

# **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**August 2009**

**David Downing**  
Assistant Director

## **MEDIA VISITS, TRADE SHOWS, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

### **Tommy Thompson, Saltwater Angler's Guide to Tampa Bay & Southwest Fla. - August 3-8**

The Bungalows in Treasure Island provided a media rate for fishing writer Tommy Thompson, who visited in August to gather information and shoot pictures for a new book, *The Saltwater Angler's Guide to Tampa Bay and Southwest Florida*.

### **Vicki Giammona, Feature Producer – WLS-TV, Chicago Market – August 5-9**

A huge fan of Florida and a frequent visitor to the State, Vicki Giammona made a visit to the area to explore and relax. A special thanks to Travel Resort Services, Inc. for hosting this producer and her husband in the Surf Beach Resort on Treasure Island. While here, they visited Clearwater Beach, ate in several restaurants, and soaked in our award-winning beaches. Because the Chicago market is a major feeder market, this connection is proving to be one that will pay off for years to come.

### **Christopher Elliott – MSNBC & National Geographic Traveler – August 6-9**

Long standing relationships certainly pay off. Case in point...Christopher Elliott -- an extremely popular travel editor and blogger -- who is a frequent visitor and longtime fan of the area. While he's visited the area many times, he had never stayed in Clearwater. Enter the Sandpearl Resort and a gracious offer to host Mr. Elliott, his wife, and three children for three nights. The resulting coverage can be seen here: <http://www.elliott.org/blog/sunset-at-the-sandpearl-resort-in-clearwater-beach/>. Another great article on Sunken Gardens in St. Petersburg also resulted: <http://www.elliott.org/blog/what-we-did-this-weekend-exploring-st-petersburgs-sunken-gardens/>.

### **Katy Walls – Wild about Florida – August 13-16**

Author Katy Walls visited the area in August to conduct research for her next book, *Wild about Central Florida*, the third book in a series. Complimentary accommodations for three nights at were arranged by the Best Western/Yacht Harbor Inn in Dunedin. Walls said she would also include text in the book for the good views from rooms of wading birds, dolphins and other wild creatures. Her itinerary included visits to The Clearwater Aquarium, Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary, Sunken Gardens, Weedon Island Preserve, Honeymoon Island Nature Center, Caladesi Island State Park (including kayaking the mangrove tunnel).

### **Canadian Media/Travel Trade Mission (Toronto & Montreal) – August 17-25**

Visit St. Pete/Clearwater's PR and Leisure Travel Departments conducted a ten-day, multi-city media and sales blitz that targeted one of the area's longest-standing international markets: Canada. VSPC Executive Director DT Minich and local hotel partners also accompanied the group for part of the tour, meeting face-to-face with high-profile industry sales and media reps to promote the area's latest developments. Senior PR Manager Mary Haban met with a constant stream of media, securing front-page placement in some of the country's top trade publications (click on links to view coverage), including: [Canadian Travel Press](#) (8/24), [Travel Hot News](#) (8/26), [OpenJaw](#) (8/26), [Travel Industry Today](#) (8/27), [Canadian Travel Press](#) (8/31) and [Travel Industry Today](#) (8/31). The trip culminated with the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Beaches & Baseball Media/Trade Event at Rogers Centre.

### **The Travel Channel - Andrew Zimmern's Bizarre World – August 23-26**

VSPC's PR Team worked with "Andrew Zimmern's Bizarre World" – which airs on the Travel Channel - and is a spin-off of "Bizarre Foods" show, which is one of the most watched shows on the network. The intent of the show is to look for customs, traditions, lifestyles, landscapes, etc. that our audience would find unexpected and unusual. The program is designed to educate the audience about other cultures, to help make the unexpected a little more familiar and understandable. The focus of an upcoming show will be Tarpon Springs and its Greek culture.

Andrew has a large following with millions of viewers who watch the show and read his blog. There tends to be tourists from around the world who like to travel in Andrew's footsteps and check out places he's been on TV. The Florida show will air some time toward the end of fall/winter and its broadcast in 70 countries around the world.

### **William Travis – Frommer's.com – August 24-28**

VSPC's PR Division teamed up with Visit Florida and two other Florida destinations (Sarasota and Fort Myers) to host Mr. William Travis and his 7 year old daughter. This talented travel editor came to the area to do a story on single parent travel for the widely read Frommer's.com website. Both the Don CeSar Beach Resort, A Loews Hotel, and the Sandpearl Resort & Spa, rolled out the red carpet for Mr. Travis. Flights and rental car was sponsored by Visit Florida.

### **Governor's Conference on Tourism – Miami Beach, Florida – August 23-25**

David Downing traveled to Miami to join Debbie Meihls and DT Minich for Visit Florida's Governor's Conference on Tourism, where they attended industry workshops and met with representatives from CVB's around the state to discuss current challenges in tourism. At the end of the three-day conference, VSPC was honored with three Flagler Awards, including the Best of Show award for overall excellence in tourism marketing. Also representing the area at the conference was Russ Kimball, a longtime member of the Pinellas County Tourist Development Council, who was inducted into the Florida Tourism Hall of Fame, alongside such visionaries as Walt Disney and Henry Flagler.

