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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Locally-owned Holiday Inn East, Asheville, NC WINS IHG® 2017 TORCHBEARER AWARD**

ATLANTA (February 21, 2018) – The Holiday Inn East located in beautiful Asheville, NC received the IHG® (InterContinental Hotels Group) 2017 Torchbearer Award, the company's most prestigious award.

The Holiday Inn East, Asheville, NC is one of six full-service Holiday Inns in the USA chosen from the IHG system of more than 5,300 hotels in twelve different brands for achieving the highest levels of excellence in all aspects of operation -- from quality to customer satisfaction.

"It is my pleasure to give this prestigious award to one of the foremost hotels in our industry," said Elie Maalouf, Chief Executive Officer – IHG, The Americas. "The Holiday Inn East, Asheville, NC embodies the heart of our brand promise and continues our story to make brands well known and loved by guests around the world."

An impressive 2017 Torchbearer trophy, the company's symbol of top excellence, will be on permanent display at the Hotel.

Built in 1973 as a Holiday Inn, the Hotel was acquired by Bryan and Ginny Nearn in 1988. The Nearn's are Memphians and have been in the hospitality business for over 50 years. They have built, acquired and renovated approximately 25 hotels over the years, but this latest honor of being selected as a Torchbearer recipient is the result of personal involvement and dedication by the Nearn's in selecting the finest employees who are dedicated to making the guests at the Hotel and dining facility, The Woodfire Grill, very comfortable with a home-like setting. In addition to guest satisfaction, further accolades were given to two key leadership positions at the property. "Best of the Best" awards were presented to Dewaine Smith for "General Manager of the Year" and Zuma Martinez for "Engineer of the Year". They were selected from a pool of over 750 Holiday Inn employees – the highest honor amongst all hotel employees.

The Nearn's have relicensed the Hotel with IHG for an additional sixteen-year franchise. They spent in excess of \$8 million renovating the entire Hotel during 2016 and 2017. The Hotel is as now "as good as new" even though it has the association of being the oldest Holiday Inn (45 years) in the IHG system that was originally built as a Holiday Inn and has remained in the system as one.

Prior to being selected as a Torchbearer winner in 2017, the Hotel has consistently been honored with the "Quality Excellence Award" for many, many years.

Having been recognized by corporate management at IHG and responding to guest satisfaction surveys, the owners continue with their commitment to excellence. The Hotel is now recognized as a modern, full-service property located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina - in Asheville, one of the top destination spots for vacationers and retirees.

The Holiday Inn East is located at Exit 55 off I-40, directly across the interstate from Billy Graham's "The Cove" (retreat and training center) and within five (5) miles of the largest private residence in the country, the Biltmore Estate.