

Taking Green Mainstream

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As the sustainability movement continues to escalate, Pineapple Hospitality's EcoRooms & EcoSuites adds green leader Q Hotel & Spa as a new member and recruits two top talents to serve as Advisors - Bernadette V. Upton and Ray Hobbs

Doug Gamble sees himself as a pretty mainstream American. Sure, he recycles at home and he's been on an anti-bottled water kick lately, but that's about it. He doesn't think of himself as a hardcore environmentalist by any means. Yet, as Managing Partner of the Q Hotel and Spa in Kansas City, Mo., Gamble has instituted some of the most-stringent green policies in the hospitality industry.

'We bought the hotel last April and have converted all its operations into an eco-friendly format,' Gamble says. 'We saw the trend and the opportunity in the movement toward sustainability and ran with it. We basically did everything we could think of. Some of the changes we implemented cost us money. But most of them saved us a lot of money. In the end, the Sierra Club walked through the hotel with us and said we did everything that could be done.'

Adding Seats to the Eco Board Room

Along with adding the Q Hotel and Spa as a new member hotel, EcoRooms & EcoSuites has added two new members to its prestigious Board of Advisors: **Bernadette V. Upton** and **Ray Hobbs**.

Upton is a Florida licensed interior designer, lecturer and consultant. She has specialized in environmental interior design since 1982. She is a professional member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and Past President for the Florida South Chapter, as well as a founding member of the national ASID Sustainable Design Council. She is a LEED (Leadership In Energy and Environmental Design) Accredited Professional and member with the US Green Building Council (USGBC), and a Home Designator and member of the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC).

As Senior Vice President of Kelco Management & Development, Hobbs oversees and directs the operations of hotels managed by Kelco Management & Development. Hobbs received his CHA designation in 1983, and he is a 40-year veteran of the hospitality industry. Hobbs has been instrumental in implementing green initiatives in all of Kelco Hotels' properties. He also serves as Director of Development for WIDECAST, the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network. WIDECAST represents sea turtle preservation and conservation programs in over 40 countries throughout the Caribbean, Latin America, and South America.

The Q Plan



For its efforts in promoting sustainability to guests and within the industry, the Q Hotel and Spa has also qualified as a member of EcoRooms & EcoSuites. (www.EcoRooms.com) - an online directory of environmentally friendly hotels, inns, motels and B&Bs. With insight from some of the greatest and greenest minds in the industry as a guide, the Web site's rigorous Significant 7 Criteria for being an EcoRooms & EcoSuites is helping define what it means to be a green hotel.

'EcoRooms & EcoSuites is a one-stop solution for green-savvy travelers searching for lodging on par with their environmental values,' says Ray Burger, President of Pineapple Hospitality, which operates the EcoRooms & EcoSuites Web site. 'EcoRooms & EcoSuites allows you to search, locate and book rooms at the leading green hotels in the United States with just a few clicks of the mouse.'

'With the growing trend toward green, it is becoming difficult for consumers to differentiate between green and greenwashing,' Burger continues. 'We don't have a large number of member hotels yet, but we have designed our Significant 7 Criteria so that only the 'greenest of the green' offerings in the hospitality industry will qualify. First commitment, then membership.'

'We're proud to have Doug Gamble and the Q Hotel join our green ranks,' Burger adds. 'The policies Doug has instituted are a perfect example of how together we can do our part to help preserve and protect our environment.'

The centerpiece of the 124-room Q's eco-plan is a 38-point sustainability program. The plan includes Green Seal-approved cleaning products, the virtual elimination of plastics, the use of water-saving aerators for every device handling water, and bulk, bio-friendly bathroom amenities. The green hotel also recently instituted an extensive guestroom recycling program.

Located in the heart of Kansas City's historic Westport Entertainment District, the Q even offers to let guests borrow hemp shopping bags rather than waste plastic ones, and keeps a fleet of bicycles around for short trips around the city.

'What's been neat is how a lot of the changes, individually, are really small, but they can add up to be huge,' Gamble says. 'It's fun and fruitful to see how far you can go - to leave as small an environmental footprint as possible. Hotels can have a bigger environmental impact than homes, condos, apartments or places like department stores because lodging's lights never go off. That's why it's especially important in this industry to do what we can to protect the natural resources we have.'

Speaking of lights, Gamble says he wants to experiment with turning off the lights in the lobby and/or meeting rooms during the day when it's sunny, and perhaps even use clotheslines to dry washed linens.

