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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CRVA SELECTS NEW CEO

**Charlotte, N.C. (Dec. 5, 2011)** – A 30-year hospitality industry executive with extensive experience in the strategic management, marketing and operational improvement of leading international hotel brands has been selected as chief executive officer (CEO) of the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA).

Thomas P. (Tom) Murray was named CEO by the CRVA Board of Directors following an extensive national search led by a broad-based industry and community advisory team facilitated by Heidrick & Struggles, one of the nation's leading management recruitment firms. The board is set to vote their formal approval on Dec. 7, and Murray will assume his new duties on Dec. 15. Tim Newman, the current CRVA CEO, will transition to a role leading sales and marketing activities for CRVA.

"Tom brings extensive knowledge and experience to CRVA through a proven track record of strategic leadership and executive management at the highest levels," said Joe Hallow, chair of the CRVA Board. "Tom has the ability to marshal all of our region's resources and help assure that we continue to compete and win internationally in the support of our \$4 billion tourism and hospitality economy."

As CEO of the CRVA, Murray will be responsible for the Charlotte region's lead tourism and hospitality organization with an annual budget of \$50 million and 200 employees. CRVA promotes the region's hospitality, tourism and convention economies through strategic marketing and business development programs. It also manages marketing and operations for Time Warner Cable Arena, Bojangles' Coliseum, Ovens Auditorium, Charlotte Convention Center and NASCAR Hall of Fame.

"Having proven itself competitive on a national level by securing the 2012 Democratic National Convention, the Charlotte region is in an outstanding position to continue the growth of its tourism, hospitality and convention economies," Murray said. "My goal is to work with the CRVA board and team, local government, business and community leaders to build on the region's strengths and long history of achievement. Our vision is to take CRVA to the next level and assure that the Charlotte region becomes an even stronger magnet for tourism and special events that contribute to the sustained economic growth of the region."

Murray's career in the hospitality industry has included service with the InterContinental Hotels Group, the world's largest hotel chain, where he was chief operating officer for the Americas during a period of rapid growth. His responsibilities spanned more than 400 hotel properties in 23 countries, seven brands and revenues exceeding \$2 billion. Murray led strategic operational, marketing and financial improvement programs for InterContinental and Crowne Plaza brands.

He has also served as chief operating officer with Red Lion Hotels as senior vice president for Hilton Hotels. For Red Lion, Murray was responsible for the development of owned and managed relationships that grew from nine to more than 50 properties and included operations, sales and marketing and quality assurance.

In addition, Murray served in several positions with Promus Corporation, including vice president of development for the western United States, where he was responsible for negotiation and management of franchise and joint venture agreements for Doubletree, Embassy Suites, Homewood Suites and Hampton Inn. During his tenure with Promus, Murray also managed construction of new properties, led operational improvement for existing hotels in markets across the U.S. and held general manager positions at several hotels.

Most recently, Murray served as CEO of Lindblad Expeditions of New York where he led this 30-year-old, ship-based expedition cruise business that operates in alliance with National Geographic. He began his career with Marriott Hotels Corporation as a hotel controller, opening and managing Marriott's first Canadian hotel. He earned a B.S. degree in accountancy from Villanova University. Murray and his wife, Alison, have two daughters and will be relocating from the Atlanta market.

The advisory committee for the CRVA CEO search included Chuck Allen, managing director of US Airways; Bishop Claude Alexander, pastor of The Park Church and community leader; Shannon McFayden, community leader and former Wachovia human resources executive; Ravi Patel, president and CEO of SREE Hotels; Charlotte City Manager Curt Walton; and Rai Glover, owner of Vigilant Homecare & Healthcare Staffing and a former senior vice president with Bank of America. Glover served as chair for the advisory committee.

## **About CRVA**

With an organization-wide vision of Southern hospitality and world-class customer service, the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA) seeks to ensure that the visitors and events that come to the area have a positive experience. Responsibilities include destination marketing through Visit Charlotte and management/operations responsibilities for the Charlotte Convention Center, Time Warner Cable Arena, Ovens Auditorium, Bojangles' Coliseum and the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

CRVA also works to promote the region's destination brand, "Charlotte's got a lot" through a number of marketing channels and partnerships. Guided by three main mission objectives, the CRVA markets by bringing visitors and events to the Charlotte region, manages by making the visitors' experiences positive and the events successful, and maximizes by marketing and managing in a way that continues to bring visitors and events back to the region.

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