

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CHTA ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2024 CHIEF AWARDS**

*Highly anticipated awards recognize best practices across the hospitality and tourism industry*



***Environmental Sustainability (left to right):*** *Andraea Proctor, Co-Founder & CCO, Hovr, Juliet Sutherland, Executive Assistant to CEO, Saint Lucia Hospitality and Tourism Association - SLHTA (accepting the award on behalf of Ti Kaye Resort and Spa), Sanovnik Destang, President, CHTA and Executive Director, Bay Gardens Resorts.*



***People Development (left to right):*** *Alina Sosa Cerullo, Business Development Manager, CoHo Reservations, Crescenza Biemans, CCO, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Sanovnik Destang, President, CHTA and Executive Director, Bay Gardens Resorts, and Vanessa Ledesma, CEO, CHTA.*



***Innovative Sales and Marketing (left to right):*** *Claire Kunzman, Founder and President, Anything But Advertising (ABA), Patricia Affonso-Dass, Group General Manager, Ocean Hotels Group, Lydia Padmore, Assistant Operations Manager, Ocean Hotels Group, Sanovnik Destang, President, CHTA and Executive Director, Bay Gardens Resorts, and Vanessa Ledesma, CEO, CHTA.*



**Social Responsibility (left to right):** Rich Tuckwell-Skuda, CEO and Founder, The Anything Group, Arlene Friday, CEO, Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association (GHTA), Sanovnik Destang, President, CHTA and Executive Director, Bay Gardens Resorts, and Vanessa Ledesma, CEO, CHTA.



**Technology Transformation (left to right):** Carl Gordon, Director - Government | Strategic Growth - English Caribbean, Mastercard, Alisa Coleman, Owner/President, Caille Blanc Villa & Hotel, Sanovnik Destang, President, CHTA and Executive Director, Bay Gardens Resorts, and Vanessa Ledesma, CEO, CHTA.

**MIAMI, Fla. (November 19, 2024)** – The [Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association \(CHTA\)](#) proudly unveiled the winners and finalists of the 2024 Caribbean Hotel Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) Awards. The winners were announced at the opening of the annual event, currently taking place in Miami, from November 18-20. The event celebrates exceptional initiatives across key categories within the Caribbean hospitality sector.

The CHIEF Awards were established to recognize successful practices of CHTA member hotels and tourism-related enterprises across five key areas – Environmental Sustainability, Innovative Sales and Marketing, People (Staff) Development and Support, Social Responsibility, and Tech Transformation.

The first-place CHIEF Award in the **Environmental Sustainability category** went to *Ti Kaye Resort & Spa* for its demonstration of a holistic sustainability approach, including initiatives such as investing in renewable energy, aiming to cut fossil fuel electricity use by 50 percent by expanding solar PV capacity, transitioning to LED lighting, and growing its composting program. The finalist was *Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association (GHTA)*, for its efforts to combat plastic pollution on the island by assisting in collecting plastic waste from member hotels and facilitating its transport to the central collection site.

In the **Innovative Sales and Marketing category**, *The Rockley by Ocean Hotels Barbados* took the top spot for its inventive approach to sales and marketing. The resort saw its renovation as an opportunity to authentically reflect Barbados and offer a fresh, guest-centered approach. By collaborating extensively with local artisans, they designed an experience celebrating Bajan culture

and artistry. The category's finalist was *Bolongo Bay Beach Resort*, with its success in utilizing the TikTok platform to drive substantial revenue over the past year.

In the highly important category of **People Development and Support**, the *Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Aruba* took top place, with the finalist being *Antigua & Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association (ABHTA)*, and special mention going to *Ocean Hotels Barbados Ltd.* *Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort's* commitment to people, place, and planet was enhanced over the past year with the introduction of AI technology to assist, not replace, staff with internal work, the elevation of its holistic healthcare with unprecedented additions of gender-specific preventative care, child care subsidies and BucutiActive. This is in addition to its already comprehensive staff program including: hiring locally, a three percent savings program, low interest and green loans, coverage for pet spay/neutering, gym memberships, DEI training, work-life balance and healthy dining.

