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## **Signature Travel Network's Owners' Meeting Brings \$2 Million to Maui's Economy**

*Group also raised more than \$400,000 in donations and delivered over 7,000 pounds of supplies to help Maui residents in the wake of the wildfires*

**HONOLULU** – When Signature Travel Network decided to move forward with its annual Owners' Meeting at the Grand Wailea on Maui from Sept. 6-9, the group of approximately 450 attendees infused more than \$2 million in spending into the local economy and also made positive, direct impacts in a community still grieving from the August 8 wildfires that destroyed historic Lahaina.

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) and Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) had been working closely with the Signature Travel Network team to bring the group to the island and stayed in close contact after the fires.

"There was obvious concern from the Signature Travel team for the people of Maui who were impacted by the devastation and whether it was even appropriate to be on the island so soon to hold their meeting," said John Monahan, HVCB's president and CEO. "We had many conversations keeping them updated on the situation as it evolved. As the weeks passed, it became clear to them that coming to Maui in a respectful and responsible manner was the best way for the group to help the residents and the economy."

What happened next truly demonstrated the group's understanding of the moment and desire to make a positive impact while on island. Signature Travel Network CEO Alex Sharp set several goals at the outset of the meeting challenging the travel advisors in attendance to demonstrate how respectful, responsible and impactful tourism to the island was possible during a time when so many are still hurting.

"Holding our annual owners meeting in Wailea was not only the right decision, but it led to the best meeting of our 67-year history," said Sharp. "For those attendees with initial hesitation that our event would distract from recovery efforts, all concerns were immediately put to rest as soon as they met local Maui residents, each of whom was there with open arms and gratitude for travelers returning to the island. Giving back to Maui gave our meeting purpose and the outpouring of gratitude lifted everyone's spirits."

The group's impact on the local community and economy was notable in many ways:

- More than \$400,000 in donations and silent auction proceeds for the Hawai'i Community Foundation's Maui Strong Fund, Maui Food Bank and Maui Humane Society.
- An additional \$75,000-\$100,000 from AmaWaterways based on its booking incentive to give \$100 per booking for the next month to the STN Travel Elevates Maui Relief Fundraising Effort.
- More than 7,000 pounds of supplies donated and delivered to Maui charity partners.
- Hundreds of volunteer hours helping to make meals, serve at the Maui Humane Society and to sort through donated items.
- Tens of thousands of dollars spent at the "Maui Market" at The Andaz Maui on September 8 supporting local Maui vendors.

“The aloha shown by the entire Signature Travel Network towards the people of Maui was an incredibly beautiful thing to see,” said Daniel Nāho‘opi‘i, HTA’s interim president and CEO. “They demonstrated that it was possible to continue with their meeting on Maui during a very challenging time, and truly benefit the community in many ways during their stay with us. I extend my sincerest aloha and mahalo to Mr. Sharp and all the STM attendees for their courage and trust in staying the course.”

Governor Josh Green, M.D. on Sept. 8 declared in a statewide address that the West Maui communities of Kā‘anapali, Nāpili, Honokōwai, and Kapalua will reopen to visitors on Sunday, October 8.

Hawai‘i residents and visitors are encouraged to make travel plans to Maui and support the island’s businesses, restaurants, retail outlets, attractions, and accommodations. All previous restrictions for travel to West Maui communities north of Lahaina will be lifted October 8 and no one should be discouraged or reluctant to go and support the businesses and workers that rely on tourism in West Maui for their families’ livelihood.

Governor Green stated, “Beginning October 8, all travel restrictions will end and West Maui will be open to visitors again, so people from Hawai‘i and around the world can resume travel to this special place and help it begin to recover economically. This difficult decision is meant to bring hope for recovery to the families and businesses on Maui that have been so deeply affected in every way by the disaster.”

Lahaina will remain closed to the public until further notice as the cleanup continues and out of respect to the town’s residents.

Meeting planners and event industry professionals interested in making donations to help communities and families recover on Maui can contribute to the Hawai‘i Community Foundation’s [Maui Strong Fund](#), the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement’s [Kāko‘o Maui Fund](#), the American Red Cross, or any other qualified organization that is providing help on the ground here on Maui. Those looking for volunteer opportunities in the community can find inspiration on [GoHawaii.com/malama](#).

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**Link to Download Photos:** <https://finnpartners.box.com/s/rnx13qwfxfh8arby0e7wuba97hog9exnp>  
**Photo credit:** Joshua Martinez / Hawai‘i Media Collective

### **About the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority**

The Hawai‘i Tourism Authority is the state agency responsible for representing The Hawaiian Islands around the world, and for holistically managing tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with community desires, economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, and visitor industry needs. HTA works with the community and industry to Mālama Hawai‘i – care for our beloved home. For more information about HTA, visit [www.hawaiitourismauthority.org](http://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org) or follow @HawaiiHTA on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), Threads and [Twitter](#).

### **About the Hawai‘i Visitors and Convention Bureau**

The Hawai‘i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) is a private non-profit organization contracted by the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (HTA) for global meetings, conventions, and incentives marketing and management services. For more information about the Hawaiian Islands, visit [gohawaii.com](http://gohawaii.com) or follow updates on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

**About Meet Hawai'i**

Meet Hawai'i is a collaboration of the Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) and the Hawai'i Convention Center (HCC) to reinforce the brand of The Hawaiian Islands as a world-class destination for global business meetings, conventions and incentive programs. For information about Meet Hawai'i and the hosting of meetings, conventions and incentives, please visit [MeetHawaii.com](http://MeetHawaii.com).

**About Signature Travel Network**

Signature Travel Network is not an organization, it is a member-owned community of leading travel agencies and supplier partners in the industry. The Network collectively generates \$11+ billion in annual sales and has experienced unprecedented growth in the past ten years. This growth is reflective of the commitment to exclusively align with the most esteemed travel agencies and supplier partners, while simultaneously expanding our reach to more than 15,000 travel advisors in the United States, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Greece, Mexico, New Zealand and the Caribbean.

Signature Travel Network® is dedicated to providing the best technology solutions and state-of-the-art marketing to promote your brand. With a robust suite of cruises, hotels and resorts, as well as land privileges second to none, Signature helps you build your sales and retain your clients. We welcome you to join our member-owned community, more than 65-years strong, with an exponential track record of sales growth, integrity and business acumen. Signature Travel Network is reinventing the retail travel landscape.

For more information, contact:

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