Jean Rolles Honored by the
Pacific and Asian Affairs Council

By Dr. Richard Kelley

On Thursday, January 24, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council (PAAC) and distinguished guests, including Governor Linda Lingle, gathered at The Kahala Hotel & Resort to present the organization’s prestigious Paul S. Bachman Memorial Award. The award is conferred on a citizen and/or organization of Hawaii for distinguished contributions to the improvement of relations between the United States and its neighbors in Asia and the Pacific.

Two awards were presented that evening – one to the Aloha Medical Mission, a volunteer organization that provides free health care to underserved people overseas and in Hawaii, and the other award to my sister, Jean Rolles, Outrigger’s Vice President of Community Relations.

Jean has been a long-time member and active supporter of PAAC, joining its Board of Governors in 1990 and currently serving as the organization’s Vice President. Over the years, she has taken a special interest in the organization’s Academic WorldQuest competition. From 2003 to 2006, she sponsored Hawaii’s winning WorldQuest team, making it possible for them to participate in the national WorldQuest competition in Washington, D.C.

During the program, emcee Roland Lagareta said, “Jean Rolles has really helped to build this program, which inspires students to learn more about the world. Last November, students from every public school district in the State of Hawaii and seven private schools competed to represent Hawaii at the nationals.”

Jean has also been a staunch supporter of PAAC’s cross-cultural exchange program, which provides opportunities for Hawaii high school students to visit countries throughout Asia and the Pacific, develop a global perspective, and foster an appreciation and respect for the diversity of the world’s cultures.

Also speaking at the dinner that evening, PAAC Executive Director Jill Takasaki Canfield commented on the importance of students being exposed to our global community. “In our increasingly interconnected world where one in six U.S. jobs is tied to international trade, and with most U.S. corporations expecting most of their growth in overseas markets, the demand for a workforce with international competence will only increase. They (students) must be prepared and globally competent, no matter what field or line of work they choose.”

Since 2004, Jean has personally awarded high school travel scholarships to China, France, and Japan, allowing young people from Hawaii to experience foreign cultures and global education outreach programs.

Presenting the award to Jean that evening was Governor Linda Lingle, who spoke of Jean as a leader in our community who recognizes the importance of providing young people with opportunities to have international experiences. She called Jean a role model for all Hawaii residents.

As it turned out, Jean was presented with another special gift that night – from a guest of Outrigger at the event, Debbie Engle, a fourth grade teacher at Ka‘iulani Elementary school in Kalihi. Debbie used the opportunity to provide a civics lesson for her students that would help create awareness of Hawaii’s role in the Asia-Pacific region and increase their understanding of world affairs. Her class made two posters – one congratulating Jean on her award and one that Debbie presented to the Governor.

When Jean took the podium that evening, she was humble in her acceptance of the award and used her time at the microphone not only to thank PAAC for the honor, but to encourage everyone in the audience to become more involved in developing a better understanding of world affairs and to cultivate an appreciation of the importance of our own choices in shaping the future of the world. These are words we take to heart at Outrigger, as we expand our horizons beyond Hawaii into the Asia-Pacific region.

Congratulations, Jean. The entire Outrigger ‘ohana is proud of your accomplishments and your commitment to improving our community and the world we live in.