

# TeleGRAM

## Great American Hotel Group Quarterly Newsletter

### Q2 Quarter Babies

Diana Fowler - April 14 (GRAM)  
Brandie Tweedie - May 24 (GRAM)  
Dan Hays - May 28 (Greensboro)  
Rob Greene - June 28 (GRAM)

### Giddy Up

Jorge Sotomayor - SpringHill Suites Sarasota  
Exec Housekeeper to Front Office Manager

### Q2 Anniversaries

Candy Grimbilas - 15 years (GRAM)  
Lisa Lester - 6 years (Lake Placid)  
Teresa Maynard - 5 years (Bennington)  
Bill Webster - 2 years (Tallahassee)  
Mercy Breitenbach - 1 year (E. Hartford)  
Sean Wilson - 1 year (Wakefield)

### Congratulations!

Sales Manager Alan Wells, SpringHill Suites Sarasota has been awarded a Master's of Hospitality Management from the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee.



Former Chief Engineer Andrew Nixon, full time police officer and currently part time maintenance at TownePlace Suites Tallahassee, has been awarded Midway Police Officer of the Year. His accomplishments include running into a burning home and saving the life of a child, helping another child after he was thrown out of a vehicle and assisting an elderly confused couple.



## Historic Atlantic House Inn Prepares for Opening



As a modern day Cabot Cove, York Beach, Maine could easily have been the hometown of Sheriff Amos Tupper, Jessica Fletcher, and Dr. Seth Hazlitt. While Cabot Cove is a movie set in California, York Beach is a true seaside retreat.

"The Atlantic House Inn is a vintage New England Coastal Inn," notes GRAM President Dave Akridge. "For anyone who is old enough to remember the television series *"Murder She Wrote"*, the town of York Beach probably comes to mind. This is a historic hotel that has been renovated with all of the modern conveniences while in keeping with the integrity of this vintage seaside building."



(...continued on Page 2 - Historic AHI)

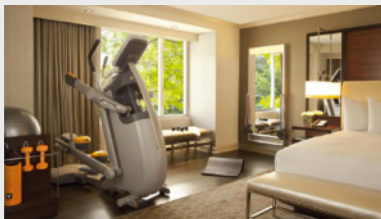
## In The News....

### HOMWOOD SUITES NASHUA, NH

Excitement is building as our newest project is underway. Located in the heart of Nashua's Gateway Hills district, the hotel is being developed by The John J Flatley Company and is the district's first extended-stay hotel, and Homewood Suites' eighteenth property in New England.

"This will be the first new construction hotel managed by GRAM to have LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) designation," said RJ Greene, Principle. Greene further noted that "GRAM will be rolling out it's own recycling program within the hotel and partnering with Waste Management who will provide 'single stream' recycling services."

LEED is a green building certification program that recognizes best-in-class building strategies and practices. Developed by the US Green Building Council, LEED is intended to help building owners and operators be environmentally responsible and use resources efficiently. LEED buildings, on average, are 25-30% more energy efficient. Other substantial benefits include increased productivity from occupants from better ventilation, temperature control, lighting control and reduced indoor air pollution.



Additionally, the hotel will debut the new Hilton decor package focused on "In Room Fitness" featuring Cardio and Yoga room types. Both room types will include specialty flooring, dedicated workout mirror and custom unit to hold workout accessories. The Cardio guest room will additionally feature a custom workout bench, SPRI Products and workout accessories and Precor's Adaptive Motion Trainer. Yoga Guest Rooms will also include blackout drapery to enhance Yoga practice experience and high quality Gaiam yoga accessories.

(Historic AHI continued from Page 1...)

York Beach is a quaint, warm and close knit coastal town. Not only is it the home of the 16 unit Atlantic House Inn, but also home to the Nubble Cape Neddick Lighthouse, Long and Short Sands Beach, and a plethora other seaside attractions. Nestled in the heart of town, the hotel, formerly "Pops Shell Shack", has been the summer vacation destination for generations of families.



