

February News Brief 2010

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Event Held to Benefit the People of Haiti

Members of the Association and the community joined Yacht Haven Grande in hosting a benefit to support the people of Haiti. More than \$36,000 was raised, and will be donated to the American Red Cross. Community Businesses, entertainers, and individuals contributed raffle items and monetary donations to support the benefit. Yacht Haven Grande would like to extend a special thank you to the following members for their donations: COACH, OnDeck Racing, Maho Campgrounds, Marriott Frenchman's Reef, Coral World, Mim's Seaside Bistro, Windward Passage, Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, Westin St. John, Moxie Marketing, Wyndham Sugar Bay, Mango Tango, Sunfone, and Admiralty Dive.

Board Chairman Doumeng Receives CHTA Hotelier of the Year Award



Richard Doumeng, Chairman of the HTA Board of Directors and Managing Director of Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, received the 2009 Hotelier of the Year Award, presented by the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association. Doumeng is the 4th Virgin Islander to receive this distinction and also holds the honor of being part of the only father & son duo bestowed with this honor. Dick and Joyce Doumeng received the award in 1988. Other VI recipients include Lorette Resch (Island Beachcomber) and Betty Sperber (King Christian Hotel). "For more than twenty years, Richard has been a leader and champion of the region's tourism and hospitality industry, said Beverly Nicolson Doty, Commissioner of Tourism. For our islands, Richard is recognized as a community leader who consistently fosters communication and pioneers

best practices for our destination's hospitality community. I applaud the CHTA for bestowing this prestigious award on Richard Doumeng." Congratulations to Richard Doumeng on this much deserved achievement.

Membership Corner

New Member Feature

*Looking for a new telecom provider? **Sunfone**, one of our newest members, can not only provide this service but shave money off the bill. Both residential and commercial service is available at a fraction of the cost. For \$25 a month, residents receive free long distance service. Businesses pay \$40 a month and \$.03 a minute for long distance. Long distance is also accessible over the Internet; however, Internet service must already be available at the existing location. Some members are already using this cost-saving service, with one reporting a \$800 savings on the monthly bill. Sunfone has been in the territory since 2005. For additional information on how you can save money on your phone service contact Sunfone at 715-7600.

*The 2010 membership directory is currently in production and will be available at the Annual Meeting in March. Advertising space is available, ranging from \$550 for the back cover (based on availability) to \$250 for a half-page. Deadline for submission is February 12. Contact Nicole at the Association for additional information.

*Both the Havensight Kiosk and the Airport Reservation Booth have been refreshed. Now is your opportunity to put your product in front of cruise ship passengers and guests arriving at the Cyril E. King Airport. Space at the Havensight Kiosk is available at \$450 for hotels and attractions; displays at the Airport start at \$125 per month and includes a picture and brochures. There is \$500 installation fee for the airport booth. Contact Canika to reserve your space today.

*The Department of Tourism has released the results of its Mystery Shopper program. Anonymous couples visited the islands in late August/early September to rate the destination in 9 different categories. For a copy of the report, email Luana at luana@virgin-islands-hotels.com.

News from the CMI

The newly re-designed Cooperative Marketing Initiative web site, www.virgin-islands-hotels.com, has launched. The revisions are designed to make the site more user-friendly and provide additional destination information. Contact the Association for information on joining the CMI.



The Quest for Blue Flag Certification

Mr. Finn Bolding Thomsen, Director of the Federation of Environment Educators, recently visited the territory for a series of site inspections to determine how we can best move forward with the Blue Flag Certification Program. Mr. Thomsen was invited by the HTA's Environmental Committee. The Blue Flag Certification is a voluntary eco-label program for beaches and marinas. Those beaches and marinas that meet a specified set of criteria--water quality, safety, services, education, environmental management--are labeled "blue flag" certified. As we continue to be more cognizant of our environmental footprint we feel it is a perfect time to explore this program. Once up and running, the goal is to include it in all Destination Marketing and Public Relations. The USVI would be one of only a few Caribbean Islands in the Blue Flag Program. His findings will be published in the March News Brief.

SAVE THE DATE

February 6

Patti Austin & Ramsey Lewis
Reichhold Center for the Arts, www.reichholdcenter.com

February 17

Membership Reception
Emerald Beach Resort, 5:30 pm

February 27

Jim Tunick & the Rotary Club of St. Thomas Presents Orleans in Concert
Reichhold Center for the Arts, www.reichholdcenter.com



Commissioner of Tourism Shares 2010 Marketing Strategy



Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson Doty and her marketing team unveiled their 2010 marketing strategy at the January Membership Meeting. Due to a 35 percent cut in the Tourism Revolving Fund, all their activity will be evaluated to determine the most effective use of funds to target a focused group of visitors. Some of the highlights discussed were:

***Advertising**—The campaign will reflect the newly-introduced "You Unscripted" brand positioning. The platform was developed from research that identified travelers' desire to tailor their vacation experience based on personal interests. The TV campaign is

currently being aired in Boston, New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Minneapolis, Dallas and Miami. A print campaign is also underway and will appear in key segments throughout the year.

***Web site Enhancements & Social Media**—Phase II of the enhancements to Visitvi.com has already seen excellent results, and Phase III, which is on the horizon, will include a more multimedia experience for the site visitors. Some of the new features will include a Danish translation of the entire site, a booking engine and a detailed Bridal RFP. The team will also capitalize on the popular social media sites to engage consumers.

***Integrated Approach to Key Markets**—The plan is to saturate key markets that offer air service into the Territory. The first of these programs was launched in Atlanta in late 2009. This saturation will be achieved with targeted advertising with airline partner call-to-action, public relations activities, sales calls and direct-to-consumer events. The consumer events will be supported with advertising on radio and local newspapers to drive attendance.

***Strategic Partnerships & Promotions**—The DOT will continue to forge strategic partnerships and promotions. One recent partnership was developed with the Minnesota Vikings to support the new Sun Country service to St. Thomas. To target the dive segments, the Department has developed a partnership with PADI to offer a special bookable offer through its travel network and database of scuba enthusiasts. Discussions are also underway with the US Tennis Association.

***Product Development**—Initiatives for the year ahead include the establishment of a visitor helpline to address visitor needs/concerns while on a vacation and a new Traveler Tips Brochure.

***Airline & Cruise Marketing**—The Department will continue its ongoing efforts to grow airline and cruise arrivals.

***Generating Positive Media Coverage**—The M Booth team will continue to seek out new opportunities to generate positive coverage. During 2009, the agency secured more than 1,700 stories valued at \$13 million dollars in advertising equivalency.