



The 50th Annual Country Music Awards were staged on Nov. 2, at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville. Shown here (left to right): Grammy award winning songwriter, Tim Nichols; Stacie Standifer, Nichols' wife; Sunny Spyridon; and Butch Spyridon, President & CEO, Nashville CVC. Photo by Ann Richardson

Battle for the Boardwalk: New Jersey Rejects Atlantic City's Recovery Plan

By Todd McElwee

Atlantic City and New Jersey state officials are wrangling for the control of the seaside destination after the Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Nov. 1 rejection of the city's Oct. 25, Five-Year Recovery plan.

Two days later, Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian and the city submitted additional information to the Atlantic City's Five-Year Recovery Plan, though threat of a state takeover still looms.

"As promised, we have delivered Atlantic City's supplemental information to the Five-Year Recovery Plan to the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs," said Guardian. "This in-depth data and analysis was compiled with the assistance of PFM; NW Financial; and McManimon, Scotland, and Baumann; whom together, have over 75 years of experience working with financially distressed cities. We have taken the time to go through each of the Commissioner's concerns or questions and have provided additional comprehensive information for clarification. We believe that after further review of this supplemental information, the Commissioner will have a better understanding of our Five-Year Recovery Plan, and will be inclined to accept the plan as the most fiscally responsible way forward."

Charles Richman, Commissioner, DCA

Please turn to page 7

WFLA-TV Questions

Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater Credit Card Spending

Story Is "Hatchet Job," Says CVB Leader

By Jonathan Trager

Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater is disputing a local television news report that focused on CVB employee expenditures on county-issued credit cards.

Mark Douglas, an investigative reporter for WFLA-TV, reported on Oct. 31 that 32 staff members spent \$1.3 million on

the credit cards during the eight-month period ending in July 2016. The CVB has a budget of \$28 million.

In his story, Douglas cited spending such as \$196,000 for "luxury travel" to destinations as far away as South Africa and \$15,000 to entertain potential clients during a Colorado Rockies stadium event and another one at a Minnesota Twins

game. The CVB also sponsors "dream vacations" to Pinellas destinations for travel agents, travel writers, and meeting planners, he said.

The piece quotes from an interview with David Downing, Executive Director of Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater, who said he's proud of how the staff spends

Please turn to page 7

Starwood to Lay Off 163 Stamford HQ Employees Due to Marriott Merger

By Grant Broadhurst

As part of the Marriott-Starwood merger which finalized in September 163 people who work at Starwood's Stamford, Connecticut headquarters will have their jobs eliminated by mid-January. However, due to outstanding agreements

with the state, the remaining Stamford employees might be safe – for now.

The majority of eliminated positions are at high levels of management: vice presidents, directors, and managers. Regular workers, while impacted,

Please turn to page 4

Inside



Page 3

Page 2
Savannah Abandons Hotel Moratorium Idea

Page 5
Susan Robertson Becomes CIC Chair

Page 5
New NY Law Targets Certain Home-Sharing Companies

Page 6
Gary Wheat Named CEO of Macon-Bibb County CVB

Questions Swirling Around Proposed D.C. Universal Paid Leave Legislation

By Todd McElwee

ASAE is one of many Washington, D.C. organizations uncertain about the next chapter of the Universal Paid Leave act of 2016 (UPL), which provides private sector employees up to 12 weeks of paid leave for the birth of a child or to recover from an illness.

Legislation champion Council Chairman Phil Mendelson is keeping alterations close to the vest. According to the *Washington Post*, he is saying he planned to submit a draft to the district's CFO on Nov. 1 for review of its fiscal impact, but he won't share it with Mayor Muriel Bowser or the public until it is brought up for a council vote.

In October, ASAE and a

coalition of D.C. employers submitted the Employer Mandate bill to the mayor's office and council as an alternative to Mendelson's proposal.

Jim Clarke, CAE, Sr. Vice President of Public Policy, ASAE, told *USAE* a lot of uncertainty surrounds Mendelson's next move. He added the Employer Mandate bill provides a clearer picture of what D.C. organizations can expect.

Introduced in February, the latest edition of the bill includes a 1% tax on employers as a funding mechanism with the program managed by the city.

Individuals who earn an average weekly wage that is

Please turn to page 3

NEWS

Savannah Abandons Hotel Moratorium Idea

By Grant Broadhurst

Savannah, Georgia came close to placing a moratorium on new hotels in its historic district, but city leaders have reversed course amid legal concerns.

The moratorium was considered because two developers want to build hotels in historic Savannah, a move with which residents and most of the city council disagreed. They worried about how it would change the feel and quality of life in the area. However, amid warnings that a moratorium could be illegal, the city council decided not to pursue a moratorium on Oct. 27.

West elm Hotels, the developer behind the hotel planned for Drayton Street, had requested a zoning ordinance amendment that would clarify the site is commercial, which would have enabled the planned hotel to have a fifth

“bonus” story. However, while the Zoning Administrator, Shane Colbin, approved the interpretation, and while the Historic Review Board approved the fifth floor in July, the Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals denied the story. In a seven to one vote, the city council agreed with the Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals. West elm Hotels did not respond to requests for comment.

Liberty Tattnell Partners, the developer behind the hotel planned for a vacant lot on Tattnell Street across from the Savannah Civic Center, had a simple zoning request: they wanted a bar. Under current zoning, they can build a hotel and restaurant on the site but food must be served alongside alcohol. Many residents feared that a hotel on the property would be a nuisance and damage the character of the area. Harold Yellin, the attorney representing the develop-

ment, did not respond to requests for comment.

Concerned by these two developments, Alderman Van Johnson brought up the option of a moratorium on new hotels in the historic district on Sep. 29. Alderman Tony Thomas made a formal motion for a moratorium.

“I don’t believe that Savannah has a strategic plan in place,” Thomas told *USAE*, explaining he wanted a moratorium to give Savannah time to develop a plan and decide what it wants to look like in 20, 50, or 100 years. “It was not so much as an anti-business move no matter how much people are trying to spin it,” Thomas added.

“We are starting to lose our uniqueness to flagged brands from around the world,” Thomas explained. “It’s not a bad problem to have.” It is, however, something that must be handled with

care and a long-term plan, Thomas said.

Alderman Julian Miller asked Savannah Attorney Brooks Stillwell whether such a measure would be legal. Stillwell said it would not be in general, and he confirmed this evaluation two weeks later, saying any moratorium would have to be limited and defined – and there could still be legal challenges over property rights. Stillwell did not respond to requests for comment, nor did Mayor Eddie DeLoach.

In Thomas’ opinion, however, something more insidious was going on. “I believe there was a heavy lobby by the business industry and the business community,” Thomas said, explaining, “There’s politics in everything. When I mentioned the word moratorium, the phones started ringing.”

Nevertheless, the legality of such a moratorium is questionable, although Thomas assured *USAE* the moratorium would have had no impact on hotels currently in the planning stage or under construction.

“I have been told that a moratorium as originally proposed was illegal in the state of Georgia,” Joseph Marinelli, the president of Visit Savannah, told *USAE*. “I think the leadership of the city of Savannah is looking for new ways to manage the city’s growth in tourism development.” Marinelli added, “As new boutique hotels come into the market, as new restaurants come into the market, as new retail comes into the market: Whatever the destination is, our job is to market it.”

Even if the council had decided to institute a limited, defined moratorium it would have been likely ineffective. “We would have been piecemealing this stuff,” Alderman John Hall, a Democrat and the only vote in favor of letting west elm Hotels build a fifth floor, told *USAE*. “I think we would have been defeating the purpose of the moratorium if we didn’t do a blanket moratorium.”

Even so, Thomas doesn’t believe he lost. “I feel that I have achieved everything that I wanted to do by bringing it up,” Thomas said. “People are starting to talk.” Note, though, while Thomas was the first to make a formal motion, Johnson was the first to mention the idea.

Hall, however, opposed the moratorium and is glad that it has fallen by the wayside.

“I hear a lot of people talking about the proliferation of hotels in the city, but we have to have places for people to stay,” Hall said. “We’re talking heads and beds. That’s what will grow our city. I don’t think we have enough rooms because we have events all the time in Savannah.” He added, “I think we’re stifling free enterprise when we say we’re going to throw up a moratorium.”

However, Hall said it’s not over for hotels in the historic district, saying that the matter will probably come up again before the council. He offered a clear idea of what the council should do, though: “Let the industry grow. It will do all right by itself. We don’t need to regulate that. This is a destination city, and heads and beds – that’s what keeps our economy growing.”

The question Savannah lawmakers must answer is whether they want to accept the growing pains or closely manage Savannah’s growth to keep its character as it is.