The **Social Responsibility category** was claimed by the *Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association (GHTA)* for its efforts in ensuring that the tourism sector on the island remained informed and resilient during Hurricane Beryl and its aftermath. As a member of the National Disaster Emergency Advisory Committee, GHTA facilitated crucial communication among its members, providing timely information about recovery efforts and wellness checks. The finalists in the category were Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Aruba, and Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa, Saint Lucia. Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort was recognized for its island-wide pet overpopulation solution, nature preserve, and clean-up initiatives, while Coconut Bay's contributions included significant investments in early childhood education, community development, and staff training programs.

In the **Tech Transformation category**, *Caille Blanc Villa & Hotel* took top honors by identifying and addressing a void in being able to answer prospective guests' questions during their down hours. As a solution, they implemented an AI chatbot, named "Jacqbot" after Saint Lucia's national bird the Amazona parrot Jacquot, to help guests get answers to their questions in a timely manner. *The Anything Group* finished as a finalist with the launch of its groundbreaking booking platform poised to revolutionize the hospitality industry by allowing guests to book hotels, activities, and ancillaries all in one transaction.

"I'd like to extend heartfelt congratulations to all of the finalists and winners for their much-deserved recognition. Once again, the CHIEF Awards have celebrated innovation, sustainability, and a deep commitment to people and community," stated CHTA President Sanovnik Destang. "We commend these businesses for their forward-thinking approaches and for sharing best practices that can inspire others across the region. By honoring excellence, we aim to strengthen the industry as a whole and motivate our members to continue to go above and beyond."

Before the awards celebration, Destang took the stage to welcome attendees and deliver his opening remarks as the newly appointed president of CHTA. Reflecting on the successful return of CHIEF last year, he expressed his excitement about reviving Taste of the Caribbean after a five-year hiatus, underscoring the event's vital role in nurturing the region's culinary and hospitality talent.

Destang shared inspiring success stories from previous Taste events and also highlighted the importance of the Young Leaders program, urging participants to embrace more formal roles within CHTA to strengthen both the organization and the greater industry. He concluded by outlining the cornerstone priorities of his presidency: empowering people and cultivating talent, leveraging technology and AI, and fostering stronger linkages within the Caribbean and beyond.

Destang then introduced the keynote speaker, Gregory G. Habeeb, Chief Development Officer, WorldHotels North America. In his presentation, *Redefining Luxury Through Authenticity: Crafting*

Genuine Caribbean Experiences, Habeeb explored how Caribbean hoteliers can blend authentic, experiential travel with the strategic use of technology and AI. He emphasized that the true value of technology lies in its ability to relieve hospitality professionals of administrative burdens, enabling them to dedicate more attention to guest care.

“High-tech doesn’t mean distancing yourself from the guest,” Habeeb noted. “On the contrary, it empowers a high-touch, personalized guest experience.”

He also shared compelling real-world examples highlighting sustainability, diversity, and wellness initiatives at other hotels and encouraged attendees to strengthen and elevate their own programming in these areas in the coming New Year.

CHTA CEO Vanessa Ledesma concluded the evening by extending appreciation to CHIEF’s 2024 sponsors whose support has been instrumental in making this year’s event possible: Anything But Advertising, Carnival Corporation & PLC., IDEaS - a SAS Company, Interval International, Hovr, Mastercard, Tambourine, CoHo Reservations, My Booking Rewards, taCONNECT, The Anything Group, Amadeus, Cloudbeds and Marketplace Excellence.

For more information about the 2024 CHIEF Awards and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, visit [www.chtachief.com](http://www.chtachief.com).

#### **About the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA)**

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) is the Caribbean’s leading association representing the interests of national hotel and tourism associations. For more than 60 years, CHTA has been the backbone of the Caribbean hospitality industry. Working with some 1,000 hotel and allied members, and 33 National Hotel Associations, CHTA is shaping the Caribbean’s future and helping members to grow their businesses. Whether helping to navigate critical issues in sales and marketing, sustainability, legislative issues, emerging technologies, climate change, data and intelligence or, looking for avenues and ideas to better market and manage businesses, CHTA is helping members on issues which matter most. For additional information, visit [www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com](http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com).

###

High-res images are available for download here: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Z2I3MT\\_Ub8zJmbB9N4A5j3GmcPg3retm?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Z2I3MT_Ub8zJmbB9N4A5j3GmcPg3retm?usp=sharing)

Media contact:  
Claire Kunzman  
[claire@anythingbutadvertising.com](mailto:claire@anythingbutadvertising.com)  
+1 407 227 8867