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Event Planner of the Year

Kindsay Childers, Catering Sales Manager - Hilton Garden Inn Indianapolis Downtown

Kindsay has consistently gone above and beyond her job duties, providing an unparalleled level of service that has made a significant impact on our organization and our clients. With a keen eye for detail and a passion for creating memorable experiences, Kindsay has excelled in planning a diverse range of events—from corporate meetings to weddings and everything in between. Her ability to understand the unique vision of each client and bring it to life is truly remarkable. Kindsay approaches every event with creativity and enthusiasm, ensuring that no detail is overlooked. Her meticulous planning and execution have resulted in numerous successful events that not only meet but exceed client expectations. Kindsay's sales acumen further enhances her contributions. She has an innate ability to connect with potential clients, effectively communicating the value of our services and offerings. Her proactive approach in identifying new opportunities and building lasting relationships has significantly increased our event bookings and revenue. Kindsay's exceptional negotiation skills and understanding of market trends enable her to craft tailored proposals that resonate with clients and lead to successful partnerships. Beyond her professional skills, Kindsay is known for her warm and approachable demeanor. She makes every client feel valued and heard, fostering trust and loyalty. Her commitment to outstanding service is evident in her willingness to go the extra mile. Kindsay also plays a vital role in mentoring new team members, sharing her knowledge and passion for event planning and sales. Her dedication to fostering a collaborative team environment inspires those around her and contributes to our overall success. In summary, Kindsay Childers is an outstanding event



planner and sales professional whose dedication to her craft and commitment to exceptional service set her apart in the hospitality industry.

Christina Dorton, Dual Director of Sales - Home2Suites

Christina is a dual director of sales for the Home2Suites and the Hampton Inn Indianapolis Airport. Christina is always working on leads and trying to get corporate rates for our hotels. She is a part of the Plainfield Chamber and was just awarded the Member of the Month for August. She has been nominated in the past for the Stars of the Industry. Christina is always willing to help around the hotel when needed. She is currently training our MIT in the sales department which is a tall task on top of dealing with two properties.

Celeste Garner, Sales Coordinator - Hilton Garden Inn Indianapolis Airport

I am pleased to nominate Celeste for the Sales Coordinator position, as her exemplary performance and positive attitude make her an outstanding candidate for this role. Celeste has consistently demonstrated an exceptional ability to manage and coordinate sales activities with remarkable efficiency and professionalism. During the recent absence of the Director of Sales, she stepped up admirably, seamlessly taking over the responsibility of detailing and organizing all events. Her proactive approach ensured that all events were handled smoothly, with no disruptions or issues. Celeste has excelled in managing inquiry calls for events and group bookings at the hotel. Her dedication to providing prompt and thorough responses has significantly contributed to our high level of customer satisfaction. She skillfully handles all aspects of these inquiries, ensuring that potential clients receive the best possible service from the outset. In addition to her front-line responsibilities, Celeste has been on top of billing and communication with various hotel departments. Her attention to detail in these areas has been crucial in maintaining smooth operations and preventing any potential billing discrepancies. Her effective communication skills ensure that all departments are aligned and informed, which is vital for the successful execution of events and group stays. Celeste's initiative and forward-thinking approach are particularly noteworthy. She consistently anticipates upcoming events and group bookings, ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks. Her proactive planning and organizational skills have been instrumental in avoiding potential issues and ensuring that all events are executed flawlessly. Celeste's positive attitude, combined with her ability to handle complex tasks with ease and efficiency, makes her an invaluable asset to our team. Her dedication and commitment to excellence are evident in every aspect of her work, and I am confident that she will continue to excel in the Sales Coordinator position. Thank you for considering Celeste for this role. Her contributions have already made a significant impact, and I am certain she will bring the same level of excellence and dedication to this position.

Amanda Jones, Senior Sales Manager - Hilton Indianapolis Hotel and Suites

I would like to take a moment to recognize the exceptional efforts and performance of Amanda Jones. Her achievements have truly made an impact on our team and company as a whole. Hard work, determination and passion were evident to each group that stayed at



the Hilton. Specifically, your success in increasing the NCAA business by 100% Year over year and achieving over 105% of your goal each quarter. Amanda consistently demonstrates professionalism, dedication and creativity, which are key to the growth and success of the hotel. We are proud to have someone like Amanda represent the Hilton

Anna Liebermann, Dual Event Manager - JW Marriott Indianapolis

Anna is known for her ability to positively impact each client and group that she works with. Anna works with groups and clients who are celebrating one of the biggest days of their lives, wedding groups. With all the stress and last-minute changes that go into planning a wedding and reception, Anna ensures she responds in a timely fashion and pays attention to every detail – making sure no stone goes unturned. Her attention to detail and caring demeanor offers comfort to the guests as she handles all requests with ease. Anna is known for her service. A previous group that enjoyed their wedding at the JW Marriott stated, “I reached out to Anna regularly with questions and requests. Her response time was fantastic and I’m so grateful for our partnership. My husband (who’s been a Marriott reward member for years) was very particular in wanting to use a Marriott property when booking our block and Marriott was truly one of the best vendors, I worked with during the entire wedding planning process.” Anna’s impact is echoed by guest comments in the Event Satisfaction Scores she receives, she has received 22 surveys this year, all at 100%. The clients that Anna work with state that she is a true gem in the industry to work with, all her clients echo how responsive she is in her communications. Anna is known to go above and beyond with every event she manages, from passing out parking vouchers to having room keys available. She expertly plans with additional departments to ensure all aspects of the stay run smoothly. Anna is also known to jump in behind the scenes and assist with helping the team flip ballrooms, clear dishware or even assisting where she can behind the scenes during a plate up. Anna’s attention to detail and willingness to jump in and help wherever she is needed is what sets her apart as an Event Manager.

Terrie Mitchell, Catering Sales Manager - Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre

Terrie has consistently demonstrated exceptional organizational skills, creativity, and dedication in planning and executing numerous successful events over the past year. She has been with the Sheraton for 7 years! One of Terrie’s most notable achievements is her unwavering service and work with American Legion. Terrie’s meticulous attention to detail ensured that every aspect of their events, from the hospitality suites to the large education sessions, are flawlessly executed. Additionally, Terrie’s innovative approach to virtual events during the pandemic allowed our organization to continue engaging with our community safely and effectively. Terrie’s ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously, while maintaining a high standard of excellence, is truly commendable. Her positive attitude and collaborative spirit make her an invaluable member of our team.

Rebecca ”Becky” Moore, Event Planning Manager - The Westin Indianapolis



It's not unusual to hear Rebecca's clients refer to her as the Best in the business. Among the 20 Customer Satisfaction Surveys she has received just this year she has been referred to as "outstanding- the epitome of what people in the hospitality industry should be", "she felt like an extension of our own team", "one of the best Event Managers in the country", "a ROCK STAR!", and "my favorite planner ever". Her level of expertise, knowledge and dedication to our convention clients is unequalled in the many years I have been director. She continually receives accolades from customers, vendors, and co-workers. Rebecca is not only a Master of organization she also understands the delicate balance of delivering a successful program from both sides of the customer & ownership's experience. Beyond Becky's unparalleled organizational skills, attention to the smallest of details and unwavering dedication to her team and hotel-what truly makes her special is her Heart. Becky is a walking example of Paying It Forward. She continually looks for ways to make other people's worlds a better place with simple (often times anonymous) acts of kindness. Whether it's an incoming convention client, repeat guest or a stranger at the drive thru she has an incredible talent & knack of finding a way to connect on a personal level. Rebecca is our department's only Certified Meeting Planner (CMP), has served on the Board of Directors for the national ESPA organization (formerly ACOM) and is often Visit Indy's Convention Services Team's go-to for best practices. She is a proven leader amongst our Team and never shies away from taking on a project or a challenge. Becky serves as a primary trainer of our new team members as well. Following her father and uncles experience with the Honor Flight in 2022, Becky has become an active volunteer for their fundraising efforts and on site logistics during those recognition weekends. She is also an amazing parent volunteer for her daughter's activities ranging from Girl Scouts, to Orchestra & parent/teacher fundraising initiatives.

Elise Schwager, Dual Event Manager - Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

Elise's dedication to professionalism and guest interactions can be summarized with the 31 surveys that have all been 100% in Event Satisfaction. Elise is known for her "go above and beyond" methods when working with clients, colleagues and even when recruiting potential applicants for the complex. Elise leaves a lasting impact on each client that she expertly plans and executes events with. Elise is known both by clients and her colleagues for her ability to manage through client communications. Elise delivers request both timely and beyond what is expected of her or the hotel. Elise's clients praise her responsiveness to communications and her flexibility with last minute changes. Elise can expertly communicate to understand requests and deliver delightful results. Elise manages all the sport teams that visit the Marriott IndyPlace Complex. She is known for her ability to manage through the teams' requests and create lasting impressions for players and coaches alike. Most recently, the Marquette's men Basketball team stated that Elise was the best Event Manager the team has worked with in the 2024 season. Elise is truly a master of her craft. Due to Elise's outstanding performance, we have recently relied on her to share her dept of knowledge. Elise was able to highlight the process from start to finish and share previous incidents to prepare the Event Manager to take on future groups. It is Elise's experience and



ability to apply what is learned that makes her a tremendous asset to the Marriott IndyPlace Team. Elise’s passion for hospitality does not stop at her job duties. Elise routinely joins the Human Resources department in college job fairs, hotel tours and recruiting efforts. Elise’s bubbly personality and expert communication skills allows her to connect with potential applicants. Her experience allows her to speak to what working in hospitality truly means. Elise’s impact on Event Satisfaction Scores is a direct result of her professionalism in guest interactions. Elise holds herself accountable for any client request and will do “whatever it takes” to deliver.

Hospitality Supporting Role of the Year

Matthew Best, Area IT Supervisor - Marriott IndyPlace

When it comes to supporting roles, IT is hands down the BIGGEST support in ensuring our operation runs as it should be, from the correct names showing on the guest room TVs, email servers all the way to credit card readers. IT plays a key role in the day-to-day operations at Marriott IndyPlace, and Matthew Best is a vital member in delivering flawless service to his internal guests (members of our team). Matthew models the perfect employee, he is always on time rarely calls in, and always delivers on his projects by or prior to deadlines. But that is not what makes Matthew a Star of the Industry, what truly sets Matthew apart is the care he has both for the Marriott IndyPlace Complex and mentoring his colleagues on “how to fixes” or ways to improve security. Matthew is passionate about what he does and goes out of his way to mentor, coach, train and share his growing knowledge of the IT world. Matthew is set apart by his willingness to assist others. Team members have a sigh of relief when Matthew comes to answer an IT call. He is known to come to the rescue quickly but also quietly because he does not want to negatively impact the operation. He asks, “Is now a good time?”. Once he resolves any IT issues, he always takes the time to explain the why behind what went wrong. He then offers expert advice on how to prevent the issue or fix it ourselves next time. Matthew is known for his exceptional customer service but also his hands on knowledge. Matthew knows the Marriott IndyPlace complex’s IT operation like the back of his hand. He knows all systems and processes inside and out, forward, and backwards. This makes him a go-to team member for all things IT. Matthew’s dedication to the IT field has led working towards obtaining his N+ certification. On top of that, Matthew is always searching for new initiatives to learn and grow from, and possible implement in the Complex. Matthew is the best IT support anyone could ask for.

Brynn Gessner, Director of Service & Hospitality - Huse Culinary

Brynn Gessner, Director of Service and Hospitality at Huse Culinary, sets the gold standard for excellence in a supporting role. With over 20 years of experience in the restaurant



industry, including more than a decade with our company, Brynn's impact is felt in every aspect of our operation. As the driving force behind our VIP program, Brynn exemplifies her commitment to personalized service. A notable example of her dedication was when she personally delivered a welcome kit to a new VIP member after logistical challenges threatened the experience. By taking the initiative, she turned a potential setback into a memorable moment for the guest, reinforcing our company's values of going above and beyond for our patrons. Brynn is also the essential link between our culinary and service teams, ensuring seamless communication when new menu items are introduced. By sharing fun facts and providing context for each addition, she empowers staff to serve with confidence, directly enhancing the overall guest experience. Her attention to detail shines through the weekly Dining Room Beautification project, where each location tackles a Front of House cleaning initiative and showcases the transformation. This initiative reflects Brynn's commitment to maintaining high standards across all locations. Beyond her operational excellence, Brynn has played a key role in the implementation of new platforms to our organization, showcasing her exceptional organizational skills and ability to manage high-impact projects while still handling her day-to-day responsibilities. What truly sets Brynn apart is her passion for making people happy, a quality that inspires both our team and guests. From encouraging young mothers to her infectious positivity with staff, Brynn's influence extends far beyond her title. Her dedication, creativity, and leadership make her a deserving candidate for the "Supporting Role of the Year" award.

