

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

October 2012

Rhonda Sanborn

Hospitality Education

EDUCATION

Industry Partnerships

October brought a number of opportunities to work with our Hospitality partners, both internally, locally and at the state level.

Working with the PR department and partnering with several other co-workers in our office, we hosted a group of journalist from the UK and our PR Agency out of the UK. Having a week to familiarize them on our County, we were able to showcase pretty much all of our best features. From our world renowned beaches, to our famous aqua star, world-class museums, sports venues of the champions, to iconic cultural attractions and personable downtowns, they had ample story opportunities to help us promote the flavor of our destination to their readers across the pond.

‘Opportunity Knocks’ was an initiative the City of St. Petersburg thought of and asked for support from the St. Pete Chamber and VSPC to help put together. The goal was to create an opportunity to stimulate a dialogue between front line staff with the city, and to explore avenues of alliance. Kimberly Bailey with Economic Development for the city, spear-headed the mixer and speakers so that partners would meet and hear timely information about city events, business decisions impacting the downtown area like Bay Walk and the Pier. This was held at the Mahaffey with about 100 plus in attendance representing Art/Culture, Entertainment Venues, Hotels, Transportation and Restaurants. To reinforce knowing what venues were in the downtown area, we offered a half day guided tour of the downtown area using two of the city’s Trolleys. In addition to stopping at a dozen points of interest, we talked about another 30 venues that would be a tourism draw, including historical information and public art in the area. Whether visiting from across the County, Tampa Bay, elsewhere in the state or country, most people coming here are curious about the local area. Often it is the front line person who is asked about what they should spend their time doing while visiting. We are invested in providing resources to educate those people who are the faces of our destination.

Pinellas County is celebrating its Centennial this year and VSPC developed a web site to make a photo library and timeline of ‘100 Years of Warm Memories’. To help promote this milestone, we created a hand-held ‘Fan’ to hand out at some of our signature events. On one side was a collage of photos highlighting the destination and things to do (similar to the front of our Visitor Guide). On the back side of the fan we wrote, “I’m a FAN!” with an invitation to submit historic photos to our online library. We passed out several thousand at a Heritage Village Centennial celebration as well as over the weekend at the Clearwater Jazz Holiday. The fans were a big hit to cool off with as both events were on warm sunny days and many people liked the idea of having a place to share some of their old vacation photos from here.

One of the most informative associations I'm engaged with is the Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations, or FADMO. There are 67 counties in the state of Florida and most of them have an agency that promotes tourism commonly known as a 'Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) or "Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)". FADMO meets twice a year with a 120+ representatives from various tourism agencies or CVB's from around Florida. This year's Annual Marketing Meeting was held in Cedar Key. The meeting always has a guest speaker from the tourism industry who, provides relevant and timely information on trends and issues. Our expert this time was Bill Geist, with Zeitgest Consulting. He led us in a half day interactive workshop to discuss old school views of Destination Marketing and challenged us to 'Think bigger than tourism and just thinking room nights'. "We are the Buzz Makers and brand management for our destinations. Tourism is the front door to Economic Development..." FADMO is also our opportunity to hear about success stories from other locations and review what is going on around the state and issues or trends impacting other communities. In addition these meetings brings the industry together by briefing us on the important issues about Visit Florida's marketing plans, budget issues and legislation related to other tourism matters.

VSPC Representation

- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber (TBBC0C) Ambassador meeting
- Women In Tourism lunch and learn: Oldsmar, LinkedIn
- John's Pass Seafood Festival
- Clearwater Beach Chalk Walk
- Science Fest at USF
- UPS Training - Review Planning & Implementation
- BIG C Mayors Meeting, St. Pete Beach Community Center
- Rowdies Championship Game
- Sustainable Living Program Advisory Committee

Value of Tourism Presentation

- St. Petersburg College: Hospitality, Tourism students

VSPC Professional Development

- Accountability That Works – County Consortium Class
- Alliance for Innovation Webinar – A Culture of Service with Tom Bonfield, City Manager, Durham, NC

VSPC Planning

- Telephone Customer Service Skills – County Consortium Class
- G.E.T. Tampa Bay workshops, 2 sessions