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## **TWO YOUNG BUSINESSES WIN YORK COUNTY BUSINESS AWARDS**

*Yorktown Beach Hotel receives Distinguished Business Award for growth and investment;  
Pappas Orthodontics named Chamber's Small Business of the Year*

(YORKTOWN, VA, March 17, 2023) – At York County’s annual Distinguished Business Award ceremony yesterday, two local companies accepted awards for their community impact. This year’s winners are particularly noteworthy because both were just established in 2021—and it’s the first time either has earned an award.

Yorktown Beach Hotel earned the 2023 Distinguished Business Award, presented by the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Department of Economic and Tourism Development (ETD). This award is presented to growing businesses that make significant investments in York County.

“I’m flattered and quite grateful for this honor, and for all of the assistance York County has provided to us over the past few years,” said Bowry. “It really is a testament to all of the hard work of my team members, all coming together to make this project a success.”

Also during this event, held in the Freight Shed at Riverwalk Landing, the York County Chamber of Commerce recognized its Small Business of the Year: Pappas Orthodontics. The business was selected for its support of and its commitment to the local and worldwide community.

**Yorktown Beach Hotel**, formerly the Duke of York, is the only waterfront hotel in the Greater Williamsburg area. Originally built by the Crockett family in three phases between 1962 and 1977, the beloved property had fallen into disrepair over recent years. By the time the pandemic hit in 2020, family members operating the hotel decided it was time to retire. Thankfully, they knew just who to call: Matt Bowry, managing partner of M.A. Bowry & Company.

“Fourteen years ago, I was in town having lunch at the Yorktown Pub and I noticed the hotel for the first time,” said Bowry. “I grew up in Newport News and had seen it before, but this time I really noticed it and saw its potential.”

Bowry—a Hampton Roads Academy graduate who earned his bachelor’s from James Madison University and his MBA from William and Mary—had left the area years earlier to pursue a career in investment banking and real estate private equity. He was home visiting his mother when he saw the Duke of York property—and knew he wanted to buy it and bring it back to its glory days.

“I was determined and patient,” Bowry said. “I wrote letters to Paul Crockett and met with him when I was in town. I developed a relationship with him and other family members and stayed in touch for more than a decade.”

On July 2, 2021, Bowry, along with his investors, became the official owner of the property. He had big renovation ideas, planned in phases over the next few years, but the very first change he made was to the name.

“I knew this might be controversial with some of our legacy guests who had been coming here for generations,” Bowry said. “But I felt strongly that we needed potential guests to know right off that we are a *waterfront* hotel; in fact, we’re the only one in the Historic Triangle.”





His next move also turned heads for longtime guests and locals alike. Bowry decided to demolish the restaurant space and create a modern lobby in its place.

“The restaurant facility was in disrepair and needed tremendous work,” Bowry said. “Plus, our parking is limited, and the restaurant was competing with the hotel for available spots.”

Confident that folks would come around once the renovations were complete, Bowry hired local contractor Scott Olsen with Fjord Construction to begin the work. For the next year and a half, Olsen’s team fully renovated the first floor of the main and largest building on the property, newly dubbed The Chesapeake Building. All windows along the front façade were replaced, the building received a fresh coat of paint, and the old plastic balcony furniture was swapped out for high-end matching chairs—offering the optimal beach-gazing experience. A new breakfast area and market will open soon.

The pool area was also refurbished, with resurfaced concrete, a new salt-water filtration system and all-new furnishings... though one day per year, he lets it go to the dogs. Literally. The day before he winterizes the pool each fall, Bowry opens it to locals for a “Pooch Plunge” event. It’s just one of many creative ways he’s integrated the community.

“The best compliment I could have received came from Paul Crockett’s son, Cole,” Bowry said. “He told me that his grandma would be proud of what we’ve done with the hotel.”

Bowry said he has plans for even more renovations in the near future.

“My fiancée, Ferren Wolfe, is an interior designer, and she’s been remarkably important to the renovation,” Bowry said. “Her vision and talent are really making it what it is. I can’t wait to see her ideas for overhauling the guest rooms come to fruition.”

In addition to upgrading the rooms, Bowry said he has high hopes of being able to bring back the rooftop sundeck that was part of the original hotel in the ’70s. Bowry credits the revived hotel’s success to his team, the community and the County staff.

“I am only a small part of the success we’ve experienced,” Bowry said. “Our team, especially longtime staff members Leelee King and Gill McCauley, have been so tremendously instrumental

to our efforts to bring this hotel back to life. County staff has also been very helpful and supportive from the beginning.”

Financial assistance provided by the EDA allowed Bowry to upgrade the windows and replace the balcony chairs. Additionally, Bowry said the many events held at the waterfront help to bolster his business and others by bringing much-needed exposure to the area.

