

FreshStay Online Network Unites Hotels Worldwide, Fuels Smoke-Free Movement

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Kentucky is the 48th state to join the FreshStay(R) union of nonsmoking lodging properties; 247 smoke-free properties in 192 cities across 9 nations are listed and linked at www.freshstay.com

In less than half a year, FreshStay(R) - lodging's fastest-growing online network of smoke-free properties - has united 247 nonsmoking hospitality establishments located in 192 cities in nine nations. Most recently, www.FreshStay.com welcomed the 21c Museum Hotel as a member - making Kentucky the 48th state to join the FreshStay(R) union.

'Now that the 21c Museum Hotel - a one-of-a-kind boutique property in Louisville featuring original artwork throughout it - has joined FreshStay(R), our members represent 48 of the 50 states. Once smokefree properties in Arkansas and Mississippi join our online union - and we're working on those two now - we'll have a smokefree stay option in every state ... In fact, we'll have an average of five smokefree stay options per state,' said Ray Burger, a 25-year hotel industry veteran and founder of FreshStay(R).

Thou Art No. 48

The 91-room 21c Museum Hotel is dedicated to Southern-style luxuries and contemporary works from living artists. The five-facility complex, which dates back to the 1800s, features a 9,000-square-foot contemporary art museum and Proof On Main, a signature restaurant managed by The Myriad Restaurant Group based in New York.

Developed by Louisville investors and art collectors Steve Wilson and Laura Lee Brown, the 21c Museum Hotel offers in each room an iPod (custom music provided to guests upon check-in), poster art available for purchase; a 42-inch, flat-screen HDTV; 500-thread-count Egyptian cotton sheets; fully stocked minibars with sterling silver mint julep cups; a spacious work desk with complimentary high-speed Internet access; and a nightly turn-down service with gourmet coffee available for in-room brewing upon awakening. The hotel also offers a full exercise facility with a steam room, sauna and spa services - and, last but certainly not least, a smoke-free, clean indoor air environment.

'We're smokefree because we want to protect our guests, staff, property, artwork and other investments throughout this complex,' said Bob Gigliotti, GM of the 21c Museum Hotel. 'I definitely expect more properties to follow suit and go completely non-smoking and join FreshStay(R) as we and hundreds of others have. This isn't a fad. This is a global movement - and we're pleased and proud to be a part of it.'

Gigliotti said FreshStay(R) - and the smokefree movement in general - will gain momentum as more owner/operators hear and read about the benefits of going non-smoking and more travelers hear and read about the freshstay.com online directory and its network of smokefree hotels.

'There's already quite a buzz out there about FreshStay(R), Gigliotti said. 'If you check the major search engines, like I'm doing right now, you'll find that FreshStay(R) has several entries in the Top 10. This is a concept that is catchy and has staying power - because it's good for hospitality businesses, guests and the environment.'

Fitness Leader

Cooper Guest Lodge in North Dallas, Texas, recently was rated the second-best hotel fitness facility in the United States, according to the USA Today - and Cooper Guest Lodge VP & GM David Little said the property being smokefree was a key part of that accolade.

Lodge guests can hit the 40,000-square-foot Cooper Fitness Center, relax in the sauna or whirlpool, schedule an appointment at the property's full-service spa, request an in-room massage, or have a comprehensive preventative examination at the world-acclaimed Cooper Clinic, next door to the hotel. Featuring 62 oversized guestrooms, including 12 one- and two-bedroom suites, the lodge is part of a beautifully landscaped 30-acre campus. The hotel is an International Association of Conference Centers (IACC)-certified property renown for its teambuilding programs and wellness programs and speakers.

'We think FreshStay.com is just great. It fits in perfectly with what we've been doing for decades in our little 30-acre corner of the world,' Little said. 'We've been smokefree since opening in 1984 - and thanks to FreshStay.com, we and our fellow FreshStay(R) member properties, now are beginning to gain the positive exposure and referrals non-smoking hotels have long deserved.'

Little said FreshStay(R) is a breath of fresh air for hospitality property/owner operators.

'The hospitality industry is a close-knit business,' Little said. 'Because of this, it hasn't always been easy to find vendors that fit with our wellness philosophy - partners such as FreshStay(R) that know both the hotel business and the business of providing and maintaining a clean indoor air environment. FreshStay(R) Founder Ray Burger is connected to the people, products and programs necessary to make the move to smokefree, and can help hotels make the upgrade seamlessly and economically.'

Proven Payback

Going smoke-free pays big time, according to Charles McDiarmid, Managing Director of the Wickaninnish Inn (75 guestrooms and suites) in Tofino, British Columbia, Canada.

'We've been non-smoking indoors since opening in 1996 and we and our guests wouldn't have it any other way,' McDiarmid said. 'The Pacific Rim National Park is right in our backyard, so we get a lot of outdoor lovers as guests who expect clean air environments indoors and outdoors.'

'We're kind of the California of Canada,' McDiarmid said. 'Western Canada has more than its fair share of heavy smokers - but while our smokefree policy may surprise some Westerners, Europeans and Quebecans, it's second nature here.'

McDiarmid said being smokefree adds a level of flexibility and selling power as it makes all room types and sizes available. Also, properties that block off smoking rooms often find a greater percentage of smoking guests disobeying related policies in nonsmoking rooms and common areas of the property clearly designated as non-smoking - because the line is blurred, he added.

'When we first opened, we allowed guests to smoke outside on their balconies - but we quickly cut even that out because the smoke and smell drifted,' McDiarmid said. 'We entirely nonsmoking - indoors and out - now.'

'In fact, we believe so much in nonsmoking that we pay smoking employees to quit,' McDiarmid added. 'If an employee quits smoking for six months, we write them a \$500 check. I've written checks to the tune of \$10,000 or so already for this - and, quite honestly, it's the best money we've ever spent.'

'It really warms my heart to see smoking employees and guests embrace our smoke-free philosophy and decide to change their behavior and improve their health and our environment,' he said. 'It happens a lot more than you'd think - and the more smokefree hotels there are, the more this will continue to happen. This is exactly why we absolutely love what FreshStay.com is doing.'

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(R) (www.FreshStay.com), 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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