21st Annual
BLOOMINGTON DIAMOND SERVICE AWARDS GALA

Sunday, February 19, 2017
DoubleTree by Hilton
Bloomington-Minneapolis South
2017 Hospitality Hall of Fame

The Diamond Service Awards Committee is pleased to announce the 2017 inductions to the Hospitality Hall of Fame, which honors commitment and longevity in Bloomington’s tourism and hospitality industry.

Jackie Ploen
Human Resources Manager • Embassy Suites by Hilton Bloomington • 37 years of service

“Loyal” is the most common word others use to describe Jackie. She’s extremely loyal to her family, friends and job. Jackie is constantly involved in work-related activities and is always ready to support the hotel. Often times, Jackie is not just participating but leading the way when it comes to organizing internal events, employee meetings, community outreach efforts and much more.

Carrie Poepping
Room Cleaning Attendant • Country Inn & Suites by Carlson®, Bloomington at Mall of America • 22 years of service

Carrie’s years of service in the hospitality industry expand beyond the 22 years that she has worked at Country Inn & Suites. Carrie has been a trusted new hire trainer and continues to help her fellow coworkers with tricks of the trade. Carrie has been a mentor and has also been instrumental in showcasing how one-on-one interpersonal engagement with our guests provides positive feedback.

Michele Robidoux
Banquet Server • DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Bloomington Minneapolis South • 30+ years of service

Michele serves all of her events with perfection, connecting individually with her guests and leaving them with lasting memories. She was so kind to share a fond story about the time she was a cocktail server for Bill Murray. She even shared how she attended the Ryder Cup to get an autograph of a picture they snapped together. To her surprise, he remembered her from all those years ago.

Sai Rosser-Ichisumi
Bartender • Crowne Plaza Bloomington MSP Airport/ MOA • 30 years of service

Sai lives in Bloomington and is very knowledgeable about the area. She encourages guests to truly see Bloomington. She knows the fun and unusual locations like the Japanese Garden, nature center and trails and also knows so much about Mall of America. She always knows the best places to go and deals for whatever guests are looking for.

PREVIOUS INDUCTEES

John Dainty (2016) — Ramada Bloomington
Marlene Kurtz (2016) — Crowne Plaza Bloomington
Mary Jo Peterson (2016) — Sheraton Bloomington Hotel
Mildret “Millie” Philipp (2016) — Mall of America

Sohrab “Sammy” Sadeh (2016) — Sheraton Bloomington Hotel
Ursula Chan (2015) — Colette Bar and Bistro
Mike Grubele (2015) — Embassy Suites Bloomington
Sue Miller (2015) — Woolley’s Restaurant
Terry Jagow (2014) — DoubleTree by Hilton, Bloomington-Minneapolis South

Bonnie L. Carlson (2015) — President and CEO, Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau

THE PROCESS

Diamond Service Award nominations are submitted by management personnel from the hospitality and retail businesses in Bloomington in 15 categories. All nominees are personally interviewed by a panel of four independent judges and rated on a point system to determine final scores. The accounting firm of Abdo, Eick & Meyers verifies all tabulations and results.

Bonnie L. Carlson
President and CEO, Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau

Linda Fleming (2014) — Quality Inn & Suites Airport
Mohammed Raki (2013) — Sofitel Minneapolis
Joseph Skluzacek (2012) — Ramada Mall of America
Peggy Gaughan Werdan (2011) — Ramada Mall of America
Congratulations to the Bloomington Police Department, this year’s recipient of the Spirit of Hospitality Award. This honor is bestowed upon an individual, company or organization that has made a significant, positive impact on the travel and hospitality industries in the City of Bloomington. The Spirit of Hospitality Award recognizes the Bloomington Police Department’s commitment to public safety and its untiring dedication to building lasting relationships with the community it serves.

