

Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

Value Destinations

Where Planners
and Their
Meetings
'Own the City'

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Photo credit: SeaWorld San Diego

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A large green sea turtle and his pals — all threatened and endangered sea turtles — call Turtle Reef their new home. The new 300,000-gallon aquarium at SeaWorld San Diego opened last month.

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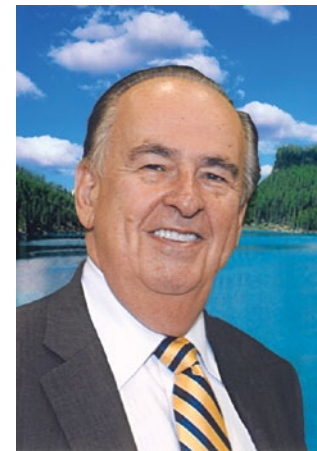
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Photo by Dan Hatzibuehler/Stock Studios/Dallas CVB

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The Real Thing

Since Coca Cola was founded in 1886, many of its advertising jingles stick with us years after they're retired: *The pause that refreshes. Things go better with Coke! It's the real thing.* Perhaps Reed Exhibitions should consider adopting one of Coke's catchy slogans because the first-ever AIBTM held in Baltimore June 21-23 was truly *the real thing*.



The thousands of participants and 11,000 appointments between U.S. and international hosted buyers and suppliers put a real face on reports of growth in travel budgets and face-to-face meetings.

What's more, the idea of co-locating events also got a real boost as the CIC Hall of Leaders Gala, PCMA Education Conference, launch of MPI Value of Meetings research and several networking functions seamlessly took place at Americas Meeting Week.

This month's cover story, "Value Destinations: Where Planners and Their Meetings 'Own the City,'" tells the story of AIBTM host city Baltimore and those of other top-notch destinations in smaller markets such as Baton Rouge, Charlotte, Indianapolis, Memphis and San Diego that are easy to get to, easy to get around, offer superior service, amenities and excellent value.

Tom Noonan, president and CEO of Visit Baltimore, rightly boasts, "If you could design a convention city from scratch, Baltimore would be it. We're on the water with a sports stadium and a rail station." In the midst of a major renaissance, Baltimore's growing accommodations (will soon have 9,000 downtown hotel rooms), meeting facilities, nightlife and attractions are a short walk from the Baltimore Convention Center. And Baltimore will host AIBTM in 2012 and 2013.

Make no mistake, even though these destinations may fit a second- or third-tier definition, there is nothing second-class about them. Noonan jokes, "We are a tier 1½ market because we're at the top of the tier 2 destinations." Moreover, meeting planners who strive to avoid being the "small fish in a big pond," set their sites on a value destination in a smaller market. "When an event comes to Charlotte," says Bill McMillan, senior director of sales for the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, "they own the city."

I look forward to returning next year to Baltimore for AIBTM 2012.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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Omni Nashville Hotel Breaks Ground



Omni Hotels & Resorts executives joined with Nashville leaders at the groundbreaking for the Omni Nashville Hotel, which will open in 2013. Left to right: Larry Atema, senior project manager, Music City Center; Mike Smith, SVP and General Counsel; CFO Mike Garcia, SVP, Acquisitions & Development, Omni Hotels & Resorts; Mike Deitemeyer, president, Omni Hotels & Resorts; Kyle Young, executive director, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum; Jim Caldwell, CEO, Omni Hotels & Resorts; Nashville Mayor Karl Dean; Butch Spyridon, president, Nashville CVB; Marty Dickens, chairman, Convention Center Authority; Vice Mayor Diane Neighbors; Bob Patterson, chair, Nashville CVB; Charles Starks, executive director, Nashville Convention Center; and Phil Ryan, executive director, Metropolitan Development and Housing Authority.

JNTO New York Welcomes New Executive Director

The Japan National Tourism Organization's New York office has a new executive director: Yuki Tanaka was sworn in June 20. She replaces Shuichi Kameyama, who is returning to his former employer in Tokyo, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. Tanaka arrives in the JNTO New York office from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, where she gained extensive experience in Japan's transportation management field. www.japantravelinfo.com



TANAKA

Gaylord Hotel and Conference Center Planned for Colorado



Rendering of Gaylord Hotel and Conference Center in Aurora, CO.

NASHVILLE, TN — Gaylord Entertainment Company will develop a hotel and conference center on 85 acres in Aurora, CO, located 10 minutes from Denver International Airport. The proposed 1,500-unit convention resort is expected to be open for business in 2015 and feature 400,000 sf of exhibition and meeting space. Colin V. Reed, the CEO of Gaylord Entertainment, said in a statement, "We are thrilled by the prospect of a Gaylord property in the Denver Market, which has fast become one of the most desirable tourist and business travel destinations in the United States and a destination of choice for meeting planners and conventions." www.gaylordentertainment.com

Events Calendar

AUGUST 4-6, 2011
ISES EVENTWORLD 2011
 St. Louis Union Station Marriott
 St. Louis, MO
 Contact: 312-321-6853
<http://ew.ises.com>

AUGUST 6-9, 2011
ASAE ANNUAL MEETING & EXPOSITION
 America's Center Convention Complex
 St. Louis, MO
 Contact: 888-950-2723
www.asaeannualmeeting.org

SEPTEMBER 7-8, 2011
HOSPITALITY SALES & MARKETING ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL (HSMI) MEET NATIONAL
 Walter E. Washington Convention Center
 Washington, DC
 800-564-4220
www.hsmimeet.com

OCTOBER 4-6, 2011
THE MOTIVATION SHOW (IT&ME)
 McCormick West
 Chicago, IL
 630-434-7779
www.motivationshow.com

OCTOBER 11-13, 2011
IMEX AMERICA
 Sands Expo at the Venetian/Palazzo Hotel
 Las Vegas, NV
 Contact: +44 1273 227311
www.imexamerica.com

OCTOBER 13-15, 2011
SITE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
 Bellagio
 Las Vegas, NV
 Contact: 312-321-5148
www.siteglobal.com

NOVEMBER 13-16, 2011
2011 FINANCIAL & INSURANCE CONFERENCE PLANNERS (FICP) ANNUAL CONFERENCE
 Grand Hyatt San Antonio
 San Antonio, TX
 312-245-1023
www.ficpnet.com

DECEMBER 6-8, 2011
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS (IAEE) EXPO! EXPO! IAEE'S ANNUAL MEETING & EXHIBITION
 Las Vegas Convention Center
 Las Vegas, NV
 972-458-8002
www.iaee.com

MEETING VALUES

Hotel Valencia Riverwalk, San Antonio, TX

Planners who hold meetings at Hotel Valencia Riverwalk during July or August receive special group rates from \$99 (applicable for Sunday through Thursday). The special includes complimentary high-speed Internet access throughout the hotel; complimentary use of fitness center; and 20 percent attrition. Contact Jasmin Hernandez at 210-220-3011 or jhernandez@valenciagroup.com.

■ **St. Regis Bahia Beach, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico.** The Bespoke Meetings package, valid for meetings booked and consumed by December 20, 2011, includes concessions based on number of room nights booked. Concessions include: 1/40 comp room; 1/30 upgrade to oceanfront suite; 1/30 chef's choice VIP amenity delivered to room; 15 percent off golf with guaranteed tee times; 15 percent off spa with guaranteed appointments; two comp round-trip airport transfers; 5 percent credit to master account (room revenue spent); comp one-hour chef's choice welcome reception. 787-809-8000, www.stregisbahiaibeach.com

■ **The Homestead, Hot Springs, VA.** The Homestead's 245th Birthday Party Package, available on select dates throughout summer 2011, includes: luxurious guest accommodations; breakfast and dinner daily; morning and afternoon coffee breaks daily; \$20 activity credit daily. Rates start at \$245/person/night single occupancy; \$175/person/night double occupancy. 877-549-9506, www.thehomestead.com

■ **Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty-Six, Fort Lauderdale, FL.** The Sail Into Summer Reward Program is valid for meetings booked before September 30, 2011 and consumed by December 31, 2011. Reward options, based on total number of rooms booked, include: 3 percent off master bill; 20 percent off published AV pricing and published catering menu pricing; comp meeting room Internet; 1/35 comp room; five VIP airport transfers; one-hour margarita reception; one suite upgrade; four comp spa treatments; double Hyatt Planner Points. 800-55-HYATT, www.hyattregencypiersixtysix.com

America Meetings Week a Big Success

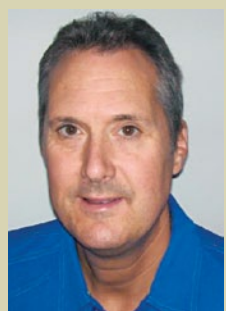
BALTIMORE, MD — On June 22 in Baltimore, the first Americas Meetings & Events Exhibition (AIBTM) was opened by Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, the mayor of Baltimore, who spoke about the positive economic impact of AIBTM on the city. More than 11,000 appointments were scheduled between U.S. and international hosted buyers and suppliers. The show increased by 40 percent over the original floor plan due to 789 exhibitors from 52 countries. The total number of registered participants was 3,872, and while the official total will not be available until the independent audit is completed, end-of-show stats indicated a total of 740 registered hosted buyers and 806 registered trade buyers.

Gary Musich, vice president of sales, Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Authority, commented, "The format is excellent. For a first-time show it's awesome. We have seen a lot of new faces, that's the biggest deal. The industry needed a new format and this is it. We couldn't be more pleased."

America Meetings Week included a number of co-located events such as the CIC Hall of Leaders Gala, PCMA Education Conference, the launch of MPI's Value of Meetings research and several networking functions. www.aibtm.com



Icebreaker event at the first AIBTM.