EXHIBITOR
KIOSKS
ON SALE NOW

PRESENTED BY

Destination
Marketing
Association International

DESTINATION
Showcase 2017

Destination Showcase has been completely revamped for 2017 to maximum opportunities for meaningful connections between planners and DMOs.

Reserve your booth before the December 16, 2016 advanced registration deadline to receive discounted pricing.

Contact Sarah Dickson
202-835-4218
SDickson@destinationmarketing.org

MARCH 2
Marriott Wardman Park
Washington, DC

RESERVE TODAY

destinationmarketing.org/destinationshowcase

HOTS

HOTS' Requiem for the Royal Clarence Hotel... England's oldest hotel is in ruins after a 287-year run and a particularly nasty fire, and HOTS can't help but feel a tear welling up. HOTS had never actually heard of the Royal Clarence until fire began to roar through it, but that makes the grief no lighter. The hotel spent its long life in Exeter, England and in its rooms abolitionists met in the 1700s and 1800s and Fascists in the 1930s. But HOTS prefers to remember the good times like when Beatrix Potter visited and complimented the view.

The poor building survived the Blitz during WWII, so it's an ignominious fate to be taken out by fire, which was fed for 24 hours by a broken gas main. The front wall of the hotel, still bravely spelling out "Clarence Hotel," must be demolished, but HOTS hopes as much as possible will be salvaged. The Andrews Brownsword Hotels group says they will rebuild it, and HOTS hopes that Royal Clarence Hotel II will be a close replica of the original and

feature as many artifacts as possible. In this way, the Royal Clarence will rise from the ashes like a white phoenix – and hopefully be fireproof like a phoenix too.

HOTS' Take on Celebrity Hotels... Recently HOTS read in People that Jessica Alba and Martha Stewart are both – maybe – considering opening competing hotel brands. At a Martha Stewart hotel HOTS imagines every banquet table would have a floral centerpiece and there would be wildly convenient secure phone lines HOTS could use to speak with its broker. HOTS' main concern with a Martha Stewart hotel, though, is that all the sheets would come from K-Mart.

A Jessica Alba hotel sounds nice, however. HOTS only remembers the actress from Fantastic Four, which HOTS actually didn't much care for. But evidently the hotel brand would be called Honest Hotels because Alba has several different product lines using the "Honest" label. And after all, HOTS would certainly prefer to put its head on a bed at an Honest Hotel over a Hotel of Hideous Lies any night of the week.



On Oct. 28, the Greater Madison CVB's Madison Area Sports Commission (MASC) announced the North American Ice Fishing Circuit would come to the city from Feb. 3-5, 2017. Shown here (right to left) on a Lake Mendota dock: Brandon Holstein, MASC; Sharon Hovde, Clean Lakes Alliance; Jack Baker, President North American Ice Fishing Circuit; Amy Supple, COO Edgewater Hotel; Andrew Nussbaum, Wisconsin Department of Tourism; Chris Armstrong, MASC; Beth Donley, Clean Lakes Alliance; and James Tye, Clean Lakes Alliance.

U.S. Travel Association's Travel Trends Index Shows Muted Growth in September

By Todd McElwee

The September edition of U.S. Travel Association's Travel Trend Index (TTI) shows while overall travel volume grew in the month it accelerated at a slower year-over-year rate than in August.

TTI is an assessment tool, developed in conjunction with Oxford Economics. It consists of the Current Travel Index (CTI) measuring trips involving hotel stays and/or flights each month, and the Leading Travel Index (LTI), which gauges the likely average pace and direction of business and leisure travel, both domestic and international inbound. Numeric scores are assigned to every segment in current, three-month and six-month predictive indicators with scores above 50 indicating growth, and scores below contraction.

September registered a 51.8 CTI, down from August's 52.4. Three-month LTI remained at 50.8 with the six-month reading experiencing a slight uptick from 50.6 to 50.7. The LTI readings indicate that U.S. travel volume is expected to grow at a year-over-year rate of around 1.5% through March. The CTI has registered above 50 for 80 consecutive months.

utive months.

"The American travel economy has thus far successfully weathered Zika, Brexit, a volatile presidential campaign and a powerhouse U.S. dollar," said Roger Dow, President & CEO, U.S. Travel. "Since 9/11, this industry has repeatedly proven itself to be one of our economy's sturdiest performers in terms of its ability to grow and create jobs in the face of challenges."

Domestic business travel was the lone segment to experience growth in September jumping from 51.1 to 52.1. Leisure travel dropped from 53.1 to 51.8. September was the first time in more than a year business outpaced leisure with U.S. Travel analysts posit the sudden burst of energy was likely due in part to the shift of the Jewish holidays to October.

International travel dipped from 51.1 to 50.9. However, September's tally still bettered the category's six-month average of 50.7. Both international LTIs however show drops below 50 while every domestic segment clears the mark.

David Huether Sr. Vice President, Research said in the report: "While growth in international inbound travel to the

U.S. is still relatively slow compared to domestic leisure travel, the fact that inbound travel remains positive is good news. First of all, it demonstrates that the growing interest we've seen from international travelers in visiting the U.S. has actually resulted in booked trips. Secondly, this growth is especially impressive against the backdrop of this year's challenging global economic environment. Overall, it's a sign that travel is faring well compared to other trade-engaged sectors of the economy."

Paid Leave

Continued from page 1

equal to or less than double the District's minimum wage (\$10.50 per hour) shall be entitled to payment equaling 90% of their average weekly wage rate. Those earning an average weekly wage greater than double the District's minimum wage shall be entitled to payment equaling 90% of double the District's minimum wage; plus 50% of the amount by which the eligible individual's average weekly wage rate exceeds double the District's minimum wage with a \$1,500 cap. The *Post* reports the plan would cost between \$300-\$400 million annually.

ASAE remains concerned with 12 weeks off; bureaucrats and not organizations running the plan; and the need for an exemption for employers with 20 or less employees. It has also pointed to D.C.'s own CFO, Jeffrey Dewitt believing the expected cost of the benefit would likely exceed anticipated revenue from the employer tax.

ASAE says the Employer Mandate bill will be less expensive for employers. It provides up to eight weeks of paid leave benefits for eligible employees who take leave for their own serious health condition or the serious health condition of a child, spouse or domestic partner, or to care for a new baby. Employees who have worked for their employer for at least 12 months and for 1,250 hours would be eligible. The effective date would be one

Please turn to page 8

WEEKLY NEWS
OF ASSOCIATIONS
CYB AND
HOTELS

USAE

PUBLISHER & EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Anne Daly Heller

annedalyheller@usae-e-mail.com

PUBLISHER, CUSTOMNEWS, INC.

Ross E. Heller

rheller@usae-e-mail.com

VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER

James Heller

jheller@usae-e-mail.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Jonathan Trager

jtrager@usae-e-mail.com

ASSOCIATION EDITOR

Todd McElwee

todd@usae-e-mail.com

HOTEL EDITOR

Grant Broadhurst

gbroadhurst@usae-e-mail.com

ART DIRECTOR

Diane Nichols

dkn@usae-e-mail.com

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR

Christy Pumphrey

cpumphrey@usae-e-mail.com

CIRCULATION ASSISTANT

Paris Smith

Due to the high volume of photos received, *USAE* cannot return any photographs or slides unless through a prearranged agreement with the Editorial Department.

To ensure publication, all Letters to the Editor must include a telephone number and mailing address in order to verify authenticity.

Complete copies of *USAE* are available for all paid subscribers online. Log onto www.usaenews.com and locate the log-in and password boxes. Specific log-in and password information is provided to subscribers via e-mail. To receive another copy, please contact the paper's circulation department at (301) 951-1881 or via e-mail at cpumphrey@usae-e-mail.com.

USAE (USPS 702-930, ISSN 0894-8194) is published weekly except the week of Christmas Day by CustomNEWS, Inc., 4824 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814. Subscription rate is \$135/year; add \$65 in Canada and Mexico. Periodical postage paid at Bethesda, MD and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *USAE*, 4824 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814.

www.usaenews.com

CustomNEWS, Inc.

4824 Edgemoor Lane

Bethesda, MD 20814

(301) 951-1881 • FAX: (301) 656-2845

©Copyright 2016 by CustomNEWS, Inc.

ALHI

ASSOCIATED LUXURY HOTELS
INTERNATIONAL

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF
GLOBAL SALES SERVICE

Serving the Meeting & Incentive industry with Global Sales services since 1986 with a worldwide portfolio of luxury hotels and resorts, cruise ships and a DMC Alliance.

ALHI.COM

NEWS

Westin Nashville Celebrates Grand Opening

By Grant Broadhurst

Visitors to the Nashville Music City Center now have a second across-the-street hotel option in addition to the Omni Nashville Hotel.

