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## **Columbia Hospitality President and CEO John Oppenheimer Named One of the Top Entrepreneurs in the Northwest**

SEATTLE – May 26, 2006 – John Oppenheimer, president and CEO of Seattle-based Columbia Hospitality Inc., a leading hospitality management and consulting firm, is a finalist for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2006 Award in the Pacific Northwest.

An independent panel of business, academic and civic leaders selected the finalists from 55 nominations. Award recipients will be announced at the event's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala June 23 at the Westin Bellevue in Bellevue, Wash.

Pacific Northwest award recipients will be eligible for consideration in the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2006 national program. Winners in several national categories, as well as the overall national Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award winner, will be announced at a Nov. 18 gala in Palm Springs, Calif.

“It is truly an honor to be one of the 24 regional finalists. This is an elite group, and I am humbled to be among them,” said Oppenheimer.

“This year’s finalists are true visionaries who have contributed to economic growth, innovation, and cutting-edge products and services,” said Greg Beams, Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Program Director for the Pacific Northwest.

It’s the second major honor of the year for Oppenheimer. In February, the Seattle Hotel Association (SHA) honored Oppenheimer and his wife, Deanna, at the group’s “Evening of Hope” Gala, which raised more than \$700,000 for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. SHA honored the Oppenheimers for their support of the group and its various community causes, including the Komen foundation.

John Oppenheimer launched Columbia Hospitality in 1995. At the time, the company had no assets, no history and no employees. What Oppenheimer did have was vision and passion for the hospitality industry.

Those qualities attracted the attention of the Port of Seattle officials, who were looking for someone to manage and operate the Port’s new Bell Harbor International Conference Center, a nearly 100,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility on Seattle’s waterfront. Oppenheimer won the contract, beating out large corporate hospitality companies, and Columbia Hospitality was born.



Columbia Hospitality was founded on Oppenheimer's years of experience in creating and managing thousands of events. Oppenheimer built on this foundation and created a model based on three equal parts: an employee-first philosophy, a management and operations division that emphasizes tailor-made relationships with its owners, and a consulting division to foster future growth.

The business plan has proven incredibly successful. Today, Columbia Hospitality employs more than 400 people throughout the Pacific Northwest and manages a growing property portfolio of premier properties, including boutique hotels, secluded resorts, mixed-use hotel developments, large and small conference centers, award-winning restaurants and executive dining venues.

As Columbia Hospitality enters its second decade, the company is poised to begin implementing a well-defined vision to expand services to include developing and operating larger boutique hotels, inns and resorts, as well as independent conference centers across the western United States and Canada.

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### **About Columbia Hospitality Inc.**

Columbia Hospitality Inc., a leading hospitality management and consulting firm, was founded in 1995 by John Oppenheimer. Columbia Hospitality creates exceptional experiences for guests and employees while achieving phenomenal results for its property owners.

With expertise in luxury hotel and resort management, Columbia Hospitality expertly transforms each vision for a unique property into an enduring and profitable business.

Columbia Hospitality's premier properties include boutique hotels, secluded resorts, mixed-use hotel developments, large and small conference centers, award-winning restaurants, and executive dining venues.

The company manages a portfolio of distinctive properties that includes the following conference centers and event venues:

- Bell Harbor International Conference Center in Seattle
- World Trade Center Seattle
- Odyssey Maritime Discovery Center in Seattle (catering and events only)
- Talaris Conference Center in Seattle
- Pier 30 Event Center in Seattle
- Kitsap Conference Center at Bremerton Harborside in Bremerton
- Washington Mutual Leadership Center at Cedarbrook. in SeaTac

The portfolio also includes the following unique inns and resorts:

- The Inn at Langley on Whidbey Island
- Friday Harbor House on San Juan Island
- Lakedale Resort at Three Lakes, also on San Juan Island

The company additionally supports an active consulting division that has worked on more than 50 hospitality development projects in five Western U.S. states and Canada.

Columbia Hospitality was named to the *Puget Sound Business Journal*'s list of the "Fastest Growing Private Companies in Washington State" three times in the past six years.

