

2007 Concierge of the Year Nominees



JON ADLER

JAMES BERNHARDT

LOIDA DIAZ

GUNTER KLEEMANN

IVETTE MUNROE

JON ADLER

The St. Regis Hotel, New York

Years of Service: 10

Organizational Affiliations: Board of Directors, Les Clefs d'Or USA; Member, NYCAHC

How and when did I become a Concierge?

Honestly, it was my mother's idea! She mentioned the International Concierge Institute one day to me, and through a process of hard work and very good luck (along with some amazing mentors), I became a Concierge here at The St. Regis! What can I say but thanks, Mom!

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

First and foremost it means being a part of an incredible community of service. I am so in love with the idea of "Service through Friendship" and the connections our associations create. The friends I have made through Les Clefs d'Or and the New York City Association of Hotel Concierges are truly the most special people I could ever imagine meeting. Lucky for me, being a Concierge means having a love affair with the best place on earth, New York City. I get to share the City with my guests, whether a return guest who I know well, or a tourist who has never been in the City before. It thrills me when a guest comes up to me and says, "We were so intimidated to come to New York, but you made it accessible and fun for us." Most of all, being a Concierge means juggling the careers of restaurant critic, weatherman, theater critic, confidante, friend, mentor, student, psychologist, travel agent and more. That's one of my favorite things about this job, that you never know exactly what each day is going to hold. I love the anticipation that grows when you hear those words, "I know this is going to be a strange question, but..."

JAMES BERNHARDT

The Peninsula New York

Years of Service: 8

Organizational Affiliations: Les Clefs d'Or USA, NYCAHC

How and when did I become a Concierge?

I began working in the restaurant industry 20 years ago. While in college, I decided to join the hotel industry, following in the tradition of my parents, who were also Hoteliers. My first job was with The Beekman Tower Hotel as a restaurant host. At the time, our department's Captain was fluent in 10 different languages. This posed a problem with the rest of the staff as our restaurant's clientele were mainly UN diplomats who wanted to be attended only by him as he spoke their native language. In order to better serve the guests, the hotel created a Concierge position in order to ease the stress and tension amongst the staff. Through this position, I was exposed to the world of Concierge service and never looked back.

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

Concierges are often described as "Houdinis" and "modern-day geniuses" and so forth. People often want to know: What does our job entail? How we deal with the stress? Is it worth it? Also the title "Concierge" is so often used or misused in an attempt to enhance the appearance of their product or service. What does it mean to me? We are the last line of exceptional service. A good Concierge is passionate, well-informed and, when asked, we find the answers to anything! There are those who diminish the position as one that does not produce hotel revenues; however, it is the concierge team that ensures that our guests return time and time again to the hotel. Our greatest talents are compassion and integrity. We truly make a difference in our guests' experiences!

LOIDA DIAZ

Trump International Hotel and Tower

Years of Service: 15

Organizational Affiliations: Les Clefs d'Or USA; Board of Directors, NYCAHC

How and when did I become a Concierge?

Believe it or not, as a child my parents always wished for me to become a dentist. Now that is certainly an admirable profession that I'm sure is very exciting, but to me, growing up in Hawaii, nothing could compare to the allure of travel and tourism. The glamour of the big and beautiful resorts and the satisfaction those in the industry enjoyed serving people on their vacations were so compelling. So despite their objections I studied Hospitality Management and completed an internship in Germany. After completing my studies, I gained experience in several hotels abroad and then decided it was time to conquer the greatest city in the world, New York City! My first position in New York was at the largest and one of the most dynamic hotels in the city, The Hilton New York, where I joined the hotel's Concierge team. The job was truly mesmerizing! I met people from all walks of life, from all over the world. I made what have become life-long friendships with colleagues and merchants all over the city. I stepped into the hotel and before I turned around my shift was over... I was having a blast and found my true calling. I worked there loyally for over fourteen years, earning many honors and awards throughout. Earlier this year I was offered a wonderful opportunity that I couldn't pass up to join the concierge desk at the famed New York Palace and just recently I made one more jump to the Concierge team at Trump International Hotel and Tower, where I expect to finish out my career.

