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PRESS RELEASE

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TRAVEL MATTERS AND TOURISM GOLDEN SERVICE AWARDS PRESENTATION

The Tourism community gathered Tuesday, May 12 to celebrate the impact of tourism on Clayton County and award deserving recipients with the Tourism Golden Service Awards.

The awards ceremony is a part of the community celebration of National Tourism Week, May 9-17, 2009. A week where across the United States, tourism entities, governments and businesses promote the message **TRAVEL MATTERS**.

Just how much does Tourism Matter? The impact of tourism on Clayton County's economy generates \$121.1 million in state taxes and \$31.7 million in local tax collections. Tourism supports 31,000 jobs in Clayton County and has an annual payroll of \$1.7 million.

"We have plenty to be grateful for here with a strong diversity of tourism venues," said Patrick Duncan, president and CEO of the Clayton County Convention & Visitors Bureau. "The National Archives, State Archives, Arts Clayton, Spivey Hall, Stately Oaks Plantation, Civil War sites, The Road to Tara Museum, dining, shopping, entertainment, outdoor parks and recreation...all easily accessible from Interstate 75 which is a river of money flowing through our county every single day."

The public was also invited to nominate someone from their company who has gone "above and beyond in assisting a visitor" so that they may be honored in a special ceremony. Three recipients were chosen to receive a **Golden Service Awards**.

Lauren Singleton works as an Events Coordinator for the Morrow Tourist Center. She has worked there for the last four years. Coworkers say that Singleton treats her volunteers as "special citizens" and makes them feel like a part of a great organization.

Ted Key works as a volunteer docent & historian with Historical Jonesboro/Stately Oaks Plantation. He has been a volunteer with the organization for over 25 years. Key is responsible for leading tours for visitors at Stately Oaks and works as a storyteller for groups. Key also works with other special events held by Historical Jonesboro and serves as chairman of the Native American Heritage Day.

LaTonya Echols works as a Front Desk Guest Service Agent at the Comfort Suites Stockbridge. Echols has worked for Comfort Suites for a year and a half. Coworkers say that Echols is an excellent front line employee and offers customers great service while handling multiple tasks. Customers always comment about her smile and willing attitude to help others.

The committee decided to give out a special award this year, the **Friend of Tourism** award. This award is presented to a person on the management level of the tourism field that exhibits willingness to partner with others and a genuine love of their community. **Jim McSweeney**, Regional Administrator of the National Archives, Southeast Region received this award. McSweeney has expanded the Archives outreach to include partnerships with Arts Clayton, Clayton State University, the Clayton/ Henry Genealogy Society and many other groups. McSweeney is a promoter of the importance of not simply preserving our historic records but using them and learning from them. He is always willing to welcome tour groups, media and all types of tourism meetings and groups and personally conducted the tours for these groups.

“It is important to recognize those individuals who are giving our visitors a memorable experience,” Duncan said. “Each of these recipients is well-deserving of this award. These are the kind of people that visitors remember and tell their friends and family about.”

The Clayton County Convention & Visitors Bureau is the official tourism marketing agency for Clayton County. The CVB advertises and promotes the area to bring business to hotels, attractions, historical sites and meeting facilities within Clayton County and its neighboring communities.

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