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PLACES TO STAY / Hilton enters Woodlands hotel market / Garden Inn aims at business crowd, wedding planner

By BETH KUHLES, Houston Chronicle correspondent

Terry Arterburn found a unique way to christen the opening of his Hilton Garden Inn in The Woodlands Town Center. The newest hotel will play host to his daughter's wedding.

Nikki Arterburn and Chris Hernandez will celebrate their nuptials at the 117-room facility on July 26 and be the first newly married couple to christen one of the suites at the hotel.

"They want to call it the Hernandez suite," joked Terry Arterburn, general manager of the Hilton Garden Inn, at 9301 Six Pines Drive.

Hilton debut

The Hilton Garden Inn opened its doors on July 7, the first Hilton property to debut in the community and the newest hotel available in the growing Town Center area. It caters to the business community, but also hopes to capture the leisure business of family weddings and visitors to the new attractions, which include The Woodlands Waterway, The Woodlands Mall expansion and Market Street.

"We took The Woodlands motif and put it in the hotel," Arterburn said. "Everything is green."

Business market

The Woodlands is a hot hotel market right now because of the growth of the community, especially the number of international headquarters located here, including Anadarko, Chevron Phillips and Chicago Bridge and Iron, to name a few.

"The Woodlands is one of the fastest growing communities for international offices," Arterburn said.

The new hotel has many amenities to cater to the business world. The motto is "Everything right where you need it."

The hotel features three conference rooms, which can accommodate from six to 150 people. It offers a 24-hour business center, which includes traditional services of an office - phones, fax, computers and printers as well as scissors, paper clips and other equipment - free of charge.

"We're pleased Hilton Garden Inn hotel chose to come into Town Center," said Frank W. Robinson, president of Town Center Improvement District. "It adds another international name of quality places to stay, further enhancing The Woodlands Town Center as a destination for business and leisure travel."

Computer lines also have been added to each room, each conference room and even in an alcove within a casual dining area. The hotel rigged each room to the business center, so guests can print out materials from the laptops and have them delivered to their room.

"It has everything you need for business," said Danielle Beckcom, director of sales for the Hilton Garden Inn.

Variety of amenities

The hotel also has a full-service kitchen for breakfast. Guests can choose from continental fare for \$3.95 or have custom-made breakfast selections for \$6.95. The kitchen may also be open in the future to cater special events. The dining area seats 65 guests.

There also is a pavilion pantry, a room stocked for the midnight munchies or for the forgotten shaver or toothbrush.

"We took the vending machines and put them in the pantry," Arterburn said.

The hotel also features a fitness room, with treadmills, abdominal machines, stationary bikes and rowing machines and an outdoor pool with depths from 3 to 5 feet.

Each room is also equipped with a microwave, mini fridge, desk and seating area, as well as a daily dose of Starbucks Coffee. The hotel offers 12 junior suites, with separate living rooms and Jacuzzi, as well as 44 connection rooms. Rates range from \$89 to \$119 on weekdays and \$69 to \$79 on weekends.

The suites and connecting rooms are especially helpful for the leisure business to accommodate families and wedding parties. The hotel is also promoting the largest conference room as a wedding hall, which will connect to an outdoor terrace and pool for such an event.

"It has a family coziness that you do not have at the larger hotels," Beckcom said.

The Hilton Garden Inn is the fastest growing subset in the Hilton hotel chain. There are 180 Hilton Garden Inns across the country and 120 more in the pipeline for construction, Arterburn said.

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HOTEL HIGHLIGHTS

Hilton Garden Inn

9301 Six Pines Drive

The Woodlands, TX 77380

281-364-9300

117 rooms, including 12 suites and 44 connecting rooms

Three conference rooms, accommodating six to 150 people

24-hour business center

Fitness room and pool

Full-service breakfast kitchen and 65-seat dining area

Internet access in rooms, meeting rooms and dining area

Rates range from \$89 to \$119 weekdays; \$69 to \$79 weekends

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