Allan
Schweyer

Engagement and Meetings

Planners Play an Increasingly Critical Role in Achieving Business Goals

Practically no profession stands to benefit more from the emerging enterprise engagement movement than meeting planners. The growing organizational focus on achieving financial results by engaging key customers, channel partners, employees, vendors and communities provides a significant opportunity for meeting planners to exit the world of commoditization and enter into one that can be tied to a company's bottom line.

Enterprise engagement is a strategy being employed by some of the nation's best known companies, including McDonalds, Hewlett-Packard, New York Stock Exchange, Euronext, Coca Cola and more, seeking to improve performance by building more powerful relationships with the people key to their business. This movement is based on extensive research from organizations as diverse as Gallup, Sirota, Corporate Leadership Council-Genesee that have all found a direct link among financial results, share price performance, and the ability of an organization to engage its customers and employees.

Opportunities for Planners

Many meeting planners will immediately understand the implications for their profession. There is no question that meetings play a critical role in addressing a number of "engagement" factors, including communication, capability, support, task value and emotion. And, through the extensive work on return on investment spearheaded by Jack Phillips of the ROI Institute and others, the meetings field can help address the measurement issue as well. Creating an effective meeting goes way beyond the man-

agement of "heads and beds" — it involves a complex combination of art and science. While the "media" of meetings, such as hotels, transportation, events and experiences, can be analyzed and compared by purchasing departments, the art and science of the process involves expertise that cannot be easily analyzed by purchasing departments alone.

This focus on engagement is having a profound effect on meeting planning. For example, New York-based EGR International, a 41-year-old company, has had full-service meeting management capabilities as one of its product offerings. EGR President Jeffrey Grisamore now positions EGR as a full-service engagement agency. "We saw the shift happen seven or eight years ago, when clients began to focus more on what they were trying to accomplish with their events than on the process itself," says Grisamore. "They began asking for solutions oriented to meeting-specific engagement goals, and that required us to continually diversify our offerings so that we could apply a zero-based solution to their unique challenges. Calling ourselves a performance improvement and meetings management company doesn't describe what we do anymore. Our objective is to help clients engage their key audiences to achieve measurable results, and that requires a far broader toolkit that can be provided only by a full-service engagement agency, which is why we have made the transition into this space."

Sandra Daniel, principal of Fire Light Group, a Madison, WI-based incentive consulting and meeting planning firm, put it another way. "The boat is leaving the dock for meeting planners — the field is no longer

just about destination selection and logistics. Companies have to be able to provide consulting not just on travel, but on orchestrating all of the key elements that go into planning an incentive or a meeting. This goes way beyond budget planning and negotiations to address the real heart of the matter: What business goal(s) is the organization trying to achieve and how will the event be choreographed and organized to achieve that goal."

Tools for Success

A new formal curriculum on Enterprise Engagement is being created by the Enterprise Engagement Alliance (EEA), a coalition of leading practitioners and suppliers involved with this emerging business

ment was also underlined recently in a major longitudinal study of a health insurance company's engagement strategy undertaken in 2010. The study, "ROI of Channel Partners Program," tracked a meetings program designed to improve the engagement and sales of its independent health insurance brokers over a nine-month period. It found that the program generated a return of investment of 190 percent based on weighing the increased sales against the fully loaded cost of the program.

The Proof

The meetings industry has done a great job of developing measurement tools. What it has yet to accomplish is proving its value

The meetings profession has an opportunity to reassert the strategic value of meetings as an engagement tool.

arena. The curriculum is based on extensive research into the critical factors involved with engagement such as an understanding of the nature and interrelationships of an organization's various audiences, as well as a grasp of the critical elements involved with engagement and the tactics used to address them. It draws from the classic survey conducted by the Incentive Research Foundation, "Incentives, Rewards and Workplace Motivation." This survey defined the critical elements of engagement to include: leadership, communications, capability, support, task value, emotion and measurement.

The link between meetings and engage-

in helping organizations achieve concrete business goals. Now that more and more organizations have begun to place a greater value on engagement, the meetings profession has an opportunity to reassert the strategic value of meetings as an engagement tool. Engagement goes far beyond social networking and often culminates in the process of people getting together in one place to engage on a specific mission or topic. It's time for the meetings profession to embrace its contribution to engagement and provide education programs that strategically focus not only on measurement, but on the art and science of engaging people through meetings and events.

C&IT

Allan Schweyer is chairman of the Enterprise Engagement Alliance (www.enterpriseengagement.org), an outreach, research and education organization focused on the emerging business of Enterprise Engagement.

Value Destinations

Where Planners and Their Meetings 'Own the City'

Kathy Artuso, travel buyer for BCD Meetings & Incentives in Chicago, recently proposed an incentive trip to one of the major meeting destinations in the country. Her executives shot it down, saying they could not get excited about it. Artuso then proposed a resort outside San Diego that takes up an entire island. She is hoping to take over the entire property for the event.

"We don't want to be a small fish in a big pond," says Artuso. "If you have a 500-person meeting, you can own a hotel in a smaller market."

Smaller, Not Small

Artuso is among the many corporate planners who are big fans of smaller markets. And we're not talking about "small" markets — simply those not in the mega-category. These are markets that tend to be compact, easy to get to, easy to get around in — but with all the world-class amenities and services a contemporary meeting needs.

What they offer in a word is: value.

Artuso says that San Diego "comes up quite a bit as an option for corporate meetings as well as incentives. Sometimes the destination is mandated by the client, but if not, we do recommend San Diego on a regular basis."

"We do a lot of training," says Sherry Awbrey, national director of sales for strategic meetings management for EMC Venues in New York, "and location is the driving factor: It is usually in a smaller market. Sometimes they look to stay at the airport. Otherwise, they want compact geography so they can get in and out quickly."

Janet Pickover, an independent planner and founder and president of

Princeton, NJ-based Site Selections Plus, says, "There are a lot of planners who work with second- and third-tier cities. You can find excellent quality in a lot of these destinations."

Location is frequently the strongest argument for a smaller destination. According to Pickover, "You have to ask where the attendees are coming from. For some secondary destinations, that might mean a couple of plane rides and that might not work, so you do have to meet client needs. But if the destination is easily accessible for that particular meeting, it can be the best choice."

"It's up to a planner, especially an independent like myself," says Pickover, "to ask the client, 'Have you ever thought about such and such a place?' You put together some information about a place like that and see if it works."

Geraldine Bordelon, director of destination sales for Visit Baton Rouge, says, "Almost all of our clients are familiar with New Orleans but not with Baton Rouge. Our success comes when we can bring them in and show them the product we have."

"When we go to trade shows," she says, "we always hear, 'I'm tired of this large city or that large city.' As a result, we will provide significant incentives to do a site inspection with us."

A recent StarCite survey found that customers wishing to have events in the top 10 convention markets rose by about 50 percent in the third quarter from 2010 a year earlier. But such requests were higher for cities that ranked 26 to 50, up 58 percent; and cities ranked 51–75 saw an 83 percent increase.

One factor that might have spurred interest in smaller markets was the

stigma attached in the last few years to meeting in upscale, high-profile settings. While that perception is fading, it has given those smaller destinations a chance to get their messages across.

In addition, large corporations are often headquartered or have a significant presence in smaller markets — sometimes giving those locations a step up. Says Bordelon, "We are home to big pe-

troleum companies, and they will have corporate retreats or other events here. We have also hosted national conventions looking for a second-tier location. We have had large meetings of sales teams from Avon and Mary Kay."

"When an event comes to Charlotte," says Bill McMillan, senior director of sales for the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, "they own the city. Planners always tell us that in larger destinations they have to spend more money, for instance, on signage to carve out their identity."

"We joke," says Tom Noonan, president and CEO of Visit Baltimore, "that we are a tier 1½ market because we're at

the top of the tier 2 destinations." One major reason, says Noonan: ease of getting to the city by air or by train. On top of that, he points to a downtown that soon will have more than 9,000 hotel rooms, all within walking distance of each other.

Evidence of Baltimore's ascendancy, says Noonan: The city recently hosted the first-ever Americas Meetings & Events Exhibition (AIBTM), which drew 3,800 registered participants, with 789 exhibitors from 52 countries, 740 registered hosted buyers and 806 registered trade buyers. Baltimore is hosting the first three years of AIBTM and hopes to become the permanent host.

"If you could design a convention city from scratch," says Noonan, "Baltimore would be it. We're on the water with a sports stadium and a rail station."

Interestingly, Indianapolis also positions itself as a city that could have been designed from scratch for conventions. Spokesman Chris Gahl, says, "We have more hotel rooms connected by climate-controlled skywalk than any other city — a total of 4,717 in 12 hotels. Delegates can go from any of those rooms to the trade show floor." The Indiana Convention Center recently doubled in size, propelling it into the top 20 largest in the U.S.

And Indianapolis' current claim to fame is that it will host the Super Bowl in February 2012.

Getting In and Getting Around

There's no question that a huge plus for smaller markets is ease of getting around. But many of these locations can also boast significant lift in and out. According to Bordelon, "We have the largest airlines coming here, with direct service from their hubs. And fares in here are frequently a bit cheaper."

Being a smaller city, says Bordelon, "our hotels offer complimentary airport shuttles, both to the hotels and downtown. And within our downtown,

there is complimentary bus service five days a week."

Typical of many of these cities, says Baton Rouge's Bordelon, "Everything is within walking distance downtown. Our convention center is right across from a casino. Also right there are a planetarium, an arts and science museum, and the Old State Capitol." Also nearby are unique venues such as the Shaw Center for the Arts. And a large number of hotel rooms in downtown Baton Rouge is within easy reach.

