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**DRAFT FOR REVIEW**

**Explore Gwinnett Recognizes Hospitality Partners at Annual Hospitality Awards Reception**

*More Than 4,500 Donated Items Collected for the Michael Steven Powell Legacy Fund*

**Gwinnett County, Ga. – (December x, 2023) –** Explore Gwinnett honored several of its distinguished hospitality leaders at its annual hospitality awards event, hosted at the Gas South Convention Center on Thursday, December 14. Attended by over 150 of Gwinnett’s hospitality industry professionals, the event was also organized as a donation drive resulting in more than 4,500 items collected to benefit the Michael Steven Powell Legacy Fund.

“2023 was quite an eventful and successful year for Gwinnett County. In addition to leading the metro region in hotel occupancy, we celebrated the completed expansion and renovation of the Gas South Convention Center and the official topping off of Gwinnett’s first convention headquarters hotel, the Westin Atlanta Gwinnett,” said Lisa Anders, executive director of Explore Gwinnett. “We are especially proud of our industry’s economic impact, which topped $1 billion this year.”

The hospitality partners recognized at the event included:

* **Outstanding Sports Partner:** Shannon Butler*–* Special Event Operations Coordinator, Gwinnett Stripers
* **Outstanding Hospitality Partner:** Wendi Lucas – Sales Manager, Main Event Entertainment
* **Outstanding Hospitality Partner:** David Sukala – Director of Sales and Marketing, Sonesta Gwinnett Place Atlanta
* **Outstanding Hospitality Partner:** Kevin Priger – Senior Sales Manager, Hilton Atlanta Northeast
* **Outstanding Community Partner:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation

Gwinnett’s hospitality community once again exemplified strong community stewardship, participating in Explore Gwinnett’s annual hospitality industry charity drive. The 2023 recipient was the Michael Steven Powell Legacy Fund which was created by Casey and Marcia Powell to honor their son, Michael, who passed away in 2022. This small non-profit is committed to supporting local charities and chooses a local charity each month to support.

Items collected during the event included toothpaste, shampoo, soap, feminine products, deodorant, shaving razors, socks, and underwear.

“We are so thankful to be able to come together to give back to our community and to celebrate our successes from 2023 as we look forward to a bright 2024,” said Anders.

**For more information about Explore Gwinnett, visit** [**ExploreGwinnett.org**](https://www.exploregwinnett.org/)**. Stay up-to-date on the latest Explore Gwinnett news by following** [**@ExploreGwinnett**](https://www.instagram.com/exploregwinnett/) **on Instagram or** [**ExploreGwinnett**](https://www.facebook.com/exploregwinnett) **on Facebook.**

**About Explore Gwinnett:**

Explore Gwinnett serves as the official tourism organization of Gwinnett County, which consists of 16 cities north of Downtown Atlanta. Gwinnett County offers award-winning dining ranging from authentic Asian fare to southern delights, an abundance of shopping, arts programming, outdoor activities and more. Locals and tourists alike can explore various culinary offerings with special year-round events including Sippin' in the Suburbs Beer Tours and Seoul of the South Food Tours. Gwinnett County is a flourishing community for artists and also serves as a thriving production hub for popular films and television series.

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