

Member News

Best Western Hotel Honored

Last May, the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association awarded the **BEST WESTERN Carriage House Inn** in Watertown, N.Y., with a Stars of the Industry Award for its community service efforts. The award, presented at the 2011 Stars of the Industry Gala & Banquet, recognized the many community service activities the hotel does throughout the year, including: American Cancer Society Relay for Life, free Day Out with Santa community Christmas party, free Thanksgiving dinner for military service people, sponsoring several Rotary fundraisers, and participating in walks for both breast cancer and multiple sclerosis. “We choose charities that are near and dear to the hearts of our employees, focusing on things that have had an effect on their lives,” says **Jeri McInnis**, general manager of the Carriage House Inn. “These events bring us together as a team and help people who need it most. I couldn’t be prouder of my staff and this award.”



Left to right: John Campbell, chairman of the American Hotel & Lodging Association and general manager of the La Jolla Beach & Tennis Club in La Jolla, Calif.; Jeri McInnis, general manager, BEST WESTERN Carriage House Inn; and Michael C. Hoffman, chairman of the board, New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association.



*Vermont’s Lieutenant Governor Phil Scott at work in one of the guestrooms at the **BEST WESTERN Windjammer Inn & Conference Center** in South Burlington, Vt.*

Vermont Lt. Governor Joins Hotel Staff for a Day

Lieutenant Governor Phil Scott of Vermont has a nifty idea. His “Vermont Everyday Jobs” Initiative is designed to promote Vermont businesses and highlight the hard work that Vermonters do every day in all areas of the state’s economy. Scott plans to take time, as his schedule permits, to work in different facilities, offices, factories and farms around the state. By finding out firsthand, and in a hands-on manner, what it takes to make Vermont businesses work, the lieutenant governor hopes to gain a better understanding of what state government can do to help those businesses work better.

Among the local businesses he has visited is the **BEST WESTERN Windjammer Inn & Conference Center** in South Burlington, Vt. His day included joining the Windjammer staff for their 9:30 a.m. daily briefing, followed by a stint with the maintenance, housekeeping and food service departments – giving him a real taste of the hard work that goes on “behind the scenes” in Vermont’s hospitality industry. Scott’s visit to the hotel was the subject of a news story broadcast on the New England Cable News (NECN) network.

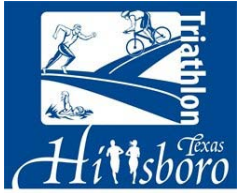
Atlanta Best Western Open for Business

The **BEST WESTERN PLUS Inn at the Peachtrees** had its grand opening this summer. The 109-room property is AAA-3 Diamond rated, pet friendly, and boasts the “ThinkTank” – nearly 1,000 feet of meeting space with the latest in meeting room technology. Shown at the grand opening are hotel owner **Chetan Patel** and **Tom Osborn**, regional director, North American Development.



Lone Star State Best Western Sponsors Triathlon

Hillsboro, Texas held its first ever triathlon for its local area last May, and the **BEST WESTERN Hillsboro Inn** hosted the contestants – of which there were nearly 90 in all. The property booked 72 room nights as the organizer and prime sponsor of the triathlon. The event included a 500-meter swim, 16.2-mile bike ride and 3.2-mile run.



“I’m a triathlete, and I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to host an event to bring heads in beds on a slow weekend,” says **Paul Ankuda**, chief engineer at the property. Paul and his wife, **Bhavini**

Ankuda, general manager at the hotel, organized the event, which was sanctioned by the United States Triathlon Association (USTA). It took place at nearby Lake Aquilla and attracted contestants from as close as the next city over to as far away as California, Arizona and Ohio. In conjunction with the race, there was a drawing for items donated by sponsors and a special high-carb spaghetti dinner as part of the festivities.

“We were thrilled with how it turned out and the reactions we got,” Paul Ankuda says. “We put a lot on our shoulders promising a good turn out to the city and chamber. And we showed that even in a recession you can throw a successful event.” Event proceeds benefitted the volunteer fire departments of Hill County and the Boys and Girls Club of America, Hillsboro division. The triathlon was such a hit that another is scheduled for May 2012.



A cyclist speeds to the finish line in last May’s Hillsboro triathlon event.

Congratulations, Howard Cohen!

Howard received the “General Manager of the Year” award during the Washington (State) Lodging Association’s Annual Convention on Oct. 3, for outstanding professionalism and extraordinary leadership at his property, in the Association, the community and/or the industry. The award was among several presented during the Convention’s Stars of the Industry Program. Cohen, who is a Best Western District II Governor, also will be entered in the American Hotel & Lodging Association’s Stars Program.



Shannan Louser of the Yuma Visitors Bureau (from left) poses with fishing equipment with **Yvonne Peach** of the **BEST WESTERN Coronado Motor Hotel** and **Chris Bedinger** of the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Hotel guests can use the equipment free while visiting Yuma.

