



MEDIA STATEMENT

2010 PROVINCIAL TOURISM AWARDS

September the 29th was the last day of the activities pertaining the infamous National Tourism Month. The month was rounded off on a high note as the Free State Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs ascribed the best of the best in the tourism industry. This epic event, the second consecutive one after the successful launch in 2009, epitomised the commitment and the resolve of the provincial government to utilize tourism as a key driver for the socio-economic emancipation of all the Free Staters.

Expected to rotate among five municipal districts, situated within the Lejweleputswa District Municipality jurisdiction, Matjhabeng Local Municipality was bestowed with the responsibility of hosting this year's lap on the 29th September 2010 at Ferdi Meyer Hall in Welkom.

With 30 entries compared to 12 for last year, the awards prove to be gaining the significant and required momentum to further yield positive results. To ensure maximum participation and equal opportunity for mutual competition, two categories have been instigated and are:

- Emerging Tourism SMME Awards and
- Established Tourism SMME Awards

Ten nominees were carefully selected from all the entries and all of them went away with trophies and certificates, with the winners from both categories pocketing R15 000.00, 1st runner ups receiving R10 000.00 and the 2nd runner ups receiving capital injection of R5000.00 respectively.

In chronological order the nominees in both categories were:

- The Winners: Hamba Nathi Travel in Bloemfontein and Frontier Inn and Casino in Bethlehem.
- 1st Runners: Thabile Tours in Bloemfontein and De Stijl Hotel in Gariep
- 2nd Runners: Free State Travel in Bloemfontein and The Castle in Clarens

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- 3rd Runners: Epozini Guest House in Bloemfontein and The Green Acorn Guest House in Ficksburg
- 4th Runners: Enaleni Guest House in Welkom and Woodpecker Guest House in Ficksburg

“I am very pleased to realize that great deeds of our endeavours are noticed, this was our first ever participation in this awards but we managed to scoop the prime prize and were therefore declared the overall winner in the emerging tourism SMME category. These awards help a lot in raising awareness about products and services which characterise the tourism industry.

This year will really go down well in our memory lane as this winning coincides with the official launch, though we have been operational for the last five years, of Hamba Nathi as a business entity. Our future aspiration is to see ourselves as a premier travel agency not only in the Free State or South Africa but globally as well, so as to be able to contribute to job creation, poverty alleviation and the overall economic enhancement through tourism, says Persy Mposelwa – manager of Hamba Nathi Travel.

Lastly I would like to urge all tourism stakeholders and make them aware that the success of this industry depends on the cooperation, collaboration and a concerted integrated and coherent approach to initiatives meant to further develop this important milestone to reach its full potential”, she concluded.

As part of the prize package, the winners will receive phenomenal prizes which include marketing of their businesses, a mentorship programme, an opportunity to attend the Tourism Indaba held annually in Durban and most importantly, automatically qualify for ETEYA and Welcome Awards National Competitions.

Furthermore these awards are meant for the following:

- Acknowledging and profiling of provincial tourism businesses for their contribution in the growth and development of the tourism industry.
- Providing a provincial platform to showcase tourism products and enable improvement of quality services and ensure sustainability of SMMEs in the industry.

Thabo Motsohi, Director for Tourism Support within the Department said, “to further enhance the motive behind these awards, I appeal to all Free Staters to tour our own

province before crossing the borders in support of these winners as well as other tourism product owners”.

Flowing from this year’s theme for tourism month which is “Tourism and biodiversity, creating a greener destination for all”, the awards are ideal to help project the country and the Free State province in particular, as a greener destination for all since they boost about both tourism and biodiversity as ultimate resultants for job creation, poverty alleviation and economic growth.

These awards will also contribute immensely to the success of provincial government’s initiatives such as “Discover the Free State, Your Free State Campaign”, as we will, through them, showcase what the province has to offer for all travellers but domestic travellers in particular.

Ends!

**Compiled by: Communication Unit
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