On Oct. 27 the 454-room Westin Nashville held its Grand Opening celebration. In addition to providing more rooms for the city, it also offers three new luxury dining and dining venues. Conference goers will find the hotel particularly convenient and comprehensive.

"The Westin opening further strengthens our convention/meetings package," Butch Spyridon, the president & CEO of the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corporation, told *USAE*. "In conjunction with the Omni, we have bookended the Music City Center

with needed first class room inventory, which makes us even more competitive."

Indeed, the Westin Nashville's impact will be felt most by travelers attending conferences and other professional functions.

"Our meeting space options, in addition to our proximity to the Music City Center, makes it ideal for meeting planners and citywide conventions to utilize our space for their program needs," Kellie Davie, the director of marketing and public relations for the Westin Nashville, told *USAE*. "We also

look forward to hosting a variety of social events, weddings and galas for our local clientele.

"The Westin opening further strengthens our convention/meetings package," Butch Spyridon, the President & CEO of the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corporation, told *USAE*.

"With over 20,000 square feet of meeting space and 453 guest rooms including suites, meeting planners looking for a luxury and convenient experience for their programs will now have more options in Nashville. Highlights of the Westin Nashville meeting space

include a grand ballroom, two junior ballrooms and a beautiful boardroom overlooking the skyline on our 27th floor" she said.

The Grand Opening Celebration

itself was just that: a celebration with live music from Brett Young and David Nail. Speeches were given by the heads of the two companies that own and manage the Westin Nashville as well as a representative from Marriott: Paul Wischermann, president and CEO of Wischermann Partners; Liam Brown, president, North America, of select and extended stay lodging and owner franchise services at Marriott International; Kevin Fee, managing director and cofounder of Castlerock Asset Management; and Seamus Ross, managing director and cofounder of Castlerock Asset Management.

"We hope to provide our guests and locals with not only the service and comfort they expect, but an experience they will treasure for years to come," Davie said.

Greenbrier Launches Campaign with Money Received after Flood

By Jonathan Trager

Five months after floodwaters devastated much of the county, the Greenbrier CVB has unveiled a new marketing campaign, revving up its efforts to get visitation back to normal.

"Simply Get Away" is the theme of the new initiative, which features a new "Welcome to the Greenbrier Valley" video. It may be seen on a newly created Webpage, simplygvb.com.

The video was shot soon after the county commission voted in July at the urgent request of the CVB to loan \$450,000 to the organization. Not all of that money is being spent on the current campaign; a portion of it will be spent in the spring, including on FAM trips, Dense noted.

Dense said dozens of stakeholders and citizens came to an open house at the visitors center for a presentation of the video and to network.

"There had been so much attention to getting this money," Kara Dense, Executive Director of the Greenbrier County CVB, told *USAE*. "We wanted to make sure everybody could see what we were doing."

The CVB is focusing a great deal on advertising on social media such as Facebook to get the word out, along with an aggressive public relations push for articles about the area, said Dense. Targeted markets include D.C., Columbus, Richmond, Roanoke, and Charleston.

"[Business has] been down, but we are recovering," Dense said. "We're not 100%, but each month that passes as we've been trying to work to get the word out, visitors are definitely coming back. But we're not where we'd normally be this time of year."

The CVB also plans to introduce a revamped website in mid-2017. The site had been budgeted for this fiscal year, but Dense said after the flood "we knew it wasn't going to be possible."

In addition, ShopGBV, a public relations push to encourage people to come to the county to do their holiday shopping, will launch on Nov. 1, according to the *Greenbrier Register Herald*. It will focus, for example, on Lewisburg's holiday festival events and White Sulphur Springs' holiday open house.

Starwood/Marriott

Continued from page 1

mostly came off unscathed according to Felicia McLemore, senior director of global corporate affairs at Marriott International.

McLemore told *USAE* "the Marriott/Starwood integration is in full swing, and with that comes the creation of new positions along with the elimination of some redundancies. The majority of impacted associates were made aware of the status of their position some time ago. When we announced the merger in November 2015, we said that there would be some duplication of functions – mostly at the corporate level."

"While we don't have an exact number of jobs that will be impacted in Stamford at this time, we will know more about staffing decisions as we continue the integration process," McLemore said. "We anticipate having a presence in Stamford for the foreseeable future; we will begin to explore longer term options and needs now that we have completed the acquisition."

The *Hartford Courant* reported that about 440 jobs remain at the former Starwood headquarters, and Marriott has a strong incentive to keep employment in Stamford at 400 jobs or more – at least until 2019.

Why? If the number of employees at the Stamford office drops below 400, Starwood – now Marriott – must pay the state over \$16 million for the following reason:

Starwood received \$7 million in loan forgiveness for a \$9.5 million loan the state gave it in 2009. A loan on which Starwood did not have to pay anything – neither principal nor interest – until 2019.

Starwood was also given a \$5 million loan as an incentive to increase employment in 2014, a loan on which it has been paying interest only.

In addition, Starwood received millions in tax credits from the state, and the company would have to pay back \$1.7 million dollars on those, plus 7.5 percent of any tax credits it receives between now and when (and if) it lowers employment in Stamford to below 400.

It all adds up to over \$16 million in incentives that Marriott, now the owner of Starwood, would have to repay. Which explains why it might make financial sense for Marriott to maintain a presence in Stamford until 2019 when the deals expire. "We are aware of the terms of the economic development loan and will address it as we finalize our occupancy plans for the Stamford office," McLemore told *USAE*.

As for the 163 employees whose jobs got eliminated, they have been told Marriott will be posting new jobs opportunities over the next several weeks.



In late October, Homewood Suites by Hilton Boston/Brookline celebrated the property's opening in Brookline. Shown here (left to right): Cathy Doran, Sr. Vice President, Greater Boston CVB (GBCVB); Pat Moscaritolo, President & CEO, GBCVB; Kevin Buchanan, General Manager, Homewood Suites by Hilton Boston/Brookline; and Luisa Lawrence-Riseman, Director of Sales, Homewood Suites by Hilton Boston/Brookline.

Stay Connected



follow **USAE** on Twitter for
breaking news, industry
reports and much more

@USAENEWS

NEWS

Susan Robertson Becomes CIC Chair

By Todd McElwee

Susan Robertson, CAE, Executive Vice President of ASAE and President of the ASAE Foundation has assumed the CIC chair during a transitional phase for the organization. In addition to overseeing CIC's hunt for a new management firm Robertson told *USAE* she has placed an emphasis on the CMP program, global efforts and leveraging the combined knowledge of the organization's members.

Robertson said: "The Convention Industry Council continues to be a leader and driving force for the growth and development of the meetings, events, convention, and exhibitions industry. The excellent programs delivered by CIC focus on the core of our industry: The premier certification for the industry, sustainability initiatives, best practices and standards, as well as research and education.

She added: "In the coming year, CIC will expand its capacity to serve the diverse needs of the key stakeholders on our council, by launching a refreshed brand along with new strategic direc-

tions. Top priorities include increasing community engagement, and building on programs that define, set standards for and promote the professionalization of our industry."

In March, CIC will end its relationship with Talley Management Group (TMG) following eight years with the New Jersey firm. Robertson and CIC Immediate Past Chair Bonnie Fedchock told *USAE* in October the organization is poised for growth and expansion in key areas, and the board's decision to align with another management firm is based on that need.

Originally Robertson was slated to guide a task force to develop the RFP and evaluate responding firms. Fedchock will now lead those efforts as Robertson said the responsibility of piloting the task force combined with serving as chair was simply too much. She added progress is being made.

"As our industry as a whole is evolving, it is crucial for the organization to continue the exchange of insights and knowledge among the leading industry organizations and to strategically grow and develop CIC initiatives and

programs," said Fedchock. "Under the board's leadership in 2016, the CIC staff delivered on the successful growth of those programs, and I am confident that the new board will continue to build upon those successes."

A renewed focus on the CMP program is a top priority for Robertson. She said the possibility of expanding the credential globally is being explored, though differences in international standards do exist.

Robertson also wants to leverage the collective knowledge of CIC's membership. She wishes to explore how the organization's shared insights and best practices can enhance its advocacy for the value of meetings. An updated Economic Significance Study and participation in the Meetings Mean Business Coalition and Global Meetings Industry Day are being employed to deliver the industry's message.

Kevin Hinton, CEO, Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) has been elected chair-elect. Cathy Breden, CMP, IAEE; Paul Van Deventer, MPI, Kimberly Gishler, Corporate Event Marketers Asso-



Susan Robertson

ciation, Kimberly Miles, CMP, CAE, American Hotel & Lodging Association, Martin Sirk, International Congress & Convention Association, and Tina Wehmeir, CAE, CMP, AMC Institute, round out the volunteer members. Karen Kotowski, CAE, CMP, CEO, CIC, is the executive officer.

