

Mississippi Development Authority
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GOVERNOR'S AWARDS RECOGNIZE STATE'S TOURISM CHAMPIONS

JACKSON, Miss. – The Governor's Conference on Tourism recently marked the recognition of several organizations and individuals for their work to promote tourism across the state. The Governor's Awards, presented Tuesday, February 6, 2001 at the Hilton Jackson, honor community leaders for their outstanding contributions to the Mississippi travel industry. Governor Ronnie Musgrove, Ray Phillips, President of the Mississippi Tourism Association, and Darienne Wilson, Director of the Mississippi Division of Tourism, were on hand for the presentations.

Governor Musgrove shared his vision for tourism and economic development prior to the awards presentation. J.C. Burns, Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority, was also present to introduce the Governor and make remarks.

In the category of Travel Media Awards, the winners were as follows:

- Broadcast - "Mississippi Outdoors"
- Newspaper – *The Times Picayune*, New Orleans
- Consumer Magazine – *Southern Living*
- Travel Trade Publication – *Recommend Magazine*
- Travel Writer – Stacy Kunstel, *Southern Living*

Chevis Swetman was named the 2000 Community Volunteer of the Year. Swetman served as chairman of "Cruisin' the Coast," an award-winning event on the Mississippi Gulf Coast that garnered national television and print coverage.

The 2000 Governor's Award for Tourism Achievement was presented to Fred L. Johnson of the Walthall County Chamber of Commerce. Under Johnson's guidance as a chamber Board member, Tylertown's "Christmas in the Park" has become a regional event receiving recognition across the state and in Louisiana.

"Winners of these achievement awards are leaders in the tourism industry whose outstanding accomplishments deserve this special recognition," said Phillips.

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The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) Division of Tourism and the Mississippi Tourism Association (MTA) hosted the Governor's Conference on Tourism from February 4-7, 2001. Established in 1987, the Mississippi Tourism Association strives to create an industry-wide force focused on promoting and advocating tourism, educating the public, and providing services to its members. MTA seeks increased economic vitality and a positive image for the Mississippi throughout partnerships with state government and every segment of the tourism/hospitality industry.

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MTA Awards Luncheon

Governor's Awards:

- Broadcast: "Mississippi Outdoors"
- Newspaper: *The Times Picayune - New Orleans*
- Consumer Magazine: *Southern Living Magazine*
- Travel/Trade Publication: *Recommend Magazine*
- 2000 Volunteer Award : Shelby Svelte, Mississippi Gulf Coast, "Cruisin' The Coast"
- Governor's Award for Tourism Industry: Fred Johnson, Walthall County Chamber of Commerce

MTA Awards:

- Convention and Visitors Bureau with a budget over \$500,000: Tunica Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Convention and Visitors Bureau with a budget less than \$500,000: Hattiesburg Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Travel Attraction of the Year: NASA StennisSphere, Hancock County
- Festival/Event of the Year: "Pavarotti in Concert," Mississippi Coast Coliseum
- Tourism Promotion of the Year: Southern Gaming Summit
- Government Friend of Tourism: Mayor A.J. Holloway, Biloxi
- MTA Member of the Year: Ann Coggins, Tunica Convention and Visitors Bureau