

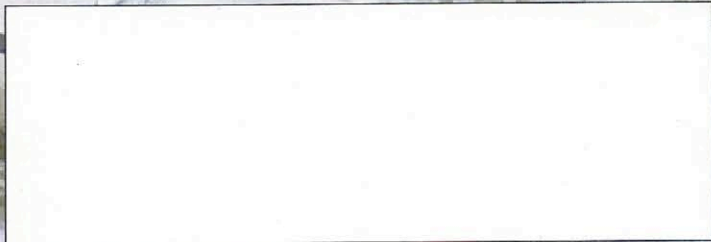
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# LIFEGUARD™

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# THE RESCUE TUBE PROJECT INTERNATIONALLY: "RESCUE TUBE FOUNDATION"

Bob Burnside

As lifeguards, our core responsibility is serving the beach going public in every possible way. We rescue them when in distress, we educate them on the dangers of swimming beyond their capabilities, we patch them up when injured, and warn them when they get too much sun. We find their lost children,

and train their children in our Junior Lifeguard Programs, and at times, we are called upon to recover their bodies when they have died by drowning on unguarded beaches.. Our rescue boats respond to the many boating distress calls, our emergency vehicles respond any time requested in all kinds of conditions, and in doing so "we sometimes lose one of our own family of lifeguards, while trying to save someone."

I will start this report with a little background. I was recently asked to attend Hawaii's Annual Water Safety Convention on Kauai, and make a presentation relating to developing and funding of water safety programs to representatives from all



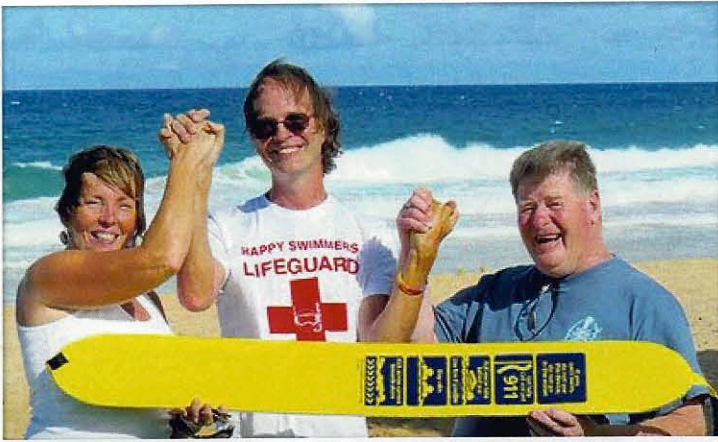
aspects of tourism, government, public and other related water safety groups. I departed Los Angeles, LAX, July 30th, 2014.

On arrival at the Kauai Airport, awaiting my luggage, I noticed a public information video being played over and over again at the baggage claim carousel. It was produced by the Kauai Lifeguard Association and a local Rotary (Kapaa) Club addressing the beauty and hazards of swimming on unguarded beaches, on the Island of Kauai. It was an outstanding presentation and to "any viewers," it gave a clear understanding of what to be aware of and what to do if an emergency occurred while visiting the Garden Island of Kauai.

Then something came up which I had never seen before. I was introduced via this video to a new program recently implemented on Kauai. The program was called "The Rescue Tube Project", supported by the Kauai Lifeguard Association and the Rescue Tube Foundation. It kept repeating itself over and over again and I was somewhat puzzled at why more people were not paying attention to the video, but understanding they were tired and ready to get settled for their upcoming island experience. I was greatly impressed as the video was on the front line; right as tourists arrived. What a brilliant idea I thought.

I was awed at how this Rescue Tube Project had been setup and looked forward to discussing it with its founders. I reflected back on the many years of water safety work, our USLA affiliate "The Club Tortuga" had been doing throughout Mexico to establish government funded lifeguard services and realized that this would be a perfect project for many of the unguarded beaches throughout Mexico. Wait a minute!, I





thought to myself, this program has International Implications and might save thousands of lives throughout the world.

“Let me make this very clear”. This project is not intended to replace lifeguards or to be a substitute for funding lifeguards and water safety programs on actively frequented public beaches. That is the responsibility that local authorities must (and which all too often do not) remain committed to i.e., funding for lifeguard coverage.

This program is for the many small and often remote locations that the general public wander onto and decide that they will experience the thrills and beauty of the ocean, rivers, lakes etc., with no knowledge of the dangers that await them. A few questions had come up about the project. Q: What if a rescuer using this rescue tube gets into trouble themselves? (A: Experience has shown that most would-be rescuers jump in whether there is a Rescue Tube available or not). Q: Why don't the local authorities place lifeguards on these remote beaches? (A: Finite budgets). Q: What about vandals stealing the equipment? etc., etc. (A: This has been a small problem and you therefore need a strong maintenance team).

But in reality, it is about someone trying to save a life, with an inexpensive device that may allow them to do just that, “in a remote area.”