What sets the Bloomington Police Department apart from other similar organizations is its passion for connecting with the residents of the city it serves. Whether it is the department’s patrolling officers, crime prevention unit, volunteer unit or the officers stationed around Mall of America, these men and women go to great lengths to ensure Bloomington’s safety and quality of life.

In addition to partnering closely with the city’s hotel managers and restaurant professionals to learn about crime trends and receive tips, the Bloomington Police Department is dedicated to truly being a member of the community, getting to know people on a personal level. It is of the utmost importance to the force to make those connections with Bloomington’s more than 85,000 residents because, as Chief of Police Jeffrey Potts explains, an individual’s interaction with police is often a high-stress situation.

“We believe in policing with our community,” Potts says. “The times when people need the police the most could be the worst days of their life. We want our officers to be understanding of that.”

Examples of the department’s outstanding commitment to the city can be seen in several community engagement programs it hosts. From Coffee with a Cop, which gives people a chance to meet with officers over coffee at a local restaurant, to hosting bingo games at Bloomington’s assisted living facilities, it is abundantly clear that the department takes the oath to protect and serve a giant leap forward. The department also serves Bloomington’s multicultural citizens by hosting meetings with representatives of different ethnic communities to discuss police practices and answer any questions they may have.

The Bloomington Police Department is comprised of several departments containing about 120 sworn officers and 40 non-sworn, volunteer officers. When asked what it means to the men and women of the force to receive this year’s Spirit of Hospitality Award, Chief Potts’ response was simple:

“With all that is going on in our country regarding policing, I know that our officers are going to be very thankful to see that their work does make a difference.”

“We are incredibly honored to have designed materials for the Diamond Service Awards since its inception and looks forward to many more years of saluting Bloomington’s amazing hospitality team.”

—DOUG KILLIAN, SENIOR DIRECTOR INTERNATIONAL TOURISM, MOA

“The Diamond Service Awards have provided outstanding recognition of Bloomington’s dedicated hospitality team for two decades. It’s a one-of-a-kind program in the U.S. industry and a big reason why Bloomington hotels, restaurants and related organizations are nationally known for leading customer service. This in turn brings more sales to Bloomington businesses. Mall of America has been a proud partner of the Diamond Service Awards since its inception and looks forward to many more years of saluting Bloomington’s amazing hospitality team.”

