

# FRONT & CENTER

INFORMATION AND EVENTS FROM THE GEORGIA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER



**Springhill Suites**  
First on-site hotel to open January 2010



**Director's Focus**  
Celebrating openings while looking to the future



**Planner Perspectives**  
Conference planners weigh in on the value of a venue

## Educational Conferences Address Challenging Issues, Face Challenging Times

IT IS NO SURPRISE that the sour economy has reached the classroom. Consider the recent revelation that esteemed Harvard University, the nation's oldest institution of higher learning, had been rendered financially unstable and must

**The 2009 Georgia PTA conference was its largest ever, attended by more than 1,300 parents, teachers and administrators and supported by more than 100 exhibitors.** cut back programs and services. If it is happening there, what about the thousands of communities across the country that struggle even in the best of times to provide youngsters the education they need to capitalize on life's opportunities?

Recent education-focused events at the GICC are confirmation: money is the key issue in education today. According to Dr. Traci Redish, preparing for the Nov. 4-6 Georgia Educational Technology Conference (ETC), "All anyone talks about now is funding."

The Georgia ETC's focus is on enhancing the use of technology in the classroom, but, as Redish notes, "Despite the fact that technology prices continue to come down, when there's not enough funding to keep all your teachers employed, technology can be viewed as a luxury."

The same issue dominates the broad-based efforts of child advocacy parent-teacher associations (PTAs). According to Susan M. Olson of the Georgia PTA, which hosted its annual statewide convention at the GICC July 10-11, the cuts in Georgia schools, in particular

*(continued on page 4)*



## The Unconventional Convention Center

Rounded forms and angled walls, reflected in silver and glass, reinforce a theme of flight, a reminder of our proximity to Atlanta's airport and its position as the world's only convention center directly connected to a major airport.

It hardly seems like six years since the "new" GICC opened its doors to rave reviews by meeting and tradeshow planners. This facility, of such bold and contemporary design, still receives top ratings from planners and their attendees, as much a marvel of function as form, and with a staff that has earned a reputation as one of the most cordial and accommodating in any convention center anywhere.

*(continued on page 4)*



A 94,000 sq. ft. lobby and registration concourse includes more than 42,000 sq. ft. of pre-function area for unlimited flexibility and capability to planners of special events.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ...

**"The staff is amazing, and has been from day one. There's never a problem with services; everything is clean and everyone is helpful and friendly. It's always a great experience, which is what you need most from a facility."**

— SUSAN M. OLSON  
Event Coordinator,  
Georgia PTA

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

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# GICC's SpringHill Suites Set for January



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HEN THEY RING IN THE NEW YEAR on the GICC campus, they also will open the doors to the first completed on-site hotel. The Marriott Corporation's SpringHill Suites will begin receiving guests in January, with the on-site full-service Marriott preparing for an opening just about nine months later.

The Marriott Atlanta Airport SpringHill Suites offers 147 stylish and smartly designed guest suites, which boast about 25 percent more space than a comparably priced hotel room. All suites feature separate living and sleeping areas, and each is equipped with a large, well-lit desk, voicemail and free high-speed Internet access. A



pantry area includes a small refrigerator, sink and microwave. The hotel also offers an indoor pool, whirlpool and exercise facility.

The property is LEED-certified, meaning it meets extremely high, objective energy and environmental standards.

While the GICC is expected to host the majority of meetings for groups using the SpringHill Suites, the hotel does offer two meeting rooms of 684 sq. ft. each. Each will accommodate a group of about 25 and can be set up in classroom, conference and u-shape formats.

All SpringHill Suites rates include a daily complimentary continental Suite Seasons Breakfast® buffet. And like all Marriott hotels in North America, SpringHill Suites maintains a smoke-free policy. ■

Along with its other amenities, the LEED-certified hotel will offer an indoor pool, whirlpool and exercise facility.



# y Opening



All suites will be equipped with a large, well-lit desk, voicemail and free high-speed Internet access. A pantry area will include a small refrigerator, sink and microwave.



