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Graham & Associates Awarded Silver in Best Travel, Hospitality & Destinations Campaign Category at 2010 Bulldog Awards

**Graham & Associates** ([www.graham-associates.com](http://www.graham-associates.com)), a California-based national PR agency, received Silver in the **Best Travel, Hospitality & Destinations Campaign** category at the **2010 Bulldog Awards** for the national campaign that re-launched the historic Yosemite resort, Evergreen Lodge.

"We are honored to be recognized for our team's efforts to design and execute a national campaign strategy that led to such strong results," said **Lydia Graham**, president of Graham & Associates. "This award is a win-win for everyone: the client saw a surge in bookings and was thrilled with the outcome."

The re-launch campaign was centered around a 2009 expansion, the second major upgrade for the property. Evergreen Lodge in Yosemite, a 1921 lodge with only a few summer cabins, underwent a significant overhaul in 2004 under new ownership. Graham was retained to announce the initial renovation and secure major regional and national coverage. In 2009, the lodge owners finished an extensive expansion, completing the lodge's transformation into an upscale Yosemite destination, and approached Graham again in January – this time with the goal to rebuild media interest and announce the "new" Evergreen. However, given a tailspin economy impacting travel, coupled with the property's waning media coverage due to the lack of a significant and consistent PR program since the 2004 launch, the campaign was up against some serious challenges.

The team's approach centered on a strategic decision to leverage the expansion as an opportunity to re-launch Evergreen Lodge's image and identity. In the re-launch release and press materials, Graham repositioned the property as an upscale mountain resort, whereas previously it had been a mid-range lodge. The campaign, which was kicked off well in advance of the summer travel season, helped bring the lodge from obscurity to the local and national travel pages.

Media results surpassed expectations. Not only was Evergreen Lodge profiled as a "Hot Property" in one of the most sought-after regional travel magazines, Via, Graham successfully pitched the expansion story to Associated Press, which ran the news with a photo. The AP story then ran in 34 newspapers and assorted other outlets across the country, including USA Today. Leveraging that momentum, Graham placed features in the San Francisco Chronicle, Contra Costa Times and related Bay Area News Group papers, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Examiner, San Francisco Magazine, Travel Savvy Mom Blog, Travel Agent, Travel Weekly and Special Events Newsletter. It then became one of the 'most viewed travel stories' on Yahoo! News.

"Exciting press and couldn't have been better timed with lots of new cabins to fill! Well done," said **Lee Zimmerman**, CEO and co-owner of Evergreen Lodge.

Message pick up was spot on; for example, the San Francisco Chronicle feature hit the primary message: "Evergreen has undergone a complete makeover in the past few years, transforming from a tavern with a handful of rustic wood cabins (built in 1921 to house dam workers) to a full-service mountain resort." Messages about the expansion, family-oriented travel and Yosemite as a popular park were cited in the coverage.

The resort reported a leap in sales shortly after the campaign release went out: an overall increase of 25 percent during peak season. Site traffic jumped over 40 percent from the previous year and stayed high throughout the summer, and accommodations page views went up 35 percent.

The agency is known in the industry for its results-driven, highly creative and original campaigns. For Evergreen Lodge, Graham brought its expertise in travel to reenergize and rebuild the resort's image in the national and international press.

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