

Conventional Wisdom

The Official Newsletter of the Greater Columbus Convention Center

Spring 2008

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GREATER COLUMBUS
CONVENTION CENTER

Greater Columbus Convention Center presents record-setting annual report as building restoration nears completion

The Greater Columbus Convention Center staff was pleased to present an annual report reviewing highlights of the record-setting 2007 business year to the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority on May 20.

The facility experienced another year of revenue growth, attributable primarily to increased event activity. A 7 percent increase over 2006 resulted in the highest revenue ever for the venue.

In fact, the Greater Columbus Convention Center remains one of the busiest convention centers in North America, with 386 events accounting for 722 event days in 2007. There were 392,984 accompanying parking transactions conducted in our garages and surface lots last year.

Compared to our peer facilities with 100,000 to 500,000 square feet of exhibit space (the Greater Columbus Convention Center has 426,000 square feet of exhibit space), our facility attracted about 250,000 guests over the national average, and rose above our peers in exhibit hall and ballroom occupancy percentages.

In 2007, we also attracted the largest number of national events, began utilizing a lead generation system created by SMG, and established the Greater Columbus Convention Center Employee Council and accompanying Ambassador Program devoted to employee recognition. We again received the prestigious Prime Site Award from *Facilities & Destinations* for the 10th

consecutive year.

In an annual survey, Price Waterhouse representatives asked facility owners whether they were mandated by their governing group to operate on a break-even or better basis. Twenty-eight percent of the facilities surveyed are required to operate on that type of basis, and 88 percent of those venues receive some form of subsidy from their respective city/county/governing authority to maintain "in the black" status.

This means only about 3 percent of convention centers operate at a break-even or better status without the boost of other non-operating revenue. The Greater Columbus Convention Center is proud to be one of them.

In 2007, the action-packed event schedule often required facility maintenance to be performed during second and third shift hours to permit client bookings to continue uninterrupted. Throughout the year, our recycling and conservation efforts are ongoing with lighting, cardboard and mixed office waste, and we are in the process of preparing for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – Existing Building (LEED-EB) certification. Once achieved by the conven-

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tion center, the LEED-certified square footage in our city will increase more than three times.

The year 2008 began with the unexpected 16-inch water main break at Swan and High Streets in the wee hours of January 9, flooding the entire north building of the facility with hundreds of thousands of gallons of water. Despite the early news reports indicating the concern of collapse, the building was quickly certified as structurally sound by Paul J. Ford and Company, an award-winning engineering firm hired by the facility.

About 150 people worked overnight with 600 industrial fans and 75 water extractors to ensure the Longaberger Buzz and other events could carry on as planned the next morning.

The ongoing process to return the facility to its pre-flood appearance is being supervised by representatives from Belfor USA, the premier provider of property recovery services in the country and a division of the world's largest company restoring property that has been damaged by natural disasters.

Initially, the main concourse near Exhibit Hall E was divided by a plywood remediation barrier enabling client events to be conducted in the exhibit halls as planned, while contractors were concealed as they continued their work in the meeting rooms. The reconstruction crew also made a "flood cut" to remove affected drywall and insulation and then replaced the drywall. The E-Pod concrete floor was removed in order to excavate the area underneath to locate and inspect the water line under the building. Subsequent projects included pouring a new concrete floor, installing new sound panels and retractable walls, selecting new carpeting, and applying a fresh coat of paint throughout the area.

The flood, the amazing morning-after recovery and the ongoing restoration received a wealth of media inquiries and coverage, ranging from television networks to trade journals and *The New York Times*.

Based on the current progress of the project, the restoration will be completed in June, according to Assistant General Manager Art McAndrew.

Employee Council welcomes new members & announces Ambassadors

The Greater Columbus Convention Center Employee Council continues its momentum by welcoming new members Tom Starks, John Burr, Gary Mosley and Kristy Yonyon. The four new members join Jennifer Criswell, Laurie Sonedecker, Darlene Robinson, Erin Hays, Amy Huggins and James Stewart.

The group plays a key role in directing the Ambassador Program,



The new Greater Columbus Convention Center Employee Council

updating the "Loop Central" employee recognition area near the Security Department, and promoting employee participation in charitable endeavors such as the United Way campaigns. The council organizes special events, such as the annual picnic and debut of the festive dessert baking competition during the holiday luncheon, which was won by Shaun Fontanella.

Most recently, the Employee Council is organizing the Traditions at Stygler Shoebox Project, with the goal of filling 75 shoeboxes with donated socks, hair brushes, combs, lip balm, crossword puzzles, stamps, writing paper, stationery, nylon shower poufs, envelopes, greeting cards, hand lotion, body lotion, pens and hard candy by September for residents of a local nursing home.

