As a destination, Hawai‘i must continue to market itself to the world. With global competition for the leisure traveler stronger than ever, this effort is essential to long-term survival. The minute we get complacent, we risk losing everything we have created through generations of hard work.

With that thought in mind, I am extremely pleased to report that the 2013 Duke’s OceanFest was a tremendous success. Last Sunday we wrapped up nine days of celebrations and athletic events.

A big “mahalo!” goes out to the organizers (the Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation), the many sponsors like Outrigger Enterprises Inc., and all the participants, who flocked to Waikīkī from around the world.

One of the reasons the event is so important is that it reminds the world of the magic found on Waikīkī Beach. Participants arrive in a state of mind eager to receive the message of good will, aloha and gracious hospitality that Duke Kahanamoku exemplified during his lifetime. All are reminded of his legacy during the opening ceremonies. Later, when the athletes take to the beaches and surf to compete, they build memories and friendships that stoke their desire to return again in future years.

Throughout their stay, everyone is immersed in the natural beauty of Waikīkī Beach, which truly is a special place. As for me, while sitting in the warm, crystal clear water waiting for a wave during the surf competition, I kept saying to myself, “Wow, what an incredible family vacation spot!” The visitors playing in the water with their families were clearly having so much fun!

Our Outrigger ‘ohana helped with many of the events, and three Kelley family members directly participated in the competition. Following is a brief summary and a few photos from some of the many events.

**Duke’s Waikīkī Ocean Mile Swim**

Linda Jane Kelley showed up on the beach early in the morning in front of the visitors having breakfast on the lanai of Duke’s Waikīkī to compete in the rough water swimming event. When the starting horn blared, a horde of swimmers left the beach and headed offshore to round large red buoys floating outside the reef. Linda is a regular ocean swimmer and easily completed the event in respectable time.

**OHR Keiki Sand Soccer Championship/ Masters Sand Soccer Championship**

It was a weekend of sand soccer, with 10-person teams of kids, most going barefoot, taking to the beach in front of Ft. DeRussy on Saturday, Aug. 17. The grown-ups – “masters” – got to enjoy their own fun and excitement the following day with teams blazing across the sand at the Kapi‘olani-Queen’s Sand Volleyball Courts.

**Lei Procession and Opening Ceremony**

As part of the opening ceremonies, Outrigger employees made strands and strands of plumeria lei, then carried them on surfboards down Kalākaua Avenue to Duke’s statue where they were ceremonially draped on Duke’s outstretched arms.
Duke’s OceanFest >> From 1

Dr. Chuck Kelley, a featured speaker, reminded those present of Duke Kahanamoku’s legacy of aloha and gracious hospitality.

Wounded Warrior Canoe Regatta

The Wounded Warrior Canoe Regatta, held on the Fort DeRussy section of Waikīkī Beach, raised funding support for members of the military recovering from injuries. The regatta participants raced in six-person teams in four separate categories – Wounded Warriors, all military, veterans and youth – between the Hale Koa Hotel and the U.S. Army Museum.

Outrigger Hotels and Resorts
Lifeguard Competition

Professional lifeguards flew in from around the world to compete in lifesaving skills. Team California took top honors. Outrigger Hotels and Resorts was the major sponsor of this event.

Celebrity Surf Competition

Representing Outrigger in the Celebrity Surf Competition, Dr. Chuck Kelley competed against surf legend Laura Blears, Taizo Braden (KHON TV), Peter Carlisle (former Honolulu mayor), Billy Kenoi (Big Island mayor), legendary surfing filmmaker Jack McCoy and Keahi Tucker (Hawaii News Now). Dr. Chuck squeaked past the competition to win first place!

Hawaiian Airlines Duke’s Legends Surf Contest

This year, Outrigger entered two teams in the Hawaiian Airlines Legends Surf Contest.

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Access Surf

Athletes with disabilities from around the country competed in five divisions of Surfing: Standing Assist and Non-assist, Prone Position Assist and Non-assist, Sitting Position Assist and Non-assist, Deaf, Wounded Warrior and Expression Session.

Canoe Teams paddling in the Wounded Warrior Canoe Regatta

Lifeguards compete in the Beach Flags portion of the Lifeguard Competition

Bitsy Kelley, speaking on behalf of Outrigger Enterprises, welcomed the participants at the opening ceremony.

Other events:

During the week, there were events from sunrise to sunset and then parties in the evening. Some of the other events were surf water polo, beach volleyball, tandem surfing, junior pro surfing, a keiki surf contest, stand up paddling races and a sand soccer tournament.

I hope Duke’s OceanFest will keep growing in popularity and be recognized as the premier event of its kind. Already, competing destinations have jumped on the bandwagon and created ocean competitions that rival the popularity of our Duke’s Festival – the Noosa (Australia) Festival of Surfing and the San Clemente (Calif.) Ocean Festival. Duke’s OceanFest is Hawai’i’s opportunity to show the world that we are the very best of family beach vacation destinations.

Left: Bitsy Kelley’s all-women’s surf team:
Legend Jericho Poppler, Bitsy Kelley, Amber-Lynn Hyden, Malika Dudley and Tammy Moniz

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Dr. Chuck Kelley, Chris Colgate of Duke's Waikiki and former Mayor Peter Carlisle

Bitsy Kelley with Team California - first place winners of the Lifeguard Challenge

Kenji's Heroes - the winning coed team in the Outrigger Hotels and Resorts Masters Sand Soccer Tournament

Duke's OceanFest >> From 3
Dr. Chuck Kelley showing off his hard-earned First Place Trophy

Outrigger's own Ethan Chang places lei on Duke's statue

Bitsy Kelley, Amber-Lynn Hayden, Malika Dudley, Tammy Moniz and Legend Jericho Poppler

Duke’s OceanFest >> From 4
Duke’s OceanFest >> From 5

Bitsy, Dr. Chuck and Linda Jane Kelley

Bitsy Kelley representing the wahine!

Guests of the Outrigger Reef on the Beach joined General Manager Bill Comstock for the scattering of flowers honoring Duke Kahanamoku

Teams fought hard for a trophy at the Outrigger Hotels and Resorts Sand Soccer Championships (U6-17 Divisions)

Lifeguards from all around the world competed in four areas: swim relay, paddleboard relay, beach flags and rescue paddle event