New N.Y. Law Targets Certain Home-Sharing Rentals

By Grant Broadhurst

On Oct. 21, N.Y. Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed into law a bill targeting certain kinds of Airbnb rentals. The law introduced penalties for Airbnb hosts who advertise short-term rentals of entire apartments that were already illegal under New York law.

While it's not a draconian law that will eliminate all home sharing in New York, Mike Barnello, the chief executive of LaSalle Hotel Properties, told investors in a conference call that the law "should be a big boost in the arm for the [hotel] business, certainly in terms of the pricing," according to a transcript obtained by investment news company *Seeking Alpha*.

"With less Airbnb options, it can cause a supply and demand issue in terms of an increasing demand for hotel rooms, which in turn could drive prices up for hotels," Hank Freid, CEO of the Impulse Group, a New York company dealing in boutique hotels, told *TravelPulse*. "However, currently in New York, pricing for hotels is actually the lowest that it has been in years, so regulations could help to balance out the market and help bring pricing back to where it was years ago."

This recent news about home-sharing and online travel agencies (OTAs) has highlighted the challenge these competitors are bringing to many segments of the hospitality industry not only in New York but around the country.

OTAs send customers to hotels; but charge a hefty fee. Add to the competitive mix: home-sharing companies like Airbnb and HomeAway.

And now there's the potential home-sharing companies and OTAs could start working more closely together.

First, consider OTAs. Spending a few hours watching television tells part of the story: Commercials for companies like Kayak, Trivago, Priceline, and Expedia are almost as common as ads for car insurance and beer. The list goes on and on of OTAs and meta-search travel companies promising the best room at the best price. What they don't announce: they also take commissions of between 10% and 25% off the top from hotels. In 2015 according to Morgan Stanley Research these commissions totaled an estimated \$16 billion.

Striking back are hotels themselves, encouraging direct booking on their websites through perks like free WiFi, guarantees and campaigns. In February

Hilton launched an ad campaign called "Stop Clicking Around" to encourage direct booking; their largest advertisement effort ever. Starwood Hotels advertises if a direct book guest finds a cheaper price within 24 hours of check-in, Starwood will match it and give a 20 percent discount. Considering an OTA would charge about that in commission anyway, it's a safe bet for Starwood.

Expedia, one of the largest and most well-known OTAs, denies it has had a negative effect on hotels and that direct booking has had a negative effect on its business, however.

"In terms of direct bookings, we have not seen an impact," Amanda Graham, Expedia's senior manager of industry relations, told *USAE*. "Our customer tends to be a different type of guest – we are an incremental channel for hotels."

"We really consider hotels our partners, rather than the competition," Graham said when asked to clarify the relationship.

Even so, hotels are using direct booking perks, campaigns, revamped loyalty programs and discounts to lower the role of OTAs in the booking business. Even

Please turn to page 7

DMAI News

By Jonathan Trager

DMAI held its Finance, Operations & Technology Summit in Kansas City in late October, drawing 110 professionals compared to the 77 who attended the Summit in Los Angeles last year.

Kansas City is a vibrant market and did a great job of hosting the meeting, said Don Welsh, President & CEO of DMAI, who attended the Summit along with Jack Johnson, Chief Administrative Officer and Sr. Vice President, Public Policy. They

"It's a time I think for these professionals to come together once a year within their disciplines and share best practices and ideas," Welsh told *USAE*. "Based on the feedback we got by the attendees, it was a step in the right direction. We're going to do everything we can to build on it for future years."

Prior to visiting Kansas City, Welsh and Alison Best, Executive Vice President of Member Engagement, attended and participated in the Travel Alberta Industry Conference in Banff. About 700 people representing more than 40 destination-marketing organizations were in attendance.

DMAI was invited to come up and

talk about what the association is doing as a result of ongoing discussions with DMAC, the Canadian equivalent of DMAI, said Welsh. He said they spoke about creating an education model for DMOs, a standardized DMAP product, DestinationNext research, and the Event Calculator, among other things.

"We also had a chance to talk with many DMOs about challenges they're having," he said. "From an advocacy standpoint we'll do what we can to support their efforts when it comes to addressing funding challenges."

Welsh also spoke at the Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast Annual Meeting in Gulfport in late October. About 200 attended the organization's annual meeting.

Welsh said last year the Coast hosted a total of 5.8 million visitors. He's confident that with the tremendous efforts of Renee Areng, Executive Director of Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast, and her team they'll reach a goal of 7 million visitors by 2020. "Many times when I talk about evolving new models for DMOs, the good news is they have already been doing a lot of those," said Welsh. "They couldn't have been more hospitable."



Kristen Jarnagin, President & CEO, Discover Long Island, unveils the bureau's new name and logo on Nov. 2, at the Theatre for the Performing Arts in Patchogue. The bureau was formerly known as the Long Island CVB & Sports Commission.

—INDUSTRY MOVERS—



Charles Young has been selected as General Manager of the Hyatt Centric Waikiki Beach. Young has more than 20 years of hospitality experience overseeing several mid- to large-scale properties in Hawaii, Australia and Florida. He also helped open the Vive Hotel Waikiki. He's a board member of the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association - Oahu Chapter, serving as a member of the organization's government affairs committee.



Carla McGlynn has joined the Asheville CVB as the National Sales Manager for the Northeast market. McGlynn has more than 20 years' experience in the hospitality industry, most recently having worked in sales for the Greensboro, N.C. CVB. She also has resort and conference center experience, has owned her own meeting and event company and has worked as a corporate meeting planner.



Sam Toscano, CMP, has been appointed Sales Manager for the 1000 Islands Harbor Hotel in Clayton, N.Y. He previously spent nearly eight years as Sales Manager for Turning Stone Resort and Casino and serves as President of the Board of Directors for the Eastern Great Lakes Chapter of MPI. Toscano is also a hospitality advisory board member at Monroe Community College in Rochester.



Danielle Foisy has been named Director of Industry Relations at Transportation Management Services (TMS). A longtime member of the hospitality industry Foisy has also worked for DMAI, Business Events Canada, a division of Destination Canada, and Tourism Whistler. She was named an ASAE Fellow in 2013 and has chaired the Meetings and Expositions Council. She also served as Managing Director of the Meetings Industry Fund.

Gary Wheat Named CEO of Macon-Bibb County CVB

By Jonathan Trager

Gary Wheat, who helped launch the Visit Aurora (Colo.) CVB in 2010 and currently serves as its President & CEO, will lead the Macon-Bibb County (Ga.) CVB in the same capacity.

Selected by a six-member search committee, including CVB officers, industry representatives and public officials, Wheat will start his new job on Jan. 3. He succeeds Monica Smith, who left earlier this year to become the new Vice President of Sales & Services for Visit Jacksonville.

"I'm very excited by this opportunity," Wheat told *USAE*. "Macon is a well-established organization and has a very successful track record, and to be a part of a destination that has so much rich history and culture is something I'm looking forward to

immensely."

That history includes being a hotbed of music from luminaries such as Otis Redding, the Allman Brothers, Little Richard, and Wheat's personal favorite, Jason Aldean. In addition, it represents a chance to return to his southern roots, as the Mississippi native's parents still live in that state.

Within five years after starting Visit Aurora in 2010, Wheat and the organization were recognized with two national awards. They increased hotel occupancy by 15% and growing lodgers' tax revenues by double digits for several consecutive years.

Susan Welsh, President of the Macon-Bibb County CVB Board, called Wheat "a change agent who has established and grown destination marketing organizations in two regions that have assets and challenges that are similar to those in Macon-Bibb County."

Wheat, who was selected by a six-member search committee, including CVB officers, industry representatives, and public officials, will start his new job on Jan. 3.

"He has demonstrated considerable success in developing strategies to grow not only leisure and cultural tourism but also healthcare and transportation industry-related tourism," said Welsh. "We are excited to see what he will accomplish in our region."

Wheat, who earned a Bachelor's and Master's of Science in Sports Administration from the University of Southern Mississippi, began his tourism career as Director of Sports Development with the Tupelo (Miss.) CVB in 1999, relocating to Iowa in 2004 to lead the Waterloo CVB. In 2008, he was recruited to establish the Longmont Area Visitors Association in Colorado, where he served until launching Visit Aurora in 2010.

An outdoorsman and sports fan who "tears up golf courses," Wheat has been active in Rotary International, Special Olympics, and the Colorado Freedom Memorial, as well as serving on Boards for the Aurora Symphony Orchestra, Aurora Cultural Arts District, Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Aurora, and Cycle of Hope.

