



# THE VICTORIA WELCOMES YOU

BY BETHANY HARBISON PHOTOS BY STEVE LATHAM

Guests of the legendary Victoria of Anniston, Ala. have come to expect excellence – and rightly so. Steeped in history and laden with antiques, the bed and breakfast has been offering guests a taste of down-home, Southern hospitality and grace for more than twenty years.

In December of 2008, Earlon and Betty McWhorter generously placed the stately inn, which appraised for more than \$3 million, in the care of the Jacksonville State University Foundation. This newly forged partnership between JSU and The Victoria benefits both institutions; The Victoria's historical integrity is maintained, and the JSU Foundation can use the property's net income to provide scholarships for JSU students.

The JSU Foundation soon hired Jackson Hospitality Services, a hotel development and management company based in Birmingham, Ala., to manage The Victoria, and James Rice was named general manager. With the continued additional advisement of JSU alumnus and highly regarded hotelier Jay Prater, The Victoria is in good hands.

Since acquiring The Victoria, the JSU Foundation has been working to spruce up the property to create an ultimate retreat for guests. New televisions, upgraded bedding, and manicured grounds are a few changes returning visitors may notice.

"The Victoria remains a unique choice in lodging accommodations," Prater says. "For guests who are tired of the



cookie-cutter approach of branded hotels, The Victoria offers a change of pace.”

The main house offers three unique rooms: The Kirby Suite, which features Victorian built-ins; The McKlelroy Suite, which includes a jetted claw-foot tub; and The Wilson Suite, which has a half-canopy bed and a glass-turreted sitting area. The McWhorter Guest House is a free-standing, one-bedroom cottage that features a sitting area, breakfast nook, separate bedroom and Jacuzzi bath. Even The Victoria’s fifty-six hotel rooms are special, with each featuring its own distinct furniture and décor.

Rice’s favorite moment from his time at The Victoria came recently, when a family rented the entire hotel for a wedding.

“The weather was great, and the food, which was set up with different selections in five locations, was wonderful,” Rice says.

“The lighting and table designs made for a beautiful Southern gathering.”

According to Prater, The Victoria’s business levels have continued to increase over the past few months – a fact he finds impressive, considering the current economic slowdown. He believes the inn will continue to be successful.

“[Jackson Hospitality Services] will be successful because they are going to place an emphasis on providing excellent accommodations at a fair price,” Prater says.

The Victoria’s success will translate into far more than just additional funds for JSU. In the near future, JSU students pursuing related careers will have the opportunity to work at The Victoria to earn school credit and learn real-world lessons. One program that will soon begin utilizing The Victoria’s potential as a learning lab is

JSU’s Department of Family and Consumer Science’s new Hospitality and Culinary Management program of study.

“Dr. Debra Goodwin and Dr. Tim Roberts of the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences have developed a strong curriculum for the HCM program,” says Dr. John Hammett, dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies. “Their efforts, coupled with the vast array of benefits offered through an authentic learning laboratory setting such as The Victoria, will no doubt produce outstanding graduates from this program.”

For more information about The Victoria’s history and rates, please visit [www.thevictoria.com](http://www.thevictoria.com) or call (256) 236-1138. To book your next stay, please call 1-800-260-8781. 