David Rosales, Banquet Set-Up Houseman - Bottleworks Hotel

For Hospitality supporting role of the year, I would like to nominate David Rosales. David is our main Banquet set-up houseman here at Bottleworks, but David does so much more than what he is asked to in his role. His role is to set up and tear down tables for our events and David is an expert to say the least. David pays attention to all the small details as he takes pride in what he does and wants our rooms to look perfect for our guests. This role is very important as we couldn't do what we do without someone as detailed as David taking pride in how every room looks. David reads the BEOs thoroughly and makes sure no detail is missed when he sets the rooms. If there is a mistake or a question, David reaches out immediately to get it corrected. Guests will sometimes see David setting rooms and will ask him for things. He is quick to drop what he is doing, say "my pleasure", and fulfill any guest requests whether it is his job or not. During large Weddings when his set-up duties are done, David happily takes on the role of bar back to help the bars move locations and to make sure they have everything they need. This was something David took the initiative on his own to do. He noticed that after the big flip from the ceremony to the dinner set, that there often wasn't much for him to do in his role, but that the bartenders often needed help at that time. He took it upon himself to always help them and make sure they have what they need to be successful during busy events and he is very much appreciated by all staff. You won't catch David sitting still and he is always finding things to do. David knows how important his role is to our operation and that shows every shift, every day. We are so appreciative of David and happy to have him on our team.



Eric Wade, Regional Director of Operations - General Hotels Corporation

My first encounter with Eric Wade was in 2012, I was a new GM and Eric was a part of the team that I inherited, and his position was as a bellman and front desk clerk. As I started to meet the team members and learn what their goals were, it quickly became clear to me that Eric embraced a love for hospitality and there was not a better example of a hard worker dedicated to the hotel, the team members and the success of the organization. He let me know he wanted to learn everything, and he wanted to grow and develop into the best operator he could be! He excelled in all areas. We moved him around to each department, from front desk, to banquet captain for food and beverage, to sales coordinator to learn about the sales and revenue management functions, to manage the rooms division at one of our busy airport locations, then to open one of our new build hotels at Hyatt Place in a downtown market as opening GM. We have watched him grow from bellman to opening GM, and finally as Regional Director of Operations with his own portfolio of 12 hotels across brands, including Hilton, Marriott, Hyatt, and two full-service Crowne Plaza hotels. We have not only seen him grow as a skilled and driven hotelier, but we have been a part of him meeting and marrying the love of his life Brittany and shared in the joy of bringing his son Bennett into the family fold. The support and knowledge he shares with the GMs and departments of our company knows zero limitations. The proof of this respect is in the two nominations from his GMs for the Hospitality Supporting Role of the year! Dependable and reliable, Eric is there for all of us. There is nothing that he will not do for any area of our organization to lend support and to learn something new! We are so proud of who he has grown to be and to have him as part of our GHC family!

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Eric moved up from a GM to Regional about a month before I came on. And that is his story, the one about a hardworking, trustworthy, dedicated worker, dad, husband, son, boss, mentor and the list goes on. From day one with GHC, I knew and felt completely comfortable knowing I could call Eric with anything. He truly does not stop. No off button found. Whether he is working out of town, on vacation (which we all yell at him about), fixing up one of his rentals, at Disney, out to dinner, etc... this man will answer. And for that I am so grateful. Between real work questions, or me just calling to vent for a minute, he is listening, offering ideas, asking me all the questions, agreeing or disagreeing with me... he answers. And the thing is, he doesn't show up for just me. He shows up for all of his properties, he shows up for sales, he shows up for accounting, he shows up for Stacie, he shows up for any person in any place who needs assistance. And if for some reason, he does not know the answer - which is very rare - he will find the answer pretty darn quick and communicate it. I don't think there are many employees that are as dedicated to their job as Eric Wade. He will 100% not be excited that I did this. However, I think that the years of hard work and the endless hours of travel and constant being on the phone and missing out on certain things with his son and wife, he truly deserves some kind of standing ovation. In my 10 years in the hospitality industry, I have always taken away what not to do as a manager, but now that I work for Eric



and GHC I'm finally experiencing fantastic leaders and seeing what good managers actually do.

Cindy Wood, Sales Coordinator - Holiday Inn Indianapolis Airport

At the start of April, our DOS resigned his position. Cindy immediately offered to assist in sales in any way possible. We were able to transition her to full time as our Sales Coordinator. Working closely with our Genny Pickle, VP of Sales & Marketing, Cindy assisted us in reviewing the status of pending group inquires, meeting space contracts and other sales issues. She helped us organize the files in the sales office. Working with Genny, she outlined her responsibilities and tasks as the Sales Coordinator. Also, during this quarter, Cindy started, on her own initiative, to complete training on the Salesforce Delphi program as well as Opera procedures for managing the Accounts Receivable (A/R) and Posting Masters (PM) accounts. As part of her efforts to help organize the sales office, she contacted Opera support and was able to set up an additional computer workstation. The task had been pending for three months. Cindy offered to review the status of our A/R and pending PM accounts for me. Working methodically, Cindy was able to collect payments and close out 20+ PM accounts that had remained unresolved as far back as the fall of 2023. She played an important role in helping the GM collect outstanding invoices with our A/R accounts. Between the A/R and PM reviews, Cindy was able to help the hotel resolve outstanding invoices exceeding \$40k. Cindy continues to regularly assist at the Front Desk when needed. On a daily basis, she checks with the front desk to assist with phone calls, guest inquiries, and other matters. Our Banquet Event Orders (BEO) are managed by Cindy, who has developed an organized, efficient system. She conducts the weekly BEO review meeting with Department Heads. It is not unusual for her to greet organizers of groups and organizations using our banquet facilities. The drive, professionalism, and determination of Cindy helped us survive the loss of a DOS and address multiple sales issues immediately afterward. She was instrumental in helping a new general manager collect outstanding invoices. Her dogged determination in collect money owed the hotel remains very impressive.

Lodging Front of House Award

Stacy Beaty, Breakfast Attendant - Fairfield Inn & Suites, Franklin

Stacy was on our opening team of the hotel and has been with us for 4 years. She comes to work daily with a positive attitude and a warm smile. Stacy is a dedicated, punctual employee that everyone can depend on. Stacy is passionate about maintaining the General Hotels Corporation core values of commitment, caring, integrity, growing, excellence, and respect, and she demonstrates them on a daily basis. Stacy exceeds all expectations when



it comes to her quality of work, as well as the positive impact she has on everyone she encounters.

Christopher DeLise, Front Desk Supervisor - Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

Christopher DeLise has been with our complex for 2.5 years. He started with us as a Guest Service Representative and quickly climbed the career ladder to a Front Desk Supervisor due to his outstanding performance. Rather it be his guest interactions, defusing difficult situations, offering up-sells or a simple check-in, Chris leads by example and trains all new team members along with the International Interns. Chris's attention to detail is one of his highly notable qualities. His attention to detail allows his leaders to trust him with pre-keys for our VIP groups such as NFL teams, input rooming lists for events such as Taylor Swift and supervisor all reservations partnered with delta airlines. His detailed approach sets team members up for success and allows them to focus on the guests in front of them. Chris is the backbone of the Front Office. He may not get the opportunity to have "tile time" out front but he is the brains behind the scenes ensuring the day-to-day and shift-to-shift items are completed for a smooth operation. Chris's attention to detail does not stop there. Chris cares just as much for his individual team members and puts extra attention in ensuring his team members feel his genuine care. Most notably, Chris took a trip to Mexico and upon returning gifted a colleague a bottle of lavender lotion that he had purchased in Mexico. Chris picked this bottle of lotion because he knew it was his colleague's favorite scent. When you are working with Chris, you know he has your back both professionally and as a best friend at work. An amazing skill that Chris possesses allows him to connect even further with the guests and team members at Marriott IndyPlace. Chris speaks French and Spanish allowing him to make connections outside of a traditional hotel experience. Chris's dedication to hospitality landed him an internship with Disney in 2011 and he has been passionate about it ever since. With winning our local title of Best of the Best, Chris truly is one of a kind and shines bright through all that he does.

Matteo Fontanin, Guest Services Representative - Bottleworks Hotel

Matteo, a Guest Services Representative, is a valued employee and member of our team at Bottleworks Hotel. Matteo was recently hired, but it feels like he has been here since day 1. He has learned very quickly the value of extraordinary guest services, making a massive impact on every single individual that walks through our doors. He's also quickly picked up our properties day to day operational needs, quickly learning the most efficient way to provide the most effective hospitality. It's no secret that Matteo is an asset to our property's success. He challenges his peers to keep up with his pace and accuracy in operational work. He is not afraid to ask an employee to work harder if he feels they are not bringing their best to the table. That being said, Matteo is a true team player. He is quick to jump in to assist his team with a complex arrival experience, rather it be at the Front Desk or up on the Guest Floors. Since joining the team, there have been many name mentions for Matteo from our guests, all mentioning his obvious love for hospitality. We are lucky to have Matteo on our Team, and look forward to his continued success and inevitable rise within our industry.



Cesar Gonzalez, Server - Fat Rooster at Hyatt Regency Indianapolis

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the question is posed, "Oh, what's in a name?" For our nominee, that question has been answered through a journey from teasing embarrassment to ultimately defining superior hospitality. While his mother, Sofia held her newborn, she chose a name for him that symbolized respect, honor, and leadership. However, children can be unkind. The name that was meant to inspire was turned into the subject of cruel jokes about dog whispering and puppy food. For a young boy, this was not just embarrassing; it was a blow to his sense of self-worth. Where laymen see hospitality as merely fulfilling requests, he wanted to embody our mission, to welcome each guest as family, anticipating their needs and connecting on a genuine level. For Sofia's son, this was not instinctual, but something he learned and mastered through perseverance and dedication. He threw himself into various roles—bussing tables, working in room service, mixing drinks as a barista, and assisting the servers—always with a focus on knowledge and improvement. Each role taught him a new aspect of hospitality, shaping him into the exceptional front-of-house professional he is today. In 2023, he found himself at a crossroads. Although he was thriving as a restaurant host, he felt ready to advance further. With a decade of experience behind him, he was ready to take on a new challenge; even considered starting over to make a name for himself elsewhere. Instead, he chose to stay and unleash what he had learned. Today, his name has become synonymous with genuine service. Month after month, he receives heartfelt praise from guests and colleagues alike. On TripAdvisor, his dedication has earned him a reputation so illustrious that guests eagerly share selfies with him, celebrating their chance to meet the "famous server." Sofia's faith in her infant son was well-placed. His journey—from bearing a name once mocked by peers to a figure celebrated by guests—shows the incredible strength of spirit and dedication he brings to his role. If only those early classmates could see him now, they would understand the true meaning of greatness. "All Hail...."

Vicky Gordon, Guest Service Evening Attendant - Homewood Suites by Hilton Munster

Vicky's outstanding outgoing personality shines so brightly at our Homewood Suites Munster! Vicky's guest rapport is phenomenal. Every guest who meets with Vicky gets a wonderful welcome. There are no bad days when you visit Vicky, she makes everyone's day a bright and shiny one. When attending to our guests during our evening social, you can catch Vicky hugging and joking with all of our guests. Vicky is also in the healthcare industry and so her love of people shines through every single day she is here with us. Not only does Vicky create a wonderful atmosphere here for our guests but her team members adore her as well! Vicky always goes above and beyond helping our team and does an amazing job in cleanliness and organization. Every team member gets a wonderful hug and a what can I do to help you today. Her spirit is captivating and when she is in a room, she brightens up every person she encounters. We are so happy that Vicky is part of our Homewood Family!

Jesse Messenger, Guest Service Representative - Hilton Indianapolis Hotel & Suites



We are proud to nominate our amazing Team Member, Jesse Messenger. His customer service skills are exemplary. He joined our Team, as a guest service representative about 14 months ago, with no hospitality hotel experience. He is that one Team member that always comes to work with a smile on his face and a happy greeting for our guest. His can-do attitude has also helped him with his secondary position of night audit. This positive effort and desire to learn more about the property assists the entire department. He is patient, kind and thorough with the guest calls and inquiries. This extraordinary internal and external customer service has won him accolades from guest and Team members alike. This year he was the #1 Team member at Hilton Indianapolis Hotel & Suites for our nationwide Hilton recognition program called "Catch me at my Best". In August, he was nominated by fellow Team members to be the Team member of the month. Although, he may be just starting in his hospitality career. Our Team sees a long and prosperous future for him in the industry.

Sonia Silva, Front Desk Agent - Hampton by Hilton Bedford

Sonia Silva is deserving of the Lodging Front of House Award because she truly embodies what it means to provide excellent service to each and every guest. Sonia has spent decades in the travel industry in a variety of roles, but it is obvious her heart is in her work at the front desk. She greets each and every traveler with a warm and personalized welcome. It is amazing to watch the genuine connection she makes with each person who comes through our doors. It is easy for her to cheer up a tired travel nurse, get a grumpy construction worker to crack a smile, and to comfort a stressed traveler staying at our hotel due to a family emergency. If you look up our hotel online, you will see Sonia's name mentioned in dozens of reviews – she is universally beloved by our guests. Frequently, a guest will see her name tag and greet her as "The famous Sonia from all the reviews." In her time at our hotel, Sonia has assisted countless guests. She has worked full house check-in days, sport team weekends, helped international guests acclimate to our small town, translated for Portuguese and Spanish speaking travelers – you name it, and she has done it. Not once have we ever had a guest say a negative word about her. Earlier this fall, our hotel team was given the opportunity to recognize each other by choosing coworkers who best fit a variety of superlatives – things like "Most Likely to Offer a Helping Hand," "Most Likely to Brighten Your Day," etc. Sonia won "Most Likely to Go Above and Beyond for the Guest" in a landslide. It is not just the guests who appreciate her hard work and dedication – it is obvious to us all. Sonia is a true example of what it means to spread the light and warmth of hospitality – her genuine care for others helps make our hotel a special place for our guests.