## **MEDIA ASSISTANCE PROVIDED:**

July 1 – Assisted Rob Mooy, Photo Editor - *Kingston This Week* with information on the area for a possible media tour in January/February 2010. His story angle would be family beach vacations and highlight accommodations, entertainment, dining, attractions, museums, parks, natural history, historic sites, shopping, family and children's activities. Any special promotions aimed at Canadian visitors could also be highlighted.

July 6 – Provided b-roll footage and images to Juergen Fritsch from *Oktagon Television* in Germany for inclusion in a public television special about the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area.

July 8 – Assisted Steve Huettel of the *St. Petersburg Times* with information on sports tourism rooms for fiscal years 2005-2009.

July 14 – Assisted Steve Huettel of the *St. Petersburg Times* with a review of several Marketing requests.

July 20 – Fielded call from John Sprecher, a blogger and contributor to the *Gulf Coast Business Review*. Assisted him with a piece he was writing on organization's using social media.

July 20 – Call from Sean McShane of the *Discovery Channel Canada* regarding an upcoming visit to the area to produce a follow up segment on Winter the Dolphin at CMA.

July 21 – Fielded a call from Joel Friedman from 2 Hungry Dog productions – seeking b-roll footage of the destination to prepare a video for an MPI meeting.

July 22 – Responded to email from Darrell Hodge with *Territory Explorer.com* and assisted him with information about the area; and provided story ideas.

July 27 – Provided Ted Jackovics of the *Tampa Tribune* with information on what we are doing to re-brand the destination in the ailing economy.

July 29 – Call from Bill AuCoin of AuCoin & Associates regarding potential visit of Outdoors Travel Editor, John Gifford, of the *Oklahoman Newspaper*.

July 29 – Provided stock footage and photos of the destination to Sarah Gebeke of *Andrew Zimmern's Bizarre World, Travel Channel* – for an upcoming feature on Tarpon Springs.

July 29 – Fielded a call from travel writer Christopher Elliott regarding his upcoming visit to the area. Chris writes for *MSNBC.com*; and *National Geographic Traveler*.

July 29 – Call from Sarah Gebeke of the *Travel Channel* regarding an upcoming visit to the Tarpon Springs area to feature on the show.

July 30 – Assisted Dede Gomez, of *Golf Digest Brazil* with information on contacting Innisbrook Resort & Golf Club to organize a golf tournament in September.

August 5 – Drafted and sent pitch on New Year’s Celebrations to *Every Day with Rachel Ray*.

August 5 – Fielded email from *Michael Hoff Productions* in San Francisco, CA regarding use of our b roll footage to supplement their animal planet documentary.

August 5 – Responded to an interview request from Cara Clinton of *Successful Meetings Magazine* for the October 2009 Florida Meeting & Incentive Planner’s Guide.

August 5 – Fielded a phone call from Mr. David Middleton of WRDQ-TV in Orlando looking for b-roll footage of area.

August 6 – Received and responded to a call from Angie Baldwin from *Conventions South Magazine* regarding an article on the area for the September issue of the magazine.

August 13 – Fielded call from Jennifer Garrett with *Connect Magazine* in search of VSPC logo.

August 20 – Drafted and sent pitch to *Coastal Living* on what’s new in the area.

August 24 – Drafted and sent pitch to Mark Howard of *Florida Trend* on what’s new in area.

August 24 – Responded to a photo request from Lawrence Hollyfield of the *Golf Newspaper* for images of golf resorts in the area.

#### **ASSISTING VISIT FLORIDA:**

August 3 – Sent pitch to Visit Florida on “Unique Florida Beaches.”

August 10 – Drafted and sent information on VSPC’s Twitter page to Visit Florida.

August 12 – Worked with Visit Florida’s Canadian Office to pitch CTV – Breakfast Television with a unique segment idea.

August 18 – Sent a link to CleanPix to Lauren Tjaden of Visit Florida, who requested photos of Honeymoon Island and Fort De Soto Park.

#### **ASSISTING THE INDUSTRY & THE CVB & OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS:**

August 3 – Attended additional Simpleview training.

August 4 – Fielded email from Jeni Hatter of the Clearwater Marine Aquarium regarding hotel stats in the area so she could write a release about CMA’s record attendance.

August 6 – Met with PR and Marketing officials at the Salvador Dali Museum to discuss social media efforts.

August 7 – Attended county exempt meeting.

August 10 – Reached out to Sensing Nature, Inc. to inquire about a fam trip for PR dept.

August 11 – Fielded a request from Matt Owen, Director of Corporate PR for Salamander Hospitality regarding providing support for a listing the next SATW newsletter for an Innisbrook Resort & Golf Club press trip.

August 11 – Contacted David Connelly at the St. Petersburg Museum of Fine Arts for photos of an upcoming exhibit for future use on FaceBook.

