

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

July 2011

Rhonda Sanborn

EDUCATION

Industry Partnership

Familiarization Tours (FAMs) are probably some of the best examples of industry partnerships. They take a collection of our partners working together to schedule and coordinate in order to accommodate our clients interests or schedules. For the greater good of promoting tourism, we all work together so that the CVB can show our best assets within a very short time frame. Whether a request for a press trips, a group of travel agents, tour operators or our local front line staff; FAM's provide the opportunity to maximize a visit in our destination. With the help of Liv Gaggi, intern for the Education Department, we hosted a tour of the Southern part of Pinellas County labeled a Family Fun FAM. The inspiration to focus on family was due to the upcoming movie release featuring Winter in *Dolphin Tale*. Judging from the response to the trailer and feedback from Warner Brothers, this is anticipated to be a blockbuster for the destination. Not just for our beaches, sun and fun, but a family vacation hot spot!

Children or not, very few people take advantage of the variety of activities we have in the County that are interesting for all ages. This FAM covered 18 different stops highlighting something cultural, historical, exciting, a nature experience or learning opportunity. Some points of interest cost quite a bit if money to take advantage of (although not Disney style expensive) and most were affordable if not completely free. Although we stopped at 18 different places by the time we finished at 6:30pm, and had someone meet us for a brief overview at these businesses; there were another 100+ mentions we put in a three-ring binder. Every participant received a detailed binder of pictures and information to take back to their business as a resource. Several of the companies asked for extra binders to share with staff. Shortly following we did a similar tour for the northern part of the County in August with equal enthusiasm.

I'd like to thank our industry partners for taking time out of their busy day and their gracious hospitality: Great Explorations Children's Museum; Practically Picasso; The Dali Museum; Safari Choppers; The Pier Aquarium; Lost in Time and Cha Cha Coconuts; Tradewinds Splash Island; John's Pass Marina, The Pirate Ship, Alligator Attraction, The Golf Beaches Black Light Mini Golf; Kilwin's Ice Cream Shop; Pirate's of the Caribbean Duck Boat, Heritage Village, Armed Forces Military Museum, Tampabay Grand Prix and Planet Jump. Our participants represented concierge, Chambers of Commerce, Welcome Centers, Airport volunteers and Information Officers, hoteliers, Yellow Cab, CVB staff and a couple kids just to make sure we really were kid friendly. Please know this group of 31 professionals interact directly with visitors on a daily basis, offering recommendations and answering questions, "what can I do with my family while we're here?" You have made them more aware of our bountiful resources and proud to recommend any of you as part of what makes our destination so distinct – and Fun!

Value of Tourism Presentations

- County Volunteer Orientation, Heritage Village

HOSPITALITY

VSPC Representation

- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber (TBBCoC), Board of Directors meeting
- St. Petersburg Chamber Tourism Promotions Council
- County Volunteer Site Coordinators lunch & learn
- Pinellas County Green Government meeting
- Big C monthly meeting in Belleaire Beach
- Reef Monitoring Symposium, St. Petersburg College Clearwater Campus

VSPC Professional Development

- Ken Blanchard Webinar: 6 Keys to Creating Learning Experiences that Inspire and Engage
- Destination Stewardship: An Innovative Approach to Sustainable Tourism Development