Nikki Snyder, Front Desk Agent - Hampton by Hilton, Corydon

In my short time here at the Hampton by Hilton, Corydon, Nikki continually goes the extra mile. Nikki will offer to assist in any department. Nikki places guests at the first and foremost importance and treats each guest with the most impressive customer service. Guests rave about Nikki and her helpfulness and kindness and are always eager to ensure there are no



issues with the guest stay, check in, and checkout. Nikki is the first one to say what can I do, where can I help on a daily basis.

Angelina Rodriguez, Public Space Attendant - Crowne Plaza Union Station

If hospitality is about how you make people feel, Angelina’s enthusiasm and energy makes everyone she comes in contact with upbeat and excited to be at the Crowne Plaza Union Station. Angelina is passionate that everything is done right – whether it’s the front entrance to the hotel or the floors throughout our historic property or the swimming pool deck, she ensures the property presents itself in the best possible light. And while she is constantly moving, her eyes are always up, looking to give a huge smile and warm greeting to anyone that walks by – guests and fellow team members. It’s hard not to smile after passing by Angelina. When she sees a need, whether it directly falls under her role, she takes responsibility for the need being served in a caring and compassionate manner. Recently, we had a guest from Guatemala that needed assistance in their guestroom. Angelina stopped her work in the lobby and went to assist the guest. She not only took care of the room, she also spent extended time speaking with the guest in their common language about their family and various sights and activities of Indianapolis. Angelina cares for her colleagues in the same manner. She brought a colleague to tears when she went out of her way to organize a surprise birthday gathering. Angelina brought the entire team together, walked her colleague to the space, and gave her a “good ole surprise” shout-out as they presented her with a small gift. Although small, it was thoughtful and tailored to what Angelina knew the person would like. The team member was teary-eyed, surprised, and smiling ear to ear telling others that while this was a delightful surprise, it will have a lasting impact on her that most importantly demonstrates genuinely cared for by Angelina. The Crowne Plaza Union Station’s purpose statement is “Transporting Friends through our Unique Environment to Create Memorable Experiences.” Angelina makes friends with everyone she meets and creates wonderful, personal, memorable experiences each and every day with team members and the guests visiting our hotel and city.

Lodging Heart of the House Award

Herbert Brumfield, Food & Beverage Manager - Hyatt Place Evansville Downtown

Herbert started off as a Front Desk agent in June of 2023. He has received multiple Guest Surveys describing his professionalism and customer service. He is a consistent team player and a valuable asset to our hotel. In July of 2024 he was promoted to F&B Manager and takes his new role very passionately. He is striving to increase our service scores as well as monitoring the Bar and Bistro outlets. He constantly goes above and beyond in all duties asked of him.



Lorena Chavez, Housekeeping Rooms Inspector - Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Airport

Lorena, her husband and 4 children came to the US from Mexico 20 years ago. Lorena is very focused on her family! In her spare time Lorena and her husband love to dance. She has worked in hotels her entire career and has been at the Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Airport since May of 2013. You can always count on a quick smile and a can-do attitude. Like most working in the hospitality field, Lorena was laid off in April of 2020 due to the Covid Pandemic. Fortunately, the Crowne Plaza accepted a project with Marion County Health Department, allowing Lorena and many of her colleagues to return to work! Lorena once again was leading the Crowne Plaza Housekeeping team, cleaning rooms, doing laundry, and cleaning public areas –keeping the hotel in pristine condition during some extremely difficult times. Once COVID was over, the Crowne Plaza opened its doors to the public and also began full property renovation. So Lorena once again took on the title of Housekeeping Inspector. Lorena has taken on the responsibility of inspecting rooms, creating room assignments, and training new room attendants. She knows and loves her fellow team members—also helping them achieve excellence! Her efforts helped to raise the cleanliness score again, to end 2023, a year we were still doing major construction in the public areas, to 88.75%. The Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Airport is a better place because of Lorena’s efforts.

Annette Drake, Lobby Attendant - Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre

Housekeeping has been referred to in many ways - The Heart of the House, The Backbone of the Hotel, The Heartbeat of the Hotel and numerous other fun things. But when we ask ourselves who is our STAR here at the Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre’ Annette Drake shines above all. Annette has been serving our guests for over 3 decades, giving nonstop assistance to thousands of guests over the years. While doing so she somehow manages to take care of a large busy lobby, clean a scary number of public restrooms, keep the marble floors spotless, deliver anything our guests ask for and gives a smile bright enough to light up Monument Circle. Annette has been showing our guests love for over 30 years. While Annette appears to be very quiet and reserved, almost shy, she knows exactly what everyone, including our guests, are up to at all times. But she will never spill a secret about our guests or her fellow teammates. Annette is super reliable, trustworthy, and the stealthiest lobby attendant in Indiana. She is a true STAR - shining every so brightly above all of us.

Juliana Elizalde, Executive Housekeeper - Hampton Inn and Suites

Juliana Elizalde has consistently exceeded expectations as our Executive Housekeeper. Over the past year, they have enhanced the overall cleanliness of our facility. With Juliana’s leadership, our facility achieved a 99% cleanliness score in the latest guest satisfaction survey, a 5% increase from the previous year. Her ability to manage and motivate a diverse team has resulted in a significant decrease in staff turnover. Juliana’s proactive approach in addressing issues before they escalate has been instrumental in maintaining our high standards of service for every guest and our associates. She has also been a great mentor



to new staff, offering them guidance and support that has accelerated their integration into our team. Her positive attitude and dedication make them a role model for everyone at this location. During a recent water leak incident, she acted swiftly to coordinate emergency cleanup, minimizing damage and ensuring the safety and comfort of our guests. This behavior consistently provides personalized service by remembering our guests' preferences and accommodating special requests with meticulous care. Juliana exemplifies integrity by always following company policies and holding themselves accountable for their actions. Her ethical conduct has instilled a strong sense of responsibility and trust within the team. She regularly acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of our team, offering constructive feedback and encouragement that boosts morale and fosters a positive work environment. This attention to detail has led to numerous guest commendations and a high rate of repeat visits. In conclusion, Juliana embodies the qualities of an outstanding Executive Housekeeper. Her exceptional leadership, innovative approach, and unwavering commitment to excellence make them an ideal candidate for this award. They have truly made a difference in our organization and are deserving of this recognition.

Genaro Escobedo, Dishwasher/Kitchen Stewarding Supervisor - JW Marriott Indianapolis

Genaro has been the absolute definition of a professional in his time working in the Stewarding department. He has completed every task that has been asked of him and has done it with a smile on his face. When he's asked to complete a task, he ensures that it not only gets done in a timely manner but also in the best way possible. He helps clean and polish upwards of 1,000 plates and 2,000 glasses for larger events and then is responsible daily for hundreds of pieces of cookware as well as several hundred pieces of silverware daily. In just the last 90 days, he has been responsible for China and glassware for dinners for more than 6,000 people which includes salad bowls, dinner plates or pasta bowls, and then dessert dishes in addition to silverware which is greater than 18,000 pieces in that time. The peak of this was a dinner for more than 2,000 people that he helped coordinate getting food for the event from the kitchen up to the 3rd floor and into the hands of the servers. He is such an amazing leader that you will find it next to impossible to find a team member that he supervises that has even a single negative word to say about him. He has always accepted his workload and has even gone above and beyond for the sake of the team when he has been asked to do so. Genaro has also had a smile on his face and in his voice every single time he has interacted with clients and/or guests.

Belma Gonzalez, Laundry Attendant - Hampton Inn Lafayette

Belma has literally worked here for half of her adult life. Over the years she has always shown hard work, dedication, and passion for the industry. Anyone you ask about Belma would describe her as happy, always smiling, nice and friendly. Her coworkers know they can count on her to help on busy days. Even though her primary position is laundry attendant she has never limited herself to the laundry room. She is always out stripping rooms, making



beds, and even actually cleaning rooms when needed. On the busiest of days, you always find her working as hard she can to keep everything caught up. One thing you will never hear is a complaint or negative word from or about Belma. She is a dream to have on the team. From Belma's Supervisor: I've had the privilege of working with Belma for the last year as her supervisor. Belma is the first to say good morning with a bright smiling face. Belma interacts well with her coworkers and is absolutely kick butt at the laundry. Belma truly completes our team from stripping rooms to even helping clean rooms when needed. Belma has been an absolute pleasure to manage and is a blessing to our hotel and our team. From her hard work to her contagious smile, I literally couldn't imagine this place without her. From the Guest Services Supervisor: I've worked with Belma for four years. She always greets everyone and has a smile on her face not only at the beginning of the day but at the end of day as well. She makes it a point to stop by the desk just to say goodbye to me as I arrive at 3pm and she is heading out for the day. She ALWAYS goes above and beyond. She doesn't do just laundry. She strips rooms and makes beds. She helps clean when it's super busy. She will take on entire rooms herself. She is always on time if not early. She brings joy to each shift no matter how crazy and busy the day is!

Mary Jones, Inspector/Assistant Housekeeper - Hampton Inn Vincennes

I am writing to nominate Mary Jones for the Lodging Heart of House award. As Inspector and Assistant Housekeeper at Hampton, Vincennes, Mary has consistently demonstrated exceptional dedication and outstanding performance. Mary has been an invaluable member of our team for the past 4 years, contributing to our success. Mary jumps in where she is needed – laundry, house person, checking rooms – she always steps in to help. Mary is a team player and brightens the day with her smile and her energetic personality.

Eskarlet Lopez, Room Inspector - Hilton Garden Inn Indianapolis Airport

I am thrilled to nominate Eskarlet Lopez for the Stars of the Industry Award. Eskarlet exemplifies dedication and teamwork in our housekeeping department, consistently going above and beyond to ensure a high level of service for our guests and support for her colleagues. A shining example of her commitment occurred when a coworker faced an urgent situation and needed to leave early. Without hesitation, Eskarlet stepped in to take care of their responsibilities, meticulously making every bed in the assigned rooms. This act not only showcased her willingness to help others but also ensured that our guests received the exceptional service they expect. Eskarlet's dedication was particularly evident during the challenges of COVID-19. As the only member of the department at one point, she took on the monumental task of managing laundry, cleaning rooms, and maintaining public spaces—all with an unwavering positive attitude. Her ability to maintain high standards during such a challenging time was truly remarkable and inspiring to all of us. Eskarlet Lopez is a vital asset to our team, and her hard work, kindness, and commitment to excellence make her a deserving candidate for this award. Thank you for considering her nomination.

Margarita Ledesma, Housekeeping Supervisor - Hampton Inn & Suites, Munster



Margarita's outstanding service to her team is nothing short of amazing! Her dedication to her team and to her work is exceptional. Not only did Margarita help our hotel reach a 98% in cleanliness in our Quality Assurance Inspection year after year, but her dedication to her team is something to talk about. Not only does Margarita inspect rooms, she also creates a board for herself. There is no I in the team here. Margarita supports each and every room attendant when fully staffed or when there is a need for staff, she does what only an amazing leader would do. She becomes one of the team, by not only cleaning rooms, but she also does laundry and inspects rooms. Margarita has also taken action to learn skills that help our maintenance department as well, her eagerness to learn has helped us in so many ways. Her leadership has shown her to team to help each other and to always work together. She is the hardest working young lady we know, and we are so grateful she is part of Team Hampton Munster!

Leny Mendoza, Housekeeping Room Attendant - Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Whitestown/Indianapolis NW

Leny has been with us since December of 2023. She started during our pre opening phase, helping get the hotel in order and ready to open. I see Leny go above and beyond every day that she works. The amount of passion that she has for her job is such an amazing quality about her. Leny has been cross trained in every department other than the front desk. On days that she works in a breakfast bar, she is always out conversing with the guests; she can make almost anyone smile! Then there are days where she helps out in laundry, ensuring no rooms will go without any linens. Her biggest passion is ensuring that our guest rooms are cleaned properly and are in order, ready for the arrival of our guests. Employees like Leny are one of a kind. She is a non-stop customer service provider in so many areas.

Karina Meza, Housekeeping Supervisor - TRU by Hilton

Karina has exhibited exceptional customer service and dedication to hospitality, she is always willing to help out when we need her to. With a small hotel like we have, we are able to get to know our employees and I have been able to get to know Karina and she is a great worker as well as a great person.

