

FRONT & CENTER

INFORMATION AND EVENTS FROM THE GEORGIA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER



It's a Winner!
Champions restaurant chosen for Marriott Airport Gateway Hotel



Rave Reviews
First visitors give SpringHill Suites and ATL Skytrain thumbs up



Planner Perspectives
Meeting planners discuss current industry issues

How Do They Do It?



Each member of the Customer Service Committee has developed and implemented a customer service "vision" for his or her GICC department. Clockwise from left: Tifanie Haun, Catering Sales, Proof of the Pudding; Rosalind Jenkins, Proof of the Pudding; Derrick Washington, Building Services; Billy Hampton, Operations; Jeremy Pannell, Tech Rentals; Coco Bright, Concierge; Willa Crook, CMP, Event Services (Customer Service Committee Chair); and Pat Mozee, Parking.

A

ASK ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN INSIDE THE GICC since the doors opened in Spring 2004 and they'll tell you how modern and beautiful it looks. But ask anyone who has planned and held an event there, and you're likely to hear more about the service, support and attitude of the GICC staff.

The GICC ensures customers receive superior service through a detailed program of people, process and product.

Delivering superior service consistently doesn't just happen by accident — or by giving lip service to the concept. At the GICC, it is the result of a commitment from senior management and throughout the building to a detailed program continuously reinforced to

"People here have the latitude to do what it takes to meet the needs of a guest without having to go through a lot of channels."

— MERCEDES MILLER | GICC Assistant Director

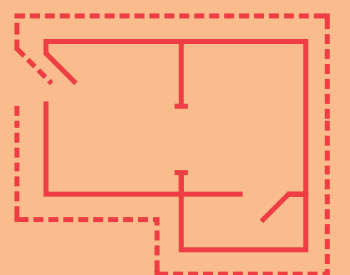
ensure every request is addressed and every guest is treated well.

PEOPLE

Ensuring customer service is the number one focus of everyone who works at the GICC is a particular passion *(continued on page 4)*

■ DID YOU KNOW?

Each of the 147 suites of the SpringHill Suites Atlanta Airport Gateway offers 25 percent more space than a comparably priced hotel room. ■



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

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Champions Wins Place as Marriott Hotel Branded Restaurant

aS MARRIOTT READIES ITS FULL-SERVICE HOTEL for a fall opening, it has announced one of the finishing touches will be a Champions restaurant. As the name suggests, the restaurant adheres to a sports theme, positioned by the restaurateur as “a vibrant celebration of sports and athleticism as part of a modern lifestyle.” Marriott has successfully implemented the concept in multiple Marriott hotels inside and outside the U.S.

Champions is high-energy: a lively, casual place for lunch, dinner or a seat at the bar for a sports event. The action on the screen is center stage. A multi-dimensional media wall anchors the restaurant and is supported by arrangements of sports memorabilia and vibrant back-lit images of various sports. Music is a mix of classic rock and contemporary.

Champions food is casual but quite creative. The American grill and sports bar menu of wings, sliders and the like also includes a bone-in ribeye and a NY strip with double-stuffed potato. Beverages range from boutique beers to cocktails mixed with specialty fruit juices. ■



tHE SPRINGHILL SUITES ATLANTA AIRPORT GATEWAY on the GICC campus, which opened in January, is getting rave reviews. Initial guests have been genuinely excited about the hotel. They also appreciate the conveniences afforded by the new ATL SkyTrain and nearby Rental Car Center — in particular, those guests with short stays who want quick access to the airport.

A few comments taken from the hotel’s guest satisfaction survey:

“They had phenomenal access to the new ATL SkyTrain, and it makes this location one of the best hotels at ATL ... returned my rental car late at night, took the train to the hotel, then took the train back to the airport for my pre-dawn flight.”

“Wow!! If you’re staying at Atlanta Airport, you have to check this place out. Literally five minutes from baggage claim to hotel room via the new SkyTrain ... and you’re at this brand new Marriott SpringHill Suites hotel. I’ve been traveling through Atlanta for years and am sick of those hotel buses! ... The sound insulation must be super-sized because I didn’t hear any planes at all — another first for an airport hotel!”

