

FRONT & CENTER

INFORMATION AND EVENTS FROM THE GEORGIA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER



Lessons for Home Schoolers

Georgia Home Education Association's show marks second decade at GICC



Director's Focus

GICC's executive director offers a perspective on GICC history

**GICC
25TH
ANNIVERSARY**

In Their Own Words

College Park leaders talk about the making of the GICC

Is the Smart Phone the New Briefcase?

Killer app *myGICC* for meeting planners and attendees

SOMEDAY SOON you may stand in line at Airport security and not see a single person removing a laptop from its carrying case. The deluge of apps being developed for iPhones and Androids and Blackberrys is delivering so much capability even the most portable of computers seems cumbersome. No need to be tied to a lumpy laptop when you can do everything you need to on your phone.

The trend — or more accurately, revolution — is storming our industry as well. “Mobile apps are now the hottest line of software development,” meetings technology guru Corbin Ball blogged. “There are hundreds of direct applications for events, trade shows, associations and venues.”

One of the newest apps for the convention industry, developed by Boston-based SwiftMobile, is a mobile solution for events and venues designed to make attending a meeting or conference more convenient and productive. Adopted by the GICC and named “*myGICC*,” the app allows attendees

“Smart phones can offer the meeting ecosystem significant value in terms of networking and navigation for the users, and cost savings and monetization for the producers.”

— KATHLEEN GILROY
SwiftMobile CEO



Twenty-Five Years, One Focus

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, MORE THAN FIVE MILLION GUESTS AND A GLEAMING NEW FACILITY LATER, TODAY'S GICC HAS BUILT ON THE ORIGINAL BUILDING'S SUCCESS.

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THE PROSPECTS WERE UNCLEAR and the critics noisy as College Park officials opened the Georgia International Trade and Convention Center in the Crowne Plaza Hotel complex bordering the Atlanta airport in 1985. But the center, the precursor of today's Georgia International Convention Center, was an immediate success, hosting more than 200,000 convention attendees that year and in the process silencing the doubters.

An article in the May 6, 1991 issue of *The Atlanta Constitution* told the story: “College Park city officials knew they were taking a big gamble in the early 1980s

when they decided to construct Metro Atlanta's third largest convention center. That gamble paid off, though, as they saw the facility ... begin paying its own way in the first year of operation.”

The newspaper article, aptly titled “Breaking Ground, Keeping Faith,” went on to announce a \$28 million expansion to nearly triple the facility's floor space, from 136,000 to 329,000 square feet. The expanded building, completed and opened in 1993, would feature three times the original facility's exhibit space and coincide with the purchase of the adjoining hotel by ITT Sheraton “... to become one of

(continued on page 2)



Architect's rendering of the Georgia International Convention and Trade Center, built in 1985. Above, an early aerial image of the Center with Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport visible just beyond.

Georgia International Convention Center
2000 Convention Center Concourse
College Park, GA 30337

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Twenty-Five Years . . .

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The current GICC, designed and built by Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart & Stewart Architects.

the hotel chain's new, upscale Gateway Hotels."

Twenty-five years, more than five million guests and a gleaming new facility later, today's GICC has built on the original building's success, winning consistent praise as one of the finest facilities not just in the Atlanta area but statewide and across the nation. The second largest convention center in Georgia, with the state's largest ballroom, the GICC is applauded not only by the College Park city fathers who continue to support it as the jewel of their city, but by the event planners who find the building one of the most modern, beautiful and convenient facilities

The Georgia International Convention Center has undergone several changes in identity since its inception.



Lessons for Home Schoolers

WHEN THE GICC OPENED ITS DOORS May 29 to the Georgia Home Education Conference and Curriculum Fair it marked the beginning of its second decade hosting the annual event. For event organizers, it was the 26th consecutive year playing host to parents, students and suppliers involved in home schooling, a segment of education that continues to grow impressively if quietly.

"Home schooling began as a way for parents to ensure their children were being taught their own values," explained Ken Patterson, who with his wife Mary Jo have coordinated the Conference and Fair for the past quarter century. "Values are still an important reason people home school these days, but other reasons include safety and simply getting a better education."

Once considered a fringe element of education, and illegal in many states, home schooling is now mainstream. It has been legal in all states since 1990. The Pattersons estimate about 70,000 home-schooled students in Georgia, giving the state the fifth largest home-school population in the U.S. Increasing at a rate of 7 to 10 percent annually for the last two decades, Conference attendance reflects the growing ranks of home schoolers. And student performance is reason to expect continued growth: home-schooled students perform better on tests, more attend college, and surveys have found them happier adults.

The Conference is designed to support, encourage and train home school teachers, primarily parents, as well as to expose those considering home schooling to the practice. Each year a large contingent of parents with their pre-schoolers in tow attend to learn more about home schooling.

