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Report
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Financing *in a*
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Chain Leadership Awards

The brand companies show their best stuff

By Ed Watkins & Eric Stoessel

Independent hotels are great, and many of them are known for their creativity in operations, marketing and customer service. Yet, it's hard to beat the hotel brand companies for overall and ongoing innovation in all areas of the hotel arts. This month, we honor the industry's most innovative brands with *Lodging Hospitality's* annual Chain Leadership Awards. We present 10 awards to nine companies (Choice Hotels won two) in eight categories (two awards are presented in the Marketing and Development categories).

The Candlewood Suites in Tulsa, OK donated 100 bedding sets and 120 books to a local children's charity. The property was out of range of participating in the National Furniture Bank recycling program.



ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION: CANDLEWOOD SUITES

Oftentimes, doing the right thing is also the best thing to do for your business. Such was the case for Candlewood Suites, InterContinental Hotels Group's extended-stay brand. Last year, as the chain prepared to roll out its

new bedding collection, IHG officials looked for a way to avoid sending the old bedding materials to landfills.

"We wanted to work with our hotels on their renovations in a way that is good for the community, good for the environment and good for the individual hotels," says Tisha Rosamund, director of brand experience for Candlewood. "We found that opportunity through a partnership with the National Furniture Bank."

The 55 Candlewoods in communities with access to NFB affiliates coordinated their bedding swap schedules with the charity. Companies hired to install the new bedding sets removed the old mattresses and materials and handed them off to NFB workers who donated them to needy families. In all, nearly 270 tons of discarded materials were diverted from landfills, and more than 4,300 families received useable bedding materials.

The program progressed swiftly and was completed in 100 days. Those Candlewood owners involved in the process collectively saved \$100,000 in disposal costs.

Lessons learned from the exercise were integrated into re:serves, a recycling guide that's available to all IHG properties.

"re:serves is now part of IHG's official property improvement plan process for all brands," says Vicki Gordon, senior vice president of corporate affairs. "When a hotel undergoes a renovation, the guide is presented to our owners urging them to consider using identified resources when remodeling and thus reusing and/or recycling as much as possible rather than discarding anything."