

## NEWS RELEASE

### COBBLESTONE HOTELS CELEBRATES TEN YEARS AT BRAND CONFERENCE

**March 16, 2018** – NEENAH, WISCONSIN – The theme of the 2018 Conference was simple: Celebrating Ten Years. Joined by general managers, owners, prospective investors, and more, the event was hosted at the Radisson Blu at the Mall of America in Bloomington, MN March 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>. The attendance surpassed previous years to nearly 300 attendees.

#### FOCUSING ON MANAGERS.

At the 2016 Conference, the brand services team wanted to host an event where the focus was just on the general managers. The focus continued at this conference, the Exclusive General Manager event was held at GameWorks, an arcade and bowling center at the Mall of America.

"We learn what we can, have fun, you just feel like you are friends with everyone already, because we are in a small company so you get to socialize and build that friendship." Said Steve Baggett, a General Manager at the Cobblestone Hotel & Suites in Newton, IL.

#### CEO WELCOME & RECEPTION.

Introduced as the biggest dreamer there is, Brian Wogernese, President, Founder, and CEO of Cobblestone Hotels, addressed the conference Sunday evening reflecting on the last ten years, but first thanking the managers.

No better way to kick off the celebrations than by shutting the Hard Rock Café down to throw a Welcome Reception Party, where a live band, Chase & Ovation, pulled the attendees on the dance floor.

Keynote speaker, Amelia Rose Earhart, a pilot, speaker, and reporter, awakened the crowd Monday morning by her contagious enthusiasm for action, charming leadership system, and took the audience along on her flight around the world with her story and inspiration.

#### BRAND GROWTH.

Jeremy Griesbach, President of Development, discussed the brand's development strategy and growth plans for 2018.

Continuing the expansion of the "Main Street" prototype, a different model typically found in larger markets, Cobblestone broke ground March 5<sup>th</sup> on a new headquarter location that will also be used for training managers.

"Is this our future? No," Griesbach said. "We understand our bread and butter, and we think that is what will drive us in the future. But, we do think there is a place to increase Cobblestone brand recognition as people travel throughout the states. I want to reassure you that small town America is where we're from and where we'll be."

Last year, the brand opened 13 properties adding 618 guestrooms to the system. Currently there are eight locations under construction, 86 open locations in 18 states, with more than 50 in the pipeline. Cobblestone Hotels anticipates adding two additional states in 2018.

#### BRAND UPDATES.

Kicking off Monday morning, the Brand Services team addressed the attendees with updates on changes to quality assurance, guest satisfaction scoring, and were joined by various partners for a Loyalty & Booking panel to address the brand's focus on driving direct bookings and building guest relations.

The team was excited to announce the launch Cobblestone Rewards Visa Signature credit card in summer of 2018, as well as a new uniform program.

Wogernese addressed the chatter of Property Improvement Plans.

"The point of this conversation is that at the 10-year mark, it's time," he said, generating laughter from those in attendance. "At that point you're either worn out or uglified out. So, keep in mind that ahead of year 10 we need to talk about your plans."

The brand completed renovations on several of the corporate stores last year, with anticipation to renovate the next round. He reassured the audience; the brand would not expect the franchisees to complete something they first did not do.

### **EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS.**

After the luncheon and partner showcase, the conference was divided between educational sessions on brand and operations, and development and strategy.

Amongst the speakers for the brand educational sessions was Travel Media Group, discussing the importance of the operators staying current with social and search trends, Terra Verde discussing the heightening issues of cyber security and protecting guests' information, and Advocates for Human Rights educating the franchisees on human trafficking and how to handle any suspicions.

The development educational sessions were centered around investor feedback, growth of the Boarders Inn & Suites by Cobblestone Hotels, and what market feasibility companies and banks are looking for in projects.

### **AWARDS CEREMONY.**

One of the finer highlights of the conference is to recognize the people behind helping the brand thrive. The following were recipients of 2017 Awards:

**Boarders Owner of the Year:** Marsha Nice, Boarders Inn & Suites of Medford, WI

**Cobblestone Owner of the Year:** Joel McDowell, Cobblestone Hotel & Suites of Greenville, PA

**General Manager of the Year:** Dean Hanes, Cobblestone Inn & Suites of St. Marys, PA

**Employee of the Year:** Tammie VanAusdal, Cobblestone Hotel & Suites of Charlestown, IN

**Renovation of the Year:** Boarders Inn & Suites by Cobblestone Hotels of Syracuse, KS

**Property of the Year:** Cobblestone Inn & Suites of Corry, PA

This year the property of the year was awarded with an orange Challenger; however, not for the property to keep. The car is used to continue the brand's efforts in community involvement, by asking the property of the year to use the car to raise money for a local charity.

"Being part of Cobblestone Network is an honor in itself, and to have our Corry property chosen as Hotel of Year from among our 80+ peers is absolutely amazing!" said Tom Kennedy, owner of the hotel. "To me it represents that we truly embraced/delivered Cobblestone Culture of Big City Quality, Small Town Values, and that we leveraged our ownership group by partnering with WHG Companies to assemble, train and lead an A+ team that works hard every day to provide the best possible guest experience."

The brand announced the 2019 Conference will be held in Denver, Colorado.

### ***About Cobblestone Hotels***

Based in Neenah, WI Cobblestone Hotels, LLC is a leading upper-midscale hotel brand with over 140 hotels open, under construction, or in development in 18 states. The company continues to pride itself in filling the lodging needs of communities through its upper mid-scale new build brand. Signature amenities include high-speed Internet access, complimentary hot breakfast, convenience store, fitness centers, business centers, and more.

Cobblestone Hotel & Suites is part of Cobblestone Hotels, LLC, which also includes Cobblestone Inn & Suites and Boarders Inn and Suites by Cobblestone Hotels. For development information please visit [www.CobblestoneFranchising.com](http://www.CobblestoneFranchising.com).

Cobblestone Hotels offers the Cobblestone Rewards frequent stayer program where guests receive ten points for every dollar spent, and can be redeemed as award nights, or with other redemption partners. For more information visit [www.CobblestoneRewards.com](http://www.CobblestoneRewards.com).