Margie Sitton, senior vice president of sales for the San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau, says, "We have a tiny airport. You get off the plane, you're out the door and downtown very quickly."

In Charlotte, says McMillan, the airport is just seven miles from the downtown, "one of the few destinations that has an airport with our kind of lift and that is that close to downtown. It's the eighth busiest airport in the country."

The ability to get around easily in a market is a huge plus, according to planners. "For one thing," says Awbrey, "it cancels out any additional transportation costs once they get there. Nancy Crook, director of national accounts for EMC Venues, says, "Given the impact that the cost of fuel is having on travel, the more accessible an airport, the better that destination looks to my clients."

McMillan says the Charlotte Convention Center connects to the NASCAR Hall of Fame, and the nearby cultural campus boasts three museums, all potential venues. And there are 4,700 hotel rooms within a four-block radius of the convention center. "This is what enabled us to book the 2012 Democratic Party Convention," he adds.

Call Them Affordable

Price, clearly, has a lot to do with choosing a smaller market destination. While destinations such as Las Vegas are still distressed and offer good deals, the total cost of going somewhere smaller



Planners are treated like the only game in town in regional markets such as Indianapolis and San Diego (background).

Photo credits: Visit Indy/John Bahu, San Diego CVB

By Harvey Chipkin

might still be less because of other costs such as transportation. Crook says that some larger markets — New York, Washington, DC, and to some extent Chicago — “are getting tougher on rate, though there are still great deals in Las Vegas and Florida.”

“Everything is affordable these days,” agrees Sitton. “If Las Vegas wants the business they’ll make the rate work, but Vegas is its own entity. (San Diego) can be a relaxing, but energizing place to meet.”

Awbrey says it’s often a good idea to try to seek out under-the-radar markets. She says, “Right now, I’m seeing Miami as a hot destination, but it’s still affordable. It’s good to catch a destination like that before it gets too hot.”

Bordelon says, “We try not to do comparison shopping because we don’t want to slam another city; however, we do believe that the package we provide stands up against any city.”

“Planners are sharpening their pencils on budgets,” says Indianapolis’ Gahl, “and the fact that we can say to a planner that we’re hosting a Super Bowl, the single largest sporting event, in an affordable market is a huge weapon for us. They have to go back to their board of directors and say, ‘I’ve uncovered a destination we don’t usually look at.’”

One-Place-Only Venues

Let’s face it: there are many venues that are simply available only in a specific destination. Says Artuso, “We learned that we could rent out Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, an awesome location.” Artuso emphasizes that events at Miramar must be arranged through a DMC, as special permissions and approval are required up front.

And you can find elements of major destinations in smaller ones. Consider the fact that Baton Rouge offers three casinos downtown.

San Diego, says Sitton, has many

different and distinct regions: the bay, Coronado Island, North San Diego, beach areas, etc. There are many micro breweries and wineries, as well as museums and theater (the Broadway hit “Jersey Boys” was launched here).

Because of its longtime status as a naval base, says Sitton, “interesting venues onboard battleships or other vessels are available.

In many of these cities, there is an appeal unique to them. For instance, Memphis means music. Craig Smith, director of sales and marketing at The Peabody Memphis notes, “The city offers a cool factor, and a lot of that is based in the history of music. There are groups that plan their events around Memphis music festivals. A musical event can be a real highlight to a meeting.”

And there’s certainly no place other than Memphis where a planner can create an event at Graceland.

CVBs: Smaller Can Be Better

Many planners say that convention and visitors bureaus in markets that don’t have the highest profile are eager to do whatever needs to be done to accommodate them. Artuso says, “We work with the CVB on initial sourcing. And they are excellent at helping us find those unusual venues.” Awbrey says she has held a number of meetings in Charlotte and that “the CVB has been a great help in getting me information.”

CVBs in smaller markets have become adept at selling meetings in destinations that are not top-of-mind for planners or potential attendees. “You do have to have a lot of knowledge about some of these places to sell them to the client,” Pickover says, adding, “A colleague of mine who has events all over the country met somebody from a state that has a terrible time marketing to meetings because they’re considered a vacation destination. I would love to bring a meeting there. A good planner with the right information can make it work.”

“Some of the smaller destinations,”

says Crook “do have very helpful CVBs because the city as a whole is more eager for the business since they are having to compete with the big-time destinations such as Las Vegas, New York City and Orlando.”

“When a planner comes to town for a site inspection,” says San Diego’s Sitton, “we assign one person to them. They are picked up at the airport, and we ensure that everything runs on time. If they say, ‘I’ve never stuck my feet in the Pacific Ocean,’ we’ll make that happen.”

Baltimore, says Noonan, has a full-time marketing executive in its sales department who helps planners promote their conferences

“There are a number of planners who flirt with Indy,” says Gahl, “and we are flirting right back. We tout our first-tier amenities packaged as second-tier affordability. We are stepping up the number of site inspection tours because we know that seeing is believing. We often design FAMs around the Indy 500 or NCAA basketball or other events.”

Indianapolis is proactive in supporting planners’ marketing efforts. Says Gahl, “We have to have every competitive edge. The microsites specific to attendees provide video podcasts. We see it as our job to be an extension of a planner’s team to elicit attendee awareness. We place a barrage of tools at their disposal.”

Getting the Word Out

Education is often the biggest challenge for these markets. To help get its message out, Baton Rouge has teamed up with similar sized cities — Providence, Raleigh and St. Paul — in a cross market effort called the Capital Cities Collection, which is going into its third year. The group is looking to expand.

With its broad appeal, says Sitton, “We are looking for international opportunities. Planners from abroad know about Las Vegas and Orlando; now it’s our turn to tell them our story.” **C&IT**

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Theme Park

Meetings

Entertaining, Energizing and Engaging

Everybody loves to feel like a kid again — about 300 million of us, in fact. That's how many people visit the more than 400 parks and attractions in the U.S. each year. So it's no surprise that planners can count on theme parks to deliver a satisfaction guarantee for attendees and stakeholders alike. Besides giving the group memorable and motivating experiences, theme parks offer great value, with most offering expert event services teams to attend to all the details of planning a successful event, from themed galas and F&B to entertainment and teambuilding, to high-tech presentation services and even keynote speakers.

Most planners understand, especially after the past few years, that attendees now want "experiences" at their meetings. And they understand, as well, that attendees actually need experiences, so they'll return home excited and enthusiastic about the meeting, and eager to help the company meet its goals.

An entertaining environment keeps

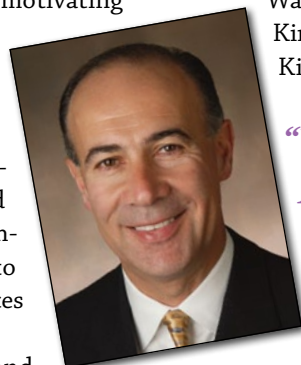


Hollywood Studios at Walt Disney World Resort provides a spectacular backdrop for events.

everyone engaged with the venue, enhancing networking opportunities even after the meetings are over.

The Kingdom of Disney

When you talk about theme parks, of course, you've got to start with the Walt Disney brand. The attraction of Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom, Epcot and Animal Kingdom is obvious. But



"When you have a meeting at a special place — a place that makes attendees feel that they're valued by the company — it resonates with them. And they go back home energized."

George Aguel, Senior Vice President
The Walt Disney Company, Lake Buena Vista, FL

meeting planners are attracted by much more: six convention resorts with a combined total of 5,000 guest rooms and more than 700,000 sf of meeting space; the Disney Institute with its leadership workshops and multi-day programs; and the Disney Event Group, a one-stop shop

for customized event planning from props to presentations; teambuilding to tours; and themed and networking events to creative catering.

All of these benefits have one thing in common — they all result in better ROI for meetings.

"Planners are looking for ways — despite their limited budgets — to create new experiences for their attendees," says George Aguel, senior vice president,

The Walt Disney Company. "But most traditional meeting venues are not built for that. When you have a meeting at a special place — a place that makes attendees feel that they're valued by the company — it resonates with them. And they go back home energized by the ex-

perience, precisely because it was just that — an experience."

Coming to Walt Disney World in 2012 is Disney's Art of Animation Resort, with 2,000 guest rooms and suites themed from Disney favorites such as "The Lion King," "Cars," "Finding Nemo" and "The Little Mermaid."

"At what other place can you have Indiana Jones give a demonstration at one of your meetings? Theme parks have hosted every conceivable type of meeting, of every conceivable size."

Janet Graff, CMP, President
JLG Event Management Solutions, Northridgeville, OH



Development of Hyperion Wharf, a new waterfront district within the Downtown Disney dining and entertainment area, will continue through 2013. Designed as an early 20th century port city and amusement pier, the wharf will expand dining options at Downtown Disney by more than 25 percent.

The Magic Kingdom's largest expansion to date is currently underway in Fantasyland. Scheduled for completion in 2013, the expansion will feature a new ride-through Little Mermaid attraction, plus new private event venues and entertainment options for large groups.

You can't talk about Disney without talking about the original Disney park — Disneyland in Anaheim, CA. Disneyland has 2,400 hotel rooms on-property, and 180,000 sf for meetings. And, like its younger Orlando cousin, it has more types of props, special effects, themes and setups for meetings than you could possibly use if you met there every year for a lifetime. Disneyland is more compact, so everything's within walking distance. The Disneyland Hotel recently unveiled the Frontier Lawn, a scenic outdoor event space next to the hotel's 136,000-sf conven-

tion center. A second lawn will open in the fall of 2011 and will feature 12,500 sf of flexible space and a permanent stage. And more than a billion dollars will be spent next year on Disney's California Adventure park, which will be the site of a new park called "Cars Land," after the Disney

movie "Cars." The park just debuted its Little Mermaid attraction in June. It is available for private events, accommodating up to 4,000 attendees.

