

# FRONT & CENTER

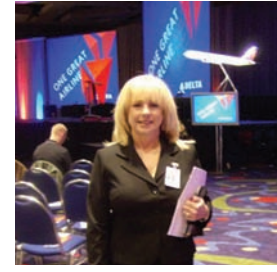
INFORMATION AND EVENTS FROM THE GEORGIA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER



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## A Grand Opening for the Atlanta Marriott Gateway

STEPS AWAY FROM THE GICC, THIS NEW LEED-CERTIFIED HOTEL REFLECTS THE LATEST IN DESIGN AND AMENITIES FOR THE BUSINESS TRAVELER.



A section of the lobby is dedicated to a "social business zone" with complimentary Wi-Fi and a mix of comfortable, stylish seating arrangements.



Evening view of hotel and ATL SkyTrain



Guest room



Breakfast bar

**I**T IS AUGUST 4, 2010, and the doors are opening to a group of special guests for a tour of the new Atlanta Marriott Gateway. Less than two years from a September 2008 groundbreaking, this newest jewel in the Marriott crown, a 403-room, full-service Marriott, completes a nine year, \$230 million multi-purpose commercial development including the GICC, two Marriott brand hotels and an office building.

Just two minutes from the airport via the ATL SkyTrain guided railway system, this eco- and tech-savvy meeting destination complements the neighboring GICC with more than 21,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, including the 12,000 square-foot Gateway Ballroom. Together, the GICC and Marriott, which are connected by a covered

walkway, provide 321,000 square feet of meeting space. As well, the Gateway Marriott is equipped with a GoThereVirtualMeetings studio, the only hotel in the Atlanta area to provide this virtual meeting technology.

The hotel reflects the latest in Marriott design and amenities for the business traveler. A lobby of three zones affords as much activity or desired privacy as

**"We are excited by how this property fulfills Marriott's global vision of its commitment to green and expansion of LEED-certified hotels."**

— ROBERT WOOLRIDGE | General Manager, Atlanta Marriott Gateway

a guest desires. The centerpiece is a food and beverage area that by morning appears as a breakfast bar offering coffee, pastries and the like, and by night operates as a full-service bar. A social business zone offers complimentary Wi-Fi and comfortable seating in booths and table-and-couch arrangements. A third zone, just steps away, attends to guest registration.

Nearby is a Champions Restaurant, a revitalization of the popular sports concept and just the third of its genre incorporated by Marriott, the others in its Boston and Miami airport hotels. Champions is high-energy but also upscale, and is as welcoming to families and women travelers as well as men, a "subtle sports theme," notes the hotel's General Manager, Robert Woolridge. Champions food is casual but creative: from wings and sliders to a bone-in ribeye and a NY strip

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**MEET THE GM**

As General Manager, Robert Woolridge is the person in charge of the new Atlanta Marriott Gateway. Mr. Woolridge's career with the Marriott Corporation spans 24 years and includes management positions at 14 Marriott properties in New York, Boston, Orlando and Philadelphia as well as Atlanta.



# BATTLING UNDER THE



HEY FLY THROUGH THE AIR with the greatest of ease. No, it isn't a trapeze act; it's hundreds of youngsters whose passion is cheerleading and whose quest is victory in the "Battle Under the Big Top." Annually one of the most colorful and competitive events hosted by the GICC, the All Star Challenge features the high-flyingest of cheerleading clubs in rapid-fire competition amidst all the hoopla of a Barnum & Bailey extravaganza.

There is more of — and more to — cheerleading competitions than an outsider might expect. This year's 8<sup>th</sup> Annual All Star Challenge, scheduled for Dec. 11-12, is one of five national annual "cheer and dance" All Star Challenge competitions, and among hundreds of annual cheerleading events staged by more than 30 competition organizations. The "Battle Under the Big Top" will host 200 teams of boys and girls ages five to 18 and another 500 parents and coaches. The youngsters are members of more than 50 All Star clubs, one of 10 such organizations managed by the largest and most prestigious player in the "spirit" industry, Varsity Brands.

But it is the circus atmosphere that really separates this competition from others.

"We differentiate ourselves by having a theme," noted Dennis Worley, who organizes the events as part of his role as director of business development and legal counsel for the All Star Challenge. But it is not *having* a theme, but how the theme is carried out, that is the real differentiator. The production is big-time theater: clowns and jugglers, lighting and rigging — circus frills and fancies dominate the activities throughout the weekend, before, between and after the 200 two-and-a-half minute cheer and dance performances.

First and foremost to achieving the production quality required to pull off such an event is finding an appropriate building, according to Worley.

