FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Darden Restaurants Earns Perfect Score on Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index for Third Consecutive Year

Orlando, Fla. – (Nov. 24, 2014) – For the third consecutive year, Darden Restaurants scored 100 out of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) 2015 Corporate Equality Index (CEI), one of 366 companies to do so. The HRC’s annual index is a renowned national benchmarking tool for U.S. businesses in the increasingly important issue of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) inclusion and equality in the workplace.

“Diversity and inclusion are business imperatives at Darden, and our commitment extends to and embraces the LGBT community,” said Daisy Ng, Chief Human Resources Officer for Darden. “Fostering a diverse workforce further enables us to retain the best, most talented team members in the industry and deliver on our core purpose – ‘to nourish and delight everyone we serve.’”

A total of 971 businesses – including the entire Fortune 500 – were rated on a number of factors grouped within four main criteria: equal employment opportunity policy; employment benefits; organizational LGBT competency; and public commitment to LGBT-specific efforts. Businesses rated 100% are recognized as “Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality.”

"In order to achieve a perfect score, a company has to show a deep and serious commitment to treating their LGBT employees fairly and equally on the job,” said HRC President Chad Griffin. “We also look at whether a company is speaking out in the public square to advocate for LGBT equality here in this country and around the world. Darden not only meets these standards, it goes above and beyond the call of duty, making commitment to equality a fundamental aspect of its corporate values.”

Since its founding in 1938, Darden has welcomed and celebrated the diversity of its guests, employees, suppliers and the communities it serves. To maximize the potential of employees, Darden has implemented a number of programs focused around the diversity of its workforce, suppliers and local communities, including a curriculum-based Diversity Learning Experience (DLE) for leaders at all levels of the company. More than 17,000 leaders have participated in DLE training since it was implemented nearly 10 years ago.
About the Human Rights Campaign

The Human Rights Campaign is America’s largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all. Launched in 2002, the HRC’s Corporate Equality Index has become the gold standard for corporate policies and practices related to LGBT employees and their families. View the full report at www.hrc.org/cei.

About Darden Restaurants

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI), owns and operates more than 1,500 restaurants that generate approximately $6.3 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, Fla., and employing 150,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2014, Darden was named to the FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to Work For" list for the fourth year in a row. Our restaurant brands – Olive Garden®, LongHorn Steakhouse®, Bahama Breeze®, Seasons 52®, The Capital Grille®, Eddie V's® and Yard House® – reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit www.darden.com.

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