'We've really seen a tremendous savings in our operations since instituting these policies - especially in our water use, which I think is going to be a huge issue in the future,' Gamble says. 'Guests are really excited to take part in our program and ask us questions about sustainability. We haven't had any complaints about the water pressure, and in the first three weeks of using bulk amenity dispensers in our guestroom bathrooms, we had just two requests for individual bottles of shampoo.'

Green Team Gurus

'Bernadette V. Upton and Ray Hobbs bring a great new ideas and enthusiasm to our distinguished and accomplished Board of Advisors,' Burger says. 'Bernadette brings an interior design perspective that we didn't have before, and Ray has tremendous experience in implementing green programs and great passion for green hospitality. We're proud to have them aboard.'

Already a 'Who's Who' of Green Hospitality, the other members of EcoRooms & EcoSuites Board of Advisors include:

Deirdre Wallace, Owner of The Ambrose Hotel in Santa Monica, Calif.,

Natalie Marquis, General Manager of Habitat Suites Hotel,

Jenn Holderied-Webb, Director of Marketing Golden Arrow Lakeside Resort in Lake Placid, N.Y.,

Wen-I Chang, President of Atman Hospitality Group and the owner/developer of California's premier green hotel brand: GAIA Hotels,

Rauni Kew, PR & Green Programs for the Inn By The Sea in Cape Elizabeth, Maine,

Stefan Muhle, General Manager of the Orchard Garden Hotel in San Francisco,

John R. Hendrie, President of Ragsdale Associates, Inc., a Consortium of Management Consultants, specializing in Customer Service/Satisfaction, Communication and Branding,

John Glen DiGuiseppe, President/CEO of Investors Hospitality Management (IHM).

Bernadette's Green Design Eye



'I started in green design back in 1982, when it really wasn't easy being green,' Upton says. 'Seeing how green is taking off, I like to joke that I've watched Kermit the Frog turn into the Jolly Green Giant.'

Specializing in green interior design, Upton has worked in a number of settings, but especially enjoys working within the hospitality industry. Over the years, she has worked with many clients dealing with chemical sensitivity and other environmental issues, which lead her participation with EcoRooms & EcoSuites.

'These people would tell me, 'I have no place to stay. I'm always compromising my health when I travel,' she says. 'That's why I knew how important this issue was. If you don't have the right design, the right indoor air quality, the right materials, you can pollute your green building overnight.'

Upton says the green movement is in its infancy. Though it's taken maybe longer than she'd like for green to catch on, it's about to explode fast and furious.

'There are a lot of green ideas I'd love to see catch on in this industry,' she says. 'I see a huge problem with mold. We have to shift to a mold-proof wallboard and get away from vinyl wall covers. I'd like to see more green products available to the industry and think we can take a closer look at the practices we use as well.'

'At EcoRooms & EcoSuites, we already have the most thorough green standards in the industry today - let's build on that and see how far we can take this movement,' she adds.

Now at Bat: Ray Hobbs



Hobbs believes that the movement toward sustainable practices is the right thing to do from both an environmental and a management perspective.

'As hotel managers, we have a fiduciary responsibility to protect property owners' assets,' says Hobbs. 'As we improve our environmental performance, we are going to run the hotels more efficiently. The savings will be substantial.'

'A hotel that operates in a sustainable manner is more attractive to both guests and in the marketplace,' he says. 'Green operations improve profits on a monthly and annual basis, and increase the overall value of properties long-term.'

Hobbs believes that as the public further embraces the green movement, hotel operators and managers must become more involved, more outspoken. Consumers more and more will come to demand sustainable standards. In turn, managers must demand more choices from product vendors. It will take some leadership, especially among the large companies and hotel chains, but it can and will happen.

'The industry is embracing this movement as it never has before, but there are still some places that won't allow recycling containers in buildings,' Hobbs says. 'We have to keep the pressure on, and keep heading in the right direction. It's going to take some thought and creative action, but that's why I'm glad to be involved with EcoRooms & EcoSuites. If we keep pressure, our criteria, while rigorous now, can become the standard for the industry.'

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is The Co-Founder and Host of the ANNUAL GREEN HOSPITALITY CONFERENCE, an EPA ENERGY STAR(TM) partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines - including FreshStay(R) (www.freshstay.com), Environmentally Sensitive Amenities(TM), the greenSPA(TM) luxury amenity and dispenser system, Energy Efficient Lighting and Controls, Custom Linen & Towel Re-Use Programs, Green Key Cards, Guestat(TM) programmable thermostats, High Performance showerheads, the Nature's Mist(TM) deodorization system, and dozens of other products and programs. To get a taste of Pineapple's planet-friendly solutions, please visit www.pineapplehospitality.net, or call us at 636-922-2285.

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