

Winners Earn Accolades For Tara, Buhl Mansion

Industry honors puts Mercer County inns on tourism map.

The owners of two Mercer County, Pa., inns and the properties they operate marked 2008 with a plethora of accolades.

Jim and Donna Winner, who own Tara – A Country Inn in Clark, Pa., and Buhl Mansion Guesthouse & Spa in Sharon were inducted into the Keystone Society for Tourism during Gov. Edward G. Rendell's conference on tourism in Gettysburg.

"This is the highest honor the commonwealth presents to leaders in the tourism industry," says Laura Ackley, general manager of Buhl Mansion and director of marketing for Tara.

The Winners were named Pennsylvania's top industry leaders in 2007 after both of their properties received the Pennsylvania Tourism and Lodging Association's Spirit of Hospitality Innkeeper of the Year Award.

In 2008, American Historic Inns

named Buhl Mansion one of America's Top 10 Romantic Inns. The property features 10 guest rooms, a spa and formal gardens, and opened as a guesthouse after the Winners acquired the stone castle in 1996 and completed a multi-million-dollar renovation.

Frank H. Buhl, founder of the Sharon Steel Corp., built the mansion in the 1890s for his wife, Julia.

In recent months, Buhl Mansion and Tara have been featured in Pennsylvania's travel magazine, Pursuits, and prominent newspapers, Ackley adds. The inns have also appeared on the cover of Inns Magazine and Tara was featured on the cover of Select Registry guidebook.

"Media recognition of the inns puts the region on the map for thousands of tourists who may not otherwise visit our area," Ackley observes.

The inns employ 75 and "generate direct and indirect revenue for the region," she says.

Tourism, Ackley adds, is Mercer County and Pennsylvania's second largest industry.