"I look forward to being an ambas-



Gary Wheat

sador for tourism and contributing to the economic growth of the Central Georgia region," said Wheat.

Nicki Grossman Joining ADEPT Strategy, Public Relations Firm

By Jonathan Trager

Having retired earlier this year as President & CEO of the Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB, Nicki Grossman is now taking on a part-time role with a strategy and public relations firm.

Grossman, who spent 20 years with the CVB, told *USAE* she plans to start in her role with ADEPT in late winter. The company's clients include the developers of the Broward Convention Center Hotel Expansion plan and the City of Fort Lauderdale.

"The people at ADEPT are smart and home grown and care a lot about Broward County," said Grossman. "It's nice to see the creativity and excitement and enthusiasm of this marketing company."

Grossman pointed out that she isn't permitted by county law to do actual lobbying. However, she'll be an advocate in various forums for signage at the airport and especially the convention center hotel and expansion project, which she called "near and dear" to her heart.

"That's definitely part of my DNA" said Grossman. "I'm thrilled to have an opportunity to be part of it, even on the perimeter. Not that I haven't been doing it for 30 years, but now I can do it as an outsider."

After ADEPT contacted her and they had a meeting, Grossman was satisfied they understood her primary role is to be with her family.

"I left the best job in the world to spend time with the best family in the world,"

she said. "I have gotten to know my husband and grandchildren again."

Grossman served on the Board of Directors for the South Florida Super Bowl Host Committee, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's Travel and Tourism Advisory Council, American Coastal Coalition Board of Directors, and the Florida Commission on Tourism. She was elected 2007-2008 Chair for VISIT FLORIDA.

An inductee to the VISIT FLORIDA and DMAI Tourism Hall of Fame, Grossman was elected to the Hollywood, Fla., Commission in 1978 and was elected to the Broward County Commission in 1982. She's married to Circuit Court Judge Mel Grossman and has three daughters and eight grandchildren.



Nicki Grossman

NEWS

New N.Y. Law

Continued from page 5

if successful – or if OTAs were never a threat to the bottom line in the first place – home-sharing companies like Airbnb have become another kind of competition for hotels.

Airbnb offers rooms in people's homes for as little as \$23 a night for a room with a private restroom, cable, WiFi, and kitchen access in a (presumably) nice, middle-class suburb. Or, for the higher end traveler, lovely rooms or even entire apartments in swank neighborhoods for hundreds of dollars a night. "Live like a local for less" is a compelling argument, but Airbnb guests pay an average of \$148.42 per night compared to hotel guests who pay an average \$119.11 per night, according to a study by STR, a research company for the hotel industry.

Other regions of the country have taken harsher steps against Airbnb. Many areas, such as Palisades Park, Cresskill, and Englewood Cliffs in New Jersey,

have banned Airbnb outright. Other areas have curbed Airbnb to varying degrees and in varying ways. In early August, Chicago passed a 25,000-word ordinance on Airbnb so incomprehensible that Shorge Sato, a Chicago real estate lawyer recognized by *Super Lawyers* as a top-rated attorney, couldn't make sense of it and said it was "impossible to comply with," reported *Watchdog.org*. In comparison, Chicago's hotel ordinance is only about 1,000 words in length.

The reasons for banning or regulating away Airbnb usually come down to worries Airbnb will increase traffic in neighborhoods and reduce the quality of life. Some also blame it for increasing the cost of affordable housing, which was the main driver behind the New York law.

However, although Airbnb's customers are generally a different type of traveler than those staying at a hotel – especially a four- or five-star hotel – they are travelers who, without Airbnb, would have few options other than staying in a hotel. In this, home-sharing companies like

Airbnb are competition.

Airbnb hasn't made an alliance with an OTA – yet – but two of its smaller cousins, HomeAway and FlipKey, are owned by Expedia and TripAdvisor, respectively. When one searches vacation rentals on either site, home-sharing listings appear alongside more traditional results.

"Given the traveler demand for vacation rentals, we are eager to provide our customers with a variety of options to meet their needs," Graham said. "We've been partnering with HomeAway on offering vacation rentals on the Expedia.com site for a couple years; today that experience is visible through a 'Vacation Rentals' tab on the homepage."

Going forward, Expedia plans to integrate HomeAway more deeply into the Expedia experience.

"And what we are talking about is a much more fundamental kind of integrated experience where someone who comes to an Expedia or a Hotels.com and is searching for hotels, depending on length of stay, depending on week-

day, weekend, etc., they are going to get a complementary mix of hotel search results and/or vacation rental results based on a number of different presentations and logic," Dara Khosrowshahi, the president & CEO of Expedia, told investors on Oct. 27, according to a transcript on Expedia's website.

HomeAway and FlipKey did not respond to requests for comment, and while Airbnb responded with links to news articles and a letter detailing Barnello's comments, it did not address the question of whether it has plans to work together with an OTA despite requests.

However, Delta Air Lines announced on Nov. 2 it is forming a partnership with Airbnb that will enable SkyMiles Members to earn miles on Airbnb stays if they book through Delta.com/airbnb. This relationship follows Airbnb's similar partnerships with Virgin America and Qantas.

What the future of hospitality entails remains to be seen, but hotels clearly have much more than high OTA commissions to worry about.

Visit St. Pete

Continued from page 1

money. He called it "an amazing investment when you consider what the return on that investment is every year."

"Downing insists that staying at swanky hotels like the Fairmont, Four Seasons, Waldorf Astoria and the Bellagio or entertaining clients at the world's finest restaurants and throwing liquor-laced parties from Napa Valley to Cape Town is all part of the tourism marketing game," wrote Douglas.

Downing told *USAE* the piece was inaccurate and lacked context, having used only seconds of his responses culled from an hour-long interview.

He then offered the following statement: "Unfortunately, the story didn't show the full context of what tourism truly does for the St. Pete/Clearwater area, like the more than 100,000 jobs it provides. The \$27 million we spend on tourism marketing comes back 300-times more in \$9 billion of economic impact. That return on investment shows the power and value of responsible tourism marketing.

"The Tourist Development Council, my

governing board, recognizes the value of what we do. Our action plans and budgets are presented every year at a public meeting, discussed and voted on by the board in public. Every dollar collected from the bed tax is spent wisely and that is why the St. Pete/Clearwater area continues to be a leader in the state, with record visitation year after year."

Leroy Bridges, Media & Interactive Director, clarified that "Staff credit cards are used for a wide range of departmental expenditures—including marketing, travel, client events, and trade show booths/registrations, which can run as much as \$100,000 each, so it's easy to paint a distorted picture with no detail."

He added that Pinellas County benefits from employees' use of the credit cards, as the locality receives \$300,000 a year in rebates that goes into its general fund. Therefore, CVB employees have "a mandate to use the card as much as we can."

"The amount that goes on the credit card can vary greatly, since we are directed by the county to use the card at any vendor that will accept it—from a cup of coffee for a journalist to a \$100,000 trade show booth," he said.

When asked about Meet AC Hetrick said he did not expect the bureau would be affected since it is funded by the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA).

Meet AC declined to comment.

Atlantic City is approximately \$500 million in debt. The city's plan sliced the budget from \$262 million in 2015 to \$207 million by 2021 and would eliminate 100 city employees, including through early retirement. Selling Bader Field to the city's water authority for \$110 and paying the Borgata Hotel & Casino \$103 million of the \$160 million it owed in tax refunds were other provisions.

This is the way forward for Atlantic City," Guardian said when announcing the plan. "Not only did we find a way not to raise taxes on the residents of Atlantic City, but we also outlined how we will steadily decrease our dependence on State aid over the coming years," Guardian said announcing the plan. "This plan creates a win-win for everyone. We are very proud to present this plan, and we anticipate its full approval by the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs."

Philly.com reports the Borgata Vice President & General Counsel Joe Corbo had no comment on the state's decision.

Bridges also took issue with the phrase "luxury travel" highlighted in the piece.

"While we provide first-class experiences for our clients, [Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater] staff purchase only coach fare tickets and accommodations are dictated by or included in the cost of the show or event we are attending," he said.

In an interview with *USAE*, Douglas said everything he reported was factual and fair, and he's sorry Downing has "hard feelings" about the story.

"I'm a little disappointed in Mr. Downing, because we gave him all sorts of opportunities to put things in context and perspective," said Douglas. "Maybe he's getting some heat for the story, but I don't know. I don't discredit the work product of the agency; [the story] was just a look at how they spend the money."

The reporter said he spent at least 20 hours of research preparing for the interview with Downing. He thought Downing was also well prepared and "gave pretty sound answers from his point of view" to the questions.