So what does this program actually do to help prevent fatalities in these remote areas? These Rescue Tubes are mounted on mounts along the beach and are there as life saving flotation devices for anyone to use. They protect a potential rescuer and certainly aid in the saving of a swimmer in distress. They are on the beach 24 hours a day 365 days a year, always available.

Through support from Rotary Clubs and private donations on the Island of Kauai, Rescue Tubes which have stenciled graphic instructions right on them are placed and maintained in locations where past fatalities have occurred and other

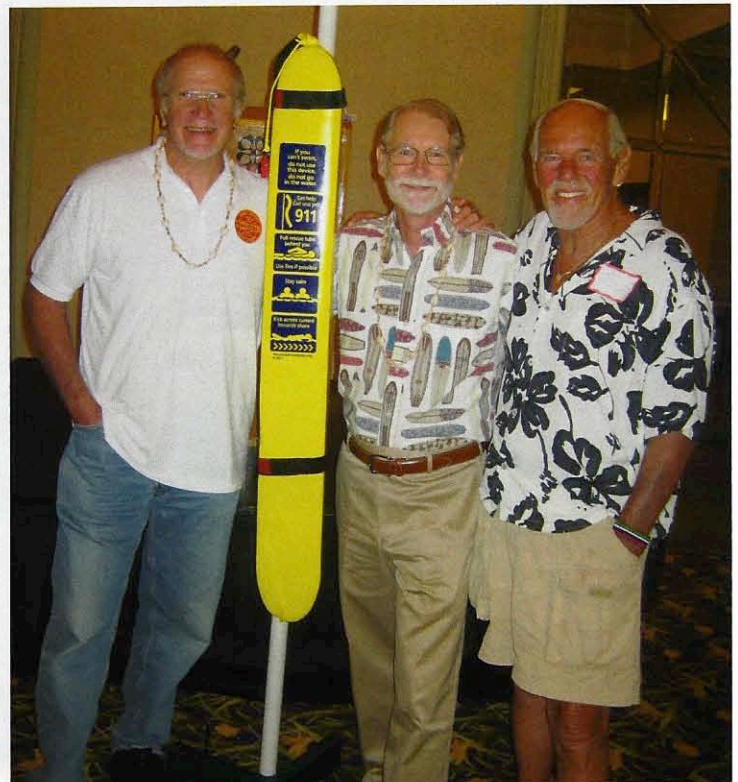
remote areas. They are very easily installed on special pole mounts at the sites determined, in perfect view of the general public. Their bright yellow color attracts attention and awareness of their presence.

Who came up with this great program and how did it finally get established? The two men most responsible for getting this project off the ground are two local residents. Dr. Monty Downs, ER Dr. @ Wilcox Hospital and the President of the Kauai Lifeguard Association and Mr. Branch Lotspiech, a Rotarian and the Executive Director of a new non-profit, the Rescue Tube Foundation. Working with many other community supporters they have placed over 200 Rescue Tubes throughout Kauai and are extending the program to the other Hawaiian Islands. The program has been endorsed by state and local government agencies and it has saved “sixty-five” lives from drowning, IS it worth the effort? ABSOLUTELY! YES, YES, YES!!

I just spoke to Branch, and he told me of a very recent incident, So here goes the story.

“A family of 5 arrived from the mainland for a Kauai vacation. The father and mother were looking for their luggage and were unaware of the airport water safety video, .BUT .their 16 year old son was viewing the video as he waited. He didn't realize that in just a few days it would become very very important to his family. His father got caught in a rip current at one of those unguarded beaches and was screaming

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*The Rescue Tube Project... from page 13*

for help as he was being pulled seaward. The son recalled the airport video, looked around, sighted the yellow Rescue Tube and grabbed it put the strap over his shoulder and plunged into the surf. He reached his father and they both clung to the Rescue Tube composing themselves before returning safely to the shore.”

STORY LINE... Another life saved (maybe two?) because someone took action to solve a serious issue, with a new approach to water safety.

I have been part of the lifeguard family for nearly 63 years now. I have seen it grow into what we all are part of today. The USLA has taken huge leaps forward to improve water safety, training, equipment advances, public education..

We are a “Family”... Lifeguards for Life... and I am honored to welcome into our family the likes of these two men who may not rush into the surf to save others as we do, but they rush into life, do what needs to be done for water safety, all

in their “special way”.

There may be a lesson in this for us all, as Mother Teresa once said... “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

So start casting those stones and let's create some WAVES!

The Mission Statement of the Rescue Tube Foundation:

The Rescue Tube Foundation is dedicated to lowering the incidence of drowning by providing lifesaving sentinel flotation equipment (Rescue Tubes) at recreational aquatic environments on Kauai, around the State of Hawaii and beyond.

Rescue Tubes stand guard 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Their call to action is simply:

Rescue Tubes Save Lives!

Donations in support of the work of the Rescue Tube Foundation can be made by going to their website: <http://www.rescuetubefoundation.org>.

