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**SANDALS GRANDE OCHO RIOS BEACH AND VILLA RESORT HONORED  
WITH 2007 AMERICAN EXPRESS CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD**  
*Employee training and community awareness at the heart of initiatives*

MIAMI, Florida (June 17, 2007) – The Caribbean hospitality industry’s growth – while positive for the countries’ economies – continues to have a major impact on the environment. Sensitizing hotels and fostering a way for them to integrate better social and environmental practices into day-to-day business decisions is a critical first step to preserve the tropical paradise. Working towards that goal each year, American Express, in association with the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA), recognizes those Caribbean hotels whose efforts stand out and position them at the cutting edge of social and environmental responsibility. “Being environmentally-conscious is not only important to the community, but it also makes good business sense,” says Dianelys Rodríguez, VP Destination Business Development, Establishment Services International, American Express. “Kudos to *Sandals Grande Ocho Rios Beach and Villa Resort* for its enlightened environmental practices; our hope is that others can look to them as an example – and follow in their steps.”

The Sandals Grande Ocho Rios Beach and Villa Resort is a Green Globe certified property since November 2006 and its environmental management system has been in place since January 2001; this system lays the foundation of the hotel’s environmental program. Environmental matters regularly canvassed and addressed vigorously by Sandals Grande Ocho Rios include: water use, energy use, solid waste generation, generation of water pollutants, hazardous waste, generation of air emissions, damage to the ecosystem, and noise pollution.

However, “what makes the winner of the 2007 American Express Caribbean Environmental Award, Sandals Grande Ocho Rios Beach and Villa Resort in Jamaica, shine is the emphasis the management places on employee and community relations - including continuous guest orientations – to achieve an effective environmental policy,” said Peter J. Odle, president of CHA.

Upon arrival to the hotel, new staff is briefed about the hotel’s environmental program, starting with global statistics and then proceeding to specific nations and local environmental matters - with detailed information on how the hotel addresses those issues. The new members of staff are also educated about the hotel’s environmental policy and briefed on the environmental impacts of the hotel’s operation - as defined by their EMS.

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The emphasis on the importance of the resort's EMS is such that each year, the hotel recognizes at a special awards ceremony the employee who has demonstrated through their efforts the greatest understanding of environmental sustainability.

Additional initiatives to educate and sensitize the staff include:

- √ The members of staff are regularly treated to lectures and discussions about the Ocho Rios Marine Park, local environmental programs, acceptable practices in the vicinity of the Park, and other topics related to the conservation of the environment.
- √ The hotel has an Environmental Library managed by the Environmental, Health and Safety Manager. This resource houses a wealth of material on environmental movements, organizations, and programs around the world, available to all staff. In addition, an "Environmental Notice" board located in the staff cafeteria posts reading materials.
- √ Sustainability as a way of life is always top of mind thanks to a fortnightly environmental newsletter – the "Green Theme" offers team members energy conservation and recycling tips for work and home.
- √ Employees who work in water sports are involved in the effort to educate guests on the management of the Marine Park as well as the do's and don'ts of marine activities on the property.

In addition to staff, guests are also engaged to contribute to the hotel's environmental policy, through individual orientations on their arrival at the property. Beyond the customary requests to reuse towels and linens and to turn appliances off when not in use, the staff goes a step further, coaching their visitors on the importance of the hotel's efforts to mitigate the environmental and social impacts of their operation. Signage through the property serves as a constant reminder of this philosophy. To further connect guests with the hotel's environmental values they are invited to join in local programs during their stay, such as the Coral Reef Restoration Project and regular tree-planting campaigns.

Sandals Grande has also "adopted" several schools in the area; through a program of staff visits and lectures, the hotel seems to sensitize their neighbors from an early age about the importance of looking after and nurturing the environment. Beyond time and financial support, the hotel shares their resources with these schools by undertaking frequent energy audits to identify gaps in the usage of utilities. Following each audit, the hotel's engineering department corrects the problem areas to increase their efficiency.

In the area of social responsibility, Sandals Grande Ocho Rios Beach and Villa Resort supports a number of community programs, notably The Windsor Girls Home. The Windsor Girls Home is a shelter for girls up to 18 years old; hotel staff visits Windsor regularly to support and give guidance to the young girls that call Windsor home.

### **GREEN HOTEL AWARDS CRITERIA**

The American Express Caribbean Environmental Awards demonstrate the Caribbean travel and tourism industry's continued commitment to pursuing sustainable tourism development in the region. The awards program is designed to encourage investment in environmentally-friendly technologies and sustainable management practices within hotels and resorts by recognizing those properties that have realized significant achievements in "greening" their operations.

A team of qualified environmental experts performed site inspections and evaluated the properties in five categories:

- **Environmental Management & Stewardship** takes into consideration the integration of management, the comprehensiveness and accomplishments of the green team, the implementation of action plans as well as plans for the future;
- **Conservation of Natural Resources** takes into consideration the hotels ability to implement the principles of the three R's; recycling, re-use and reduction of wastes, energy and water consumption.
- **Awareness & Community Activities** reviews environmental and conservation training programs for the staff, community awareness and outreach programs, the efforts made to communicate the hotel's conservation and protection policies to guests, and future plans or commitments to act;
- **Infrastructure & Technology** reviews the hotels use of sustainable or renewable energy technologies, the property design, the use of water and energy saving devices, and capital investments made towards greening the hotel;
- **Health and Safety** examines the maintenance of relevant equipment, disaster awareness programs and emergency plans, and the use of natural alternatives for harsh chemicals.

The awards program is made possible by the generous contributions of American Express, a Governing Council member of CAST since its inception. To learn more about the winners or for additional information on how to develop an environmental program, contact CAST 787-725-9139; E-mail: [dshurland@caribbeanhotelassociation.com](mailto:dshurland@caribbeanhotelassociation.com)

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