



**Huntsville/Madison County Hospitality Association hosts
28th Annual Pineapple Awards Ceremony**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jennifer Hoffman-Little, 2025 HMCHA President

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(Huntsville, Ala.) –The [Huntsville/Madison County Hospitality Association](#) (HMCHA) recognized the outstanding accomplishments of hospitality professionals in the Huntsville/Madison County community at the 28th Annual Pineapple Dinner & Awards Ceremony on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at the Von Braun Center South Hall Ballroom.

Each year, the organization holds the Pineapple Dinner & Awards Ceremony to honor members who have exhibited outstanding achievement and professionalism in the local hospitality industry. In addition to the awards, HMCHA provides annual educational and professional development scholarships during the event. The hospitality industry includes diverse market segments of hotels, restaurants, tourism, travel, attractions, allied services and is one of the state’s largest employment providers.

The evening's program included welcoming remarks from Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle thanking attendees for their continued dedication and hard work throughout the year. He noted it is the people working in the hospitality industry who are the first to greet and make an impression on visitors to our city and he commended everyone for doing a wonderful job of helping make Huntsville a great place to visit and live.

“It was truly an honor for me to serve as President of the Huntsville/Madison County Hospitality Association in 2024,” said outgoing HMCHA President Kelley Middlebrooks. “I’ve seen firsthand the passion and dedication this community has for the hospitality industry, and I encourage anyone involved to join this incredible association and help strengthen the connection within our growing community.”

During the event, the Association continued a long tradition of recognizing and supporting member employees and their dependents with higher education and professional development scholarships.

2025 Hospitality Scholarship Winners:

1. Amanda Sands, Arrowhead Conferences & Events – B’Lisa King Professional Development Scholarship
2. Mackenzi Turner, daughter of Cat Turner, Arts Huntsville - General Scholarship
3. Jaylen Goins, employee of Holiday Inn Research Park - General Scholarship

The **Rising Star Award** kicked-off the awards portion of the evening. The recipient of this award must work in the industry for less than 5 years but demonstrate the potential to become a pivotal figure in the hospitality

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community and exhibit excellence in their professional work endeavors. They excel in their role and are excited to learn more and grow within the hospitality industry. The 2025 Rising Star Award recipient is Claudia Gatewood, Event Coordinator at the Von Braun Center.

The next award does not recognize one individual's contributions to the hospitality industry but instead celebrates the impact an organization's team can make. The 2025 **Outstanding Team Award** winner is Arts Huntsville.

The **Red Ribbon Awards** are the highest honors for those working in the Hospitality Industry. To be nominated, the individual must be currently working in the hospitality industry and through their career have made outstanding contributions directly benefiting tourism. The person should actively work to enhance the economic impact of tourism in the community, as well as be a positive role model to others. One winner is selected from each of the four membership categories of the Huntsville-Madison County Hospitality Association.

2025 Red Ribbon Award Winners:

Lodging & Conference Center – Amy Flaugher, Downtown Huntsville Springhill Suites by Marriott

Food & Beverage – Mike Sokoll, Huntsville Coca-Cola

Tourism & Travel – Christopher Madkour, Huntsville Museum of Art

Allied Services – John Bono, The UPS Store

The next award is one of the most coveted awards in our industry and has a long list of recipients who exemplify hospitality and who have made tremendous contributions to tourism and travel. Leaders across the hospitality industry are nominated by members of HMCHA for the prestigious **Pineapple Award**. This award is given to an individual who has been involved with a project that has had a major impact on the hospitality industry and/or has been involved in the improvement of an existing project or program that benefits tourism. The 2025 Pineapple Award recipient is Brenda Martin, Host of Inside Huntsville, to recognize and honor her decades of service as a leader and advocate promoting our community.

HMCHA created the **Lifetime Achievement Award** in honor and memory of B'lisa King in 2018. This award is not presented every year and is reserved to recognize an individual who has spent a significant portion of their career in the hospitality and travel profession – contributing to the betterment of the industry in a noteworthy and lasting way over an extended period. Someone who demonstrates outstanding service and has a goal of making the hospitality industry a great place to work within, as well as providing lasting experiences for those who travel to the area. This year's Lifetime Achievement Award recipient is Marie Arighi who recently retired after 35 years of working in Huntsville's hospitality and tourism sector, the last 25 of which she was Director of Sales and Event Services at the Von Braun Center.

Following the awards ceremony, the 2025 Huntsville/Madison County Hospitality Association Officers and Board of Directors were inducted, followed by the official introduction of the 2025 HMCHA President Jennifer Hoffman-Little of MH Hospitality.

“It is an honor to be able to work alongside so many dedicated professionals who share a passion for hospitality, management and catering excellence,” said Hoffman-Little. “I am looking forward to a full and productive year of building the Association with the help of our dedicated Board this year.”

Special thanks to sponsors of this year's event, Sysco and Redstone Federal Credit Union.

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About the Huntsville-Madison County Hospitality Association

The Huntsville/Madison County Hospitality Association is a 501c6 membership-based association with the purpose to unite representatives of the hospitality and tourism industry, including Lodging & Conference Center, Food & Beverage, Tourism & Travel, and Allied Services for the promotion and protection of their common interests.