

# Housekeeper has a passion for cleaning

Trade association honors  
Rosita Galera, 72, with  
lifetime achievement award

**BY ROBBIE DINGEMAN**  
*Advertiser Staff Writer*

West Loch resident Rosita "Rose" Galera flew to Las Vegas last week to collect a lifetime achievement award from the International Executive Housekeepers Association for a half-

century of cleaning everything from homes and small offices to large hotels.

Galera, 72, has a passion for cleaning that began as a teenager and continues today. "The rewards are that you know that you're doing something good for people," she said by phone after winning the award.

She owns her own business, Clean Plus Systems II, trains high school students in housekeeping and food sanitation career development, and serves

as a consultant to Hawai'i's hotel industry.

Galera was the first executive housekeeper for the Hale Koa Hotel in 1975 and served as the corporate executive housekeeper for Aston Hotels & Resorts from 1979 to 1992.

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## Galera

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ing many employees and making sure the hotel was cleaned properly.”

She joined the association 33 years ago and has not missed a single general membership meeting all these years. She also is a past president of the Hawai'i chapter, serving as its leader from 1991 to 1993 and 1999 to 2001, and as a director of IEHA's Pacific Southwest district from 2003 to 2007.

Among Galera's lifelong accomplishments is the opening of more than 30 properties in Hawai'i, on the Mainland and in Mexico. She enjoys educating others, whether it's high school students or professional cleaners at workshops.

Galera received the association's William Joyner Achievement Award for "her life's work and demonstration of excellence in the field of professional housekeeping."

The award's namesake played an integral role in the creation of the Certified Executive Housekeeper training program and, during the mid-1980s, launched a housekeeping training program that graduated more than 6,000 people living in Chicago's Housing Authority.

Gary Nushida — executive housekeeper of the Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki — said he got to know Galera over the past eight years through the Hawai'i chapter of the International Exec-



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ROSE GALERA | given lifetime achievement award from the International Executive Housekeepers Association

utive Housekeepers Association.

He said Galera stands out in the international organization and in the community, where she also teaches part-time in local public schools.

"Rose has immersed herself in the cleaning industry more than anyone I have ever known," Nushida said. "Even in her semiretirement, she's very active in the community."

Nushida said Galera focuses on education to share her career with others. "She's trying to strengthen that industry with our future leaders," he said.

Galera got started with cleaning as a teen nanny with a military family baby-sitting after school and going home on the weekends after cleaning their house in the morning.

She grew up in Kalihi, going to Fern School, Kalākaua Intermediate and Farrington High. "My goal was to become a nurse, but I married early and didn't get to go to college," she said.

Galera has been certified for 33 years.

Founded in 1968, the Hawai'i chapter of the International Executive Housekeepers Association is celebrating its 40th anniversary

this year.

The Hawai'i chapter is IEHA's largest chapter with 140 members, out of 3,500 members worldwide. It represents facility housekeeping at the management level and members represent a variety of industries, including hospital-ity, healthcare, education, contract cleaning and suppliers.

She and her husband opened their own business and she has continued even after he died in 2005 after a respiratory illness.

"I have a passion for the profession," she said, which is why she still personally cleans two offices and a private home once a week.

Galera said the hands-on cleaning allows her to test new products, especially those with fewer chemicals to see what new innovations work.

"It allows me to do tests and research and to stay up with the technologies," she said.

She likes working parttime in schools — Pearl City, Waipahu and Moanalua (where her son is the principal) — to offer another career path for students who might not be planning to go to college. She shows them they can apply for hotel and restaurant jobs and consider housekeeping and food sanitation as good entry-level jobs.

And she offers some useful training for those who can learn from her personal story. "I don't have a college degree," she said. "I worked my way up. But I'm always reading," and keeps up with noncredit business classes, workshops and other research.

She's proud that an approach toward cleaning as a science — she calls it cleanology — has helped to elevate the profession over the years and brought a new level of awareness to the business of cleaning.

"I don't intend to retire," Galera said matter of factly. "I plan to be in this field until the end of my time."

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— Robbie Dingeman

### CLEANING TIPS FROM A PRO

Career cleaning expert and executive housekeeper Rose Galera has some tips for amateur cleaners:

- **Telephones.** Wipe your telephone with disinfectant wipes a couple of times a week at the office or at home and always when you check into a hotel.
- **Avoid the floor.** When you go to a public restroom, hang your purse or backpack up on the hook, don't put in on the floor to pick up germs.
- **Kitchen sponge?** "I would tell you throw it out." She said the sponges retain moisture and germs and then spread them. Microfiber cloths or nylon cleaning cloths that dry quickly are what she recommends. "You don't have to use chemicals with microfibers."
- **Remote control.** Wipe with disinfectant wipes a couple of times of week at home and always at a hotel. "It's one of the germiest things in a hotel room."
- **Cloes that lid.** At home, to avoid spreading germs to toothbrushes and other personal items, she says put down the toilet seat and then flush the toilet.
- **Kitchen.** Use sanitizers such as liquid dishwashing soap rather than harsher bleach-based solutions.
- **Teen germs.** She cautions teens to be aware that personal items can carry a lot of germs. She advises against sharing cell phones, iPods, water bottles, hair brushes and lipstick.