"It has to be a world-class facility to make the production work," he said. "And the GICC is exactly that. The hallways and common space, the entrances and lobbies, are gorgeous."

Still, you can pardon some of the kids and even their coaches and parents if they are sometimes too

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— DENNIS WORLEY | Director of Business Development, 8th Annual All Star Challenge

preoccupied to notice the clowning. This is serious business, especially for the Advanced Senior division, from which two teams will win paid bids — about \$50,000 in expenses — to the Cheerleading Worlds competition in April 2011 at Walt Disney World in Orlando. That event has gained sufficient stature to get the attention of the ESPN sports network, which televises the competition highlights.

"The teams competing here at the GICC have a lot at stake," Worley explained. "They know a win means they will have a good chance to win in Orlando, just as five teams in the previous eight years of Battle Under the Big Top have done before them." ■

SHOW PROFILE

8th Annual All Star Challenge

Varsity Brands

Dec. 11-12, 2010



The "Battle Under the Big Top" hosts 200 teams of boys and girls ages five to 18 to dance competitively with a fanciful circus theme.





# BIG TOP



18 — a serious cheer and



All photos © Jamie Christian Photography



## GICC HAPPENINGS

A GICC pre-function area is converted to look like an airport gate as a set for the movie *Quarantine 2: Terminal*. Contemporary and beautiful, the GICC has been used for sets in several recent movies and TV shows, including Tyler Perry's *Why Did I Get Married Too*, *American Idol* and *The Biggest Loser*.



## FOCUS

by Hugh Austin  
GICC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# A View from the Inside

*Industry conferences keep GICC execs on top of industry trends.*

Recently GICC's top executives had the opportunity to participate in industry conferences of their own. Executive Director, Hugh Austin, attended the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) conference and trade show in Houston, while Assistant Executive Director, Mercedes Miller, took in the 2010 Meeting Planners International (MPI) World Congress in Vancouver, Canada.

We participate in these associations and attend these annual conferences for the same reasons that many of our clients attend their industry events here at the GICC, to stay abreast of the most pressing industry issues, to contribute to the growth and success of our industry, and most importantly, to learn how to continue to improve our service to our clients.

### Executive Director, Hugh Austin:

I have attended the IAVM (formerly IAAM) and served in various capacities and on committees, including on the IAVM International Board of Directors from 2005 to 2007, for more than 20 years. I continue to find tremendous value in the Association and these meetings, not only for my own continued professional development, but for the opportunity to interact with leading venue managers from across the nation and around the world.

"Spending this time together [with our customers] leaves all parties feeling a deeper commitment and stronger obligation to one another."

— MERCEDES MILLER  
Assistant Executive Director, GICC

Going "green" is more than a trend in our industry; it is the future — and the future is now. This year's meeting provided valuable input on sustainable design and such topics as how green practices can reduce operating costs. We met with "green" vendors at the trade show and learned a great deal about refitting existing facilities, like the GICC, for LEED certification.

The highlight of the meeting for me was an informal conversation I had with keynote speaker Lt. General Russel Honoré. He is retired from the Third U.S. Army/U.S. Army Forces Command and works with the American Red Cross and FEMA relief centers. He was particularly complimentary of GICC's role in providing relief to Hurricane Katrina victims in 2005, especially of the work of what he called, "your effective team that knows how to get things done."

### Assistant Executive Director, Mercedes Miller:

While participating in MPI, I have the opportunity to work with planners who will hold their meetings at our facility.

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# Marriott Grand Opening . . .

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with double-stuffed potato, and beverages from boutique beers to cocktails mixed with specialty fruit juices.

The conveniences of the hotel extend to a market, business center and service desks manned by partners Hertz, which will maintain a fleet of cars on site, and Delta Air Lines.

"I'm most excited about two things," noted Woolridge at the Grand Opening. "We're pleased about increasing the Marriott presence in the airport market. This property represents a significant improvement in lodging for business travelers to Atlanta.

"But we are most excited as to how this property fulfills Marriott's global vision of its commitment to green and expansion of LEED-certified hotels."

The Marriott Gateway and SpringHill Suites Gateway, also on the GICC campus, are among the first hotels in the Atlanta area to apply for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building certification.

They have been built on a site near alternative transportation and accessible via Atlanta airport's guided rail. Each hotel was created with ten percent of recycled materials and a landscape and irrigation design that reduces water consumption by 50 percent. They will use 30 percent less water and 28 percent less energy than a non-LEED hotel. Twenty percent of hotel supplies are sourced locally, within a 500-mile radius, and each building has a white roof to reduce heat absorption. Both hotels use non-coal produced energy, low-flow plumbing and shower fixtures, energy efficient lighting and low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint, sealants and carpets. ■



Champions Restaurant serves classic American food as well as regional favorites and signature organic beverages; open for breakfast, lunch and dinner; free Wi-Fi and numerous high-definition televisions.



