

# TeleGRAM

## Great American Hotel Group Quarterly Newsletter

### GRAM Go GREEN

Recycling is a priority these days and Great American Hotel Group is doing their part by going paperless. All of our reporting and document storage is now being done "in the Cloud" and all efforts to "not" print are stressed. Many of our hotels are following suit, and the Hampton Inn East Hartford (for example) recycled 32 tons of aluminum, cardboard, paper, plastics and glass during 2013.

### 1st Quarter Babies

Wishing a very happy birthday to two of our GRAM associates:

*Bob Weiser - January 18th  
Linda Komornik - March 1st*

### Giddy Up

Congratulations to the following office or property staff on moving up the corporate ladder:

*Don Hibshman is the new Director of Sales at the TownePlace Suites/Tallahassee. Don moved to TPS from the Carriage Inn in Ridgecrest, CA.*

*Danny Hays is the new General Manager at the Days Inn Greensboro.*

### Q1 Anniversaries

Wishing a "Happy Anniversary" to our GRAM office and property associates:

*Diana Fowler - (12 years) January 2002 Rob Greene - (17 years) February 1997  
Brandie Tweedie - (1 year) February 2013  
Teresa Maynard - (5 years) March 2009*

### Top 100

GRAM has been named as one of the top 100 Management Companies in the US by Hotels Magazine.



## Our "Great" New Digs

On November 22nd, Great American Hotel Group moved from Portsmouth to the historic Hale School building in Dover, New Hampshire. The schoolhouse, built in 1872 was originally named in honor of John P. Hale, an American politician and lawyer who served in the US House of Representatives from 1843 to 1845, the US Senate from 1847 to 1853, and again from 1855-1865. He was one of the first senators to make a stand against slavery.

According to City Council records of 1872, it states, "During the past year the Locust Street School has been added to the number of our school buildings. It is a brick building of four rooms, 30 by 25 feet, 13 feet stories, with sittings for 175 scholars. It is pleasantly situated on Locust Street, south of Silver Street. It is substantially built and furnished, and will answer the demands in that part of the city for many years to come."



Answering the demands of Great American Hotel Group, our hotel management team will occupy the second floor suite of offices and other commercial tenants will occupy the first floor. There is a communal area, kitchen, and law library in the lowest level of the building. *(continued on page 2...New Digs)*

## In The News....

Homewood Suites by Hilton, Hilton Worldwide's international brand of upscale, all-suite, extended-stay hotels, continues to drive the expansion of its portfolio in prime urban markets with the announcement of a new hotel in Nashua's Gateway Hills district. The hotel, which will be developed by The John J. Flatley Company, is Gateway Hills district's first extended-stay hotel, and Homewood Suites' eighteenth property in New England.

"Metropolitan locations present a strong expansion opportunity for Homewood Suites, as business and leisure guests see the home-like amenities and value associated with extended-stay hotels," said Bill Duncan, global head, Homewood Suites by Hilton. "Homewood Suites provides a scalable solution for developers in these markets, while also meeting modern travelers' desire for hotels that deliver both comfort and productivity."

The 109-suite hotel will provide guests visiting the area close proximity to an array of shopping, restaurants and entertainment venues located in the currently under development 29,000 square-foot retail center Tara Commons, along Spit Brook Road. That center, with associated medical office buildings, bank and industrial park will be the only retail along heavily travelled Spit Brook Road between the turnpike and the Sky Meadow Plaza.

"We are very excited to have John Flatley joining the Hilton family and developing a Hilton Worldwide product. John has been exposed to the hotel industry his entire life and we are thrilled that he has chosen Homewood Suites by Hilton as his first solo hotel project," said Karen Whitman, Senior Director of Development - Northeast Region, Hilton Worldwide. "John has selected a fabulous location in Nashua, NH to join the 18 open Homewood Suites by Hilton hotels in New England."

Great American Hotel Group has been engaged as the Hilton approved hotel management company and will oversee pre-opening sales and marketing, and hotel operations.

*(New Digs continued)*

"Leaving the Portsmouth office was sad as this is where GRAM got its start just 2 short years ago," stated Dave Akridge, President. "It was also a very happy occasion, as it now allows us the opportunity to build our own corporate foundation in a



community close enough to major cities and transportation hubs, while allowing us the chance to live and work amidst the charm and ambiance of historic New England. We are delighted to be here in Dover."

The Hale School, is located at 180 Locust Street, offers modern convenience while preserving historic charm such as brick walls, iconic masonry, and historic significance.

All contact information, telephone numbers, email addresses for staff, as well as our website address remains the same.

## Talking About Your Health

A young lady confidently walked around the room with a raised glass of water while simultaneously leading and explaining stress management to an audience. Everyone knew she was going to ask the ultimate question, 'half empty or half full?' She fooled them all by asking, "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers ranged from 8 ounces to 20 ounces.

She then replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

She continued, "That's the way it is with stress. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on."

"As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden - holding stress longer and better each time practiced. So, as early in the evening as you can, put all your burdens down. Don't carry them through the evening and into the night. Pick them up tomorrow."

