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NEWS RELEASE

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THE BUSINESS LIKE B&B HAS ARRIVED

The recent up tick in business travel is increasing occupancy at traditional business hotels as *well* as their newest competitors – Bed & Breakfasts. Lambertville, NJ, Bed & Breakfast proprietor Mary Freedman has watched the trend emerge over the past year. Having designed her elegant B&B, the Martin Coryell House, with business travelers in mind, she is thrilled to see them give a boost to her midweek bookings.

Freedman's B&B could be a bellwether of what's in store for those prepared to serve business clientele. Located in a well-known weekend getaway spot within 30 minutes of Central New Jersey business hubs like Princeton, Trenton and Flemington, the Martin Coryell House typifies those B&Bs best able to capture business clientele. "Guests greatly appreciate having someplace intriguing to go after the workday," notes Freedman, who recalls her own disappointing experiences traveling on business as a Human Resources executive. "Most of the hotels were in what you might call 'concrete canyons' that basically shut down after work hours. By contrast, Lambertville affords guests an opportunity to end their day discovering a charming historic town with enticing restaurants, shops and galleries."

A great location – something many B&Bs offer – also helps when business travelers bring along a friend or spouse. Freedman points out that it's easy to take in Lambertville on foot if your spouse has taken the car to a meeting. She also sees a growing number of guests combining work and pleasure. "Often, a couple will book a four-day weekend so that one or both can attend meetings before enjoying a few days of R&R."

Freedman notes that this trend in business travel is no accident. "Thanks to a lot of hard work on the part of B&B owners in the past few years, the idea of B&Bs as frilly, old-fashioned and geared almost exclusively to romantic weekend getaways has given way to a much more sophisticated and diverse image," she says. Citing a turning point several years back, Freedman believes that as business travel exploded in the mid- to late-1990s, many B&Bs responded to the growing need for accommodations. "Those interested in tapping the corporate market – and building mid-week occupancy – renovated, redecorated and added the type of amenities that are 'must haves' for guests traveling on business." The result: According to the Professional Association of Innkeepers International (PAII), a California-based trade group recently relocated to Haddonfield, NJ, about 6% of the country's 19,000-plus B&Bs now specifically target business travelers, up from virtually none a decade ago.

While attending a recent PAII meeting, Freedman found herself discussing this trend with other B&B owners who, like she and her husband and partner Rich, had taken many steps to attract business travelers. "A lot of inns have updated their decor with a more urbane, tailored look equally attractive to men and women," says Freedman. "It's also now common for rooms to include desks, comfortable seating and tvs – the latter long shunned by B&Bs – enabling guests to get some work done in the evening or sit back comfortably to catch the news."

Other amenities added to many an old Victorian home – often free of charge – include high-speed Internet access, in-room phones and fax machines. Some B&Bs have installed digital keypads on outside doors, allowing guests to come and go as easily as they can at hotels. Innkeepers are accommodating early risers with self-serve breakfasts and coffee. And, like the better hotels, most business-minded B&Bs offer 24/7 access to such extras as bottled water, ice and a selection of hot and cold beverages. (Unlike hotels, B&Bs generally provide these free of charge.) Freedman also says she's noticed a change in policies to accommodate the business traveler. "Flexible check-ins, credit card acceptance and weekday corporate rates all have become standard fare." (Because of the Martin Coryell House's proximity to New Jersey's capital, Freeman also offers a special government rate based on single occupancy.) Additionally, many B&Bs are beginning to compete in the lucrative area of on-site meetings and retreats. PAII's 2002 biennial members survey found that well over 40% of B&Bs and inns in the U.S. offer on-site meeting space, the average size growing from 541

square feet in 2000 to 640 square feet in 2002. But even a relatively small, six-room inn like Freedman's offers intimate meeting space options.

Of course, it wasn't necessary for B&Bs to completely reinvent themselves to attract business clientele. A focus on personal service – making dinner reservations at a recommended spot or outlining a daytrip around a guest's personal interests – has long been a staple of B&B hospitality. Safety may well be another draw, particularly for women travelers. Remembering her own uneasiness at the anonymity of large hotels, Freedman says women often like knowing that someone will notice if they're not back at the inn when expected.

Freedman's inn offers six spacious guest accommodations, including three suites. The professionally decorated inn is noted for its "comfortable elegance" and superior service as well as a fascinating history as the former home of numerous Coryells – one of the city's founding families.