

NEW GENERAL MANAGER BRINGS PROVEN EXPERIENCE TO THE CHASE PARK PLAZA HOTEL

BY ABBY WOJCIK

The Royal Sonesta Chase Park Plaza Hotel welcomed its new General Manager Amy Ruffner, a certified revenue manager, who oversees the daily operations of the historic property, along with the financial performance and quality standards of the full-service, nearly 400-guest-room hotel. Ruffner is the first woman to be general manager in the Chase's history.

Prior to coming to St. Louis, Ruffner was general manager of The Royal Sonesta Chicago River North, near Millennium Park. Under Ruffner's management, the Chicago hotel became one of the top performers in the Sonesta portfolio and achieved placement in the top 10% of hotels in the city.

How have your first few months at the Chase been so far?

"It's been really fantastic. The hotel itself and the team that's already there, they're just fantastic. One of my favorite things is learning the history as we go along, and [how] everyone has the different lens that they understand the history from and their own disciplines. And then also, I've been getting really involved within the community and understanding the impacts that we already make in today's world and what we could do even better in the future."

Was there a challenge or something that you learned at the Chicago River North that you feel you're able to bring to the Chase?

"Yes, the market has been challenging since 2020. When I first started, Sonesta was still a pretty soft brand in a market that wasn't rebounding as quickly as others. So, just like any other business operators, we had to absolutely rethink how we did business in all aspects. What worked for me for the past 18 years in the Chicago hotel market wasn't going to work in the new post-2020 market. We had to really

look at our marketing, segmentation, pricing strategies, all the 'boring' things that make hotels work, but we had to do that in order to capture as much business as we could.

I love a good challenge and that's one of the reasons I started with Sonesta in River North. I wanted to bring that hotel back to life and make it one of the top-producing hotels within the portfolio. So, those types of challenges excite me more than anything else. Even looking at the Chase, while it's a fantastic hotel, I'm very excited to see what else we can do with it and bring it to life even more."

What makes you passionate about your career in the hotel and travel industry?

"It's a really cool thing because I work in an industry where I get to make an impact on people's lives every day. And that has never changed, no matter what level of the organization I was at, whether early in my career when I was an assistant manager, or where I am now leading Chase.

We have people who walk through our doors getting ready to see their child get married, or college grads coming for their first job interview, or road warriors just trying to get to their room in time to FaceTime with their family. Although it may be a small moment in time, we all have that opportunity to make someone's day just a little bit better, and I think that's really important in today's world."

What does an average day look like as GM?

"Of course there's the longevity of the business, the essentials: mak-

ing sure we have the right pricing and we're selling it the right way. But the other part of it is the people piece. My favorite part of the day is doing my rounds in the building. The Chase is a very large footprint, so doing those rounds and talking to our hostess, or the front desk agents, checking in with the bellmen or banquet servers. Sometimes it makes my day longer because people stop me with questions or requests, but those are the moments that matter the most. That's where, as GM, you know how you can better impact your hotel from within."

How do you feel about managing a hotel with such a deep history in the community?

"I feel that it's an incredible honor to lead such an iconic hotel. I'm very proud to be the next GM for the Chase. Adding to its history is very exciting for me, and helping



Amy Ruffner

our team grow and get better every day. I'm also excited to be a part of community boards, and the St. Louis Hotel Association, and to see what comes from Explore St. Louis under Brad Dean's new leadership.

All that to say, I'm excited to be a part of this community and to help push St. Louis to the next level and to the capacity I know I can while representing the Chase."

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