all the members of our ‘ohana wherever you may be, Thank You for making such a big and important difference in so many lives! You Rock! 🌟
“Three Outrigger Resorts Win Family-Friendly Awards”
By Dr. Richard Kelley

Thousands of readers of Australia’s Out and About With Kids magazine have voted three Outrigger resorts – Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort and Villas, Outrigger on the Lagoon, Fiji and Castaway Island, Fiji, an Outrigger Resort (see “Memories for a Lifetime,” Page 1) – best in their regions for family holidays.

In the magazine’s 2014 Best of Family Travel Awards competition, Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort and Villas was voted Asia’s No. 1 family resort. Readers voted Outrigger on the Lagoon, Fiji best – most family-friendly – in the Pacific Islands region. Outrigger on the Lagoon’s sister resort, Castaway Island, in Fiji’s Mamanuca Islands, took second place in the Pacific region.

Outrigger Laguna Phuket General Manager Marc Landgraf said the members of his resort’s ‘ohana were very proud of their recognition by the magazine’s readers – clearly discriminating travelers whose views were shaped by their great experience at the resort.

Area General Manager of Outrigger Resorts Fiji Peter Hopgood said this resort’s “daily calendar of cultural, educational, sporting and educational activities with a focus on Fijian cultural values … in conjunction with the natural charm of our hosts, is what families absolutely love.”

Best in Asia! Best in the Pacific! That’s just terrific! Congratulations one and all on honors well-earned and well-deserved!