

Restaurant Forum

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE GEORGIA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

**Lifetime Achievement
Award Winner
S. Truett Cathy,
Chick-fil-A, Inc.**



SECOND ANNUAL

GRACE AWARDS

THE GEORGIA RESTAURANT
ASSOCIATION'S CRYSTAL OF
EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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THE GRACE AWARDS

2008 INAUGURAL GEORGIA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION CRYSTAL OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

THE GRACE AWARDS WERE NOMINATED BY THE GRA MEMBERSHIP AND PRESENTED TO OUTSTANDING MEMBERS OF THE GRA IN THESE CATEGORIES:

LIFETIME

RESTAURATEUR OF THE YEAR

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

INNOVATOR

INDUSTRY PARTNER

ONE YEAR AGO, THE STARS OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY JOINED KEYNOTE SPEAKER TED TURNER AT THE GRAND HYATT ATLANTA IN BUCKHEAD TO RECOGNIZE AND PAY TRIBUTE TO THEIR OWN AT THE INAUGURAL GEORGIA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION'S (GRA) GEORGIA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION CRYSTAL OF EXCELLENCE (GRACE) AWARDS. THIS YEAR, ON NOVEMBER 9, 2008, THE GRACE AWARDS GALA PROUDLY RETURNED TO THE GRAND HYATT FOR AN EVENING OF GLAMOUR WITH THE CULINARY ELITE. THIS BLACK TIE AFFAIR IS THE ONLY EVENT OF ITS KIND TO EXCLUSIVELY HONOR THOSE WHO HAVE MADE EXEMPLARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO GEORGIA'S PROLIFIC RESTAURANT INDUSTRY.

THE 2008 GRACE AWARDS FEATURED KEYNOTE SPEAKER COBY BROOKS, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF HOOTERS OF AMERICA, INC., AS THEY CELEBRATED THEIR 25TH ANNIVERSARY. THE GRACE AWARDS, CRYSTAL WORKS OF ART CREATED BY RENOWNED LOCAL ARTIST HANS-GODO FRABEL, STAND FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE FOLLOWING FIVE CATEGORIES: RESTAURATEUR OF THE YEAR, INDUSTRY PARTNER OF THE YEAR, DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD, INNOVATOR AWARD AND LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD. THESE AWARDS SHOW APPRECIATION FOR OUR STARS, THE PEOPLE DEVOTED TO OUR INDUSTRY. ON BEHALF OF THE GRA, CONGRATULATIONS TO BOTH THE WINNERS AND THE FINALISTS.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

S. TRUETT CATHY, FOUNDER AND CEO, CHICK-FIL-A, INC.

S. Truett Cathy is founder and Chairman of Chick-fil-A, Inc. Cathy started the business in 1946, when he and his brother, Ben, opened an Atlanta diner known as The Dwarf Grill (later renamed The Dwarf House). Through the years, that restaurant prospered and led Cathy to further the success of his business. In 1967, Cathy founded and opened the first Chick-fil-A restaurant in Atlanta's Greenbriar Shopping Center. Today, Chick-fil-A is the second-largest quick-service chicken restaurant chain in the United States based on annual sales.

In 2006, Cathy celebrated his 60th anniversary in the restaurant business with industry-wide recognition: a local celebration at his first restaurant, The Dwarf House, in Hapeville, GA, and the opening of the third Truett's Grill location — a concept the chain first introduced in 1996 to recognize Cathy's then-50th anniversary in the restaurant industry. In 2007, Cathy celebrated another exciting milestone — the 40th anniversary of the Chick-fil-A restaurant chain.

Currently, there are more than 1,380 Chick-fil-A restaurants in 37 states and Washington, DC. Remarkably, Cathy has led Chick-fil-A on an unparalleled record of 40 consecutive years of annual sales increases. Cathy's approach is largely driven by personal satisfaction and a sense of obligation to the community and its young people. His WinShape Foundation, founded in 1984, grew from his desire to "shape winners" by helping young people succeed in life through scholarships and other youth-support programs. The foundation annually awards 20 to 30

students wishing to attend Berry College with scholarships up to \$32,000 that are jointly funded by WinShape and Berry. In addition, through its Leadership Scholarship Program, the Chick-fil-A chain has given more than \$23.3 million in \$1,000 scholarships to Chick-fil-A restaurant employees since 1973. This year, the company will award more than \$1.4 million in scholarships to its restaurant team members.

