

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

March 2014

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EDUCATION

Industry Partnership

Historically, the Grand Prix weekend and festivities are time for strong partnerships so that we can continue to make the experience better each year for all constituents. Safety is always the foremost concern although economic success, local business concerns and visitor experience roll into the mix. Numerous meetings take place months leading up to the Grand Prix involving event planners, city staff, special interest groups, service providers and tourism officials. One area of feedback that has always been a challenge has been the local business that have not really Embraced the Race. Mayor Kriseman heard this and asked for a concerted effort be made to connect with the greater downtown businesses. His business liaison team, the St. Petersburg Chamber and CVB coordinated efforts to find ways to reach out to the local businesses. We talked, walked, emailed, questioned and listened to ways we could improve the race program for their particular business. Some of the ways we connected were getting them to participate in a digital coupon that all social media and printed materials went to for race fans and even locals who typically might stay away from downtown. We created hash tags to connect with people in real time to answer questions, send photos and have conversations in real time. The City of St. Pete made a very user friendly website that was easy to navigate and was mobile friendly which was also on all our printed signs that went into business windows, were on posters at our Welcome tents at Gate 5, or the printed brochures we handed out to thousands of people. We even made a hand-held fan, with one side saying "I'm a FAN" and the hash tag info and the other side with VSPC photos and message to "Embrace the Race". Other outreach was through direct emails to restaurants in a newsletter format and taxi trainings. We took materials to several of the main taxi companies and set up a table for several hours at a time to speak with drivers, show them an enlarged map of the race area and explain best areas for pick-ups, handicapp access and other events in town they might be needed and could make more money. We also gave them " We <heart> Visitors" pens and posters to display and tickets for Friday's preliminaries so they could share their experience first hand with customers and get them to "Embrace the Race".

During the Firestone Grand Prix week another partnership took place between Leadership St. Pete (LSP) and the CVB, which was a seminar on Tourism, Sports & Economic Development. LSP has a number of seminars that take place during the year to introduce members to the community and important or timely issues. They are held at random venues and include expert presenters on that topic. LSP alumni help guide the seminars and suggested holding this one at a time when they could have access to the track and see first hand the impact of sports tourism, event planning and management to put on such a major production in metropolitan area. Along with Tim Ramsberg, DT, Kevin Smith and Tim Boggot presented. We also were sponsors in the lunch and learn associated with this seminar, handing out the race information, fans, Love Visitors buttons, etc. so that these 40+ leaders in the community could also carry the message forward that Embracing the Race was beneficial for the entire community.

As our destination becomes more popular and curiosity peaks to know more about us, we are asked more frequently to host media or travel planners. Hosting typically means coordinating site visits, or familiarization tours (FAMS) to learn more about the destination. All of the departments host these and sometimes there aren't enough staff available in that department at the time needed and we need to share the work load. In March I was available to meet with journalist from Latin America and share with them a locals sunset from Pass-a-Grille Beach and the Hurricane Restaurant. Arriving at 6pm for a 7:30 sunset gave us plenty of time to acquaint them with the surrounding area from the 360 degree roof top views as well as dip their toes in the calm waters of the gulf as we stepped right off the steps at a high tide from the pavillion across the street. Not only were the Brazilain media impressed with the quaint downtown and access to PSTA, they enjoyed a fabulous dinner of local grouper and unsurpassed sunset view from their table. The only thing I couldn't provide was the "Green Flash" ...this time. But now they know about and will always look for it and be remembered of their visit to St. Pete/Clearwater.

Value of Tourism Presentations

- Guest Experience Training Tampa Bay (G.E.T. Tampa Bay) at Mosi

HOSPITALITY

VSPC Representation

- TBBCoC Board of Directors monthly meeting
- Firestone Grand Prix planning meetings at City Hall
- Dunedin Mardi Gras
- St. Pete Chamber of Commerce Tourism Meeting
- Leadership St. Pete Alumni First Friday Forum, Culinary Arts Academy, NE High School
- Ground breaking for Marriott at Madeira Beach
- International Women's Day luncheon
- Florida Tourism Day in Tallahassee
- Keep Pinellas Beautiful Joes Creek clean up volunteer
- Leadership St. Pete FOCUS Committee
- Leadership St. Pete Seminar on Tourism, Sports & Economic Development

VSPC Planning

- Dolphin Trail project via Jolley Trolley
- National Travel and Tourism week events