

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION
January 2010
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Hospitality Education

EDUCATION

Industry Partnerships

Following a TDC presentation by a non-profit organization called Clean the World (CTW) I organized two more information sessions to reach out to other hotel partners. The Trade Winds and Renaissance Vinoy were gracious enough to host these hour and half programs for local hotels so we could learn more about CTW soap recycling efforts, as well as hear from a representative from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFTMD) and their water conservation programs. SWFTMD conserved over 100 million gallons of water last year at a considerable savings to these businesses bottom line. All through programs that were free and readily available. In total we had about 30 representatives from a wide range of properties and positions in the hotel, including general managers, owners, hotel staff, grounds and operations staff. CTW shared that over a million bars of soap end up in land fill every day just from the US in addition to all the shampoo and conditioner bottles. We learned that nearly 9,000 children die each day and clinical studies have shown that the simple hygiene practice of washing one's hands with a bar of soap can reduce these deaths by up to 60%. CTW has discovered a process to sanitize and re-batch soap and is working with established organizations with existing distribution channels, to get the soap in the areas of most need around the world. Locally, they are supplying shelters with the slightly used hotel bottle amenities and recycling the empties. Several main points stood out for everyone in attendance. The hotel industry makes a sizable imprint on the environment and communities they service. Any efforts we can achieve towards conservation, help minimize waste, save money for our businesses and in doing so, save lives, would have a significant impact. A cooperative effort on behalf of the Pinellas County accommodations industry would make an important contribution to this cause and it is our hope to lead the way in a campaign to collect a 1,000,000 bars of 'Soap for Hope' in the following months.

Florida Huddle had a huge presence for one of the weekends in January and overflowed into events before and after the conference. Many of the VSPC staff helped with pre-staging tables, couriers for materials, standby greeters or escorts as needed. As a courtesy to our Chambers we offered to set up tables at the Harborview, Hilton and Sheraton to display local maps and guides for attendees. On the night of the progressive dinner and cocktail party our best laid plans to have over a 100 torches line the beach were windblown by heavy gusts. Guests barely noticed they had been averted street side to stroll from the Sandpearl to the Hilton as they mingled with our entertaining ambassadors in costumes. On Monday night staff was on hand to help meet and greet guests at an outdoor deck party on the 8th floor of the new Hyatt. However, due to weather the party was brought inside and they recruited their own staff from other Hyatt locations.

Luckily plans were in place for unruly weather and skillful event planning by the participating hotels, never let on to our guests that a hair was out of place.

Pinellas County has over 2000 volunteers who have been finger-printed and had a back ground check completed. They also go through about a two hour orientation including paperwork. Their services are used throughout the county in services ranging from Animal Services, beach and park clean-ups, land management projects, Fred Marquis Bike Trail, Heritage Park docents, to staffing shops and Gulf Beaches Museum. Over 87,000 hours were recorded last year with about 90% of those hours contributed to areas that many of our visitors frequent. Their time, energy and efforts have not gone un-noticed and plans have been ongoing to determine how to best recognize our unsung champions. A celebration has been planned for April 19th the middle of National Volunteer Appreciation Month.

One of the reasons I thoroughly enjoy our destination (also a key marketing feature) is because of the unique communities and personalities that flavor those areas. One neighborhood I was recently reacquainted with was Pass-a-Grille Beach. Myself and Katie Marvin, who is interning in the Education Department, had the pleasure of being given a historical and cultural tour of the barrier islands by a long time resident and environmental advocate, Cleo Robertson. She operates a community website called, www.spb2day.com which is full of pretty much anything you would want to know about the St. Pete Beach area, the colorful history as well as great articles about the local wildlife. Cleo grew up in Pass-a-Grille and knew most of the early inhabitants so delighted us with childhood memories and descriptions of what the area looked like with only a handful of buildings or businesses occupied the area. What stood out for me was that even with the progress that has changed the landscape of days gone by, Cleo could appreciate the benefits of those changes for the betterment of most people's quality of life. Perhaps she was referring to the eight and ten foot rattlesnakes that were seen regularly in her neighborhood and having to have milk brought in by boat.

As much as I love learning by doing, I try to incorporate a similar experience in the trips I organize for our local hospitality front line staff, or FAMS. I also believe the more you know about a subject the more you appreciate it. Elizabeth Brincklow is the manager for Arts, International Relations Manager for the City of St. Petersburg. We have been trying to coordinate schedules so that we could discuss the best way to generate more awareness around our art community. On March 12th we will invite our hospitality partners of concierge, Chamber staff, welcome center volunteers, airport information workers, bus and taxi drivers to a full day of learning about the collection of cultural affairs in the downtown St. Petersburg area. We plan to visit dozen of venues ranging from the Woodson African-American Museum, American Stage to the Dali and Great Explorations. In addition to this tour we hope to create awareness about the Waterfront Park Centennial as we weave in information about the public art sprinkled throughout our drive. We are very fortunate for William Straub's vision and dedication to preserve the city's waterfront as public park and open water vistas, particularly in one of our most developed areas of the county.

Professional Development

Toastmaster's weekly meeting

Working with Eckerd College Intern, Alex Fernandez

Value of Tourism Presentations

Fun Bunch Dunedin Community Center

Seasonal County Volunteers at Fort Desoto

County Volunteer Orientation at Heritage Village

St. Petersburg Downtown Business Merchants

Jolly Trolley Drivers and staff

HOSPITALITY

VSPC Representation

BACA (Bay Area Concierge Association)

Women in Tourism past Presidents Luncheon

Performance Management Training

Annual Dinner and Awards for Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce

Annual Dinner and Awards for St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce

Annual Dinner and Awards for Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce

Senator Charlie Justice Presentation

Clearwater Regional Tourism Committee & Hotel Partners

Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber Board of Directors Monthly Meeting

Indian Shores Town Hall Ground Breaking

Hyatt Tasting for new restaurant pre-grand opening

Held the last class of Junior Achievement for this semester

Green Government Education County Partnership

VSPC Planning

Telephone Customer Service Skills class for Pinellas County HR Dept.

National Tourism Week Luncheon

County Volunteer Appreciation Meeting with team leads

Project outline for 13 week internship, Katie Marvin – UF Tourism, Sports & Recreation Major

Arts Express Familiarization Tour (FAM)

Youth Leadership Pinellas