

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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EDUCATION

Industry Partnerships

VSPC held another successful National Tourism Week Luncheon at the newly renovated Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club. We had a nice representation of our county with 280 guests that included elected officials, industry executives and hospitality partners. The National Tourism Industry theme was “Tourism Matters” which was a perfect complement to the presentation our guest speaker addressed on the success of Allegiant Airlines. Ponder Harrison, Managing Director for Allegiant, shared some of their unique business strategies and marketing perspective that lead them to be the only successful airline in 2008. Prem Devada, President of Salamander Hospitality also engaged the audience with ideas on doing business in the new economy and some changes to their property that they hoped would set them apart in the resort industry. Keeping with the Tourism Matters theme, we introduced our Ambassador advertising campaign along with the Visit Florida video clip on “Share a Little Sunshine”. Taking the crusade just a step further, VSPC had postcards made with the Ambassadors and encouraged our partners to use them in their own grassroots marketing efforts to invite someone to visit our destination.

One of the goals for the Education Department is to provide six Destination Awareness Familiarization Tours (FAMs). On target with our fourth event and working with the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce, we hosted 30 chamber welcome center volunteers, airport information officers, concierge and hotel front desk associates for a “Discover Natural Pinellas” adventure. Most of our guests were surprised to discover the amount of undeveloped areas we still have to enjoy right in our own backyard. This FAM only covered the southern part of the county but included stops to Gulfport’s Clam Bayou; Boyd Hill Park; Tampa Bay Watch Community Center; Ft. Desoto Park and one of the most important N. American migratory bird areas. We also were treated to an extremely informational talk on local archeology findings by Brian Evensen owner of the Pier Shop called, Lost in Time.

Sports Commissioner Kevin Smith and team were thinking outside the box to incorporate an educational outreach effort inclusive with the BIG EAST Baseball Championships. This was a follow up to National Tourism Week and communicating to our partners the value of sports tourism in our market. Together we invited industry partners to join us at Bright House Fields to learn more about the growth and opportunities involving amateur sports. In addition they were able to hear how they could be more prepared in the RFP process, what sports administrators

look for that makes a property or destination more attractive and affordable. We also wanted to make them aware of some of the other signature events we host and how we can work with them to highlight the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area. Over 40 partners participated and also had a chance to show support for the local USF baseball team.

HOSPITALITY

VSPC Representation

- Toastmasters District Spring Conference, Tampa: Education seminar to grow speaking and leadership skills. Special guest speaker, Admiral Franken from MacDill Airforce Base.
- Travel Matters tourism rally at Tampa Airport
- Holiday Inn Express Largo, grand opening

VSPC Planning

St. Pete Chamber workshop on Tourism Matters