August 14 – Assisted VSPC’s Leisure Travel Division by sending a link to Cleanpix to RSAA for posting on their website.

August 18 – Communicated with Kim Hosang of the Hyatt Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa regarding their pet friendly policies.

August 20 – Assist the Sports Commission with info on what’s new in the area and send it to the Black Coaches & Administrators Association.

August 20 – Proofread the e-newsletter for VSPC’s Internet Marketing Department.

August 20 – Attended the Clearwater Beach Chamber’s social media event.

August 24 – Assist Deborah Holland in the Internet Marketing Department with updating the PinellasCVB.com with info on TDC openings.

August 27 – Attended Clearwater Marine Aquarium’s Turtle release.

August 27 – Responded to Kim Hosang with recommendations for video production companies in the Tampa/Clearwater area to shoot b-roll

August 27 – Provided area b-roll footage to Diba of Frame by Frame Productions who produce for Air Jamaica, their award winning in-flight video "Island Stylee

## **SOCIAL MEDIA INITIATIVES:**

VSPC'S PR Team continues to monitor and post relevant destination news on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages to promote the destination to our ever-growing fan base. We are also monitoring news coverage on a daily basis, and forwarding positive coverage to our industry partners via email.

VSPC's PR Team continues to update the CleanPix on-line image library for the media.

We posted the following press releases on Facebook, PinellasCVB.comFloridasBeachMedia.com and Press Briefs: Russ Kimball's induction into the Hall of Fame; VSPC winning Flagler Awards; and Clearwater Beach Named Best for Singles.

Finalized the Facebook vanity URL with Nicole Hanni of BVK.

Sent out the Social Media Summit invite to industry.

Worked with Nicole Hanni of BVK on FaceBook sweepstakes.

Continued extensive research for the VSPC Social Media Summit to be held in September.

## **PRESS RELEASES & E-NEWS & INDUSTRY ALERTS:**

August 12 – Industry Update Sent: TDC Recap.

August 17 – Press release entitled, “Clearwater Beach Named Hot Singles Destination for 2009; *Nonstop action, plentiful restaurants land “reawakening” favorite on ‘Top 5’ list,*” sent to the industry and the media.

August 19 – Sent out E-News to industry.

August 24 – Press release entitled, “Local Hotelier Named to Florida Tourism Hall of Fame *Sheraton Sand Key's Kimball Honored as ‘Model for Tourism’* sent to industry/media.

August 25 – Press release entitled, “VSPC Wins ‘Best of Show’ in Statewide Competition; *‘Ambassador’ Ad Campaign, ‘No Coats Required’ Outreach Honored With Flagler Awards,*” sent to industry and the media.

## **UK PR Firm and German Media Activities:**

Please refer to separate reports from each office.

## **Outdoor/Nature PR Activities: August 2009**

Bill AuCoin & Associates, Inc.

- Arranged for a media rate at Bungalows in Treasure Island for fishing writer Tommy Thompson, who visited in August to gather information and shoot pictures for a new book, *The Saltwater Angler's Guide to Tampa Bay and Southwest Florida*.
- Introduced author Katy Walls to information sources for visits to various attractions in the St. Petersburg-Clearwater area for a book she is researching, *Wild about Central Florida*, the third in a series. The CVB (Mary Haban) arranged for complimentary accommodations for three nights at the Best Western/Yacht Harbor Inn in Dunedin. Walls said she would also include text in the book for the good views from rooms of wading birds, dolphins and other wild creatures. Her itinerary included visits to The Clearwater Aquarium, Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary, Sunken Gardens, Weedon Island Preserve, Honeymoon Island Nature Center, Caladesi Island State Park (including kayaking the mangrove tunnel).
- Confirmed and started arranging a September visit by Sue Cocking, outdoors editor of the Miami Herald, to fish Lake Tarpon, which holds Florida's unofficial state bass record of 19-pounds-plus.
- Set up a December 7 Lake Tarpon fishing expedition for two writers from Bassmaster Magazine, Ronell Smith and James B. Hall. They plan to write a destination feature for Bassmaster, a national magazine with a circulation of 600,000-plus.
- Discussed media hosting and best story ideas with a new eco-tourism business in Pinellas County, Sensing Nature.
- Forwarded ideas for fishing tweets on St. Pete-Clearwater's Twitter page.
- Communicated with several writers concerning future visits including...
  - John Gifford on a 2010 visit for a fishing article for the Sunday Oklahoman of Oklahoma City.
  - Steve Waters, Outdoors Editor, South Florida Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale)
  - Dale Bowman, outdoors writer, Chicago Sun-Times
  - Mark Taylor, Outdoors Editor, The Roanoke Times
  - Terry Gibson, outdoor writer, picked as on-camera host for a video by The Ocean Conservancy

#### **UPCOMING MEDIA VISITS - TRADE SHOWS - PRESS GROUPS:**

- 1 – ESTO Conference, Lake Tahoe, Nevada – August 30-September 2
- 2 – Social Media Summit – Sept. 10