

Date: August 4, 2015  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **9<sup>th</sup> Annual GRACE Awards Gala Finalists Announced**

**Atlanta, GA (August 4, 2015)** – The Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA) is proud to announce the finalists for the 2015 Georgia Restaurant Association Crystal of Excellence (GRACE) Awards. All finalists are peer nominated, which ensures that we honor the most deserving in our industry. The winners are then decided by the GRACE Academy, which consists of all past GRACE nominees and current GRA Board Members.

On Sunday, November 1, 2015, the GRACE Awards Gala, an exclusive event honoring leaders who have made outstanding contributions to Georgia's restaurant industry, will take place at the Foundry at Puritan Mill in Atlanta, GA. At the event, winners for Restaurateur of the Year (Small/Independent, Franchisee, Large/Corporate), Industry Partner of the Year and the Distinguished Service Award will be announced. The GRA will also honor the Restaurant Employee of the Year, Manager of the Year, ProStart Student of the Year and this year's Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Doug McKendrick of McKendrick's Steak House. A complete list of finalists can be found at the end of this release.

In addition, Jim Stacy, television host and owner of Pallookaville Fine Foods, will serve as the Master of Ceremonies. Live entertainment will be provided by the Latin band, Willie Ziavino and C.O.T. Band, who regularly plays at GRA member restaurant, Eclipse di Luna.

"In celebration of the 9th Annual GRACE Awards Gala, we are delighted to continue the tradition of recognizing our industry for their excellence and achievement," said Karen Bremer, executive director of the Georgia Restaurant Association.

A portion of the proceeds from this event will go to benefit the Atlanta Community Food Bank, whose mission is to fight hunger by engaging, educating, and empowering the community.

To learn more about the GRACE Awards, or purchase tickets, visit <http://www.garestaurants.org/grace-awards-gala.html>.

- more -

Page 2/ 9th Annual GRACE Awards Gala Finalists Announced

**2015 GRACE AWARDS FINALISTS**

**Restaurateur of the Year: Small/Independent**

Jonathan and Justin Fox, Fox Bros. Bar-B-Q

Kevin Rathbun, Cliff Bramble and Kirk Parks, Rathbun's, KR Steak Bar, Kevin Rathbun Steak

Ryan Pernice and Ted Lahey, Table & Main, Osteria Mattone

**Restaurateur of the Year: Franchisee**

Mike Orcutt, Cowabunga, Inc. | Domino's

Matt Hansen, KBP Foods | KFC, Taco Bell, Long John Silver's, Pizza Hut

John Silvey, Poultry Partners | Zaxby's

**Restaurateur of the Year: Large/Corporate**

Adriana Quintanilla, Norsan Group Restaurants | Frontera Mex-Mex Grill, Luciano's

Ristorante Italiano, Pampas Steakhouse

Paul Damico, Moe's Southwest Grill

Cheryl Bachelder, Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen

**Industry Partner of the Year**

Atlanta Foodservice Expo

UnitedHealthcare

The Giving Kitchen

**Distinguished Service Award**

Fifth Group Restaurants

Ray's on the River

Tin Lizzy's Cantina

**ProStart Student of the Year**

To be determined by the Hospitality Education Foundation of Georgia (HEFG)

**Manager of the Year**

Dewey Funna, Hudson Grille Midtown

- more -

Page 3/ 9th Annual GRACE Awards Gala Finalists Announced

**Restaurant Employee of the Year**

Chris Gianaras, 4th & Swift

**Lifetime Achievement Award**

Doug McKendrick, McKendrick's Steak House

**About the Georgia Restaurant Association**

The GRA's mission is to serve as the voice for Georgia's Restaurants in Advocacy, Education and Awareness. The GRA is sanctioned by the National Restaurant Association (NRA) to operate Georgia's only not-for-profit representing the state's foodservice industry. From large chains to start-ups, the GRA helps make Georgia a better place for restaurants to do business and helps make restaurants better for Georgia.

**About the GRACE Awards**

The GRACE Awards is the Georgia Restaurant Association's annual black-tie gala event honoring Georgia's Restaurant Industry. The GRACE awards are peer-nominated and honor the top finalists in the following categories: Restaurateur of the Year (Small/Independent, Franchisee, Large/Corporate), Industry Partner of the Year and the Distinguished Service Award. The winners are announced at the event and are presented with crystal works of art created by renowned local artist Hans-Godo Frabel.

For more information, ticket reservations, and/or sponsorship opportunities, visit the website at <http://www.garestaurants.org/grace-awards-gala.html>. For media inquiries, please contact Rachel Bell, marketing and communications manager, at (404) 467-9000 or [rachel@garestaurants.org](mailto:rachel@garestaurants.org).

###