

THE BREAKERS®

PALM BEACH

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CONTACT: Bonnie Reuben (310) 248-3852
bonnie@bonniereuben.com

First National Award for “Servant Leadership” Recognizes Paul Leone, President of The Breakers Palm Beach

PALM BEACH, FL – At the fourth annual [World LEADERS Conference](#) held at the Palm Beach County Convention Center, the first ever *Servant Leadership Award* was presented to Paul N. Leone, president of [The Breakers Palm Beach](#), for his team member-driven approach to managing a 2000-associate resort operation. The honor was bestowed before an audience of 700 by James L. Davis, president of the World Leaders Group and organizer of the conference, and West Palm Beach Mayor Jeri Muoio, who also proclaimed March 5, 2014, as Paul Leone Servant Leadership Day.

Mayor Muoio told conference attendees, “Paul continuously exhibits the keystone habits of excellence,” adding that she always keeps in mind something she heard Leone say that gives her strength when facing a challenging day: “Even on the best day, we can be better.” Davis acknowledged that the World LEADERS Group sought an award recipient whose framework of thinking and action is based on the principles of servant leadership...the premise of turning a hierarchical organization upside down. “We could not think of a finer leader in the community than Paul Leone,” he said. “He was the obvious choice for the inaugural award.”

The ceremonial presentation was completely unexpected by Leone, who humbly received this accolade and immediately deferred credit to his team members and ownership. He has attended the annual World LEADERS Conference since its inception in 2011; previously he was unfamiliar with the term, ‘servant leadership.’ At that first forum, he delved into many facets of this approach to leadership, which perfectly aligned with his long-standing values and employee-centered philosophy.

As president of the luxury oceanfront resort since 1994, Leone has infused The Breakers’ organizational culture with his intrinsic respect for people and his enthusiasm for building a nurturing environment where staff can grow and flourish. He demonstrates the servant leadership philosophy of sharing power and influence, putting the needs of others first and striving to encourage people to develop and perform to the best of their potential. Servant leadership dramatically contrasts with traditional leadership habits that typically focus on accumulating and exercising power, or top-down governance.

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“Servant leadership has always been the core of The Breakers’ DNA, which has been fostered by our dedicated, longstanding owners [descendants of founder Henry Flagler, circa 1896],” said Leone, an award-winning hospitality executive who was recognized as ‘Hotelier of the World’ by *HOTELS* magazine just last November (2013). “Our company is proof that employee fulfillment drives customer satisfaction and directly impacts the lives of others, as well as the bottom line.”

“Our focus will always be on the team, our greatest asset,” he continued. “We place tremendous value on their quality of life and their professional and personal contentment; that drives our exceptional staff retention rates and guest loyalty. Thanks to our people, we have achieved success that also empowers us to make a difference in the community.” For Leone, The Breakers’ sense of social responsibility is the ultimate expression of hospitality — a purposeful journey that not only enhances the team and fortifies the environment, but strengthens those in need. In that spirit, he believes, “It is more important to bring people along than to give back.” Employees of The Breakers tallied almost 8,700 hours of community service in 2013.

“Paul’s management style is to operate on the ground, as the coach for each and every employee,” said colleague Denise Bober, director of human resources of The Breakers, who has worked with Leone for 26 years. “He has a genuine interest in the lives of the people in our organization and takes the time to get to know them and their families on a personal level. Few senior executives out there have earned renown for their integrity, humility and compassion, and are as determined to achieve excellence. Paul personifies the class and respect that is synonymous with servant leadership.”

Particularly in the hospitality sector, the pressures and expectations from stakeholders, customers and clients are higher than they have ever been. “For an independent hotel like The Breakers, which operates in entrepreneurial fashion, servant leadership is the difference between surviving and thriving,” said Leone.

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Editor’s Notes and Photography:

- [Photo link](#) to image of Paul Leone, WLG Servant Leadership Award
PHOTO CREDIT: LILA PHOTO

Description: Paul N. Leone, President of The Breakers Palm Beach, receives the inaugural 'Servant Leadership Award' at the World LEADERS Group's 2014 National Conference