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### **The Peabody Orlando Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Orlando, Fla...** The Peabody Orlando today celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, commemorating more than two decades of Peabody Service Excellence® in Central Florida. After opening November 1, 1986, The Peabody Orlando has grown to become the largest non-gaming Forbes Travel Guide Four-Star, AAA Four Diamond hotel in the United States. With a legacy of high service standards and luxury amenities, The Peabody Orlando continues to be recognized as an innovator in Central Florida's meeting and convention industry, which is most recently demonstrated in the hotel's \$450 million expansion and renovation, which debuted last September.

"When the hotel first opened 25 years ago, it was the only hotel neighboring the first phase of the Orange County Convention Center," stated Alan Villaverde, president, operations and managing director, The Peabody Orlando. "Today, this bustling entertainment district is home to more than 300 hotels, restaurants and attractions, making it one of the most desirable locations for meetings and convention goers, and we are proud of the role that our property has played in making this happen."

Designed to change the landscape of Central Florida's meeting and convention sector, The Peabody Orlando has played an integral role in the development of the International Drive Resort Area. It has served over 8.4 million guests and currently employs 1,080 associates in Orlando. Further, attendance at the Orange County Convention Center has grown by 238 percent and visitor spending reached \$28 billion in 2010.

The Peabody Orlando honored its heritage with a commemorative Duck March featuring the hotel's first guest and Central Florida Partnership president and CEO, Jacob Stuart, leading the world-famous Peabody Ducks as Honorary Duck Master. Following the Duck March, Tom Ackert, executive director of the Orange County Convention Center read a proclamation, recognizing November 1, 2011 as "The Peabody Orlando Day" and appointed Marty Belz, president and chairman, Peabody Hotel Group as the Duck Master General of the Orange County Convention

Center. Celebrations continued as 29 day-one associates were recognized during a luncheon hosted by Marty Belz and Alan Villaverde.

“Today marks another great milestone for the Peabody Hotel Group,” stated Marty Belz, president and chairman of Peabody Hotel Group. “As the second hotel to break ground, The Peabody Orlando is now the largest in our portfolio, making it a significant part of our history. We are grateful to the Central Florida community, valued meeting planners and industry leaders for your continued support over the past 25 years.”

Continuing its dedication to supporting the Central Florida community, The Peabody Orlando and its associates have pledged to provide more than 25,000 hours of community service during the year-long celebration. Hotel associates will kick-off this campaign at Second Harvest Food Bank this month, followed by volunteer events Toys for Tots and Clean the World, among others.

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**Editor’s Note:**

**Photo 1:** [Jacob Stuart, president and CEO of Central Florida Partnership and first guest of The Peabody Orlando, prepares to march The Peabody Orlando Ducks down the famed red carpet as Honorary Duck Master during the hotel’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Pictured with Alan Villaverde, president, operations and managing director, The Peabody Orlando and Donald Tompkins, Duck Master, The Peabody Orlando.](#)

**Photo 2:** [Tom Ackert, executive director of the Orange County Convention Center, reads a proclamation from the Office of the Orange County Mayor, recognizing November 1, 2011 as “The Peabody Orlando Day.”](#)

**Photo 3:** [Marty Belz, president and chairman, Peabody Hotel Group and Alan Villaverde, president, operations and managing director, The Peabody Orlando honor all 29 day-one employees with a commemorative 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary pin in recognition for their hard work and dedication. Pictured with Barb Bowden, day-one associate and general manager, The Peabody Orlando.](#)

**Photo 4:** [25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorative cake, designed and created by executive pastry chef, Alain Verqnault and The Peabody Orlando pastry shop.](#)

**About The Peabody Orlando:**

The Peabody Orlando, opened in November 1986, is a staple in the Orlando-area convention and tourism industry and famous for its Peabody Ducks. The hotel has received the prestigious *Forbes Travel Guide* Four Star rating for 22 consecutive years. Located directly across from and adjacent to the Orange County Convention Center and in the heart of the International Drive entertainment district, The Peabody Orlando currently offers 1,641 ultra-luxurious guestrooms, 300,000 total square feet of state-of-the-art, flexible function space, a 22,000-square-foot, full-service spa, salon and fitness center and ten delectable dining and entertainment options. Peabody Hotels, comprising The Peabody Orlando, The Peabody Memphis and The Peabody Little Rock (all Forbes Travel Guide Four Star rated hotels) is a division within the portfolio Peabody Hotel Group of Memphis, Tennessee. To learn more, please visit [www.PeabodyOrlando.com](http://www.PeabodyOrlando.com) or [www.PeabodyMeetings.com](http://www.PeabodyMeetings.com), connect on [Facebook](#) or follow on [Twitter](#).