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HOTEL'S VISION: "TO BE A HUB, A WONDERFUL MIX" FOR EMPLOYEES AND DIVERSE COMMUNITIES



Ha'aheo Zablan

GM at the Kaimana Beach Hotel



FOR HA'AHEO ZABLAN, A SIDE HUSTLE opened the door to a stellar career.

He was working at Macy's in visual merchandising – "it was great, but not necessarily what I wanted to do long-term" – when he noticed that The

Kahala Hotel & Resort was looking for a part-time bellhop.

"It was close to my other job and I thought, 'oh, a night job.' Very quickly, I realized it was an environment I thrived in." He moved to the front office, working as a concierge, before the Mouse called.

At Disney's Aulani, "I had all these amazing opportunities," Zablan says. He worked in VIP guest services, and even met Disney CEO Bob Iger. "Disney is known for its high-end service," says Zablan. "I really got to hone those skills."

He was promoted to various leader-

ship roles at Aulani, including front-office guest services manager, housekeeping manager, and food and beverage manager, before moving to the Waikiki Beach Marriott for another management role.

Now, as GM at Kaimana Beach Hotel, Zablan relishes working at a smaller, high-end property. "We have 122 rooms and 150 employees," he notes.

With Zablan at the helm, Kaimana Beach Hotel was named to the 2022 Travel + Leisure It List, which honors the world's top 100 "most memorable, game-changing hotels."

Zablan was born and mostly raised on O'ahu, on the Papakōlea Hawaiian homestead, with some time spent in California too. He views himself as a servant leader. "When you look at your org chart, usually your GM sits on top, but I see it the opposite. I am the base holding up this team, encouraging them and providing leadership opportunities for them."

Zablan and his partner, Jonathan Hall, a pipeline integrity engineer, recently bought a house in Wailupe. "So that's now our hobby," he says. "The house, the yard."

Zablan is board VP for Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center, helping underserved communities with programs for smoking cessation, needle exchanges and housing.

"I am hyperfocused on creating job opportunities, things like internships here at the hotel, to provide meaningful work so people can support their housing." He also volunteers on the Hawai'i LGBT Legacy Foundation board, which conducts Honolulu Pride in October.

At Kaimana Beach Hotel, he says, "There are team members who identify as LGBTQ+ and those who don't, but they are supportive. Our approach is to be a hub, a wonderful mix of the creative community, kama'āina, LGBTQ+, for those who work here and for the community at large."