FOCUS

by Hugh Austin  
GICC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## As We Celebrate Openings, We Look to What's Next

OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS we've been on a countdown to the openings of several key components of the expanded GICC complex, which in its entirety goes by the name "Gateway Center at the Georgia International Convention Center." Now the openings have begun.

As you receive this issue of Front & Center, the Gateway Center's first office building, Office One, is moving in its first tenants. By the time you receive our next quarterly issue, the automated people mover, now named "The Atlanta Skytrain," will be operating, shuttling passengers from the airport to the GICC/Gateway Station and on to the Rental Car Center (RCC), the new off-site location of all rental car company customer and office operations.

Major projects typically have phases of construction in their Master Plan. The opening of the new GICC in April of 2003 was a major milestone, defined as the first phase of our Master Plan. The full-service Marriott hotel and the SpringHill Suites join Office One, the ATL Skytrain and RCC as phase two.

Still, as we celebrate the completion of phase two, we are already looking forward. The City of College

**FIVE TRACTS OF LAND WILL BE USED TO EXPAND THE OFFICE, RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES IN PHASE THREE OF OUR MASTER PLAN.**

Park, Ga., which owns the Gateway Center property, has reserved more than 28 acres around the GICC for phases three and four. There are five tracts of land, approximately 20 acres, to be used to expand the office (Office Two and Office Three buildings), retail and hospitality businesses

in phase three. The largest piece could accommodate another large convention/airport hotel.

Meanwhile, the remaining eight-plus acres on the west end of the GICC are destined for an expansion of our beautiful convention center facility. This is an ambitious project that will demand careful planning, and its timing will depend to a significant extent on market conditions. In building out that phase four, we have the space to accommodate any of several options. One would be adding 75,000 sq. ft. to our current 150,000 sq. ft. in the exhibit hall and another 37,500 sq. ft. of meeting space. A second option would involve adding the exhibit hall space and a 6,000 fixed-seat venue. A third – a very expensive option but one that would serve the cultural needs of our local South Metro Atlanta area well – includes a 2,800-seat performing arts venue and associated practice halls, a small black box theater, and a 10,000 sq. ft. ballroom.

We will continue to rely on our private partnership with our development firm, Grove Street Partners, and the vision and support of our Mayor, City Council and Business and Industrial Development Authority to continue the expansion of this world-class meeting destination at the world's busiest airport. ■

### Touring the New Gateway Center at the GICC



As construction on the on-site hotels and office building nears completion, College Park city officials and local businesspeople toured the buildings and celebrated the impending openings with the hundreds of dedicated construction professionals who worked on the projects. **Right**, workers put the final touches on the GICC station of the ATL Skytrain.



# The Unconventional Convention Center

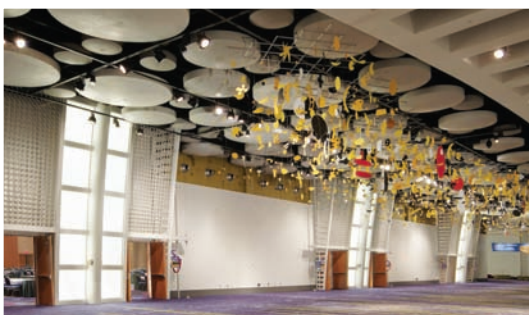
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The 40,000 sq. ft. ballroom is Georgia's largest.



Six 2,000 sq. ft. meeting suites, each divisible into four 500 sq. ft. rooms, three executive boardrooms and a VIP "Green Room" are equipped to provide the latest in communications technology.



The GICC is adorned with a commissioned art collection valued at more than \$10 million.

## 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:  
Call C. Lee Evans, III; Colliers Spectrum Cauble, Inc.  
Phone: 404.877.9203  
Email: [lee.evans@colliers.com](mailto:lee.evans@colliers.com)

# Educational Conferences . . . (continued from page 1)

in rural counties where the tax base is small, have been deep and widespread.

"We've lost funding for such programs as the arts and physical education. And the class sizes that we fought long and hard to reduce are slowly being increased. The Legislature attempted to cut school nurses, but due to our strong PTA voice, we were able to maintain the funding."

