



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

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.

The **2011 General Manager (GM) of the Year** is Kevin Hill, Hampton Inn Sugarloaf. This award is given to the GM who shows leadership, support, and advocacy for the tourism industry.

The **2011 Unsung Hero Award** honored 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.

2011 Salesperson of the Year is 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.

2011 Restaurant of the Year is 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.

2011 Industry Partner of the Year is 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.

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