



HOTEL · MOTEL · RESTAURANT · ASSOCIATION · INC.

# OCHMRA Gazette

Winter 2008

## Message From The President ...

We have a lot of changes ahead of us this year: Increase in room tax, increase in sales tax, the smoking ban, probable addition of slots in Maryland, and a new employee. There comes a time when all good things must come to an end. *Our good thing was newsletter editor and Executive Assistant Veronica Kahn.* After seven and ½ years, Veronica decided it was time to take a break. Her company will be missed by the many who worked with and around her in the Convention Center offices. *We wish her future happiness.* If anyone needs a little creative writing in the future, Veronica is tops! Amy Tingle will begin soon, so stop by and say Hi! She brings with her experience on special events and graphic design and we want to make her feel welcome. Trade Expo is right around the corner, so be sure to offer booths to all your vendors. *Best Wishes for Happy and Prosperous New Year.* — Diane Kacafer

## Steel Magnolias Draw a Crowd

Approximately 250 people gathered in the Crystal Ballroom of the **Clarion Resort Fontainebleau Hotel** for the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association (OCHMRA) Holiday Dinner Meeting on December 13.

The main attraction of the evening was a tribute to the “**Steel Magnolias**”, a name given to the women who started the hospitality industry in Ocean City. Some of the women are past presidents of OCHMRA, the years are noted in brackets.

The first OCHMRA dinner meeting dedicated to honoring “Steel Magnolias” was in 1997. The honorees at that time were **Thelma Conner** (85-86), **Kathleen Harman** (71-72), **Lois Harrison**, **Eleanor Kelly** (73-75),

**Ann Showell and Dorothy Taylor.**

At this event, however, the focus was on **Rose Brous** (83-84), **Susan Cropper** (77-78), **Eunice Sorin** and three who were honored posthumously, **Carol Alfonsi** (81-82), **Kate Bunting** (78-79) and **Betty Frame** (79-80).

**Michael Birchenall** of Foodservice Monthly was on the scene with his pen in hand, and camera slung around his neck. The following is a sample of his wonderfully poetic coverage of the event:

“The stories of these incredible women as told by themselves and their relatives had the audience smiling, laughing and at times in tears. The humor in their lives helped them to persevere against

all odds ... as they supported each other when no one else came to their aid. To those of us who have worked this crazy hospitality business all our lives know that our history has many great stories – most nowhere near the politically correct versions we have to tell in “mixed” company.”

Stay tuned; in ten years the OCHMRA will pay tribute to six more fabulous women.

Special thanks to **Ken Bates of Taylor Bank**, who accompanied his daughter, soloist **Katie Bates**, and his wife, **Debbie**, who gave the invocation.

Thanks also to **Taylor Bank**, which was the evening’s sponsor.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE 34th ANNUAL SPRING TRADE Expo 2008 - SUNDAY & MONDAY, MARCH 2 & 3

Contracts have gone out, and all of our previous exhibitors have been called. We are now taking inquiries from prospective exhibitors. Our theme this year is “Cruise on the High Seas of Profitability”, once again emphasizing the relaxed atmosphere of Ocean City. As usual, our theme works for both the exhibitor (seller) and the attendee (buyer). The seminar line up includes: “**Your Guide to Goal Setting**” and “**The 7 Secrets of Successful Marketing**”. We had a very good response to our website [www.oceancitytradeexpo.com](http://www.oceancitytradeexpo.com) last year. It is a great tool to use in selling booths. If you are an Allied member, taking a booth in the OCHMRA Spring Trade Expo will strengthen your bond with your Ocean City clients. As an Active/Associate member you will find what you need for your business at the Expo while you support your association. We definitely need your support, not only as a volunteer, but as an attendee. Simply give us

**Hospitality Highlights**

As usual, we've got lots of "good stuff" to report from our members.

**We have the weddings:**

**Megan Torrey**, daughter of **Bob and Donna Torrey** of the **Happy Jack Pancake House**, wed **Juan Alvarado** in September.

**Earla and George Conner** of the **Bonita Beach Hotel**, traveled to the Cayman Islands to witness the marriage of their daughter, **Bonita**, to **Mike Ellingsworth** on November 2.

**Then the babies:**

**Kim Schissler** of the **Carousel Resort Hotel & Condominiums** and her husband, **Mike**, are having fun with their son, **Tyrus**.

**Madalaine and Harry How** of **MAD Engineering**, are really into spoiling **Savannah**, who was born to their daughter and son-in-law, **Jennifer and Dan Hallon**, on September 28.

