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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JIM AND DONNA WINNER RECEIVE VISITMERCERCOUNTYPA'S HIGHEST HONOR FOR TOURISM CONTRIBUTIONS TO MERCER COUNTY

Winner's Work in Tourism Saluted with 2010 Bill Knecht Tourism Award

Mercer County, Pa. –June 7, 2010–Jim and Donna Winner, owners of several Mercer County destinations including Tara – A Country Inn, The Winner, Buhl Mansion Guesthouse & Spa and the Radisson Hotel Sharon, are being honored with the 2010 Bill Knecht Tourism Award on June 9. The award to be presented during VisitMercerCountyPA's annual dinner meeting is the agency's highest honor, recognizing individuals who have made outstanding contributions to tourism in Mercer County.

The award is named after Bill Knecht, late CEO of Wendell August Forge and a board member of VisitMercerCountyPA (formerly known as Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau). Mr. Knecht also served on the boards of Penn Northwest Development Corp., Mahoning Valley Historical Society and the Youngstown Club among others. Mr. Knecht died in January 2004 after a battle with cancer.

The Winner's were close personal friends of Mr. Knecht. Prior to his death, Jim and Bill traveled extensively together and the two men held annual Fourth of July parties and fireworks at Tara for family, friends and the staffs of all the Winner companies and Wendell August Forge employees.

The Winners began their work in the tourism industry when they opened a small retail store in Transfer, Pa. and purchased the Shenango Inn in the late 1970s. From there the Winners went on to renovate the abandoned 1854 Koonce mansion on Shenango Lake, creating Tara – A Country Inn. The inn was opened to the public in 1986 and after new renovations now features 27 beautiful rooms, several restaurants, indoor and outdoor pools, public tours and elegant gardens with stunning settings for outdoor gazebo

weddings and a virtual museum of Civil War artifacts and *Gone With The Wind* memorabilia. Other projects instrumental in adding to Mercer County's tourism industry include The Winner Off-Price Department Store, the Radisson Hotel Sharon, and their saving and restoration of the Buhl Mansion Guesthouse & Spa.

“We are proud to honor Jim and Donna Winner with the 2010 Bill Knecht Tourism Award,” said Peggy Mazyck, Executive Director of VisitMercerCountyPA. “Their work over the last several decades has helped transform Mercer County into a great tourist destination and they have helped position the county for further growth.”

The couple also received the Pennsylvania Tourism and Lodging Association's Spirit of Hospitality Innkeeper of the Year Award in 2007 and in 2008 they were inducted into the inaugural class of the Keystone Society for Tourism, handpicked by Governor Ed Rendell. The Society honors Pennsylvania visionaries in destination leadership and community development.

The VisitMercerCountyPA annual dinner meeting will take place at Oak Tree Country Club in West Middlesex, Pa. The guest speaker at the dinner is Will Knecht, son of the late Bill Knecht and present owner and CEO of Wendell August.

About Mercer County:

Located in Northwestern Pennsylvania, along the Ohio border, Mercer County is home to name-brand outlets, boutiques and unique specialty stores for shoppers. The area is also known for its more than 25 challenging golf courses of inspired design. Golf Digest ranked Mercer County as one of its top golf destinations. Visitors can dine on mouthwatering cuisine in Mercer County's array of fine restaurants and then stay overnight in a well-appointed hotel, a luxurious bed and breakfast or a cozy country inn. Close to Pittsburgh, Erie, Cleveland and other major markets, Mercer County is easily accessible via I-80 and I-79. The County offers the perfect escape. For more information, visit www.VisitMercerCountyPa.com

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