



Extraordinary "Ordinary" Awards Winners Honored

Elisha Sauers nailed it with her piece in *The Virginian-Pilot* on October 14 when she wrote: "The hospitality group knew exactly what it was doing when it ironically rebranded its awards as 'ordinary' last year."

The term "ordinary" refers to one of America's longest continually run inns and taverns — Chinn's Ordinary — now operating as the Red Fox Inn in what is now Middleburg, Va.

"Rebranded" refers to the relaunch



Hotel Employee of the Year: Rocqui Camm, flanked by VRLTA's Debbie Donehey (l) and Barry Bigger

of the VRLTA awards program. In 2016, after a year break from the "VHTA Awards," we opened the program to all hospitality and travel business and individuals across the Commonwealth, not just our members.

It appears that our efforts are paying dividends. In the second year of the program, we saw our nominations increase threefold. And, attendance at the annual awards dinner, held October 2 in Richmond, grew by 35 percent.

We — VRLTA's staff and leadership — are truly grateful for all the support we have received for this young program from all of our

nominators and sponsors. The name "ordinary" is historic, but it is contradictory to the extraordinary individuals and business that we honor each year.

During the awards event, VRLTA also honored Virginia's Speaker of the House William J. Howell with the Legislator of the Year Award for his support of hospitality and tourism during his tenure. Tony DiFilippo, President and CEO of VisitNorfolk, was also honored before the audience with a Golden Pineapple Lifetime Achievement Award for his work to grow the tourism industry in Norfolk and throughout the Commonwealth.

ERIC TERRY is the executive director of the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging and Travel Association.

2017 VRLTA Ordinary Award Winners:

Bartender of the Year

Mary Garriques, Capital Ale House, Downtown Richmond

Charlie Buser Award for Attraction Employee of the Year

Dana Staniunas, Massanutten Resort

Hotel Employee of the Year

Rocqui Camm, Delta Hotels by Marriott Richmond Downtown

Restaurant Employee of the Year

Connlan Hogan, Capital Ale House, Harrisonburg

Chef of the Year

Tony Cochones, Glory Days Grill restaurants

Supplier of the Year

Jo Diedrich, LeisureMedia360

Rising Pineapple Award for Hospitality & Tourism Student of the Year

Lauren Schlenker, Virginia Tech

Brewery of the Year

Blue Mountain Brewery + Blue Mountain Barrel House, Afton + Arrington

Distillery of the Year

Copper Fox Distillery, Sperryville + Williamsburg

Winery of the Year

Williamsburg Winery, Williamsburg

Hotelier of the Year

Geoff Lawson, The National Conference Center

Jim Ricketts Award for DMO/CVB Employee of the Year

Dan Cook, Discover Prince William & Manassas

Jim Wordsworth Award for Restaurateur of the Year

Tony Stafford, Ford's Fish Shack restaurants

Attraction of the Year

Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company's Chincoteague Pony Penning

Restaurant of the Year

Wicker's Crab Pot Seafood, Chesapeake

Hotel of the Year

The National Conference Center, Leesburg



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