

Annie & David Colquitt

Owners

Annie and David Colquitt purchased The Swag in 2018 from lifelong family friends, Dan and Deener Matthews. The Colquitts live in Knoxville, Tennessee with their three children: Will (6), Ruby (3), and Davy (1). Originally from Tennessee (Annie) and Texas (David), they met at Princeton University, where Annie studied Anthropology and David studied Politics. Annie went on to obtain a Master of Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University while David earned a JD from the University of Virginia School of Law. They married in 2011 and honeymooned at The Swag.

Prior to the acquisition of The Swag, David worked at Pilot Flying J, the largest operator of travel centers in North America, in various capacities. The Colquitts are also involved in several other hospitality projects including Provision in Fairhope, Alabama, and Cataloochee Ranch in Maggie Valley, North Carolina.

Annie and David are active in several philanthropic efforts, including serving on the board of trustees for Friends of the Smokies, the Cleveland Browns Foundation, the Knoxville Museum of Art, the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking, and the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra. They are also active members at Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church.



“In a busy world of more stress and more screens, we love that The Swag continues to be a refuge for guests looking to connect with each other and with nature.”



Will Jones

General Manager

Will Jones joined The Swag family as general manager in August 2020. Will's more than 12 years in hospitality management include time at Montage Palmetto Bluff, Keswick Hall and Golf Club, The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, and Beaver Run Resort. Originally from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Will and The Swag owners, David and Annie Colquitt, were aligned at their very first meeting on their vision of authentic hospitality and supporting a great working environment for employees.

Will is married to Honor Jones and has two sons, Finnian (8) and Lochlann (6). When he's not creating curated guest experiences at The Swag, Will enjoys golfing, hiking, camping and spending time at the beach.



*“To me, Swag
hospitality is all
about truly personal
service in a totally
breathtaking setting.”*



Phyllis Miller-Barnard

Pastry Chef

Phyllis Miller-Barnard, who operates by the motto “Have whisk, will travel,” joined The Swag as Pastry Chef in May 2020.

One of six children, Phyllis was raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, where her fondest memories are of being at her mother’s side in the kitchen. She developed a love for animals, nature, baking, and chemistry that led to many years of Easy Bake Ovens and chemistry sets landing on her Christmas wish list. She formally pursued her passion for baking and pastry once both of her sons were out of the house. She graduated with an associate degree in Pastry Arts in 2007, and has since worked in pastry around the country.

Her love of the outdoors has made her position at The Swag even more enjoyable. When she’s not handcrafting perfectly glazed and laminated pastries, Phyllis can be found engaged in one of her many hobbies – photography, hiking, biking, kayaking, horseback riding, reading, or watching her favorite musical.



“I love the outdoors and pastry, so there’s something truly gratifying about crafting pastries to be enjoyed in such a wonderful natural setting.”



Jake Schmidt

Executive Chef

Jake Schmidt joined The Swag as executive chef in April of 2017. The son of a former professional football player, Jake moved with his family from California to Chicago when he was 3 years old for his dad to join the NFL's Chicago Bears. It wasn't until his freshman year studying criminal justice at Western Illinois University, that Jake picked up cooking as a hobby. He quickly shifted course.

Three years at culinary school later and an extensive internship at Flagstaff House in Boulder, Colorado, Jake found himself on a path that would lead him to becoming the executive sous chef at notable Chicago restaurant The Signature Room at the 95th and later, executive chef at the Omni Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. In 2017, he discovered The Swag through a job listing and fell in love with the location and its fresh culinary approach that includes an ever-expanding on-site garden.

Jake is married to Allison Schmidt, and when he's not transforming garden-fresh herbs and produce into culinary art, he can be found using the home improvement skills, like woodworking, he learned during The Swag's off-season construction projects.



“A meal at The Swag should be as fresh and inspiring and soul-satisfying as our views.”





ABOUT THE SWAG

Perched almost a mile above sea level on a breathtaking summit, The Swag is an acclaimed mountaintop luxury hotel just west of Asheville, North Carolina – and just steps from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. One of the highest boutique hotel destinations in the country, the one-of-a-kind getaway is known for exceptional weather, stunning views, romantic sensibilities, and impeccable food and service. Hosting only a few dozen guests at any one time, the all-inclusive escape is a favorite of travelers who treasure the property's rare, restorative combination of natural beauty, ultimate privacy, and authentic hospitality.

HISTORY

The Swag was originally built as a family home in 1971 by Deener Matthews and her husband, Dan, an Episcopal clergyman, who is Rector Emeritus of Trinity Church, Wall Street, in New York City. The property had previously operated as a potato farm that was cleared for farming at the turn of the 20th century. In 1982, Deener opened their family retreat to the public as a resort and managed day-to-day operations until 2018, when David and Annie Colquitt, who honeymooned at The Swag in 2011, purchased the inn.

LOCATION

The Swag rests along the Cataloochee Divide, an immense ridge that forms one of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park's boundaries. Four of North Carolina's six highest mountain ranges are visible from the inn: The Great Smokies to the northwest, the Plott Balsams and Richland Balsams to the southwest, and the Black Mountains to the east. The Divide Trail, traveled by settlers for 200 years and by the Cherokee for many hundred more, passes just behind the inn.



2021 AT A GLANCE

QUICK FACTS

5,000 ft elevation

boutique property with
16 unique rooms and suites

50-mile views

mile-long border with
The Great Smoky
Mountains National Park

2-mile nature trail and
world-class hiking trails

250-acre property

owned and operated
by David and Annie Colquitt

celebrating
40 years in operation

HIGHLIGHTS

- 2021 Season runs April 16-November 27
- All-inclusive resort includes daily meals and expert-led activities
- Member of Relais & Chateaux association
- Highest elevation of any Relais & Chateaux property on the East Coast; within the top 5 highest elevations of all U.S. Relais & Chateaux properties worldwide
- Award-winning restaurant
- New bar and expanded wine cellar
- Newly opened spa with three treatment rooms and outdoor relaxation space
- On-site herb, produce, and cut-flower garden
- Home to the Smokies' famed synchronous fireflies, songbirds and blooming rhododendron

TIMELINE

- Mountaintop site originally operated as a potato farm
- Deener and Dan Matthews built The Swag in 1971 as a second home for their family
- Deener Matthews opened the property as a resort in 1982
- David and Annie Colquitt purchased The Swag in 2018 after honeymooning there in 2011

The Swag features breathtaking views of four of North Carolina's six highest mountain ranges:

- The GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS to the northwest
- The PLOTT BALSAM MOUNTAINS to the southwest
- RICHLAND BALSAM MOUNTAIN to the southwest
- The BLACK MOUNTAINS to the east