

# HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

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Hospitality Education

## EDUCATION

### Industry Partnership

St. Petersburg initiated a new initiative to increase collaboration between their hospitality providers called Hospitality Bridging – Opportunity Knocks. This was co-hosted with VSPC Education Department to give more information regarding the community, current special events and provide an opportunity to create a dialogue with key leaders. Topics ranged from updates on the Pier, Downtown develops, RNC transportation, planning and marketing efforts. Mayor Foster, Chamber President Chris Steinhocher, VSPC Assistant Director David Downing, Gary Dukeman from transportation, addressed the crowd of about 80. A survey was given at the end of the program asking the value of attending. Overwhelmingly they appreciated making new contacts and thought community business briefs were important updates to receive. They even requested there be a bi-annual event to gather again.

Tampa International Airport recently built two new Welcome Centers in the baggage claim area. They sent out requests for volunteers and received approximately 140 applicants. Training took place over several days with back of the house tours, speakers on the history of the airport, the seriousness of security, customer service, expectations of front line Ambassadors and destination training by Visit St. Pete/Clearwater and Tampa Bay & Company. Volunteers agreed to background checks and promised to work a minimum of so many hours a month in return for free anytime parking as one of their perks. There was a great deal of enthusiasm from volunteers from both sides of the Bay as many came from travel or hospitality backgrounds and were very eager to share their love of the destination to travelers.

Leadership St. Pete continues on; which is one of the enduring missions of this program to strengthen relationships with and in your community. FOCUS St. Pete is an abbreviated immersion program to the area for relocating business people and significant others. A good portion of relocation programs fail because one person moves for a new job and is consumed with work while the spouse is left to find their own way around. The FOCUS program starts with an invitation to a hosted dinner with local leaders from various sectors, Education, Social Services, the Arts, Economic Development, Sports, Elected Officials and Founding Fathers. Over a course of just a few weeks we also host brief educational seminars and tours of the area. I'm thrilled to be on this committee with long time 'Burgers' who adore living in the area and want to help newcomers settle into the destination and be part of the community as soon as possible.

Clearwater Beach Chamber has recently been blessed with fabulous volunteers and interns. However, they still understand about life-long learning opportunities and requested a familiarization tour (FAM) of the County with emphasis on the South part of the County.

Leaving first thing in the morning I guided four interns, two well traveled volunteers, a newly transferred St. Petersburg College internship coordinator and newbie tourism partners from a Superior Small Lodging. We covered the entire County, hitting pretty much all the traditional tourism hotspots and a number of hidden gems like the up & coming Warehouse Arts District in St. Petersburg. They were all very appreciative to have a broader perspective on the diversity of the County and off the beaches in particular.

### **VSPC Representation**

- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber (TBBCoC) Business Education Council
- TBBCoC Ambassador meeting, St. Pete Beach Community Center
- Arts Alliance
- RNC Volunteer Orientations (Vinoy, Clearwater Hilton)
- RNC Rebuild Volunteer Project
- Women in Tourism, Biltmore Country Club
- BIG C Mayors Meeting, Bellaire Shores
- TDC
- Dine Tampa Bay Launch Party
- Clearwater Regional & St. Petersburg Chambers, Politics in the Park
- St. Petersburg Chamber grand opening, The Kitchen
- TBBCoC Board of Directors monthly meeting
- TBBCoC Summer Sizzler
- UPS County Training, Providing Constructive Feedback
- Pinellas County Volunteer Coordinators meeting

### **VSPC Planning**

- Dine Tampa Bay Event with FRLA, Tampa Bay and Co.
- Superior Small Lodging State Conference
- RNC Preview Event
- RNC Dolphin public art project
- RNC Volunteer Coordination
- Stavros Institute Sponsorship of Finance Park exhibit on Sustainable Tourism