

FRONT & CENTER

INFORMATION AND EVENTS FROM THE GEORGIA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER



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A hotel boom in the GICC neighborhood

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Providing structure and support amidst chaos

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Ready to respond when the going gets tough

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Green Acres

FROM LANDSCAPE TO LAUNDRY, THE GICC IS CONSPICUOUSLY GREEN.

AS YOU ENTER the GICC campus and ride the gently winding road past the new Marriott hotels to the convention center, part of the striking beauty of the complex is the greenery, a rich, manicured landscape featuring river birch, oaks and magnolias. But the acreage is just the beginning of green. The convention center and everything in and around it has been designed around, and is focused on, a commitment to environmental sustainability.

Inside the GICC, the goal is “total green,” according to Event Coordinator Cindy Sumter, who coordinates the GICC’s green initiatives, in particular, a center-wide recycling program.

“We gather and separate all glass, paper, plastics and aluminum products,” she noted. “We also coordinate with event planners for the recycling of all their meeting materials.”

According to Operations Superintendent Yanous Barner, “All cleaning chemicals and supplies used throughout the facility, like trash bags, must be recyclable and are recycled.”

All food at the GICC, from elaborate ballroom dinners to sandwiches on the exhibit floor, is prepared and served by caterer Proof of the Pudding. Recognized as unique among convention center foodservice providers for its restaurant-quality food, “Proof” is also an industry-leading

From the meats, fish and vegetables it purchases to its “zero trash” initiative, Proof’s green programs aim for 100 percent sustainability without adding costs that must be absorbed by the customer.



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Reese Witherspoon, Avon’s Global Ambassador, and Avon Chairman & CEO Andrea Jung, celebrate the company’s 125th Anniversary during the Atlanta stop of the 2011 Avon Global Believe Tour.

Avon Comes Calling to Celebrate 125 Years

DESPITE “SNOWMAGEDDON” MEETING PLAYS TO OVERFLOW CROWDS

SINCE 1886, AVON HAS BEEN CALLING on women. It started in New York, then spread across the U.S., and now Avon makes its calls, from door-to-door sales to online “eRepresentatives,” to customers in more than 100 countries to the tune of more than \$10 billion annually.

The Avon mission is to empower women,



and this year the Avon call includes gathering its representatives together regionally on a 16-city “Avon Believe World Tour” to celebrate 125 years of its heritage. The Tour, which started in Atlanta in January at the GICC, is a one-day combination of celebration and inspiration, including addresses from Avon Chairman and CEO Andrea Jung and Actress and Avon Global Ambassador Reese Witherspoon.

A slight delay

Typically for our Front & Center event features, we ask planners to identify the biggest

challenges to planning their events. In the case of the Avon World Tour, we hardly needed to ask. Because on January 13, the date scheduled for the

MEETING PROFILE

Avon Believe World Tour 125th Anniversary Celebration

Avon

January 25, 2011

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



LEFT: Hilton Atlanta Airport. ABOVE: Holiday Inn Airport South. RIGHT: Sheraton Gateway. BELOW: Westin Atlanta Airport.



HOTELMMA

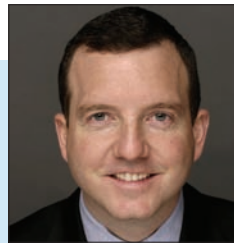
The GICC and neighboring “world’s busiest airport” have created a hotel market booming with more rooms and fantastic renovations.

AS BOOKINGS OF the GICC have increased over recent years, the meeting and event planners responsible for those bookings are driving an expansion boom in the neighboring hospitality industry. The number of rooms available in the airport area has increased by 178 percent over the past three years, by far the fastest growing of Atlanta’s nine hotel markets.

College Park, the home city and owner/operator of the GICC, alone offers more than 20 hotels on and around the GICC complex. Virtually every major brand is represented among the more than 5,000 rooms in all sizes of hotels and at all price points, from the 638-room Atlanta Airport Marriott on Best Road to the 63-room Sleep Inn on Sullivan Road. These hotels cater to travelers on business, offering a total of more than 200,000 square feet of meeting space in addition to the GICC’s 150,000 square feet of exhibit space, 16,000 square feet of meeting rooms, and its 40,000 square-foot ballroom, Georgia’s largest.