Janet Graff, CMP, is president of JLG Event Management Solutions, a Cleveland-area company. She's held four medical-industry meetings at Disney in the last few years, two of them with 1,000 attendees each (and 60 exhibitors), and two with 400 attendees. And she believes that meetings at theme parks are trending upward, because of ROI and value.



Disney California Adventure Park recently celebrated the grand opening of the Little Mermaid — Ariel's Undersea Adventure attraction, available for private events.

"At what other place can you have Indiana Jones give a demonstration at one of your meetings?" she says. "Theme parks have hosted every conceivable type of meeting, of every conceivable size. They know what they're doing. They're very flexible, so they can help you stay within your budget. It's also a great attendance-builder for meetings. At a couple of our trade shows, we asked attendees at past meetings if they wanted to try somewhere new the next year. And we got a resounding response: 'Stay at Disney!'"

Her thoughts are echoed by Melinda Hanzlik of Chicago, an independent consultant in employee engagement and change management. She staged a salesforce incentive event for a food-service company last October at Disneyland for 70 salespeople and their spouses. She emphasizes that this was a business event in which attendees were taken to the headquarters plant and shown new manufacturing facilities.

"We looked at meeting venues all over Southern California," she says. "Beach properties, Beverly Hills, Hollywood. But we realized that a theme park offered the most bang for the buck. Disneyland just offered so much in terms of variety, of activities, restaurants, dinner options, shopping. And they offered us the opportunity to keep all our people together. Many attendees told me that the best networking sessions they experienced were just talking with their colleagues in the park at night."

Universal Orlando

Universal Studios Orlando boasts three full-service meeting hotels: Loews Portofino Bay (750 guest rooms; 42,000 sf of meeting space); the Hard Rock Hotel (650; 6,000); and Loews Royal Pacific (1,000; 85,000). And it has the newest star at-

By Steve Winston



The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando Resort offers Harry Potter-themed events including specialized menus and entertainment.

traction in the theme park world in its Islands of Adventure park, where The Wizarding World of Harry Potter has been packin' 'em in since its opening a year ago. Universal's meetings and events team can arrange customized themed events in the Wizarding World as well as in its other park, Universal Studios.

Like Disney, Universal spends heavily on new attractions and capital improvements. In May, the company announced its newest attraction, which will open next year – a high-tech, 3-D adventure based on its hit animation film, "Despicable Me." And the popular "Amazing Adventures of Spiderman" will be reanimated in digital high definition.

To Universal, these new attractions will only enhance its allure to meeting planners, because they'll help make meetings into "experiences" that will attract more attendees. The meeting trade is so important to Universal Orlando that its two Loews properties just started a new program called MVP, in which planners earn points for bookings at the hotels, which they can redeem for merchandise.

Sharon Holm, senior events manager, corporate marketing for MA-based Avid Technology, brought 650 people from all over the world to Loews Portofino in

February, for the company's teambuilding event and sales kickoff.

"My job is to make the meeting an educational experience," Holm says. "But it also has to be a motivational experience. I like to let people out of the usual small breakout rooms, and let them get to know colleagues they may see only once a year. Theme parks are uniquely



"My job is to make the meeting an educational experience. But it also has to be a motivational experience. ...Theme parks are uniquely equipped to do that."

Sharon Holm, Senior Events Manager, Corporate Marketing
Avid Technology, Burlington, MA

equipped to do that. They allow your attendees the opportunity to step away for a few hours and decompress."

Universal Studios Hollywood

Before there was a Universal Orlando, though, there was a Universal Studios Hollywood in California. And there are few places more skilled at meetings production and management.

Jacqueline Jordan wouldn't hold her fund-raising events anywhere else, in fact. As special events manager for Providence Health & Services Foundation, based in Los Angeles, she stages an annual gala every November at Universal Hollywood.

"This is our big fund-raising event," Jordan says. "And we only get one crack at it. If we don't meet our financial goals with this event, we don't meet our financial goals, period. So it has to be something memorable, and it has to be something magical."

Jordan holds the event in the Universal Globe Theater, which has every type of prop and a staff that excels at making swift and seamless changes during the event.

"Like everybody else," says Jordan, "we've done some events in ballrooms. But no matter how you dress them up, they're still ballrooms. The Globe Theater can transform right in front of your eyes, with a thousand different props, décor, lighting, etc. It helps draw more people to the event, and it makes the experience magical for them. And that's why we exceed our goals for the event every year."

Busch Gardens

Attendees will have a wild time at

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay in more ways than one. This 335-acre family adventure park is roller-coaster heaven for thrill-seekers and one of the country's premier zoos with more than 2,000 animals. The newest attraction, Cheetah Hunt, just opened in May and can be bought out for larger events. To give an idea how this coaster rates on the thrill meter, it's described as a "triple-launch coaster." Cheetah Hunt, inspired by the world's fastest animal, accelerates riders to speeds up to 60 mph at multiple "launch" points.

The new Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy show takes place in Busch

Gardens' Moroccan Palace and features the impressive athletics and theatrics of aerialists, contortionists, acrobats, jugglers and musicians.

"Up close" tours are available for behind-the-scenes looks at several animal attractions and habitats, the Montu coaster operation, customized safaris, a Keeper for a Day crash course in zoo-keeping and more.

The Gwazi Pavilion accommodates up to 300 attendees for themed events, banquets and meetings.

Busch Gardens Williamsburg in Virginia was just voted the "World's Most Beautiful Amusement Park" by National Amusement Park Historical Association for the 21st consecutive year. The Kingsmill Resort lies just outside the gates of the theme park and just minutes from Colonial Williamsburg, where 18th-century America is recreated every day. The Kingsmill Resort has 422 guest rooms and 16,000 sf of meeting space, in an IACC-certified conference center with windows and outdoor decks in every room, all overlooking the James River. A new marina on the river offers recreational and teambuilding options.

SeaWorld

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment owns Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, Busch Gardens Williamsburg, and SeaWorld Orlando and SeaWorld San Diego.

SeaWorld Orlando includes two



The only feeding frenzy going on at SeaWorld Orlando is at Sharks Underwater Grill, where diners enjoy surf 'n' turf with denizens of the deep looking on.

water parks, Aquatica and Discovery Cove. The flying roller coaster Manta and aquarium exhibit provide a themed event option, which can include strolling entertainers, dancing Sea Divas, Manta-inspired furnishings and lighting — even a signature cocktail, a Manta-rita, served from a manta ray-shaped ice bar. Another special event venue is the Penguin Plaza — home to more than 200 penguins and puffins. The Ports of Call banquet facility, with its 12,000-sf ballroom, accommodates groups of up to 750 attendees. Shamu Stadium seats up to 5,000 attendees and features state-of-the-art audio-visual technology. SeaWorld also offers expert speakers who can customize presentations to complement the meeting objective. A variety of hands-on teambuilding and tour options are also available.

Within walking distance of SeaWorld is the 1001-room DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld, which also is across the street from the Aquatica water park. The hotel has 60,000 sf of meeting facilities for indoor or outdoor events.

SeaWorld San Diego recently opened its new Turtle Reef exhibit — a 300,000-gallon aquarium with massive underwater viewing window — with more than 60 threatened and endangered sea turtles. SeaWorld San Diego recently partnered with The Hilton San Diego Resort & Spa to offer planners and their groups an opportunity to take part in a different kind of CSR — Care, Support and Rehabilitation for threatened or endangered sea turtles. The "Save Our Sea Turtles" package, available for meetings booked by August 31, 2011 and consumed by December 31, 2011, includes: an amount equivalent to 5 percent of the group's total room charges donated to the SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund in the group's name; a group teambuilding day at SeaWorld San Diego; and a turtle plush toy and turtle pen presented to each attendee in recognition of the group's donation.

Theme Park Pluses

"Theme parks are a way to keep your people at a safe, self-contained site, while still affording them the opportunity to have a great time," says Trevor Hanks. Hanks is principal of TMM-The



Groups can reserve the new Cheetah Hunt attraction at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay.

Meeting Manager, an Irvine, CA destination management company that often holds meetings at Universal Studios Hollywood. "We use theme parks eight to 10 times a year, for events as large as 4,000 attendees and as small as 50. We have to show value to our clients' senior executives. And most theme parks offer real value."

Hanks also points out that most theme parks can accommodate large meetings and that you don't need to bring in outside vendors, because they do it all.

"Even through the recession, we've been doing more meetings at these parks," Hanks says. "And our clients always want to go back. Theme parks offer a turnkey operation. They are very flexible if plans change suddenly. They have everything you need onsite. They're often located near cities with good air access and convenience. And, especially these days, senior executives really like the value proposition."

Hanks adds, "We're still seeing fewer meetings than we did a few years ago. But we're not seeing fewer theme park meetings." **C&IT**

Meeting at the Beach

Atlantic City and Virginia Beach Make It Look Easy

King Neptune, a majestic 34-foot tall statue, towers over the Virginia Beach Boardwalk at Neptune Park (left). The world-famous Boardwalk of Atlantic City stretches for four miles along the beach.

Photo courtesy of Atlantic City CVA

rooms, a variety of special event venues and 24-hour casinos. In addition, the region offers spectacular golf, great dining and top-notch, built-in entertainment. Atlantic City International Airport is minutes away.