## Renovations

Four of our hotels have completed renovations: Courtyard/Lake Placid has completed a full public space renovation including adding The Bistro.



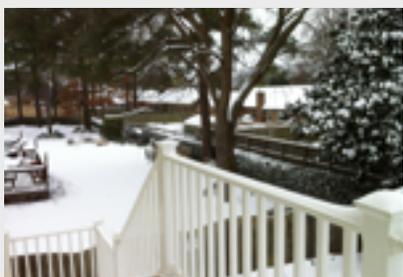
Both the TownePlace Suites/Tallahassee and SpringHill Suites/Sarasota-Bradenton completed guest rooms and public space renovations. Hampton Inn/Bennington completed the Perfect Mix lobby renovation.

## Charity Starts Here

Great American Hotel Group was thanked by the Dover Children's Home for their support and donation. As a new business in this community, we look forward to working together with this organization to assist families in need.

## Baby It's Cold

While snow in New Hampshire is commonplace, associates who are based remotely have also had their share of cold winter weather this season. Maineville, OH - home of HR maven Suzanne Baele, has had multiple days of winter weather. Virginia Beach, VA - home of Sales Department Linda Komornik, has been hit with 10" of snow in a city NOT known for snowfall. Even Florida, home of Rob Greene has had freezing temperatures.



Virginia Beach - January 29, 2014



It's official! On February 11, 2014, the Chamber of Commerce celebrated our move to Dover with an official ribbon cutting. **Front row:** Candace Snelling, Diana Fowler, Candy Grimbilis, Kathy Wentworth-Chalue (Atlantic House Inn) Catherine Cheney (Dover City Council), Lori Hultz (Bank of NH), Doug Glennon (Glennon Consulting), Molly Hodgson (Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce) **Back row:** Susan Miltner (Seacoast Business Machines), Brandie Tweedie, Bob Weiser, Deanna Strand (Dover Adult Learning Center, Melissa Lesniak (Keller Williams Coastal Realty), RJ Greene, Dave Akridge, Donna Coraluzzo (Dover Children's Home), Susan Smith, Gabrielle Smith, Jerry Bazata (Newburyport Five Cent Savings Bank, Rudi Janoschek (Foster's Daily Democrat)

## What About Our Name?

Many people have asked, "Why Great American Hotel Group?"

Before the very familiar Ocean Hospitalities, Inc. (OHI) name of our company, we were known as GAP Management. **GAP**, while it wasn't an acronym, became the starting point for developing our new name. We explored **Great American Properties**, but this name could not be licensed or trademarked because it was not available. Great American Hotel Group was subsequently chosen to not only pay tribute to the past, but to keep "GAP Management" and Doug Greene at the heart of our new name.



GAP Management was originally founded in 1986 by Doug Greene and Dave Akridge and still remains an active corporation and subsidiary of Great American Hotel Group, Inc.



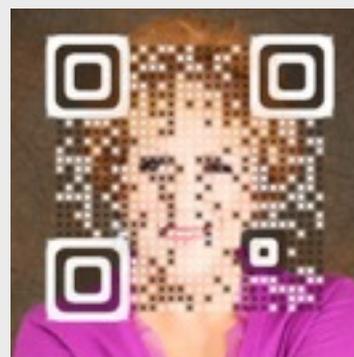
## Human Resources .... *Suzanne Baele, Corporate Director of Human Resources*

Interview questions differ dramatically company to company. Your style of questioning for potential new associates may be “nuts and bolts,” or it may venture to the creative side. Here are a few “unique” questions that companies around the globe have integrated into their interview process: “If you were a pizza deliver man, how would you benefit from scissors?” (Apple), “If you could sing one song on American Idol, what would it be?” (Red Frog Events), “If you were on an island and could only bring three things, what would you bring?” (Yahoo); “If you were a box of cereal, what would you be and why?” (Bed, Bath & Beyond), “You’re a new addition to the crayon box, what color would you be and why?” (Urban Outfitters). The uniqueness of this line of questioning borders on curious as to ‘why’ these types of questions are asked. What do you think? Would you be able to answer these types of questions during an interview? What would the answer communicate to the interviewer?

## Selling The Sizzle .... *Linda Komornik, Corporate Director of Sales and Marketing*

Ever wonder why you are on the distribution list of my [blog](#) “The Roomer Mill”? Funny you should ask....

We tell our properties to make sure that every associate is an extension of their sales team. Every person on staff should know the basics of sales, strategies and a little about how to talk to guests. The same goes for our office staff! You should understand the basics as it refers to strategies at the property level, the whys about what we do, and current trends. So the next time you see an email drop into your GRAM inbox entitled, “Check out my latest blog....” maybe you’ll open it up and read through the info. My goal on every blog is that it is 1) written in the first person 2) be short and sweet and 3) be valuable to all levels of sales persons. Happy learning about sales!