Gary Murphy, Maintenance Tech - Courtyard by Marriott, Muncie

Our team will be nominating Gary Murphy for the Heart of the House award. I say our team, because every manager on our team agreed that this award should go to Gary. This winter will be his 9th year as one of our maintenance techs working for us at the Courtyard Marriott Muncie. He is the definition of a team player. Over the years, Gary has constantly gone above and beyond to help EVERYONE. This not only includes our guests, but the employees. Multiple times Gary has used his maintenance skills to help employees outside of work. He has worked on employee's cars, HVAC units at their homes, worked on employee's houses, etc. He always goes out of his way to help his co-workers when they need it. There is even a time where Gary has gone fishing with a co-worker's husband because they did not have anyone to go with. Gary makes friends with everyone and has the biggest heart. Our hotel



gives gift cards to employees who go above and beyond their job duties and Gary always gives his gift cards to his grandkids. Every time we ask him where he wants the gift card from, he says, "Dairy Queen, so my grandkids can get some ice-cream." This just shows how big of a heart Gary has and he gives the same service to his guests. We are always getting compliments on Gary, and we appreciate him and everything he does.

Nelly Ocampo, Room Attendant - Homewood Suites by Hilton Lafayette

Nelly Ocampo has worked for GHC for the last 13 years. She began her journey with zero experience and quickly became one of the top housekeepers within her first year. She has always been recognized through the years by guests' compliments and employee recognition nominations from her fellow coworkers. Nelly has won employee of the month multiple times for always showing up for work, coming in on her days off if called, being a great coworker, and her rooms are impeccable. As the General Manager, I will go and check rooms on occasion and Nelly's rooms are always inspection ready. When a VIP guest is coming in we always look to Nelly's rooms first, because we know the quality will be to the highest standard. When we share the housekeeping/cleanliness score during our huddles, she is excited with the good scores and scoffs (she can't believe that is a possibility) at the low scores. She takes such pride in her rooms and believes in the entire team. Nelly always participates in team building activities, is always smiling and making jokes. If you ask her fellow teammates, she is not just a housekeeper, she is a great friend and makes the team feel like a family.

Uriel Orozco, Laundry Attendant - S&P Staffing Inc

I am pleased to recommend Uriel, who has been a valuable member of our team at S&P for over two years. Throughout his time with us, Uriel has consistently demonstrated exceptional responsibility and dedication to his work. His efforts have not only contributed to our success but have also opened new opportunities for growth within the company. Uriel's commitment and proactive approach make him an invaluable asset to any team.

Carlos Pina Gordillo, Banquet Houseperson - Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

One of Carlos's greatest attributes is his eagerness to learn and grow, both in his personal and his professional life. Carlos is always looking for additional roles and responsibilities around the hotel. His role within the hotel is as a Banquet houseman however he has been known to carry trays to assist the banquet servers, pushing racks of dirty dishware for stewarding or even bringing in tools to fix items in the banquet office. Carlos's commitment to growing with the team had led him to also be a part-time supervisor when the supervisor is off. Carlos's passion for learning and growing landed him a seat in the English Language Learning class offered by Marriott IndyPlace. Carlos successfully graduated from the program and began implementing his newfound English skills within his customer service. Carlos can connect with his guests not only with his learned skills but also with his welcoming smile. Guests who encounter Carlos always praise his work ethic. Marriott provides their VIP client contacts with gold keys; these keys are lapel pins that the guest is



provided at check-in. The Event Managers ask the clients to then gift the gold key to a team member at the Marriott who positively impacts the guest/event. Carlos quickly collected 4 gold keys within the first month of his employment with the Marriott. In return for the exceptional customer service provided for the gold key, associates can trade in their key for a gift card. Carlos takes such pride in the customer service that he provides that instead of trading in his gold key pen he wears it proudly every day on his uniform. Carlos's managers recall a specific night that the team was there late and had to flip the banquet space for a following event. The team took a quick moment to understand the request and then got to work. The leader provided the team with Red Bulls as the set was going to take a long time to complete. The manager stepped away and shortly returned to find the set already halfway complete.

Otilia Silvestre, Executive Housekeeper - Fairfield by Marriott Indianapolis Carmel

I am thrilled to nominate Otilia Silvestre, our Executive Housekeeper at the Fairfield Indianapolis Carmel, for this award. Otilia has continuously demonstrated professionalism, teamwork, and an unwavering commitment to guest satisfaction. Since joining the Fairfield Indianapolis Carmel, Otilia has risen through the ranks from housekeeper to her current role, exemplifying the very essence of hard work and leadership. Under her guidance, our hotel has consistently ranked in the top 1% for cleanliness among all Fairfield properties worldwide—a testament to her high standards and meticulous attention to detail. Otilia is deeply respected and liked by her team. Her hands-on approach and willingness to step in whenever needed foster a collaborative atmosphere that encourages teamwork and morale. She regularly motivates her staff with innovative strategies, creating an environment where everyone feels valued and empowered. This dedication has resulted in notably low turnover rates within her department, highlighting her ability to inspire and retain talent. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Otilia's selflessness shines through in her interactions with colleagues. She has demonstrated exceptional empathy and support, notably when she rallied her team to assist a pregnant coworker facing challenges, providing both financial and material help. This act of kindness reflects her genuine concern for her team's well-being and embodies the spirit of teamwork. Otilia's commitment to our guests is equally remarkable. She often sacrifices her days off to ensure the hotel operates smoothly, prioritizing guest satisfaction and team welfare above her own time. Her dedication is not just to maintaining our high cleanliness standards but also to creating a welcoming and comfortable environment for our guests. Her positive demeanor, strong leadership skills, and proactive approach have not gone unnoticed, earning her recognition as the Fairfield RISE Employee of the Month multiple times. Otilia's contributions have significantly impacted our hotel's reputation and success, making her an indispensable part of our team. Her professionalism, teamwork, and exceptional guest interactions truly embody the values we uphold in the hospitality industry. I wholeheartedly support her nomination and believe that her remarkable dedication and leadership make her an invaluable asset to our organization.



Richard Steinmetz, Shuttle Driver - Hampton Inn and Suites

I am honored to nominate Dick Steinmetz for the Lodging heart of the House award. With nine years of dedicated service as a full-time shuttle driver, he consistently goes beyond in every aspect of his role. In addition to providing safe and reliable transportation, Dick takes the initiative to hand wash each shuttle, reflecting his pride in maintaining our vehicles. He also demonstrates exceptional dedication by coming into the office early or staying late to ensure the efficient transportation of shuttles to service repair shops, minimizing downtime. This act alone shows his attentiveness and responsibility as a leader on our property. Dick is very hands-on and not afraid to look under the hood or beneath the cabin to gain a closer insight into any shuttle issues. This proactive approach to maintenance ensures that our vehicles are operating at their best and displays his technical knowledge and commitment to safety. Moreover, he is the only associate who actively finds coverage for any shifts whenever he is unavailable, which significantly reduces disruption and highlights his sense of duty and teamwork. Feedback from our surveys and reviews consistently highlights Dick's positive impact on our team and the exceptional service he provides. His unwavering support and dedication have not gone unnoticed by colleagues and passengers alike. Dick is truly an invaluable asset to our team, and I wholeheartedly believe he deserves this recognition for his continual outstanding contributions.

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Sergio Solis, Chief Engineer - Hampton Inn & Suites Keystone

Sergio exemplifies our company values of respect, integrity, service, and excitement in all aspects of his work. Sergio radiates positivity and uplifts those around him. His infectious smile, coupled with his encouraging words, reminding us to take a breath when we are stressed, serves as a constant source of motivation for the team. He genuinely cares about his colleagues, readily lending an ear and offering support whenever needed. Additionally, his thoughtful gestures, such as sharing treats with the team, illustrate his genuine concern for others' well-being and oftentimes it's just the pick me up someone needs. Despite his busy schedule with multiple jobs, Sergio remains deeply committed to his personal growth and professional development. His proactive approach to learning and continuous improvement not only benefits him but also enhances the quality of service he provides to the hotel and its guests. Sergio always puts the hotel first! When he is working at his other job, we can call him and he comes right over to fix any problems the hotel is having. The hotel was sold out during the NBA All Stars. At 4:30PM on a Saturday the hot water circulator pump went out. We had the pump to fix it. Mike was on vacation and Tim was out of town. Sergio pulled it up on his phone to change it and he got it changed with no problems. He had the pump changed and hot water back on again by 6:15PM. During a pool overflow incident, while many of us were assisting in the cleanup efforts, Sergio, despite being under the weather and at home, chose to come in and lend a hand to ensure everything was restored to normalcy. His willingness to assist and proactive and prompt approach during emergencies, such as aiding a housekeeper by flushing her eye, further underscores his unwavering commitment to the well-being of the team and guests alike. In conclusion, he embodies the essence of our company values and consistently puts the hotel's needs above all else. His dedication, professionalism, and genuine care for others make him a deserving candidate.

Richard Steinmetz, Shuttle Driver - Hampton Inn and Suites

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Shawna Worden, Housekeeping Supervisor - Fairfield by Marriott, Jasper

I would like to nominate Shawna Worden from the FIJA property for Lodging Heart of House. She has been working in hospitality for over 25 yrs. She has been at the Jasper Fairfield for almost a year and a half and was promoted to housekeeping supervisor in July 2024. Shawna has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to providing exceptional service in the hospitality industry. Her professionalism is evident in her polite demeanor and ability to handle challenging situations with grace and composure. She consistently goes above and beyond her job duties, always striving to exceed guest expectations. Shawna's dedication to teamwork is equally impressive. She works seamlessly with her colleagues, fostering a positive and supportive work environment. She is always willing to lend a helping hand, whether it's assisting with a heavy workload or offering guidance to new team members. Her collaborative approach ensures that the entire team operates efficiently and effectively. Perhaps most notably, Shawna's interactions with guests are truly exemplary. She greets each guest with a warm smile and a genuine desire to make their stay memorable. She actively listens to their needs and preferences, tailoring her service to their individual requirements. Shawna's ability to anticipate guests' needs and address their concerns proactively has earned her a reputation for providing exceptional customer service. In summary, Shawna's exceptional service in the hospitality industry is characterized by her professionalism, teamwork, and outstanding guest interactions. Her unwavering commitment to excellence has made her an invaluable asset to her team and a beloved member of the hospitality community.

Lodging Manager of the Year (more than 100 rooms)

Laci Benson, General Manager - Hampton Inn-Airport

Laci Benson has been General Manager for Dunn Hospitality for 13 years. She took over the team at the Hampton Inn Evansville Airport in 2022 with the property's Guest Satisfaction Scores ranked in the bottom 30% of the Hampton Inn Brand, and its RevPar Index was just



barely receiving their fair share. After 2 years of Laci's leadership, the property is now ranked in the Top 8% of the nearly 2400 hotels in the brand in Guest Satisfaction and has improved its RevPar Index to over 125. While these are certainly impressive accomplishments, Laci's strongest attribute is her commitment to her team to ensure that they are prepared for any situations that they may face...and in the past 18 months, they have faced more than their share but have been able to execute Laci's plans to ensure that all guests, staff, and assets were safe and protected. Examples of these situations include several weather-related events that called for guests to be evacuated from their rooms and protected in secure spaces until the weather cleared. Another well-managed evacuation occurred when a natural gas leak was detected near the lobby and guests needed to be cleared from the building. And yet another happened when a vendor was careless with a cigarette and started a fire on the roof. Laci and the team relied on their training to get the guests out of the building while other team members assessed and contained the fire until the fire department arrived. Damage was minimal and no one was injured. Laci has trained her teams to effectively handle life-threatening medical emergencies as well, and that training has allowed them to react calmly and professionally when they were forced to deal with several instances of guests in physical distress. The team successfully handled situations involving a guest having a seizure in the lobby, a guest choking in the breakfast area, and a staff member even used their training knowledge to successfully perform the Heimlich Maneuver on a guest's dog. If preparation is the key to success, it is easy to see why Laci Benson is so successful.

Virginia Chavez, Assistant Executive Housekeeper - Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre

When we think about what it takes to be a dedicated hospitality professional, we often recall those shining team members that we've worked with in the past, the ones that we wish we had in our toolbox today. I'm lucky enough to have that level of STAR working with us at The Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre'. Virginia Chavez started as a Room Attendant over 20 years ago and has worked her way up to the Asst. Executive Housekeeper. Virginia hits all the boxes on the checklist for superstars. In fact, I believe she may have created the checklist. Beyond dedicated, reliable, straightforward, knowledgeable, and just plain awesome. Virginia has seen a few Executive Housekeepers come and go during her time here, she's probably trained the last 3 or 4. She has coordinated the training of each new hire, ordered 10,000 cases of toilet paper, sent more than her fair share of lost and found items back to our beloved guests and counseled many of her reports to success. All the while raising my new favorite "adopted grandson" who is flourishing as a young boy conquering Autism. Virginia is a true STAR of our industry. Her dedication to providing the best possible product and guest experience inspires me every day to keep up!

