

There are 12 First Fridays a year, and just one place to be

By **JOSEPH W. BEAN**

The Maui County Office of Economic Development recently started a program of Friday parties. “The program, which features monthly community gatherings in some of Maui’s most iconic settings, was developed to showcase the island’s historic towns and celebrate the unique nature of the business communities in each,” according to a county press release. The schedule is first Friday of the month, Wailuku; second Friday, Lahaina; third, Makawao; and fourth, Paia; with the occasional fifth Friday under consideration for future development. That’s all good, but Wailuku kind of got a head start.

“It’s hard to believe,” said Kama’aina Properties Principal Broker Bob Horcajo, “that it’s been over 4 years – October 2007 to be exact – since the Wailuku Town merchants decided to offer a monthly event as a way to remind the Maui community what Wailuku Town has to offer. We all have surely participated in annual events, but now ’51 and counting’ First Fridays in Wailuku really is a testament to the per-



severance of many hearts that truly love this town.”

First Friday in Wailuku was established by the Wailuku Community Association (WCA) Board in 2007 as a way to generate more business for merchants and to remind the Maui citizens of the historical and cultural significance of the area. For a restaurant or retail store, as intended, the First Friday street party is a special business opportunity. For a real estate office, not so much.

Nonetheless, Horcajo is recognized as a founder of the monthly party because, from before the beginning, he was committed to the idea of

revitalizing historic Wailuku Town. When the first First Friday was approaching, Horcajo and his staff were thinking of ways to contribute to the party.

They found a great way. Realtor Elaine Waldow said, “We’re here, and we open our door if a nonprofit wants to come in.” Over the years, a lot of service organizations and charities have taken advantage of Kama’aina Properties’ prime spot on the corner of Main and Market, setting up information tables or conducting fundraising operations of various kinds.

Those nonprofits have included Mental Health Kokua, Women Helping Women, the Kidney Foundation, and Bailey House Museum.

“Many of the social service nonprofits that we opened our office to during the event are now on the streets,” Horcajo said. By “on the streets” he doesn’t mean anything has gone wrong. Having used the real estate office as their introduction to the party and the crowd, they’ve taken their own places on Market Street, in the midst of the entertainment, commerce, dancing, schmoozing, and strolling.



Elaine Waldow and Bob Horcajo didn’t get much done toward decorating their Kama’aina Properties office before First Friday December, but they were very ready for the party, anyway.

“More and more,” Horcajo added, “there are other nonprofits, like sports clubs, benefiting from First Friday in Wailuku. This is truly a community-driven event, so it’s heartening to see the administration of Mayor Arakawa extend its support to monthly Friday events to the communities of Lahaina, Makawao and Paia.”

Time will tell and the communities of Maui will decide if this island is glad to have four or more Friday parties a month. Meantime, Wailuku is a solid hit thanks to busi-

ness people like Horcajo, Waldow, and Teri Edmonds, owner of If the Shoe Fits.

“Whether folks realize it or not,” Horcajo said, “an event like First Friday is a real part of the revitalization efforts in Wailuku Town. It goes hand-in-hand with recent street improvements and infrastructure enhancements.” As property owners in Wailuku Town, Horcajo and Waldow, along with all their friends on the street, understand the importance of the revitalization effort, and they see the need to do their

part in supporting it.

The business operators are not just supporting First Friday, then going back to heads-down work in their separate shops till next month. They do all they can all the time to improve Wailuku. Together with another merchant in town, Horcajo turned a once sandy and weedy lot across from Cafe O’Lei into a park-like setting for other community events, and he has decided to try to empower the town’s landowners, to help them become an organized voice to speak up for themselves and the needs of Wailuku. “I created a group called Property Owners Group Wailuku,” Horcajo said. A website was created, www.POGWailuku.com. “This is an opportunity to begin to educate the property owners and share happenings in our community.”

Seeing the energy Horcajo and Waldow expend on behalf of Wailuku Town, you’ll find yourself taking a second look at the Kama’aina Properties’ slogan: “building relationships and community.” Obviously, this is more than a slogan. It’s how they approach life on Maui.