"Unfortunately, I don't have an hour on the 6 o'clock news to tell a story," Douglas said.

Douglas said there was no implication of illegality on behalf of the CVB, only the question of whether the bureau's spending is an appropriate use of tax dollars.

"One of the themes [Downing] left me with is, 'Look, this is how we operate, this is how we roll, this is the business we're

in. We're a public agency operating as a sales and marketing agency, and if you look at other [DMOs], we're no different than those guys," said Douglas.

Douglas doesn't doubt that significantly more people visit the destination as a result of sales and marketing efforts. However, he said reporting on return-on-investment issues during a 40-year journalism career has made him "somewhat skeptical of those claims," which he believes are inflated to an extent.

USAE asked Douglas whether he recognized a difference between property taxes paid by local residents or occupancy taxes paid by tourists.

"I've heard that argument time and again," he said. "They say it's just tourists paying, but on the other hand tourists don't have any say in that tax, they don't have a voice to say whether it's an appropriate tax, and they certainly don't have a say on what that money is spent on."

Douglas said he has learned Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater's spending isn't highly unusual in the destination-marketing industry. Yet he was "somewhat taken aback and wide-eyed in how much money [DMOs] spend from taxpayers, and how they spend it."

"These guys are really good at sales and marketing," said Douglas. "But it's my job to monitor how tax dollars are spent, and I don't care if it's hotel tax or property tax; it's all public money."

Atlantic City

Continued from page 1

said in the report: "I would have much preferred to leave management of the city's recovery in the hands of its municipal officials. However, I am constrained by the plan the city has placed before me. The enormous problems confronting the city did not occur overnight. City leadership has had ample time to improve the city's financial condition, yet has avoided doing so in any meaningful way."

City Council President Marty Small, Sr. did not respond to *USAE's* messages.

Christian Hetrick, a reporter for the *Press of Atlantic City* told *USAE* the state was at the "goal line" in terms of a takeover and was skeptical the new submission would make any difference. He said overseeing the takeover process would be the DCA's Local Finance Board (LFB), which is scheduled to meet on Nov. 9. And while no agenda had been set he expected the Atlantic City matter to be included either then or in December.

The "Municipal Stabilization and Recovery Act," allots LFB a series of 26 civic powers including employment, negotiations and financial matters. Hetrick said LFB could assume as many as it chooses.



On Nov. 1, HelmsBriscoe presented a painting to the City of Phoenix and the Phoenix Convention Center in recognition of their hospitality and support of the 2016 HelmsBriscoe Annual Business Conference and HB Cares charity, HopeKids. The artwork was created by nine-year-old Arizona HopeKid, Angelita Tavizon and will be displayed in the Phoenix Convention Center. Shown here (left to right): Dave Chapman, Sr. Vice President, HelmsBriscoe and National Board Member, HopeKids; Mary Beth Nobs, Director of Global Accounts, Ritz-Carlton; Tavizon; Peter Shelly, Executive Vice President, HelmsBriscoe; Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton; John Chan, Director, Phoenix Convention Center & Venues; and Steve Moore, President & CEO, Visit Phoenix.

NEWS

PCMA Unveils 20 in Their Twenties Class of 2017

By Todd McElwee

The fourth class of 20 in their Twenties recipients has been announced by PCMA. Supported by the PCMA Education Foundation the program is designed to engage the best and brightest young meetings industry professionals.

"I am thrilled to be named to PCMA's 20 in Their Twenties list," Holly Lammert, National Sales Manager, Explore St. Louis told *USAE*. "I want to thank not only PCMA for this honor, but the Explore St. Louis leadership and my colleagues who have been so supportive of my efforts to grow professionally and sell our amazing destination to clients across the country."

Honorees receive complimentary registration to attend Convening Leaders this January in Austin and PCMA Education Conference in New York in June. Recipients are also granted a year of PCMA membership, Convening Leaders travel expenses and membership and registration discounts for the next two years. A trio of mentoring sessions with industry leaders and recognition at Convening Leaders and in *Convene Magazine* and other PCMA communications is also included.

"This is our fourth class and with each one, we are struck by the passion and insights these individuals bring to the business events community," said Deborah Sexton, PCMA President & CEO. "It is our honor to recognize excellence in these bright and innovative leaders."

"I am honored to join PCMA's "20 in their Twenties" Class of 2017," Eric Kincaid, Corporate Sales Manager, Destination DC, told *USAE*. "During my



Tessa Kalfell

two years with Destination DC, I've come to understand the value of peer-to-peer support and the power of an organization to shape an individual's career. PCMA sets the national standards for the meetings and exhibitions industry so I'm excited to further my professional development with their mentorship."

Tessa Kalfell, Convention Services Manager, Visit Seattle said: "I am honored and humbled to be part of such a diverse and influential class of PCMA professionals. This recognition is especially meaningful to me coming from PCMA because I gain tremendous knowledge from my peers, to better serve our clients. I greatly appreciate support for young professionals like me and look forward to the opportunity to attend my first PCMA Convening Leaders conference in Austin as well as the PCMA Education Conference in New York next year."



Eric Kincaid

This year's class includes:

- Derek Anderson, Washington State Association of Counties
- Vanessa E. Bass, CMP, HMCC
- Alexandra Deering, Intuitive Surgical
- Matthew B. Fox, Meeting Management Services, Inc.
- Christine Frye, CTA, National Trade Productions
- Tessa Kalfell, Visit Seattle
- Eric Kincaid, Destination DC
- Holly Lammert, Explore St. Louis
- Amanda Marochko, DES, TQ
- Megan Martin, CMP, National Conference of State Legislatures
- Johnny Martinez, ShockLogic
- Kaitlyn Palatucci, American Frozen Food Institute
- Allison Perrelli, CMP, Conference & Logistics Consultants
- Morgan Prewitt, CMP, McCormick Place



Holly Lammert

- Katherine Sinnen, CMP, American Orthopaedic Association
- Nichole Steele, Experience Grand Rapids
- Naida S. Struyk, CMP, National Contract Manager Association
- Wei Nei Tan, Sarawak Convention Bureau, Sarawak
- Lindsey Walker, Visit Anaheim
- Andrias White, MBA, CMP, CSEP, Events DC

Applicants had to be employed full time in the events industry, be 29 years old or younger at the time of recognition and demonstrate ways they consider themselves to be industry leaders. They are not required to be PCMA members. A committee made up of program alumni and veteran industry professionals reviewed more than 60 applications.

Hyatt to Update Loyalty Program, Emphasis on Points, Not Stays

By Grant Broadhurst

Big changes are coming to Hyatt's loyalty program as it transitions from Hyatt Gold Passport to World of Hyatt on March 1, 2017.

World of Hyatt will allow members to earn higher tiers by points, but it will end the use of stays as a measurement. In addition, it will offer members three tiers versus Gold Passport's two-tiered system. Nevertheless, however a current member interacts with Hyatt, they will ei-

ther enjoy the same or better tier in 2017.

Jeff Zidell, Senior Vice President in charge of Hyatt's loyalty program, told *USAE* the revamping of the loyalty program is just the first of many changes as Hyatt seeks to better serve its clientele.

"Our purpose is to take care of people so they can be their best," Zidell said. He explained, "When you think about purpose, caring for people so they can be their best is really rooted in empathy. One thing that is really important to bring empathy to life is to listen. Our loyalty

program was designed through a series of both qualitative and quantitative listening."

One of the major changes to the loyalty program is the transition from a two-tiered system – Platinum and Diamond – to a three-tiered system – Discoverist, Explorist, and Globalist. "There was such a large gap between our existing Platinum and Diamond that we were losing customers who couldn't quite make it to Diamond but were somewhere in the middle," Zidell explained.

However, the change that will either delight or dismay current Gold Passport members is that while nights still count toward the elite tiers, stays no longer will. Instead, elite tiers will be earned with points, which means food, beverage, spas, and other peripherals count. In other words, if a member is the type of traveler who makes 25 short stays in a year but doesn't stay long or spend a lot, then that member will find himself downgraded whereas a member who spends a lot or stays for long stretches will benefit.

Zidell said this change isn't meant to target any one type of traveler, though. "It came down to simplification," Zidell said. "We know that people are counting their points and nights, and we felt to simplify it both internally for our staff and externally for our guests that they shouldn't have to keep track of three things."

However, existing customers will either benefit from or be either largely unaffected by the March 2017 transition



– at least for 2017. Anyone who currently qualifies for an elite tier under Gold Passport will be moved to the corresponding World of Hyatt tier. Some might even find themselves in a higher tier.