Not only have the number of hotel rooms in the area increased dramatically, virtually every major brand in the market has invested millions of dollars in upgrading rooms, lobbies, meeting spaces and restaurants.

At the Sheraton Gateway Hotel, which borders the airport and adjoins the original GICC building, a recent \$7 million dollar



DAVID PISCOLA
Hilton Atlanta Airport, GM

“We here at the Atlanta airport property are among the first system-wide to benefit from (Hilton’s) investment dollars. But our 4-Diamond rating is about more than facilities. Our front-line staff is what generates repeat business.”



ADREENE ALLEN
Holiday Inn Airport South, GM

“As a brand we’ve re-launched. Its about our service culture. We’ve made a major investment in service training. We call it treating our guests as ‘every day heroes.’”



KERRY RINGHAM
Sheraton Gateway, GM

“We put a lot of emphasis on appealing to the increasing number of female business travelers. The new signature Sheraton bathroom with its granite and marble and residential look is an example.”

renovation has produced beautifully updated guest rooms and public areas, as well as 20,000 square feet of updated meeting space.

“We put a lot of emphasis on appealing to the increasing number of female business travelers,” offered Kerry Ringham, Sheraton Gateway general manager. “The new signature Sheraton bathroom with its granite and marble and residential look is an example.”

Other major brands, specifically the Westin Atlanta Airport and Atlanta Airport Marriott, have spent in excess of \$20 million

in recent renovations. And not to venerable brands, the Holiday Inn are continuing with major upgrades

The Westin’s \$22 million renovation inside and out, according to General Manager Kerry Ringham. In addition to 500 newly renovated rooms, the hotel has added techno-amenities as HD TVs and computer-to-TV hookups, the hot



ANNIA!



BILL HENDERSON
Westin Atlanta Airport, GM

“Westin is a leader in wellness programs and amenities.”

The hotel features a Clean Meeting Program within its 23,500 square feet of meeting space and a Super Foods Program of healthy menu items.

“Pure Rooms,” rooms treated to remain allergen-free.

“Westin is a leader in wellness programs and amenities,” he pointed out. The hotel features a Clean Meeting Program within its 23,500 square feet of meeting space and a Super Foods Program of healthy menu items.

“There has been a Hilton Hotel here at the airport since the 1950s,” explained David Piscola, general manager of the Hilton Atlanta Airport, which has earned the AAA 4-Diamond Award for 21 consecutive years. “We were one of the first hotels here.”

The current Hilton, built in the late 1980s, completed its latest round of renovations in 2008 with new meeting and lobby space. Next up is a complete renovation of all guest rooms, scheduled for completion by October 2011.

“Hilton is making a tremendous financial commitment to its properties,” Piscola said. “And we here at the Atlanta airport property are among the first system-wide to benefit from those investment dollars.”

“But our 4-Diamond rating is about more than facilities. Our front-line staff is what generates repeat business.” He added that some of the hotel’s employees have been with the property since the opening of the original Hilton Atlanta Airport.

Adreene Allen of the Holiday Inn argues a similar case for the 190-room Holiday Inn Airport South. The hotel boasts a fresh new look, including 3,500 square feet of meeting space, after a 2009 refreshing. But, she points out, it is the “personable alternative to the bigger boxes,” that distinguishes the Holiday Inn here.

“As a brand we’ve re-launched,” she said. “It’s about our service culture. We’ve made a major investment in service training. We call it treating our guests as ‘every day heroes.’”

In addition to their work individually to address the wants and needs of business travelers, most of the area’s hotels participate in the Atlanta Airport Hotel Coalition, which addresses issues collectively that aren’t within the parameters of a single venue. According to Westin’s Henderson, who chairs this year’s Coalition council, current issues include hotel employee security and safety training and working with the airport to improve traveler access to hotel shuttle transportation. ■



FOCUS

by Hugh Austin
GICC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Providing Structure amidst Chaos

ALL OF US IN THE EVENT BUSINESS, from planners to facility managers, know that no amount of preparation can guarantee things will go as planned. And when things do go wrong, the situation is magnified by the typically large numbers of people we are charged with accommodating and the substantial budgets at risk. So we train for and get plenty of practice at responding to crises, at providing structure and support amidst chaos.

When an uncharacteristic January snow turned to ice and virtually shut down the Atlanta area, we at the GICC got another opportunity to utilize our training in crisis management.

