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NORTHERN VIRGINIA'S POPPY HILL TUSCAN KITCHEN EARNS NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION'S STATE 'RESTAURANT NEIGHBOR AWARD'

Fredericksburg, VA – Poppy Hill Tuscan Kitchen (www.ciaopoppyhill.com), owned and operated by husband-and-wife team Chef Scott Mahar and General Manager/Wine Director Ingrid Mahar, has been named by the National Restaurant Association (NRA) as a state winner of its distinguished "Restaurant Neighbor Award." The authentic Italian eatery – recently named by *Epicurious* to its list of "Top 10 Farm-to-Table Restaurants in the U.S." – is now a finalist for the NRA's national Restaurant Neighbor Award, to be announced September 23rd at the NRA's 2008 Annual Public Affairs Conference in Washington, DC.

"I think it is part of our responsibility as business owners to pitch in with community and neighborhood projects," said Ingrid. "Our Virginia community has helped us and our Fredericksburg restaurant so much with their support. Returning that, at least in some measure through community outreach, is the least we can do."

Community outreach and charity projects have been essential parts of the Mahars' overall business approach since the 2005 launch of Poppy Hill Tuscan Kitchen. The Mahars have been actively involved in a wide variety of events and fundraisers, and regularly have donated time and resources to numerous community organizations, including the local Fredericksburg Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Fredericksburg Council on the Arts, and a variety of local schools and food banks.

The team at Poppy Hill Tuscan Kitchen also actively support the local farming community and local Virginia growers. The restaurant is gaining national attention for its consistent use of chemical-free, all-natural and organic ingredients from local farmers in all of its fresh, northern Italian dishes. Working with nearby farmer Jane Van Zalhah at Friendly Cottage Farms, in particular, Chef Mahar helps decide what seasonal ingredients are planted for use throughout the year at the popular Fredericksburg restaurant. "We don't want to feed our guests anything that we wouldn't be comfortable feeding our own children," according to Chef Mahar.

Singled out as a "culinary craftsman" and "fearless foodie" by food press, Chef Mahar continues to earn a growing amount of recognition. His distinct cooking style, learned in large measure from his Italian grandfather, embraces the seasonal ingredients and fresh flavors so characteristic of authentic Tuscan cuisine.

In its tenth year of presenting its annual "Restaurant Neighbor" awards, the NRA continues to recognize restaurants around the nation whose teams consistently dedicate their time, resources and commitment to the betterment of the communities around them.

"We're really pleased and grateful to receive this recognition from the National Restaurant Association, but also feel that we're fortunate to be receiving the enthusiastic support of the community around us," Chef Mahar said. "If we can contribute in modest ways to helping out folks in our surrounding Virginia neighborhoods, that only helps all of us in the long run."

About Poppy Hill Tuscan Kitchen:

Since opening its doors in December 2005, Poppy Hill Tuscan Kitchen (www.ciaopoppyhill.com), located in Fredericksburg, Virginia's beautiful historic district, has earned a loyal following with its made-from-scratch, northern Italian Cuisine. Owned and operated by husband-and-wife team Scott Mahar (Executive Chef) and Ingrid Mahar (Wine Director and General Manager), the increasingly popular restaurant keeps patrons returning again and again by offering authentic dishes which feature only the freshest local ingredients, gracious guest service, and a top-notch, continually evolving wine list – all at a reasonable price point.

For further information about Poppy Hill Tuscan Kitchen, or to schedule an interview with Chef Mahar, please contact Jen Beltz at Front Burner PR, LLC at Ph: 207/699-5502 or jen@frontburnerpr.com.

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