Radell Green, General Manager - Hampton Inn & Suites Keystone

Before I dive into Radell's role as General Manager, I believe it's more fitting to first introduce you to Radell, the person. Radell is a remarkably generous individual who consistently goes above and beyond to support those around her. She has selflessly cared for the newborns



of fellow associates and rallied resources for colleagues facing financial hardships, health issues, and personal crises. Yet despite all her efforts, she remains humble about her extensive contributions to the community. Her passion for giving extends to numerous causes, including volunteering countless hours at nursing homes, hospice care, food pantries, animal shelters, Megan Ott Foundation, and even her neighbors. If you didn't know Radell personally, you might not immediately envision her in this compassionate light. As the leader of the Hampton Inn & Suites Keystone at the Crossing, she is known for her relentless drive toward success and her pursuit of excellence. For over 16 years, Radell has been a key part of Schahet Hotels, leading both the Hampton Inn Carmel and Keystone properties. Her colleagues often turn to her for guidance, knowing that she possesses unmatched industry knowledge and resources. Whether it's brand standards, hiring, training, sales, guest services, or company protocols, Radell is the go-to person for answers and solutions. Despite her demanding schedule, Radell remains approachable and attentive, always making time for those around her. A few weeks ago, I stopped by the hotel and found Radell working at the front desk. When I asked why, she explained that one of her associates needed the week off to take their son to London and help set him up for a work study he was doing. She was happy to step in and cover. This story exemplifies Radell's selflessness and her willingness to lead by example, making her both respected and admired by her team. Her mentorship and guidance have helped many of her associates advance in their careers, with several going on to become General Managers themselves. Radell's dedication to developing talent and fostering a supportive work environment has left a lasting impact on countless individuals. This year, Radell was honored with the prestigious Schahet "Dan Waller Leadership Award," the highest accolade given by the company. This award recognizes an individual who demonstrates outstanding commitment and professionalism, exemplifies strong leadership and character, upholds Schahet's core values, and contributes to both the company's success and the betterment of the community. Radell served on the Schahet Hotels leadership Summit Committee this year and set up the community service event that was to make about 100 sack lunches for the Wheeler Mission. Under Radell's leadership, the Hampton Inn & Suites Keystone has consistently ranked in the top 10 hotels in Indianapolis on TripAdvisor, out of 193 hotels in the area. Additionally, over 61% of her associates have been with the hotel for more than a year, and 47% for over two plus years—a testament to the positive culture she cultivates. Radell's keen financial stewardship ensures the hotel stays on budget, delivering strong top and bottom-line results. Her Brand Quality Assurance scores consistently rank in the outstanding range, and the hotel is currently ranked 120th out of 1,040 Hilton properties in the Total Quality Score (TQS) system. In 2022, her hotel earned the prestigious Hilton Award of Excellence, awarded to the top 5% of properties within the brand.

Whitley Johnson, Dual Director of Front Office - Courtyard Springhill

Whitley's superpower is making connections, it is what sets her apart as a leader in the hotel and allows her to make the impact that she does. If we had to describe Whitley in one word, it would be "Sparkles". Whitley hands down delivers the best pre-shifts that sets the tone



for the day. Whitley, through her connections, can read the mood of the room and adjust to what the team is needing. Whitley is known to feature stretches before a physically demanding day or offer a quick dance session to raise energy levels. Whitley starts her day by focusing on the whole person in front of her, not just what needs to be accomplished for the day. Whitley's connections with her team are just as strong as her innate ability to make connections with the guests. It is not the "what" that Whitley is saying, but how she delivers her words that leaves each guest feeling genuinely cared for. Whitley's strengths around connecting to the guests were quickly noticed and we have transitioned her into a space that allows her to teach her skills to our new leaders. She has been tirelessly working on ensuring her team feels and operates with the same passion for connection that she does. Whitley's curiosity to form genuine connections has had a tremendous impact on the career growth of leaders in the hotel. Just in the past short 5 months, under Whitley's training and mentorship, we have had one supervisor promoted to manager and a manager promoted to a different area of the hotel. Whitley's talent is creating exceptional stays and fostering genuine connections that allow team members to flourish in their careers. Whitley truly embodies our associate promise, "To create an environment that allows you to be your best self and grow through ongoing training, development and mentorship."

Christopher Knight, Director of Operations - Hilton Garden Inn Jeffersonville

Christopher Knight is our Director of Operations. He exudes Professionalism and Customer Service every moment he is on property. Guests have mentioned him dozens of times for his helpfulness as well as his kindness. We have become a more efficient and customer driven property due to Chris's attention. He points out the small things that will make or break a Guest's successful stay. His attention to detail while training our Team Members is truly second to none. He has gone above and beyond several times when a guest has left or misplaced personal items and makes sure to follow up with them once they have received their belongings. I am so happy to nominate him for this prestigious award and believe he is strongly worthy of this honor.

Kevin Shannon, Director of Housekeeping - JW Marriott Indianapolis

Kevin is the calm, collected and caring leader that leaves an impact on all he works with. Kevin is known throughout the JW Marriott as genuinely friendly and helpful. Kevin is well liked by everyone within the Marriott IndyPlace Complex. What sets Kevin apart is while he is known for his genuine demeanor, he is also known for delivering great results and performing well under pressure. Kevin possesses all the positive leadership qualities that many strive to achieve. Kevin's ability to deliver results time and time again under pressure is truly impeccable. Kevin is a solution driven leader and has yet to face an obstacle he and his team cannot overcome. When Kevin is presented with a new project or a deadline, you know he is going to hit it head on with his sense of urgency. Kevin expertly utilizes his sense of urgency for accomplishing tasks but does so methodically. While Kevin operates under his sense of urgency, he knows how to motivate his team, when to push the team and when to let back. Under his leadership, the housekeeping team is able to check out, clean, and



check in over 900 rooms in under 9 hours. In the world of housekeeping, changes are inevitable. Kevin’s ability to adapt to change with positivity allows him and his team to excel in their day-to-day operations. Rather it be adapting to last minute room moves, 10+ call offs in one day, adjusting public area set-ups for client requests or a 200-room group checking out a day early – Kevin is known for his ability to manage through the changes with a smile on his face. His unwavering positivity has been instrumental in crafting the positive culture at the JW Marriott. Kevin’s impact does not stop with the Housekeeping Team at the JW Marriott. Kevin will always jump in and assist with other departments when asked or without being asked when he sees he is needed. Kevin’s impact on the Housekeeping department has resulted in an 87.7% Guest Satisfaction Score, 2.7% better than the brand average, placing the hotel 7th in the brand.

Michael Thompson, Dual Chief Engineer - Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

Today, we celebrate not just a Chief Engineer, but a true problem-solver, a family man, a hunter, and an invaluable leader at Marriott Indianapolis Downtown. Michael is the mastermind behind both White Lodging’s property upkeep, and his own laundry repair business. Michael has shown that there is no challenge too big (or machine too stubborn) for his expert hands. Speaking of challenges, who could forget Michael’s incredible feat of managing a full hotel-wide 24-hour water shutdown? Not only did he oversee the replacement of the domestic water system pumps, but he also executed multiple repairs across the building’s intricate water systems—all while keeping calm under pressure. It was a logistical masterpiece, and the entire hotel is running smoother thanks to Michael’s skillful management. From fine-tuning mechanical systems to ensuring the hotel operations flow as effortlessly as ever, Michael’s commitment is undeniable. Let’s not forget Michael’s second calling – helping the corporate office assess and optimize our commercial laundry facilities. Michael is not just fixing machines; he is ensuring the guests receive that fresh laundry experience every day. His impact doesn’t stop there, our corporate office relies on him to task force and assist other hotels. Michael’s mechanical know-how and dedication serve as a compass, guiding all team members to a higher standard of excellence. Whether it’s a tough mechanical fix or a complex system overhaul, Michael is known to tackle it all with grace, grit, and plenty of good humor. A huge thank you to Michael for being a pillar of strength in the engineering team and for always willing to go the extra mile — and sometimes even the extra load of laundry! We’re so fortunate to have Michael as both an engineer and a moral leader at White Lodging Hospitality.

Restaurant Front of the House Award

Davion Allen, Server - Social Cantina- Carmel



Davion Allen, embodies the Finney Hospitality Group Culture each shift he works. He is respected by his peers, management, and guests. He starts his shifts with a warm smile and positive infectious attitude. Slow or busy he is the first person to lead by example with teamwork. Food running, getting ice, walking drinks, bussing tables all without having to be asked. When he has interactions with his tables that's when the Davion magic happens. His warm embrace, charm, and expertise knowledge of the menu leaves his guests feeling like VIP's. He has a constant flow of regular guests who always request to sit in his section due to his impeccable service and hospitality. He also has the record for the highest sales to date by any server on staff current and past. No one deserves this nomination more!

Nicholas (Nick) Bruner, Lobby Bar Lead Bartender - JW Marriott Indianapolis

Nicholas Bruner has been a go to rock for team members and leaders alike during his 12 years with the JW Marriott. Nick embodies the true meaning of "Hoosier Hospitality" with the guests he serves in the lobby, with team members working beside him and with his leadership team. The first thing any guest that walks into the Lobby Bar will see and hear will always be Nick greeting the guests. He is the first team member to always greet the guests as they approach the bar. It has become an on-going joke with the team at Lobby Bar that it is impossible for Nick to be in a bad mood. No one on the team believes that it is emotionally possible for him to be in a bad mood. Nick's infectious personality and good moods allows him to build rapport with our guests and positively impact their stay. When serving his guests, you know that Nick is going to make the perfect cocktail every single time and do so with top tier customer service. Nick is known for a Brand Standard Audit that occurred in 2022 where the Auditor praised Nick's service saying it was the best he had ever received. Nick's tremendous work goes beyond the perfect cocktails and the amazing customer service he provides. Nick is currently the Lead Bartender because his leadership and training techniques are some of the bests in the industry. Rather it be training team members and colleagues or spending time with new leaders teaching them about the bar, Nick ensures he is understood and takes the time to explain the why. What speaks so highly to Nick's dedication to the team and the hotel is his coworkers and all the positive things they have to say. All of those who encounter Nick echo that he is a 10/10 human outside of work and a 10/10 coworker.

Renee Finley, Bartender - The HC Tavern + Kitchen

Renee Finley, a bartender at The HC Tavern + Kitchen, exemplifies the heart and soul of the Front of House team. With over 25 years in the restaurant industry and nearly 20 years as a bartender, Renee's passion, infectious positivity, and commitment to our guests have made her an irreplaceable asset. From the moment she joined our team three years ago, Renee has set an unparalleled standard for hospitality. Her coworkers repeatedly emphasize how welcome and comfortable she makes new team members feel, and how she consistently brings positive energy to every shift. One of her peers shared that Renee was the first person they met on their first day, and her warm welcome and enthusiasm left a lasting impression. Renee's passion for guest service is evident in every shift. "I am so fulfilled in my job," she



shares, “by making connections with guests, learning about their lives, and giving them amazing experiences.” Her ability to form personal relationships with her guests ensures that they never feel rushed, even during the busiest of shifts. Whether it’s a quick lunch or a special occasion, Renee treats each interaction with care. Her commitment to her team is equally impressive. Renee is known for taking on extra tasks like organizing the bar or managing inventory—all while maintaining her upbeat attitude. Her coworkers describe her as reliable, tenacious, and always willing to help others. As one colleague put it, “Renee is the person you can count on, no matter what.” In addition to her outstanding professional achievements, Renee is also an amazing mom to two incredible teenagers, balancing her role at work with being a supportive and loving parent. Renee’s General Manager praises her dedication, noting how much joy she finds in the relationships she has built with her regulars. “One of the cornerstones of a great restaurant is an awesome lunch Bar Team—We have that covered thanks to Renee.” Renee truly deserves to be recognized as the Front of House Employee of the Year. Her love for hospitality is contagious, and she plans to continue spreading that joy for the rest of her career.

Kate Garrett, Server/Trainer/Experience Maker - Metro Diner

Kate Garrett’s nomination for the Restaurant Front of the House Award is incredibly well-deserved. Her ability to understand and cater to the unique needs of her guests, as highlighted in the heartfelt letter on the Autism-focused Facebook page, showcases her remarkable compassion. Kate turns potentially stressful dining experiences into moments of comfort, especially for families with special needs, which is rare and an invaluable gift. Her widespread recognition on social media and the high number of table requests are further testaments to her excellence, and her leadership, admired by both peers and managers, truly sets her apart. Kate Garrett’s compassion and selflessness extend far beyond her role at Metro Diner. Her decision to adopt her sister’s son, Miguel, and provide him with a loving home reflects her incredible strength and commitment to family. This personal sacrifice and dedication mirror the care she brings to her work, making her an even more deserving nominee for the Restaurant Front of the House Award. Thank you for reading about the extraordinary Kate Garrett.

Philip Keno, Bartender/Training Manager - Social Cantina- Downtown Indianapolis

Keno is the definition of Hospitality. He makes sure that every person that sits at his bar gets the All-Star treatment. He’s able to recommend drinks and liquors guests have never tried - all while making the guest feel right at home. He has the ability to make cares and worries melt away while he indulges his guests in the history of tequila and our restaurant group. He has a knack for genuine connection and heartfelt communication. He strives to make every day better than the previous and leave everyone better than when he met them.

