

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

February 2011

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Hospitality Education

EDUCATION

Industry Partnership

The Superior Small Lodging (SSL) is a network of boutique hotels, motels, villas and B & B's with fewer than 80 rooms. Membership is determined by an independently conducted property review that assures consistency in standards of cleanliness, security, fair business policies and practices along with quality of the lodging landscaping, personalized guest services and amenities. For some time SSL members have also been interested in certifying as Green Lodging but have not had the resources to organize this process throughout their properties. However, they currently have the additional resource of a college intern that I was able to work with to coordinate a local program that very much parallels the guidelines for Green Lodging. This is a volunteer program administered by the UF Extension referred to as the Green Lodging Partnership. It requires partners to go through an application process to verify and follow best green business practices for recycling, energy conservation, water usage, and business procedures. Presenters at the workshop were from the UF Extension, Utilities Solid Waste and Progress Energy. To date more than half of the partners have gone through the application process to become Green Business Partners.

Chambers of Commerce represent 14 communities in Pinellas County and are some of our strongest partners as they understand first-hand the trickle down effects of tourism's economic impact. VSPC also appreciates having the local businesses as champions for tourism and holds a twice yearly lunch to meet with the Chamber Executives to hear directly from them. These lunch meetings offer us an opportunity to understand what issues are most relevant to their particular areas as well as provide an atmosphere for us to bring them up to date on how we can most effectively work together and bring them up to speed on our latest marketing efforts like the 100 Days of Summer.

Dunedin has a thriving art scene that has recently come alive with activity and Chamber President Lynn Wargo was eager to make sure that VSPC knew all the latest developments. Internet Director, Deborah Holland and I took a half day site visit with Lynn to visit and learn about their developing cultural offerings. The Dunedin Art Center was under construction and is slated to be fully open to the public in a few more months with many new additions, area for art and additional classes. We also had a tour of the Institute of Creative Arts which is a huge open workshop specializing in iron work. It is also used by a number of other artists who are jewelry makers and photographers who create on property as well as display their art for resale. Another area that has a collective of working artists where you can converse with the artist and then purchase at the same location is at the Stirling Commons just off of Main Street. You can spend your time browsing dozens of studios showing woodworking, miniature figurines, photography, jewelry makings, pottery and much more conveniently located under

one roof. We also had the pleasure of meeting the artists who painted the Dogenden mural and started placing hidden oranges on businesses all around the city, to acknowledge Dunedin as the birthplace of orange concentrate.

In my opinion, knowing and loving what our destination has to offer is part of our jobs at VSPC. Having time to experience all that we have, is another matter. Fortunately, the County provides an opportunity for employees to educate themselves in whatever area of competency they represent through a program called In-Service Day. This is a day set aside for professional development and learning, which I was asked to help organize. We ended up taking the occasion to discover more about two of our newest world class cultural offerings, the Salvador Dali Museum and Morean Art Center's Chihuly Collection. Experiencing the tours as our guest might, we walked the new facilities and took the docent tours from zealous volunteers impassioned to represent the art and our destination. Many of us either took the trolley or walked along the waterfront between exhibits, giving us all a better framework as to what our visitor would truly encounter.

Value of Tourism Presentations

- County Volunteer Orientation, Heritage Village

HOSPITALITY

VSPC Representation

- Big C Monthly Meeting
- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber (TBBCoC), Board of Directors meeting
- TBBCoC Lunch and Learn Sheraton Sand Key
- TBBCoC Mixer Black Palm
- St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce Breakfast, Governor Rick Scott Keynote
- VIP event for Hooters Grand Opening at John's Pass
- Madeira Mayoral Candidates panel
- County Volunteer Coordinators lunch and learn
- Green Business Partnership
- Clearwater Beach Chamber Tourism Marketing Council
- Clearwater Beach Mix and Mingle, Sandpearl Art Gallery
- John's Pass Village Merchants meeting

VSPC Planning

- National Travel & Tourism Luncheon
- Telephone Customer Service Skills
- Spring internship placement, Susan Blankenship with Suzy King Events