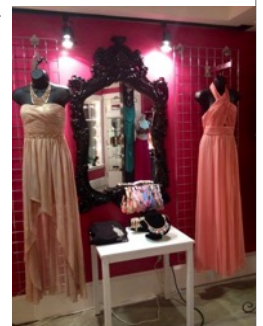
Each condo pays homage to traditional New England cottage decor, highlighted with modern touches. Spacious accommodations and the comforts of homelike amenities, including full gourmet kitchens with refrigerators, microwave ovens and stoves,

beautifully appointed bathrooms featuring rain showers and whirlpool tubs (some units), gas fireplaces in living areas and some guest rooms, 42" plasma televisions, washers and dryers, and balconies (some units) make this hotel the perfect beach get-away.

A one-of-a-kind Loft features two-story accommodations. For maximum occupancy, add a one-bedroom condo suite to the Loft unit, and/or another hotel room to accommodate up to 12 persons!



Tenants of the Atlantic House Inn include GiGi's, one of the area's favorite Italian restaurants, My Wine-y Sister, a gourmet wine and cheese shop, Rossi's Italian Bakery, and POSH, an upscale boutique.





## Selling the Sizzle ....

Linda Komornik, Corporate Director  
of Sales & Marketing

Capitalizing on Business Travel is the name of the game! Trying to convince groups to pay a little more, stay a little longer, and come more often is an art... and when mastered can increase not only revenue, but incremental revenue as well.

What might also be a great opportunity to fill gap weekends, shoulder nights and low demand periods is the attractiveness of "bringing a spouse or family" and taking advantage of pre- or post-meeting activities. Coupling business with pleasure might be an unexpected get-away opportunity with lower personal costs.

Are you in a destination that offers your guests a reason to extend their stay? Maybe you are near the beach, or skiing, or golf, or an amusement park.... maybe you are near outlet shopping, a spa, or winery.... maybe you are near a museum, sports venue, or historic site. If you are - why not offer great rates and reasons for meeting attendees to "stay over" a few days.

Road warriors are notorious for having bank loads of accumulated miles and points. Some even have companion tickets saved in their travel banks. Companies planning meetings might not think to attract their attendees to the local community. When submitting a proposal to groups, try suggesting activities and then adding attractive rates for those who might want to extend their trip.

Not only will you be driving incremental revenue to your hotels, but you will be showing your uniqueness to planners. Thinking outside the box and offering something different than the sales person from the hotel next door will make you stand out in the crowd!

Happy Selling!

## Spring Has Sprung (Finally)

Given the fact that we are 'oh so done with winter', here's your chance to test your knowledge of the spring season! There are a total of 12 multiple-choice trivia questions. Answers to the quiz can be found on page 5 of this newsletter. Enjoy!

- Which imagery is most associated with the spring season?  
a. Blazing sun                      b. Snow                      c. Foliage  
d. Blossoms                      e. None of the above
- The first day of spring is technically called \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Spring Solstice                      b. Spring Equinox                      c. Either A or B
- Spring months vary according to climate and geographic location. In North America, spring season starts in which calendar month?  
a. January                      b. March                      c. May  
d. July                      e. September
- In many cultures, spring symbolizes \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Rebirth                      b. Death                      c. Love  
d. All of the above
- Spring is the season of flowers. The Japanese celebrate the arrival of spring by hosting mass viewings of which flower?  
a. Peach Blossoms                      b. Tulips                      c. Sunflowers  
d. Carnations                      e. Cherry Blossoms
- According to folk legends, certain groundhogs can predict whether or not spring will arrive early in that year. How do they make their predictions?  
a. Look for shadows                      b. Thickness of snow                      c. Find a mate
- In the US, schools allow their students to take a short break or vacation for spring. What is the typical length of Spring Break?  
a. 3 days                      b. One week                      c. Two weeks  
d. 15 days                      e. One Month
- The start of spring coincides with the postseason of which US organized sport?  
a. American football                      b. Baseball                      c. Basketball  
d. College football                      e. College basketball
- The term "equinox" is defined as \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Sun furthest from equator                      b. When day and night are equal in length                      c. When Earth's two poles meet
- In the Persian calendar, the first day of spring (or New Year's Day) is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Sizdah Bedar                      b. Nowruz                      c. Ashura  
d. Khordad                      e. None of these
- Which playful bird is often seen as symbolizing the arrival of spring?  
a. Cuckoo                      b. Jaybird                      c. Robin  
d. Sparrow
- True or False. On the seasonal calendar, spring immediately precedes autumn?  
True                      False

## **Human Resources....** *Suzanne Baele, Corporate Director of Human Resources*

Two embarrassing new wage-and-hour settlements have been plastered across the Internet as of late. These companies thought they'd never get caught gaming the system, but guess what - they did get caught!