Virginia Beach has the best of both worlds: the coastal charm of the oceanfront and big-city amenities of Town Center and the inviting Virginia Beach Convention Center. More than 3,500 committable rooms are located with 2.5 miles of the convention center. The region features spectacular golf, historical sites such as Williamsburg and much more.

Atlantic City

In May, Denise M. Nowak, the director of marketing for Rochester, NY-based 5LINX Enterprises, was pleasantly surprised when the company's International Training Event in Atlantic City attracted nearly 5,000 independent representatives — the highest attendance in the company's history. The 10-year-old network market-



Photo courtesy of 5LINX

Corporate group meetings and events staged at premiere beachfront resort cities take on special significance. A meeting in Atlantic City or Virginia Beach is sure to evoke fond memories of endless summer days filled with great food and fun and adventure. Both these popular and easily accessible meeting destinations retain the history and glory of a bygone era coupled with the allure of the salt air and sandy beaches. What's more, each city is wholly committed to attracting meetings and conventions year round and provides the infrastructure, amenities and value to prove it.

For example, Atlantic City offers a modern, "green" convention facility, 11 full-service resorts, 20,000 first-class hotel

In May, the National 9/11 Flag Tour made its way to Atlantic City. Joined by local heroes from the city's fire and police departments, the tribute was a moving experience for 5LINX attendees.

By Susan W. Fell

ing company, which provides telecommunications, Internet and other services in the U.S., Canada and Nigeria, holds three of these events each year and needed an East Coast destination to accommodate many of the reps located in the region. Nowak says, "Atlantic City was a choice given the wide variety of things the attendees could do when not at the event. We always choose locations based on what the city has to offer as well as the venue itself. The property was able to accommodate our large group for both general session and breakout training purposes. This is often difficult for the company to accomplish because of the space requirements. Also the venue facilitated the ability to have the general session, registration and store all in one location, which made it easy for staff to manage." In addition to the training sessions, 5LINX held a company-wide party at House of Blues at Showboat Atlantic City. Many of the teams of reps held their own events on other nights in Atlantic City.

One of the highlights of the event was the arrival of The National 9/11 Flag (www.national911flag.org). The New York Says Thank You Foundation sponsors the flag at leading nationwide venues and arranges for local service heroes in all 50 states to stitch the flag back to its original 13-stripe format. The completed flag will become a part of the permanent collection of the National September 11 Memorial Museum at the World Trade Center.

Revel, a luxurious new oceanfront casino hotel featuring more than 1,000 guest rooms, is slated to open in Atlantic City in May 2012.



Photo courtesy of Revel Entertainment

Nowak says the Atlantic City Convention Center and the Atlantic City Fire Department, Atlantic City Police Department and EMTs "really helped to make it special by being there in uniform, helping to facilitate having the flag brought in and displayed. I heard from many attendees that if they didn't experience anything else at the event, but only that, then it would have been a success."

Moreover, Nowak says she would like to have "one in every city" like Anne Bergen, CMP, national sales manager at the Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Authority who went "above and beyond" to make 5LINX's first event in Atlantic City a rousing success. Nowak says Bergen anticipated all their needs by attending a prior event and learning firsthand what the organization needed and what to avoid, such as long lines for food for their large group. Nowak, whose organization is growing in leaps and bounds, will seriously consider booking Atlantic City in the future, especially since the city's room inventory is expanding.

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“Atlantic City was a choice given the wide variety of things the attendees could do when not at the event. We always choose locations based on what the city has to offer as well as the venue itself.”

Denise M. Nowak, Director of Marketing
5LINX Enterprises Inc.
Rochester, NY



Revel is slated to open May 15, 2012 with more than 1,090 rooms, 160,000 sf of convention space, a 5,500-seat event center, 700-seat performance venue and more than a dozen restaurants. Hard Rock International has submitted plans to Atlantic City for a casino hotel now that a new state law permits smaller casinos with a minimum of 200 rooms. Previously, the law required at least 500 hotel rooms.

The Trump Marina Hotel Casino is now owned by Landry's, owner of several restaurant brands and Las Vegas' Golden Nugget. They plan to convert the Trump Marina Hotel &



A sightseeing, dolphin-watch cruise boat glides into the marina near the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa and The Water Club.

Casino into a Golden Nugget and add new restaurants and entertainment concepts.

At the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, a renovation is underway. The posh hotel is reportedly investing \$50 million to refurbish 1,600-guest rooms, residences and hotel corridors. The work is slated for completion this time next year. Borgata, which opened in July 2003, and its sister property, The Water Club, an 800-room hotel that opened in 2008, together have more rooms than any other Atlantic City casino hotel.

Borgata is also popular for its 12 destination restaurants such as the New York-landmark Old Homestead Steakhouse and the celebrity chef restaurants of Bobby Flay, Michael Mina, Wolfgang Puck and more.

In addition to strolling or running along the famous four-mile Boardwalk, shopping is a big draw, too. Phase III of Atlantic City Outlets-The Walk is now open with 10 new stores to complement their 100 name-brand shops with outlet prices.

Virginia Beach

Charming Virginia Beach is within a day's drive of nearly two-third's of America's population, and Norfolk International Airport, which offers 200 flights daily, is but 20 minutes from the oceanfront. Conveniently located, easily affordable and replete with unique venues such as the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, Virginia Beach is ready made for all sizes and types of meetings.

Virginia Beach is environmentally friendly to the max. Everyone works together to preserve and sustain the health and beauty of this coastal city. The modern Virginia Beach Convention Center, America's first LEED Gold-certified convention center in the Existing Building category, sets the green tone for all meetings and events. Virginia Beach is expanding, too: Oceanfront developments are scheduled for completion next year. In addition to 31Ocean, a mixed-use project, the Oceanaire Resort Hotel & Conference Center will add 200 rooms and 10,000 sf of meeting space.

From the three-mile long boardwalk where nightlife, dining and people-watching go hand-in-hand, to Virginia Beach's Town Center where eclectic restaurants, exciting nightlife and shopping reign, to water sports and spectacular golf, there's plenty of exciting activity.

Meeting planners truly appreciate the Virginia Beach CVB and convention center staff. As vice president of convention sales and marketing Al Hutchinson blogs: The staff strives to go the extra mile. One meeting planner said, "I consider the Virginia Beach CVB an extension of my office.

They took the time to thoroughly understand my event. In every area, they exceeded my expectations. I believe they added value to my event, brought quality and professionalism to my team and helped me take my event to a level higher than it could have obtained without their involvement." **C&IT**



Built in 1888, the three-mile-long Virginia Beach Boardwalk features entertainment, shopping, food and great fun such as surrey rides.

Photo courtesy of Virginia Beach CVB



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Photo courtesy of Visit Denver

Colorado

A Pristine Path to Matchless Meetings

When meeting planners think about the unique charms of Colorado as a destination, their associations naturally drift to the great outdoors and some kind of adventure — set against the majestic canvas of the Rocky Mountains. That's largely because the state has long been a treasured haven for upscale domestic incentive travel programs, whether that means skiing exclusive slopes in winter or hiking them in summer.

Now, however, Colorado is emerging as a new and different meeting destination with lots to offer — from the urban sophistication of Denver, to the rustic mountain retreats of Colorado Springs and Estes Park, and chic, celebrity-studded ski resorts such as Vail, Keystone, Steamboat Springs, Breckenridge and Snowmass.

To planners who have used Colorado for years, it comes as no surprise that it's now gaining new fans. "I think overall value is the biggest benefit of doing a meeting in Colorado," says Megan Meyers, CMP, meeting architect at independent meeting planning company Kinsley, based in Littleton, CO. "What you have access to, in relationship to what you pay, is a huge factor. There is a huge variety of hotels, meeting venues, restaurants and services that cover the gamut — at very reasonable prices, compared to a lot of major U.S. cities."

That value comes as a pleasant surprise to planners who consider Colorado for the first time, says Meyers, who has planned meetings throughout her home state for a decade. "I wish we could do all of our clients' meetings and events in Colorado," she says. "It's just a fantastic destination. And what really surprises planners who discover it, is the range of options. What I generally hear from planners outside Colorado is, 'I didn't know there was so much to do.' And that includes the fine dining options and the activities, whether you're in Denver or the mountains."

Denver

The Mile High City is one of America's most beautiful and sophisticated urban centers, with an often-recognized advantage over most U.S. cities when it comes to general quality of life. Denver today boasts world-renowned dining, and arts and entertainment scenes. The ever-growing list of local amenities helped the city put up its second-best meeting and convention numbers ever in 2010.

"Denver is a modern urban hub that has everything you could possibly want or need as far as a meeting is concerned," says Meyers. "Denver has great hotels, from boutique hotels

to major meeting properties, and a state-of-the-art convention center.

"Denver is big enough to offer all of those things, yet small enough to be very manageable from an attendee perspective," Meyers says. "For example, you can walk from one end of downtown to the other. It's one mile long, and it's absolutely designed for tourists. There's great dining and a great arts and entertainment culture."

Another unique advantage, she says, is that "planners and attendees can have a 'big city' experience in Denver, but be just minutes away from experiencing the Rocky Mountains, whether that's a glass of wine on a patio or hiking or white-water rafting."

Yet another factor in Denver's favor is Denver International Airport, which serves as a major hub for both United Airlines and Frontier. In addition, based on demand trends, Southwest has also added a number of flights into Denver, says Meyers. "And then once you're here, it's easy to get to the mountain destinations if that's where you're headed."

