

Darden Restaurants Scores 100 Percent on the Human Rights Campaign 2013 Corporate Equality Index

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Only restaurant company among 252 businesses to earn perfect score

ORLANDO, Fla., Nov. 14, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Darden Restaurants announced today that the company scored 100 out of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) 2013 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) for its business practices and policies toward its lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees. A record 252 businesses achieved the top rating of 100 percent, with Darden the only restaurant company among them.

(Logo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20050203/FLTH026LOGO>)

"At Darden, we embrace diversity and inclusion as business imperatives that are critical to our success and future growth," said Samir Gupte, senior vice president of Culture for Darden. "We believe that understanding and embracing our unique differences enriches our corporate culture and enables us to be a stronger, high-performing organization."

A total of 889 businesses were rated in the 2013 CEI, including the entire Fortune 500.

Six-hundred eighty-eight companies, like Darden, voluntarily participated in the annual survey. Companies are rated on 40 specific policies and practices, including having fully-inclusive equal employment opportunity policies, providing equal employment benefits, demonstrating organizational LGBT competency, evidence of their commitment to equality publicly, and exercising responsible citizenship.

Darden was recognized for the following policies and practices:

- Including sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in its non-discrimination policies;
- Offering health insurance and at least three other domestic partner benefits;
- Benefits coverage for transgender employees;
- Providing diversity training, LGBT employee resource groups and other practices that support LGBT organizational competency; and
- Public engagement with the LGBT community.

The HRC's CEI report, released each fall since 2002, provides an in-depth analysis and rating of large U.S. employers and their policies and practices pertinent to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees. It is the premiere national benchmark for LGBT workplace inclusion. Businesses rated 100% are recognized as "Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality." The full report can be viewed at: www.hrc.org/cei.

Darden's long history of diversity and inclusion dates back to 1938, when company founder Bill Darden welcomed anyone as a guest in his first restaurant during an era of racial segregation and discrimination. Today, diversity remains at the core of Darden's culture. The company's diversity initiatives reflect its guiding principles to attract and retain a workforce that mirrors its diverse customer base, provide opportunities for diverse suppliers, and contribute to the well-being of the communities it serves.

About the Human Rights Campaign

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

About Darden Restaurants

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates more than 2,000 restaurants that generate over \$8.0 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, Fla., and employing 185,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2012, Darden was named to the FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to Work For" list for the second year in a row and is the only full-service restaurant company to ever appear on the list. Our restaurant brands – Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52, The Capital Grille, Eddie V's and Yard House – reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are

built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit www.darden.com.

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