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THIS IS WEST TEXAS

Lubbock Hotel Motel Association and Visit Lubbock Announce Winners of Tourism Industry Awards

(LUBBOCK) – In partnership with the Lubbock Hotel Motel Association (LHMA), Visit Lubbock hosted the fourth annual Live Love Lubbock Luncheon on Wednesday, May 4 in celebration of National Travel & Tourism Week. The luncheon, hosted at the American Wind Power Center, honored Lubbock’s ambassadors and professionals of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry.

The LHMA presented their annual Tourism Trumpeter Award to Steve Gomez, head coach of the Lubbock Christian University women’s basketball team. The Tourism Trumpeter Award is given to an individual outside of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry who has made a positive impact on the local industry.

“On behave of LHMA, we are blessed to have Coach Steve Gomez be our Trumpeter of 2016,” Rob Meyer, owner of Arbor Hotels and president of the LHMA, said. “He is one of the few people who actually leads by example, and it shows in each and every one of his players. Lubbock is better place to live because Coach Gomez is changing lives in our town.”

Steve Gomez assumed the role of the Lady Chap’s head coach in 2003 after serving as men’s basketball assistant coach at Monterey High School and men’s basketball head coach at Lubbock Cooper High School. In his first season, Gomez's Lady Chaps went 16-14 and finished fifth in the Sooner Athletic Conference. While this might appear to be an average year, big wins for the Lady Chaps and entry into the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) National Poll for the first time proved good enough for an at-large bid to the NAIA National Tournament: LCU women's first trip to the big dance. Since 2003, Gomez has led the Lady Chaps to 10 consecutive trips to the NAIA National Championships. In 2016, Gomez and the Lady Chaps took home the NCAA Division II Women’s Basketball Championship trophy after a perfect season.

Today’s luncheon also included the presentation of two awards from Visit Lubbock. The awards were given to individuals who have established recognition, accomplished success, created positive change and built notoriety in the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. The Rising Star Award, given to an individual with five years or less of experience, was awarded to Erick Lewis, general manager at Courtyard by Marriott Downtown Lubbock. In his few years in the hotel industry, Lewis has accomplished tremendous success and shows passion for the service industry.

This year’s Heart of Hospitality Award, given to an individual with five or more years of experience, was awarded to Diana Smith, executive housekeeper at Arbor Hotels. Smith has been with Arbor for 11 years and always makes sure guests have an exceptional experience during their stay.

“Both of these individuals have shown passion and ambition during their years in the hospitality industry,” John Osborne, president and CEO of Visit Lubbock and the Lubbock Economic Development

Alliance, said. "It's dedication like theirs that helps us maintain Lubbock's friendly and hospitable reputation."

During the luncheon, attendees were also informed about the positive impact of travel on Lubbock. For more information about the impact of tourism, visit facebook.com/visitolubbock. For more information about the LHMA, visit lubbockhotelmotel.org.

To celebrate the tourism industry and its benefits, the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution in 1983 to designate the first full week of May as National Travel & Tourism Week. The week is celebrated so that local citizens may become educated and excited about what their city has to offer for visitors and how the money spent by tourists positively affects the local economy.

About Visit Lubbock and Lubbock Sports

Visit Lubbock is Lubbock's official Convention & Visitors Bureau, charged with increasing the activity of leisure, sports, meeting and convention travel to Lubbock. Since 2004, Visit Lubbock and Lubbock Sports have booked more than 4,480 events or conventions, resulting in 3.78 million visitors, 1.2 million room nights and \$403 million in direct economic impact to the Lubbock area. For more information, or to receive a free Visitor Guide, please call 800.692.4035 or go to VisitLubbock.org. For our latest events, check out our Facebook page at [Facebook.com](https://facebook.com) and search for Visit Lubbock and/or Lubbock Sports.

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