In the first case, a Philadelphia sports bar with dozens of locations has agreed to pay an astounding \$8 million to settle a handful of ugly wage-and-hour lawsuits. Chickie's & Pete's has entered into a consent decree with the Department of Labor after an investigation found that the company required waiters and waitresses to contribute to a tip pool - of which the company kept 50%. Employees who failed to pay the money in cash were threatened with disciplinary action. In addition to the tip pool fiasco, the company also didn't pay the tipped worker minimum wage of \$2.13 per hour; didn't pay overtime, didn't pay for required training and meetings, and charged employees for uniforms. The company will divide up \$6.8 million in compensation to 1,159 affected employees. The company will also pay a \$50K civil penalty, be subjected to 18 months of external monitoring and a further 18 months of internal monitoring and train employees about their rights. In addition, the company's owner has to write an article for a restaurant trade publication detailing companies' requirements under the Fair Labor Act. Finally, Chickie's & Pete's reached an agreement to pay \$1.68 million to 90 current and former workers who had filed federal lawsuits regarding many of the same complaints.

In the second case, Extended Stay Hotels has agreed to pay \$75,800 to settle a recent pay bias lawsuit. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the company paid Latoya Weaver less than male guest services reps, including some newly hired ones, at the hotel's Lexington Park, MD location. The agency also charged that the firm unlawfully paid other female employees lower wages than those paid to male employees for performing the same work. Weaver and three other women went to the EEOC, which filed suit on their behalf. The company opted to settle. In addition to the \$75,800 monetary relief, the company agreed to stop engaging in wage discrimination based on sex, provide annual training on federal anti-discrimination laws, report to the EEOC about its handling of any wage discrimination claims, and post a notice on this settlement.

It is important to understand the law. Should you have questions regarding and wage-and-hour or EEOC issues, please contact Human Resources immediately.

## **By The Numbers ....** *Gabrielle Smith, Corporate Controller*

### **DATA BREACH - CYBERCRIME - SKIMMERS - POS INTRUSIONS**

#### **Did these words grab your attention?**

With all the items in the news about data breaches, we do want you to take this opportunity to change all passwords. Changing your password every 30 days (or as your Franchise requires) is considered a best practice.

Passwords should be complex. Each user should have their own ID and Password (no sharing). Passwords should contain UPPER and lower case letters, numbers and special characters, and be at least 7 characters long. The password could be a phrase, or the first letters of a longer phrase. They should be something memorable, but not personal. Passwords should be something other than "Password" or "Admin" and should not contain your name, the user name, or the company name. Passwords should not be listed on post-it notes attached to the computer or hidden under the keyboard.

A password can meet most of the criteria of a strong password but still be rather weak. For example, Hello2U! is a relatively weak password even though it meets most of the criteria for a strong password and also meets the complexity requirements of password policy. H!elZl2o is a strong password because the dictionary word is interspersed with symbols, numbers and other letters.

Do take just a few moments and update your passwords today.

### Hot Buttons

No, I'm not talking about those metal buttons on your jeans that burn your fingertips when coming directly out of the dryer. These "Hot Buttons" have to do with understanding what your property's Owner/Asset Manager/Corporate Manager (OACM) and your guests want and need from you.

Relationships with these individuals progress over time. During that "getting to know you" time period, it is imperative that you tune into their "Hot Buttons". This could easily happen during a property visit, during a monthly phone call, or through correspondence. For example, when the OACM pointed out an area of the hotel that looked dirty or sloppy while they were touring the property - that is a Hot Button. Naturally, it is imperative that the area noted will be clean and organized before their next visit. If an OACM asks the same question or requests the same data on your monthly calls, that it is a "Hot Button" and you must anticipate this request and have the information in hand on future calls. Be proactive, not reactive.

How many times has this scenario played out:

OACM: Good morning GM, how is your day going? What does business look like for the rest of the month?

