

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION
March 2012
Rhonda Sanborn
Hospitality Education

EDUCATION

Industry Partnership

Although this was the sixth annual Honda Grand Prix (HGP) and partnership with Andretti Green Racing, it was my fifth opportunity to participate. Having never seen a car race in my life before this, I must say it has been an evolving relationship both from a tourism perspective and appreciation of the sport.

The first couple of years with the CVB were helping coordinate the Credentials area within the USF gym area for the 700+ volunteers. Three days of last minute logistics and making sure all our areas were adequately staffed for the twelve hour days; volunteers had breaks, were well hydrated and had resources to answer questions appropriately. Important position but not much interaction with the action. Year three I served as a volunteer with Inside Information Services and had plenty of ear pounding action with guests at three of the booths set up to field questions about the event.

This year and last we decided there were enough inquiries from visitors asking about the destination that we would put up an outside Visit St. Pete/Clearwater hospitality welcome tent. I've worked closely with the City of St. Petersburg and Kim Tyre from the Marketing Department to coordinate our city and county presence. Our area has been directly outside the main gate on 5th for the HGP and available all three days. This year the city joined in on the mobile phone app revolution and made a site specifically for the HGP. They made oversize posters which were a huge success and attention grabber at our booths. The link also included the VSPC phone MS Tag site full of destination information. Besides maps, sunscreen, and log pens from the Clearwater Marine Aquarium, we handed out our buttons that said, "We  Visitors – Thanks for being here!". These buttons were also handed out in bags-full to the volunteers working other positions throughout the area.

Aside from the positive reception to our hospitality efforts, a major frustration for our guests was the issue of those who came to visit the Dali Museum during this weekend. Hundreds of guests on Saturday and Sunday only wanted to go to the museum and were extremely aggravated to find out they also had to pay for access to the HGP. In the future, I hope we can encourage conversations from all stakeholders to find a solution that keeps the customer experience the number one objective in solving this issue. Our reputation as a fan friendly experience and destination could suffer otherwise.

Another partnership activity in conjunction with the HGP was a Taxi Training and Information session. Kim Tyre and I offered an overview of the weekend's activities at City Hall for four cab company supervisors and owners, complete with workbooks to take back

and share with their drivers. For Yellow Cab, we took the workshop to their headquarters and set up in the lobby for half a day so drivers could stop by at their leisure. We also were able to address a group of new drivers going through orientation that morning.

Leadership St. Pete (LSP) began in January and has been an intensive, interactive, six-month experience designed to promote and enhance community leadership through an in-depth introduction to social, economic, business and political issues in the St. Petersburg area. As part of that experience groups are assigned to coordinate one of the twice monthly seminars. As part of the seminar, we are assigned guest speakers which we are expected to interview and get to know on a more personal level. In addition, we are tasked with integrating them in our seminar to best get the message across to the rest of the class on specific topics. My group hosted Business, Sports & Tourism at the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport. Our guest speakers were: Noah Lagos- Airport Director, Matt Silverman – Tampa Bay Rays President, Mike Alstott – Mike Alstott Family Foundation and former Buccaneer and Mary Haban – PR Manager with VSPC.

In addition to the presentations which were scattered throughout the seminar, we had an interactive and informational airport tour that Michelle Routh organized in the way of a game. Split into two groups we went on a PIE Family Vacation that included a starting budget, choices of destinations and a number of vacation challenges to overcome before reaching our final destination. It was all spirited fun and left our LSP classmates much more informed about the impact of tourism and inter-relationships with the business community.

VSPC Representation

- TBBCoC Board of Directors Meeting
- Dali Museum FAM for Airport Planners
- Dine Tampa Bay with Tampa Bay & Co.
- RNC Volunteer Captains
- LSP Alumni Assoc. site visit to FreeFall Theater
- RNC Small Business Network seminar at Lowry Park Zoo
- Sand Key Beach Nourishment meeting at Bellaire Community Center
- LSP Education Seminar at USF St. Pete Campus
- LSP Fundraiser at PUSH
- Women in Tourism lunch and learn with Sandler Training
- RNC Host Committee reception at Tampa Club
- Big C monthly meeting at Redington Beach Town Hall
- Largo Cultural Center and outdoor lunch music program
- County Volunteer Site Coordinators Meeting
- Quaker Steak and Lube car show and fundraiser for prosthesis (pre-Honda Grand Prix)
- LSP Mid Year Retreat at Eckerd College
- Honda Grand Prix Volunteer Orientation at the Mahaffey

Professional Development

- First Monday Staff meeting, special guest: Ed Ecker with Simply Sailing
- Iconic Women Luncheon, Keynote Speaker Colleen Barrett, President Emerita of Southwest Airlines

Value of Tourism Presentations

- County Volunteer Orientation at Heritage Village
- Light House of Pinellas - Visually Impaired School

VSPC Planning

- Relay for Life for TBB Chamber
- National Travel & Tourism Week activities
- USA Triathlon's Emerging Women Leaders Conference
- Leadership St. Pete (LSP) – Community Project for Resurrection House
- Telephone Customer Service Skills seminar for County Employees
- Dine Tampa Bay with FRLA and Tampa Bay and Co.