Arizona Hotel Reels 'Em In

With concerns about airport security, even travelers who are avid fishermen probably don’t make room in their bags for a rod and reel. But that doesn’t mean they can’t wet a line on the road, at least if that road leads to Yuma, Ariz., where the Arizona Game & Fish Department is luring hotel guests with the use of free fishing equipment. The new pilot “Check It Out” program dropped its hook at five Yuma hotels, including the **BEST WESTERN Coronado Motor Hotel**, Clarion Suites Yuma, Hampton Inn, Homewood Suites and Radisson Yuma. Game & Fish provided each property with four new rods and reels, rigged and ready to fish, four stocked tackle boxes, information about online license purchase and brochures with tips for new anglers that also highlight local fishing hot spots. The aim? Introduce folks to local fishing opportunities and provide a new recreational outlet for visitors, especially those on extended stays, says Chris Bedinger, Game & Fish spokesman.

Local hotels were quick to take the bait. Bedinger says all the slots in his pilot program were gobbled up the same night it was introduced at the Yuma Visitors Bureau annual meeting. And yes, if hotel guests respond just as enthusiastically, Game & Fish might consider expanding it to other hotels and other areas. “It’s an experiment, we’re casting a line and seeing if we get some nibbles,” Bedinger says. “Obviously, the more people we can get hooked on Arizona fishing, the happier we’ll be.” Long-time Yuma hotelier **Yvonne Peach** of the **BEST WESTERN Coronado Motor Hotel** said she thought a lot of her guests would take advantage of the new program. “This is a great idea and a wonderful example of how businesses can team up with a state agency to showcase what Arizona has to offer,” she says.

In Memoriam

Sam McPeake, husband of Board Member **Bonnie McPeake**, president of McPeake Hotels Inc. and a long-standing Member of the Best Western family, died May 25. He will be missed by all.

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Denver Hotel Receives '4 Green Keys' Eco-Rating

The **BEST WESTERN PLUS Denver Hotel**, in Denver, Colo., has received a 4 Green Keys eco-rating through the Green Key Eco-Rating Program. According to Green Key Global, a 4 Green Keys-rating signifies “a hotel that has shown national industry leadership and commitment to protecting the environment through wide ranging policies and practices. Mature programs that involve management, employees, guests, and the public have shown substantial and measurable results.”

Cory Morrison, CHS and general manager at the BEST WESTERN PLUS Denver Hotel, says the rating wasn't all that difficult to achieve since they already had a number of green practices in place at the property. “Although the property already had several environmental management and corporate social responsibility programs in place, we found that with some minor, cost-effective changes, we were able to achieve a 4 Green Key rating while saving money and reducing our environmental footprint in the process,” Morrison says. It didn't cost much either.

According to Morrison, the comprehensive self-evaluation and certification took approximately five hours to complete. And while the Green Key Eco-Rating Program normally costs \$600 annually, by using the discount code BWUSA, they instantly saved \$150, bringing the total cost of certification to only \$450.

Morrison adds: “I believe the return on investment for this program is two-fold: first, increased bookings by environmentally savvy travelers who search for green hotels, and second, decreased electric, gas and water bills. With this combination of savings and increased room revenue, the program pays for itself, reduces our environmental footprint and increases our net revenue.”

If you have any questions or would like to brainstorm ideas to earn a 4 Green Key Eco-Rating at your property, please contact Morrison via email at cory@bestwesterndenverhotel.com or by phone at 303-388-6161 ext. 7800.



Happy Anniversary!

Last August, staff at the **BEST WESTERN PLUS Bridgewater Hotel & Convention Centre** paused to celebrate their grand opening's first anniversary. The new construction hotel is in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.

Member Hotel Earns ENERGY STAR Certification

The **BEST WESTERN Windjammer Inn and Conference Center** in South Burlington, Vt., recently earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ENERGY STAR certification, which signifies that the building performed in the top 25 percent of similar facilities nationwide for energy efficiency and met strict energy efficiency performance levels set by the EPA.

“Earning the EPA ENERGY STAR certification displays the BEST WESTERN Windjammer Inn's commitment to lowering energy usage and their overall carbon footprint,” says Alan Hebert, planning and development manager for restaurants, lodging and ski areas at Efficiency Vermont. “The hotel has proven that it is a leader within Vermont's tourism industry by being the first hotel in Vermont to earn this designation.”



Commercial buildings that earn EPA's ENERGY STAR certification use an average of 35 percent less energy than typical buildings and also release 35 percent less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The BEST WESTERN Windjammer Inn improved its energy performance by managing energy strategically across the entire organization and by making cost-effective improvements to its building.

“The BEST WESTERN Windjammer Inn and Conference Center is pleased to accept the EPA's ENERGY STAR certification in recognition of our energy efficiency efforts” states **Karen Wisheart**, general manager. “Through this achievement, we have demonstrated our commitment to environmental stewardship while also lowering our energy costs.”