GM: We have a boiler issue. We've had a few complaints about no hot water to rooms. (note that the GM has avoided the original question entirely.)

OACM: What is wrong with the boiler? Have you had anyone in to check it out?

GM: I am not sure what the problem is with the boiler. I came in this morning and the GSR told me that guest's have been complaining all morning. Maintenance went up and looked at it but I haven't had an update yet.

OACM: So, it's now 10:30 a.m. and you aren't sure what is wrong, and you've not had an update from maintenance. There's not much time left to get someone out today, and you are telling me that you have no idea if you are going to have hot water tonight and tomorrow morning. What's the plan?



While you might say that this an extreme example, I can tell you it happens. What should the questions/comments that the OACM asked in the above hypothetical conversation, tell you about what their expectations? It tells me that their "Hot Button" is communicating all the information before sounding the alarm. It tells me that you have not communicated the importance and seriousness of the issue to your staff. It tells me that you have not followed up with Maintenance to gather as much information as possible.

Think like your OACM... what would you want to know before you ask them to spend hard earned money on a repair or replacement?

Be upfront. Do not be afraid to "not" know an answer. But know the facts and speak with confidence. Communicate succinctly and with authority, and most of all - in a timely manner.



Spring Has Sprung Trivia Questions Answers:  
1. d 2. b 3. b 4. a 5. e 6. a 7. b 8. e 9. b 10. b 11. d 12. False





## Hotel Stories

### HAMPTON INN BENNINGTON VT

Jeremy Rice, one of the hotel's most valuable Guest Services Representatives, has just received notification of his acceptance into the Hotel Management Program at George Brown College's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management in Toronto, Ontario, Canada for the fall term, 2014.



Jeremy, who is consistently mentioned in guest satisfaction surveys for his exemplary customer service, will be greatly missed by guests and staff alike, but we all wish him the very best in this exciting new opportunity!

### SPRINGHILL SUITES SARASOTA, FL

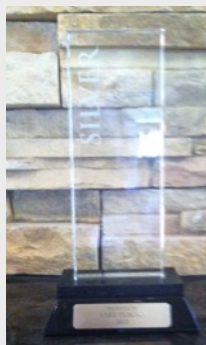
Recently, the Governor of Florida was a special guest at the hotel. Governor Rick Scott took time to pose for pictures and interact with staff.



Governor Scott and GM Al Alsina

### COURTYARD LAKE PLACID, NY

The hotel received the Silver Circle Award for achieving performance results in the top 20% of the brand in overall GSS - Overall Satisfaction category. Congratulations to Lisa Lester and her team of hospitality professionals.



## Getting To Know You!

A team is comprised of many different individuals with unique talents and personalities. Did you know.....

... that **Linda Komornik** is an avid ballroom and latin dancer? Most nights Linda can be found at the studio, taking group or private lessons in a variety of genres. Her latest passion is learning Argentine Tango. To view her dancing Viennese Waltz, copy and paste the link in your browser: <https://www.youtube.com>



... that **Tom Cherundolo**, GM at SpringHill Suites in Quakertown, PA enjoys camping, cooking and watching the Yankees? He married his high school sweetheart (a Red Sox fan) and has two children ages 7 and 17. Something most people don't

know about Tom, is that he has bungee jumped at least 20 times during his younger days and is now scared of heights!

## Dress For Success

Now is a good time for a Spring review of your dress and grooming policies. When temperatures increase, these policies oftentimes are tested. As with any policy, there are risks of which to be aware. For example, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination by employers on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion or sex.

Common discrimination traps include:

- ♦ Allowing men to wear t-shirts, but to discipline women for doing the same
- ♦ If headwear or hats are prohibited by your policy, be prepared to grant a reasonable accommodation to an employee whose religion requires certain headwear such as a hijab for an Islamic woman or a turban for a Sikh.

Remember to always base policies on business-related reasons and explain the reasons to all employees; require a clean, well-groomed appearance at all times, even on casual dress day; apply the dress and grooming code to all employees uniformly; make a reasonable accommodation if a situation requires an exception (such as for religious beliefs or disabilities); and consistently discipline violators and explain why their attire or grooming is non-compliant and how to comply.