And the program offers plenty to learn about. Through breakout sessions and more than 130 exhibits,

SHOW PROFILE

Georgia Home Education Conference and Curriculum Fair

Georgia Home Education Association

April 29 – May 1



Graduates are congratulated by Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue.



"Home schooling began as a way for parents to ensure their children were being taught their own values. Values are still an important reason people home school these days, but other reasons include safety and simply getting a better education."

— KEN PATTERSON | Conference Coordinator,
Georgia Home Education Conference and Curriculum Fair

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anywhere. As we begin the second decade of the 21st century, the GICC finds itself in the final stages of Phase II of yet another impressive expansion, a \$230 million development project which has added two on-site Marriott-brand hotels — a 403-room full-service Marriott and a 147-room SpringHill Suites — amidst more than a million new square feet of office, retail, hotel and parking space.

architecture and contemporary interior, including its museum-like collection of commissioned art, make every event just that much more interesting.

But more than any other aspect of the building, the GICC culture of superior customer service, which has characterized the facility since its first opening in 1985, makes planning an event at the GICC as enjoyable as attending one.

“Our focus is, as it always has been, on doing whatever it takes to ensure our events are the best they can be,” offered GICC Executive Director Hugh Austin. “More than anything else, that is why our clients bring their events back to the GICC year after year.” ■



“Location was a big consideration when we first chose the GICC for our conference, and still is. People come from all over the state as well as from Tennessee, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina ... Having the airport next door is mainly an advantage for our speakers. More important is that we are near Atlanta without being downtown.”

— MARY JO PATTERSON | Conference Coordinator,
Georgia Home Education Conference and Curriculum Fair

130 exhibits feature home schooling aids and supplies.



the 5,000 attendees find everything from traditional textbooks to new teaching innovations like “video math”; from concepts like “unit studies” that build an entire curriculum around a particular issue, to a chess tournament and an event-concluding graduation ceremony.

The economy has not affected participation in the Conference, the Pattersons offer. Still, their main challenge as a not-for-profit association is cost.

“We’re still a mom and pop organization, and it is hard to find all the funding we need,” Ken Patterson noted. The event-sponsoring Georgia Home Education Association addresses the issue, in part, with a small registration fee, but also through the support of an all-volunteer staff.

Formerly held in a large local church,

the Conference and Fair moved to the GICC in 2000. It was also the first event held in the new GICC as it opened in 2003. Today exhibitors occupy three of the exhibit halls; all the GICC meeting rooms are used for breakout sessions.

“We’ve been pursued by other conference centers, but we stay at the GICC. The building works well for us, and having the new hotels onsite is a big plus,” Mary Jo Patterson offered. “Location was a big consideration when we first chose the GICC for our conference, and still is. People come from all over the state as well as from Tennessee, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. They drive, so having the airport next door is mainly an advantage for our speakers. More important is that we are near Atlanta without being downtown.” ■



FOCUS

by Hugh Austin
GICC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“The Perfect Formula” and “Dream Come True”

I HOPE YOU’LL PARDON US for taking most of this issue of *Front & Center* to beat our chests a bit. Then again, I guess a 25th anniversary is just cause for celebration.

When I came to the GICC in 2000, it was an incredible opportunity to oversee the development of the “new” GICC. Anyone in the convention business would have been excited to see the plans the leaders of the city of College Park had for this building and the complex that has emerged around it. And I never tire of seeing how impressed our guests are with our convention center complex as they arrive and throughout their stay.

If you’ve read the remarks of Mayor Jack Longino and Councilman Charles Phillips in this issue (*“In Their Words,”* p. 4), you understand how this vision became

reality. The leadership of the city that owns and operates the GICC have never wavered, from the opening of the original building 25 years ago, in their commitment to and support of their convention center. They committed to the construction of a cutting-edge facility and to operating it in a way that ensures it retains its like-new appearance and appeal. Their support was not weakened by a recession that tabled many an expansion plan, as Phase II of their vision of a complex with on-site hotels and office buildings became reality just this last year.

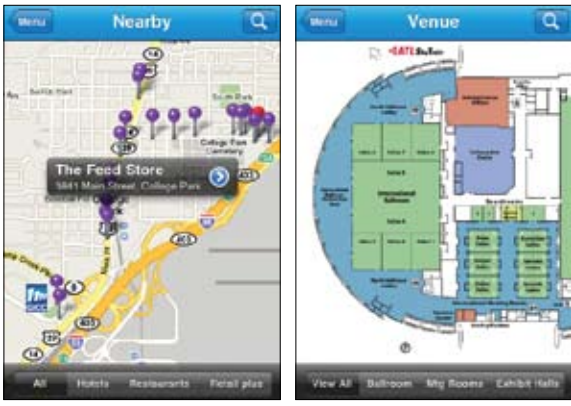
Nor are they hedging on moving forward with additional phases of our complex, which will include most notably an expansion of the convention center and two more office buildings.

