



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **AAHOA Annual Convention in San Antonio One for the Record Books**

SAN ANTONIO – The largest gathering of hotel owners in the country set a new record this week as the four-day annual convention and trade show of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association wrapped up Friday, reaching 6,689 attendees and vendors.

“The 2017 AAHOA National Convention and Trade Show surpassed even our highest expectations,” said Chip Rogers, the group’s president and CEO. “Over the past few years, AAHOA has grown tremendously. And that’s because we’ve focused on what matters to members—advocacy, industry leadership, professional development, member benefits and community engagement.”

“This year’s convention theme, Evolving Through Collaboration, points to how we’ll continue to grow,” continued Rogers. “As an industry, every time we’ve made a leap forward it’s through working together—owners, brands and vendor-partners.”

The annual confab at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center featured three days of keynote speakers that included Marcus Lemonis, entrepreneur and star of CNBC’s hit show “The Profit,” David Robinson, former San Antonio Spur and 10-time NBA All-Star, and Scott Kelly, former astronaut and U.S. Navy fighter pilot.

“A big thank you to our keynote speakers for inspiring us with their words of wisdom on leadership and business,” said Rogers. “A special thank you to David Robinson, who is one my personal heroes. He’s an NBA legend, but his legacy is much greater than his accomplishments on the court. As San Antonians know well, he has tirelessly given back to his community—both financially and through his time and efforts.”

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) also addressed attendees on Friday, welcoming them to Texas and applauding the economic impact that hospitality and tourism has on the Lone Star State. More than 650,000 jobs are supported by more than \$68.7 billion in direct travel spending and \$6.7 billion in state and local tax revenue, according to 2015 numbers released by the governor’s office.

The presidents and CEOs of 10 major hotel brands were on hand Wednesday to speak about the future of the industry. Brands represented include Best Western Hotels & Resorts, Choice Hotels

International, G6 Hospitality, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), La Quinta Inns & Suites, Magnuson Worldwide, Red Lion Hotels Corporation (RLHC), Red Roof Inn, Trump Hotels and Wyndham Hotel Group.

The event also featured one of the largest trade shows in the industry. On Wednesday and Thursday afternoon, attendees roamed over 62,000 square feet of exhibit space and networked with more than 400 exhibiting companies. Convention-goers could also attend any of the 11 educational sessions held, with topics ranging from “Make Lodging Great Again” to how hotels can fight human trafficking.

Rogers also congratulated Biran Patel of Irving, Texas, for being elected by the AAHOA membership to be an officer of the association Friday. The group’s officers are elected to the position of secretary and automatically ascend to treasurer, vice chair and chair annually, meaning Patel will become chair in 2020.

“We’re very proud our organization is so member-driven, and that starts with our officer elections,” said Rogers. “Congratulations to Biran for his successful election. We know he’ll serve AAHOA with all his heart over the next four years.”

Bhavesh Patel of Cinnaminson, New Jersey, took over the reins as chair on Friday, with Hitesh (HP) Patel of Austin, Texas, becoming vice chair. Jagruti Panwala of Ivyland, Pennsylvania, who last year became the organization’s first-ever woman to be elected an officer, became treasurer.

Bruce Patel of Irving, Texas, stepped down from his four-year term as an officer of AAHOA. He’ll continue to serve on the board as immediate past chair.

Rogers thanked the San Antonio community for their amazing hospitality this week.

“San Antonio’s riverwalk and the downtown area is stunning,” commented Rogers. “And the restaurants, shops and other businesses in the area welcomed us with open arms, which we greatly appreciate. We can’t wait to come back.”

Lastly, the group announced the location and dates of its 2018 convention: March 27-30 at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland, minutes away from the nation’s capital.

AAHOA was founded in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1989 and is now the largest group of hotel owners in the world with over 16,500 members. Its mission is to advance and protect hotel owners through advocacy, industry leadership, education, member benefits and community engagement.

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*Founded in 1989, AAHOA ([www.aahoa.com](http://www.aahoa.com)) is the largest hotel owners association in the world, with more than 16,500 small business owner-members. AAHOA members own almost one in every two hotels in the United States.*