Cathy thinks the restaurant industry means so much to Georgia. He says the GRA serves as an organization that attracts restaurant businesses.

Cathy states, "Georgia has become a convention center attraction surrounded by large hotels, all depending on tourists. It is important for the restaurant industry to focus on taking care of these industries, rendering courtesy and kindness.

People like to come to cities where they can find hotels and good food.

Hotels and food are a large attraction and exist by the kindness of people." In

order to attract customers, you must be consistent and courteous. "It is important to do things right each and every time, be consistent in the quality of food and

quality people providing the service."

Cathy predicts major industry trends for 2009 to be people eating out more often, a change in the quality of food and quality of service. He counts food costs, industry competition and economic conditions all as challenges facing the industry today. Cathy advises anyone just starting out in the industry to have a tremendous amount of "want to." Cathy notes, "Your reward from pleasing customers is the satisfaction of knowing you did your very best."



S. Truett Cathy

RESTAURATEUR OF THE YEAR WINNER

WINNER: ANNA HSU, OWNER, HSU'S GOURMET CHINESE, PACIFIC RIM AND SILK RESTAURANT

Anna Hsu, longtime Atlanta restaurateur, owns Silk, Hsu's Gourmet Chinese and Pacific Rim Bistro. Because Hsu is always present, the popularity of her restaurants is legendary.

Hsu sees the restaurant industry, the biggest employer in Georgia, as the most promising profession for younger people, providing more entry-level jobs than any other profession. She thinks, within the industry, people learn working skills, etiquette, tolerance and collaboration as the group has the same common goal. Hsu also believes that restaurants are a huge point of attraction for conventions and tourism: "When more and more restaurants open in an area, the area grows not only as an area of tourism, but an area for residents to live and to play."

Hsu believes the GRA is the collective voice of the restaurant community for legislation, providing buying power for restaurants to secure services.

Hsu also believes the GRA provides a forum for information and training and outlets for creativity in events such as Taste of Asia Week. The biggest challenge facing the industry today

is the economy, with people spending less money on luxury items, including dining at restaurants.

Hsu predicts the restaurant industry will continue to grow toward a healthy, organic trend in 2009, as customers are looking for ways to better themselves including what they eat. In addition to eating healthier, Hsu thinks customers will continually seek a more unique taste, something "different." Hsu sees "different" as a real trend in the United States in people's way of thinking of life, and this has poured into the hospitality business. The advice she would give someone just starting out in the industry is to have passion. Hsu says it is passion for the industry that keeps her going, as well as her drive to be successful. She adds that it doesn't come to you in just one day: "It's hard work. Without the passion and drive, you will not make it in this industry." She says the best job she's ever had is being a mother, and raising two kids has taught her patience.

This patience has, in return, helped her deal with customers at her restaurants. Hsu brings up family again when sharing her greatest accomplishments. "I am lucky to have raised two amazing children and married a man who adores me and is always by my side," she says. She wants to be remembered as a caring person, not only for her family, but also for all her employees, all the customers and all fellow restaurateurs.



Anna Hsu



RESTAURATEUR OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

FINALIST: KAREN BREMER, OWNER, CITY GRILL AND DAILEY'S RESTAURANTS

When you've risen through the ranks of one of the United States' most successful restaurant groups until you've become the president, what do you do as an encore? For Karen Bremer, former President of Atlanta's Peasant Restaurants and Mick's Restaurants, the answer was to become an owner. In October of 2000, she assumed ownership of two of the most popular Peasant Restaurants, Dailey's and City Grill, and began her own Atlanta-based company, Great Hospitality, LLC.

Bremer has come a long way since her first job in the industry at the age of 15, as a checker for S&S Cafeterias in Tampa, FL. She thinks her current position now is the best job she's ever held: "It is an honor to work with so many long-term employees. I take great responsibility to uphold the traditions of excellent food, service and hospitality in both Dailey's and City Grill, bringing Atlantans the standards from these landmark restaurants that they've come to expect."

Bremer hopes her contribution to Georgia's restaurant industry is remembered as having the courage and leadership to recognize the need for the independent GRA. She helped start what is today the GRA with a group of other industry leaders. The advice Bremer gives to someone just starting out in this industry is to work every position in a restaurant, particularly in the kitchen. She recommends working in different types

of restaurant environments, from fast food to fine dining.

