

2008 Concierge of the Year Nominees



SUSANNE CARTER



ISABELLA IBRAGIMOV



HANK MCKEE



HARALD MOOTZ



MELANIE PORTSCHE

SUSANNE CARTER

The Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park

Years of Service: 8

Organizational Affiliations: Les Clefs d'Or USA, NYCAHC

How and when did I become a Concierge?

I worked in the hotel business in Germany in different positions before I moved to the United States in 1996. Although it appealed to me, I quickly learned that in Europe, Concierge was a male-dominated profession at the time. When I arrived in the United States, I was thrilled to discover women working at so many Concierge desks. Soon I knew that I had found my true calling. Time and effort paid off as I eventually got the opportunity to become a Concierge in 2000 at The Pierre, then a Four Seasons Hotel. I leaped at the chance and began to discover the city from the new perspective of a Concierge! Over the years, I have delighted in the fact that it is my personal adventures that create the best contribution I can make for my guests.

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

Being a Concierge means so many things to me, but the common thread in all of them is passion! In my view, a good Concierge has passion to make each guest happy, passion for being a representative for your hotel, passion for our community and passion for being the best ambassador to the greatest city in the world! Concierge is truly the most rewarding position I have ever had. It is a great responsibility as we are the ones who create lifelong memories for our guests every day. In addition, we are able to establish wonderful relationships with our guests, vendors and colleagues alike. I am proud to be a part of NYCAHC and Les Clefs d'Or, which have given me the opportunity to grow professionally. I look forward to many more years of service through friendship.

ISABELLA IBRAGIMOV

The New York Palace Hotel

Years of Service: 18

Organizational Affiliations: NYCAHC, Les Clefs d'Or USA

How and when did I become a Concierge?

I consider myself a very lucky person. I always loved languages and I have studied some of them for many, many years (English in particular). When I came to this country from Tajikistan I was invited to Columbia University to teach Tajik during the school year and during the summer I taught Russian. At the same time I was accepted to the graduate program at Columbia University and studied Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures specializing in Central Asian Studies. Needless to say, I always loved languages and different cultures; this took me to different countries in the world. I started working in the hotel industry just by accident. In 1991 I came from Italy where I worked with Russian and Persian immigrants who were en route to the United States. When I came back from Italy, I was looking for employment. It so happened that the St. Regis New York was opening its doors after extensive renovation so I just sent my resume. I was offered a job as a Maitre d'Etage (Butler) on the floors. One of my guests actually suggested to me that I should become a Concierge. My first job as a Concierge (1995) was at the Omni Berkshire Hotel, where Dominic Alfonzetti molded me and taught me what the true meaning of Concierge is, for which I am grateful. From then on I was introduced to a profession that's never boring, always changing, full of life and energy! In 1999 I was hired at The New York Palace Hotel and have been there ever since.

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

It means offering unconditional assistance to all types of guests,

treating each and every one as a VIP and remembering that we are the ones who create our guests' "memories." It means being resourceful, attentive, understanding, patient, empathetic and informed about everything that is going on not only in our particular city but in the world. The art of Concierge is being able to multitask, sometimes in different languages, and work together with the global community in order to "make it happen." By instructing a guest on how to explore the city and enjoy what it has to offer, a Concierge not only teaches but also learns from the guest. This is a benefit which I experience daily. Finally, it means a lot to me when a guest tells me that I "made their stay" in New York memorable and further proves this point by returning to the hotel or, better yet, sending their friends.

HANK MCKEE

Newark Liberty International Airport Marriott

Years of Service: 20

Organizational Affiliations: NYCAHC, Council for Airport Opportunity (CAO)

How and when did I become a Concierge?