Cindy Beeman, executive assistant to the chief operating officer at Sidney, NE-based outdoor outfitter Cabela's, has used Denver for the past four years for the company's annual meeting. In February, she hosted 520 attendees at the 628-room Denver Marriott Tech Center. "It's a particularly convenient destination for us," says Beeman, "because it's a three-hour drive from our corporate headquarters. Denver is also the airport we use for corporate travel. And it's also convenient for our attendees, who come from across the country."

In fact, Beeman, her management and her attendees all like Denver so much that the company has signed a four-year deal, beginning with next year's meeting, at the 1,100-room, AAA Four Diamond Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center, which opened five years ago as an official convention center hotel — a major benchmark in the city's evolution as a truly competitive national destination.

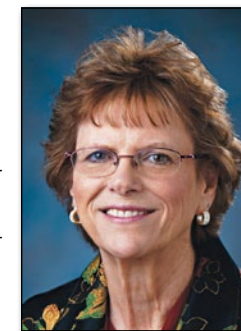
The hotel complements the acclaimed Colorado Convention Center, which features 584,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space divided into six halls. The complex also includes 63 meeting rooms, totaling 100,000 sf — all on one level. Two ballrooms, measuring 50,000 sf and 35,000 sf, offer state-of-the-art lighting and sound.

Denver also offers an eclectic menu of offsite venues and activities. Popular venues include the Denver Art Museum, Denver Museum of Nature & Science and Denver Firefighters Museum. Options that highlight local culture include the Colorado Railroad Museum and American Mountaineering Museum.

Denver also offers a variety of free tours that help meeting planners get the most from their budgets. Among the ven-

ues featuring free tours are the Colorado State Capitol, Coors Brewery and the U.S. Mint.

The city also boasts an impressive roster of golf courses. Among the most popular are the 27-hole John F. Kennedy Golf Course complex, which includes a nine-hole, par-3 course and two restaurants; and the 18-hole Overland Golf Course, formerly the Denver Country Club and featuring a new clubhouse and a restaurant. With its mature trees and time-tested challenges, Wellshire Golf Course, designed in 1926 by Donald Ross and voted among the best links in the U.S., features an 18-hole course and two restaurants.



Cindy Beeman, Executive Assistant
Cabela's, Sydney, NE

"It's a particularly convenient destination for us because it's a three-hour drive from our corporate headquarters. And it's also convenient for our attendees."

Planners can learn more about Denver at a new meeting planner website (www.visitdenver.com/conventions) launched in April by Visit Denver, the city's CVB.

Despite its many amenities, however, it is Denver's commitment to its meetings infrastructure that has made it a hot ticket. For example, notes Meyers, at about the same time the Hyatt Regency convention center hotel made its debut five years ago, the AAA Five Diamond Ritz-Carlton, Denver, with 202 guest rooms and 13,000 sf of meeting space, also made its debut. Then, last October, the 230-room Four Seasons Hotel Denver, with 17,000 sf of space, opened its doors. Other new properties include the 403-room Embassy Suites Denver-Downtown Convention Center, which opened last December.

Gaylord Entertainment's CEO Colin Reed recently announced that Gaylord will build a 1,500-room Western-themed resort hotel in Aurora, CO, 10 minutes from Denver International Airport. Gaylord chose the location because planners have ranked the Denver market among the top 10 most desirable destinations for meetings. Set to open in 2015, the hotel will have 400,000 sf of exhibition and meeting space.

Colorado Springs

Located 60 miles of south of Denver — and at a slightly higher elevation — Colorado Springs features a trio of world-famous attractions: 14,000-foot Pikes Peak, the most visited mountain in North America; the U.S. Air Force Academy; and

By John Buchanan

the U.S. Olympic Training Center. Colorado Springs also is home to two renowned meeting properties: The Broadmoor and nearby Cheyenne Mountain Resort.

Colorado Springs Airport is served by nine major airlines, including Allegiant Air, American, Continental, Delta, Frontier, Northwest, United and US Airways, which provide more than 110 flights daily. Fifty-six non-stop flights are available daily from Denver, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Sacramento, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, Houston, Dallas/Fort Worth, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Chicago and Minneapolis/St. Paul.

“We think that Colorado Springs is among the best-kept secrets in the country when it comes to meeting destinations,” says Chelsy Murphy, a spokesperson for the Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau. “And we find that when planners learn about us, they want to come here.”

Meeting planners who experience the destination tend to agree.

“Colorado Springs is just beautiful,” says Meyers. “If you’re looking for an experience away from a big urban environment — if you want a very ‘Colorado’ experience, tucked up against the mountains but having access to all the good things a city offers — then Colorado Springs is a unique and fantastic destination.”

Andrea Pennington, controller at Bonham, TX-based lawn and garden manufacturer VPG, chose Colorado Springs for the company’s annual stockholders meeting in July 2010 for 435 attendees at the 316-room Cheyenne Mountain Resort. The recently renovated resort features a 40,000-sf, IACC-certified conference center, which includes 38 meeting rooms and a tiered amphitheater, as well as a new state-of-the-art boardroom. The hotel features an 18-hole, Pete Dye-designed golf course and clubhouse facility.

“We had researched the property and heard good reports,” says Pennington, who hosted her meeting prior to the start of the renovation. “We had heard that the staff was very courteous and hospitable to meeting planners and attendees. And our people like that extra little touch. That’s what Cheyenne Mountain Resort promised us. And that’s exactly what they delivered.”

In general, Pennington says, VPG got excellent service across the board. She also gives high marks to its F&B department. “The F&B services were excellent,” she says. “It was right up there with the best we’ve ever gotten. We got more compliments from attendees than we had in the last four years.” In fact, she says, several of her attendees liked Cheyenne Mountain Resort so much they booked their own future meetings there.

Not far away is The Broadmoor, ranking high among the country’s most acclaimed and cherished meeting properties. It has received a AAA Five Diamond award for 35 consecutive years, a feat matched only by three other U.S. hotels.

Opened in 1918, The Broadmoor set the architectural and design standards for an opulent, elegant resort, featuring a spectacular curved marble staircase, dramatic chandeliers, Della Robbia-style tile, hand-painted beams and ceilings, a carved marble fountain and a striking pink stucco façade.

Set on 3,000 acres, the 744-unit resort complex includes 593 guest rooms, 107 suites and 44 new cottage bedrooms added in 2009. The hotel also features 185,000 sf of meeting space, including the 60,000-sf Broadmoor Hall completed in 2005. In addition, the resort offers a five-star spa and fitness center, a salon, 18 restaurants, cafes and lounges, and 25 specialty and boutique retail shops.

But The Broadmoor is much more than a list of its features and amenities, says Meyers, who hosted a meeting there in June. What makes it so unique and spectacular? “The first thing is location,” Meyer says. “It sits at the base of Pikes Peak. So you feel like you’re tucked away from the world. And the property is just so beautiful, with its lake and traditional buildings. And it has great golf courses.” And all of that is supported by a legendary standard of service.



The Lakeside Terrace Patio at The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, provides spectacular views of the stunning scenery surrounding this iconic resort, which sits at the base of Pikes Peak.

Another local landmark is the U.S. Olympic Training Center, which represents a penultimate opportunity for teambuilding and motivation. The 32-acre facility features the 4,114-sf West Wing Conference Center, suitable for up to 200 attendees, as well as 19 other meeting rooms. Receptions for up to 350 can be staged in the Visitor Center’s Hall of Fame Rotunda, as well as in actual gym locations. Olympic biathlete Eli Bremer, who also holds an MBA and operates Colorado Springs-based Five Ring Insight, currently works with corporate meeting clients to arrange custom-tailored and powerful motivational and team-building programs at the Olympic complex.

This fall, Colorado Springs also will have a new hotel, the

117-room The Mining Exchange, a Wyndham Grand Hotel housed in four exquisitely restored buildings that date back to the days of local gold and silver mining.

Exclusive Enclaves

In addition to Denver and Colorado Springs, Colorado offers a diverse roster of charming small-town destinations that dot the Rockies.

Estes Park is located 90 minutes north of Denver. Known as “the gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park,” it was named the No. 2 outdoor and adventure destination in the world last year with a Traveler’s Choice Award from TripAdvisor.

Estes Park also can claim a manmade landmark, The Stanley Hotel, opened in 1909 by F.O. Stanley, creator of the Stanley Steamer automobile. A lovingly preserved example of the car adorns the lobby. The Stanley was used in the TV remake of Stephen King’s “The Shining” — and is famous for its ghosts. It has been featured on The Travel Channel’s “Ghost Hunters.”

Featuring 135 rooms and 16,000 sf of meeting space — much of it housed in historic structures with natural light — The Stanley is also acclaimed for its extraordinary F&B.

Another local meeting property is the 150-room Rocky Mountain Park Inn, which operates the adjoining 12,000-sf Estes Park Conference Center in partnership with the city. A little-known but spectacular resort property that also delivers excellent value is the Estes Park Center operated by YMCA of the Rockies. The sprawling, secluded complex, which offers a conference center and practically every outdoor activity known to man, can accommodate groups of up to 4,000 people.

For small incentive groups or meetings, a popular choice is the charming Mary’s Lake Lodge, which features new rustic condo units and a superb restaurant, Chalet Room. The hotel is developing plans for a new conference center.

Other popular Colorado destinations include the marquee-name ski resorts of Vail, Keystone and Steamboat Springs. For meetings, they are popular year-round. “They’re each very unique in terms of the environment and feel that they offer,” Meyers says. “But Vail is a little more high-end.”

That might be an understatement. The celebrity hideaway is among the most exclusive luxury brands in the world and offers a sophisticated range of activities in winter and summer. Popular summer activities include tours of Vail Valley via horseback or Jeep with Adventure Ridge, which also features a rock-climbing wall, disc golf and traditional lawn sports such as bocce and horseshoes. In winter, groups can rent a ski slope and stage their own race, then enjoy an après ski reception in a rustic lodge with breathtaking views.