## A View from the Inside

(continued from page 3)

This meeting helps us gain the knowledge and skills we must develop to successfully serve that market, which is transitioning.

The highlight of the meeting for me was its focus on technology and its increasingly important role in planning and executing the kind of meetings that meet audience expectations and address audience needs. We discussed various ways of integrating technology to the benefit of a meeting, including profile, social scheduling, recommendation engines, geo-location, mobile, gaming, virtual and streaming technologies.

Meetings like MPI are a driving force in building lasting relationships with customers. They help us create a bond with our customers, which enhances communication; spending this time together leaves all parties feeling a deeper commitment and stronger obligation to one another. ■

## Planner Perspectives

# Delta Lands Here for Corporate Meetings

**S**USAN HUDSON IS ASSISTANT CORPORATE SECRETARY and Manager of Delta Event Management, a title matched in length only by her tenure. She has worked in the executive offices of Delta Air Lines for 37 years, planning and executing corporate meetings that today extend beyond 100 annually, 12 of which are considered major events. That used to be the work of five planners, but the economic realities of the airline industry post 9/11 has rendered her a department of one. *Front & Center* talked with Hudson on a break at her July 20-22 Leadership Conference, one of two such annual meetings that host upwards of 2,400 Delta managers from around the world and that have been held at the GICC since its opening in 2003.



Susan Hudson  
Assistant Corporate Secretary and  
Manager of Delta Event Management

**F&C.** *What types of meetings do you oversee as the planner for the corporate offices of the world's largest airline?*

**Hudson.** The major annual events include the Leadership Conferences, the annual shareholders meeting, employee block parties in Atlanta and Minneapolis, and new aircraft deliveries where we will fly a group to the manufacturer to take delivery and fly it to Atlanta. The size of the meetings can range from company-wide and worldwide events to a CEO dinner for a handful of business associates.

**F&C.** *After 37 years, you likely have this down to a science. Are there still challenges in planning these meetings?*

**Hudson.** It's always a challenge to bring all the pieces together in a timely manner: transportation, food, the space, production. But most challenging is handling the last minute changes so common to meetings, in particular meetings like this Leadership Conference. People come from all over the world to this meeting. They run into people here they might not see at any other time of the year, and that leads to a

lot of impromptu meetings. So we have to be ready at a moment's notice to provide everything that's needed for them to conduct business.

**F&C.** *What is it about the GICC that keeps you returning here for your meetings?*

**Hudson.** First of all, the GICC is so convenient. Not only is the building convenient to our campus near the airport, but for people flying in from all over the world. We also benefit from our extended relationship with the staff here at the GICC. Most of the people we work with have been here a long time and we can anticipate each other's needs. When things change at the last minute, as they are certain to do, they can roll with it.

**F&C.** *Are you taking advantage of the new on-site hotels?*

**Hudson.** Yes, we are very happy to have them. The new full-service Marriott is going to be a big help to us, not just for lodging, but for the additional space we will have access to for people who might want to meet during non-conference hours or off site from the conference center. And we're already enjoying the new ATL SkyTrain. It is a tremendous convenience. It makes a bigger difference than you might think in getting to the GICC from the airport and back. ■



"Not only is the building convenient to our campus near the airport, but for people flying in from all over the world. We also benefit from our extended relationship with the staff here at the GICC. Most of the people we work with have been here a long time and we can anticipate each other's needs."

— SUSAN HUDSON | Assistant Corporate Secretary and Manager, Delta Event Management

### KEY CONTACTS

To book your next meeting or trade show at the GICC, contact the Sales Department:  
Phone: 770.997.3566  
Email: [dcole@gicc.com](mailto:dcole@gicc.com)

To book hotel reservations directly with the on-site Marriott or SpringHill Suites hotel:  
Phone: 404.459.5681  
Website:  
[www.SpringHillSuitesAtlantaAirportGateway.com](http://www.SpringHillSuitesAtlantaAirportGateway.com)

For leasing information on the Atlanta Gateway Center Office Building, contact:  
Lee Evans, III; Colliers Spectrum Cauble, Inc.  
Phone: 404.877.9203  
Email: [lee.evans@colliers.com](mailto:lee.evans@colliers.com)

For information on booking space, please call the GICC Sales Department at 770.997.3566.



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