

Service can make spirits bright or save lives

By JOSEPH W. BEAN

When Realtors and real estate affiliates gather to visit and learn about properties that are for sale, they call that a caravan. Besides the facts and figures about properties and the opportunity to see them, caravan is also a forum for communication of all kinds. For instance, Fran Peart Mitsumura, branch manager of First Hawaiian Mortgage Co. in Lahaina, spoke to such a gathering about how her company, fondly referred to as FHM, looks at community service.

“We give back to the community on a continual basis,” Mitsumura said, “and most of this, you never hear about. We sponsor Realtors Association of Maui events and Lahainaluna High School events, including the programs for football and wrestling, Project Graduation and the PTSA. We pay for the space for the weekly West Maui Caravan, and we helped to raise the funds for the new Christmas wreaths on Front Street. We are currently helping to raise money for Fourth of July fireworks and to provide canoe club donations. A



couple of years ago, we even raised funds through Paddlemania to help a canoe club buy a new canoe for the kids.”

(By the way, it takes 65 wreaths, costing \$25,410, to light up Front Street.)

Mitsumura, who is not one to seek the spotlight unless doing so will help the cause of the moment, wanted the Realtors to understand how engaged FHM is with the community, both to encourage them to have a good opinion of FHM so they’d send borrowers her way and to give them all a little nudge in the direction of considering more service projects themselves.

“We give back to Maui,”

Mitsumura added, “from the proceeds of loans from Realtors’ referrals – directly.”

Actually, Mitsumura and her cohorts do a lot more than donate money to good causes. She was on the committee – along with Joan McKelvey, Connie Sutherland, Donna Soares and Lahaina Town Action Committee Executive Director Lynn Donovan – that raised the funds to replace the 25-year-old Front Street Christmas wreaths. Among other things, that meant calling on businesses to ask for their support, too. A lot of Lahaina businesses chipped in, but you have to kind of suspect that some of the real estate-related firms were inspired by Mitsumura. They included, in addition to FHM, Aloha Realty, Barbara Potts; First Hawaiian Bank; Joseph Pluta Realty; Lowson Associates, Mac and Laurie Lowson; Maui Paradise Properties; Maui Showcase Properties; Shore To Shore Realty, Noosh & Phyllis Nishihara; Sakamoto Properties; and Whalers Realty, Bob & Tess Cartwright.

The range of service projects undertaken by Mitsumura and FHM could be said, in a



The committee to replace Front Street’s worn-out Christmas wreaths included Joan McKelvey (front row from left) and Lynn Donovan; and Fran Peart Mitsumura (back row from left), Donna Soares and Connie Sutherland.

sense, to start with lifting spirits, as with the Christmas wreaths, and go all the way to saving lives. “FHM,” Mitsumura said, “donated \$5,000 to the Maui Memorial Medical Center Foundation towards the final funds needed to pay off a building that was bought for the cardiologists.”

Lisa Varde, executive director of MMMC Foundation, added, “MMMC Foundation recently completed a \$2 million capital campaign called

S.E.E.D., Space, Equipment, Education, Delivery of health-care services. The funds raised were used to provide clinical space for the new Heart & Vascular program, to purchase life-saving equipment, and to fund education and training for hospital staff. Since its start-up a couple of years ago, the Heart & Vascular program has grown by leaps and bounds, and MMMC cardiologists are performing hundreds of angio-

plasties and open heart surgeries each year. In the past, these patients would have had to travel to Oahu for care, losing precious time in the process.”

The \$5,000 gift mentioned above is far from representing Mitsumura’s commitment to Maui Memorial. She has been a supporter for many years and in many ways. Today, you will find her listed as an ex officio member of the MMMC Foundation board. Five years ago, she was urging everyone to help. As she put it, “It’s going to take a lot of energy and a lot of people to make health care on Maui at MMMC all that it can be. I think a lot of people don’t know that they can help.”

You can send a check made payable to MMMC Foundation, 285 Mahalani Street #25, Wailuku, HI 96793, and you can even designate your donation to be used for the department or program that interests you. Maybe you’d be willing to pitch in a bit of your most valuable asset, your own time. Call 242-2630 to ask how you can help or to look into bequests or insurance as ways to support Maui’s hospital.