—TIM McVEAN, DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING, AVEX

2017 Spirit of Hospitality

Bloomington Police Department

PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS

Rodney Wallace
Thunderbird Hotel & Convention Center, 1997

Mayor James H. Lindau
City of Bloomington, 1998

John Pidgeon
City of Bloomington, 1999

Gary L. Gandrud
Faegre & Benson, 2000

Marilyn Carlson Nelson
Carlson Companies, 2001

Governor Jesse Ventura
State of Minnesota, 2002

Richard Anderson
Northwest Airlines, 2003

John Edman
MN Office of Tourism, 2004

Sam Thompson
metroConnections, 2005

Bonnie L. Carlson
Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau, 2006

Sen. William H. Belanger
Minnesota Legislature, 2007

Jeffrey Hamiel
Metropolitan Airports Commissions, 2008

Jim M. Ramstad
U.S. House of Representatives, 2009

Minnesota Zoo, 2010

Mall of America, 2011

Steve Fox
Greenspring Media, 2012

Bruce Karstadt
The American Swedish Institute, 2013

David Fong Family
David Fong’s, 2014

Gene Winstead
Mayor of Bloomington, 2015

Jim Saccoman
Embassy Suites Bloomington, 2016

Spirit of Hospitality • Food Safety Awards

Bloomington Food Safety Awards Finalists

**FULL SERVICE HOTEL**

Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport Mall of America

Radisson Blu Mall of America

Crowne Plaza Bloomington MSP Airport/MOA

Park Plaza Hotel

**LARGE RESTAURANT**

American Girl Bistro

TGI Friday’s, Normandale Boulevard

Bakers Square, West 98th Street

Applebee’s, Southtown

**LIMITED SERVICE & PIZZA CARRY-OUT ESTABLISHMENT**

Pizza Hut, Portland Avenue South

Home2 Suites by Hilton Minneapolis Bloomington

Domino’s Pizza, Lyndale Avenue South

Cold Stone Creamery at Mall of America

**FAST FOOD/CAFETERIA SERVICE**

Hyland Hills Chalet

Johnny Rockets at Mall of America

**RETAIL GROCERY**

Cub Foods, Lyndale Avenue South

Cub Foods, France Avenue South

Sam’s Club, West American Boulevard

**AIRPORT/MOA**

American Boulevard Airport/MOA

Southtown Shopping Center

South Point Express

**SHOPS**

Avenue South

Cub Foods, Lyndale Avenue South

Cub Foods, France Avenue South

**SERVICE**

Cold Stone Creamery at Mall of America

Pizza Hut, Portland Avenue South

American Girl Bistro

TGI Friday’s, Normandale Boulevard

Bakers Square, West 98th Street

Applebee’s, Southtown

**SPIRIT OF HOSPITALITY**

With an ever-expanding Mall of America, as well as the addition of multiple top-tier hotels, the future has never looked so bright as it does in Bloomington today. DSA shines a light on what makes this industry an economic driver in Bloomington—its service professionals.”

—TIM McVEAN, DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING, AVEX

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Whether you dine on the run, enjoy a hearty meal at your own table, or pay a visit to one of the many restaurants in Bloomington, safe food handling and preparation are of the utmost importance. Indeed, at the very heart of fine dining lay these practices. The City of Bloomington’s Advisory Board of Health is pleased to present the Food Safety Awards to establishments in the area that have demonstrated excellence in safe food handling. Restaurants, hotels, grocers and other food providers are nominated by Bloomington health inspectors based on their 2016 inspection results. Then, Bloomington Food Collaborative industry volunteers interview and score the nominees, and the city’s Advisory Board of Health approves the award recipients. Congratulations to our finalists.

“We believe in policing with our community,” Potts says. “The times when people need the police the most could be the worst days of their life. We want our officers to be understanding of that.”

Examples of the department’s outstanding commitment to the city can be seen in several community engagement programs it hosts. From Coffee with a Cop, which gives people a chance to meet with officers over coffee at a local restaurant, to hosting bingo games at Bloomington’s assisted living facilities, it is abundantly clear that the department takes the oath to protect and serve a giant leap forward. The department also serves Bloomington’s multicultural citizens by hosting meetings with representatives of different ethnic communities to discuss police practices and answer any questions they may have.

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**BEST RETAIL PERSONNEL**
- Sosena Haile, Nickelbottom Universe®
- Jessica Koch, American Girl®
- Heather Nordby, American Girl®
- Claudia Ramirez, Brighton Collectibles
- Hanna Smith, Hard Rock Café

**BEST BARTENDER**
- Valeria Antonova, Hard Rock Café
- Jessica Balts, FireLake Grill House & Cocktail Bar
- Eden Caswell-Gapinski, Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport
- Matthew Peterson, Embassy Suites by Hilton
- Jessica Thorn, Hard Rock Café

**BEST TRANSPORTATION PERSONNEL**
- Jeff Eggert, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson®, Bloomington at Mall of America
- DuWayne Gunderson, Best Western Plus Bloomington Hotel at Mall of America
- Benito Hernandez, Homewood Suites by Hilton Minneapolis, Mall of America
- Gary Kluada, DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Bloomington-Minnesota South
- Douglas Sloan, AmericInn Hotel and Suites Bloomington West

**BEST FOOD PRODUCTION PERSONNEL**
- Gabino Delgado, Hard Rock Café
- Jason Lamm, Hilton Garden Inn Minneapolis/Bloomington
- Devery Peterson, Hilton Garden Inn Minneapolis Airport Mall of America
- Jose Rojas, Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington
- Severiano Vasquez-Reyes, Woolsey’s Steakhouse