**Madelyne and Brandon Phillips** of the **Atlantic Stand**, are busy with their daughter, **Lilly Ann**, born November 29.

**And the professional accomplishments.....**

**Deborah Travers**, assistant director of tourism, just keeps racking up the honors. She was named the **New Travel Professional of the Year** at the 27th Annual Maryland Governor's Tourism Industry Conference by the Maryland Tourism Council, she is chair-elect of the Maryland Association of Destination Marketing Officers (MADMO), and has been named, by **Governor Martin O'Malley**, to the Governor's Maritime Task Force, to study the boating industry.

**Rick M. Collins, RA** is the Operations Director of the new **Wilmington, NC** office of the **Becker Morgan Group, Inc.**

**Maryland Life** is returning from the International Regional Magazine Association's annual conference where **Maryland Life**, in its first year of eligibility, won several awards from this esteemed organization: Award of Merit for GO Maryland department; Award of Merit for Single Photograph (congratulations to **Christopher Myers** for his image of

the Cove Point Light house); **Bronze Award** for Overall Art Direction for a publication with more than 40,000 circulation, and **Gold Award** for **Eugene L. Meyer's** column, **Hidden Maryland**.

**Travis and Jody Wright** have new digs for their wonderful restaurant, **The Shark**. They are on the harbor in West Ocean City. Opening is planned for sometime this winter...stay tuned!

**Kristi Foster** is the Assistant General Manager of the **Quality Inn Boardwalk**. Sorry we named the wrong hotel in the last newsletter.

***Congratulations  
And  
Best Wishes  
To  
Everyone!!***



**Welcome New Members**

We are pleased to introduce the following new members.

**Active**

*32 Palm in the Hilton Suites*

**Betsy Faunteroy**  
410-289-2525

[Betsy@harrisongp.com](mailto:Betsy@harrisongp.com)

*Windows on the Bay*

**George Moniodis**  
410-723-3643

[Windowsoc@verizon.net](mailto:Windowsoc@verizon.net)

**Associate**

*Albrights Motel Efficiencies*

**Jeff Albright**  
410-289-9205

[Albrightsmotel@aol.com](mailto:Albrightsmotel@aol.com)

**Allied**

*Atlantic Technology Services, Inc.*

**Don Cook**  
410-860-9899

[Don.cook@AtlanticTechs.com](mailto:Don.cook@AtlanticTechs.com)

*Affordable Business Systems*

**Dean Woroniecki**  
410-742-2234

[Deanw@affordablebusinesssystems.com](mailto:Deanw@affordablebusinesssystems.com)

*Copy Central*

**Linda Dearing**  
410-213-2540

[Ldearing@verizon.net](mailto:Ldearing@verizon.net)

*Cosmic Spice & Specialty Foods*

**Marc Zaccaria**  
856-697-8282

[Cosmicspice@verizon.net](mailto:Cosmicspice@verizon.net)

*CRC Consultants*

**Charles Cohen**  
410-860-0123

[Charles@CRC-Consultants.net](mailto:Charles@CRC-Consultants.net)

*Career Firefighters/Paramedics Assoc.*

**Michael Maykrantz**

410-497-3217

[Mmaykrantz@ococean.com](mailto:Mmaykrantz@ococean.com)

*Hard Tops Refinishing*

**Todd Wampler**  
301-604-9500

[Mybathtub@yahoo.com](mailto:Mybathtub@yahoo.com)

*New Way Advertising*

**John Byer**  
443-864-2280

[Info@newwayads.com](mailto:Info@newwayads.com)

*Ocean Cleaning & Maintenance, Inc.*

**Linda Hilde**  
410-600-0252

[Info@oceancleaningandmaintenance.com](mailto:Info@oceancleaningandmaintenance.com)

*Otis Elevator*

**Theresa Majchrzak**  
410-352-5316

[Theresa.majchrzak@otis.com](mailto:Theresa.majchrzak@otis.com)

**Welcome!!**

# Members Bring Christmas Joy To Local Children

The generosity of the Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association members is truly amazing. They are always being asked to help out with any fund raising event that comes along, and they step right up to the plate.

One of our pet projects is providing toys to the children who attend the N.O.E.L. project at St. Paul's By The Sea Episcopal Church on Christmas Day.

In order to obtain the toys, we ask our members to donate door

prizes at our Holiday Dinner Meeting. To qualify for the door prize drawing, guests must bring an unwrapped toy to the meeting.