Fia Markey, Bartender - Alexander’s Bar & Grill at Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre

Fia Markey joined the Sheraton City Centre Hotel in July of 2015 and in her tenure has served as a Banquet Captain, Bar Supervisor and, for the last few years, Bartender. In all of her



roles, Fia has always strived to provide our guests with exceptional service and memorable experiences. In her time as Bartender in Alexander's Bar & Grill, she has established herself as a dedicated, hardworking associate who works tirelessly to exceed her guests' expectations. With her congenial manner and sharp wit, she has established meaningful relationships and deep personal connections with many of our guests who consider her not only their favorite bartender, but also a friend. She has many friends that specifically come to dine with her from the apartment building across the street and they even invite her out to dinner with them. In addition, Fia takes ownership of Alexander's and goes above and beyond her job description to ensure it operates smoothly and efficiently, frequently stepping into a supervisory role (i.e. completing liquor requisitions, expediting food off the line, etc.) when it's needed. Fia's dedication and commitment to providing exceptional service to the Sheraton's guests is beyond reproach and sets the standard for other associates to follow. We greatly appreciate all that she does and are extremely grateful to have her on our team.

Calista Richardson, Hourly Manager/Bartender - Social Cantina- Downtown Indianapolis

Calista is the definition of team player. She is always thinking about her impact on the day and the team. She consistently shows up for her team and executes at a very high level. She constantly makes sure that things are covered and taken care of. She takes accountability for her mistakes and understands the responsibility that her job and position carries. I couldn't be more proud of her growth with us here at FHG and what she brings to the table in our restaurant.

Gustavo Silveira Martins, Banquet Captain - Bottleworks Hotel

We would like to Nominate Luiz Gustavo Silveira Martins for the restaurant front of the house award. Gustavo just celebrated his 2-year anniversary as a Banquet Captain with the Bottleworks hotel. We are very pleased to have Gustavo on our Food and Beverage team. As a banquet captain, Gustavo works directly with our guests and our banquet team the day of the event to make sure all events go smoothly and that our Guests have everything they need for their event. Gustavo goes way above and beyond to ensure that all needs are met that day for the event. Gustavo helps our clients troubleshoot AV and computer issues, and there are very few times when Gustavo has not been able to solve any issues. (He may be aiming towards the IT Department by now lol) Our Guests often have last minute changes to room sets and Gustavo is quick to jump in and rearrange tables, chairs and retrieve anything else that is needed. The word no is not in his vocabulary and anytime I have heard a guest request something from him, whether it's his job or not, he always responds with "absolutely, you got it." He truly lives by that and goes above and beyond daily to ensure all of our guests have an amazing experience here at Bottleworks. Guests love Gustavo and we often have repeat groups remember him and ask for him by name. He is also mentioned in guest servers regularly for his excellent service and willingness to go above and beyond. The banquet team loves Gustavo and often compliments his leadership and thorough



direction. Gustavo is on top of the little details, and I see him constantly checking in with the team and the Kitchen to ensure everything for an event is running on time and will even jump in where help is needed. Gustavo is a key reason as to why our operation is so successful and why our event guest satisfaction scores are so high. He is definitely deserving of this nomination, and I am honored to be able to nominate him.

Aysa Streeval, Server/Bartender -The Tap Bloomington

Aysa started out as a server and then was promoted to a closer server trainer. In the past month she was promoted again as one of the main bartenders. She always has a great attitude and is a great team player. She has helped me work multiple events for my store plus other stores in our company. She always gives great customer service and gets multiple guest compliments.

Brittney Turner, Conner's Kitchen and Bar Server - Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

Brittney is the smiling face that greets each guest with a warm welcome, a genuine tour of the menu, timely service, and a welcoming invitation to dine with Conner's again. But don't let Brittany's friendly demeanor fool you – when it is time to get to business, Brittney uses the “whatever it takes mindset” to ensure our guests leave 100% satisfied. Brittney doesn't just stop with our guests; she ensures her coworkers have every tool they need to do their job. Brittney is expertly straightforward and direct with her co-workers and when training new servers but does so gently enough that she wins you over. When it comes to serving our guests, Brittney is a 10/10 every single time. This is echoed through the plethora of positive reviews Brittney receives from the guests. Just this past weekend, Brittney received 8 positive reviews over a 2-day period. She leads Conner's department with the most positive reviews. But it's not just about the reviews, it is about the impact she makes on our guests that truly sets her apart. Brittney greeted a guest one afternoon and upon reviewing the menu, discovered that the guests could not have anything on our menu due to dietary restrictions. Instead of sending the guest away, Brittney exhausted all efforts to ensure this guest could enjoy a lunch with Conner's. Brittney's dedication to ensuring each guest experiences a 10/10 meal with Conner's can also lead her to other departments when options are not available in Conner's. Such as, a guest requested a diet coke, but Conner's does not have them readily available. Brittney took it upon herself to visit the Loaf and Vine department to ensure that the guest request was met. Conners relies on Brittney's expert skills to train and mentor new servers starting their roles, to provide 10/10 exceptional customer service and to win over repeat customers. Brittney's efforts as helped Conner's Kitchen and Bar achieve the #1 spot on TripAdvisor in Indianapolis.

Jayce Ullah-Blocks, Server/Bartender - The Tap Indianapolis

As both a server and bartender, Jayce has proven herself to be an essential member of our team, consistently setting the standard for excellence and leadership. Jayce is someone who naturally commands respect from her peers. She is the first to step in when the team needs guidance, always ensuring that operations run smoothly and efficiently. Whether it's



making sure guests are greeted promptly with menus or holding the team accountable to the highest standards, Jayce is a true leader. Her ability to provide constructive feedback to her colleagues—while also offering solutions—has earned her the trust and admiration of everyone around her. Behind the bar, Jayce’s work ethic is unparalleled. She takes meticulous care in stocking, ensuring that the bar is always fully prepared for service. Her attention to detail means that no one ever has to worry about inventory issues when she’s working, which allows the team to focus on providing the best experience for our guests. Jayce’s positive attitude and dedication to her role extend beyond just her technical skills. She is always ready to answer guests’ questions, making sure they feel well taken care of. Her presence elevates the entire team, and she is someone I am truly grateful to have on board. For these reasons and more, I wholeheartedly recommend Jayce Ullah-Blocks for the Stars of the Industry award. She is an outstanding team member, and her contributions deserve to be recognized.

Jamaiel (Boogie) White, Bartender - Yogi’s Bar & Grill

Boogie isn’t just an exceptional employee at Yogi’s—he *is* the culture of Yogi’s. His energy, dedication, and genuine care for both the team and our guests make him stand out every day. As a barkeep and sports aficionado, Boogie goes above and beyond in every aspect of his role. He’s always on top of things, making sure every guest has a great experience from the moment they sit at the bar until they leave. Whether it’s a packed game day or a quiet night, Boogie’s warm, welcoming personality and deep knowledge of sports set the perfect tone. He can effortlessly balance serving up drinks while engaging guests in lively sports talk, creating an atmosphere that’s fun and inclusive. Boogie is also the heart of our team. He constantly steps up to help others, whether it’s handling a rush at the bar, offering advice to newer staff, or lending a hand to the servers when things get hectic. His positive attitude and team-first mentality keep everything running smoothly, no matter how busy it gets. What really sets Boogie apart is his connection with the guests. Regulars come back just to sit at his bar, not only because of his expert drink-making skills but because he makes everyone feel like they’re part of the Yogi’s family. He remembers names, favorite drinks, and keeps the conversation going, whether it’s about the latest sports scores or just life in general. Boogie doesn’t just pour drinks—he creates an experience that makes people want to return time and again. Boogie’s impact on the culture and success of Yogi’s is immeasurable. His exceptional service, teamwork, and passion for what he does make him the perfect candidate for the Front of House Award. He truly goes beyond the call of duty every single day.

Josh Yadlosky, Server/Bartender - The Tap Indianapolis

It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend Josh Yadlosky for the Stars of the Industry award. Josh exemplifies everything we strive for in our team members—dedication, teamwork, and a genuine passion for hospitality. From the moment Josh joined our team, he stood out as someone who is always willing to lend a hand. He consistently goes above and beyond, whether it’s answering guest questions with a friendly and knowledgeable



demeanor, running food, or ensuring the restaurant is clean and well-maintained. His attention to detail and care for both guests and colleagues have made a lasting impact on our team. What truly sets Josh apart is his adaptability and leadership. When a vacancy opened up in our bartending role, Josh stepped up without hesitation. Within just two weeks, he not only mastered the role but became one of our top bartenders, delivering outstanding service and maintaining a positive and professional attitude throughout. He is always the first to offer assistance to new employees, helping them navigate their roles with patience and kindness. Josh's commitment to ensuring the success of the team is unmatched, and his positive energy is contagious. He has earned the respect and admiration of everyone he works with. His dedication and hard work make him an ideal candidate for this award. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of recognition than Josh Yadlosky, and I highly recommend him for the Stars of the Industry award.

Restaurant Heart of the House Award

Nicole Willis, Lead Cook - Bottleworks Hotel

It is my pleasure to nominate Nicole Willis for the 2024 Restaurant Heart of the House Award. I have had the privilege of working beside Nicole for the past 2 years. Over this time, Nicole has exuded excellence in relationship building, mentoring, leading, guiding, creativity and GRIT. I started at Bottleworks Hotel in October of 2022, Nicole was the morning line cook, her responsibilities included In Room Dining as well as breakfast and lunch banquet events. Nicole handles all of this without breaking a sweat all the while with a smile on her face and a conversation for whomever she crosses paths. Her friendly, upbeat, positive energy draws not only our team but also individuals from other departments to stop by the kitchen to see her. Nicole is the go-to person in the kitchen, she works with our team giving directions including cooking techniques, speed, organization, the importance of planning and working ahead. All these things lead to Nicole being promoted to Lead Cook. Nicole has is a gift, she goes above and beyond when it comes to presentation, there is an excellence to her plating, she has the eye and touch and does it with such ease. Not only is she a beast with understanding how to manipulate food to result in the best result, she also has stepped up and helped to keep the kitchen in order when there was no direct management. She has done this on three occasions, most recently she stepped in to help execute a wedding and two VIP events that were happening on the same day. She has been the eyes and ears of the kitchen, working side by side with our F&B Manager, pushing out last-minute events and giving all hands-on deck directions and making it happen. Nicole shines in the kitchen, she has the skill set and mindset that cannot not be taught to be a part of this industry. It is an absolute honor to work bedside her daily watching her learn, grow and pour into the people around her.



Diana Tagalog, Culinary Supervisor - JW Marriott Indianapolis

Diana is a quiet force in the banquet kitchen, and she is meticulous in her work. She creates the highest quality products. Her commitment to excellence is a wonderful example for other associates in the culinary department to push past mediocrity. Recently, we had a plate-up for 3,000 people. The executive chef asked the team if we had enough vegetables and learned that Diana counted the vegetables. It is her attention to detail that makes us the best! Diana is a great worker. If there is any problem in the kitchen. We know she can resolve it quickly. She's a great leader and a role model. Her fellow cooks are bettered by her mentorship. She is amazing and many do not understand how she keeps such a high energy level. In the kitchen, Diana gets pulled in a million different directions but graciously stays on top of it all. Diana was a J1 Intern with the JW Marriott in 2016. During this time, Diana made leaps and bounds learning about the American Kitchen Culture and how to deliver perfect plates with delicious food. Due to Diana successfully completing her J1 Internship and landing a full-time position at the hotel, the International Interns in the kitchen deeply value her advice. She can comfort and coach all of the Interns and help them master the culinary craft. Diana is always looking for ways to improve herself, the team, or the hotel. In the past year, the JW Marriott rolled out an Associate Advocacy Council which allows associates to freely share their ideas for improvement. Diana's ideas sparked minds on the council, directly leading to strategic changes in training plans, kitchen signage and Intern communications. Diana's commitment to growth, mentoring her team and always going above and beyond in every opportunity sets her apart in the culinary world.

Fernando Hernandez, Banquet Culinary Supervisor - Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

We are nominating Fernando because he embodies the Heart of the House category day to day, he is truly the Heart of the House. When speaking of Fernando's impact on our operation, there is not one day that stands out because every day is an exceptional day for Fernando. He consistently delivers above and beyond expectations in the kitchen both with his tasks and his daily interactions with his co-workers. Fernando's customer service is unmatched, due to the outstanding service he provides he is our go-to for VIP clients with omelet stations, such as NFL Teams. We rely on Fernando's welcoming smile, curious nature, and attention to detail to not only serve the best plates but also offer top tier customer service. Fernando is our breakfast supervisor but willing jumps in wherever needed, rather it be grilling 1,000 pieces of chicken for lunch, cleaning dishware from events with over 1,500 guests or ensuring last minute special dietary requests are perfectly delivered. We truly could not serve our guests at the level we do without Fernando. Fernando's impact does not stop at his performance, it is the impact he has had on the kitchen culture at the Marriott that is truly outstanding. Fernando greets every team member with a genuine smile and hello, from all areas of the hotel. Fernando has a deep knowledge of culinary and offers his knowledge for anyone looking for a mentor. He has mentored our current Banquet Sous Chef, and she attributes portions of her success to his mentorship. Fernando's impact spans over his 16 years with the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown. He



started as a breakfast cook for Circle City Bar and Grille at the Indianapolis Marriott downtown. Fernando is known to always have multiple jobs at a time, leaving a breakfast shift to cook dinner at his next job – impeccability giving top tier customer service with all that he does.