Bremer thinks her greatest accomplishment is starting her own restaurant company and providing a livelihood and true career path for many individuals. She counts her ability to cope with change as an attribute to her success, especially during difficult economic times.



Karen Bremer

Bremer believes that change is the most disruptive force in life, but it consistently occurs, and is the most valuable tool for broadening the scope and depth of one's intelligence.

PHOTO BY THOMAS JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

FINALIST: BOB CAMPBELL, PRESIDENT, TAPPAN STREET RESTAURANT GROUP, INC. (DBA TACO MAC)

President of Taco Mac, Bob Campbell has literally worked

Bob Campbell



his way up through the restaurant industry. He was born in Tallahassee, FL, raised in Germantown, TN, and earned a bachelor's degree in business from Auburn University's School of Finance. His first job at Taco Mac was bartending over weekends and during breaks from his university studies.

Campbell thinks the

restaurant industry in Georgia means jobs, jobs and more jobs. He notes that there are no other professions where someone with a Ph.D. can work next to someone with barely a high school education. He adds, in good economic times and bad, people are always looking to restaurants to fulfill or supplement their income. Campbell loves being able to see Taco Mac grow and see other people's careers evolve and flourish as a result.

Campbell states the economy will ultimately be the overriding factor for change in 2009. He adds, "Economic times such as these can create hardships for many operators, leading to closure for some and a slowdown in development for others. The industry is working against a slowing economy in the face of rising commodity prices. At the same time, a rise in unemployment tends to bring the industry a stronger workforce as people migrate from other industries. A sharp rise in commodities historically has been followed by a sharp decline. The stronger operators will recognize the opportunities a weak economy brings and plan for the growth economy that is destined to arise."

Campbell says the GRA is THE voice for Georgia restaurants. With so many diverse operations across the state, the ability to come together through an organization like the GRA will become more and more of a necessity. He adds the GRA is already proving its value in fighting the cost of worker's compensation insurance and fighting the rise of more local, state and federal government compliance issues.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD WINNER

WINNER: LEE CHADWICK, PRESIDENT/CEO, THE METROPOLITAN CLUB

Lee Chadwick is the proprietor and operator of "The Metropolitan Club," a 25,000-square-foot, exquisitely decorated catering and full-service event facility located on Windward Parkway in Alpharetta. She has been in the banquet and catering business for 20 years and is known as someone who always does things right. After running two successful businesses that included The Pavilion on Roswell Road and The Camerron City Club on Old Roswell Road, she opened what is the "crème of the crop" in events facilities in the golden corridor.

Chadwick is a recognized authority in the areas of food, travel and entertaining. She is a fifth-generation chef, featured writer and speaker and appears in local and national television presentations. She has given lectures to professional groups such as the Club Managers of America and the National Restaurant Association on subjects ranging from corporate table manners and style

to buffet creativity and innovative proprietary financing. She has

enjoyed appearing and working in locations as Australia, Hong Kong and Norway.

Chadwick's first job opportunity was to open The Gaslight Club at O'Hare Airport in Chicago for the legendary Burton Browne. While that was amazing, she feels like the job she has now is the best she's ever had. Chadwick calls her work extremely varied and says she and her staff enjoy a level

of success that allows them to push the envelope of tradition by "informing their work rather than control it." Most importantly, she enjoys a level of trust with the people she serves, which to her is really satisfying. Chadwick adds that she has never felt so grateful for her work or the people she shares it with as she does now.

Chadwick foresees the issue of health as the biggest trend in the restaurant industry in 2009. Adding that more than 80% of all illnesses are lifestyle related and the most insidious problems exist as a result of food additives and a lack of understanding of good and bad fats.

Chadwick philosophically believes we all have to recognize learning as a lifelong process, "if we do not aggressively seek out alternative information about all we believe, and instead rely upon what we've learned, it's easy to become obsolete within 10 to 15 years." Chadwick thinks the industry must have a clear understanding of excess capacity, seeing that there are always untapped sources of profitability if you look long enough to reveal them. She adds that doing what you have always done will

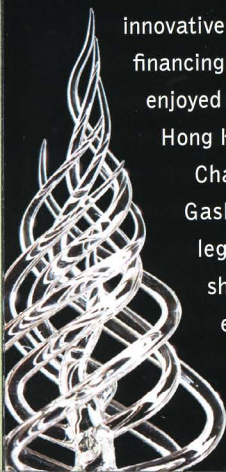
NOT get you what you've always gotten. She states, "When the marketplace shifts, you must shift with it or be left behind."

