

LUCY BUFFETT TO EMCEE TOURISM AWARDS BANQUET

2009 Governor's Conference on Tourism

Montgomery, Ala. — Celebrity Chef Lucy Buffett and Mobile's WPMI NBC-15 reporter Darwin Singleton are scheduled to emcee the awards banquet at the 2009 Governor's Conference on Tourism. The conference will be held at the Marriott Grand Hotel in Point Clear August 29 – September 1.

A native of Mobile, Lucy opened her now-famous restaurant Lulu's in 1999. What was once considered a dive has now become a destination experience for more than 750,000 customers every year. Lulu's serves more than 1,000 gallons of gumbo and more than 100,000 hamburgers each year. She has made several appearances on NBC's "Today Show" and the Food Network promoting and preparing recipes from her "Crazy Sista Cooking" cookbook.

"I'm honored to emcee this banquet to award the efforts of tourism representatives across the state. Tourism is alive and well in Alabama and at LuLu's we prosper and grow right along with the rest of the state," said Buffett. "We welcome everyone, we've never met a stranger and treat everyone like family. I believe that's the secret to Alabama's success as well. From my restaurant to my cookbook, promoting Alabama is one of my top priorities and I'm proud to be an ambassador."

Singleton is becoming a fixture on the Gulf Coast with his "Here's Darwin" reports. He has anchored and reported television news for 28 years and is in his 22nd year of covering news in and around the Mobile-Baldwin County area.

"I'm always delighted to talk with people who have visited Alabama's Gulf Coast for the first time. Many tell me they didn't even know Alabama had a coast. When they discover the history and cultural opportunities that we take for granted, well, they usually vow they'll come back. Hey, it was my intention to stay here in Mobile for a couple of years and then move on. That was 22 years ago," said Singleton.

Scheduled speakers for the business sessions include keynote Peter Yesawich, known for his strategic thinking, breakthrough creativity and innovation in marketing practice. Berekely Young of Young Strategies will speak on the latest travel trends, David Stutts and David Griner of Birmingham-based Luckie & Company ad agency will speak on social media and marketing in tough economic times.

Tourism and hospitality representatives from across the state will gather for the annual conference for professional development seminars Sunday-Tuesday followed by the black-tie awards banquet on Tuesday evening.

Awards in 13 categories will be presented: Attraction of the Year, Event of the Year, Tourism Employee of the Year, Executive of the Year, Tourism Organization of the Year, Government Advocate and Media Advocate awards, Partnership of the Year, Welcome Center of the Year, the Governor's Tourism Award and the prestigious Alabama Tourism Hall of Fame award. Two new categories were added for 2009, the Rising Star award will be awarded to a tourism professional who has been working in tourism for two years or less, but has made significant contributions to the industry, and the Theme Campaign award will be presented to an organization that has consistently promoted the "Year of Alabama" theme beyond the initial campaign year.

For a complete schedule of speakers and events visit www.algovernorsconference.com.