The first rule of crisis management is to be prepared. So on Friday January 7, we began preparing for the storm that was predicted for late that Sunday night. Coordinating with Amanda Perlman, general manager of Springhill Suites, one of the GICC complex on-site hotels, we arranged for housing for the upcoming days for 65 College Park employees – Public Safety (Fire and Police), our College Park Power and College Park Public Works emergency workers.

A major production move-in was scheduled for that Monday morning at 10:00 for the Avon Tour (see Avon story, this issue). I was in the building with a skeleton crew who despite the hazardous traffic in the area made it in that morning. We provided break services, a lunch at 3:00 p.m., and dinner at

8:00 p.m. for the crews; and they completed the sound and lighting rigging for the show by midnight. But as we returned for work the next morning, Avon contacted us and asked to postpone the event. So we fed the production crews breakfast and lunch, and they had the set dismantled and move-out completed by 3:00 p.m.

When an uncharacteristic January snow turned to ice and virtually shut down the Atlanta area, we at the GICC got another opportunity to utilize our training in crisis management.

By late that Tuesday morning, all the other events scheduled for the week had been postponed.

Under the skilled direction of our staff, and with the universal cooperation of the event planners, we were able to reschedule them all. We even were able to accommodate several planners who were unable to reschedule their events with other local venues.

As a city-owned and -operated facility, the GICC has an extended role in emergencies – the storm was classified an emergency by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) – and so our involvement included working closely with College Park Emergency Management Coordinator Tami Fowler, City Manager William Johnson, and Fire Chief Teresa Everett, who managed the Emergency Operations Center at the Public Safety Building along with the leadership of the Police Department, College Park Power, College Park Public Works and the Public Information Office. We conducted status briefings throughout the event and a post-event review. We are using those findings to continue improving our processes and skills at responding to such emergencies.

Yes, no amount of planning can avert some crises. Still, as President and General Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “Plans are nothing; planning is everything.” ■

be left behind, two of the most and Hilton, have undergone and s. vation covered the entire hotel, neral Manager Bill Henderson. d guest rooms that feature such d “jack-packs” that allow for el offers 25 specially designated

Green Acres

(continued from page 1)

proponent of environmental consciousness.

From the meats, fish and vegetables it purchases to its “zero trash” initiative, Proof’s green programs aim for 100 percent sustainability without adding costs that must be absorbed by the customer.

“We do it first of all because it is the right thing to do,” noted Proof Vice President Ben Witte, “but we also know that it is important to our customers. A majority of customers these days want to know the specifics of our green program.”

It starts with purchasing, Witte said. “We order as much product as possible from local sources – fruits and vegetables, sustainable seafood and natural organic meats.

“The meat we buy is from animals that have been treated right, slaughtered correctly and not filled with chemicals,” he said. “In addition to being the right way to do things, they’re also better products.”

Proof has also virtually eliminated disposable products, including plastic and Styrofoam plates and flatware. “Our first choices are china, glass and silver because they are reusable,” Witte explained. “When it has to be disposable, we have gone to corn and sugarcane-based products, like plates and flatware, that are biodegradable.”

A green “punch list” also includes replacing paper menu cards with electronic information in digital frames, printing on 100 percent recycled paper, and using low-flow spray valves in the kitchen to preserve water. The company coordinates activities with the U.S. Green Building Council and employs a green consultant to educate clients and employees on how to conduct eco-friendly events.

Meanwhile, both on-site Marriott properties, the Atlanta Marriott Gateway and SpringHill Suites Atlanta Airport Gateway are LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified hotels. Each hotel was created with 10 percent of recycled materials and a landscape and irrigation design that reduces water consumption by 50 percent. They use 30 percent less water and 28 percent less energy than a typical non-LEED hotel. Each has a white roof to reduce heat absorption, and both use non-coal produced energy, low-flow plumbing and shower fixtures, energy efficient lighting and low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint, sealants and carpets. ■

“We order as much product as possible from local sources – fruits and vegetables, sustainable seafood and natural organic meats.”

