

'Meaningful Monday' events at Hotel Melby's The Landing Rooftop support local charities; Kelley Jones' Hospitality Alliance is known for giving back in its markets

By Ken Datzman

The Landing Rooftop at the Hotel Melby on East Strawbridge Avenue in downtown Melbourne, a newly opened "boutique hotel" with 180 guest rooms, is the talk of the town.

Quickly, it is becoming a popular place for locals to eat, meet, and relax.

"I estimate that 80 percent of the people patronizing The Landing Rooftop are local residents," said industry expert and businessman Kelley Jones, the founding partner of Hospitality Alliance.

His extensive resume includes serving as the host for the "Vegas Restaurant Rehab" show featured on Food Network.

He said "most of the guests who stayed at Hotel Melby in the first week of its opening were locals. They wanted to be among the first to experience the inviting atmosphere at Hotel Melby and The Landing Rooftop."

The restaurants within boutique hotels often earn a reputation of their own — independent of the hotel property — and are entrenched in the community.

With both indoor and outdoor seating, The Landing Rooftop offers 180-degree views of the city and waterways. Located on the 11th floor, The Landing Rooftop restaurant, bar, and lounge can seat up to 200 people.

"We've done a lot of rooftop restaurant venues — including in Las Vegas, in Miami, in Dallas, and in Philadelphia — and The Landing Rooftop is a special property with amazing views of the water," said Jones, whose company was hired to set up and operate the food and beverage business at Hotel Melby.

Jones has been onsite at that facility, fine-tuning operations for Hospitality Alliance, which has offices in Las Vegas, Dallas and New York. He is Hospitality Alliance's president and chief operating officer.

When asked, "Where are you based?" He responded, "On American Airlines. Really, I'm based in Las Vegas. I travel to multiple states. American Airlines has a hub in Charlotte, N.C., so I travel from Las Vegas to Charlotte and Charlotte to Melbourne. Melbourne is much easier to get to than some of our other operations in Colorado and Vermont."

Jones travels more than 100,000 miles a year. "During COVID-19 I flew less frequently than I probably have in the past 20 years. But I was able to achieve my 2-million-mile status with American Airlines."

His company specializes in running hotel food and beverage operations, and food halls around the nation. It also owns a number of themed restaurants and operates them as well.

Hotel Melby is the latest addition to the Hilton's Tapestry Collection, a portfolio of more than 45 original hotels that encourage guests to explore local destinations.

"Our company was brought in to run The Landing Rooftop and all the food and beverage operations at Hotel Melby," said Jones, who is familiar with Brevard County and has family members who live in Florida. "We worked on concept development, menu design, beverage programming, and the hiring and training of staff. We are the day-to-day management company that operates that part of Hotel Melby's business. In addition to the 200-seat restaurant, the Hotel Melby ballroom can seat another 168 people for events and social functions."

A centerpiece of Hospitality Alliance's successful business model is community involvement. And one of the



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Kelley Jones is the founding partner of Hospitality Alliance, which has offices in Las Vegas, Dallas, and New York. His company runs the day-to-day food and beverage operations at Hotel Melby's The Landing Rooftop, on the 11th floor. His firm is well-connected to the communities in which it operates. Hospitality Alliance created 'Meaningful Monday' as one way to support local charities and introduce customers to The Landing Rooftop. Every Monday from 5–10 p.m., 10 percent of all sales at The Landing Rooftop are earmarked for a local charity.

ways it gives back to communities in which it has operations is through a charity program called "Meaningful Monday."

"At every new restaurant we have opened in the last 12 years, we have hosted Meaningful Monday, where we give back to local charities," said Jones. "When we first introduced the program in Las Vegas, our intent was to pair up with 12 local charities and do Meaningful Monday for 12 weeks in a row. There was so much interest from charities we ended doing it for 28 weeks." He added, "It's important for us to give back and become ingrained in the community while supporting nonprofits. We saw Meaningful Monday as a great way to do this."

The program kicked off May 3 at The Landing Rooftop with the Women's Center in Melbourne being the first recipient. This is a fun way for the business community and the public to enjoy an evening of dining at The Landing Rooftop and have a portion of their bill support a local charity.

Additionally, the Daily Bread, Genesis House, Rolling Readers, Club Esteem, Aging Matters in Brevard, Called Out Inc., Habitat for Humanity, and Ready for Life Brevard have all participated in Meaningful Monday.

"Every Monday from 5 p.m. until close (10 p.m.) we dedicate 10 percent of all our sales to a local charity," said Jones. "We allow the charities to have a presence at The Landing Rooftop. They set up tables, and representatives hand out literature to guests about their organization, mission, and the services they provide in the community. It's a good way for them to help raise awareness of their organization, and it gives The Landing Rooftop an opportunity to fill the place on a Monday, which is typically a slow restaurant day in downtown Melbourne."

