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**CONTACT: Tami Reist, President & CEO**

**Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association**

**PHONE: 256.350.3500 / 800.648.5381**

**EMAIL:** **tami@northalabama.org**

**AMLA Receives Tourism Grant to Expand Training in North Alabama’s Hospitality Industry in Customer Service**

Decatur, Ala. (October 26, 2022) – The Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (AMLA) has been awarded a tourism grant to support its Flawless Delivery customer service training program for the hospitality industry in North Alabama. The two-year grant from the Alabama Tourism Department will help train frontline workers, housekeeping, front desk personnel and sales coordinators in North Alabama’s growing hospitality industry on how to deliver exceptional customer service. The free training will begin next month and will include 92 sessions over the next two years starting with hotels and motels and then expand to other areas in the hospitality industry.

“The grant will allow us to expand our Flawless Delivery training program that we launched last year as a pilot program for hotels in Decatur and Huntsville to additional areas of the hospitality industry,” said AMLA President and CEO Tami Reist. “The North Alabama region has more lodging construction in the works than in other parts of Alabama and it is important for us to invest in the tourism workforce to ensure our frontline employees are equipped with the skills and knowledge to be successful in their positions. According to a report by STR ([www.str.com](http://www.str.com)), Huntsville is leading the state in occupancy and new hotel construction with over 1500 new rooms to be added and is one of the top three markets in the state leading the way in RevPAR (revenue per available room) gains.”

Flawless Delivery, a free customer service training program designed for frontline workers, housekeeping, front desk personnel and sales coordinators, incorporates a foundation of empathy, communication and engagement in order to highlight the quality of service necessary to retain guests in today’s competitive environment. The training consists of 20 hours over the course of two days and one evening and uses gamification, small group projects, role play, team building exercises and lecture to engage participants. The co-training model incorporates bi-lingual trainers who are also skilled in differentiated learning practices.

In addition to the classroom learning, the training is an immersive experience, as the students become guests at a hotel and also serve as mystery shoppers. Two mystery shopper evaluations are submitted by the participants: One for the front desk, room and site experience, and one for the dining experience. These evaluations serve two functions. First, they enable the participants to comment based on their experience as guests, thus giving them a different perspective on the process. Second, the evaluations will help the host site by giving them valuable input on services received.

The two-day program concludes with a graduation ceremony where participants are presented with a certificate from Calhoun Community College and a Flawless Delivery Certified Pin.

Employees who successfully complete the training will receive an incentive to continue employment in the field. One year after the end of the training, those participants who are still employed will receive a getaway for themselves and their families provided by AMLA. This will include a stay at an Alabama hotel, dining and recreation. They will be asked to again function as mystery shoppers thus helping hoteliers and entertainment venues with their input.

The first training session is set to be held Nov. 21-22, 2022, beginning with hotels and motels participating. Over the next two years, a total of 92 sessions will be conducted and will include other areas of the hospitality industry in addition to lodging. There is no fee to participate. For a short video on the Flawless Delivery training program, visit <https://www.northalabama.org/we-care/work-force/>.

AMLA, in partnership with Calhoun Community College, North Alabama Works, Yedla Management Company and Holistic Performance Group, launched the pilot program last year. Fifteen front-line employees and sales coordinators representing six hotels located in Decatur and Huntsville completed the first training September 13-14, 2021, at the Courtyard by Marriott in Decatur, Ala. The two-day training program was facilitated by Holistic Performance Group based in Decatur, Ala.

Jabria Finch, assistant general manager of DoubleTree Huntsville, participated in the pilot program and said “The Flawless Delivery training provided me with the tools and skills needed to serve guests and create great customer experiences more effectively. Skills focusing on time management, emotional intelligence, team building and goal setting were covered through a hands-on approach which made it easy for me to implement in the workplace. In addition, the program provided time for networking where I was able to discuss real-life scenarios with colleagues and share ideas and discuss solutions that work and don’t work.” Prior to the training Finch was the front desk supervisor and received a promotion after showing improved job performance following the training.

Reist approached Calhoun Community College, Yedla Management Company and Holistic Performance Group with the idea to develop a certified training program for the hospitality industry in 2021. There are no trainings of this type currently available in the state of Alabama.

“One of my long term goals has been to establish a credited training program for the North Alabama hospitality industry,” said Reist. “Customer service expectations are at an all-time high and the Covid-19 pandemic has made it extremely difficult to find and retain good workers. This training is designed to equip frontline workers with the skills needed so they can communicate and engage with guests as well as with coworkers in order to deliver the quality of service the traveling public has come to expect.”

In addition to instructors from Holistic Performance Group, AMLA provides local industry leaders as guest speakers on important topics relevant to the “Flawless Delivery” approach to customer service development and to share personal experiences in the hospitality industry, adding an extra layer of support to the program. The two day training is also filmed in order to share with others in the industry who have the same training needs.

For more information on the Flawless Delivery training program, call Reist at 800-648-5381. Any business or organization interested in the training may send an inquiry to Craig Johnston, director of workforce development training and advocacy, at craig@northalabama.org.

**About Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (AMLA)**

AMLA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion and development of the travel industry within the 16 northernmost counties of the state. It is supported by 500-plus members consisting of chambers of commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, attractions, campgrounds, festivals, communities, counties, golf courses, restaurants, tour operators, accommodations, vendors, financial institutions and individuals. Counties included within the AMLA region are Blount, Cherokee, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Morgan and Winston. Additional information on North Alabama destinations, accommodations and special events is available from the AMLA by calling 800.648.5381 or by visiting their web site at [www.northalabama.org](http://www.northalabama.org).

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