

The votes are in—our readers and editors have spoken—and we are thrilled to announce the winners of our 2009 Platinum Choice Awards in this issue and on our website (smartmeetings.com). We consider these awards to be a very prestigious honor, because our experienced meeting planners and well-traveled editors are tough to please, and this terrific group of hotels and resorts (see page 50) had to go above and beyond the call of duty to earn the recognition.



These awards are based on first-hand experience, and properties are judged by the highest industry standards for the overall meeting experience. They're rated on ambience, amenities, facility quality, guest services, meeting space, restaurant and dining facilities, staff attitude and other criteria. In this day and age, with budget and staff cuts, it is even more difficult to stay ahead of the competition and excel; however, our winners have exceeded expectations, so hats off and congratulations to them all!

You may notice that there is a different face than "yours truly" gracing the page this month. I am proud to announce the birth of my son, Quentin, and couldn't wait to share the pout on his face with you. We are celebrating many things this year, and this tremendous addition to our office is one of them.

We are also celebrating that 2010 is on the horizon and promising to be a better year. We're embracing the uptick in the economy with renewed vigor and energy, as meetings and the demand for hotel rooms are increasing across the globe. In fact, Mark V. Lomanno, president of Smith Travel Research, recently predicted "with a great deal of confidence" that the worse is behind us.

Getting together with colleagues and professional peers more often gives us much to celebrate as well. But as it can't be all about the party, this month's issue also includes valuable insights on ROI. If nothing else, 2009 has taught us to work hard and play hard, and this article will help everyone speak the business language of the boardroom—so critical in today's meetings environment.

Cheers, and here's to an abundant 2010!



Amanda Andrews Photography

VOLUME EIGHT, NUMBER TWELVE: DECEMBER 2009

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