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VRLTA Announces Winners of 2021 Ordinary Awards, Celebrating the Best of the Hospitality and Tourism Industry

RICHMOND, VA – The Virginia Restaurant Lodging and Travel Association (VRLTA) celebrated the best of the hospitality and tourism industry during the 2021 Ordinary Awards presentation and dinner at the Omni Richmond Hotel on Monday, October 4. Winners for the sixth annual event were announced to an audience of 220 industry peers and leaders from across the state.

Awards are given each year in recognition of Virginia's restaurants, hotels, lodging establishments, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), attractions and more. Nominations are open to members of the Association and non-members, and nominees are judged by a group of VRLTA members and industry professionals. The Lifetime Achievement and Legislator Awards are determined by the VRLTA staff and Board.

The following 21 individuals and businesses were selected as winners from nearly 150 nominees:

- **Bartender of the Year**
Gina Lehtinen, Glory Days Grill, Alexandria
- **Supplier Employee of the Year**
Kip Ruposky, VistaGraphics, Inc
- **Charlie Buser Award**
Attraction Employee of the Year
Morgan Guyer, Virginia War Memorial
- **Hotel Employee of the Year**
Benjamin Ross, Hilton Richmond Downtown
- **Restaurant Employee of the Year**
Clark Kidwell, Tom's Drive-In
- **Chef of the Year**
Antwon Brinson, Culinary Concepts AB
- **Rising Pineapple Award for Student of the Year**
Reed Fundter, Virginia Tech
- **Legislator of the Year**
Senator John Bell
- **Supplier of the Year**
Encore at the Greater Richmond Convention Center
- **Brewery of the Year**
Stable Craft Brewing
- **Distillery of the Year**
A. Smith Bowman Distillery
- **Winery of the Year**
Blenheim Vineyards
- **Hotelier of the Year**
Nick Patel, Kalyan Hospitality
- **Jim Ricketts Award**
DMO/CVB Employee of the Year
Bruce Newton, Hampton Convention & Visitors Bureau
- **Jim Wordsworth Award**
Restaurateur of the Year
Stephanie Dietz, The Pink Dinghy
- **Hospitality Hero – Individual**
Victoria Wimberley, Hilton Norfolk The Main
- **Attraction of the Year**
Dairy Market
- **Restaurant of the Year**
Mac and Bob's Restaurant
- **Hotel of the Year**
Quirk Hotel Richmond
- **Hospitality Hero – Business**
Homewood Suites Woodbridge
- **Golden Pineapple Lifetime Achievement Award**
Jim Wordsworth

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“On behalf of the Association, staff, and board, we applaud the efforts of our 2021 nominees, finalists, and winners for the exemplary work they have done and will continue to do,” said Eric Terry, President of VRLTA.

The event was sponsored by Visit Fairfax, Performance Food Service, UnitedHealthcare, Smithfield Culinary, Sysco, E. & J. Gallo Winery, and Classic Party Rentals of Virginia.

For more information on the Ordinary Awards, visit www.ordinaryawards.com.

*Why would the awards be called...**Ordinary**? Chinn’s Ordinary, considered “the oldest original inn in America” (Baltimore Sun), was built around 1728 in Chinn’s Crossroads, now Middleburg, Virginia. The building was uniquely situated to serve as an inn and tavern catering to travelers. Since 1937, it has operated as the Red Fox Inn & Tavern. This history of Chinn’s Ordinary speaks to all facets of VRLTA’s membership—restaurants, lodging, and travel, while the term “ordinary” is just the opposite of the hospitality and travel industry. The true goal of these awards is to honor those in an extraordinary industry, individuals and companies, that are truly **Extraordinary**.*

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Awards event photos available upon request. Contact Carla Murray, Director of Marketing and Communications, at carla@vrlta.org or 804-288-3065, ext. 205.