



Live it up just down the road

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Tourism & Business Awards Honor Outstanding Supporters of Tunica

TUNICA, Mississippi (May 19, 2010) — The Tunica Convention and Visitors Bureau joined the Tunica County Chamber in presenting the 2010 Tourism and Business Awards at Harrah's Casino at the Mid-South Convention Center. The luncheon publicly honored area individuals and organizations for the vital role each has played in the establishment and promotion of the Tunica tourism and business industries.

"These honorees contribute their time, their businesses, their professional experience, and their financial resources to what we now call 'The Tunica Miracle'," said Webster Franklin, President and CEO of the CVB. "It is a wonderful thing to have everyone working together to make Tunica a resort destination."

More than 300 people, including public officials from across the state, attended the event.

"The award luncheon and awards ceremony recognizes those who have performed above and beyond the call of duty in their contribution to the success of Tunica," stated Lyn Arnold, the President and CEO for the Tunica Chamber of Commerce.

Six individuals or organizations were presented with a crystal tower trophy to commemorate the growth and benefits of gaming and tourism to Tunica.

Given annually by the Chairman of the Tunica County Tourism Commission, Penn Owen, Jr., the Chairman's award recognizes individuals for dedication to tourism. This year's winner was Rechelle Siggers, the Senior Guidance Counselor at Rosa Fort High School.

"Rechelle Siggers never stops helping people in the community," Owen said. "She gives vision, guidance, and inspiration for the future in the hospitality industry."

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Tourism & Business Awards

The Jeff Piselli Media Support Award was given to Michael Sheffield, a reporter for the Memphis Business Journal. This award, given to a person or individual who has been instrumental in presenting Tunica to the public, is given in honor of Jeff Piselli, the first Public Information Officer in Tunica County, who died in 2003.

“For seven years Michael Sheffield has been writing business news telling the world about the accomplishments of businesses in our area,” Franklin said. “We are thankful that he is a partner to promote the tourism industry in Tunica County.”

The Southern Hospitality Award is presented to an individual for exceptional service to the hundreds of tourists that the person comes in contact with on a daily basis. The Southern Hospitality award was presented to Rick Collinson, the Director of Player Development for Gold Strike Casino Resort.

“Known for his ability to win customers over and getting them to come visit Tunica again and again, Rick Collinson was nominated by customers who say they extended their trip because of his hospitality,” Franklin said. “Collinson is originally from New Jersey who has wholeheartedly adopted the South and brings his southern charm now to everyone who visits.”

The Volunteer Service Award was presented to Evada Bullock.

“This award winner is very deserving of this award because of her work spending countless volunteer hours behind the scenes serving senior citizens in Tunica in addition to her work for Tunica County,” Franklin said.

The Heritage Awards is given to an individual who has made a significant contribution toward the preservation of Tunica County’s natural, cultural, and aesthetic legacy. This year the award was given to Son and Janet Hood.

“The Hoods were given this award for their generosity in donating the Illinois Central Railroad Depot to the Tunica Convention & Visitors Bureau,” Franklin said. “This train depot will soon be moved to the Tunica Visitor Center and will be the entrance to the new Gateway to the Blues Visitor Center with an interpretive museum being built behind the railroad depot.”

Inducted into the Tourism Hall of Fame this year was Ricky Busey, the Vice President of Human Resources and Business Development for Harrah’s Entertainment Mid-South Region at Harrah’s Casino.

“Dedicated to the enhancement of Tunica Tourism, Ricky Busey continues to explore opportunities and attractions to add to the overall visitor experience in Tunica,” Franklin said. “This winner orchestrated the development and design of the Paula Deen Buffet, Fuddrucker’s, Uno Express, Quizno’s, and Dunkin’ Donuts and oversaw the rebranding of Harrah’s Casino. This summer, he will see two more of his project come to fruition in the opening of Toby Keith’s I Love This Bar and Grill and the Willows Sporting Clays and Hunting Center U.S. Open.”

For the sixth year, the Tunica County Chamber of Commerce presented business awards. The Chamber gave three awards to people and businesses who actively participate in and support community efforts along with promoting tourism in Tunica County.

The Distinguished Community Service Award went to the Carl Bridges, who maintains the flowers and landscaping daily in Downtown Tunica beautifying Main Street.

“This very dedicated employee makes sure that the plants in Downtown are watered twice most days, even on Sundays,” Arnold said. “His attention to this detail is one of the reasons the Chamber office and the Town of Tunica have such beautiful landscaping each year and Downtown is so visually pleasing.”

The Inspiring Business of the Year went to Tunica Full Service, a business that has been revitalized by the Graves family.

“The Graves bought the old, vacant Pure Oil station in Downtown Tunica and restored the building, keeping it true to its beginnings, more than 70 years ago,” Arnold said. “This is one of the few remaining original Pure Oil stations in the country still actively operating, and that is why the business is deserving of this award.”

The 2010 Dynamic Business of the Year was the Tunica Airport for their work in bringing commercial service with AirTran Airways and more tourists to Tunica.

“Since the Tunica Airport was built in 2003, they’ve constructed two runway expansions, a hangar, and a fire station, as well as hosting scheduled service and a charter industry that has grown exponentially, making it the third busiest airport in Mississippi,” Arnold said.

Located 30 minutes south of Memphis, Tunica is *The South’s Casino Capital*. Live It Up Just Down the Road at the nine world-class casinos, 6,000 luxurious hotel rooms, fine dining restaurants and buffets, headline entertainers, championship golf and tennis, award-winning museums, lavish spas, and outlet/antique shopping. Come see why everyone is saying, “Tunica...Live It Up Just Down the Road!” Call 1-888-4TUNICA to request a value-packed Winner’s Guide, or visit www.tunicatravel.com for travel information.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For a variety of photos of Tunica, please visit the Press Room of the Tunica website at www.tunicatravel.com. Selections of recent high resolution photographs are available for all Tunica attractions. If you are unable to find the photo needed for your article, please contact Claire Pittman at the number listed above, and for more details about all the great attractions and facilities in Tunica, please see the official Tunica Press Kit.

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