

Sisters take act on the road

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MICHELE LAWSON PHOTO

Sisters Stefani Choy (left), the accountant at the Days Inn Barrie and Stella Gan, general manager, are taking their hotel-management skills on the road.

Barrie hoteliers Stella Gan and her sister Stefani Choy, who own the Days Inn Barrie with their father Lesmana Gani, are seeing a sudden demand for their expertise as hotel managers elsewhere.

Their company, Liberty Hospitality, which is actually the owning entity of the Barrie property, has recently been hired to oversee the startup and ongoing management of two Ontario hotels set to open in 2008.

"We formed that company first (before taking on Days Inn Barrie)," says Gan, general manager of the Bryne Drive hotel. "We always acted as a separate entity from the very beginning, because we knew this was the direction we wanted to take."

It's surprising to her, however, to be recognized and offered two completely different contracts so early in the company's life. The Days Inn Barrie just celebrated its fourth year in business in October.

"We're honoured, in one year, to be offered two properties to manage," she says. "Especially for a small company like us."

Brampton developer Eden Oak is planning to break ground on the new Days Inn Brampton in the spring of 2008; and DHC Development is about two months into construction of its own Days Inn in Kincardine.

"They're new to the industry, want to own, but don't want to operate," says Gan. "They looked at what we have to offer and what we've done, and they liked that very much."

Since opening the Days Inn Barrie, Gan and family have racked up a long list of community, business and industry awards, including their recent Chairman's Award that was given by the Days Inn franchisor.

In addition to her rich experience at five-star hotels worldwide, Gan credits their professional success to daily interaction with her guests.

"You really can't manage by numbers," she says, comparing her style to the larger management firms who often oversee operations from offsite locations. "We really have a sense what the market needs – we're here day to day. We're not sitting in an office somewhere in Toronto."

The Liberty Hospitality group has also purchased an interest in, and will be managing, a fourth property (a Motel 6) in Kingston.

Gan says she prefers to provide mid-range accommodations which appeal to a broader range of the market – to offer five-star service in an economy package.

"If you're only selling amenities, others will catch up – amenity-based selling won't last," she shrugs.


"Going back to basics is what it takes. We hear from our clients regularly that our property is clean and fresh, and our front-desk staff is so helpful.

"It's so intangible, but so important."

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