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GBJ Staff

Tourism awards recognize Gwinnett business drivers



2011 Unsung Hero Award recipient and Gwinnett Place CID director Joe Allen pictured with Lisa Anders, GCVB deputy director.

The Gwinnett Convention and Visitors Bureau (GCVB) honored the County's top hospitality industry professionals on Dec. 3 at its annual Tourism Awards and Holiday Luncheon.

"Recognizing the best in our industry is always such a challenge, with so many people working hard to drive new business to Gwinnett," said Lisa Anders, GCVB Deputy Director. "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."

2011 Industry Professional of the Year is 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

Four hospitality professionals were named as **2011 Friends of Tourism**: 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.

2011 Sports Partner of the Year is 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.

2011 Event of the Year is Norcross Art Fest (Frances Schube)

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.

2011 Innovative Marketer of the Year is The City of Suwanee (Lynne DeWilde). This award is given to