Scan from your smart phone to go directly to the Blog site

## By The Numbers .... *Gabrielle Smith, Corporate Controller*

I can hear that familiar melody and lyrics playing in my head:

♪•\*~ ♪~\*•“A Mark, a Yen, a Buck or Pound, that clinking clanging sound, money makes the world go round!”♪•\*~ ♪~\*•

Whatever corner of the world our guests are from, the phrase remains the same “money makes the world go round.” Tracking and recording money accurately, and representing it to the Owners clearly and concisely, are our top priorities. By understanding our clients’ needs, we can provide the best hotel management information. This is a key to our success.

## Operations .... *Bob Weiser, Regional Director of Operations*

Employees are our biggest asset when it comes to life safety. We should always encourage associates to keep their eyes open as they walk the property and report any type of issue that could cause injury to their fellow associates and guests. This includes potholes in the parking lot, leaking ice machines, unlocked secured area doors such as the pool, fitness center, and chemical room. All emergency numbers need to be posted and easily accessible for all employees if an emergency arises.

Properties need to have a safety committee, usually the head of Maintenance, and one employee from each department. They should be talking to their fellow associates to get feedback for these meetings, (this committee could double as a guest service committee). Minutes need to be taken, submitted and discussed with the General Manager who will communicate with the management company to work on correcting any life safety issues.

All properties need to have an emergency plan book easily accessible to all employees. Franchised properties are required to have these plans and be updated every 6 months.

## Hotel Stories

### ATLANTIC HOUSE INN

Morgan Chalue, Front Desk Agent at Atlantic House Inn, York Beach, ME fulfilled a life long dream by recently singing the National Anthem at the Frozen Fenway hockey game at Fenway Park! Great job Morgan!



### HAMPTON INN & SUITES/BENNINGTON

Hampton Inn Bennington has 5 repeat customers each night. While the rest of their guests are sleeping comfortably snug in their "clean and fresh Hampton bed" - these guests feast every night out back of the hotel. The staff has to provide "transportation" home every morning (ladder).



The hotel has also had other "guests" check-in to their flower beds and call them home. A Mama snapping turtle laid eggs and proudly delivered 17 baby turtles. The staff helped them all back to the creek to live happily ever after!



## Getting To Know You!

A team is comprised of many different individuals with unique talents and personalities. Did you know....



That Sue Smith loves to spend time with her girl Tasha?



That, Gabrielle Smith plays the cello weekly in a small string ensemble? Gabrielle and her fellow musicians oftentimes play at nursing homes during the holidays to bring seasonal cheer.



That, Diana Fowler does yoga and volunteers at Blue Ocean Society to help clean beaches and assist on whale watches?

That, Suzanne Baele is an avid outdoors woman and enjoys skiing, snow shoeing, gardening, and horseback riding as well as indoor activities like yoga and knitting?

Her latest love is her new friend Bear. Suzanne relishes taking the spunky Bear on walks (or perhaps him walking her).



# Here's Your Sign.... *by Linda Komornik*

I love Bill Engvall. Keep in mind, I'm a southern, kinda-country girl, so all of you in GRAMland may not have heard of Bill, but trust me - he's funny. Bill Engvall is a comedian (he was also on Dancing With The Stars), and tours with Jeff Foxworthy, Ron White and Larry the Cable Guy (Blue Collar Comedy group). His humor revolves around the dumb things that people do and say. His trademark phrase is "Here's Your Sign". So, why oh why am I referencing this comedian and his funny act in this article about "customer service"?



Oftentimes we run into people who ask questions, that seemingly to us, have an obvious answer. Sometimes it takes great restraint to not admonish them with a smart aleck retort or snappy come back. As customer service professionals, we need to remember that we are professionals and always treat both our external and internal customers as if they are paying clients.

Every small thing that we do or say, creates the opportunity to increase the chances of truly getting a satisfied customer into our hotels and our company. As the guest or patron sees value in our brands/company, they are motivated to invest more of their travel budget in our establishments, and possibly invest in our company portfolio.

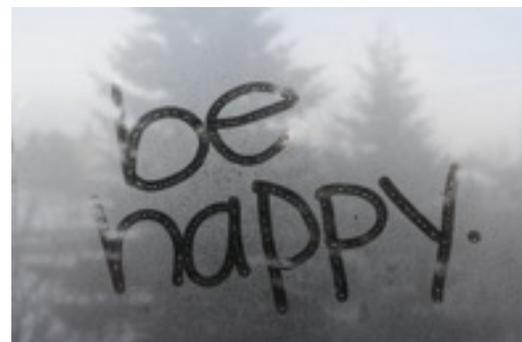
Imagine our hotels or staff providing inferior service. No matter what the location and facilities may represent, based on the intangible service, guests will be more than likely to never come back, state negative information on social media and never refer



anyone. The impact on revenue, tends to be much more severe in terms of guest service. That said, more than likely, investment in ensuring that staff is fully owning each guest service encounter will weigh more in the bottom line than anything else.



At the end of the day, always remember that if you are a satisfied and happy employee you will certainly assist with the level of a positive impact in your customers, which in turn will show a positive increase in revenue.



"Here's Your New Sign"!