Chadwick says she has been privileged to receive a lot of fantastic opportunities during her career, spanning 20 years and five operations. She is most proud of the influence she has had over the people she employs and thinks by watching them grow, learn and develop into resourceful, self-assured competitors of every description is nothing short of amazing.



Lee Chadwick

PHOTO BY JIM STORM, ARGOSY STUDIOS



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FINALISTS

FINALIST: KAT COLE, VICE PRESIDENT OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT, HOOTERS OF AMERICA, INC.

Kat Cole is Vice President of Training and Development for Hooters of America, Inc., the international and privately held corporation that operates and franchises restaurants, manages the Hooters brand entities and generates over \$1 billion in revenue.

Cole was hired for her first job in the industry at Hooters in Jacksonville, FL, as a hostess. She was not old enough to be a Hooters Girl (didn't meet the state's required age to serve alcohol), but as soon as she turned 18, she went through her first day of training to become a Hooters Girl.

Cole thinks the GRA plays the role of advisor, marketer, trainer, connector, public servant, friend and the larger "voice" for the restaurant industry. She believes it is a place to learn the latest laws and trends that will affect business, but it is also an organization that helps build relationships between vendors, partners, restaurant operators and owners. She emphasizes that the GRA plays the role of a strong bridge between many places that must be connected for everyone's long-term success.

The advice she would give to someone just starting out in the restaurant industry is to take care of the customer first, treat the company you work for as if it's your own and save money. Cole says she always tries to ask these three questions before

making decisions: Is it good for my guests? Is it good for my employees? Is it good for my business? If the answer is yes to all three questions, then she does it!

She cites her greatest accomplishment as the people she has mentored and developed along the way. Cole thinks they have taught her so much about herself and life in



Kat Cole

PHOTO BY FOSTER AND ASSOCIATES

general and are the reasons she is able to do all the volunteer work that she does. She is most proud of her volunteerism, particularly with the Food Bank and Atlanta Union Mission and tries to give back every chance she gets.

FINALIST: BOBBY DONLAN, MANAGING PARTNER, DONLAN AND GREENBAUM'S NEW YORK PRIME — A STEAKHOUSE

Bobby Donlan



Robert Emmett "Bobby" Donlan Jr. started his food and beverage career working as a houseboy for the Chi Omega sorority at the University of Massachusetts. Since then, Donlan has worked for numerous establishments, including the Sheraton Tara, The Point After Lounge & Restaurant, Poopsie's Pizza Restaurant and

Bone's Restaurant. He and his partner opened Donlan and Greenbaum's New York Prime — A Steakhouse in January of 2003.

The industry trend he sees for 2009 is a "thinning out of the herd." He predicts that some restaurants will fail because of the lack of cash flow. Donlan has noticed all restaurants in the last 12-18 months have seen sales drop from 2006 and 2007 levels. Some major players have revamped their pricing, their products or their expansion plans. He notes, "Sometimes taking a step back (i.e., the closings of Starbucks) is a necessity."

Donlan attributes his success, especially during difficult economic times, to his staff knowing their customers. He says, "The restaurant industry is one of the most people-to-people businesses. It is so important the staff know your clientele." He believes customers make choices on dining out — choosing places to eat — where they are known and loved from the valet knowing their car to the hostess remembering their favorite table to the bartender pouring their favorite drink and the wait staff knowing their wine selection and steak temperature. "All these people keep me successful in both the good and difficult times. You are only as good as your last meal," states Donlan.

Donlan would like his contribution to the Georgia restaurant industry to be remembered as an individual who has worked hard to make a difference to the people he has served — both employee and guest.

INNOVATOR AWARD WINNER

WINNER: CHEF MATT COHEN, CHEF/ PRESIDENT, THE NEW SOUTH CAFÉ & CATERING

As a fifth-generation Savannah native, Chef Matt Cohen, owner of The New South Café & Catering, is a culinary expert who has worked in big name restaurants throughout New York and Atlanta. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY, Chef Cohen trained at one of the top-rated culinary schools in the world. He earned a degree in hospitality management at Florida International University, one of the top three hospitality universities in the country.