Many of our members provide both door prizes and toys. More than 300 toys were collected.

Our thanks to the following members who donated door prizes.

**Best Western Ocean City Suites, Coconuts Bar & Grill at Castle in the Sand, Crab Alley, Dough Roller Restaurants, Embers Restau-**

**rant & Chop House, Francis Scott Key Motel, Galaxy 66 Bar & Grille/Lovin' Life Limos, Grand Hotel, Greene Turtle North, Hotels at Fager's Island, Marlin Moon Grille, Maryland Coast Pizza Hut Ocean City Factory Outlets, Paper People, Phillips Seafood Restaurants, Quality Inn & Suites OC, Victorian Room Restaurant in the Dunes Manor and Windows on the Bay.** And, of course, thanks

## News and Notes

**Commuter Choice Maryland** is the most comprehensive resource guide for commuting options on the Web. There you'll learn about new ways to commute, compare your commuting alternatives and find out how to save money. Whether you commute by Local Bus, Commuter Bus, Light Rail, Metro Subway, Train, Van or Bike, Commuter Choice Maryland will help you get where you want to go, for less. Just go to [commuterchoicemaryland.com](http://commuterchoicemaryland.com).

The Maryland sales tax has increased from 5% to 6%, effective Jan. 3. This increases both the Food & Beverage Tax, and the Room Tax by 1%. The Food & Beverage Tax will be 6% State and 1% City for a total of 7%. The Room Tax will be 4.5% County and 6% State for a total of 10.5% effective Jan. 1.

\*\*\*\*\*

You can advertise your job openings with **Wor-Wic Community College** for free. All job notices are posted on their "job openings" bulletin board at the college campus and in the career services "job openings" section of the college Web site at [www.worwic.edu](http://www.worwic.edu). Job notices are posted as they are received. Employers can also schedule employee recruitment interviews on campus. Call Lori Smoot, Director of Career Services at 410-334-2901 for more information.

\*\*\*\*\*

Save the date. **Wor-Wic Community College** will hold their **Annual Career/Job Fair** on Thursday, April 10, 2008 from 2:30—6 p.m. in the new Workforce Development Center Building. Employer registration for this free event is online at [www.worwic/StudentServices/](http://www.worwic/StudentServices/)

CareerServices/  
EmployerServices.aspx.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Department of Homeland Security's **Ready** campaign is partnering with **FEMA's Citizen Corps Program** to encourage business and voluntary organizations to *Resolve to be Ready* in 2008. Visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for complete information on Ready America, Ready Business and Ready Kids. It shows you how to Prepare, Plan and Stay Informed.

\*\*\*\*\*

The **Rt. 50 Bridge** will be closed beginning January 17th. Remember to let your guests know to utilize Rt. 90. The MD Highway Administration is hoping to have the work complete just before Presidents Day Weekend. Keep your fingers crossed!

**Our Sincere Condolences To Family and Friends of Marcia Harris President & CEO Restaurant Association Of Maryland**

**Hale & John Harrison of the Harrison Group and their entire family on the loss of their mother Lois C. Harrison**

**Bill Herbst of La Hacienda and his entire family on the loss of his mother**

**Barbara Brown Herbst**

**Karen Harrison & her husband John of the Harrison Group and her entire family on the loss of her mother**

**Betty Kepler Gardner**

**Ten Things You Can Do In Response To Traveler Reviews** from HOTELMARKETING.COM

The combination of increasing numbers of web-savvy consumers, the web 2.0 frenzy focusing on social media, and increased travel site volume, have created a 'wild-west' environment where hotels' traditional marketing dollars are being trumped at the point of decision by dialogue in the public square.   
by Renier Milan

Traveler reviews have become part of the daily dialogue of web travel shoppers. The architecture of participation that is a basic hallmark of web 2.0 has resulted in users adding value to a site each time they write a review or upload a photo. It's no wonder that up to 84% of people visiting a site hosting consumer generated content (CGC) have their hotel choices affected by what they see. Millions of travelers log on daily and may experience a property through hotel generated photos and written text, but they find reviews and candid photography much more believable.

Many in the industry feel review sites are not objective and may be manipulated. They feel the content is not controllable or actionable and reject the opportunity to manage these sites by saying the comments might be inaccurate. However, what matters in the issue of web 2.0 sites is whether guests perceive them to be accurate. So far, customer research indicates they do. Furthermore, the research shows increasing numbers of possible clients are researching on third party sites, even if they are booking on brand sites. The model has changed from a brand or property image that was controlled by the supplier, to one that is forged in dialogue with consumers. And this image is being debated at the virtual point of purchase. The combination of increasing numbers of web-savvy consumers, the web 2.0 frenzy focusing on social media, and increased travel site volume, have created a 'wild-west' environment where hotels' traditional comment card programs and advertising dollars are being trumped at the point of decision by dialogue in the public square.