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

A Concierge is a friend, a problem-solver, a fountain of information, an ambassador to our city and a "one-stop shop" at my hotel for any and all needs that come up. That being said, nothing gives me more satisfaction than knowing that I was instrumental in making someone's visit to New York more pleasant and memorable. So a Concierge is also a "creator of lifelong memories." Finally, being a Concierge is an opportunity for which I am truly grateful. I love the excitement, the challenges, the fast pace and, above all else, the feeling of fulfillment that comes from serving my guests and my colleagues.

GUNTER KLEEMANN

The New York Palace Hotel

Years of Service: 8

Organizational Affiliations: Les Clefs d'Or, USA; Board of Directors, NYCAHC

How and when did I become a Concierge?

I came into this business through Gray Line. I was in show business my entire life. Struggling. I was looking for a job as a tour guide because I know this city very well, and I love this city more than anything else. Gray Line didn't have any tour guide positions available, but they did have a position as Concierge available. That was the time that Gray Line had a number of various hotel desks, to sell their tickets, not too different from what Continental Guest is doing today. Concierge? *What the...is a Concierge?* I thought. Then they put me into the Roosevelt Hotel, and I could say that right under "The Clock" in the Roosevelt Hotel I fell in love. That position closed at the end of the year and I was employed by the Lucerne Hotel as Concierge. I

worked there for six years and am now employed at The New York Palace Hotel. From now on the sky's the limit.

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

It means having to be a good person, with an up personality, to everybody coming to your desk, no matter what personal disposition they are in. It means knowing this city, it means knowing this city really well. It means knowing how to put things together, knowing how to read people and deciding what is right for them. It means making recommendations. It means wheeling and dealing. It means multitasking. It means speaking different languages. It means traveling around the world. It means building relationships that last for a lifetime. It means knowing how to listen. It means having good manners. It means knowing how to dress myself and knowing when to get dressed up. It means being trustworthy. It means your handshake and your word mean something. It means getting up early or going home late. It means taking responsibility for what you are doing. It means selling theater tickets. It means making restaurant reservations. It means booking the limousines, and processing each job until it has been posted and charged. It means putting yourself aside and helping someone find that pair of jeans that they were looking for. It means being patient. It means staying informed. It means being insightful. It means making someone happy.

IVETTE MUNROE

The Pierre, a Taj Hotel

Years of Service: 9

Organizational Affiliations: Board of Directors, NYCAHC

How and when did I become a Concierge?

I consider myself to be one among a rare breed, a true New Yorker! Born and reared in the Columbia area of upper Manhattan, my fascination for the city is neverending. My early sense of adventure and travel introduced me to many cultures and languages throughout 10 years of living in 4 countries. Upon returning to the U.S. and completing my studies I joined The New York Palace Hotel in PBX through the inspiration of my mother who was employed by the hotel. I then transferred to the mail desk and eventually the Executive Lounge. While handling my duties as a supervisor in the Executive Lounge, I had the opportunity to observe three extraordinary Concierges at work in the lobby, Julie Devlin, Frederick Bigler and Mark Peterson. They saw in me "a calling" that I had not yet realized. The "calling" prompted me to join the Concierge team of the Grand Hyatt and become a member of NYCAHC. I eventually fulfilled a childhood dream by becoming an employee of The Pierre, a Taj Hotel, where I've flourished as a professional Concierge with the mentorship of Maurice Dancer, and now have the position of Assistant Chef Concierge.

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

A craft, a skill, an art are descriptions that I would choose to define this profession for which I have a passion. While serving as Secretary and Treasurer on the Board of Directors it meant serving my Concierge community and giving my time to inspire others. While working in the lobby of my hotel at my desk, it means opening a "new world" to the visitor and being a part of creating memories that can only occur when one possesses a "yes" and "make it happen" energy and attitude.