Chef Cohen has been honored with numerous awards throughout his career. Earlier in 2008, Chef Cohen was voted the 2008 Best Chef of the Year by *Connect Savannah* magazine in their annual Best of Savannah Readers' Poll. The New South Café was also awarded the Small Business Chamber's New & Emerging Small Business Award. In 2006, Chef Cohen made the prestigious *Savannah Business Report & Journal's* "40 Under 40" list.

Chef Cohen's advice to someone

just starting in this industry is if you don't love what you are doing and you don't love the people you are doing it with, then you should stop. He says his greatest personal accomplishment is "becoming happy with myself and becoming the person I always wanted to be by simply acting correctly

and treating people well." He recalls his best job was as the food and beverage director of the Jockey Club in Miami Beach, FL. He was just 28 years old, had been in management a few years and had the "dream job of a lifetime."

Chef Cohen feels that as a southern state, Georgia has strong roots connected to food. "Food has always offered a reason to

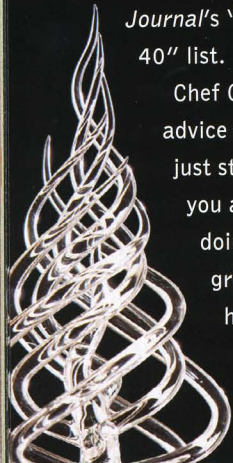
gather and been a catalyst for great conversation. I love that the South is all about hospitality." Chef Cohen thinks the Georgia restaurant industry represents a gathering place where people can celebrate friends, family, spirituality and food. From a business perspective, the Georgia restaurant industry "creates revenue for the state, jobs for the people and a destination for tourists."

Chef Cohen is passionate about the GRA and feels the organization must be a united voice for the many small business owners — independent restaurants and caterers — who have little say in the Georgia legislature. Chef Cohen thinks the future of the restaurant industry will lend itself to less competition and more camaraderie and cooperation among independent small businesses. He feels by uniting as fellow restaurateurs and chefs

they become a greater force, elevating everyone in the process. Chef Cohen attributes his success to the performance of the team surrounding him and relies on his strong religious faith. Chef Cohen, without a doubt, would like to be remembered as a person who helped other people change their lives by giving them the opportunity to succeed, grow and progress in life.



Chef Matt Cohen



INNOVATOR AWARD FINALISTS

FINALIST: CHEF PATRICK GEBRAYEL, EXECUTIVE CHEF, DUNWOODY COUNTRY CLUB

Chef Patrick Gebrayel discovered his career path early in life, when at the age of 6 he made a birthday cake for his mother from scratch. Although the cake was inedible, he had found his calling. With his mother's Dutch ancestry, Chef Gebrayel recalls food always being cooked at home and eating out as a rarity. He has wonderful memories of amazing smells coming out of the kitchen. Throughout his career he has worked in Baton Rouge, LA; Salem, OR; Washington, DC; Palm Beach, FL; and Amelia Island, FL, and has made Atlanta his home for the past eight years. He loves the city and its people.

Chef Gebrayel is incredibly proud to be a member of the GRA and feels very fortunate to be involved with the Green Foodservice Alliance (GFA). He says, "The GFA are an amazing group of people that are really redefining what it means to get involved." He hopes everyone in the industry gets a chance to be a part of such a great organization with such hardworking people.

It is that hard work which Chef Gebrayel attributes to his success, especially during these hard economic times. He relies on his great team, which he calls loyal, supportive and hardworking. He also says he is not afraid of trying new things, keeping customers entertained and hopefully coming back for more. He also thinks he's successful

because he never cuts his quality standards. He understands that by doing so you kill your reputation much faster than you earned it.

Chef Gebrayel believes the best job he's ever held is his current position

at Dunwoody Country Club. He says the club has been very supportive of his involvement in the GRA, allowing him a chance to be involved with a number of groups, especially the American Culinary Federation Atlanta Chapter and the GFA. He says he has met so many wonderful people and feels like the work he and his team are doing now will have a lasting benefit to our state and our industry. Chef Gebrayel says, "In addition, I have made a ton of friends and feel very fortunate to be able to learn so much from these people, which ultimately has made me a better chef."



