

aloft Donates Virtual Land in Second Life To TakingITGlobal.org

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Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. (NYSE:HOT) and aloft hotels announced today their plans to donate the aloft land in Second Life to TakingITGlobal.org, an international organization that currently reaches over 1 million young people in over 200 countries.

Led by youth and empowered by technology, TakingITGlobal.org works to inspire, inform and get people around the world involved in improving their local and global communities.

aloft, the world's first hotel brand to place a 3-D computer generated property inside a virtual world, announced their plans in May 2007 to donate the use of the land for the next year to celebrate the brand's transition from the virtual world to the physical world. Second Life residents were invited to submit their ideas on the best use of the land once the virtual aloft closes; aloft received an overwhelming amount of submissions before making their final decision. The island will be transferred to TakingITGlobal.org later this month.

"Second Life has been a tremendous learning experience for the aloft brand. Our time spent on the island helped us to create what will surely be the ultimate destination sensation," said Brian McGuinness, Vice President of aloft hotels worldwide. "We think it's only natural to donate the island to an organization that will not only learn from the experience, but also find a way to educate and improve the community. TakingITGlobal.org proposes to do just that, and we're excited to see the great things they'll achieve through this opportunity."

"We've wanted to create a non-profit center in Second Life for quite some time. When we heard about aloft's plans to donate their land, we immediately knew we had found the perfect place to do so," said Michael Furdyk, Director of Technology, TakingITGlobal.org. "We are incredibly grateful to aloft for giving our community this opportunity to grow and look forward to sharing our future success with the brand."

Once the organization officially joins the Second Life community, they plan to celebrate their arrival with a series of events on the island, to be held on a regular basis beginning this summer. The island will house two spaces: an amphitheater that will, amongst other things, serve as a designated meeting space; and the 'School of the Future,' an educational facility dedicated to teaching and informing Second Life residents about global and social issues. The organization also plans to reach out to teachers in the physical world and invite them to utilize the information available on the island to help engage their students in the growing number of global issues. TakingITGlobal.org will appoint a group of volunteers to oversee the Second Life project and its content, which will be made available in 12 languages.

Since it first opened in the virtual world in September 2006, aloft has actively solicited input from Second Life residents on such design features as public spaces, guest rooms and exteriors - everything from color palette to space planning. After reviewing all of the comments, several changes to the design are a direct result of consumer feedback, and will be reflected in the "real-life" aloft hotels. Some of these changes include adding radios in the guest room showers, providing additional seating in the re:mix lobby, and incorporating artwork created by local artists on the walls in the public areas.

As a Vision of W Hotels, aloft is shaking up the lodging industry with urban-influenced design, accessible technology, style and a social atmosphere. aloft offers a total sensory experience, with guest lofts featuring loft-like nine-foot ceilings and oversized windows to create a bright, airy environment. The centerpiece of the loft room is the ultra-comfortable signature bed, and large stylish bathrooms complement the guest experience with oversized walk-in showers and amenities created by Bliss(R) spa. Each guest loft is also a combination high-tech office and entertainment center, featuring wireless internet access and plug & play, a one-stop connectivity solution for multiple electronic gadgetry such as PDAs, cell phones, mp3 players and laptops - all linked to a large flat panel HDTV ready television for optimal sound and viewing.

Designed in conjunction with world-renowned David Rockwell and the Rockwell group, aloft stays true to W's heritage, offering atmospheric public spaces designed to draw guests from their rooms to socialize and make friends. Guests can read the paper, work on their laptops via hotel-wide wireless internet access, play a game of pool or grab a drink with friends at the re:mix communal lobby area and bar w xyz. The re:charge fitness center and splash, the indoor or outdoor pool, give travelers options to de-stress and re-energize; while re:fuel by aloft, a one-stop food and beverage area, offers sweet, savory and healthy food, snacks and beverages to grab & go, 24-hours a day.

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