

Marcus Foundation executive Michael Leven launches Cornell Hotel School's 'Conversations with Entrepreneurs' series

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Michael Leven, vice chairman of The Marcus Foundation, will kick off the 2007/2008 Conversations with Entrepreneurs series at the Leland C. and Mary M. Pillsbury Institute for Hospitality Entrepreneurship at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration.

Leven will present on Tuesday, October 2, launching a program through which entrepreneurs share their experience, expertise and counsel with Cornell Hotel School students.

"We are excited to host Michael Leven in the Pillsbury Institute's Conversations with Entrepreneurs series," stated Steve Carvell, associate dean for Academic Affairs, Cornell School of Hotel Administration. "We are honored that he's sharing his outstanding expertise in hotel franchising, as well as his leadership in entrepreneurial ventures, with Cornell students."

Leven is vice chairman of the Atlanta-based Marcus Foundation, where he has been a trustee and a member of the board. The Marcus Foundation was founded by Bernie Marcus, co-founder of Home Depot and one of America's most generous philanthropists. Leven was formerly president and CEO of US Franchise Systems, Inc. (USFS), a company he founded in 1995 that franchises the Microtel Inns & Suites and Hawthorn Suites hotel brands. Under Leven's tenure, USFS gained national recognition as a franchisor committed to both the customer and the franchisee. Prior to that, he was president and COO of Holiday Inn, Worldwide, Days Inn of America, and Americana Hotels. At Days Inn Leven led initiatives to hire older workers, people with disabilities, and the homeless, a commitment that earned the company an Outstanding Employer Citation from the AARP.

Leven has also been an active supporter of many civic organizations. He was a member of the National Board of Governors of the American Red Cross, vice president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, chair of the marketing and public affairs committee for United Jewish Communities (UJC), general chairman of the Atlanta State of Israel Bonds Committee, and board member of the Georgia Aquarium.

Leven is an honorary member of the Cornell Hotel Society. His son, Robert J. Leven graduated from the Hotel School with a B.S. in 1991.

Leven will present on October 2 from 1:15 - 2:15 p.m., in Room 291, Statler Hall. The Conversations with Entrepreneurs Series is sponsored by CHC Advisors, Hotelie Entrepreneurs and the National Society for Minorities in Hospitality.

About the Leland C. and Mary M. Pillsbury Institute for Hospitality Entrepreneurship at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration

The Institute supports and enables innovation and new business formation in the hospitality industry. Through our faculty and industry partners, the Institute provides students with guidance on entrepreneurship study, introduces students to hospitality entrepreneurs, and encourages students to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. The Institute is also a platform for knowledge about forming new hospitality businesses, managing small and family-run businesses, franchising, corporate venturing, new venture funding, and innovation. To learn more about the Institute, visit: www.ihe.cornell.edu, or contact Joe Strodel, Jr., acting director, Leland C. and Mary M. Pillsbury Institute for Hospitality Entrepreneurship at 607.255.4646 or via email at js343@cornell.edu.

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