



### **SMALL HOTELS JOIN TOGETHER TO PROMOTE SUPERIOR LODGINGS**

CLEARWATER, FL – As the Internet continues to reshape the dynamics of vacation planning, small properties without the marketing budgets or name recognition of large chains are searching for new ways to reach potential visitors. From teaming with low-cost airlines to working together to host small groups, the “mom and pops” are finding new ways to attract visitors.

Nearly 75 properties in the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area have turned to the Superior Small Lodging program in conjunction with the area’s Convention & Visitors Bureau for a new way to brand their properties. The St. Petersburg/Clearwater CVB this month released its 2004 Superior Small Lodging brochure and updated its Web site highlighting these unique properties. And in St. Petersburg, a group of Bed & Breakfast properties has joined together as the St. Petersburg Area Association of Bed and Breakfast Inns (SPAABBI) and teamed with an airline partner to market their properties.

“We used to go to our feeder markets with a handful of brochures and call on all the travel agencies,” said Ken Hamilton, owner of the Palm Pavilion Inn on Clearwater Beach. “But as travel agencies consolidated, we had to change our strategy. We still work with the agents, but we need to reach consumers as they plan their vacations. And the Superior Small Lodging program helps us to do that.”

The Superior Small Lodging idea has quickly grown from a Florida-only idea to a national program. St. Petersburg/Clearwater – Florida’s Beach offers one of the largest inventories of SSL properties anywhere in the country. To qualify for the program, small properties must pass thorough inspections administered by an independent hotel-industry expert. The inspections cover areas similar to those of the AAA and Mobil ratings systems, stressing cleanliness and maintenance aspects of the properties.

Properties with 50 units or less are eligible to be in the program. For St. Petersburg/Clearwater, the majority of these are located directly on or close to beaches and marinas, with restaurants and shopping nearby or in downtown St. Petersburg close to the city’s many cultural attractions. Visitors can choose between well-appointed rooms or efficiency apartments with fully functional kitchens. To ensure ongoing

***St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention & Visitors Bureau***

Media Contact: Wit Tuttell at 800-822-6461 or 727-464-7200 • [Wit@FloridasBeach.com](mailto:Wit@FloridasBeach.com)

14450 46th Street North, Suite 108 Clearwater, FL 33762 • Fax: 727-464-7222 • [www.FloridasBeach.com](http://www.FloridasBeach.com)

success, participation in the program is an earned privilege. Members must continually demonstrate commitment and adherence to the requirements of the program.

“Our research indicates that a fair percentage of our visitors are seeking smaller, well maintained, value-priced accommodations,” said Carole Ketterhagen, executive director of the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area CVB. “The Superior Small Lodging designation gives them confidence that these properties have met stringent standards and rank among the finest smaller lodgings anywhere in the nation. They are attractive alternatives to large hotel and resort stays.”

The St. Petersburg Area Association of Bed and Breakfast Inns has created a new brochure featuring its 12 member Inns, 8 non-profit attractions and the new airline carrier, USA3000 Airlines. This brochure is a culmination of a joint effort spearheaded by the Inns and supported by the City of St. Petersburg, USA3000 Airlines, MOSI, the Pinewood Cultural Village, the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, the American Stage, Florida Craftsmen, The Arts Center, Sunken Gardens and the Museum of Fine Arts. USA3000 Airlines will be the first airline partner to place this brochure at ticket counters at all of its hubs throughout the U.S. to help draw visitors to the area.

“We are all working together to attract the savvy traveler to the area, promoting our area as a destination that has everything to offer—not only world class beaches, but a wealth of artistic and cultural attractions, lovely bed and breakfast inns and the convenience of the St. Petersburg/Clearwater airport,” said Ed Caldwell, owner of Dickens House Bed and Breakfast and President of SPAABBI. “This brochure marks the first cooperative effort from such a diverse section of the tourism industry in the greater St. Petersburg area, but we hope it is just the beginning of even greater collaboration in the future.”

Free copies of the **2004 Superior Small Lodging** brochure are available from the CVB and online at [www.FloridasBeach.com/ssl](http://www.FloridasBeach.com/ssl). For an SSL brochure or area visitors guide, call toll-free 1-877-FL-BEACH (352-3224). The **St. Petersburg Area Association of Bed and Breakfast Inns** can be contacted at [www.spaabbi.com](http://www.spaabbi.com) or 1-888-655-STAY (7829). USA3000 can be contacted at [www.usa3000.com](http://www.usa3000.com) or 1-877-USA3000 (872-3000).

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