The upcoming schedule and charity recipients for Meaningful Monday are: July 12, ReleaseSARA; July 19, Life Recaptured; July 26, Guardian Alliance; Aug. 2,

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Community of Hope; Aug. 9, Promise of Brevard; Aug. 16, I am a Freedom Fighter; Aug. 23, Candlelighters of Brevard; and Aug. 30, Neighbor Up Brevard.

Reservations for Meaningful Monday are suggested but not required. Reservations can be made at the OpenTable app, or by calling The Landing Rooftop at (321) 327-6007.

"We're looking forward to helping as many area charities as we can and grow the program as more people in Brevard learn about it," said Jones, who has built an impressive career in the hospitality industry.

He is often a speaker providing views and insights at leading conferences around the country, including the National Restaurant Association Show, and the Hospitality Design Boutique Expo. He has spoken at Temple University School of Hospitality and Tourism, The Culinary Institute of America, Florida International University, and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas.

Jones also instructs the culture and leadership training for managers and team members for the Madison Square Garden Company at their venues, including the LA Forum, Chicago Theater, and Radio City Music Hall.

He has been on the executive teams that have opened some of America's leading hotel brands, including The Monaco in Washington, D.C., The Clift in San Francisco, The Hudson in New York, and the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas.

"I was blessed to have worked with two of the pioneers of the boutique hotel world — Bill Kimpton and Ian Schrager. They developed some of the hottest brands in the industry — The Morgans, The Clift, and The Hudson, to name a few. It was one of the great experiences in my career."

The late Kimpton transformed an industry. He was the

founder and chairman of the Kimpton Hotel & Restaurant Group. A graduate of Northwestern University and a U.S. Army veteran, Kimpton purchased his first hotel — The Bedford — in 1981 in San Francisco. He quickly established himself as an innovator in the industry.

Convinced that the average consumer was frustrated by a choice between hotels that were either overly pricey and luxurious or else bland and generic, he decided to introduce to America the small, European-style hotels. Often, these hotels have high-profile restaurants attached.

In the early 2000s, Jones was vice president of restaurant operations for Kimpton. He oversaw the day-to-day operations of 39 fine-dining restaurants. The locations included San Francisco, New York, New Orleans, Denver, and Aspen.

He used that experience and others throughout his career to launch Hospitality Alliance.

"Hotel people are great at running hotels, but not so great at running restaurants," said Jones. "So those boutique hotel pioneers reached out and brought in restaurateurs to operate that part of their ventures. That's why Hospitality Alliance exists. And, we're seeing more limited-service hotels wanting to become full-service hotels. We come in and run their food and beverage arm."

For The Landing Rooftop, Jones said his company brought in its executive chef from Savannah, Ga., and its sous chef from Orlando. "We tapped some great talent for this hotel launch."

Jones started working in the hospitality industry washing dishes and busing tables at a Greek diner in New Jersey at age 14. He worked his way up to "line cook" by the time he graduated from high school four years later.

"I was never good at institutional education, but loved the restaurant business because you could learn by doing,"

he said in a HospitalityDesign.com interview.

In that same interview, Jones said he decided to start Hospitality Alliance because "there was a niche in the industry that was not filled. We are multifunctional in all aspects of the hospitality industry, including real estate, branding, marketing, operations, culinary, beverage, human resources, recruiting, and finance. There are not many 'development management and consulting' companies in hospitality that embody all those skill sets."

The restaurant and hospitality industry in Florida and around the nation offer wide job opportunity. On June 14, the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association went live with GreatFloridaJob.com, an easy-to-use website for employers and job-seekers to post and find jobs across all levels of the Sunshine State's hospitality industry.

According to the Department of Economic Opportunity, Florida has more than 460,000 jobs available, including tens of thousands from entry level to managerial in Florida's hospitality industry.

Gov. Ron DeSantis led the nation to reopen Florida and jumpstart the economic recovery, and Florida's hotels and restaurants are rebounding, but still face historic labor shortages.

To assist the industry in getting back to pre-COVID service and staffing levels and maintain Florida's status as the number-one international tourism destination, the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association has advocated for policies that will support industry recovery, hosted job fairs, and created a task force to help identify solutions.

Said Jones, "There is unlimited opportunity in the industry I love, and that I have long worked in, ever since my days as a teenager. There is a great deal of freedom and mobility in this industry. Work hard. Set goals. Strive to achieve your goals."

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