— BEN WITTE
Vice President,
Proof of the Pudding

When the Going Gets Tough

WHEN AN AUTOMOBILE manufacturer moved its national dealer meeting to the GICC this fall, it kept an opening breakfast session of more than 900 dealers well beyond expected closing time. With just over two hours to prepare for a lunch session for the same group, a call for “all hands on deck” went out. Managers from all departments joined kitchen staff to clear tables, replace table cloths, reset places, fold napkins, pour water and deliver a scrumptious meal in time for the noon start.

A 2008 CAR AND BIKE SHOW expected, and planning was done for, a crowd of about 6,000. As more than 13,000 stormed the GICC, operations staff set about revising the plan in real time, scrambling to deliver sufficient food, handle parking and provide appropriate security, even as they staged two additional ballroom events, a military ball and a wedding, over the same weekend.

WHEN HURRICANE KATRINA scattered New Orleans residents, authorities we’re desperate for help from facilities like convention centers that could accommodate relief for the masses. The GICC stepped up, helping thousands of evacuees who turned up, unpredictably and unscheduled, as loaded buses were re-routed from other destinations. For weeks, in an ever-evolving process, GICC staff worked 15-hour days providing food and shelter, managing the delivery of medical support and overseeing the issuance of relief checks.

Events like these test the endurance of facility and equipment as well as manpower. But they also testify to the willingness and ability of a venue and its people to respond effectively when the going gets tough.

Convention centers are expected to know how to accommodate the unexpected, but the GICC is recognized for being particularly good at it. Event after event, planners rave about how flexible and responsive the people of the GICC are. It’s not an accident nor is it luck or magic, notes Andrea Smalls, a Certified Emergency Manager and GICC’s director of Event Operations, a staff that includes managers of every aspect of the operation that touches planners and their guests, from building operations to parking, from coordinating with on-site caterer Proof of the Pudding to working with general service contractors in the exhibit halls.

“It’s a culture, a management style that involves assembling a team of good



“It’s a culture, a management style that involves assembling a team of good people then providing them whatever they need to do their jobs.”

— ANDREA SMALLS, Emergency Manager and GICC’s director of Event Operations

people then providing them whatever they need to do their jobs,” said Smalls.

A member of GICC management team since 1993, Smalls started the Event Operations department with a couple of other account service managers a decade and a half ago. She is one of many of the 50 department employees with similarly long employment histories at the GICC.

“We are a well-seasoned team,” she

noted. And so it is that occurrences like unexpectedly large turnouts, unprecedentedly fast turnarounds or responding to a natural crisis benefit from the cumulative experiences of such a seasoned team.

The service culture and concept that led to the organization of an Event Operations department are even more relevant today than they were 15 years ago. And while planners may book the GICC initially for its contemporary style and long list of conveniences, it remains the primary reason they bring their events back year after year. ■



Surprisingly high turnouts and quick turnarounds are just a couple of the challenges regularly handled by the GICC and its staff.

Avon Comes Calling to Celebrate 125 Years

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event, the Atlanta area was literally shut down by a paralyzing ice storm. Dubbed “snowpocalypse” and “snowmageddon,” the storm caused the cancellation of virtually everything planned for the area that week, including the Avon program, which had anticipated an audience of 5,000, most of whom planned to drive from cities around the Southeast for the day-long affair.

By Tuesday that week, it was evident that neither the majority of attendees nor their Avon hosts, most of whom are based in New York where the storm system was also wreaking havoc, were going to get to Atlanta. Barbara Johnson,

Avon’s manager of event in North America, called her GICC contacts, Denise Cole and Darcel Ivey, to cancel.

A new plan

The three immediately went to work on a new plan.

“We got on the phone and discussed our needs, and they responded immediately,” Johnson offered. “They contacted another client who was able to shift his dates and open the space for our event. Within an hour of our cancellation notice, we had rescheduled our event.”

Avon Representatives proved as flexible and resilient as those

planning and executing the event.

An overflow crowd of more than 5,700 came on the new date, January 25, less than two weeks after the cancellation.

Johnson gave the GICC staff rave reviews for their work in rescheduling and executing the event.

“At every step they were responsive and flexible,” Johnson said. “(GICC Coordinators) Willa Alston and Tamara McLaren did everything right, even when Atlanta was in the midst of a huge snowstorm. I was able to contact them at home and continue to work on the elements of the program.” ■



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:

Marriott sales: 404.443.8750

SpringHill Suites sales: 404.461.2125

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

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

Front & Center is published quarterly by the Georgia International Convention Center.

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