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AAHOA Continues to Empower Women Hoteliers at the Second Annual HerOwnership Conference & Retreat

ATLANTA, Ga., Nov. 9 - AAHOA, the nation's largest hotel owners association, held its second annual HerOwnership Conference & Retreat last week at The Beeman Hotel in Dallas, TX.

Designed by women hoteliers for women hoteliers, the HerOwnership Conference & Retreat aims to foster a more robust and inclusive industry where women can thrive.

Attendees of the two-day conference participated in a variety of activities aimed at enhancing their professional growth, such as innovative panel discussions, restorative wellness events, two pre-conference masterclasses, and networking sessions, including the AAHOA Pink Party.

"When AAHOA launched the HerOwnership initiative, it was about supporting more women in the hospitality industry and propelling them to reach their full potential so they could realize their dream of hotel ownership," **said AAHOA President & CEO Laura Lee Blake**. "I am constantly impressed and inspired by the women who make up AAHOA – their desire to learn, to engage, and to lift each other up. The HerOwnership community is nothing like I have ever seen in this industry or elsewhere. As word continues to spread, I cannot wait to see how this will continue to grow into a source of support for women owning hotels, but also for women seeking to be stronger leaders in their businesses and their communities."

The Conference and Retreat had an impressive lineup of women speakers, panelists, and guests from all over the country, diverse in backgrounds and all at various stages of their ownership journey. Some of the top women leaders within the industry shared their triumphs and discussed the challenges they've faced as entrepreneurs, showcasing the resilience necessary to break glass ceilings as women in hospitality.

"Resilience is a characteristic women across generations have employed to push beyond the constraints of society," **said Tejal N. Patel, AAHOA Women Hoteliers Director Western Division**. "We are not only breaking down barriers, we are redefining them. The lessons we have learned and continue to share light a path for the next generation of women within the hotel industry and beyond."

The event featured keynote speakers, including **Mira Hole**, global co-chair of Women on the Move, JPMorgan Chase Asset Wealth Management; **Dr. Ruby Dhalla**, president and CEO of Dhalla Group of Companies; **Tracy Prigmore**, founder of She Has a Deal (SHaD) and TLTsolutions; and **Dr. Nissi Hamilton**, anti-human trafficking activist. New at the second-annual event were HerStory segments, where industry trailblazers shared their remarkable journeys to hotel ownership. Speakers included future hotel owner and 2023 SHaD Cohort **Hester Jackson**, GBTA Top 50 Women **Mercedes Blanco**, and **Jyoti Sarolia**, president and CEO of Ellis Hospitality Group.

“Thanks to our women leaders, including Women Hotelier Directors Tejal N. Patel and Purnima Patel, AAHOA EVP & CSO Heather Carnes, and the Women Hoteliers Committee, the second annual HerOwnership Conference & Retreat was a tremendous success,” said **AAHOA Chairman Bharat Patel**. “HerOwnership is a reflection of a broader movement in our industry and society. AAHOA has a clear vision for the future of our industry and is committed to empowering, elevating, and inspiring the exceptional women working tirelessly today, as well as those of tomorrow.”

In addition to the informative educational sessions and engaging panel discussions, attendees also had the opportunity to partake in rejuvenating wellness sessions led by **Nila Patel**, licensed Zumba® fitness instructor, and **Asha Patel**, certified yoga instructor. During these sessions, these experts provided valuable insights on maintaining an active lifestyle, integrating mindful exercises into daily routines, and discovering the pleasure in movement. These wellness sessions empowered attendees to focus on their well-being as they balance the demands of their personal and professional lives.

On top of the educational sessions and panel discussions, women stepped into a world of elegance, empowerment, and a touch of nostalgia at the first-ever *HerOwnership Pink Party: Inspired by Barbie, Brought to You by HBO*. It was an evening full of glamour and inspiration as we celebrated women's entrepreneurship and leadership. As women in the hospitality industry, we often place ourselves at the bottom of our 'to-do' lists, focusing on the needs of others ahead of our own,” said **Jennifer Burcham, Red Roof® Franchise Development Director**. “The DIRECTV HOSPITALITY and SHOWTIME® photoshoot encouraged us to place ourselves at the forefront, offering a moment of pampering and confidence-building in front of the camera. It's a reminder that we should prioritize self-care and self-expression more often, and for that, we are immensely thankful.”

AAHOA is also grateful to *Hotel Management* and their editorial team for hosting the first-ever HerOwnership *Hotel Management* Roundtable, which featured new and leading voices in the industry talking about the topics that matter most to women hoteliers.

“I'm so grateful to our speakers, sponsors, committee members, Officers, and the AAHOA team for their support and hard work in making this event a reality,” said **Purnima Patel, AAHOA Women Hoteliers Director Eastern Division**. “Whether it was the masterclasses, networking opportunities, the Pink Party, inspiring panel discussions, or just feeling the tremendous energy of having so many powerful women in one room, the HerOwnership Conference & Retreat delivered the value that the women of AAHOA deserve and have come to expect from the HerOwnership platform.”

To learn more about AAHOA's HerOwnership initiative, visit www.aahoa.com/herownership. To request photos from this event, email PR@AAHOA.com.

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About AAHOA

AAHOA is the largest hotel owners association in the nation, with Member-owned properties representing a significant part of the U.S. economy. AAHOA's 20,000 members own 60% of the hotels in the United States and are responsible for 1.7% of the nation's GDP. More than one million employees work at AAHOA member-owned hotels, earning \$47 billion annually, and member-owned hotels support 4.2 million U.S. jobs across all sectors of the hospitality industry. AAHOA's mission is to advance and protect the business interests of hotel owners through advocacy, industry leadership, professional development, member benefits, and community engagement.