Virgilio Amantecatli, Line Cook/Trainer - Metro Diner

Virgilio Amantecatli's story is incredibly inspiring! Overcoming brain cancer three times is a remarkable testament to his resilience, and the fact that he continues to channel that strength into his work at Metro Diner shows his deep passion for life and others. His ability to motivate his team as a trainer, even amidst personal challenges, demonstrates his leadership and selflessness. Being an original team member for eight years speaks to his dedication and the impact he's had on those around him. His presence as the "beating heart" of the team is a reflection of the warrior spirit he brings to every aspect of his life. Virgilio's story continues to amaze with every detail. Not only is he an exceptional worker, but the love and dedication he shows as a father of three add even more depth to his character. His ability to balance the immense challenges of his health with the commitment to both his family and work is truly heartwarming. His nomination for the "Heart of the Kitchen" award perfectly captures his spirit-someone who brings strength, compassion, and perseverance into every space he enters. He truly stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration to all who know him. Thank you for reading about a great nominee! Attached is a picture of Virgilio one day after having brain cancer surgery!!! Back at work 4 months later! He is a warrior!

Samuel Trivett, Heart of House Supervisor - 1933 Lounge Fishers

Sam is constantly looking out for his peers by ensuring they are set up for success before, during and after their shifts. He does this by being thorough and checking out the staff before they leave, ensuring the kitchen is clean, and their stations are stocked. He comes in every day with a positive attitude and willingness to lead by example and coaches his peers. He loves the grind of the industry because he can be creative and make new dishes and he thrives under pressure. He keeps calm and collected during peak volume and sets the tone of the day by his outgoing ambitious demeanor. Sam is always looking for projects around the kitchen such as cleaning duties and being involved in private event execution. Sam is a role model for both the front of the house and the heart of the house because of his drive to succeed and his overall passion for cooking and delighting the guests.

Santos Gonzalez Hernandez, Cook - Yogi's Bar and Grill

Santos is being nominated for their incredible dedication and outstanding service in the hospitality industry. Santos consistently goes above and beyond in their role, setting a great example of professionalism, teamwork, and how to treat guests right. Santos is one of the most dependable people on our team. Whether it's a crazy busy night or unexpected challenges pop up, they always stay calm and focused, keeping everything on track. Their attention to detail and ability to handle whatever comes their way ensures that both the



team and our guests have a smooth, enjoyable experience. What really stands out about Santos is their teamwork. They're always ready to lend a hand, whether it's helping new team members get up to speed, supporting coworkers during rush hours, or stepping in wherever they're needed. Their positive attitude and willingness to go the extra mile make them a natural leader, creating a strong sense of camaraderie among the staff. In short, Santos is a huge asset to Yogi's. Their professionalism, teamwork, and natural passion to make the most out of every shift make them truly stand out, and they absolutely deserve recognition for the hard work they put in every day.

Jose Vivero, Kitchen Hourly Lead - The Tap Bloomington

Jose was promoted from a line cook to a kitchen key hourly this past year because of his performance and attention to detail. He now helps us with food orders, prep lists, as well as running the kitchen and expo. His ticket times and food presentation is what got him promoted to this role.

Maria Mora Esquivel, Prep Cook - Social Cantina - Downtown Indianapolis

Maria works early in the morning and won't leave until everything is complete. She makes sure that her and her prep team are following recipes, builds, and prep processes. We know we can always count on her for consistency, incredibly tasting food, and a clean work station. She is a team player and has even stepped into being a line cook when the lunch rush hits. She takes extreme pride in her work and it shows in her final product.

Steven Oakley, Executive Chef/Proprietor - Oakley's Bistro

It is not often that you see someone in Indianapolis with the years of service that Steve has. Without fail he has fed Indianapolis for the last 35 years without missing a beat. He is still to this day as dedicated to creating menus as the day he started. He thrives on creating unique dishes with local ingredients. He's created relationships within the community that have lasted his entire career (which is not over yet). OAKLEYS bistro partnered with Second Helpings from its concept, Steve has employed people they have sent our way, he's donated portions of proceeds from the restaurant and has helped over the years in their events and their classroom. Over the years he's employed and trained some of the best chefs Indy has, such as Colin Hilton, Carlos Salazar, Braedon Kellner just to name a few, the list can go on and on. He's partnered with local elementary schools to bring kids in to learn manners and how to eat in a nice restaurant. He really helped to establish the palate that is now Indianapolis with other great chefs like Tony Hanslit, Greg Hardesty, Regina Mehalik, Richard Cottance and so on. He's been nominated for James Beard 7 times, been on several food network programs, his brightest star, Beating Bobby Flay. Our guests at the bistro have followed him throughout his career and continue to be like family to us. I hope that you will consider him one of your brightest stars, he certainly is to us here who work alongside him. Thank you for your consideration.



Restaurant Manager of the Year: (4 units or less)

Jamie Morris, Starbucks Manager - JW Marriott Indianapolis

Jamie has been the instrumental piece that the JW Marriott needed to see the Starbucks perform to its full potential. Jamie came into an unstable environment and through her leadership, was able to expertly craft a highly engaged team that delivers on or beyond expectations. Jamie's impact on the operation is directly measured through all positive trends. Since Starbucks has been under Jamie's Leadership, year to date revenue has increased 20% compared to the expected budget. Jamie's impact on the culture and engagement have directly impacted Starbucks profitability. Through the changes that Jamie has expertly implemented, profitability has increased 38% compared to the budget. The most impactful part is that Jamie has been able to make all these changes while managing change resistance and creating a highly engaged team. Jamie genuinely cares for not just the success of the store but also for the team members. Jamie achieved an associate engagement survey ranking of green during the 2023 survey period. This is the highest ranking that a leader can achieve. Jamie has achieved such remarkable scores through her respectful demeanor and flexibility in her leadership style. Jamie looks at each of the team members as co-workers but also individuals outside of work. Jamie is known to take personal interest in her team members and allow team members to utilize their personal expertise while working. If Jamie can support an associate with their career growth or the assignment due for school, she is known to drop what is on her plate and assist without hesitation. Just as Jamie treats the team members as Starbucks, she treats the guests the same. Jamie is known for engaging with customers even in the short 30 seconds it takes to place a coffee order. Rather this be guests at the hotel or internal guests with the hotel, her ability to make quick connections has resulted in overall happier customers. Jamie's impact on the Starbucks department is one that will forever be remembered within the history of JW Marriott.

Kimberly Doaks, Conner's Kitchen and Bar Restaurant Manager - Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

What makes Kimberly such a powerful leader is her innate ability to manage through difficult times. Over this past year, Kimberly suffered a personal tragedy which devastated her world. Majority of others would not have been able to return to the workforce. While Kimberly took some time away, she returned with the famous "Kimberly Smile" and never missed a beat. The "Kimberly Smile" that we have all come to know and love is not one that can be faked, but one that is from the heart. Kimberly goes above and beyond the expectation of a leader when it comes to setting the tone for the day. Kimberly has been with Conner's through 2 transition periods and during both, she was calm in the storm. We all have that leader when we know that we do not have to worry about the operation, and that leader is Kimberly. Her leadership does not stop with her assigned work duties, she goes above and beyond with



assisting other departments to help cover vacation, answer questions, share best practices and offer a listening ear. Kimberly spends the time getting to know each one of her team members on personal levels and creates bonds that go beyond the 4 walls of the hotel. Kimberly is always the first one to get invited to Birthday Parties, Holiday Parties or any gathering occurring outside of work because of the time she puts into creating connections with her team members. It is the standards that Kimberly holds the team members to that has assisted Conner's in passing all 2024 Audits. She ensures team members handling alcohol are properly licensed and trained to do so. She checks every box not because she must, but because she wants the team to be the best version of themselves. We hear the phrase "Heart of the House" but what makes Kimberly such an impactful leader, is her heart for hospitality. Kimberly can manage through difficult times and focus 100% of her attention on helping others. Kimberly is the Heart of the Front of House.

Restaurant Manager of the Year: (5 units or more)

Adam Jackson, Front of House Manager - Harry & Izzy's Northside

Adam Jackson exemplifies what it means to go above and beyond in the hospitality industry. Over a decade ago, Adam began his journey with our team as the valet manager at St. Elmo Steak House. Even then, he demonstrated exceptional guest service, greeting diners by name and remembering details like their cars and preferences. His natural ability to connect with guests laid the foundation for his success and growth within our organization. Today, as a manager at Harry & Izzy's Northside, Adam's dedication to ensuring every guest has an exceptional experience is evident in his daily interactions. One guest recently shared how Adam called ahead of their reservation to ask about their dietary preferences, resulting in a specially crafted three-course vegan meal that was not on the menu. This level of attention and care ensured both the guest and her husband had an unforgettable evening, where they each felt valued and seen. Such stories highlight Adam's proactive approach to hospitality—he doesn't wait for problems; he anticipates guests' needs, making sure everyone feels special and accommodated. Adam's commitment extends far beyond a single evening. He has built lasting relationships with regulars, such as a 90-year-old widower who would frequent Harry & Izzy's. In a moment of kindness, Adam noticed the guest missing a shoe upon arrival. Without hesitation, he purchased a new pair from the nearby store, ensuring the guest's comfort and dignity. This thoughtful action reflects Adam's focus on creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for everyone who walks through the doors. Adam's leadership also inspires his team to follow his example. His passion for hospitality shines through in empowering the staff to excel and create memorable moments for guests. This focus on teamwork has solidified the restaurant's reputation as a premier dining destination. Adam Jackson is not just a manager; he is a leader who sets the standard for



hospitality, professionalism, and care. His genuine passion for creating memorable dining experiences makes him a deserving nominee for Manager of the Year.

Greg McClelland, General Manager - Social Cantina Downtown Indy

Greg started with Finney Hospitality Group (FHG) as a doorman at the original Bloomington Tap location in September of 2019. Greg quickly became one of key hourly team members, setting a consistent example of great work ethic and Hospitality! Greg helped open the re-opening of the Bloomington restaurant scene icon Yogi's in Bloomington the fall of 2019. He quickly became the #1 hourly team member in the restaurant assuming the role of our lead server during the first year of operations! Greg then moved to Indianapolis in a salaried manager role at our Downtown Indianapolis Tap location where he quickly became our most successful assistant manager, rising quickly to the role of Assistant General Manager at this location in a matter of months! Greg mastered the entirety of the restaurant and assumed the role of bar manager. His creative flair allowed Greg to raise the bar with our beer and cocktail program where his efforts led to impressive sales increase and company wide dominance! Because of Greg's leadership, team member development, and commitment to Hospitality Greg was promoted to General Manager of Social Cantina Downtown shortly after we opened in 2022. During Greg's tenure as General Manager, Social Cantina Downtown has quickly become a cornerstone of the Georgia Street corridor and Fan Favorite of event and convention goers. Under Greg tutelage and leadership, he has mentored two team members into salaried managers and a salaried manager into a support role with FHG Catering. Impressively Greg has stewarded this restaurant to record sales levels, holding the busiest week of sales in FHG history and has it on track to realize a sale increase in 2024 of over \$1 Million dollars! Best of all Greg is a humble and gracious leader, who cares deeply for his team and holds himself to a level that makes him a large part of what makes FHG a great place to work! Greg graduated from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music!

Tesa Prater, General Manager - Penn Station East Coast Subs

In 2023, Tesa was ranked 5th out of 319 for exemplary operational performance, and continues to perform in the top 10% for 2024. Her relational management style is balanced between connecting with employees, guests, and the community thereby creating a cohesive team within a safe environment to provide outstanding customer service and a consistent product. Tesa's vision is to provide guests high-quality food and a welcoming experience. She understands that collaboration amongst team members is crucial to achieve her goals, which is why she works side by side with new employees, checking in and listening to their needs, providing support and affirmation during a busy shift. Her attentive and caring attitude towards her employees directly translates to how her employees interact with guests. She reinforces operational standards through regular coaching and recognizes that all feedback, guest or corporate, is an opportunity for herself and her team to improve. Tesa's controllable metrics and performance evaluations demonstrate her competency as a Restaurant Manager. Tesa manages the schedule with great awareness of her employees



lives outside of work, making certain parents with children are able to attend functions and/or participate in school/community activities. Tesa, quite literally, brings the whole crew in at the holidays and makes everyone breakfast – allowing them to experience the level of service they provide throughout the year. She has devoted 20 years to our franchise and acknowledges a deep appreciation for the integrity of BRG. The awards Tesa has won are proudly displayed in the store, acknowledging that success comes from teamwork. Her relationships with employees are genuine, they know she sincerely cares about them and therefore her team strives for excellence. At Tesa’s store, you’ll be greeted with a warm welcome, perhaps your name, and a “Thanks for coming!” on your way out the door.

