

Insider
For April 7, 2010
By Kim Burger

Spring has sprung (at long last) and with it comes our annual celebration of tourism and the Cedar Valley Tourism Awards Luncheon! This will be the sixth time we have partnered with the Waterloo Convention and Visitors Bureau to celebrate Tourism Month with an awards event. We'll be gathering at the Holiday Inn in Cedar Falls on Wednesday, May 12th, from 11:30 to 1:30pm. Our theme is See Yourself in the Cedar Valley. We'll be celebrating recent accomplishments like our selection as an overnight RAGBRAI stop; being named among the National Historic Trust's Dozen Distinctive Destinations, Iowa's Tourism Community of the Year (for a second time), a Bicycle Friendly Community, an Iowa Great Place; and home to Iowa's Attraction of the Year, the Phelps Youth Pavilion.

We'll also feature photographs selected from our Cedar Valley Photo Contest. Entries are rolling in and we'd like to include yours as well. Details regarding the contest can be found in the What's Hot section of our web site at CedarFallsTourism.org, but the basics are that we are seeking photos of what YOU think makes our community a special place to visit. These photos will be displayed during the luncheon and on the bureau's web sites, visitor guide and other publications. Entries are due to the Visitor Center by April 15th.

We're also seeking your input for the awards portion of our celebration. Awards will be given in the following categories:

Event of the Year is a hallmark event or festival that has created a significant economic impact on the community, has attracted substantial out-of-town visitors, generated media profile, and/or has positively promoted the Cedar Valley as a tourist destination. Previous recipients of this award include the College Hill Arts Festival, Waterloo Bowling Association's Iowa State Bowling Tournament, and National Wrestling Coaches Duals, and John Deere 90th Anniversary.

Attraction of the Year is an attraction that has substantially contributed to the local tourism industry by bringing a significant number of visitors to the area and enhancing the quality of life in our community. Lost Island Water Park, John Deere Tractor Assembly Tours, the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, Cedar Valley Trails, and Phelps Youth Pavilion have received recognition in previous years.

The **Business/Organization of the Year** award will honor an organization that offers a unique product or service that contributes to the local tourism industry. The organization should excel in product and marketing innovativeness, quality or product experience, and support higher quality of life and tourism-related goals. Recent recipients of this award have included the Waterloo Jaycees, Ramada Hotel and Five

Sullivan Brothers Convention Center, Barmuda Corporation, Galleria de Paco, and Waterloo Black Hawks.

The **Hotel of the Year** award is rather new and will feature a hotel with service that exhibits excellence, a positive attitude and attentive staff, an availability of outstanding facilities, ambience, innovation, and the ability to provide visitors with a memorable stay. The Holiday Inn University Plaza, Hampton Inn and Black Hawk Hotel have received the honors over the last several years.

Award recipients are selected from nominations made by the general public and we encourage you to send us your suggestions. It's a simple process requiring a one-page description of why you think your nominee should be honored. Details can be found in the What's Hot section of our web site. Nominations are due by April 23rd.

Tourism is an important industry in our county, generating over \$274 million in visitor expenditures and employing over 2,700 people. We welcome your involvement in our celebration by attending the event, submitting your photographs and/or award nominations, or all of the above.