In celebrating our 25th anniversary, we can see how this vision of our leaders has materialized as what Mayor Longino called “the perfect formula for a unique and powerful hospitality destination,” combining the convenience of our proximity to the airport with the amenities of our cutting-edge convention center and hotels. As Councilman Phillips commented, it is “our dream come true.” ■



Smart Phone . . .

(continued from page 1)



Select screenshots from myGICC for iPhone

SwiftMobile's app is designed to suit any meeting budget. A large event can have its own branded, custom app, while smaller event planners can add upgrades within myGICC, such as session schedules, social networking, and a map of their exhibit floor.

to use their mobile devices to navigate the exhibit halls, find meetings, locate local businesses like restaurants and shops, track flights and shuttle services, and connect with each other through social media. And when customized for an event, the app can provide virtually all the information contained in a show directory or guide, only more interactively.

"Smart phones can offer the meeting ecosystem significant value in terms of networking and navigation for the users and cost savings and monetization for the producers," noted SwiftMobile CEO Kathleen Gilroy.

"About half of today's meeting attendees carry smart phones with them — and that will grow to about 80 percent in the next year or two." That will dramatically reduce the need for printed materials — directories, attendee brochures and the like — she pointed out. "And lost publication ad sales can be replaced by app advertising."

SwiftMobile's app is designed to suit any meeting budget. A large event can have its own branded, custom app, while planners of smaller events can add upgrades within myGICC, such as session schedules, social networking, and a map of their exhibit floor.

Pardon her enthusiasm, but Gilroy is flat-out giddy about the future of the mobile venue app. "Where these venue apps are available, use has been intense. A recent physicians meeting in Boston produced 85,000 page views by 2,000 doctors during the four-day event. People who downloaded the app had the whole meeting in their pockets. And the event producer was able to cover the cost of the application by selling a mobile sponsorship." ■

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

To book hotel reservations directly with the on-site Marriott or SpringHill Suites hotel:
Phone: 404-459-5681
Website:
www.SpringHillSuitesAtlantaAirportGateway.com

For leasing information on the Atlanta Gateway Center Office Building:
Call C. Lee Evans, III; Colliers Spectrum Cauble, Inc.
Phone: 404.877.9203
Email: lee.evans@colliers.com

Perspectives

In Their Own Words . . .

FRONT & CENTER TALKS WITH COLLEGE PARK LEADERS MAYOR JACK P. LONGINO AND COUNCILMAN CHARLES E. PHILLIPS ABOUT THE MAKING OF THE GICC.

AS A PUBLICLY-OWNED FACILITY, the GICC relies on the support — moral as well as financial — of the leadership of the city of College Park, Ga. The decision to construct a convention center ... then expand it ... then build a new facility that would set new standards for convention center design and functionality ... then create a mixed-use complex around the convention center — all are evidence of the commitment to development of unyielding quality of the mayor and city council of this city of just over 20,000 residents. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the GICC, *Front & Center* spoke with Jack P. Longino, a third-generation resident of the College Park and mayor since 1996, and Charles E. Phillips, who first won election to the city council in 1990, about the past, present and future of the GICC.



Jack P. Longino
College Park Mayor



Charles E. Phillips
College Park City Councilman

F&C. How important is the GICC to the city of College Park?

Mayor Longino. Our primary business focus in College Park is on helping our people capitalize on our connection with the world's busiest airport. And the way we achieve that goal is through quality development. In addition to the GICC, we have built 32 hotels since 1980, four of which have more than 400 rooms and several more with at least 200 rooms. The GICC combines with airport traffic to fill those hotels, so that, on any given day, our community of 20,000 can grow to more than 100,000 people doing business and supporting local businesses.

Councilman Phillips. The GICC is a beacon for the city. It is the first thing people mention when they talk about our city today. It has always had widespread support. For example, in 1993, when we proposed to expand the original facility to nearly triple the exhibit space, all our leaders supported the expansion, recognizing that we needed the bigger facility in order to compete with other convention centers around Atlanta.

F&C. Mayor, you were quoted in the Atlanta newspapers at the opening of the new GICC facility in 2003 as saying, "We knew we were on to something big — the perfect formula for a unique and powerful hospitality destination." How is the GICC fulfilling those expectations?

Mayor Longino. The main comment we heard when people saw the facility for the first time was "wow!" It is on the cutting edge — and it is memorable. Today, the new complex, with the hotels and office building, just adds to the "wow" factor.