Yukon Hotel Earns Special Recognition

The **BEST WESTERN Gold Rush Inn**, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada was named “Business of the Year” by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce this summer. Congratulations!



Generous Member Gives Building to University

Kirit Patel, owner of the **BEST WESTERN Classic Inn** in Richmond, Ind., presented Indiana University East a \$500,000 building gift in September 2010. The 9,040-square-foot office building is located on Richmond's east side. Patel's gift will provide the institution the opportunity to expand its outreach to the local community.

"This is the community in which my kids were nourished and raised into being good citizens of this country, which my family is proud of," Patel says. "Thus, this building is just a token of gratitude toward education and to this city which has helped my kids and me succeed in our lives."

"IU East was founded by community leaders in eastern Indiana," says School Chancellor Nasser Paydar. "Mr. Patel has continued that legacy of visionary community leaders stepping forward in a significant way to enhance education and enhance our community. We are grateful for his incredible generosity."

Best Western Nabs Three AH&LA Awards

At a recent American Hotel and Lodging Association (AH&LA) Stars of the Industry Awards luncheon, industry professionals were honored for their exceptional accomplishments, service, and leadership in the lodging industry. Among the winners were three Best Westerns. Congratulations to the following for receiving top awards:

- **Kanta Kondur**, general manager of the **BEST WESTERN Evans Hotel** in Grovetown, Ga., received the General Manager of the Year (small property) award for taking a once struggling hotel to one that received Best Western's Director's Award for Quality Assurance three times since 2005.
- The **BEST WESTERN PLUS Executive Inn**, in Seattle, Wash., received the Community Service (small property) award because its employees have for eight years served dinner once a month to a local shelter through Operation Nightwatch.
- The **BEST WESTERN Clock Tower Inn** of Billings, Mont., received the Technology Innovation award for using iPads and mobile apps in its maintenance and housekeeping departments.



Minnesota Publication Features Best Western Owners

The editors of *Meetings: Minnesota's Hospitality Journal* had a notion to run a story in its Summer 2011 edition about forward-thinking, ahead-of-the-curve players in the state's hospitality sector. You know, the sort of folks who come up with a brilliant plan and see it through to successful completion, leaving the rest of us to wonder, "Gee, why didn't I think of that?" Among those the story profiled were **Scott Mehlhaff** and **Chris Holland-Mehlhaff**, husband-and-wife owners of the **BEST WESTERN PREMIER The Lodge on Lake Detroit** in Detroit Lakes, Minn. What really caught the magazine's attention was how strongly the 54-room hotel reflected the couple's interest in and commitment to sustainability – including organic skin care products in the spa, recycling in all guest rooms, fluorescent lighting throughout the hotel, an eco-friendly exterior rain garden, and a restore-the-shore project encompassing more than 10,000 native plants, grasses, shrubs and perennials. Why were we not surprised to learn that The Lodge was awarded a "Sustainable Tourism Award" earlier this year by the Minnesota Office of Tourism? In addition, the property conveys Scott's and Chris' love of the arts such that it features artwork and furnishings specially commissioned from local artists and artisans. The Lodge on Lake Detroit is independently owned and operated by Holland Motel, Inc., now in its third generation of providing excellence in hospitality. Scott and Chris also own and operate the 56-room **BEST WESTERN PLUS Holland House** in Detroit Lakes and the 66-room **BEST WESTERN PLUS Superior Inn & Suites** in Grand Marais, Minn.

Illinois Best Western Boasts Unique, Hand-crafted Rooms

The **BEST WESTERN Designer Inn and Suites** in Galena, Ill. has been doing some extensive room renovating of late. Sales and Marketing Director **Shannon Strobusch** says: "The unique feature of our hotel will be the fantasy suites, crafted by my father-in-law, **Gary Strobusch**. We design and build suites around themes, such as a Rainforest, Crystal Cave, Roman Palace, Arabian Nights, Heart's Delight and more. They are amazing! Gary designs the suites and custom makes all of the furniture, and his work has been featured in several Midwest newspapers and on several television news stations. He also hand molds all the countertops and sinks, paints wall murals – the list is endless. We

have completed two brand new fantasy suites, the Roman Palace and Heart's Delight. The Crystal Cave will open sometime in November and there are four more suites in the pipeline. We expect all work will be completed by the end of 2012. We are so excited to bring these to our Best Western in Galena!"

Since assuming new ownership and management in August 2010, the hotel also has undergone in-room renovating and remodeling and has added many amenities to even better serve customers. Please visit the hotel's website to see what all the buzz is about: www.bestwesterndesignerinn.com. ◀



The 'Roman Retreat' Suite (above) and the 'Heart's Delight' Suite (below) at the **BEST WESTERN Designer Inn & Suites** in Galena, Ill.

