

KiaOraMai Awesome Service Award Presentation by Rotorua District Council May, Kevin Winters, to Bellamarie Todd, 7th October, 2011

A warm welcome to our guests, and particularly to the folk from the Boulevard Motel and Restaurant, and most particularly to Bellamarie Todd who is here this afternoon to receive a KiaOraMai Awesome Service Award for outstanding customer service.

Bellamarie, I think I'm right in saying your friends call you Marie.....?

Well, as you are among friends here, I'll call you Marie as well.

Up and down the country there are many types of business awards.

But the KiaOraMai Awesome Service Awards are unique in New Zealand because they salute **individuals working in business**, rather than businesses themselves.

It's a great concept because when you think about it businesses don't deliver service – the individuals who work in and for them do.

The KiaOraMai Awesome Service Awards salute the folk at the heart of service delivery.

A word or two about the KiaOraMai association with the Awesome Service Awards.

KiaOraMai is a uniquely New Zealand customer service training programme.

It was developed by the Services Industry Training Alliance in conjunction with the Tourism Industry Association and with the endorsement of the Minister of Tourism and Prime Minister, John Key.

KiaOraMai is a proud sponsor of the Awesome Service Awards. The two programmes share common goals – the KiaOraMai training programme promotes excellence in customer service while the Awesome Service Awards celebrate those who provide it.

KiaOraMai has had strong support in Rotorua since its launch in 2009. The first KiaOraMai workshop was held in Rotorua and the Rotorua District Council has been a strong advocate of the programme and indeed has put staff through the course.

Another unique feature of the Awesome Service Awards is that the national winner each month doesn't nominate him or her self – they are nominated by appreciative customers and clients, and – on behalf of the New Zealand Chambers of Commerce, Auckland Chamber chief executive Michael Barnett selects each recipient.

So why was Marie nominated?

Marilyn Guinan, from Bulls, says in her nomination: "For the past four years a group of friends have been coming to Rotorua for the National Mah Jong tournament and each year have eaten at the Boulevard Restaurant.

And every year we have been served by Bellamarie and every year we have remarked to the Boulevard Motel receptionist about the great service and her great personality.

This year, with these awards in mind, we asked her name and subsequently nominated her.

In our book she is Waitress of the Year.”

A couple of things really impress me about Marilyn’s nomination of Marie.

One is the obvious consistency of Marie’s customer care of this group of visitors over four years.

As Rotorua District Council staff appreciate, great customer service is about delivering it not once, but every time.

So I reflect on this: how many other visitors to Rotorua and the Boulevard Restaurant have also left with equally pleasant impressions of her, the restaurant, and therefore Rotorua as a destination.

My guess is a lot.

Marie becomes one of just 12 KiaOraMai Awesome Service Award winners across New Zealand in 2011, and NewstalkZB has announced her win nationwide over the course of this week, while later in the month her win will also be profiled in the Sunday Star Times nationally.

So her customer service ethic has become a great advertisement not just for the Boulevard Restaurant but for Rotorua.

So Marie I take great delight in presenting you with this lovely certificate on behalf of the KiaOraMai Awesome Service Award organisers, and this bouquet from Rotorua District Councillors and staff.

You are a great ambassador for the city and our aspirations to ensure that visitors are given every reason to come back time and again.

Congratulations on your award.

....it is a most appropriate way for us to celebrate National Customer Service week.

(Immediately after presenting Marie with her certificate and flowers)

Just a final word about awesome customer service.

For the Rugby World Cup to provide lasting tourism benefits next year and the years following Kiwis at the front line of the visitor and hospitality industries should aim to over-deliver on the expectations international visitors bring with them.

And an effective way of equipping your team to do so is give them the skills that the KiaOraMai programme provides.