

**HOSPITALITY EDUCATION**  
**September 2012**  
**Rhonda Sanborn**  
**Hospitality Education**

**EDUCATION**

**Industry Partnership**

Just prior to the Republican National Convention, Tampa International Airport built two new Welcome Centers in the baggage claim area. In response to a public call for volunteers, they had 140 qualified diverse individuals commit to shifts that covered seven days a week from early morning to late evening. Most of the volunteers had some previous affiliation with the travel industry and wanted to give back to their community. They also had a deep appreciation for the Tampa Bay Area and wanted to share their enthusiasm as an airport Ambassador. One of the perks for donating their time, is to be invited on trips to various tourist based attractions throughout the Bay Area, called familiarization tours or FAMS for short. In addition to being part of their trainings on destination awareness, the Education Dept agreed to host FAM's on alternating months with TIA and Tampa Bay & Company. Their first trip with us was in Clearwater, the beaches and Dunedin. We had 50 volunteers attend on this full day excursion that included special stops at: Honeymoon Island, Clearwater Marine Aquarium, Winter's Dolphin Adventure, Pier 60, The Marina, Beachwalk and Sand Key. Shephard's Beach Resort generously hosted our large group for a wonderful lunch waterside in the sun room.

Another educational FAM I hosted was for attendees at the Superior Small Lodging (SSL) State Conference. Although about half the crowd, we covered most of the County to give attendees a "Taste of Pinellas" as we called it. They saw all of the beach communities from Pass-a-Grille Beach to Clearwater Beach, had a tour of the Clearwater Marine Aquarium and most of the larger museums and art galleries. We even squeezed in time for a Morean Hot Shop demo, view from the hop of the Hurricane Restaurant and cruise down Central Avenue and waterfront to show them how much St. Petersburg had livened up in recent years.

One other more intimate FAM I gave was for the trainer of the G.E.T. Tampa Bay program, Ruby Newell-Legner. This is the Guest Experience Training that VSPC is partnering with Tampa Bay & Co. which began pre-RNC and will continue throughout next year. A service skills workshop combined with destination awareness for our front line staff. Ruby is from Colorado and had been working with the Tampa Bay Lightning for the last year, so never had the chance to visit Pinellas County. In one very full day I managed to show her all our hottest spots, tourism draws both man-made and natures best. We drove end to end in the County, seeing Greece and the Caribbean without leaving Pinellas County.

Several events were scheduled in September to celebrate the Pinellas Centennial. One was held at Heritage Village and the other at the Florida Suncoast Center for Fishing. To show our support we produced a hand held fan that had our signature photo branding collage on one side, with the words, "100 Years of Warm Memories". On the other side was, "I'm a Fan" and information inviting people to submit photos to our online library at VSPC. We handed out 500 to grateful attendees at the hot Centennial outdoor celebrations.

## **VSPC Representation**

- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber (TBBCoC) Lunch and Learn
- BIG C Mayors Meeting, St. Pete Beach Community Center
- Dine Tampa Bay – Debrief
- St. Pete Chamber of Commerce Tourism Promotions Council
- Clearwater Chamber Tourism meeting
- St. Pete Arts Alliance
- Clean the World Soap Recycling community project for Governor’s Conference
- Water School Program with Pinellas Green Government
- Site visit to Tampa Bay Seawater Desalination Plant, Gibsonton
- TBBCoC mixer Free Fall Theater
- Guy Harvey Press event at Sandpiper
- Pinellas County class
- Walgreens Bayside Business Forum with DT and Doug Mclain from Tampa Bay & Co. as a RNC wrap-up
- Dine Tampa Bay debrief

## **VSPC Professional Development**

- Governor’s Conference on Tourism

## **VSPC Planning**

- G.E.T. Tampa Bay Train the Trainer
- G.E.T. Tampa Bay workshops, 2 sessions