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TOURISM INDUSTRY LEADERS HONORED AT GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM

Jackson, Mississippi (February 18, 2009) – Mississippi tourism professionals were honored this week at the Governor's Conference on Tourism. Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Director D. Craig Ray presented the awards during the Governor's Awards Luncheon with more than 250 tourism industry members from both the private and public sector in attendance. Mississippi Tourism Association sponsored the conference, held February 8 – 10 in Hattiesburg.

Awards were presented in the Lake Terrace Convention Center during the awards luncheon. Winners were selected on general evaluation of qualifications such as exceptional efforts, innovation, uniqueness and measurable results. Winners are listed below:

Travel Media Award for Travel Writer
Kelly South, Jackson Sun

Travel Media Award for Newspaper
Phil Stukenborg, Sports Writer-*Commercial Appeal*

Travel Media Award for Broadcast
Tom "Doc" Clifton & Mark Boehler/WOWL-FM "Fun 91.9"

Community Volunteer of the Year
Dorothy Moore

Governmental Friend of Tourism
Public Works Department-Bay St. Louis

Tourism Achievement Award
Tishomingo County Tourism "Trash & Treasures along the Tenn-Tom"

Tourism Promotion of the Year Award
Greenwood Convention & Visitors Bureau

Travel Attraction of the Year
Mississippi Museum of Natural Science

more

Festival/Event of the Year-Small

Mississippi Blues Marathon & Half-Marathon

Festival/Event of the Year-Large

Oxford CVB's Double Decker Arts Festival

CVB of the Year-\$0-\$100,000

Kosciusko-Attala Development Corporation

CVB of the Year-\$100,000-\$300, 00

Mississippi's West Coast Hancock County Tourism Development Authority

CVB of the Year-\$300,000-\$500,000

Greenwood Convention & Visitors Bureau

CVB of the Year \$500,000-\$750,000

Meridian/Lauderdale County Tourism

CVB of the Year over \$750,000

Columbus Convention & Visitors Bureau

MTA Member of the Year

Wanda Collier-Wilson

"It is always such an honor and privilege to recognize these organizations and individuals that have gone above and beyond to promote Mississippi tourism," Ray said. "Our annual tourism conference is an important educational and networking tool for the tourism industry."

The conference offered exceptional professional development sessions featuring such noted speakers as Dr. J. Thomas Cullen a consultant providing consulting services and management development seminars to such distinguished companies and organizations as Shangri-La Hotels, The Peninsula Hotels, Four Seasons Hotels, and InterContinental Hotels. Thomas Curtin, the publisher and senior vice president of *Bridal Guide* Magazine. Sharing her marketing expertise and her passion for agriculture was Jane Eckert, vice president of marketing for Eckert's Country Store and Farms. In addition, on the program was Craig Marinello instructing leaders on how to facilitate change in their business life. Don McEachern, CEO of North Star Destination Strategies, and Berkeley Young, president, Young Strategies both presented tips on destination marketing and research.

The conference highlights included an address to the industry by Governor Haley Barbour, the acceptance of the Community Volunteer of the Year by its recipient Dorothy Moore. In addition, the Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division presented a video that highlighted its year in review.

The annual three-day event attracts innkeepers, restaurateurs, community tourism officials, tourism attraction operators, state agency officials, tourism educators, and other representatives of the hospitality industry.

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