

## AH&LA Honors Most Outstanding Hotel Employees with Annual Stars of the Industry Awards

2008-06-12

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### Nine Employees from Across the Country Recognized for Dedicated Service and Innovation

During the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) Stars of the Industry Awards luncheon, nine employees out of hundreds of applicants, were chosen for their outstanding accomplishments and exceptional service in the lodging industry. The awards, sponsored by U.S. Foodservice, were presented during the AH&LA Summer Summit at The Skirvin Hilton in Oklahoma City, and awarded to Outstanding Lodging Employees, Managers, and General Managers, with awards categorized by property size.

Outstanding Lodging Employee of the Year awards went to Polly Vestall, Arctic Caribou Inn, Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, Mary Stone, Doubletree Guest Suites Anaheim Resort/Convention Center, Anaheim, California, and Matt Lohnes, Westin Waltham-Boston, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Vestall, who won in the small property size category, is a housekeeper and supervisor whose results-oriented approach has made her a great asset to the Arctic Caribou Inn team. She is committed to sharing her Alaskan culture with every guest, sharing her perspectives on growing up in a bush community and discussing the past and future of Alaska. In addition to volunteering throughout the area at the Noatak Church and Alaska Women's Shelter, Vestall also travels abroad with the Church of Friends, bringing food and medical relief efforts to the needy in various developing countries.

Stone, winner in the medium property size category, was part of the hotel's opening team and currently serves as PBX operator and CARE Committee Guest Relations Associate. Stone has been a part of the DoubleTree Guest Suites team since February of 2006, and has increased guest satisfaction through her willingness to wear many hats - literally. Stone has donned a bunny costume, a Christmas tree outfit, and personally decorated a five year-old guest's hotel room for their birthday.

Lohnes is the winner in the large property size category. Having never worked in a hotel until 2006, Lohnes began at the Westin Waltham-Boston as a doorman and was quickly noticed for his positive and friendly demeanor, and for frequently exceeding expectations, at one time he ran 2.5 miles in order to return to the overcrowded hotel when Massachusetts' snowy conditions made driving impossible. Over the past two years, Lohnes has been recognized for his dedication on many occasions, winning the hotel's Employee of the Year award and the Shining Star of the Month award.

Outstanding Manager of the Year award winners are Julie Allred, La Quinta Suites, Albuquerque, New Mexico., Brenda Bufford, Comfort Suites Perimeter Center, Atlanta, Georgia, Terry Richard, Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee.

Allred does 'Whatever it Takes' when it comes to La Quinta Suites, living the hotel's motto in her daily duties as front office manager. She constantly strives to improve every guest's stay by helping out with a variety of jobs. Whether it is 'pet sitting' for guests, or searching for nasal cannulas for a guest who needs oxygen, Allred's commitment to the hotel and its guests leaves a lasting memory with everyone she encounters.

Bufford, winner in the medium property category, received this honor based on her motherly character, proactive nature, and effective management skills that have not only enabled her to unite and bond with the staff who work under her as the property executive housekeeper, but also to help improve the property's loyalty scores.

Richard, the winner in the large property category, is one of the original members of the Marriott at Vanderbilt staff. Now banquet manager, Richard worked his way up through two promotions since he started off as a banquet captain with the hotel seven years ago. Active in both the lodging industry and community, Richard oversees 12,000 square feet of flexible meeting space and more than 30 associates. In 2004, Richard created Gear 4 Career, a non-profit agency that provides men in need with suitable clothing for job interviews and careers.

Outstanding General Manager of the Year award winners are David Grossberg, Concord's Colonial Inn, Concord, Massachusetts, Wes Tyler, Chancellor Hotel on Union Square, San Francisco, California, Dennis Clark, The Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Seattle, Washington.

Grossberg, who won in the small property category, plays an active role in the lives of his employees and his guests. Grossberg views his job as providing not only a comfortable stay for his guests, but a uniquely historical one, in the inn which dates back to 1716 and whose most famous resident is a ghost who frequents room 24. Grossberg's dedication to service extends beyond the property, as he is a member of a local Rotary organization, and always on the look out for new service projects.

The winner in the medium property size category, Tyler, has earned the Chancellor Hotel a top five rating out of the 237 hotels in San Francisco, according to Trip Advisor's Popularity Index of guest reviews. Tyler first entered the hospitality industry as a dishwasher in 1975, and he has since moved through various cities, hotels, and jobs. In his 14 years at the Chancellor, Tyler has begun his very own general manager's blog to address employee and guest concerns, and become very involved in online initiatives. Additionally, Tyler has maintained an active presence in the greater lodging community, serving as the 2006 chairperson for the California Hotel & Lodging Association.

Clark, winner in the large property size category, has served as general manager of the Fairmont Olympic since 2003. Clark did his part to enhance Seattle's tourism product during his tenure at the historic hotel, which has long been noted as the city's 'most distinguished landmark.' Under his direction, the hotel was recently honored as the best hotel in Seattle by both Conde Nast Traveler's Gold List and Travel + Leisure's T+L 500, noted for its 'thoughtful service' and not-to-miss Penn Cove oysters.

Many of AH&LA's partner state associations choose their own employee award winners, which are submitted to the association for national judging. Making the decisions in this year's competition were Stephanie Ricca, managing editor, Hotel & Motel Management, and Stefani C. O'Connor, executive news editor, Hotel Business.

For more information on AH&LA's Stars of the Industry Awards program, please visit [www.ahla.com](http://www.ahla.com). To contact any of the Stars of the Industry winners, contact Jessica Soklow, AH&LA manager of media relations, at (202) 289-3153 or [jsoklow@ahla.com](mailto:jsoklow@ahla.com).

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

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The URL for this story is:

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