“The County is focused on continual enhancements to the Historic Area, from Riverwalk Landing to the beach picnic area and up the hill on Main Street,” said Kristi Olsen-Hayes, director of the County’s Economic & Tourism Development Department. “Our EDA is also focused on retaining the long-standing businesses in our legacy industries. So, helping Mr. Bowry revive the aging hotel, and choosing Yorktown Beach Hotel as this year’s award winner, made perfect sense. We’re excited to see this tourism asset refreshed and thriving again.”

**Pappas Orthodontics** was established in 2021 by Dr. Nick Pappas. Pappas grew up in Poquoson and earned his Bachelor of Science in biology from the University of Virginia. He completed his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree at Virginia Commonwealth University and later, after serving three years in the United States Air Force, completed his orthodontic residency and Master of Science at the University of Iowa. He even spent time in Jamaica and Honduras, providing dental care in rural communities through Missions of Mercy.



Dr. Nick Pappas

But all the while, this Tidewater native dreamed of returning home one day to open his own practice.

“I was beyond excited when the opportunity came along to purchase an existing office in my hometown area,” said Pappas. “I bought my childhood orthodontist’s practice. I think it is so neat that I sat in these very same chairs when I was younger.”

Pappas said his practice is committed to providing the best orthodontic care to its patients, by always going the extra mile and focusing on personal touch. He explained how he relies heavily on his amazing staff to help reach this goal.

“We focus intently on making the full patient experience a positive one,” Pappas said. “We want to be the Chick-fil-A of orthodontics by giving our patients whatever they need to have the best overall experience with what could be a scary situation to some.”

“Pappas Orthodontics was awarded the Chamber’s 2023 Small Business of the Year award for Nick’s service to the community and commitment to his patients and staff,” said Snap Troeschel, president of the York County Chamber of Commerce. “We’re proud to support Pappas Orthodontics, as they focus on our community. Small and home-based businesses are the heart of York County.”

Pappas supports numerous community initiatives, from children’s sports teams to the Junior League of Hampton Roads. He said he especially enjoys family events, such as the Junior League’s Tour of Trucks and the YMCA’s Victory at Yorktown Family Fun Run. Pappas currently serves on the board of directors for the Victory Family YMCA in York County, under the leadership of Executive Director Chris Sapp.

“Nick has been such a strong supporter of the Victory YMCA over the past few years,” said Sapp. “He and his staff have been so helpful in supporting and promoting the Victory at Yorktown Family Fun Run, one of our biggest fundraisers each year.”

Pappas said he feels grateful to have been chosen for the Chamber’s Small Business of the Year Award. He thanked his staff and family for the success that the business has experienced over the past two years.

“None of this would be possible without them,” Pappas said. “My wife and father have been instrumental in getting the business set up and helping it grow, running so much of it in the background. My dad is my best friend!”

When asked what makes him feel most fulfilled about his business, Pappas said it was the ability to serve the community that has been so supportive of him and his business.



The Pappas Orthodontics Team

“Being involved in the community that I live in is important to me,” Pappas said. “I love living in such a small, close-knit community, where I get to see my patients out and about. It’s so rewarding to see their healthy smiles and know that I helped them achieve them.”

### **About York County Economic Development**

York County seeks to create a diverse economic base through continually recruiting, growing and retaining business across a variety of industries. The **Department of Economic and Tourism Development** is dedicated to expanding York County's tax base through capital investment in the County; promoting tourism; supporting large, small and home-based businesses; and providing new employment opportunities for County residents. Its efforts result in improved quality of life throughout York County, including charitable giving, volunteerism, and job creation.

The Department of Economic and Tourism Development works in cooperation with many regional and state agencies to pursue its mission. Key among these allies are the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Hampton Roads Alliance, Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center, and local Chambers of Commerce. Its strongest ally is the **York County Economic Development Authority (EDA)**. Established in 1972, the EDA is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia and has unique powers established in the Code of Virginia. The EDA is a conduit for non-taxable industrial revenue bonds, and can legally own, develop, and sell/lease commercial real estate. It also can provide incentives necessary to close deals within targeted industry sectors.

Learn more at <https://www.yesyorkcounty.com/>

### **About the York County Chamber of Commerce**

The York County Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit business membership organization operated by volunteer business leaders who care about our community. The Chamber is dedicated to serving its community by promoting the businesses and business interests of its members. The Chamber is working to strengthen the area's overall economic climate by supporting small business development in the community through its programs, such as mentorship and workforce development. The Chamber recently signed a lease with Mid Atlantic Real Estate that will move them to a new level, with low cost long term room rental as well as an incubator that will assist York County home-based and small businesses to get started and flourish. The Chamber is the place to go for small businesses on the Peninsula. Learn more at <https://yorkcountychamberva.org/>

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