



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Office of the Director

News Release

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DCCA RECOGNIZES ITS OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEES IN 2008 AWARDS PROGRAM

HONOLULU – The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) honored its outstanding employees today at its annual Incentive and Service Awards ceremony. The event recognized the department's employees and groups of employees who demonstrated exemplary service to the public.

The following are DCCA awardees for 2008:

Employee of the Year

John T. Hassler, staff attorney, Regulated Industries Complaints Office (RICO). Hassler prosecutes cases involving professional and vocational licensing violations. He routinely handles many of the division's most challenging cases, including medical licensing violations, and is generous of his time and expertise in assisting consumers and co-workers. His dedication to fair and effective enforcement of the licensing laws has earned him the respect and admiration of his peers. Hassler lives in Pacific Palisades and has been a state employee for eight years. This is the highest award bestowed upon an employee of the DCCA. The award represents the accomplishment of overall outstanding and consistent performance of achievement.

Manager of the Year

Lance K. Hirano, chief financial analyst, Insurance Division. Hirano leads the Financial Surveillance Branch, and has implemented a comprehensive and in-depth process to monitor and analyze the financial condition of domestic insurance companies. He works closely with the staff in his branch to foster innovative approaches to insurance regulation. Hirano lives in Mililani and has been a state employee for four years. This award is given to the manager who maintains overall outstanding and consistent success in performing his/her management functions.

Team of the Year

Administrative Services Office – Fiscal Staff, Accounting Services and Cashiering Services Section. This team provides consistent, uninterrupted and timely processing of payments and collections service to the public and to the various DCCA divisions. Team members: Cheryl Arakaki, Barbara Harada, Darleen Hoshida, Susan Kanda, Teresita Idos, Eliza Martin, Kay Okimoto, Toni Ukishima, and Lisa Wang. This award is given to a group of two or more employees that worked together to accomplish a common goal that supports the organization's mission or vision.

Spirit of DCCA

Melanie Yoshida, office assistant, Division of Financial Institutions. Yoshida lives and breathes “aloha” and “kokua” that is the spirit of DCCA. She originated the idea of organizing a DCCA “Support our Troops” project to send care packages to our Hawaii troops and has spearheaded that effort for the past four years. Yoshida also creates Hawaiian print Christmas stockings and handmade postcards to send to our troops overseas. This award recognizes the DCCA employee whose intangible contributions are not a part of the statewide awards programs. The award is specifically to allow for the recognition of those employees whose work is a quiet inspiration to other employees.

Service Award

Theresa Anne K. Kong Kee, investor education specialist, Business Registration Division. In the span of two years, Theresa has developed a highly successful and vibrant Investor Education Program that has reached more than 60,000 people throughout the islands. She was recognized in 2007 by the North American Securities Administrators Association with the Investor Education Outreach Award for the “Most Investor Education Consumers Reached”. Kong Kee lives in Kaimuki and has been a state employee for two years. This award is presented to employees who provide outstanding contributions to consumers and who promote sound business practices.

Merlin Award

D.B. Griffin, III, commissioner, Division of Financial Institutions. D.B. Griffin III has been Commissioner of Financial Institutions since 2003. Since then, he has used his extensive knowledge of the financial services industry and his vast managerial experience to implement critical initiatives within the division that have led to more efficient and effective regulatory oversight of the state's financial institutions. Griffin lives in Honolulu and has been a state employee for five years. The non-traditional award is given to the DCCA employee who, like the magician “Merlin,” exhibits wizardry by forecasting the future and leading or guiding the department to meet up with the future.

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