Rising Star Award

Aligibani Arias, Houseman - TownePlace Suites by Marriott Indianapolis Airport

Aligibani was hired as houseman but has taken on the responsibility of supervising when our Executive Housekeeper is off work. He is a jack of all trades. He has been called at 4am to cover breakfast on days we get a sudden call off. He has learned Fosse so he can step in to work at the desk with checking people in and out. He does laundry/strips beds/puts away the supplies that are delivered to the hotel for housekeeping. Aligibani is the hotel comedian. He always has a smile and is quick to joke and laugh at himself to lighten up the mood. Even in those stressful situations that occur at a hotel at the last minute, you can count on Aligibani to be the person to make all of us laugh and work together. He is a joy to work with and mentor.

Letti Balingga, Front Desk Agent - Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Whitestown/Indianapolis NW

This is Letti’s first position within the hospitality workforce. We opened January 31st of this year, and she has been with us since February. While I unfortunately do not have any reviews or letters to show the passion that Letti has for our guests, I do have the privilege of getting to watch her interact on an almost daily basis. No matter how busy we are, or what may be going on at the moment, Letti is always there to greet our guests with the biggest smile, positive attitude, and professionalism. She makes sure our guests’ needs and experience are top priority at all times, as well as making them feel comfortable and giving them that “at home” feeling. Letti is always the first person to step up in situations and help. I am extremely proud of all of the growth and knowledge has gained during her time thus far as a front desk agent.

Delaney Dunn, Front Desk Manager - Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

Delaney is a prime example of a Rising Star in the hospitality industry. Delaney has extensive knowledge of hospitality through the lens of restaurants and events. Her extensive



knowledge is motivated by her love of hospitality, and her love of hospitality led her to take on the transition to our Front Office Department. Delaney has been with our Front Office for 6 months now and has made huge waves of improvement since her transition. Delaney is not afraid to take on a new project, a new challenge or new expectation and does so effortlessly. Delaney is known to hit the ground running and will race to the finish line to ensure she delivers beyond expectations with every project she touches. Delaney's position with our Front Office teams allows her to focus on our MClub, the lounge used for Marriott BonVoy members. In the past 6 months, under Delaney's leadership, the MClub has done a complete 180. Prior to Delaney's leadership, the MClub would leave our guests with a lacking impression of Marriott Service. If a guest had a negative review about their stay, 8 out of 10 times, it was due to the offerings and hours of MClub. Currently, the only feedback we receive on MClub is positive. This has had a direct positive impact on our guest satisfaction scores. Rather it be from streamlining processes and procedures, implementing new products, or redecorating the space – guests and team members have taken notice of her impact. These improvements have directly impacted the department's productivity, team members engagement and Guest Satisfaction Scores. Delaney's success with Mclub has made her a well trusted member of our Front Office leadership team. Recently, we tasked Delaney with spearheading the new air quality control system in the guest rooms. Delaney single handedly managed all communication, both the good and the bad, with our guests and team members. We are proud of Delaney and the impact she has made in the short 6 months she has been with our Front Office Team.

Jordyn Gasser, Guest Services Supervisor - Bottleworks Hotel

We would like to nominate Jordyn for the Rising Star Award. Everyone who works with Jordyn quickly realizes how valuable and impactful an employee she really is. From Day 1 to today, you can really see how this star has risen. Her knowledge and understanding of the industry is fully transparent through her work and dedication to success. She has helped fully train every employee who is currently working at our Front Desk, and you can easily see her impact there (along with her genuine love for our guests shining through each of them). During transitional times, when staffing was sparse, Jordyn took charge and developed the Front of House to where it has become today, all while navigating a very extensive and trying Opera migration! She truly cares about our guests and is very empathetic with them at times when needed. Jordyn fully understands the true definition of hospitality. Our star is rising...

Haylee Jeter, Front Desk Agent - Homewood Suites by Hilton - Keystone Crossing

Haylee is currently attending college full time in Hospitality Management. Recently we had a complete power outage in the area causing everything at the hotel to be off for over 12 hours. Haylee was the only employee at the front desk. She followed all emergency procedures, including printing her reports ahead of time knowing there was severe weather coming. She brought all emergency equipment to the front desk so it was handy. She called management to report the issues as they happened and to ensure there wasn't anything that needed to be checked. She also made sure that maintenance was walking all areas



consistently. Most importantly, she was also taking care of all guests that were coming to the desk. When the next shift arrived, she called management again and had a meeting with the team members to make sure they were comfortable and had all they needed. She kept very good notes about all guests and any issues and made sure to post everything in the system the next day. She was a complete rock star; she made what could have been a dreadful experience seem so manageable and under control.

Abigail Kinkle, Front Desk Manager - JW Marriott Indianapolis

We are pleased to nominate Abigail Kinkle for the Rookie of the year with the Stars of the Industry Award. As a manager in training with the College Recruit Program from Purdue University, Abigail has displayed an impressive ability to quickly learn and apply new skills in her role. Abigail has hit the ground running and takes every opportunity to learn and grow that is offered to her. She can do so with poise and grace. Abigail's diligence and attention to detail have been instrumental in training and developing her team. Abigail leaves no stone unturned when it comes to ensuring that each team member is aligned with the department goals. Abigail expertly applies all that she had learned while being a leader to take the time with each team member to align them with the department. Due to Abigail's efforts to align the team, the team has accomplished surpassing the 2024 goal with upsells. The team currently has sold \$258,495. Her impressive results are also echoed in the Guest Satisfaction Score which is currently a 77.8. Abigail also ensures that the Executive Lounge is up to brand standard and fosters collaborative communication cross-departmentally to successfully order, cook, supply and stock to standards. Abigail's positive attitude has fostered a collaborative and motivating work environment. Her positive attitude has directly impacted the culture in the Front Office Department. Abigail can lift up her colleagues and deliver success time and time again. Her leadership style is both effective and empowering, as she consistently leads by example. Abigail's growth and impact make her an ideal candidate for this prestigious award!

Carlos Pineda Jr, Assistant Front Office Manager - Hyatt Regency Indianapolis

This story begins with a chair. While it might seem an unusual starting point, consider the chairs in life: the first grade stool with a place for your folders, the couched sources for a first apartment, the worn pleather chair handed down to the newbie, and the new one upgraded to with each new hire. Chairs mark and celebrate our journey. On my first day as Human Resources Manager, I noticed a new employee meticulously cleaning a white pub chair in the lobby. He wiped. He buffed. He polished it with a level of care that surpassed what many would invest in their entire dining room. His relentless pursuit of perfection was impossible to ignore. Our General Manager saw and introduced himself to our new service partner. He and his father, who shared the same name, had just been hired as lobby porters—so we called the younger Junior. It was heartening to see our leadership celebrate their work ethic. It confirmed that I had joined a team where effort is truly valued. Weeks later, when I was confronted by a language barrier, Junior happened by and stopped to help. With a warm smile, he bridged the communication gap with ease, alleviating the stress of the situation and embodying the spirit of teamwork. Months later, Junior's hard work was recognized



when he was named Service Partner of the Quarter, a testament to his exceptional contributions. His journey continued as he was promoted from Night Supervisor to Assistant Executive Housekeeper. He became a cornerstone of the housekeeping team, advocating for his colleagues and inspiring them with his unwavering support and recognition of their hard work. His dedication also earned him the honor of Manager of the Quarter. Just over two years later, Junior has become the Assistant Front Office Manager. His journey from porter to a respected leader reflects the essence of a Rising Star, showing that true passion and commitment lead to success in this industry. Both he and the chair from his first day remain, but each has transformed—one reupholstered, the other now coming to work in a new suit.

Angela Rivera, Guest Services Agent - Ironworks Hotel Indy

Ironworks Hotel Indy is proud to nominate Guest Services Agent Angela Rivera. Angela consistently anticipates and exceeds guest expectations, demonstrating exceptional dedication and service in every guest interaction. Her warm smile and genuine enthusiasm for hospitality create a welcoming atmosphere from the moment guests arrive. Angela's attention to details is remarkable, she remembers repeat guests' preferences and efficiently handles special requests to the delight of her clients. One standout example of her commitment occurred when an arriving family encountered a last-minute reservation discrepancy at check-in. Angela quickly identified the inconsistency and resolved the situation, while simultaneously arranging for complimentary amenities to enhance their stay and maximize the enjoyment of their leisure visit, transforming a potential frustration into a delightful experience. Her exceptional service has led to numerous positive guest reviews and surveys mentioning her efforts directly by name and crediting her for a positive impact on their Ironworks experiences. She has also won recognition recently as our Hotel Employee of the Quarter for Q2 2024, as well as accolades in company-wide competitions. She has achieved no less than 9 perfect secret shopper interactions so far this year, a company best and an unprecedented commendation! Angela is a valued team member, always willing to assist colleagues and share her expertise which she has refined by serving guests not only domestically, but also while working abroad, even as far as Germany! Her positive attitude and problem-solving skills inspire others and contribute to a work environment that inspires and demands excellence. Angela's unwavering dedication to guest satisfaction and her exceptional contributions to our team make her truly deserving of this recognition and to be considered Indianapolis's Rising Star in Hospitality.

Jackson Schneider, Assistant Manager - Bottleworks Hotel

Jackson began working as a valet/bellman in March 2024. Since then, he has hit the ground running, and he received two different promotions in just 5 short months. He is now the Assistant Manager for the Bottleworks Valet Team and still has his sights set on more. Jackson exemplifies the definition of work ethic as well as determination. Jackson shines by finding a connection with all of our guests as well as fellow employees. He is consistently getting his name mentioned in Bottleworks Hotel reviews. Anyone who has had the chance



to experience the Bottleworks District, you have probably noticed Jackson sprint full speed to grab someone's car or carry luggage through a rainstorm. He is willing to go above and beyond to ensure that everyone who visits will be treated like royalty. Not only is Jackson a terrific employee, but he is also a terrific colleague and friend. He is willing to pick up an extra shift if we are in a pinch or pick up the slack for someone who is just maybe not having a great day. Bottleworks is very lucky to have him, and his future here is very bright!

Domonic Tardy, Culinary Arts Instructor - Anderson High School Career Center D26

Dominic has been an incredible Culinary Arts Teacher for the last five years. In those five years I have witnessed Dominic mold hundreds of Culinary Arts students into the amazing young adults that they are today. I can only imagine how far his teaching has reached and has impacted the Culinary Industry. Out of 2,000 Career Technical Education teachers he is recognized as the best. He won the 2024 Indiana ACTE Teacher of the Year. This honor not only reflects his dedication to culinary education but also highlights the collective achievements of our students and community, reinforcing the importance of professionalism and teamwork in shaping future culinary leaders. Mentorship is a cornerstone of his teaching philosophy. He actively mentors new teachers, guiding them through safety and event committees, and enhancing our Culinary Skills space in partnership with facility management. This collaborative effort ensures that our kitchen remains a safe and effective learning environment, promoting both creativity and professionalism. Dominic is very dedicated to helping those in the culinary community. He led the efforts for the Spanish Heritage Storyteller event at D26 allowed students to collaborate on cultural storytelling through food, enriching their understanding of diverse culinary traditions. He also teaches healthy cooking classes in the community and adult training sessions at the Cultural Winery further demonstrated our commitment to promoting culinary skills and healthy eating. Additionally, his help with the summer camp at Sullivan University in collaboration with NASA sparked innovation and creativity among participants, showcasing the potential of culinary arts in interdisciplinary applications. Moreover, his interactions with guests, from industry professionals to parents, play a crucial role in enriching the educational experience. Their feedback and support help refine our curriculum and initiatives. He deserves to be the Rising Star of INRLA because of his huge impact on the Culinary Arts Community.

I am honored to recommend Domonic Tardy for this award, recognizing his outstanding dedication and contributions as a culinary instructor. Throughout his tenure, Chef Tardy has demonstrated an exceptional ability to prepare students for the real world by equipping them with not only technical culinary skills but also a strong work ethic and a passion for the culinary arts. His commitment extends beyond the classroom, as he frequently participates in after-school activities, ensuring his students have ample opportunities to develop their skills and confidence. One of Chef Tardy's most defining characteristics is his unwavering enthusiasm for helping others and engaging with community events. His passion for supporting students is evident in the extra time and effort he invests to provide mentorship,



guidance, and support. This dedication is reflected in his recent recognition as a recipient for the prestigious CTE Teacher of the Year for 2024, a well-deserved honor that highlights his impact and leadership.

Chef Tardy has been an incredible addition to the team at the D26 Career Center. In less than 2 years, he has truly transformed our Culinary Program at the D26 students. Not only has it grown in terms of the number of students, but in visibility in our community. This has been done through community partnerships and innovative and immersive opportunities for his students.