"We'll also look at their 2016 activity and if they would have qualified for a higher tier with World of Hyatt, then they'll receive it," Zidell said. "Every customer will be migrated into a tier that is as good or better than tier they currently have."

After 2017, though, members of World of Hyatt must qualify for elite privileges by World of Hyatt standards.

The changes to Hyatt's loyalty program come as other players in the industry alter their own programs. On Oct. 14, Choice Hotels announced that it would add Planner Rewards to its Choice Privileges reward program, which will allow event planners to earn points on booking meetings spaces and other spending on meetings such as food and drink.

Paid Leave

Continued from page 3

year after enactment for employers with 50 or more employees, and two years after enactment for medium employers (20-49 employees) and small employers (fewer than 20 employees). The paid leave would be at 100% of salary.

The Employer Mandate bill preserves control and flexibility for employers and reduces administrative burden. UPL creates a new D.C. government bureaucracy to administer those benefits. The Employer Mandate bill will be administered and paid by employers to their own employees. Employers can directly determine whether their employees qualify for paid leave, just as they currently do under the Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act ("ASSLA") or for unpaid leave entitlements under the D.C. FMLA and other statutes. Employers can satisfy their paid leave obligations by applying their

current paid leave policies.

The D.C. government will be required to contract with an insurer to offer paid leave insurance coverage to small and medium employers in D.C., under the Employer Mandate bill. Large employers may choose to use the insurance. The insurance will be subsidized for small and medium employers with the funds the District had set aside to establish a government-administered fund. Small and medium employers will be required either to purchase a paid leave insurance plan or to certify that their own policies satisfy the eight-week requirement.

ASAE and the coalition's bill also allows employers to maintain all of their current paid leave policies without alteration, as long as they supplement those policies with salary continuation benefits for the subset of eligible employees who take leave for a qualifying event that is not fully covered by the employer's existing suite of benefits.

NEWS

Four Seasons Opens Research and Discovery Studio in Toronto

By Grant Broadhurst

As part of their stated effort to get every detail right, Four Seasons has opened a Research and Discovery Studio in Toronto. It's not for guests; it's for the Four Seasons designers who decide what a room should look like and what sorts of silverware to put on the table.

At the new studio, they will be able to test everything from cocktail equipment to table settings to employee uniforms to even mock hotel rooms built out of cardboard. In addition, the workspace will be used to simulate and experiment with aspects of meeting rooms and event areas.

"While the R&D Studio is new, the philosophy behind the space is not," Dana Kalczak, the vice president of design at Four Seasons, told *USAE*. "The R&D Studio is a dedicated workspace where Four Seasons considers everything from table settings and lighting specs to staff wardrobes and bathroom amenities - all

in pursuit of perfecting the guest experience."

The workspace itself has been designed to similar standards, and vaunts silvery modern aesthetics and a largely open floorplan. Graffiti-like art hangs on the walls and common hotel items - like dishes and plates - are displayed on the partitions as if in a well-curated museum. It's lovely to look at and is presumably pleasant to be in, and Four Seasons plans to use the workspace to create similar spaces for its business guests.

"Our goal is to create spaces that are pleasurable to be in and promote productivity; a positive experience in meeting rooms and event spaces can actually improve productivity," Kalczak said.

And if it's good enough for a Four Seasons guest, then it's evidently good enough for a Four Seasons designer.



Among other things, the Four Seasons Research and Discovery Studio will allow designers to create mock hotel rooms and table settings. Photo provided by Four Seasons.

Natchez CVB Director Search Underway

By Jonathan Trager

The search for the new Director of the Natchez (Miss.) CVB is narrowing, as committee members are interviewing a top-tier of candidates for the position.

The goal is to have the position filled by Jan. 1. Interviews of five candidates are being conducted this week via phone and Skype, said Kathleen Bond, Search Committee Chair and Natchez national Historical Park Superintendent.

"I think it's a mixed bunch," Bond, told *USAE*. "I do feel we have got some good quality candidates."

Bond said she worked on the previous search for a Director just a couple of years ago, and there's a greater number of applicants this go-round, she said. Nearly 30 individuals have applied to take over the top spot of the organization.

Candidates hail from Natchez, the region, and other parts of the country. The Board of Aldermen will eventually review the top three candidates.

The search committee is looking for a new leader with a combination of traits. Bond said it must be someone who can manage an organization and has marketing experience, as well as "soft skills" such as the ability to communicate with people well and manage conflict.

The successful candidate will also have "a vision for 21st-century tourism," said Bond. In particular, she noted, the industry is shifting in focus to Millennials.

"The [search] group is working together so well," said Bond, according to the *Natchez Democrat*. "I think it's a good process, and I'm very pleased to be a part of it, because I want to see a good partner in place."

Former bureau chief David Kirby was fired in April after being accused by the Natchez Convention and Promotion Commission (CPC) of unauthorized spending and misrepresenting finances. Members of the CPC then resigned at the behest of the Board of Aldermen and the body was reseeded.



12.15.16 | Hyatt Regency Chicago

Energized for more Excitement and Engagement! Here's a glimpse of what's NEW!

-  **Completely Cool Opening and Closing Reception**
-  **Supercharged Show Floor**
-  **Digital Depot**
-  **Celebration Station**




Register, today! holidayshowcase.org

@AssocForum | #HSC2016

NEWS

Minnesota Sports Commission Raffles Off Tickets to Games

By Jonathan Trager

Sports Minneapolis, an extension of Meet Minneapolis, is hosting a first-ever raffle for a pair of tickets to 295 events, including tickets next season to all home games of six professional sports teams.

Kicking off on Oct. 31 and limited to only 500 purchasers, one ticket will win the Ultimate Sports Ticket raffle. The drawing will be held at the Timberwolves game Jan 28, three days after the deadline for buying tickets (unless the 500 tickets sell out sooner).

Each raffle ticket is available for \$250 at www.sportsminneapolis.org, with all proceeds going to Sports Minneapolis. Seat locations are at the sole discretion

of each team and are based upon availability.

"Initial reception has been very positive," Scott Romane, Executive Director of Sports Minneapolis, told *USAE*. "I would say it's every sports fan's dream to have access to all of these games on the professional and collegiate level as well as the X Games."

Professional teams involved include NFL's Vikings, MLB's Twins, NBA's Timberwolves, NHL's Wild, WNBA's Minnesota Lynx, and MLS' Minnesota United. The competition also includes six collegiate teams and VIP passes to X Games Minneapolis, an ESPN event that focuses on extreme sports.

Because there are so many events and

some overlap, Romane said he thinks many conversations about the promotion are taking place, with friends, relatives, and co-workers chipping in for a raffle ticket. It's also a great opportunity for a holiday gift, he added.

"I'd like to say it's an innovative, ingenious idea we came up with all by ourselves, but this type of sports promotion is done in other cities," said Romane. "Really it came out of research into best practices as to what other sport commissions are doing."

The research led the Sports Commission to set the ticket limit at 500 based on population size and the belief that the 1-in-500 odds make people feel they have a decent chance to win.

Matt Laible, Director of Public Relations & Communications, said the organization is mostly relying on free promotion through outlets such as social media and e-mail lists, as well as a small amount of paid digital and social media advertising.

Asked how many tickets had been sold in the first week, Laible said the group wasn't releasing specific sales numbers, although it "may do so at milestones along the way."

"Since the window for purchasing entries lasts nearly three months, we are planning marketing activities over a long period of time, and so far, we're happy with the sales we've seen in the first three days," he said.



On Nov. 2, the 2016 TCS New York City Marathon Blue Line Painting Ceremony was held at the race's finish line in Central Park. Shown here (left to right): Lisa Quevedo, New York Road Runners (NYRR); Antoine Fonville, NYRR; Rachel Pratt, NYRR; Fred Dixon, NYC & Company; Joe King, TCS; Bill Rudin, Rudin Management Company; Eric Rudin, Rudin Management Company; George Hirsch, NYRR; Michael Capiraso, NYRR; Michael Paul Carey, Mayor's Office; Peter Ciaccia, NYRR; James O'Neill, NYPD; Daniel Nigro, FDNY; Douglas Blonsky, Central Park Conservancy; James Fortunato, MTA; Joe Jarrin, Department of Transportation; Liam Kavanagh, NYC Parks; and Victor Calise, Mayor's Office.



Meet in the Center of It All.



MIAMI BEACH
CONVENTION CENTER

Reimagined for 2018. | Open for Business Now.

