

ALOHA

from front page



Hula dancers setting the Hawaiian mood with a shaking of their hips.



Where would Aloha Evening be without hula dancing?

summer event, Reed said, as she opened her own home for the party. The backyard holding the luau had colorful paper ribbons strung across the trees with paper flowers. There were fish balloons and attendees wearing tropical clothing with leis.

The event featured entertainment to put people in a paradise mood. The Ulu Ohana band was on-hand to provide the party with some island tunes. The band was provided by the Kahanamokus' Swimboat store and consisted of eight ukulele players wearing matching Hawaiian shirts. And of course, hula dancers were on the scene, shaking their hips.

A table at the party held an island feast, including various fruits, orange chicken, rice, and pineapples pieces wrapped in ham (which were toothpicked to a full pineapple). Another table held festive drinks like Mai Tais, red and white wine and Corona beer.

The Aloha Evening also had a very special guest at the party: six-year-old Matilda "Tilly" Dumaine, patient of CHLA. She may seem like a normal little girl with a fraternal twin sister (Isabel "Izze"), but she has been through a lot for someone her age. Matilda was two years and five months old when it was discovered she had Neuroblastoma, Matilda's mother Rachel Dumaine explained. Her limp was her first noticeable symptom. Neuroblastoma is cancer of the central nervous system, Rachel said.

The cancer spread to Matilda's knees, both sides of her pelvis, both sides of her ribs, one shoulder, and possibly some other places, Rachel said. She had a 30 percent chance of survival, or even less. "She's one of the few who was very, very lucky," Rachel said, "Like a miracle, she responded completely to treatment." Part of her treatment was received from CHLA. Right before Matilda

was three, her parents took her to CHLA for a stem cell bone marrow transplant. "That's a pretty big thing," Rachel said, "It's 30 days in isolation with no immune system and a possibility of death at any moment."

The experience was horrible, Rachel recalled, but was very well handled by the staff, doctors and hospital. "They go out of their way to make things work for you as much as possible," she said. The nurses in children oncology are wonderful, she added.

Matilda's cancer is currently in remission, and the family visits CHLA every three months for scanning. Her mother describes her now "as robust and exuberant as she was before this happened." Matilda's father admitted it was a terrible experience, but it brought out a lot of compassion from people. "Saw the worst side, but saw the best side in people," he said.

El Segundo resident Brian Ash, 17, was another attendee of the Aloha Evening and a patient of CHLA. Ash said he was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome about two years ago. He explained it is not exactly known what causes chronic fatigue syndrome, but it's most likely due to a person's immune system not shutting itself off after a virus. So the person continues to have the symptoms of fatigue, headache and fevers.

Ash said that before going to Childrens Hospital, he went to see a few other doctors. Many of them thought he was a hypochondriac and didn't believe him. "It was kind of an uncaring atmosphere," Ash said, "And when I went to Childrens Hospital, it was just a night and day difference. It was amazing. Though I'm not a child anymore, I don't want to go see any other doctor."

For more information about the El Segundo Auxiliary of Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, call 310-647-3414. •

LAX

from front page

If the traffic numbers continue to fall, say to 45 million annual passengers, it would mean an overall decline of the economy with far-reaching implications, McDowell noted. "There's a reason we have 3,500 hotel rooms in El Segundo—we're five minutes from the airport," he said. "In my first meeting years ago with (then Los Angeles Mayor) Jim Hahn, the first words out of his mouth were about how much El Segundo benefits from LAX. There's no question we benefit greatly from our proximity not just in terms of room nights, but also jobs. However, these benefits come with an enormous price—mostly to our residents. The people who live here and sleep here suffer the heaviest impacts. There is no question the airport will remain the biggest external issue in El Segundo politics long after I'm gone and long after everyone on our city council has left office."

With the SAIP now put to bed, LAX officials have turned their attention to north airfield safety improvements. A proposal to push the northernmost runway some 34 feet closer to residential neighborhoods in adjacent Westchester may see the light of day, depending on the results of multiple safety studies now underway. "Their argument is that if you want to keep both runways in operation with the new breed of large aircraft, you have to have a separation of 340 feet north of the northernmost runway in order to maintain safe aircraft wing tip separation," explained McDowell. "Today, they have to shut down the whole side of the airfield when the (Airbus) A380 is on the runway since it impinges on clearance for the adjacent runway. But we're only talking about 12 flights a day, so shutting down one of the runways for what will amount to very brief periods over the course of a day won't have a significant impact on operations at LAX even if air traffic increases to the rate it was prior to the downturn."

