



200 Smokefree Hotels Join www.freshstay.com

Date: 2006-03-22

Just 2 months after FreshStay launched the www.freshstay.com online directory of hotels offering clean indoor air products and practices, 200 smokefree properties have joined the network. Five smokefree properties are added to the online directory every day, including national, regional and independent brands in most states and 100 cities.

Connecting millions of travelers and thousands of groups to hotels committed to providing clean indoor air, www.freshstay.com awards hotels guaranteeing non-smoking rooms at the point of reservation two pineapples, while 100-percent smokefree hotels automatically earn three pineapples. Beyond that, the more fresh indoor air products and practices a property has in place, the more pineapples it earns. In the near future, the Web site will list and rate hotels that offer enhanced accommodations including being cleaned with Green Seal-certified products, having walls covered with low-odor, low-VOC paints, and offering improved air and water filtration and allergen-barrier products.

'We went smokefree a year ago. I believe smokefree is fast becoming the standard instead of the exception,' said Denis Herron, Director of Sales & Marketing for the 245-room Hilton Palm Beach (Fla.) Airport, one of more than 200 smokefree hotels to join www.freshstay.com.

Herron said the area's bars and restaurants went smokefree a while ago, so converting the 22-year-old property to smokefree in early 2005 made even more sense.

'Our occupancy jumped nine percentage points in 2005, from 78 percent to 87 percent, partly because of our decision to go smokefree,' Herron said. 'Before, we had eight non-smoking floors and one smoking floor. Guests would complain their nonsmoking rooms had been smoked in by previous guests - and that's a lingering smell you cannot deny, nevertheless try and eliminate.'

Be a Leader

Cable TV. In-room movies. Indoor pool. Continental breakfast. Plush bedding. High speed Internet access. All of these amenities, and many more, started at a few choice properties and the wave caught on as hotel owner/operators realized they could bolster occupancies, revenues and guest satisfaction. The same is now fast coming true for smokefree hotels, Herron said.

'We want to be a leader rather than a follower - and going smokefree now is one way to do that and win out,' Herron said. 'Not only do we get free publicity in the media and on www.freshstay.com, but we're protecting our hard and soft assets and building stronger, healthier relationships with our valued guests and employees.'

'Most smokers don't have a problem going outside to smoke in a designated area,' Herron said. 'It's become commonplace throughout much of our country - and for good reason: the health of others. And those few who knowingly or unknowingly light up inside, quickly and kindly get redirected outside by our staff, who find our smokefree policy both refreshing and rewarding.'

The Hilton Palm Beach Airport recently earned honors as the best airport Hilton in the area for customer service. Herron said going smokefree is part customer service, part sound management and part savvy marketing.

Health Awareness

Larry Broughton, President of the Broughton Hospitality Group, is a big fan of the smokefree movement and of www.freshstay.com. Four one-of-a-kind Broughton Hospitality Group properties in California - The Tallman Hotel in Upper Lake, Inn of the Spanish Garden in Santa Barbara, Wine Valley Inn in Solvang, and The Georgian Hotel in Santa Monica - are smokefree members of the www.freshstay.com online directory.

'Broughton Hospitality Group promotes an active, healthy lifestyle and wants to ensure that the environment of our properties guarantees just that,' Broughton said. 'Our guests have commented on the enjoyment of breathing in the fresh aroma of our flowers and scented candles versus the stale air of properties that allow smoking.'

Broughton Hospitality Group properties are boutique hotels that cater to couples, families and business travelers. The Tallman Hotel and the Inn of the Spanish Garden opened smokefree, while the other two aforementioned Broughton Hospitality hotels were older but easily transitioned to smokefree.

'The nonsmoking element is a great draw for the health and fitness conscious individual,' Broughton said. 'We see a lot of repeat customers who look for a cleaner environment when traveling. I think companies will find there isn't a lot of opposition to the conversion (to smokefree) from guests.'

The company believes in creating the cleanest, healthiest work environment for its employees as well. From a financial standpoint, for the property owner, eliminating the smoke helps retain buildings' asset value and reduce air quality control maintenance, Broughton said.

'Ultimately, being smokefree is a benefit to everyone who frequents the property,' Broughton said. 'Broughton Hospitality Group properties are delighted to have joined FreshStay™. We are happy to be members of this resource, www.freshstay.com, which promotes a healthier environment. We hope that more hotels across the country will join in to support this idea!'

Attracting Groups

Carrienne Pugh, Director of Sales & Marketing for the Sheraton Seattle (838 existing guestrooms and another 415 being added on), said the property's recent conversion to smokefree has had zero negative impact and plenty of big pluses and dollar signs.

'Our decision was the culmination of a thorough consideration of guests' requests and the costs and benefits of maintaining our smoking guestrooms,' Pugh said. 'We felt this (conversion to smokefree) was the appropriate response to one of the sensitive issues we've faced during the course of our ongoing expansion project, as we gauge the current and future climate for the hotel industry in Seattle and how we can continue to best serve the diverse groups and individuals who use our facility.'

Pugh said the property has not had a single complaint from any group since going smokefree and that the move appears to be an attractant to almost all market segments.

'Traditionally, 95 percent of our group attendees requested nonsmoking rooms,' Pugh said. 'In the past, complaints received relative to group business typically were due to nonsmokers being placed in smoking rooms because we were sold out of smoking rooms.'

Another key benefit, Pugh added, is that 'Our employees know we are making their safety a priority - that smokefree indoor air ordinances protect our employees and customers from secondhand smoke exposure.'

The Sheraton Seattle has been considering the benefits of going nonsmoking for a number of years. The conversion to smokefree, begun December 2005 and completed January 2006, included room-type system changes, guest notification, signage purchases, guestroom and corridor deep cleaning including but not limited to sheers, drapes, mattresses, carpet, room furniture and all hard surfaces. Scripting for the front office also was established and distributed.

'The cost of the conversion was considerable, from signage to deep cleaning - the total is estimated at \$8,500,' Pugh said. 'However, since the conversion, the reduction in guest complaint compensation and labor savings from the cleaning process has affected a savings of approximately \$5,500 in just two months. Thus, for 2006, we will affect a net total savings of \$24,500.'

Easy Sell

Aaron Babbie, Director of Sales & Marketing for the 205-room The Westin Portland, said going smokefree was an easy sell and a smart buy-in.

'Our smoking rooms were the last to sell, and nonsmoking guests have booked them as a last resort,' Babbie said. 'Of course, this inevitably led to guests pleading to be moved to nonsmoking rooms - so our conversion to smokefree helped eliminate that inconvenience for both the guests and our staff.'

With a heavy base of transient travelers, the property expects to gain business by expanding its day-to-day nonsmoking room inventory. Babbie said the conversion to smokefree was as big a hit with the property's housekeepers as it has been with guests and groups - 'Who have been happy to stipulate that the few members of their organizations who do smoke simply do it outside the hotel.'

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is an EPA Energy Star™ partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines - including FreshStay(TM), Environmentally Sensitive Amenities, the greenSPA luxury amenity and dispenser system, GE energy efficient lighting, Guestat programmable thermostats, Oxygenic water-efficient showerheads, the Nature's Mist deodorization system, and dozens of other products and programs. To get a taste of Pineapple's sweet solutions helping hundreds of hotels bolster business and cut costs, please visit www.pineapplehospitality.net, or call Ray Burger at 636-922-2285.

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