Imagine a center of creative collaboration, in the perfect location, surrounded by everything you desire – beaches, fine dining, art, luxury rooms, and ideal weather all year long. It's real. Unveiling in 2018, but open for business now. Reserve today. Meetings@GMCVB.com | 305-539-3071 | MiamiMeetings.com



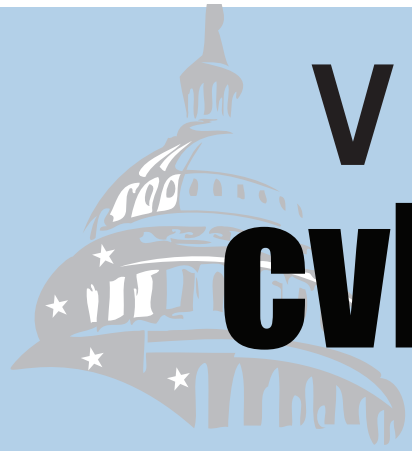
New 60,000 sq. ft. ballroom • 81 breakout rooms with more than 190,000 sq. ft. of space
500,000 sq. ft. of renovated exhibit space

#myphx

THIS IS PHX

You weren't looking for inspiration,
and yet this is where it found you.
You wouldn't have guessed it. But you'll never forget it.


VISITPHOENIX[™]
.com



Visit Today cvbreps.com

Reach Over 60 Cities with
Satellite offices in DC...
Visit cvbreps.com Today...
Submit an RFP; Qualify to
win a \$100 Amex Gift Card

The following destinations maintain offices in the Washington, DC-metro area. On calling please mention you saw the listing in USAE's "Call Us Page."

CALL US IN D.C.

ALBERTA

Kyla Knudson, CASE, CIS
kyla.knudson@travelberta.com

ANAHEIM

Kimberly Mladenik
kmladenik@visitanaheim.org
Paul Romero
promero@visitanaheim.org

ATLANTA

David H. McAuley
dmcauley@atlanta.net
Heather Turner
hturner@atlanta.net

ATLANTIC CITY

Sandi Harvey
sharvey@meetinac.com

AUSTIN

Jim Doherty, CTA
jdoherly@austintexas.org
Kristen Parker, CASE, CTA
kparker@austintexas.org

BALTIMORE

Kim Allison, CAE, CASE, CTA
kallison@baltimore.org
Laurie Nelson-Choice
lchoice@baltimore.org

BLOOMINGTON

Rose Dudycha
rdudycha@bloomingtonmn.org

BOSTON

Mary Migre, CASE
mmigre@BostonCMC.com
Maureen Buckley
mbuckley@bostonusa.com
Caitlin Nagle
cnagle@BostonCMC.com

CHARLOTTE

Will Trokey
will.trokey@visitcharlotte.com

CHICAGO

Darrell Baker, CASE
dbaker@choosechicago.com
Rocky Gupta
rgupta@choosechicago.com
Tina Carter Chocklett, CMP
tchocklett@choosechicago.com
Gabi Donchez
gdonchez@choosechicago.com

CINCINNATI

Mary Beth Baluta
mbaluta@cincyusa.com

CLEVELAND

Jennifer Sullivan
jsullivan@destinationcle.org

COLUMBUS

Artrice McNeil, CTA
amcneil@experiencecolumbus.com

DALLAS

Jay Marsh
jmarsh@dallascvb.com
Erica Critzer
ecritzer@dallascvb.com

DENVER

Andrea McFadden
amcfadden@visitdenver.com

DETROIT METRO

Tom Albrecht
talbrecht@meetdetroit.com

FT. LAUDERDALE

Rosa Mendoza-Friedheim, CASE, CDMP
romendoza@broward.org
Dion James Zanfordino
djames@broward.org

FORT MYERS & SANIBEL

Betsy Bush
bbush@leegov.com

FORT WORTH

Roger Freeman, CT
rogerfreeman@fortworth.com
Melissa Ritchie
melissaritchie@fortworth.com

GRAND RAPIDS

Leslie Hastings, CHSP, CASE
lhastings@experiencegr.com

HARTFORD

Krystine L. LoBianco, CMP
klobianco@ctconventions.com

HAWAII

Meredith Parkins
mparkins@hvcb.org
Dawn Eagleton
deagleton@hccaeg.com

HOUSTON

Ron Sipes
rsipes@visithouston.com
Rose Mary Mitchell
rmitchell@visithouston.com

INDIANAPOLIS

Kenneth Hemsley
khemsley@visitindy.com
Kathryn Morgan
kmorgan@visitindy.com

LAS VEGAS

Devin Lewis, CMP
dlewis@lvcva.com

LONG BEACH

Regina Richardson
reginar@longbeachcvb.org
Art Scanlon, CMP
arts@longbeachcvb.org

LOS ANGELES

Debbie Glenn
dglenn@LAtourism.org
Angie Martin
amartin@LAtourism.org
Mary Gallagher, CMP
mgallagher@latourism.org

LOUISVILLE

Regina Rink
rrink@gatolouisville.com

MELBOURNE

Maria Rivera
maria.rivera@melbournecb.com.au

MEMPHIS

Kim Warren
kimwarren@memphistravel.com

MIAMI

Kathy Semmes, CASE
Kathy@gmcbv.com

MILWAUKEE

Lauren Hyps
lhyps@milwaukee.org
Gus Martinez
gmartinez@milwaukee.org

MINNEAPOLIS

Kay A. Russell
kayr@minneapolis.org
Natalie Ortiz
natalieo@minneapolis.org

MONTEREY

Howard Munves
howard@seemonterey.com

MONTREAL

Wanda Jackson Lewis
wjacksonlewis@mtl.org

NASHVILLE

Nell Chadwick
nell@visitmusiccity.com
Susan Giambalvo, CASE
susan@visitmusiccity.com

NEW ORLEANS

Helen Mesfin, CMP
hmesfin@neworleanscvb.com

NEW YORK

Trudy Singh, CMP
tsingh@nycgo.com

NORFOLK

Bill Adams
badams@visitnorfolktoday.com

OMAHA

Matt Heck
mheck@visitomaha.com

ORLANDO

Faye Memoli
faye.memoli@visitorlando.com
Barb Herod, CMP
Barb.herod@visitorlando.com
Ron Keith
ron.keith@visitorlando.com

THE PALM BEACHES

Dori Jensen
djensen@palmbeachfl.com

PALM SPRINGS

Michelle Morgan
mmorgan@palmsspringsoasis.com
Lynne Bowis
lbowis@palmsspringsoasis.com

PHILADELPHIA

Devon Whitaker
devon@discoverPHL.com

VISIT PHOENIX

Maribel Velazquez
mvelazquez@visitphoenix.com
Mark Metcalfe
mmetcalfe@visitphoenix.com
Tom Michalisko, CMP
tmichalisko@visitphoenix.com

PORTLAND

Cara Tobias Ingram
cara@travelporland.com
Tracey Chapman
tracey@travelporland.com

PUERTO RICO

Mildred Hernandez
mildredhernandez@meetpuertorico.com
Anita Nunez Cepollaro
anunez@meetpuertorico.com

RALEIGH

Jamie Rice
jrice@visitraleigh.com

RENO/TAHOE

Jennifer Bumbalo
jbumbalo@renotahoeusa.com
Jennifer Martini Abdinoor
jabdinoor@renotahoeusa.com

SALT LAKE

Eddie Canaday, CHSP, CHME
ecanaday@visitsaltlake.com

SAN ANTONIO

Summer Davey
summerdavey@visitsanantonio.com

SAN DIEGO

Phyllis Bradley Azama, CMP
pazama@sandiego.org
Michelle Coombs
mcoombs@sandiego.org
Damara Gomez
domez@sandiego.org
Debbie Jordan, CASE
djordan@sandiego.org
Lynn Whitehead
lwhitehead@sandiego.org

SAN FRANCISCO

Kenley Moy, CMP
kenley@sfravel.com
Beth Melanson, CMP
beth@sfravel.com
Donna Del Gallo
donnad@sfravel.com

SAN JOSE

Jason Koteff
jkoteff@sanjose.org

SEATTLE

Alison La Follette, CMP
alafollette@visitseattle.org
Kireem Swinton
kswinton@visitseattle.org

SONOMA COUNTY

Barbara Quigley
bquigley@sonomacounty.com

SPOKANE

Shannon Shannon
sshannon@visitspokane.com

ST. LOUIS

Bruce Arnold
barnold@explorestlouis.com

ST. PETE/ CLEARWATER

Liz Dane
liz@visitspc.com

TAMPA BAY

Jason Carroll, CMP
jcarroll@visittampabay.com

TORONTO

Tara Gordon
tgordon@torcvb.com

VANCOUVER

Jacqueline Kavcak
jkavcak@tourismvancouver.com

WICHITA

Keith Talbert, CMP
ktalbert@visitwichita.com
Amy Schmidt
aschmidt@visitwichita.com