

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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EDUCATION

Industry Partnerships

Phase V is our customer call center located in Ft. Meyers. We have their services in order to ensure anyone calling for information about our destination, reaches a person versus voice mail. They answer our phones any time we are off-site, after hours and in case of an emergency. They also support several other CVB destination call lines in the state. Although they are very knowledgeable about our particular area, their owners were excited to have me offer a destination awareness workshop with their team. We held two sessions back to back in order to have the phones covered at all times and include both their shifts. The workshop was very interactive, lots of maps and background information about the differences in all the areas and unique characteristics. To wrap up the session they paired up to play a spirited and competitive game of Destination Jeopardy, with topics on, “Hotels”, “Sports”, “Pinellas FAQ”, “Landmarks & Culture”, “Beaches” and “Family Fun”.

In 2010 Pinellas County will celebrate a 100 year anniversary. In preparation for a county wide acknowledgement of our heritage and showcasing some of our most notable points of interest, I am planning several Historical FAMS (familiarization tours). I’m partnering with the Chambers of Commerce to include their local municipalities so that each area is familiar with their ancestry and will celebrate those aspects of their culture and create a greater sense of community for the Centennial. I am also coordinating efforts with the archivist at Heritage Village as well as local historians and librarians. Roberta Whipple from St. Pete Beach library has also been working on a Gulf Beaches History Map to be used on the PSTA beach trolley, which we are fine tuning to coordinate with this public awareness outreach.

I was recently asked to be a CVB ambassador for an organization called the Alliance for Innovation. This is primarily an online group that communicates via electronic newsletters, an online book club and interactive webinars. This program is about transforming local government through innovative ideas and sharing new techniques to encourage us to think beyond ordinary boundaries helping us build extraordinary organizations. One of the first discussions was through a series of case studies and asked can our customers help us envision the future? A quote from Henry Ford “A Faster Horse”, cautioned us about eliciting ideas directly from your customers. Although valuable input to listen to your customers, this reply was what he knew his customers wanted prior to the first automobile being produced.

The County volunteer program has seen a resurgence in the last few months due to numerous articles in the papers about budget cuts to programs and services impacting some of our most visited areas. One article in particular about Ft. Desoto losing a number of park personnel inspired residents to ask how they could help maintain one of our number one recreational areas. Over 30 people signed up for various volunteer assignments just at that park alone. Heritage Village, Brooker Creek and Weedon Island are also seeing more interest in volunteer support. Part of the orientations includes a discussion about representing the county, volunteer responsibilities, benefits of being a county volunteer because of the fingerprinting and background checks, like working with children and with money. Aside from the paperwork and going over the volunteer manual on procedures, I have the opportunity to talk about the Value of Tourism to Pinellas County; the efforts of the CVB in promoting our destination and how valuable the volunteer role is to supporting tourism, our economy and quality of life.

My job takes me out in the community at a very grass roots level. I actively seek opportunities to learn about current affairs, community issues and challenges so that I can address questions when I present to neighborhood associations and civic groups. Since I work for the county there is a certain assumption I should know what our policy is for everything that is public information. I also try to gather and share information to help people be more educated on certain subjects they might not have an opportunity to hear through their networks. For instance, a conference like the “Governors Conference on Tourism” is the perfect chance to share information on the overview of the tourism industry, forecasting from a cross section of experts and best practices among our peers. Another area I’ve been trying to educate myself on is the offshore oil drilling issues. I’ve had numerous opportunities to hear panel discussions for and against the issue. This has allowed me to connect people with information so they can present it to their constituents which helps them be better educated about the economic impact of tourism verses the monetary impacts presented by plans and false promises of drilling off the shores of Florida. Another upshot of being at a recent BIG C meeting was hearing from the Census Bureau. From their presentation and discussion of issues from the last Census, I offered to touch base with our Chambers personally. I was able to let them know about two new offices opening in Pinellas County and several hundred job opportunities they could communicate to their membership. I also

encouraged them to actively promote the value of participating in the census and making sure their area was counted. The census numbers taken on April 1st will be the basis of their communities having accurate representation as well as funding.

HOSPITALITY

VSPC Representation & Community Involvement

- Women Inspire Luncheon hosted by Largo Chamber of Commerce
- Girls Community Club House grand opening hosted by Pinellas Gateway Chamber
- Clearwater Regional Chamber Sales & Marketing Executive Forum
- Sustainable Green Education Partnership
- Westwind Hotel grand opening Treasure Island
- BIG C monthly meeting
- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber Board of Directors
- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber lunch & learn, Fertilizers
- Clearwater Regional Chamber lunch & learn, Offshore Oil Drilling panel
- St. Petersburg Chamber & 4th St. Business Assoc. Mayoral Forum
- Innovation Ambassador Webinar, Case Studies

Value of Tourism Presentations

- Pinellas County Volunteer Orientations, Ft. Desoto & Heritage Village
- Dunedin Library
- Masonic Home St. Petersburg
- Rosalind Reid, County Employee who came for a half day visit to CVB offices

VSPC Planning

- Virgin Holidays Tour packages for the Bucks chartered UK – Tampa trip
- Historical FAM for Pinellas County
- Concierge Certification
- Keep Pinellas Clean Beach Clean up
- Florida Encounter post FAM, museum tours
- Off-shore oil drilling community communication
- Mid-American Research Co. tour with Florida Destinations & Incentives