

ESPA Awards Student and Services Professionals for Dedication to the Event Services Industry

April 4, 2013

Dedicated to elevating the event and convention services profession, the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA), announced the winners of its sixth annual student scholarship program, its fourth annual William H. Just CAE, CMP Memorial Award, Executive Excellence Award, CSM of the Year Awards, as well as other notable recognitions.

Supporting students studying in the hospitality management field, the Donald S. Freeman, Jr. ESPA Conference Scholarship provided funding for a student to attend the ESPA Annual Conference on January 11-13, 2013 at the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin in Orlando, Florida. Selected by a panel of ESPA members, the sixth annual award recipient, Opal Wade, a hospitality student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, gained a real-world perspective of the issues currently affecting Convention Services Managers (CSMs) and learned from conference sessions and networking opportunities with industry professionals from across the U.S. and Canada. Wade was mentored by a Freeman representative before, during and after the Conference.

"The scholarship enables students to experience the meetings industry first-hand and network with the top services professionals," said Robert Desautels, CMP, ESPA President. "Providing students with a real-world account of their future career early on, not only strengthens the association, but also the meetings industry."

The Annual William H. Just CAE, CMP Memorial Award, established in honor of the late William H. Just, CAE, CMP, who founded ESPA in 1988, recognizes an ESPA member who has received their CMP certification within the last three years and remains in good standing with the association. After submitting an application inclusive of an essay on how the CMP designation has benefited her, why she decided to receive this certification and details on her industry and community involvement, the fourth annual award recognized Allison Kuussalo, CMP, Convention Services Manager at the Louisville CVB. Having worked in the hospitality and meetings industry for six years, Kuussalo has attended two ESPA conferences, earned her CMP earlier this year and as a result of the award, received complimentary registration to ESPA's 2013 Annual Conference.

"This award allows us to honor the late William Just who founded the association while celebrating the hard work and dedication of our members to strive for excellence and elevate the event services profession," said Desautels.

Awarding an executive for his or her commitment and dedication to the profession of event service and for providing key support and leadership to members of its services team, ESPA recognized Julie Pingston, CMP, Greater Lansing CVB with its 2012 Executive Excellence Award. Serving as a contributing member of the association since she began her career at the Greater Lansing CVB, Pingston is a vocal advocate of ESPA and serves on the Board of Directors as President-Elect. Consistently exceeding client expectations, Pingston supports the professional development for all of her staff members, while also

encouraging growth and new ideas.

Presented in conjunction with Successful Meetings magazine, the CSM of the Year award winners, Yoli Troncoso, EPIC, A Kimpton Hotel; Teri Wiley, CMP, Virginia Beach CVB and Gail Eason, San Diego Convention Center, were recognized for their ability to provide the highest level of service to meeting planners.

ESPA also distributed a number of annual member awards to deserving individuals. Receiving the 2012 ESPA Member of the Year award, Sissy Lawty, Travel Portland, was recognized for her outstanding enthusiasm and support of both ESPA and the event services industry. The 2012 President's Award was given to Paul Ruby, CMP, Sheraton Dallas, for his volunteer support and efforts towards the betterment of ESPA. Recognized with the 2012 Meeting Professional of the Year Award, Heather Black, Maritz, exhibits the personal and professional traits conducive to creating a team environment, while also showing support for the event services profession.

For more information on these awards and ESPA's Annual Conference, visit www.espaonline.org.

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/news/enn-display.asp?counter=12069>