

Opening Speech by Margaret Lamont, Chairperson of HASA

Good evening everyone, and the warmest welcome from all of us on the HASA committee to another HASA conference

To those of you who have travelled from neighbouring countries, we are delighted that you have been able to attend. We know that the friends and knowledge that you will gain from this conference will benefit all, and we hope that you find South African hospitality warm and welcoming.

This conference promises to be the best yet, but we must not forget that our conferences would never be possible without the continued support of our loyal sponsors, who support us year after year.

Thanks must also be given to our employers, who have allowed us this opportunity to attend. I urge you all to make the best of your opportunity here, and go back to your staff with a revived enthusiasm and passion, which will showcase that we, as Housekeepers, can contribute positively to the standards in the hospitality industry across the whole country.

2007 has been the most productive year for HASA.

The vision of the committee has always been to improve the image of the Housekeeper and to encourage youngsters to aspire to becoming Housekeepers. With this in mind we embarked, with the assistance of Bidvest and the benefit of the donation that they invested in HASA some years ago, on a learner ship program that would benefit the industry, and hopefully produce inspiring Housekeepers.

To achieve this, the project had to have some inspiring leaders, and with the assistance of Brenda Davidson from QTAC, Joyce Osbourne and Karen Borain who all gave selfishlessly of their time, expertise and excellent training material, we are proud to be able to advise you of the success of this project.

We started the year with 18 learners and 16 have completed the gruelling course. The cherry on top for HASA is that each and every one of these learners is currently employed and they have been given a kick-start in the hospitality industry.

The exciting spin off from this year's success is that for 2007/2008, THETA has granted 28 learnerships. Induction has already been completed with the learners and their course starts on the 5th of August 2007

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Emperors Palace for hosting the learnership program, and allowing us to use their incredible resources to further the education of Housekeepers in training

A special thanks to the Emperor's training department, especially Beverly Muller who has played a huge role in the co-ordination of the course.

During the year HASA has also hosted, in conjunction with our partners in industry, continued learning workshops to the benefit our members, and always with the intention of broadening our knowledge base.

This year we have completed topics covering:-

Death in a hotel room! Hosted by Emperors Palace

This lecture had everyone upright in their seats and many delegates left feeling that this was certainly an eye opener

Why pile and not tile? Hosted by Millicare

HACCP - what does it mean to you? Hosted by Wetrok

I am sure you will all agree that although the focus of HACCP is currently on the FB side, HACCP will be coming to the Housekeeping departments soon

Events still to come in 2007 will be an educational on Breast Awareness a topic that all women need to have a healthy regard for. Being Housekeepers we have a responsibility to look after ourselves as well as our staff and it is initiatives such as these that give us the tools to be more understanding compassionate managers.

Watch the website for your invitations and more information www.hasa.org.za

Another initiative that will be offered in September by our inspiring Executive Manager, Simone Lobetti, will be the continued learning workshops. These will be held in conjunction with the learners so if you are hosting a learner please support the learner and come along. Your support alone will be an incredible boost to these youngsters.

These workshops will be open to all, at a nominal fee of R300 to cover our expenses and to ensure that you are fed for the day. Never forget that HASA is a Section 21 Company and that means that we are a non-profit organisation. Our committee gives of their time and expertise purely for the love and passion that we have for this industry.

In 2007 our membership has grown but I am sad to say that there are also some who have fallen away. In particular a number of hotels have e-mailed stating they no longer wish to belong to HASA. It is up to all of you as members, to be HASA ambassadors, to continually promote the HASA initiative, and to spread the continued learning that HASA exposes us to.

I would like to now introduce you to our dedicated HASA committee.

Firstly Simone Lobetti who is the driving force behind the committee. Her dedication to the hospitality industry cannot be questioned and she has proven to be just the injection of inspiration that HASA needed to continue to move forward.

Tony Balabanoff, of City Lodge fame. I am sure most of you know Tony is the man behind the signature on the cheque book, and watches the rest of us carefully in case we get carried away. Tony has been with us for the duration of HASA and will always be seen as the HASA mentor.

Hazel Barnard, who unfortunately is not able to join us this conference due the recent death of her mother, is another founder member. Her company Hychem is another of our loyal supporters and we are in Hazel's debt for so much, not least of all the fact that she hosts the HASA office from her premises and we hold most of our committee meetings in the comfort of the Hychem boardroom

Brenda Davidson is another dedicated member. Brenda is not with us due to the illness of her husband and we send our best wishes for his quick recovery. Brenda through her company QTAC has been the support that the HASA learners required to complete their course. She has invested hours too many to count in this project and has achieved amazing results.

Marcel Kobilski from the City Lodge group is one of the calming elements to our committee and always brings wisdom and balance when the going gets tough.

Cecil Makgalemele, another of our industry supporters has been a dedicated member of our team this past year. Cecil is a director of Johnson Diversy but also wears the HASA hat with dedication and passion.

Pieter Van der Westhuizen is another HASA supporter of long standing. During his time with Prestige he promoted Housekeeping and brought the lot of the contract Housekeeper to a different level. Pieter has recently left the Bidvest group, but fortunately his expertise has not been lost to our industry. He is now simply using his knowledge to ensure that his new company is a supplier of the best equipment to the industry.

Jayne Weiffenbach is currently a Prestige Manager who has reached the top of her profession. Jayne gives willingly of her expertise in all meetings. Jayne is our current liaison with the Bidvest Group.

Wilma Steyn who is currently with the Supercare group is another valued member of our committee. Wilma understands the housekeeper's role in the hospitality industry from her own experience in both the front office and housekeeping departments of several Southern Sun hotels.

So now you have met the committee. They are an amazing mix of people that have worked selflessly to make this event possible for all of you.

We encourage new participants in our committee, and would therefore encourage all of you to stand up and be counted, and to do your bit to assist in the goal of making the hospitality industry proud to call us professionals in our field.

Our thanks also go to Cohesion Events in the form of Sharon and Debbie, an events team that we have been privileged to work with in the past, and who have done an amazing job in organising all the finer details of the conference.

There are really so many people to give credit to for a conference like this, but I can assure you that their reward will be in what you as delegates contribute to it, so please show your appreciation by your participation.

Give it your undivided attention and we will all go away as WINNERS

We have exciting times for HASA going into 2008, but remember it is your organisation so participate and help us take HASA to new heights.

Watch the HASA website as we intend to amaze you all.

Thank you to all the sponsors, guest speakers, and everyone that is participating.

My personal congratulations to the nominees of our awards and I will look forward to an exciting evening on Tuesday.

Remember have fun, enjoy and above all make sure you have lots of new initiatives to take away with you.