Each month, the Employee Council may select one full-time and part-time Ambassador of the Month. Each monthly honoree is considered for Ambassador of the Quarter recognition, and quarterly award recipients advance to Ambassador of the Year consideration. Jack Cochran is the first full-time Ambassador of the Year, while Johnnie Williams was recognized as the deserving part-time



Jack Cochran

employee. Michael Wingo, James Stewart, Eddie Bowen, Jennifer Davis, Floyd Meadows, Dave Davies, Richard Cook, Amy Huggins, Tyra Harris, Sean Campbell

and Jason Castleman have also been recognized as Ambassadors through the program.

"All employees have the opportunity to make a difference by excelling in their job performance," said SMG Regional General Manager Craig Liston.

"The Ambassador Program provides employees with the chance to recognize and reward the stellar performance of other staff in both part-time and full-time categories."



Johnnie Williams

Community Return

Employees continue charitable endeavors throughout year

The Greater Columbus Convention Center employees are proud to contribute to community and charitable efforts throughout the year, and the creation last year of the Greater Columbus Convention Center Employee Council has increased our focus on these efforts.

As presented in a recent annual report, employees continued their ongoing partnership with Cedarwood Elementary School, devoting more than 200 hours to tutoring students in 2007, as well as collecting school supplies, participating in the Pals for Peers program and judging the Science Fair.

In addition, there are annual activities in which employees traditionally participate, such as the Volunteers of America Thanksgiving-Care-A-Van meal preparation with



Sherry Fish, CMP, Senior Director of Sales

Sales & Marketing Update

Sales team dedicates decades of experience to cultivating and retaining event bookings

The Greater Columbus Convention Center Sales Team, with 78 years of combined experience in sales and event planning for large corporations, resorts, country clubs and social functions, has all the tools to attract and assist a variety of clients in making their events at the facility memorable.

The sales team responds to leads that are generated through Experience Columbus, Web site and direct call inquiries, referrals from affiliated SMG-managed properties, memberships in national and local professional organizations, and sales trips to national association offices. We also join Experience Columbus in advertising in pertinent trade journals and establishing a presence at trade shows. In addition, our partnerships with limited service hotels in the vicinity have exceed-

ed our expectations.

Trade show involvement includes participation and sponsorship in industry blockbusters such as the American Society of Association Executives and the International Association of Exhibitions and Events functions.

Our participation in professional associations also reaps benefits for the facility. I am currently president of the Association for Convention Sales & Marketing Executives, an organization which serves as a liaison between convention centers and convention and visitors bureau marketing executives to promote the convention industry and the members' respective destinations. National Sales Manager Suzanne Zeppernick was recently named Supplier of the Year by the Buckeye Chapter of the Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP). Suzanne is a board member of this chapter, which is comprised of meeting planners in governmental agencies, contract meeting planners and representatives from meeting facilities. Kate Fisher, sales manager for the state associations/state government market, also participates in SGMP meetings. Debbie Vaughn, sales manager for corporate, short-term and social events, has served as president of both the Columbus Chapter of Executive Women International and the Ohio Chapter of Meeting Professionals International. Sales Manager Crista Tompson, responsible for the sports,

cheerleading and dance market, is active in the local chapter of Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International.

Last year, Suzanne Zeppernick and I became Certified Meeting Professionals through the Convention Industry Council, joining Debbie Vaughn in having achieved this honor. We are proud to welcome Director of Event Management Joe Shaw and Event Services Manager Amy Huggins to the CMP ranks. They successfully completed the 13-week preparatory course, one-day "boot camp" and comprehensive examination in order to receive this honor. The Event Management Team, which also includes Floyd Meadows, Erin Hays, Erika Hill and Kristy Yonyon, features a combined total of 69 years of experience and we work closely with them in serving our mutual clients.

Contact us today to become one of the hundreds of successful events we host every year at the Greater Columbus Convention Center!



Suzanne Zeppernick, CMP



Joe Shaw, CMP



Amy Huggins, CMP



Marc Dickson supervises CPR training

ARAMARK and joining other members of the hospitality community for "Columbus in Bloom" to plant flowers in nearby Sensenbrenner Park to welcome the summer conventions and visitors.

The Salvation Army also benefits from our employee involvement, and cell phones that remain unclaimed by guests are donated to Choices, a shelter which offers assistance to

women and children striving to escape from domestic violence. Our Finance Department annually participates in Accounting for Kids Day, teaching kids about financial management and the stock market through interactive games.

Our employees and Experience Columbus representatives periodically receive CPR training, now taught by two members of our own Security Department, Marc Dickson and Jason Castleman, to further assist emergency responders when guests need medical assistance. Our in-house instructors provide the very same training in Standard First Aid, child and adult CPR, and Automatic External Defibrillator usage that participants would receive through the American Red Cross, and are certified by the organization to teach the classes.

