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CORAL REEF AWARDS PROGRAM CREATED

(Honolulu, Hawaii, June 16, 2004) — The Coral Reef Outreach Network has announced the creation of Hawaii’s first annual “Living Reef” environmental awards program. The awards will honor and recognize organizations, groups or individuals that do the most to preserve Hawaii’s reef ecosystem.

“The awards program was created as part of Hawaii’s Living Reef program to create awareness of the importance the coral reef plays in our island lifestyle, says Peter Young, chairman, State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources.

“The goal is to honor groups and individuals that promote reef ecosystem wellness, appropriate to their resources and ability,” he explains.

The awards program will recognize winners in five industry categories:

- Fisheries (aquaculture, commercial, aquarium trade, etc.)
- Ocean recreation (dive shops, snorkeling tours, whale watching, etc.)
- Travel/visitor industry (hotels, cruise lines, car rentals, etc.)
- Business (corporations and small business)
- Agriculture/land owners

Two awards will also be granted in a community division:

- Non-profit organizations (individuals and groups)
- Education (students, student groups, teachers, all levels of schools)

Individuals, groups or organizations must have implemented the reef program or activity anytime between January 1, 2003, and December 31, 2004. Winners in each category will receive a specially designed award at a recognition luncheon banquet held in their honor in March 2005.

A panel of representatives from Hawaii's community will conduct the judging. Nominations, including self-nominations, are due January 31, 2005. Please go to www.hawaiireef.org for more details. Judges Include: Mayor Alan Arakawa; Dr. Andrew Rossiter, Director, Waikiki Aquarium; Evan Dobelle, President, University Of Hawaii; Marsha Weinert, Tourism Liaison, Office Of The Governor; Murray Towill, President, Hawaii Hotels And Lodging Association; Oswald Stender, Trustee, Office Of Hawaiian Affairs; and Young.

In 2002, Hawaii was asked by the US Coral Reef Task Force to develop local action strategies to address primary threats to coral reefs. Hawaii identified a strategy to address the lack of public awareness and formed the Coral Reef Outreach Network to facilitate communications and work together to develop materials and events to launch an awareness campaign. CRON's outreach strategy includes enhancing and coordinating existing efforts, encouraging new ones and increasing voluntary participation among the general public to protect Hawaii's living reefs and our island lifestyle.

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