A MESSAGE FROM RICHARD R. KELLEY TO OUR OUTRIGGER ‘OHANA

Theater Massacre Touches but Spares Outrigger’s Colorado ‘Ohana

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Outrigger Enterprises Group has a significant presence in Aurora, Colorado, with facilities near the Century 16 movie theater where the tragic shootings occurred early last Friday morning, July 20. I am happy to report that all members of our Aurora ‘ohana and their families are safe and none were injured. However, there are several stories of close calls and thoughts of “what if” – and one story of heroism.

Outrigger’s World Wide Reservations Center and our affiliate hotel, Hilton Garden Inn Denver Airport (HGI), are both located in the City of Aurora, one of the principal municipalities of the Denver metropolitan area. Many of our ‘ohana live within the Aurora city limits and frequent the Aurora Mall where the Century 16 Theater is located.

Outrigger affiliate hotel, Hilton Garden Inn Denver Airport

At our Reservations Center, with 40 percent of its staff living in Aurora, everyone was shocked and saddened by last week’s events. However, the work of the Center proceeded without a single glitch.

Reservations Manager Marion Beverly had a “what if” moment early Friday morning. She took her family to see the first-night showing of The Dark Knight Rises. After news of the shootings spread, friends were worried and called even though it was the middle of the night. Fortunately, Marion had chosen to see the film at another theater, closer to her home.

Several of our ‘ohana knew at least one of the victims or are friends with someone who knew a victim. Kathy Sylvester, Director of HR at the Reservations Center, has reminded everyone that Outrigger offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help members of our ‘ohana deal with personal emotional issues, such as those that could stem from a tragedy like the theater shootings.

At the Hilton Garden Inn Denver Airport, a great deal of our business comes from Aurora. Buckley Air Force Base is located there as well as the Anschutz Medical Campus of the University of Colorado. Visitors to both use HGI heavily and our staff there makes special efforts to support these guests and their activities.

Sadly, one of those travelers, a frequent HGI guest, Air Force Staff Sgt. Jesse Childress, was killed in the theater as he heroically threw himself in front of a fellow service member and friend, Munirih Gravelly, saving her life.

A lot of HGI team members go to the Century 16 Theater and live near it. Gian Gandolfo, HGI’s General Manager, collected this information:

- David Tampubolon, HGI Night Person In Charge (PIC), reported that a family from his church (father, mother and son) were at the Century 16 Theater the night of the shootings. The mother was hit twice and the son once. They are both hospitalized in stable condition. The father was exceptionally lucky. A bullet went in and out of his shirt leaving two holes in the cloth but miraculously did not wound him.

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- Donald Browner, HGI Weekend PIC, had gone to the Century 16 Theater for the midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises*, but fortunately he and his fiancé were turned away because it was sold out.

In addition to the heartbreaking shootings, Colorado is also trying to come back from a summer of the most devastating and massive forest fires in the state’s history. The state has proven itself resilient, overcoming such tragedies as the 1999 Columbine High School shootings and other destructive wildfires that have wrought much damage to the beautiful land and to people’s homes and property. Grateful for the major assistance received from other states and localities, the people of Colorado have united and support one another through a variety of organizations to which contributions can be made to assist in such tragedies.

We grieve for all who suffered the loss of loved ones or were injured in the shooting. Many will face enormous costs for medical bills, rehabilitation, etc. As an active member of the Aurora community, HGI Denver Airport has donated $5,000 to assist the affected families and has issued a challenge to all hotels in the Aurora/Denver metro area to match or exceed it. Outrigger Enterprises Group is also making a significant contribution in support of our Denver ‘ohana.

This is a challenging time, but I think everyone at the Outrigger Worldwide Reservations Center, the Hilton Garden Inn Denver Airport and so many throughout the City of Aurora – particularly the Aurora Police Department, Aurora Fire Department, first responders, area medical facilities, physicians, nurses, etc. – all deserve congratulations and thanks for how well they handled this tragedy.