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55 YEARS

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## **Green Hospitality and Tourism Leadership Council**

March 13, 2008 - Rhode Island

Karen Jedson, director of our Division of Tourism, Culture, and Development, is a member of the Green Hospitality and Tourism Leadership Council, a committee comprised of representatives from tourism- and hospitality-related groups as well as officials from the state Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM).

The council has established an Environmental Certification Program, with an eye to helping industry businesses implement new programs or expand existing services in cost-effective, more environmentally-friendly ways.

The program's centerpiece is a self-certification workbook, which has been distributed to hoteliers and restaurant owners throughout Rhode Island. Participants are asked to assess their operations and services in nine different categories, such as waste management, energy, kitchen and housekeeping, administrative offices and recycling, and check off any practices that they currently employ.

A point value, determined by RIDEM's Office of Technical and Customer Assistance, is allotted for each question. Topics for assessment are wide-ranging and include, for example, the amount of post-consumer recycled stationery that's used, to whether food served is organic or locally grown, if surplus food is donated or composted, if use of styrofoam and non-essential "to-go" products has been eliminated, if the facility recycles, uses biodegradable, non-tested-on animals products, practices water conservation steps or has installed LED lighting. An "environmental extras" is the ninth category, and awards points for creative, extra steps a business is taking - establishing an environmental task force or team, for instance.

Once the survey has been completed, RIDEM staffers determine a company's final score. Those who earn 100 points or more automatically receive a two-year Environmental Leader certification, with random verification appointments throughout that timeframe. This designation includes use of the program logo, flag and decals, a listing on state tourism and hospitality websites and on brochures that identify them as "environmentally preferable," and ongoing, free technical assistance from RIDEM.

To earn re-certification, a company must increase their overall points to 130. Those that do not earn 100 points can be awarded a provisional certificate, providing they agree to increase environment-related practices within a specified timeframe.

Hoteliers recently completed a training seminar, and restaurant owners and those in other hospitality sectors will be invited to the next session of training slated for the beginning of April.

Next month, those hoteliers who have advanced their efforts will be honored with a ceremony - planned, appropriately enough, on or near Earth Day.

For more information about this program, please contact Jedson at (401) 738-2000 x6402 or via

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