Chef Patrick Gebrayel

FINALIST: CHEF LINTON HOPKINS, EXECUTIVE CHEF/OWNER, RESTAURANT EUGENE, HOLEMAN & FINCH PUBLIC HOUSE AND HF BREAD CO.

Chef Linton Hopkins never dreamed of becoming a

Chef Linton Hopkins



professional chef. While growing up in Atlanta, he rarely went out to eat in restaurants. Food was something his family enjoyed at home. After attending the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY, Chef Hopkins worked in kitchens in New Orleans and Washington, DC, before moving back home. It was in DC that he met his wife, Gina, with whom he owns several

restaurants, including Restaurant Eugene and Holeman & Finch.

His first job in the restaurant industry was as a dishwasher in a small gourmet food store in Buckhead called the Easy Way Out. He was 15 at the time, and worked his way up to prep cook. Chef Hopkins sees his greatest accomplishment is building the family he has with wife and partner, Gina. He is very proud that in this busy industry they can have a strong family relationship, yet still build their professional dreams.

Chef Hopkins says his current role has to be his favorite, because of the ability to focus completely on what he needs and wants to do. He enjoys building and training teams in the way that he feels cooking and thinking about cooking should be done. He also enjoys the development of strong business practices, which give him the freedom to engage in cooking.

Chef Hopkins thinks the GRA has become a voice and partner in shared goals and vision for restaurateurs. From quick response to water cut offs to labor law, Chef Hopkins has found the GRA responsive to his needs. He calls its leadership on sustainability practices exemplary and says "it brings together leaders from allied organizations, governments and industries to help shape the restaurant industry for many years to come."

Chef Hopkins also believes Restaurant Eugene, Holeman & Finch Public House and HF Bread Co. are an integral part of their neighborhood. He sees major industry trends for 2009 as a continued increase in organic and sustainable farming and ranching and a more concerted recycling effort, eliminating costs on fats and paper as key in the industry.

INDUSTRY PARTNER OF THE YEAR WINNER

WINNER: THE LAW OFFICES OF CHARLES Y. HOFF, AFFILIATED WITH TAYLOR, BUSCH, SLIPAKOFF & DUMA, LLP; CHARLES Y. HOFF, ESQ., MANAGING PARTNER OF HOSPITALITY PRACTICE

Charles Yale Hoff, general counsel of the GRA and the GFA, serves on the Executive Committee of the GRA Board of Directors and sits on the GFA Advisory Council. Prior to devoting his practice to hospitality law, Hoff served as senior vice president and international counsel for Equifax Inc.

At The Law Offices of Charles Y. Hoff, affiliated with Taylor, Busch, Slipakoff & Duma, LLP, Hoff has established one of the nation's largest premier hospitality law practices offering full turnkey legal services to the restaurant industry — from alcohol licensing to franchising. In addition, Hoff operates a hospitality consulting business specializing in guiding restaurants in their growth and development, counseling national chains on pressing industry topics such as menu labeling regulations and compliance. Hoff believes the restaurant industry

has helped make Georgia a very attractive destination for tourists, conventions and commercial enterprises. Hoff says, "Georgia's national reputation is catching up with what people in the state have long known to be the reality: Georgia is one of the culinary leaders in the nation and is producing the most exciting and innovative restaurant concepts." Hoff thinks there is an entrepreneurial spirit and vibrant commercial environment that has given rise to many of the nation's largest and most successful chains that call Georgia home. Hoff feels the GRA, as the voice for the state's

restaurant industry, its vital interests and concerns are heard and understood by both the government and the public at large. Effective political advocacy, professional development/education and the opportunity to network and learn from peers have been the foundation for the GRA's success. In essence, the GRA provides an extensive "toolkit" to assist restaurants in their profitable growth and success.

When looking at legal-related matters, Hoff predicts several restaurant trends in 2009. Specifically, the dramatic increase in incidences of PCI internal security breaches giving rise to identification theft and fraud, the proliferation of inconsistent menu labeling regulations being imposed on the local level, the rise in local environmental and conservation regulations, troubling wage and hour claims/litigation and an increase in the efforts being made by the local governments to address immigration issues.

Hoff would like to be remembered as a member of the "supporting cast" of the GRA leadership, assisting the state's foodservice industry in its successful growth and development. He finds nothing more gratifying than to have

assisted restaurants in being proactive in avoiding the legal pitfalls and unnecessary regulatory hardships that threaten the business. "To have played a role in helping some of Atlanta's most successful restaurant chains receive funding and strong professional help to grow from one or two locations to become thriving chains and franchisors has been particularly rewarding," states Hoff.

