

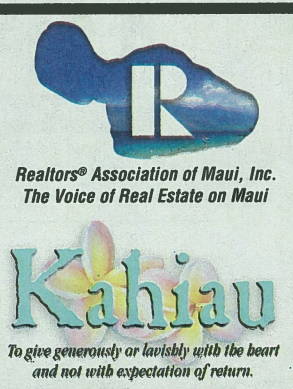
# Maui volunteer recognized by national program

By JOSEPH W. BEAN

On June 23, the National Association of Realtors® announced the winners in its annual “Volunteering Works” program, and Sarah Sorenson of Whale’s Tail Realty was among them. Just five Realtor®-volunteers in the country were selected for the honor. The cash award is a modest \$1,000 grant, but the other gift that comes with the recognition is a year of one-on-one mentoring from a member of the Good Neighbor Society, that is, a past recipient of the larger, annual Realtor® Magazine Good Neighbor Award for volunteer service.

Officially, Volunteering Works is intended to bring attention to Realtors® who work on “small-scale charitable efforts,” but Sorenson’s charitable efforts on behalf of Maui schools and students is amazing, especially given the size of the community. She started the Realtors® Wishing Well... for Maui Students program three years ago to provide Maui County students with things they needed, but would otherwise not have. Those things, delivered throughout Maui, Molokai and Lanai, have included everything from sea-going containers full of furniture to lunch money, from pencils to field trips.

It is probably not possible to place an actual dollar value on the donations of cash, volun-



teer time and physical objects provided through the Wishing Well... program, but the number, very conservatively estimated, has to be many hundreds of thousands of dollars.

“Realtors® play an important leadership role in building our communities,” said National Association of Realtors® President Vicki Cox Golder. “Volunteering Works gives an extra boost to new nonprofits and helps them maximize their impact in the community, which benefits all of us.”

“Volunteering Works recipients,” Realtor® Magazine explained, “are selected based on their dedication to the community through volunteer work and the potential for their charitable work to be expanded or improved with the help of an expert mentor.” The 2010 recipients of the Volunteering Works award demonstrate the variety of charitable efforts recognized by the pro-



A fire at Kahului Elementary was a major setback to the school budget. Wishing Well... helped out with a check for school supplies. Here, left to right, are Michelle Bosque of Century 21, the school’s coordinator; Principal Fern Markgraf, teachers Skylar Decker and Jan Kakiuchi, with program founder Sarah Sorenson.

gram: Cynthia M. Dwyer provides clothing to families of wounded soldiers recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Leslie Heath of Paducah, Kentucky, is restoring a historic home to create an after-school homework and meal center for children. Joyce R. Long, Panama City Beach, Florida, works with doctors, families and caregivers to improve acceptance of people with Down Syndrome. Donna Whiskeman of Colorado founded an organization to serve seniors and adults who are homebound or disabled.

The other 2010 winner, of course, is Maui’s Sarah Sorenson. The award announcement praises her program for providing “support the area’s 32 budget-crunched public schools by coordinating donations of goods, services and funds,” adding that she has volunteer-coordinators “to identify each school’s needs; locates individual and corporate donors of furniture, office equipment, materials and services; and then facilitates transportation of the goods to the schools.” The article also names her mentor: 2008 Good Neighbor Victor Kee, Pete An-

derson Realty, Astoria, Oregon. His charity is Sunday Supper and Sunday Meals on Wheels. Sorenson said she hopes Kee will help her recruit volunteers and improve communication with school administrators, teachers and students.

Ellen Kiss, a 2009 Volunteering Works winner was the founder of Adopt-A-Classroom in Del Mar, California. She said, “Volunteering Works has given me incredible recognition and credibility throughout the community,” and credits her mentor – half a continent away in Warrensburg, Missouri – with helping

her brainstorm creative fundraisers, and helping her find someone to make her website.

Sorenson’s Realtors® Wishing Well... for Maui Students program could be called “Adopt a countywide school system,” and she has high hopes for the year ahead as a Volunteering Works honoree. “We have already done so much, but it is never enough,” she said. “There are new kids coming to school with new needs. And, while it’s nice to give desks and athletic equipment that last, most of what we provide is in the category of supplies, things that are used up in the classroom, things that have to be replaced at least annually, and re-supplied more often if they didn’t have enough to start with.”

You can help. If you see Realtors® Wishing Well... volunteers out in the community, usually near a place that sells school supplies, donate cash or pop into the store and buy some supplies. If you don’t see volunteers when you’re out, check-in with Sorenson at whales@maui.net. She’ll help you find a way to help Maui students and schools.

Volunteering Works is funded by The Stuart & Jill Siegel Charitable Foundation. To learn more about Volunteering Works or the Good Neighbor Awards, go to [www.realtor.org/gna](http://www.realtor.org/gna).