The trend of traveler reviews is not going away. TripAdvisor.com's unique visitors grows dramatically monthly, as does consumer generated content on sites such as Expedia, Travelocity, Priceline and others. Given the juggernaut, it is important to know what to do internally when customer comments become the issue.

**10 Things You Can Do In Response to Traveler Reviews**

**10. Read them:** As simple as it is to say, monitoring these sites occasionally may not be enough! It is recommended sites be vis-

ited at least weekly for new reviews and photos.

**9. Audit them:** A friend at a major brand hotel recently told me he found 6 unflattering photos posted by a guest on a site. Fortunately, they were not of his hotel. It seems there was an error in posting the photos. He was able to work it out with the website involved.

**8. Study them:** Any hotel might have a poor review, but patterns of poor reviews are of particular concern. If you see the same issues arise on a site, or across several sites, one might identify operational deficiencies. These comments should be treated the same as customer comment cards or letters. They may be more anonymous, but an hotelier recently told me that internal public discussion of web commentary usually yields someone that knows the situation and the guest. This enables the hotel to take action by contacting that customer for follow up.

**7. Celebrate them:** As with any feedback system, the positives must also be rewarded. Posting these comments, offering employee incentives for improvements, and reading positive comments in meetings allows one to focus and enhance strengths, not just see vulnerabilities.

**6. Correlate them:** Public comments should be married to existing internal comment card scores and not taken as isolated. The issues of one may be illuminated by commentary on the other.

**5. Distribute them:** Website comments should be shared at all levels, from housekeeper to regional manager. If each is aware of comment card scores, each should be aware of virtual scores (especially since these are seen by many more people).

**4. Compare them:** A smart hotel analyzes their scores and those of their competitors. It is important to know quality ratings when setting rates, just like it is important to know operational advantages when selling a group against a competitor. The best revenue managers take quality and page placement into account when establishing rates. Likewise, sales teams should use public forum commentary as competitor intelligence.

**3. Analyze them:** It is critical to know that rate is just one factor in a buying decision. Each set of comments, when compared to rate, creates a competitive ranking in perceived quality and/or possible risk. Perceived quality is the real issue, and perceived quality is affected by public commentary. It is critical to know the nexus between rate and perceived quality, the result of which should be better than your competitive set. Remember, the goal is to be the most attractive to a client, not necessarily the lowest priced.

**2. Track them:** Trends are more valuable when viewed over longer periods of time. As such, traveler review scores, rankings, and rate strategies should be viewed retrospectively for patterns. Comparing these critical factors will allow an hotelier to see tactical changes by competitors and gauge the effectiveness of hotel specific changes.

**1. Respond to them:** TripAdvisor.com allows posted responses from hotels and studies show those who respond are viewed favorably. Other sites will soon follow, but internal discussion of problems will yield the names of disgruntled guests, which, in turn, will allow a hotel to respond. Internal incentives to improve web site scores or rewarding departments for not repeating problems can also be effective. Since most hotels produce positive customer experiences, encouraging web-booking customers to write about the hotel online can be effective as well.

The big picture of a hotel's reputation includes traveler reviews because there is no insulation from the trend. Consider as proof that buying decisions are now made by balancing brand identity in light of word-of-mouth public feedback. While brand may yield recognition for an individual property, it may not be enough to overcome negative reviews or photos of a run down room. Consumers understand individual property experiences vary and are eager to learn if reputation is reality.

*Renier Milan is COO of Avalon Report. The company has been delivering rate and page placement results since 2001.*

**STAFF**

◆ Susan L. Jones  
 ◆ Executive Director  
 ◆ Amy Tingle  
 ◆ Events Manager  
 ◆ Jayne Sawyer, Pat Diniar, &  
 ◆ Sandy Patrick  
 ◆ Part-time Tourism Coordinators

◆ PO Box 340  
 ◆ Ocean City, MD 21843-0340  
 ◆ 410-289-6733  
 ◆ 1-800-OC-OCEAN ext. 2  
 ◆ Fax: 410-289-5645

◆ www.ocvisitor.com  
 ◆ www.oceancitytradeexpo.com  
 ◆ www.oceancityrestaurantweek.com