“This is a great hotel and having access to the monorail to the airport will make this hotel an instant success.”

“Extremely friendly, helpful staff. Extremely convenient to get to (and) from the airport! Beautifully decorated, comfortable, functional rooms!” ■



Early Stayers Give SHS, Sky T



Diners at Champions will enjoy American grill menu selections in an energetic, contemporary setting of live sports viewing and back-lit sports imagery.



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SpringHill Suites hotel.”**

— SPRINGHILL SUITES GUEST

rain High Marks



FOCUS

by Hugh Austin
GICC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A New Symbol for Our New Complex

YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED that this issue of *Front & Center*, our 22nd consecutive quarterly publication, bears a new GICC logo. The newest in the progression of logos employed to represent our convention center over the 25 years we have been in business, it replaces the mark introduced as we opened our magnificent facility here in the Gateway Center seven years ago.

The introduction of the new logo symbolizes the recent and soon-to-be openings across our campus. With our new on-site hotels, the arrival of the ATL SkyTrain guided railway to deliver visitors from neighboring Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, and other new facilities, we are now a community of arguably the most attractive amenities and conveniences associated with a convention center.

Graphically, the new mark reflects our characteristic appearance. The shapes in the logo mimic the structures that greet a visitor upon entry to the convention center complex. The seven “sails” or wings, which dance at night with color and light, stand tall at the entrance and illustrate the theme of flight that extends throughout our building in angled shapes of aluminum, silver and glass.

And now that theme extends to our entire complex. The angles and shapes are evident in the way the SkyTrain winds through the complex, in the shape of the new on-site Marriott hotel, in the sheltered walkways and access roads that wind through the property. You can see how the master plan has been executed, how each new property — and there are more to come — fulfills the original design.

It is particularly appropriate that the lead article in this issue that debuts our new logo is about customer service. Because, despite our admiration for what the architects and developers have wrought here, it is our preoccupation with exceeding our clients’ expectations that has distinguished us for 25 years — and that continues to attract the events that allow us to fulfill our dreams of developing the nation’s most contemporary, convenient and comfortable convention center complex. ■

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How Do They Do It?

(continued from page 1)

for GICC Assistant Director Mercedes Miller. Miller has worked in the hospitality industry for 25 years, most of the last 16 with the GICC, and her center-wide program to ensure great customer service could be a model for virtually any organization.

"First, you have to hire the right people," Miller began. "Service is either in you or it's not. You can teach someone to polish a floor or operate a forklift, but people either have a service personality or they don't."

Even before the opening of the "new" GICC in 2004, the previous building was operated with the same commitment to hiring service-oriented employees. In fact, most of the current employees were on staff when the new building opened. The average length of service at the GICC is more than 10 years, with two employment dates, Janitorial Crew Chief Larry Smith and Office Manager Donna Young, dating back to 1987.

"People like that have a vested interest in our success because it's their life."

Employees take care of guests proactively because they are empowered to do so, Miller added. "No one here is afraid to let us know if there is something

"First, you have to hire the right people. Service is either in you or it's not."

— MERCEDES MILLER
GICC Assistant Director

they need to do their job better. They know we'll take them seriously and follow up to make sure it gets done. And they know that they have the latitude to do what it takes to meet the needs of a guest without having to go through a lot of channels."

PROCESS

Customer service is about people, but also process, Miller explained. A unique GICC Partnership Program involves assigning a three-person team to each client: sales manager, catering manager and event coordinator. The team works seamlessly, supported by technology that keeps each abreast of all the event details, so that each can provide current information to and assist the event planner upon request.

To ensure customer service remains top of mind for all employees, Miller assembled a Customer Service Committee that includes a hand-selected representative of each GICC department and the GICC's onsite contractors: catering, security and audiovisual services.

"We chose the people with the strongest passion for service and the respect of their fellow employees. They receive ongoing customer service training and it is their job then to train others in their departments."

PRODUCT

Providing superior service is also about the product, Miller pointed out.