I have spent decades in a career covering many facets of the hospitality industry. My work experiences encompass airline, travel and the hotel industries. I have been a hotel Concierge for a total of 20 years: seven years at the Hyatt Hotel and Marriott Hotels in Princeton, New Jersey, and the last 13 years at the Newark Liberty International Airport Marriott Hotel. The Newark Marriott is the "largest" hotel in New Jersey, excluding Atlantic City, with over 600 rooms, and is considered the "gateway" to New York City. 80 percent of our hotel guests travel there. As a Concierge I have been responsible for defining the position and standards for Concierge, training of Concierge support staff, developing guest-to-Concierge protocol and promoting the hotel in the community (e.g. speaking to various youth groups about opportunities in the industry and sharing my experience with younger hotel staff). Being a member of the NYCAHC for the past nine years has given me an opportunity to establish working relationships with the outstanding Concierges in the area. During 2004, I hosted one of the first and largest NYCAHC general meetings held in New Jersey. The purpose of the meeting was to promote hotels in the Tri-State Area. I was instrumental in having several important guest speakers attend, including the Former Mayor of Newark, the General Manager of Newark Liberty Airport, the Commissioner of New Jersey and the Head of Travel & Tourism in New Jersey. This event was a total success due in part to the cooperation and involvement of the NYCAHC. In keeping with the spirit of the kinship I feel between the Newark Liberty Airport Marriott and the NYCAHC, I can cheerfully and sincerely say "New Jersey is in the House!"

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

I think of my hotel guests as if they were guests in my own home. I want to exude warmth and charm in the way they are treated. The impression my guests feel as they deal with me carries over in their feelings toward our hotel and our city. I have many families touring New York City for the first time. I make their stay as comfortable and hassle-free as possible. I plan their itineraries so that they can experience an unbelievable array of arts, culture, entertainment and cuisine from around the world. Not only do I plan their New York itineraries, I also plan their visits to New Jersey from the northwest corner to its southernmost tip and every destination in between! Our guests have "needs and wants" and I cater to virtually every desire and interest. Being a Concierge is the "Spirit to Serve."

HARALD MOOTZ

The St. Regis New York

Years of Service: 15

Organizational Affiliations: NYCAHC (Board Member), Les Clefs d'Or USA (Eastern Membership Committee)

How and when did I become a Concierge?

I owe it to the movie *For Love and Money* with Michael J. Fox; after working Reception at the Capital Hilton in D.C. for a summer in 1989, I realized that my energies were better utilized when I returned to the hotel world in 1994. It seemed like a natural use of my languages and people skills...the rest is history. I started at the Hotel Plaza Athénée, joined The New York Palace Hotel in 2006 and joined the St. Regis New York in July 2008.

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

Being a hotel Concierge is like being an ambassador for your very own city; one who welcomes you and takes care of you during your stay while assuring you of the best service possible. And that's what it's really about in our profession—the desire to serve. New York can be a daunting visit, whether for the first or twentieth time, and the ability to create a memorable experience for my guests is what I enjoy most. Having a guest return glowing after a recommended restaurant or show gives me the feeling that I shared a small part of a larger entity that makes this city so vibrant, and that makes me feel like I've done my part in the world.

MELANIE PORTSCHE

The Westin New York at Times Square

Years of Service: 6

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

How and when did I become a Concierge?

I began my career in the hospitality industry in 1993 at the Sheraton Hotels of New York, where I started in Food & Beverage, followed by Reservations, the Front Desk and finally the Executive Club Level. During my time at the Front Desk, I was inspired by our Director of Front Office, who encouraged our department's knowledge of New York City. He was always "thinking outside the box" in order to exceed guest expectations. Next, I moved onto the W Times Square Hotel, where I enjoyed the whatever/whenever philosophy: anything is truly possible... Finally, six years ago, I began my current position as Concierge at The Westin New York at Times Square. Additionally, I've had the great honor of being the Social Director of the NYCAHC for this past year.

What does "being a Concierge" mean to me?

Being a Concierge means the world to me! It is a true privilege and, perhaps most importantly, a huge responsibility, as we are blessed with the opportunity to assist in the lifetime experiences and memories of many. What an honor to have helped in the planning of everything from special dining experiences to itineraries, event planning ideas, engagements, celebrations and even weddings. We are so lucky: we help make dreams come true! To me, being a Concierge truly means "making it happen"! It means constantly learning and growing. It means boundless energy, putting myself in the shoes of my guests, being creative and thinking outside the box. Finally, being a Concierge means being part of a beyond-amazing community! Our Concierge community is comprised of such talent, knowledge, passion and drive, and this energy certainly inspires me to "go beyond" for our guests and for our community!