



Caribbean National Team - WINNER – Bahamas (left to right): In photo: Emil Lee, CHTA President; Frank Comito, CHTA CEO; Team Bahamas (Jamal Small, Charon McKenzie, Sheldon Tracey Sweeting, Richmond Fowler II, Marv Cunningham, Crystal Morley); Peter Olsacher, Judge.



Chef of the Year - WINNER Puerto Rico (left to right): In photo: Jonathan Hernandez, Team Puerto Rico, 2015 Judge.

and profitability of the industry, and recognizing that it's the primary employment generator of tax revenue for the region. That's not necessarily acknowledged in practice by many governments in the region, and we've worked hard with our counterpart organization, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, which represents government interests in the tourism industry, to provide information and facts about its economic impact. We've worked closely with the World Travel and Tourism Council and groups like Oxford Economics to garner and support the development of the necessary research to show the broad economic impact of tourism in our various jurisdictions in the Caribbean. That's been absolutely necessary because we're faced constantly with issues of high taxation and high costs of doing business in the Caribbean, which have corresponding effects on our rates and our profitability. We have to be on top of that all of the time and work hard to make sure governments are aware of how policies and regulatory matters affect our industry. So, advocacy plays a very key role in everything that we do. We operate under seven guiding strategy objectives and

right in there is advocacy and representation."

**You also mentioned research and the dissemination of information as part of the Association's mission. Any recent initiatives in that area?**

"We've done research and position papers on the lifting of the U.S. embargo on Cuba and offered some positive and constructive ways in which individual jurisdictions in the region can address the impending changes. We're finalizing an advocacy paper, right now, on the sharing economy – groups like Uber and AirBnB – and how they may be effectively integrated into the industry with standards, regulations, and some fair play on taxation, to not only protect the reputation of the industry, but also to help to develop that subsector of the accommodations sector, as well.

**The Zika virus has been in the news lately and it's realistic to think that it will have an impact on travel and tourism in the region. How has the Association responded?**

We've been working for the past four weeks on the