



## VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA HOLDS NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK CELEBRATION

*Inaugural Beacon Awards recognize superior service throughout all levels of industry*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – May 11, 2011 – Today, Visit Buffalo Niagara held a National Travel & Tourism Week Celebration at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. More than 200 guests were in attendance.

"Travel and tourism is one of Erie County's growth industries," said Dottie Gallagher-Cohen, president and CEO of Visit Buffalo Niagara. "It creates more than \$1.3 billion in direct spending, employs approximately 19,000 people, and provides more than \$455 in tax relief to every household in Erie County."

The celebration featured the inaugural Travel & Tourism Beacon Awards, which recognize superior service throughout the industry, from volunteer docents to hotel general managers.

The following awards were presented:

### **Lodging Employee of the Year**

Yolanda Bowman, Buffalo Marriott

### **Lodging Manager of the Year**

Jennifer Taylor, Comfort Suites-Downtown

### **Lodging General Manager of the Year**

Matthew Spencer, Comfort Suites-Downtown

### **Good Earthkeeping Award**

Waseem Mango, Adam's Mark Hotel

### **Tourism Employee of the Year**

Erin Grajek, Buffalo & Erie County Botanical Gardens

### **Tourism Executive of the Year**

Louis Grachos, Albright-Knox Art Gallery

### **Tourism Initiative of the Year**

Taste of Buffalo Presented by Tops

### **Tourism Volunteer of the Year**

Michael Osika, Darwin Martin House Complex

### **Buffalo Ambassador of the Year**

Robert Schell, Amherst Youth Hockey



The Beacon Awards are modeled after the New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association (NYSHTA)'s Stars of the Industry Awards. Special recognition was given during today's celebration to Annie Smith of Comfort Suites-Downtown, who was recently named NYSHTA's Outstanding Roomkeeper of the Year.

*Visit Buffalo Niagara sells and markets our assets and attractions to visitors outside of the Buffalo Niagara region as a convention, tourism and leisure destination for the economic benefit of the community.*

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