



Attractions Ontario Recognizes Tourism Industry Professionals with Three Awards of Excellence

May 2013 (Ontario) – At the recent 2013 Attractions Ontario Annual General Meeting, the Membership Committee of Attractions Ontario recognized tourism industry professionals and volunteers for their dedication to the Ontario tourism industry. The three award categories recognized four individuals for establishing a visible and long-term record of accomplishment that merits special recognition. Attractions Ontario congratulates the following award recipients in each of the categories.

Rob Thorburn, Owner of Scenic Caves Nature Adventures- Colonel Don Dailley Lifetime Achievement

Mr. Thorburn has demonstrated a significant and lasting contribution towards the sustainability of the tourism industry and increased awareness of Ontario as a tourism destination. Mr. Thorburn's exemplary leadership, innovative ideas and creative marketing efforts resulted in a substantial net benefit to the social, economic, natural and cultural environment in Georgian Bay area. Following the purchase of the then bankrupt Scenic Caves, Mr. Thorburn instituted an aggressive capital revitalization process which continuously added new components to the attraction, such as Ontario's longest suspension bridge, cross-country skiing and more, positioning Scenic Caves Nature Adventures as a premier Ontario tourist attraction. The development of Scenic Caves is consistent with Rob's overarching vision of best tourism practices.

Jamie Hesser, Regional Manager of Treetop Trekking - Tourism Champion of the Year

Ms. Hesser has played an instrumental role in the growth of Treetop Trekking dominating in the planning, organizing and growing the business with one aerial zip line park and small staff to three successful locations in Ontario now employing well over 100 people. Over the past year, Ms. Hesser has been vital in taking Treetop Trekking from a business with one aerial zip line park and a small staff to one that now has three successful locations in Ontario employing well over 100 people. In the fall of 2012, Ms. Hesser lead the bid for a project with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority resulting in three additional Treetop Trekking parks soon to be built at three locations within the GTA over the next three years.

Darren Dagleish, General Manager & CEO, St. Lawrence Parks Commission - Tourism Champion of the Year

Since 2011, Mr. Dagleish has been pivotal in transforming the culture of St. Lawrence Parks Commission (SLPC) to cater more to their customers. He reorganized the Senior Leadership team, made extensive changes to the strategies and business model, zeroed-in on the long-term sustainability of the agency, completed adjustments in SLPC's waste management and recycling program, and developed a successful business plan attributing to significant financial savings with a 30% growth in special event admissions. Never in the SLPC's 58-year existence has there been such a dramatic change and bottom-line improvements. Mr. Dagleish sets an outstanding standard igniting change industry-wide.

Susan Mackie of Markham Museum- Co-Op Student of the Year

Through her placement with Markham Museum, Ms. Mackie surpassed the museum's expectations at every event, program and project she was tasked with as a co-op student. Ms. Mackie helped reduce employee overload and offered new perspectives. She has since been hired at the end of her co-op term as a program instructor and is now the leading a public program as well as guides tours and schools groups.

About Attractions Ontario

Attractions Ontario is the leading non-profit association for the attractions sector and the only province-wide trade association dedicated exclusively to the attractions sector of the tourism industry. It boasts a membership of over 550 attractions and tourism related organizations, including public and privately owned attractions in numerous categories such as amusement parks, historical sites, cultural activities, arts & entertainment and adventure. For more information visit www.AttractionsOntario.ca.

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Note to Media: Further information on the nomination and selection process, Attractions Ontario Membership Committee and professional biographies are available upon request.

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