Playing more of a facilitating role, the cities of El Segundo and Inglewood banded together to offer a compromise "no new impacts" alternative that mimics the provisions of the SAIP by calling for the northernmost runway to move just 100 feet north. "This still allows LAX to make the necessary safety improvements without any new environmental impacts on neighbors to the north and east," explained McDowell.

The Westchester faction, spearheaded by the Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion (ARSAC), opposes any northern runway move. McDowell maintained that airfield balance is now the most important consideration moving forward. "Naturally Westchester doesn't want more heavy jet takeoffs, but 80 percent of those takeoffs currently occur on the south due to runway length," he said. "We want to see balance on the north side. The most important fix is lengthening the inboard runway on the north side so fully-loaded heavy jets can take off."

Spreading air traffic equitably across the Southland is another issue. As part of the legal settlement, LAX periodically meets and confers with petitioners regarding the regionalization of air traffic. El Segundo has long been the ringleader for the regional cause, calling for airports in areas with the highest population growth (e.g. the Inland Empire) to assume their fair share of the burden. Again, the times have changed. "While we support Westchester and others who have strong feelings about this, our feeling internally is, 'It's tough to regionalize air traffic that you don't have.'" McDowell said. "LAX is struggling to keep Ontario open since it's a 12 MAP (million annual passengers) airport operating

at five MAP. The overhead is shared by the airlines. Trying to get airlines to regionalize in an era where they're simply trying to keep airports open is difficult at best."

Regionalization may make sense for logistical reasons. McDowell looked to data recently presented by a LAX consultant showing there is a destination motivation to get passengers out of LAX to someplace else. "Ninety-six percent of travel to Anaheim is destination-oriented," he said, citing the data. "LAX and Ontario are almost exactly equidistant from Anaheim, so why not try to drive that traffic to Ontario? These are passengers who end up down there not just to go to Disneyland, but also to Knotts and the Convention Center. The fact that the numbers are so extraordinarily overbalanced makes you take note."

While LAX air traffic has dropped to its lowest level since the mid-'90s, McDowell was also quick to point out that the impacts on El Segundo residents are actually the same they've always been. "People complain as much as ever and insist the noise is as bad as ever," he said. "They're not making this up. They're sincere."

A multi-camera system installed to monitor airplane early turns in real time has been effective, though the actual number of incidences are few and far between. Instead, the most prominent noise factors are "go-arounds" and aircraft taking off from the outside runway at night. Cargo plane pilots like to use the outside runway, which is closer to their terminals but also to sensitive El Segundo ears. At the same time, air traffic control has a built-in preference for aircraft not to cross runways. "Our argument is that there aren't other planes out there at three in the morning, so it wouldn't be a safety issue," McDowell said. "This is all about reducing impacts on our residents who'd prefer a good night's sleep."

The Mayor was resigned to the idea that freighters probably won't start taking off from the north runway even after that project is done, but he would be happy to see them use the inboard runway on the south side to reduce noise impacts on the community. "The north project will lengthen the inboard runway on the north, which is good for us and good for safety," McDowell said. "Another project will be to modernize the cross-field taxiway that leads from the north side to the south side and that will enable freighters to take off on that side, potentially. If that happens, we should see a noticeable reduction in noise impacts."

Another El Segundo goal will be to extend the gate constraints provision of the legal settlement well beyond the 2015 expiration date. McDowell maintained that the airport won't lose anything in the process. Whatever the case, the topic of airport modernization has certainly evolved into something vastly different from a decade ago. "This is the most fascinating issue I've encountered in government since here you have a city (Los Angeles) and proprietary department (LAX) trying to modernize and get out of the stone age of airport development and trying to do so in the middle of the biggest recession since the Great Depression," he said. "It's truly a vicious cycle. The administration has mandated completing many of these improvements by the end of Mayor Villaraigosa's term. Revenues have dropped through the floor, but at the same time they are trying to modernize. Then petitioners are asking for regional traffic, but the airlines don't have any passengers. It makes these questions harder than ever to answer."