## HIGH STAKES DRAW ATTENDEES

For both groups, conference participation has served to demonstrate the increased concern from all quarters — teachers, parents, administrators. The 2009 Georgia PTA conference was its largest ever, attended by more than 1,300 parents, teachers and administrators and supported by more than 100 exhibitors. Pre-conference delegate enrollment and exhibitor space reservations for the Georgia ETC are keeping pace with previous years' highs as well, this on the heels of a "record year for our national conference," Redish reported.

The stakes are high, Olson noted. As the primary advocate for education funding, from local administrators to the State Legislature, the Georgia PTA and its delegates considered this year's conference among the most important in the more than 100-year history of their organization.

Of course, technology is a prominent issue in today's schools. Redish points to Internet applications and security and enhancing student assessment as leading technology issues of the day. But the \$4 billion segment of the federal stimulus designated for education has raised

**"When there's not enough funding to retain all of your teachers, technology can be viewed as a luxury."**

— DR. TRACI REDISH  
Associate Professor,  
Educational Leadership and  
Instructional Technology,  
Kennesaw State University



2009 Georgia PTA Conference

another issue, as the relative effectiveness of student data systems will be a major factor in determining how much funding goes to a particular state.

## PLANNING CHALLENGES

Not to say that planning this year's events hasn't presented challenges — for both Olson and Redish.

Olson said that exhibitor sign-ups were slow at first, but picked up quickly when an advertising perk was added, participation in a "tote bag" promotion typically priced at \$400-600.

The Georgia ETC will hold its fourth straight session at the GICC. Tight budgets have included travel restrictions, but according to Redish, that might mean increased attendance at the statewide event. "Restrictions on out-of-state travel kept a lot of Georgia educators from attending national conferences," she noted. ■

## Planner Perspectives



SUSAN M. OLSON has worked with the Georgia PTA, first as a local volunteer then on the state board and as conference coordinator, for 18 years. Her background includes work as a hotel event planner and planning

weddings. She notes that holding the meeting at the GICC has helped improve participation.

"We've been here since the opening of the new building," she said. "The staff is amazing, and has been from day one. There's never a problem with services; everything is clean and everyone is helpful and friendly. It's always a great experience, which is what you need most from a facility."

Olson lists her requirements for a conference facility as follows:

**Affordability** – of both the convention facility and nearby hotel rooms.

**Convenient layout** – to accommodate meetings and exhibits.

**Knowledgeable customer service** – a staff that understands and can fulfill the requirements of the meeting.

**Superior service** – a staff that is committed to doing everything it can to deliver a great experience for attendees.



DR. TRACI REDISH is Associate Professor in Educational Leadership and Instructional Technology at Kennesaw State University. This is her third year of chairing the Georgia ETC. She

prioritizes her requirements in choosing a facility for her event as:

**Technical capabilities** – need to support extensive wireless and wireline connectivity. (This year's event will feature a two-day pre-conference on student information systems, "Power School High School" that will require simultaneous Internet access for more than 200 attendees.)

**Sufficient space** – a hall large enough for the exhibitors and a ballroom big enough to host the entire group of attendees for the keynote speeches.

**Sufficient breakout session meeting rooms** – enough segmentation to accommodate hundreds of concurrently running sessions and workshops.

**Location** – as convenient to statewide attendees as it is to speakers flying in from across the country.

**Local attractions** – for attendees to have access to interesting leisure activities.

**Affordability and safety** – in terms of facility and local hotels. ■

## FAST FACTS: GRAND OPENINGS

2009			2010	
<b>ATL Skytrain</b> (people mover connecting airport, GICC and Rental Car Center)	<b>RCC</b> (Rental Car Center)	<b>Gateway Center Class A Office Complex</b>	<b>Springhill Suites Hotel</b>	<b>Marriott Airport Gateway Hotel</b>
Airport to GICC in 2 minutes <b>Service begins November 2009</b>	Off-site facility housing all airport rental car operations <b>Opens November 2009</b>	130,000 NSF & 526 parking spaces <b>Ready for occupancy September 2009</b>	147 guest rooms <b>Opens January 2010</b>	403 guest rooms <b>Opens September 2010</b>

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



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