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Winners get tourism honor

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— Gov. Ed Rendell has inducted James E. Winner Jr. and his wife Donna into the Keystone Society for Tourism, the highest honor the commonwealth presents to leaders in the tourism industry.

This is the inaugural year for the Keystone Society for Tourism. Inductees were selected by the Pennsylvania Tourism Office in consultation with the Governor's Tourism Partnership. The society honors Pennsylvania visionaries in destination leadership and community development.

The Winners were honored for having made a significant impact on the tourism and economic development in Mercer County and were instrumental in reinventing the county as a tourism destination. They reclaimed many of the county's historic landmarks and created millions of tourism dollars.

Rendell bestowed the honor during the first Governor's Conference on Tourism in Gettysburg, which was created to focus on preserving the distinctive character of a community while building economic development through cultural and place-based tourism.

The Winners also were recognized last year when they received the Pennsylvania Tourism and Lodging Association's Spirit of Hospitality Innkeeper of the Year Award for both Tara – A Country Inn and Buhl Mansion Guesthouse & Spa.

In 1985 the Winners purchased an abandoned 1854 Greek Revival mansion along the shores of Shenango Lake and created Tara. This award-winning inn has 27 guest-rooms, gourmet and casual dining, meeting and banquet rooms, indoor and outdoor pools, elegant gardens and a virtual museum of Civil War artifacts and "Gone With The Wind" memorabilia.

In 1996 a multi-million dollar restoration of the 1890s stone castle, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, created what is now one of America's "Top 10 Romantic Inns." Buhl Mansion Guesthouse & Spa offers 10 luxurious guestrooms, a full-service spa and gardens. Tara and Buhl Mansion are both members of Select Registry: Distinguished Inns of North America.

The Winners also own The Winner — "the World's Largest Off-Price Fashion Store," the Radisson Hotel in Shenango Township, Tiffany's Banquet Hall and Winner Institute of Arts & Sciences, a culinary school designed to feed the needs of the region's restaurant industry. Winner is chairman of Winner International Inc., best known as the marketer of "The Club," a vehicle anti-theft device.

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Photos



Dennis Yablonsky, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, left, recently helped to induct Donna and James E. Winner Jr. into the Keystone Society for Tourism, the state's highest honor for leaders in the tourism industry, at a ceremony in Gettysburg. -----