

PROVIDENCE • WARWICK
Convention & Visitors Bureau

For Immediate Release

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**WaterFire Among Those Honored
at Providence Warwick CVB Annual Meeting**

Tourism's Role in RI Economy, Providence's Top Travel + Leisure Rankings Also Spotlighted

Providence, RI – October 22, 2009 – WaterFire, Providence's signature event, shone brightly today at the annual meeting of the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau (PWCVB), receiving the organization's Member of the Year award.

"It's easy to swoon at the pageantry and marvel at the spectacle (of WaterFire), but what we at the PWCVB admire is the hard work behind the scenes," said PWCVB Director of Partnership Christine Walsh. "Each event takes an optimal tide, a serious financial commitment, more than 100 volunteers, and countless hours from a core team of extremely dedicated - and frequently exhausted - staff members."

J. Rudi Heater, former general manager of the Crowne Plaza at the Crossings and former Chairman of the PWCVB Board, was inducted into the organization's Hall of Fame.

"For more than a decade, Rudi was a true leader in the tourism community – a solid, steady presence known for his sage advice and boundless generosity," said PWCVB President & CEO Martha Sheridan.

In her remarks, Sheridan cited the current economic climate as an opportunity for re-evaluation.

"While the economy was certainly a challenge for every business, the PWCVB has emerged from this past year as a more focused and more strategic organization than ever before," she said.

Sheridan gave a brief overview of the PWCVB's accomplishments over the 2009 Fiscal Year, among them:

- The Bureau's full accreditation by the Destination Marketing Association International.
- The city's hosting of major conferences, including the prestigious U.S. Conference of Mayors in June and GovEnergy, the leading energy workshop for federal employees that boasted record-breaking attendance of more than 3,000.
- The destination's growth in the booking of sporting events, including the NCAA Division 1 Men's Basketball National Championships, slated for March 2010.
- The securing of more than \$2 million in ad equivalency for editorial placements in national media outlets, culminating in a successful viral marketing campaign for inclusion in *Travel + Leisure's* "America's Favorite Cities" list.

Also honored at the event were frontline hospitality employees, who received Recognition of Service Excellence (ROSE) Awards for their outstanding efforts. The winners were:

- Richard Corso – Staff member at the RI Film Festival in Providence;
- Barbara Dickinson – Sales Coordinator at the Johnson & Wales Inn in Seekonk;
- Elizabeth Gray – General Manager at the Z Bar & Grille in Providence;
- Paul Izzo – Bartender at the Capital Grille in Providence;
- Pete Fontaine – Shuttle Driver and Concierge at the Hampton Inn & Suites-Downtown in Providence;
- Onofrio Porecca – Shift Supervisor at the Rhode Island Convention Center;
- Julian Rico – Member of the housekeeping staff at the Providence Marriott Downtown; and

- Theresa Summerly – Office Clerk at MDT, Inc./MDT Bus Co. in Seekonk.

The Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau (PWCVB) is a 501 (c) (6) organization responsible for promoting Providence, Warwick and the Rhode Island Convention Center Complex as visitor destinations. The organization provides an array of services and travel planning assistance to visitors and conventions, all geared toward enriching stay in the area.

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