"Regardless of economic pressures or other commitments, the city of College Park continues to provide the budget to keep the building looking like new and for ongoing improvements. The kind of support is not so common, and is a real differentiator for us.

"The bottom line is we treat each meeting as if it were our only one," Miller concluded. "We know planners have a lot of choices. We're grateful for their business and we show it." ■

Planner Perspectives

Attracting Crowds to Repeat Annual Meetings

THE FALL 2009 *FRONT & CENTER* FEATURED AN INTERVIEW with Meeting Planners International Chairwoman of the Board Ann Godi, who addressed several of the issues meeting planners grapple with today as a result of our challenging economic times. (Find a copy of that issue on our website, www.gicc.com.) For this edition of "Planner Perspectives," we asked a couple of planners with recent meetings at the GICC to comment on some of the issues raised by Ms. Godi.



YVONNE TYSON retired from Primerica Financial Services, where she spent 15 years in video production and planning the company's multiple annual meetings for its national network of independent insurance and investments sales agents. Today, she plans those and other meetings as a partner in Atlanta-based On Cue Productions. Primerica's African American Leadership Council, March 5-7, was the 10th annual such meeting and third consecutive at the GICC.



SCOTT SHELAR is Executive Director of the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia, which held its sixth annual Career Expo and Skills USA State Championship, March 9-11, at the GICC. Students come to learn about careers in the construction industry and compete in construction trade skills contests.

Q. What is the value proposition for this meeting and how do you communicate its value to prospective attendees?

Tyson. Primerica's sales network is mostly independent business people. The meeting is their opportunity to share success stories, get recognition for their achievements, even be part of the program as speakers — and to catch up on the things most important to their businesses. We're not involved in promoting the meeting, but the company doesn't have to promote it aggressively.

Shelar. The students can explore hundreds of career opportunities in one location. The exhibiting companies, while they are not hiring right now, do expect to be hiring in three or four years. They find a lot of value in connecting with the young people as well as in networking with the more than a thousand fellow professionals who come. We communicate to the students primarily through the schools.

Q. Did you draw more or fewer attendees this year than last?

Tyson. We had about 5,000, about 1,000 more than last year. We've grown every year, but the big jump this year was related to Primerica's new independence from Citigroup. It is been split off and the agents wanted to find out what that is going to mean for them.

Shelar. We have grown the show about 30 percent each year, but this year's attendance was about the same as last: about 4,000 students of the 6,000 attendees, and 250 vendors, which sold out the 150,000 sq. ft. GICC exhibit hall. We would have grown again this year, but most of the students are bussed here by the schools, and many schools' transportation budgets were cut this year.

Q. Have technology-enabled meetings hurt attendance for your face-to-face conferences?

Shelar. Not this type of meeting. It's hands-on learning and physical competitions.

Tyson. Video or web-based meetings work for some types of meetings, but not for these Primerica conferences. Salespeople like the reinforcement of face-to-face meetings. They need that hug — and that walk across the stage is valuable to them.

Q. What are the three most important considerations in choosing a venue for your meetings?

Shelar. Location is important. It has to be easy to get to for all attendees and the GICC is at the juncture of both north-south and east-west interstate highways. About half the people who come spend at least one night, and this year we loved the convenience of the new onsite SpringHill Suites.

The staff at the GICC makes the event a great experience for everyone — that is a key reason for us being here for the third consecutive year. And it is a

first class building itself, which was a big factor in selling out the exhibit space.

Tyson. The location has to be convenient. Most attendees to the Primerica meetings are from the East Coast, but we do draw nationwide, especially from California, Texas and the Midwest. People fly in, come in on buses, and drive. So it has to be easy to get to. The new onsite SpringHill Suites

is another great convenience; having a hotel open now on site is a big plus.

We also need plenty of meeting room space for Primerica, as there are a lot of breakout sessions. But we keep coming back to the GICC because of the people. They try very hard to satisfy all our requests. Plus they maintain the building extremely well. It always looks like new.

The staff at the GICC makes the event a great experience for everyone — that is a key reason for us being here for the third consecutive year.

— SCOTT SHELAR
Director, Construction Education Foundation of Georgia

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

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



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