Vail’s major meeting properties include the 344-room, AAA Four Diamond Vail Marriott Mountain Resort and Spa; the 180-room The Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch and the recently renovated, 291-room, AAA Four Diamond Vail Cascade Resort

& Spa, with 45,000 sf of meeting space. The town’s newest hotel is the 121-room Four Seasons Resort Vail, which opened last December and features 8,510 sf of meeting space.

Keystone, located east of Vail, is famous for its ski slopes as well as its mountain biking, white-water rafting and golf. Despite the town’s small size, it’s home to the largest conference venue in the Colorado Rocky Mountains — the 1,200-room Keystone Resort and Conference Center, spread across five individual villages, including the AAA Four Diamond Keystone Lodge & Spa and the Ski Tip Lodge, an 1880s stage-coach stop turned bed and breakfast. The resort complex also includes modern, secluded condominiums and features more than 100,000 sf of meeting and event space. Summer activities include four-wheel drive tours and ATV tours, as well as balloon rides, mountain biking, fly fishing, horseback riding, white-water rafting and boating on Keystone Lake. In addition to skiing, other popular group activities include full moon snowshoe tours, a “peak to peak” snowshoe tour, a scenic sleigh ride and snowmobile tours. Keystone Resort also features a state-of-the-art spa and two 18-hole golf courses.

Steamboat Springs, known for both its skiing and its ranching, has a colorful, fascinating history that is preserved in its downtown area, defined by historic buildings, businesses that date back a century and quaint neighborhoods — all complemented by modern restaurants, bars and shops. Steamboat Springs also hosts a year-round array of art festivals, rodeos, farmer’s markets and other events.

Like its sister destinations in Colorado, the Steamboat Springs experience is built around exhilarating outdoor activities and adventure. And it offers a long list of options year-round.

One of its most charming amenities is its walking tour, which showcases buildings that date back to 1800s. The local Tread of Pioneers Museum offers free local history talks, and on the first Friday of each month, there’s a free evening art walk. The nearby Yampa River offers superb fishing, and Steamboat Springs also features two mineral hot springs.

There are two major meeting hotels in town. One is the 188-room Sheraton Steamboat Springs, which completed a \$20 million renovation in 2008. The property, the only full-service ski-in/ski-out resort and conference center in Steamboat, features 28,000 sf of meeting space. Its Sevens Bistro and Saddles Lounge restaurants feature executive chef Jon Demel’s unique take on Colorado cuisine. The hotel’s Rollingstone Ranch Golf Course, designed by Robert Trent Jones II, has been named one of the state’s best for 2011 by *Colorado Avid Golfer*.

The other Steamboat Springs hotel is the 328-room Steamboat Grand, featuring 17,000 sf of meeting space and offering both hotel rooms and condominiums.

So no matter which path meeting planners take from rustic adventures to luxurious incentives, Colorado offers plenty of options that won’t break the meeting’s budget.

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2. Affordability

Denver was named one of the most affordable destinations for business travelers by Corporate Travel Index.

3. Accessibility

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4. Hotels

8,400 hotel rooms within walking distance of the Convention Center, including a new Four Seasons and Embassy Suites.

5. Meeting Facilities

From our two-million square-foot Colorado Convention Center to unique off-site venues, Denver has the meeting space for you.

With a full-time sustainable programs manager, an award-winning Greenprint program and our unique, online carbon calculators, Denver is the premier green meetings destination.

6. Service

We've won all major convention industry service awards for the past 18 years, proof positive of our commitment to planners.

7. Green City

Selected by Lonely Planet as a
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Rated World's
#1 Convention City


DENVER
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Texas To-Do List

What's New & Notable in the Lone Star State



It's certainly no secret that Texas is a pretty darn big state. In fact, the person who coined this phrase while driving through the Lone Star state probably said it best: "Sun is risen, sun is set, and we ain't out of Texas yet!"

When you're a meeting planner, though, big is good, because it means that you have a big list of properties and venues to choose from when planning a meeting, from the Dallas metro area in the north all the way down to Houston and Galveston in the south. Here's an update on what's new and notable:

Dallas

November 11, 2011 will mark the grand opening of the city's newest convention center hotel, the 1,001-room Omni Dallas Hotel. Connected to the Dallas Convention Center via skybridge, the new hotel is being built to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's standards for LEED Silver certification. It will feature 110,000 sf of function space comprising 39 meeting rooms, including two ballrooms. Other amenities will include a heated infinity swimming pool and sauna, the Mokara Spa, and four dining outlets, including Texas Spice, which will feature fresh farm-to-fork cuisine.

The event services company Freeman, which is headquartered in Dallas, will be the first major group to hold an event at the Omni. "Freeman is extraordinarily excited," says Bob Moore, the company's chief sales officer. "We just wanted to support the fact that Dallas has re-entered the marketplace as a major destination for organizations that have not been able to consider downtown for a lack of hotel rooms."

"This is a magnificent new building, so we're just thrilled to

be the first major group in there," he continues. "I took a hard hat (tour) a couple of weeks ago and the quality of the finish in that hotel is just remarkable. They've got two very workable ballrooms, so it just makes for a great venue, plus it's connected to the convention center. While we may not need the convention center for our particular meeting, for many others it will add tremendous flexibility."

Freeman's national sales meeting will require 400-500 rooms on its peak night. "We're going to try to educate and motivate and celebrate with these people," Moore says. Since a portion of the program will be dedicated to sales training, he likes the fact that the new Omni has multiple breakout rooms. "The flow of meetings and moving your people around the hotel has been very well thought through, so it's going to make for us having a very effective use of time."

When asked what gave him the confidence to book a property during its pre-opening phase, Moore replies, "Like a lot of things, you don't just buy the product, you buy the people. I have a lot of confidence in Omni people in general about being able to honor their word, and I have particular confidence in Ed Netzhammer.



"We just wanted to support the fact that Dallas has re-entered the marketplace as a major destination for organizations that have not been able to consider downtown for a lack of hotel rooms."

Bob Moore, Chief Sales Officer
Freeman, Dallas, TX

I know he has experience in opening large hotels, and when he says it's going to be open on a certain day, it's going to be open." Netzhammer is Omni's regional vice president and will serve as general manager of the new hotel.

Following on the heels of its \$125 million renovation project, the 1,606-room Hilton Anatole recently completed construction of the \$2.3 million Trinity Corridor, an enclosed, air-conditioned passageway that connects the hotel to the Trinity Ballroom and

Exhibit Hall. As meeting attendees travel through the corridor, they will be able to enjoy views of the seven-acre Anatole Sculpture Park located on the hotel's 45-acre campus. The Hilton Anatole offers more than 600,000 sf of event space.

Plano

Located just minutes north of Dallas, Plano is home to a popular attraction: the Southfork Ranch Event & Conference Center, known worldwide as the site where the television series "Dallas" was filmed. Today, the facility hosts groups from 10 to 10,000 in its more than 63,000 sf of indoor event space set on a sprawling 300-acre ranch. Among its event spaces are the 26,500-sf Oil Baron's Ballroom, the 16,500-sf Lone Star Atrium and the 6,300-sf Ewing Ballroom. Attendees might also enjoy grabbing a snack at Miss Ellie's Porch Deli.

Irving

After 12 years of planning, the 275,000-sf Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas made its debut in late January. The \$233 million multiuse facility includes a 50,000-sf, column-free exhibit hall, a 20,000-sf ballroom, and 20,000 sf of meeting space for breakout sessions. It is located in Las Colinas, a 12,000-acre master planned community where more than \$2 billion is being invested in hotel, retail, entertainment, office, meeting facility and residential development.

Grapevine

Located between Dallas and Fort Worth, Grapevine is known for its historic downtown area. It is also home to the 1,511-room Gaylord Texan Hotel & Convention Center, which offers more than 400,000 sf of flexible meeting space and a 25,000-sf day spa and fitness center. The resort recently celebrated the grand opening of its 10-acre Paradise Springs outdoor pool complex, which also has been constructed to host private catered functions. According to a spokesperson for Gaylord Texan, "The pool has four private event areas that have audio-visual capabilities at each where live music, staging, presentations, etc. can be set up. For large group events, all four private event areas can be combined to host up to 3,200 attendees."

Arlington

The Arlington Convention Center is located just 15 minutes south of DFW, but that's not all that's convenient about this

event facility, which offers 50,000 sf of exhibit space, a 30,000-sf Grand Hall and 8,500 sf of meeting space. It's set right in the heart of Arlington's entertainment district, which includes such major attractions as the \$1.2 billion Cowboys Stadium (home of the Dallas Cowboys), Rangers Ballpark (home of the Texas Rangers), Six Flags Over Texas and Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, the largest water park in north Texas. Groups staying at selected hotels in Arlington may qualify for free transportation on the Arlington Trolley Service, which runs between the area's hotels, attractions and the convention center.

Austin

One of the newest meeting properties in Austin, also known as "The Live Music Capital of the World," is the 297-room AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center at The University of Texas. Accredited by the International Association of Conference Centers, the hotel has views of the state Capitol and 40,000 sf of meeting space, including a multimedia amphitheater.

The new W Hotel Austin features 251 guest rooms and 10,000 sf of event space. An outdoor terrace connects the W's meeting space to a spectacular new venue, Austin City Limits Live at Moody Theater, where the popular PBS program is

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By Karen Brost

filmed. The theater can be booked for corporate dinners, awards presentations and other events.