**BEST BUS/DISHWASHER**
- Jeffrey Bakke, Hyatt Regency Bloomington-Minneapolis
- Teyi Meleneukpo, Radisson Blu Mall of America
- Abdurhmen Mhamed, JW Marriott Minneapolis
- Jose Rodriguez, Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington
- John Wright, Courtyard Bloomington by Marriott

**BEST HOSPITALITY ADMINISTRATION**
- Manuel Contreras Jr., Mall of America®
- Jordan Hartman, Radisson Blu Mall of America
- Athena Lopez, JW Marriott Minneapolis
- Ilyssa Perez, Crayola® Experience
- Megan Schmidt, Crayola® Experience

**BEST GUEST RELATIONS PERSONNEL**
- Kamily Olson, Radisson Blu Mall of America
- Amanda Ruch, Mall of America®
- Timothy Rutherford, Mall of America®
- Steven Wendt, FlyOver America

**BEST HOUSEKEEPING PERSONNEL (FULL SERVICE)**
- Ericka Galicia, Embassy Suites by Hilton Bloomington-Area West
- David Jenkins, Embassy Suites by Hilton Bloomington
- Viky Martinez, Creveco Plaza Bloomington MSP Airport/MIA
- William Pinos, Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington
- Maria Stickney, Radisson Blu Mall of America

**BEST HOUSEKEEPING PERSONNEL (LIMITED SERVICE)**
- Brad Jackson, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson®, Bloomington at Mall of America
- Ignacia Martinez, Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites Bloomington Minneapolis Airport Area West
- Carrie Poepping, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson®, Bloomington at Mall of America
- Rohanie Sook, Homewood Suites by Hilton Minneapolis Mall of America
- Margarita Vergara, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson®, Bloomington at Mall of America

**BEST ENGINEER/MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL**
- Sean Bowman, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson®, Bloomington at Mall of America
- Juan Pablo Campos, Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington
- Doug Matson, Homewood Suites by Hilton Minneapolis Mall of America
- An Nguyen, Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington
- Jorge Oscar Perez, Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites Bloomington Minneapolis Airport Area West

**BEST HOTEL GUEST SERVICES (FULL SERVICE)**
- Fiana Emma Doh, Hyatt Regency Bloomington-Minneapolis
- Hayley Grimmer, Sheraton Bloomington Hotel
- Abdil Ran, Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport Mall of America
- Joe Torres, JW Marriott Minneapolis Mall of America
- Precilla Xiong, Hyatt Regency Bloomington-Minneapolis

**BEST HOTEL GUEST SERVICES (LIMITED SERVICE)**
- Gloria Garner, AmericInn Hotel and Suites Bloomington West
- Rhoda Randle, Homewood Suites by Hilton Minneapolis Mall of America
- Samantha Schimmers, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson®, Bloomington at Mall of America
- Michael Schrufer, Home2 Suites by Hilton Minneapolis Bloomington

**BEST HOTEL RESTAURANT PERSONNEL**
- Roberta Collins, FireLake Grill House & Cocktail Bar
- Annette Cummings, Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington
- Nancy Gomez, Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington
- Carmelita Stanciel, FireLake Grill House & Cocktail Bar
- Megan Tesmer, Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport Mall of America

**BEST RESTAURANT PERSONNEL**
- Ross Abbett, Dick’s Last Resort
- Kaleb Greene, TGI Friday’s-Normandale
- Stacey Parenti, Hard Rock Café
- Jenna Smith, Hard Rock Café
- Bryce Tovsen, Dick’s Last Resort

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OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”
—JOHN F. KENNEDY

THANK YOU for helping the Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau bring this incredible program to life. Your commitment to exceptional customer service is as evident as those we honor tonight.

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GALA SPONSORS

DIAMOND SPONSORS

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