

Applebee's® Recognizes Top-Performing Franchisee And Vendor at 2015 National Conference

Annual Awards Honor Top Performers For Operational Excellence, Product Innovation

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KANSAS CITY, Mo., Nov. 3, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- **Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar®** recently named The Rose Group its 2015 Franchisee of the Year, and pork producer Smithfield Farmland Sales Corporation its 2015 Vendor of the Year at its annual franchise conference.

Each year Applebee's recognizes the top performers in its network of 33 domestic franchisees for their financial performance, operational excellence and community support. The Vendor of the Year award goes to the vendor that has made the greatest contribution to the Applebee's system during the past year.

Newtown, Pa.-based The Rose Group was named the top performer in a variety of financial, operational and community-building categories. Kansas City-based Smithfield Farmland was chosen by Centralized Supply Chain Services (CSCS) the franchisee-owned purchasing cooperative that serves as the exclusive buying agent for the Applebee's system.

"These award winners are the best of the best and demonstrate how we rely on our world-class franchisees and vendor partners to help us drive success," said Applebee's President Julia Stewart. "I am proud to serve alongside these winners."

Franchisee of the Year: The Rose Group

Established in 1985 and operating 56 Applebee's in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey, The Rose Group was recognized for its financial performance, operational excellence and innovation of new products and systems.

In 2015 The Rose Group excelled in sales, bar sales and guest count. It has also been consistently a top performer in all operational metrics, has helped to drive online and to-go sales, and has innovated new products and systems.

Beyond the numbers, The Rose Group's success is based on its sharp focus on its people and teams. Their employee turnover rates are among the best not only within the Applebee's system of franchisees, but in the entire casual dining category.

Its employee retention numbers are supported by important culture-building efforts like executive-employee roundtables in each market, where team members are able to speak directly with leadership, and rewards of \$100 for any team member idea adopted by the business.

The Rose Group also won the Pennsylvania Restaurant Association's 2015 Restaurant Neighbor award for its contributions to the communities it serves.

Vendor of the Year: Smithfield Farmland

Smithfield Farmland was cited for developing key programs and new products in partnership with Applebee's culinary team, along with strategic cost management.

Smithfield Farmland assisted Applebee's culinary team in the development of several pork-based menu items, and was honored for delivering value, product consistency and quality, service and responsiveness, reliability and innovation.

"Smithfield Farmland's ability to be great partners in the product development life cycle while providing excellent ongoing support for other key products is what sets this vendor apart," said Mike Leikam, president of Applebee's purchasing cooperative Centralized Supply Chain Services. "The company received high marks across all criteria from the culinary, quality assurance and supply-chain teams."

About Applebee's

Applebee's is the world's largest casual dining chain, with more than 2,000 locations in 49 states, 16 countries and one U.S. territory. Based in Kansas City, Missouri, Applebee's offers a lively bar & grill experience with an array of flavorful, hand-crafted drinks, appetizers and entrees that constantly evolve. Applebee's Grill & Bar® restaurants are franchised by DineEquity, Inc. (NYSE: DIN).

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