

From: Lisa Anders [LAnders@gcvb.org]
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2011 4:21 PM
To: Elliott Brack; Judy Putnam; vanzetta.evans@patch.com; Steve Burns; Laura Sullivan; Kim Marks; meghan.kotowski@gwinnettdaily.com; lschoolcraft@bizjournals.com; Dave Williams; Margaret Jones; tim.burns@hyatt.com; Bucky; Lynne DeWilde; christine.moorhead@hilton.com; Joe Allen
Subject: GCVB tourism awards announced at annual Holiday Luncheon

ANNUAL TOURISM AWARDS
HOSTED BY GWINNETT CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU RECOGNIZES
TOP GWINNETT HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS
Annual Event Also Supports Local Charity, the Norcross Cluster Schools Partnership

December 3, 2011 (Buford, GA) -- 145 of Gwinnett's hospitality industry professionals were in attendance at the Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center for the Gwinnett Convention and Visitors Bureau's (GCVB) Annual Tourism Awards and Holiday Luncheon on December 2, 2011.

"Recognizing the best in our industry is always such a challenge, with so many people working hard to drive new business to Gwinnett. We've had a great year, and the Tourism Awards recognize the individuals and organizations who are our partners in drawing in new business, and who consistently go above and beyond," said Lisa Anders, GCVB Deputy Director. Anders adds "these individuals are pivotal in not just drawing meetings, events and visitors to our county, but making our visitors and events want to come back, as well as being good stewards of our community."

Community stewardship was exemplified by the GCVB's "Holiday Book Drive", a charity effort to support the Norcross Cluster Schools Partnership, with their mission to support disadvantaged Gwinnett Public School students. The hospitality community collected **2,000** new and gently used books for K-3 students, 100 stockings of school supplies and a \$250 VISA gift card, generously donated by the Hilton Atlanta Northeast in Norcross. NCSP board member Ranae Heaven spoke on behalf of the Partnership, and was "amazed and delighted at the support of the hospitality community. This book drive has exceeded our wildest expectations."

The GCVB's annual tourism awards were also distributed, with winners from across all aspects of Gwinnett's hospitality industry.

Four hospitality professionals were named as "**2011 Friends of Tourism Award Winners**," including: Barbara Mullin with Exceptional Hospitality; Lindsay Harmon, Sales Manager for the Gwinnett Braves; Aryn Bana, Owner, Purple Rain Restaurant and Yajaira Torres, Director of Sales for the Hyatt Place Duluth/Gwinnett Mall.

Other awards included:

Industry Professional of the Year: Malinda Foster, Director of Sales, Courtyard by Marriott Mall of Georgia
This award, the highest given, is a peer-driven award. The winner is chosen by votes from the entire hospitality industry. Malinda received a wide range of votes, and was noted for 'exceeding expectations, strong relationships with staff, the local community and other hotels; integrity, professionalism and a sense of giving to her community

Sports Partner of the Year: Suwanee Sports Academy (Mike Eddy)
This is given by the Gwinnett Sports Commission in recognition of a group/facility that consistently works and strategizes with the Sports Commission to create and host new room-night generating sports events. SSA was recognized as one of Gwinnett's premier venues, with staff that are creating a direct economic impact for Gwinnett's hotels with their strong regional and national slate of events.

Event of the Year: Norcross Art Fest (Frances Shube)
This juried fine art festival, now showcasing over 170 artists, does a wonderful job of improving Gwinnett's appeal as a leisure destination, as well as being a arts and cultural showcase.

Innovative Marketer of the Year Award: The City of Suwanee (Lynne DeWilde)

This award is given to the person or organization who is creative, visionary and they continually work to maximize their assets and achievements in new and creative ways. Suwanee was recognized for their efforts to integrate public art and the visual arts into the psyche of the city, and their consistent support as a hospitality partner..

General Manager (GM) of the Year: Kevin Hill, GM, Hampton Inn Sugarloaf

This award is given to the GM who shows leadership, support, and advocacy for the tourism industry.

Unsung Hero Award: Joe Allen, Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District

This award is given to the industry professional who works behind the scenes to facilitate change. Joe has worked tirelessly to improve the landscape and the future of the Gwinnett Place Mall district, one that is very important to Gwinnett's hotel industry.

Salesperson(s) of the Year: Kevin Priger, Atlanta Marriott Gwinnett Place

This award is given to the sales professionals who consistently exceed the sales and marketing goals for their hotels, are creative and professional and set the standard for the hotel sales staff.

Restaurant of the Year: Purple Rain Restaurant, Duluth

This award is given to the local restaurant that is a partner with the hospitality industry, has a positive economic effect on their area, as well as bringing in new diners for Gwinnett's restaurant landscape.

Industry Partner of the Year: Dave & Buster's, Sugarloaf

This award is given to the organization that has proven themselves to be true supporters of the hospitality industry. Dave & Buster's Sugarloaf has hosted tour groups, family reunion workshops, provide coupons for incoming meetings/groups and more.

###

About Gwinnett Convention and Visitors Bureau: *The Gwinnett Convention and Visitors Bureau is Gwinnett County's official tourism organization and is dedicated to strengthening Gwinnett County's economy by marketing the county as a destination for conventions, sporting events, meetings and leisure travel through sales, marketing and promotion. The GCVB also runs the Gwinnett Sports Commission, and oversees the management and marketing of Gwinnett Center.*

_____ Information from ESET NOD32 Antivirus, version of virus signature database 3997 (20090409)

The message was checked by ESET NOD32 Antivirus.

<http://www.eset.com>