



WIRTA HOSPITALITY WORLDWIDE

Contact:

Bret Wirta

206-295-0247

[bretw@wirtahospitalityworldwide.com](mailto:bretw@wirtahospitalityworldwide.com)

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Grand Opening Remarks-Holiday Inn and Conference Center, Sequim  
By Bret Wirta-Owner and CEO Wirta Hospitality Worldwide

Thank you all for coming tonight to the Grand Opening of the Holiday Inn Express and Conference Center. We are beta testing live streaming technology so welcome to our family, friends and associates far away who are with us via the internet.

It's important for me to begin by thanking a few people. Please hold your applause to the end. It's fashionable to malign banks today but I'd like to praise Wanda Smith and her team at United Western Bank, Denver Colorado and Erik Houser, North West Business Development Association for having the foresight to approve this project when all other banks panicked during the recession. Thanks to the invaluable assistance of our Mortgage Broker, Jeff McKee in guiding us through the day to day financing maze. Thanks to our attorney Greg Duff and his team at Cairncross and Hempelmann for steering us through a few sticky situations. If you like the design of this hotel as much as I do then thank Dale Sweeney, our architect, who was able to transfer my vision to paper. We also worked closely with the Sequim Planning Department who wanted to make sure that this "gateway property" was something the community could be proud of which I confident it has become.

Thanks to Cox Hospitality for the procurement and installation of the furnishings and a big thanks to Will Clayton of Wright Development. He was the construction supervisor that kept this project on track daily. But mostly I'd like to thank all the dozens of contractors and hundreds of skilled technicians who built this wonderful hotel. I don't have time to name you all, but if you are one of those contractors please stand up. We applaud you.

I'd like to thank all my employees for the hard work it's taken to open the hotel and especially my management staff, Damian Humpreys, Toni Skinner and Lacy Howell for their extraordinary efforts to pass our franchise inspection on April 1<sup>st</sup>. With the opening of this hotel our company has doubled in size to over 50 employees and three managers including our wonderful General Manager at the Quality Inn, Nancy Schade. By the way

Nancy is one of three finalist of all the thousands of Choice Hotels International properties worldwide for Woman Businessperson of the Year. Good Luck Nancy.

Lastly I like to thank my family for their support during the three years this hotel project has taken from conception to today. Though I'm confident, we're betting our entire company on the success this hotel. I'm not Paris Hilton's wealthy dad so I'm grateful for my families understanding and willingness to calmly shoulder such risk.

The reason my wife Trisha and I decided to build the Holiday Inn Express and Conference Center is because we saw a need for a resort-style hotel and conference center on the Olympic Peninsula. This new hotel allows our company to remain the primary source of hospitality in Sequim and gives us another opportunity to provide our customers with the best possible guest experience. We hope the design of the Holiday Inn Express and Conference Center exceeds your expectations and that our hotel will be a refuge from daily stresses and anxieties the moment you step through our doors.

Our goal was to design a hotel that builds on the wonderful Holiday Inn Express brand that includes beautiful guestrooms and a delicious, free, hot breakfast. But you will receive more than that. We designed our first floor rooms with eleven foot tall ceilings, added extra insulation in the walls and floors for quietness, built real one-bedroom suites with kitchen facilities and configured our ADA rooms with caregivers in mind. We built a large pool and spa and we brought the exercise room out of a closet to a balcony above the pool where it's light and airy. We built a roof-top pavilion flanked with a green-roof gardens. Our bold interior was designed by the firm of Ricca-Newmark to highlight Sequim's unique locale between the forest, the sea and the blue sky.

We did not build another hotel on the Peninsula to further divide up leisure-market for tourists already visiting the area, but instead we built a conference center that will bring new visitors to the Olympic Peninsula. The Holiday Inn Express and Conference Center will allow us to directly market our services to the Seattle-Bellevue-Tacoma market that is looking for business conference, wedding, retreat and reunion facilities. Our customers who are here for a business retreat or wedding will shop in area stores, visit area attractions and dine in area restaurants. We seek to improve the economic viability of Sequim and the region, continuing our mission of being good neighbors to our community.

We have already begun direct marketing to Seattle. I call on businesses each week. My goal is to expand these personal sales calls into a direct sales force with the simple goal of bringing more visitors to the Peninsula. What I'm finding is that almost every Seattle area business that I've visited is interested in the Olympic National Park. For those of you who may not realize it, Olympic National Park is a World Heritage Site. The park is one of 890 places on our planet which has been selected as having outstanding cultural or natural value. Our company takes seriously the duty to promote and protect Olympic National Park. We are members of the World Heritage Alliance, a group that advocates for sustainable tourism through the economic enhancement of local communities. We

support local tour operators, family farms and small business that make their livelihood from Olympic National Park tourism.

In fact if you are a park supporter like our company and my family please join us for another gala event on May 27<sup>th</sup>. The Washington's National Parks Fund is hosting an exciting evening that will highlight the park and local farms, foods and wines. It will be right here in the Holiday Inn Express Conference Center.

There is one more function that this conference center is designed to serve; it will be a space for learning. Our company has partnered with Peninsula College to offer dozens of choices for corporate and individual training classes. Right here where you sit certified instructors from Peninsula College can teach your company's staff leadership, management and entrepreneurial skills. We can train your employees in anything from resolving conflict in the workplace to a course on CPR.

But this conference room is also available for you as an individual to teach others. Do you have a special skill that you've wanted to share and don't know how to go about it? Are you an artist, technician or entrepreneur looking for a way to connect with a larger audience? Is it time to take all that you've mastered in your lifetime and share it with others? Dream a little and let this space be yours.

I'm excited about tonight's beta test of the internet streaming technology that's being provided by our partner CI Digital Media. Lynn Johnson is helping us provide a link to a worldwide audience. This broadcast is being watched on the East Coast and in Europe. (Hi Mom and Dad!) Just imagine what that potential means for business conferences, or even weddings and reunions where long-distance guests unable to be here in person can watch and still feel they are part of the family.

I hope you agree that this project is more than just a standard hotel. Allow me to close with this quote which I hold close to my heart. Henri Nouwen writer and theologian once said that "Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place."

That is how I see our new Holiday Inn Express and Conference Center.

Thank you for coming this evening.