Hoff says other than having a wonderful wife and two wonderful children, he is particularly proud of helping the state's restaurant industry reunite under the umbrella of the GRA and assisting Ron Wolf and fellow GRA board members grow the organization.



Charles Hoff, Esq.



INNOVATOR AWARD FINALISTS

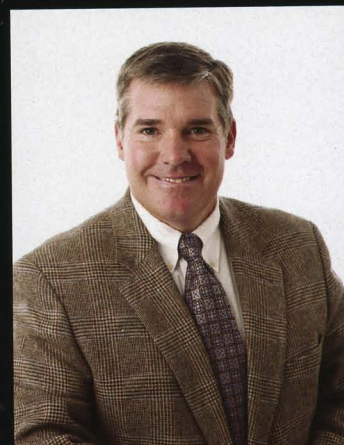
FINALIST: GAS SOUTH, CHRIS COAN, AREA VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER, BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT MARKETS

Gas South is one of Georgia's leading natural gas providers. Chris Coan joined the Gas South team in November 2006, having worked previously for General Electric, holding various leadership positions in sales and marketing in the energy industry serving utility and large industrial customers around the world. In his current role, Coan is responsible for all industrial and governmental customers with annual natural gas consumption greater than 30,000 therms. Coan holds an M.B.A. from the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University, and undergraduate degrees in chemistry and ceramics from the State University of New York and Georgia Institute of Technology, respectively.

Two major trends he predicts for 2009 are a rise in the local casual dining and family restaurants, as well as the rise in local produce and sustainable products. Coan thinks new fine dining restaurants and specialty restaurants will have a hard time gaining market share in 2009 as consumers tighten their belts. He adds, "In this economy, controlling operating costs, including those associated with utilities like natural gas, will be very important." Coan thinks credit issues will continue

to be a big challenge in 2009, predicting it will hit restaurant owners on two fronts. He emphasizes, "restaurant owners will find it much harder to find capital to support expansions or to stay afloat during slow times. In addition to tight credit, identity theft is the fastest growing crime in Georgia and regulations around data security for restaurants that accept credit cards will add additional costs and risks for owners as they work to stay compliant."

Coan notes the GRA has seen the interest in local and sustainable issues surfaced by various roundtables, committees and partners, and acted quickly to build the GFA. Coan believes the GFA is a great addition to the GRA and will have a big impact on helping its members learn and implement programs that promote environmentally friendly best practices.



Chris Coan

FINALIST: ROYAL CUP COFFEE, JASON HOWELL, ATLANTA DISTRICT MANAGER

Over the past 100 years, Royal Cup Coffee has grown from its small, hometown roots to become a major importer, roaster and distributor of premium coffees and teas. Serving

Jason Howell



customers in the foodservice, office and specialty coffee markets, Royal Cup Coffee now reaches markets throughout the United States, into Mexico and the Caribbean.

Jason Howell, Atlanta District Manager, has been with Royal Cup Coffee since 2004. His first job in the industry was as an oyster shucker/busboy at Palmer's Seafood in Savannah, GA, when he was 14 years old.

He thinks his current position is the best job he's ever held primarily because Royal Cup Coffee is a family-owned-and-operated company with a commitment to producing the finest coffee and tea products available anywhere, and it has sensational customer service. He adds, "The Smith family, who own Royal Cup, maintain a commitment to their employees, their families, numerous charitable and industry organizations [including the GRA], as well as their treasured customers. That level of commitment is part of the Royal Cup culture."

Howell sees the most pressing challenges facing the restaurant industry today are the rising costs/prices in all categories, less discretionary income for consumers and economic uncertainty. He thinks these factors will challenge those in the industry to be creative in terms of how items and services are marketed.

Howell's advice for anyone starting out in the restaurant industry is to work hard, be a business partner and give back to the community (both industry and people) that supports you financially. He attributes his success, especially during hard economic times, to his current company. Howell says that working for a company like Royal Cup Coffee, whose uncompromising commitment to producing the highest quality products, providing sensational service to its customers and overall great value, helps keep demand high despite a sluggish economy. He realizes, though, that a lot of hard work, creativity and a strong team are also extremely important.