According to the Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau, more than 500 groups have bypassed Austin because of a lack of hotel rooms. Two new projects will help to remedy the situation: Construction will begin in 2012 on a convention-style,

“There are certainly a lot of properties around the Gulf Coast, but I just keep coming back to Moody Gardens.”

Bob Kibler, President
Gulf Coast Conference, Tomball, TX



1,003-room Marriott Marquis Hotel three blocks from the Austin Convention Center; and plans are in the works for a \$350 million hotel also near the convention center that will offer 1,035 rooms and 115,000 sf of meeting space. Hilton is reportedly under consideration as operator of the hotel.

San Antonio

San Antonio's world famous River Walk with its shops, restaurants and galleries isn't the only reason that groups love to meet in this city. For Jeff Abramson, vice president of purchasing and distribution for Famous Dave's BBQ in Minnetonka, MN, there were many more reasons that he booked his annual meeting for 300-350 suppliers, general managers, franchise personnel and corporate office personnel in San Antonio.

“San Antonio is a great city,” he says. “It's the combination of weather, affordability and being a nice destination where you can do different activities. It's the right combination of business and leisure that we're looking for.”

Abramson chose the 508-room Westin La Cantera Resort for his program. “I had done a conference there at my previous company and the experience was very good, so I felt like it would be a good place to go back to. First of all, it's a beautiful property. It's one of my favorite properties in the country based on the ambience, the rooms and the service, and the fact that there's a Starbucks right inside the hotel. It's got a beautiful view, just a very nice setting. There are different places to retreat to, like a very large bar for large gatherings after the structured events.”

The Westin La Cantera offers more than 39,000 sf of indoor meeting space including a 17,000-sf ballroom, and more than 53,000 sf of outdoor event space. Amenities include two golf courses, six pools, five dining venues, and a health club and spa.

“You're close enough to the city that it's easy to get to and from,” Abramson continued, “but you're still a little bit separated from the city of San Antonio and the River Walk, so that you

can keep people captive to have your meetings. If you're right out there in the middle of the fun, sometimes we've found that it's hard to keep everybody's attention. So being up in the Hill Country like (the Westin La Cantera) works very well.

“We just love the property,” he adds. “The meeting space is fantastic with places to set up and conduct your hospitality desk and there are lots of places for the different breakout sessions that we do. And we're very impressed with the food and beverage.” He also noted that the golf facilities are excellent.

Located along the River Walk steps from fine dining restaurants and quaint shops is the chic Hotel Valencia Riverwalk. Distinguished by its Tuscan architecture, brick ceilings and walls, fire pits and waterfalls, the hotel offers 213 luxury accommodations and 7,000 sf of meeting and event space including an executive boardroom. Overlooking all the action on the River Walk are private dining rooms, an open-air courtyard and terraces, as well as the “ultra-hip” VBar.

Another San Antonio meeting property, the new JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa, opened early last year. It features 1,002 guest rooms, 265,000 sf of meeting and event space, 36 holes of golf, a spa, lazy river and more.

“The JW is extraordinary,” says Darlene Baldearena, vice president of the destination management company Circa Texas Inc. “We are seeing groups we've never seen before that would never have considered San Antonio as a destination because they're a high-end buyer. We're getting to showcase our city to a whole new audience.” Baldearena says one of the most popular choices right now for offsite corporate events is the new Lonesome Dove Room at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. The Texas ranch house-themed room, which accommodates from 150 to 500 people, opens out onto the River Walk Grotto and features Western elements such as antler chandeliers, cowhide rugs, wrought-iron barstools and plush leather furnishings.

Houston

Planners interested in making their meetings as green as possible will be interested to know that the EPA has recognized the city of Houston as the No. 1 purchaser of green power in the nation. One quarter of the electricity the city purchases comes from wind power.

The new 267-room Westin Houston Memorial City opened its doors in March in the city's Memorial City District, which contains numerous shops, restaurants and entertainment venues. The new hotel is connected to Memorial City Mall via skybridge. The Westin offers more than 30,000 sf of meeting and banquet space, an infinity pool on the 18th floor featuring panoramic views of the city's skyline, and shuttle service to nearby shopping.

Another property that benefits from a convenient location is Hotel Sorella, which is the centerpiece of Houston's CityCentre development with its elegant dining, sophisticated

shops and open-air plazas. The luxury hotel has 244 accommodations, and an outdoor pool and lounge terrace, both of which overlook the CityCentre Plaza. The hotel currently offers 10,000 sf of meeting space including a 4,000-sf ballroom and two VIP boardrooms. New construction is well underway on the 8,500-sf Hotel Sorella Meetings and Events Centre, which is scheduled for completion late this summer to coincide with the hotel's second anniversary. More meeting space is accessible via a glass skywalk linking the hotel to the Norris Conference Center, which offers 18,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space.

Galveston

The Gulf Coast Conference (GCC), which takes place annually in Galveston, brings petrochemical refining and environmental experts together for education and networking. “We usually bring in about 1,500 to 2,000 people,” says Bob Kibler, president of the GCC. “Last year, we drew from all 50 states and 23 different countries.” Each year, the GCC meets at the Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa and Convention Center. “There are certainly a lot of properties around the Gulf Coast, but I just keep coming back to Moody Gardens,” Kibler explains. “The property is fabulous, but it's the people that keep me coming back. Everyone there, from maid service all the way up to the management of the hotel is just really in tune with our conference and what we want to accomplish.”

Moody Gardens offers 428 guest rooms and more than 100,000 sf of meeting space. The complex has a golf course, aquarium, science exhibits, water park, paddlewheel boat, 4D and 3D theaters and an 18-passenger ride surrounded by a wraparound 180-degree screen. Moody Gardens also recently opened its newly redesigned Rainforest Pyramid after a \$25 million enhancement project featuring a tree-top canopy walkway that gives guests a birds-eye view of more than 1,000 exotic plants and animals.

“We do a golf tournament at the Moody golf course on Monday of the program,” Kibler adds. “We also sometimes do things at the Lone Star Flight

Museum.” The 60,000-sf museum, which boasts one of the finest collections of restored aircraft in the nation, can be booked for corporate events.

So in the end, it's OK to say “we ain't out of Texas yet.” As Abramson found with his experience at The Westin La Cantera, it's good to find a destination that attendees are more than happy to spend time in. “It keeps me popular here,” he laughs. **C&IT**



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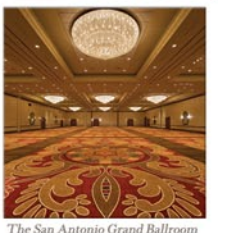
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MCKAY

Carol Queen was named director of sales for Gastonia Conference Center, Gastonia, NC. She formerly served as director of catering with Sheraton Hotels & Resorts and Embassy Suites Hotels in Charlotte, NC.

DoubleTree by Hilton Grand Hotel Biscayne Bay, Miami, FL, has named **Joel Palleschi** as director of sales and marketing. He formerly served as sales manager for the hotel. **Saul Fonseca** was named sales manager. He most recently served as account executive for national accounts at Royal Caribbean International.

The Napa Valley Destination Council, Napa Valley, CA, has named **Kathleen Fitzgerald** as vice president of sales. She formerly served as director of sales at the Ventura Visitors & Convention Bureau, Ventura, CA.

Andrea M. Powers was named director of sales for Richmond Hill City Center, Richmond Hill, GA. Most recently, she was catering sales manager at the Mansion on Forsyth Park, Savannah, GA.

Fantasy Springs Resort Casino, Indio, CA, has named **Shawn Sande** as director of sales. He was sales manager at Agua Caliente in Rancho Mirage, CA.

Tod Roadarmel was named director of sales and marketing for the Omni Nashville Hotel, which is scheduled to open in late 2013. He joins the Omni Nashville Hotel from RevSource, a Nashville-based hospitality sales and marketing firm, which he founded in 2002.

Mark Theis was named director of group sales - North America, for Starwood Hotels & Resorts. Theis, who has more than 20 years of hospitality sales experience, most recently served as executive vice president of the Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau.

DoubleTree Atlanta-Northlake, Atlanta, GA, has named **Ciaran Daly** as area director of sales and marketing. Formerly, he directed sales and marketing for two Sage hotels in the Atlanta market.

Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces has appointed **Lisa Iaquez** director of corporate and group sales - the Americas, based in New York and responsible for the Eastern U.S. She was most recently global director of corporate sales with Jumeirah Hotels. **Frances Maxwell** was named director of corporate, group and incentive sales - the Americas, based in Chicago. She most recently served as director of regional accounts, Midwest, for Wynn and Encore Las Vegas.

Kathy Van Vechten was named vice president of sales and marketing for the Hilton Carlsbad Oceanfront Resort and Spa, opening in spring 2012 in Carlsbad, CA. She most recently served as vice president of marketing and sales at Terranea Resort, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA.

The Hilton Orlando, Orlando, FL, has named **Bill McKay** as director of sales. He most recently oversaw citywide bookings for the Savannah Convention and Visitors Bureau, Savannah, GA. **C&IT**

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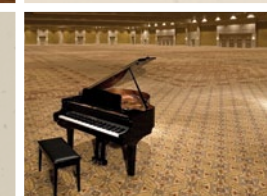
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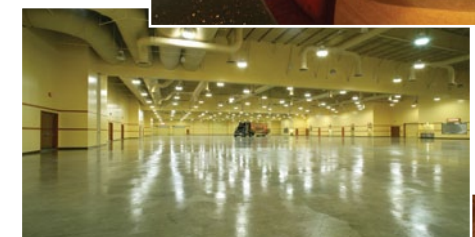
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