Travel & Tourism, like so many things in the world today, is changing very rapidly. However, no matter what segment of this industry you encounter, it is clear that hospitality is the vital core concept that makes all the difference in the world. With that in mind, you will understand why I am so pleased that 14 members of our Outrigger ‘ohana in Hawai‘i were recently recognized for their leadership, service and hospitality at the Na Po‘e Pa‘ahana (in English, The Hard-Working People) Awards ceremony (see photo below).

This ceremony is much smaller in scale than, but similar in spirit to, the Academy Awards in Hollywood, where top figures in the film industry are recognized for their accomplishments each year. The Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association sponsors the Na Po‘e Pa‘ahana event, which this year was held in the ballroom of the Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort.

There were 12 categories, ranging from Outstanding Lodging Employee of the Year and Housekeeper of the Year to Security Officer of the Year. This year, a new award for Leadership in Sustainability was presented, which reflects the fact that for hospitality to be effective and memorable, a strong performance by a broad range of individuals is required.

If our company’s founders, Roy and Estelle Kelley, could return to Hawai‘i today and walk around the hotels they developed from the 1950s through the 1970s, they would be unfamiliar with some of the things they encountered, such as guests walking around holding black rectangles to their ears and people using terms such as blog, Airbnb, RFID or Wi-Fi. However, if Roy and Estelle could see how arriving guests are greeted as they step onto an Outrigger property, or, if they could watch a dinner guest being served a sizzling slab of perfectly grilled mahimahi at the Kani Ka Pila Grille while listening to authentic Hawaiian music played on a nearby stage, they would know that true aloha and hospitality are still found throughout the properties operated by Outrigger Resorts.

Hospitality still flourishes even though Hawai‘i now receives nearly 8.5 million visitors annually, up from barely 100,000 when Roy and Estelle opened the Islander Hotel, their first, in 1947. The 26th Na Po‘e Pa‘ahana awards recognized the continuity and high quality of Hawai‘i’s hospitality industry and the extraordinary efforts of the hosts who work so hard to provide this hospitality day after day.

My warmest congratulations and sincerest thanks to all those who were recognized – and to our entire ‘ohana for the wonderful hospitality I see you all displaying every day of the year.