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Top Timeshare Professionals Reflect on Past, Exchange Ideas for Industry's Future

Industry Perspective, Education, and Networking Highlight ARDA Convention

(Washington, D.C., April 8, 2009)—Almost three thousand timeshare industry professionals gathered together at the 2009 American Resort Development Association (ARDA) Convention and Exposition, March 29–April 2, 2009. The annual convention and tradeshow, hosted at the Orlando World Center Marriott, showcased 164 exhibitors, including 36 new exhibiting companies.

This year's convention kicked off with the Group RCI/AIF Open Golf Tournament at Hawk's Landing Golf Club. One hundred and forty-four golfers played in support of the ARDA International Foundation. All net proceeds from the tournament and Auto Driveaway support industry research and education programs. Interval International's "Party with a Cause," which showcased the Spinners, also raised funds for the Foundation.

The convention's opening general session, sponsored by Group RCI, featured keynote speaker Dr. Jeffrey Rosenweig, who is a global economics forecaster and expert on global investing and business strategy. This session also feted the industry association's 40th Anniversary, which will be celebrated in various ways throughout the year.

The week's events featured a notable line-up of forum and educational sessions with outstanding speakers and entertainers. Highlights of the convention included Tuesday morning's opening session, "State of the Industry in Three Parts". Three back-to-back panels discussed the rapidly changing state of timeshare industry from different viewpoints: The Advocates, The Communicators, and the CEOs.

Other events included the Industry Think Tank, sponsored by North Highland. Three hundred industry leaders came together to share and design new business strategies and models needed in order to succeed during the current economic environment. The Resale Forum, "Shaping Resale for the Future," was presented to discuss the need for better consumer information about the secondary market and future plans.

ARDA members were joined this year by members of the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA) and the Caribbean Society of Hotel Association Executives (CSHAE), who held an annual two-day leadership conference in conjunction with the ARDA Convention and attended educational sessions.

Throughout, industry executives shared industry practices, gained knowledge of the most recent marketing trends and tools, heard state-of-the-industry updates, and witnessed firsthand the impact of timeshare in Orlando, one of the top resort regions in the United States. Panel discussions and educational sessions addressed a wide variety of topics, such as hospitality issues, fractional and private residence clubs, fundamentals of finance, cross-industry developments, green management, and e-media trends--all with the goal of drawing a new road map for the future.

“Although the industry has been hit hard by the current credit crisis, the fundamentals remain sound, especially in fulfilling the need for better vacationing at a great value,” said Howard Nusbaum, ARDA president and CEO. “Our industry was developed during the recession of the 1970s, and the entrepreneurial nature and creative spirit of our members will continue to meet the needs of a new generation of Americans eager to answer their wanderlust with vacation ownership.”

Highlights of the program also included Breakfast of Champions, sponsored by Hilton Grand Vacations, featured legendary Olympic swimmer Janet Evans. The ARDA Awards Gala, sponsored by Holiday Systems International (HSI), which featured the presentation of the annual ARDA Awards and a performance by famed composer Marvin Hamlisch.

The 2009 Signature Sponsors include American Express, Group RCI, Holiday Inn Club Vacations, Holiday Systems International (HSI), International Cruise and Excursions, Inc. (ICE), Interval International, Redweek.com, Starwood Vacation Ownership, Inc., Textron Financial Corporation, VacationGuard, Inc., and Whirlpool Corporation.

The American Resort Development Association is the Washington D.C.-based professional association representing the vacation ownership and resort development industries. Established in 1969, ARDA today has over 1,000 members ranging from privately held firms to publicly traded companies and international corporations with expertise in shared ownership interests in leisure real estate. The membership also includes timeshare owner associations (HOAs), resort management companies, and owners through the ARDA Resort Owners Coalition (ARDA-ROC).