Darden Restaurants to Participate in Investors Expo Hosted by the National Association of Investors Corporation (NAIC)

ORLANDO, Fla., Sept. 17 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) will participate in the 52nd National Association of Investors Corporation (NAIC) Expo 2002 from September 20th through September 21st at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland Oregon.

Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI) is a Fortune 500 company and the largest casual dining restaurant company in the world with fiscal 2002 sales of $4.4 billion and over 133,000 employees. Darden owns and operates over 1,200 Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze and Smokey Bones BBQ Sports Bar restaurants.

Darden has created a passionate culture with a sustaining drive for cultivating:

*leadership development throughout the company,

*service and hospitality excellence, and

*culinary and beverage excellence that redefines casual dining.

Darden believes in being brilliant with the basics in each of these strategic areas -- creating a distinctive competitive edge.

With over 660 restaurants in North America, Red Lobster commands a 49% market share of the casual dining seafood segment and finished fiscal year 2002 with 18 consecutive quarter of same-restaurant sales increases.

Olive Garden leads the casual dining Italian segment with over 490 restaurants in North America, a 30% market share and achieving 31 consecutive quarters of same-restaurant sales growth.

Darden also operates two emerging concepts -- Bahama Breeze and Smokey Bones Barbecue Sports Bar. Bahama Breeze is a vibrant Caribbean-themed restaurant with 29 restaurants in 16 states while Smokey Bones has 19 restaurants in 9 states.

Learn more about Darden by stopping at our booth, #503, at the NAIC Expo 2002 located in Portland, Oregon on Friday, September 20th and Saturday, September 21st.

Corporate information is available through Darden's website at http://www.darden.com

Forward-looking statements in this news release, if any, are made under the Safe Harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Certain important factors could cause results to differ materially from those anticipated by the forward-looking statements, including the impact of changing economic or business conditions, the impact of competition, the availability of favorable credit and trade terms, the impact of changes in the cost or availability of food and real estate, government regulation, construction costs, weather conditions and other factors discussed from time to time in reports filed by the Company with the Securities and Exchange Commission.