But it is also uniquely easy for people to conduct business here. The convention complex connects to the world's busiest airport via the Atlanta SkyTrain (guided railway that connects the airport, GICC and airport rental car facility). Then by MARTA (Atlanta's mass transit rail system), you can go virtually anywhere in Atlanta. Add that to the fact that we are at the juncture of three major interstate highways, and you have a level of convenience no other convention facility in America can offer.

F&C. Councilman Phillips, what convinced the city leadership to build this leading-edge convention center and now the hotels and office buildings that comprise a complex everyone seems to agree is nothing short of spectacular?

Councilman Phillips. When the airport decided to add a fifth runway, and we were able to convince the city of Atlanta to buy the old convention center from us, we decided to use all the money to build the new facility. But our vision was more than a building; it was

the mixed-use complex including the hotels and office buildings. They said it couldn't be done, but we did it — and it is our dream come true.

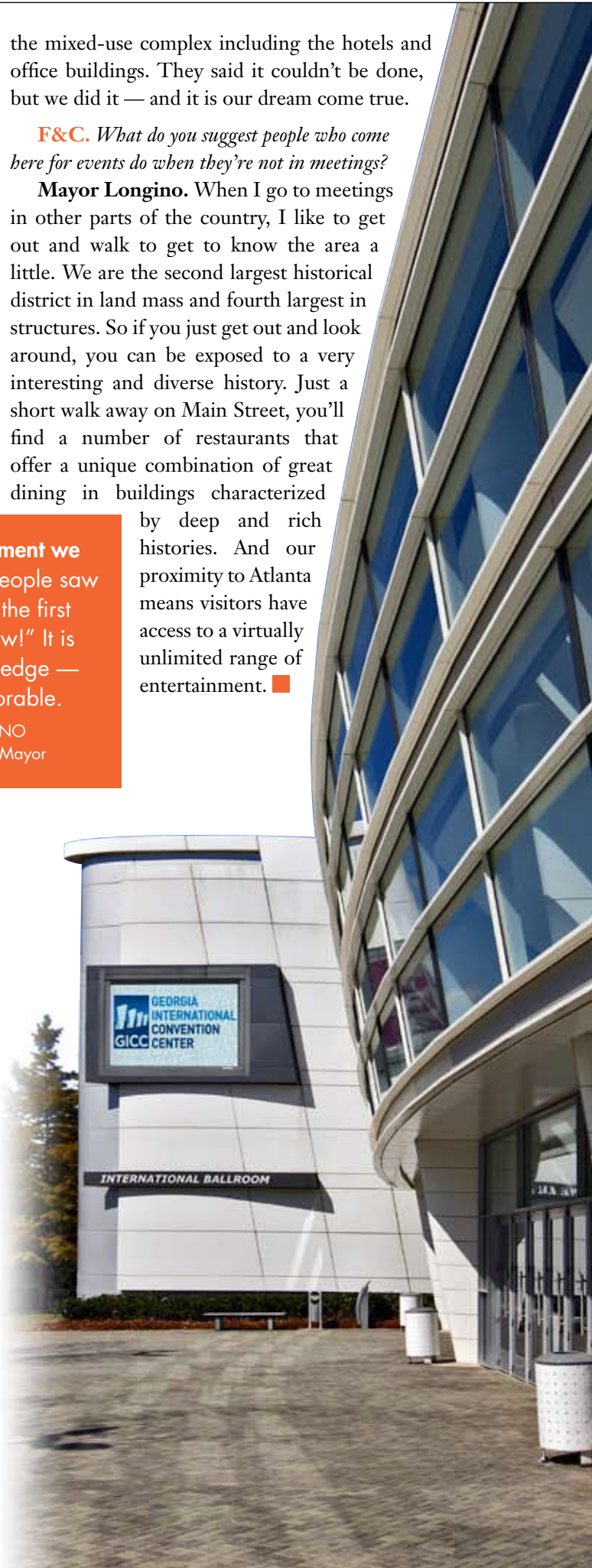
F&C. What do you suggest people who come here for events do when they're not in meetings?

Mayor Longino. When I go to meetings in other parts of the country, I like to get out and walk to get to know the area a little. We are the second largest historical district in land mass and fourth largest in structures. So if you just get out and look around, you can be exposed to a very interesting and diverse history. Just a short walk away on Main Street, you'll find a number of restaurants that offer a unique combination of great dining in buildings characterized

by deep and rich histories. And our proximity to Atlanta means visitors have access to a virtually unlimited range of entertainment. ■

The main comment we heard when people saw the facility for the first time was "Wow!" It is on the cutting edge — and it is memorable.

— JACK LONGINO
College Park Mayor



For information on booking space, please call the GICC Sales Department at 770-997-3566.



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