

ST. LUCIAN HOTELIER AND ENTREPRENEUR AWARDED GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT

CASTRIES, ST. LUCIA, March 7, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the occasion of the island's 41st independence anniversary, Joyce Louisa Destang, one of St. Lucia's most successful homegrown entrepreneurs was honored with the St. Lucia Gold Medal of Merit for her long and meritorious service in the field of entrepreneurship.

One of the most accomplished female hotel entrepreneurs in the Eastern Caribbean, Mrs. Destang was conferred the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2005 and recognized as St. Lucia Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneur of the Year in 2014.

Mrs. Destang is the Managing Director of the Bay Gardens Resorts chain of hotels, co-owner of Stardust and Company Limited, and owner of several commercial and residential real estate properties.

Destang allowed she was inexperienced as she took her first steps in the hospitality industry but she had a vision: "I wanted a hotel that was heavily service-based, offered excellent value for money and offered an unapologetically authentic Caribbean experience to the discerning traveler with a particular focus on Caribbean clientele and the Caribbean diaspora."

Honing her entrepreneurial skills in real estate and retail after retiring from teaching, she launched the 45-room Bay Gardens Hotel in 1994 growing it to five properties with some 240 rooms over 25 years.

Mrs. Destang acquired the former



Mrs. Joyce Louisa Destang is one of St. Lucia's most successful entrepreneurs. Photo credit: Belle Portwe



Mrs. Destang receives her latest honor from St. Lucia Governor General Sir Emmanuel Neville Cenac. Photo credit: Belle Portwe

Palm Tree Hotel, reopening it in 2002 as the Bay Gardens Inn, which won the Best Small Hotel in the Caribbean Award (Gold) from Virgin Holidays in 2006.

With the fearless vision of a skilled entrepreneur, she made up for the properties' lack of a beach by investing in the Bay Gardens Beach Resort & Spa in 2007 which launched her into the luxury accommodations market. From there, she entered and thrived in the uncharted waters of timeshare properties. Bay Gardens Beach Resort & Spa currently has over 500 Interval International-affiliated timeshare owners.

The resort group diversified into the tours and attractions business with the opening of Splash Island Water Park in 2015, an independent business unit which was founded by Mrs. Destang's daughter-in-law, Julianna Ward-Destang, a chartered accountant, who would herself go on to win the Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2016.

In 2018, Bay Gardens acquired the former Palm Haven Hotel reopening it as Bay Gardens Marina Haven, which won a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence in its very first year, while keeping pace with its sister properties which all operate at greater than 80 percent occupancies year-round and with very high levels of repeat business.

Recognizing the changing trends she recently opened the luxurious Waters Edge Villas, which moved her into the rapidly developing sharing accommodations market made popular by Airbnb.

Undergirding her drive to success was her determination to hire and develop local talent - 99 percent of the Bay Gardens staff and management have been St. Lucian or Caribbean nationals.

Challenging the status quo in an industry that has been traditionally dominated by men at senior management levels, all three of Mrs. Destang's general managers are women, as are 70 percent of the resort group's management team.

Confirming her recognition as a responsible tourism leader, Mrs. Destang, along with her management team, adopted a three-pronged focus on Environment and Sustainability, Youth Development, and Community and Cultural Preservation for Bay Gardens Resorts, which is St. Lucia's only Green Globe Gold-certified hotel chain.

The Bay Gardens group has adopted the Monchy Primary School, and its feeding program supports outstanding young athletes as well as the Chefs in Schools program.

About Bay Gardens Resorts

Bay Gardens Resorts is a group of locally-owned and -operated award-winning hotels all located within, or near, Rodney Bay Village, St. Lucia's entertainment capital. All five of Bay Gardens Resorts' properties - Bay Gardens Inn, Bay Gardens Hotel, Bay Gardens Beach Resort & Spa, Bay Gardens Marina Haven, and Bay Gardens Waters Edge Villas - are close to more than 40 restaurants, entertainment venues, duty-free shopping malls, Treasure Bay Casino and Rodney Bay Marina. All properties offer comfortable accommodations, traditional Caribbean cuisine, and warm Caribbean service and hospitality. Bay Gardens' Splash Island Water Park, the first open water sports park in the Eastern Caribbean, is a popular attraction off St. Lucia's Reduit Beach.

For further information, visit www.baygardensresorts.com.

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