Individual employees donate their time and talent to a variety of

organizations when away from work, including the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Columbus Reads, food pantries, Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Franklin Park Conservatory, Ohio State Advocates, New Directions Career Center, Godman Guild Job Success Program and Tech Bridge.



Rick Clar reviews a science fair project



Howard Rosenberg of Nielsen's during the store expansion

Meet the Merchant Nielsen's expands store and product offerings

You may have noticed some terrific changes at Nielsen's, the convenience and gift store located in the Food Court & Shops on Level 1, near the Hyatt Regency lobby.

Guests are now welcomed to the newly expanded store by the red glow of an illuminated sign. The owner, Howard Rosenberg of Economy Enterprises, is now offering additional merchandise within a much more expansive area.

"Now I can display the merchandise in a more relaxed atmosphere and add products," he said. "We have the space to provide a more upscale environment for all the guests of the Convention Center."

In fact, Howard opened Nielsen's, and the drug store which preceded it, because of the ever-changing clientele to be served here.

"This is a first-class environment with the opportunity to serve a great variety of guests," he believes.

Now that the expansion is open for business, customers are enjoying an increased selection of beverages, gifts, periodicals and newspapers, greeting cards and new product lines in the larger store.

"The new layout is much more conducive to guests' browsing," Howard explained.

Nielsen's offerings include lottery tickets, over-the-counter medicines, pre-packaged cream treats, Dom Pérignon champagne and beer and wine selections, a full line of health and beauty aids, high energy drinks, reading glasses, candy and chocolates, Boyd's Bears, WebKinz, Gund and Groovy Girl merchandise, as well as a variety of \$5 and under Toysmith "grab and go" items especially designed for youths looking for an affordable keepsake.

Nielsen's management is also known for tailoring its orders and merchandise displays to appeal specifically to the convention groups coming in that week, whether it is stocking extra cosmetics and glitter when cheerleading groups are in town, or energy drinks for late-night gaming groups.

"We have gifts for every occasion that cover the range from the birth of a child to a 50th wedding anniversary celebration," said Howard.

Check out what's new at Nielsen's the next time you visit the Food Court & Shops!

In the Spotlight

Laura Hood

Travel behind-the-scenes to the Engineering Office tucked away along the service corridor in the south building of the facility, and you'll reach the office of Laura Hood.



Laura Hood

Hired in 1996 as the administrative assistant for the Engineering Department, Laura joined the staff after being an assistant in the executive offices of the former EBCO Manufacturing Company.

In her role, Laura is responsible for completing a variety of administrative projects for all of the engineers assigned to both the north and south sections of the facility.

In addition to the daily projects she completes for the engineers,

Laura enjoys seeing the arrival of the wide variety of events that are held within the facility.

"I love the way the different shows come in here," she said. "We are right in the center of it all."

Laura and her husband Robert, an employee of Carr Supply, reside in Blacklick and are the parents of a daughter, 21-year-old Ashley, who is majoring in human development and family science studies at The Ohio State University.

Moving to their new home two years ago inspired Laura to become more involved in decorating her residence, which she has now updated from country to modern décor. She also enjoys pedaling for long bicycle rides along the scenic roads and trails that are accessible nearby and going on walks with Simba, the family's 1½-year-old Pomeranian. Traveling is another of Laura's favorite pastimes, including trips to Indianapolis to visit family members and a memorable excursion to Disney World which involved her family touring four amusement parks in four days.

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The Greater Columbus Convention Center is owned and developed by the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (FCCFA).

Center Stage 2008

June

- 5 Mel Schottenstein Birthday Celebration
- 7 OSU College of Nursing Convocation
- 7-9 The NeedleArts Market
- 9-11 American Electric Power 2008 Environment, Safety and Health Leadership Institute
- 9-11 South Central Ohio Minority Business Council
- 11 Toledo School District
- 11 Ohio Manufacturers Association
- 11-12 The Ohio Society of CPAs
- 11-14 Knitters Connection
- 12 American Electric Power McMurry
- 12 Ohio Funeral Directors Association
- 12 Stores Online
- 13 Chemical Dependency Professional Board
- 13-15 Midwest Haunters Convention
- 14 Magic the Gathering PTQ Berlin
- 14-15 Edge Productions/Act Workshops
- 16-18 Making Ohio Schools Work Conference
- 18 Management Council/Ohio Education Computer Network
- 19-21 NQA 39th Annual Quilt Show
- 19-21 KnowledgeWorks Foundation Summer Governor's Institute
- 20-22 Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game U.S. National Championships
- 25-29 2008 Origins Game Fair

July

- 2-6 Algersgate '08 Conference
- 12-15 2008 OFA Short Course
- 17 Ohio Cast Metal Association
- 17-19 Stanley Steemer
- 19-20 Spirit Productions/Ohio National Miss Pageant
- 23-24 OSU Comprehensive Cancer Center Political Rally
- 23-31 2008 Longaberger Bee