Tourist Bureau, SRAC to offer attraction seminars in 2012

The Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau hosted “Media Buying on a Shoestring Budget” in October at the University of Phoenix located at the Louisiana Boardwalk. National media buying expert Peggy Yervanian shared practical advice on how to purchase various types of print, online and broadcast media with limited marketing dollars. The seminar also included a panel of local experts in social media, newspaper, radio and advertising agency.

“The seminar was excellent,” said Mary Dunn, Attractions Association representative on the tourist bureau’s board of directors. “I think we have finally found a way to get the attractions together and several told me they liked what we were doing.

In 2012, the tourist bureau is partnering with the Shreveport Regional Arts Council to host quarterly seminars that help area attractions and arts organizations build attendance, extend their marketing dollars and improve the visitor’s experience. The seminars, beginning in January, will cover grant writing, customer service, tourism trends and social media.

“The tourist bureau’s main goal is to help the attractions to thrive in a downward economy,” said Stacy Brown, tourist bureau president. “We want to give them tools that they can use to extend their dollars, find new resources and enhance the visitors experience so they will come again and again to our destination.”

If you would like to be included in mailings and receive additional information about the 2012 seminars, contact Sarah McKinney-Williams, communications coordinator, at (318) 222-9391 or smckinney-williams@ctcb.org.

2011 Indy Bowl airs on ESPN2 uncontested

In its 36th year, the Advocare V100 Independence Bowl is ramping up for a great match up between the ACC and Mountain West conferences set to face off at 4 p.m., Monday, Dec. 26, at Independence Stadium. While the teams won’t be revealed until December 4, 4-Bowl organizers are busy setting the stage for an exciting and successful game day.

The game will be televised nationally on ESPN2 without competition. There are no other college football bowl games the day after Christmas. “We believe this late afternoon, uncontestated time slot will appeal to both local fans and those traveling to support their teams,” said 2011 Bowl Chairman Fred Sexton, Jr.

New this year, expect sweet deals on group packages like the Johnny’s Catfish and Seafood Family Fun Pack, Touchdown Club, Patriot Pack and Bowl Backer, and the Kid’s Corner Youth Ticket. Visit www.independencbowl.org for more information about this year’s game and specials.

“Ralph Turner, owner of Red Arrow, a diversified planning company, liked much about the inaugural Small Market Meetings Conference held in Shreveport. He especially enjoyed an evening spent at the Red River Revel, Shreveport’s major arts and music festival. It was really neat to build the conference around the festival.”

~Small Market Meetings, September 2011

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Social Media Seminar on back

Dates to Remember:

Shreveport-Bossier Hotel and Lodging Association
Nov. 4, 8 a.m., Petroleum Club
Dec. 1, Holiday Party Dinner at Sam’s Town Hotel and Casino

Hospitality Breakfast
Nov. 2 – 8 a.m., Skybox at Independence Stadium
Chamber of Commerce
Dec. 3 – 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., 629 Spring Street
Louisiana Restaurant Association
Nov. 5 – 6 p.m., East Ridge Country Club

*no meeting in December

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Your Bureau at Work

Suzy Manfredi, convention sales manager and Dianna Douglas, regional sales manager, attended the Small Market Meeting Conference in Little Rock, Ark. in September. Both brought back requests for proposals to host future convention meetings. The two also traveled to south Louisiana in October to make sales calls in Lafayette, Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

Mary Brown, tourist bureau president, and Chris Jay, public relations/social media manager, traveled to Oklahoma City, OK, with Shreveport Mayor Cedric B. Glover on an “inter-city visit,” as part of an initiative to explore opportunities to enhance the quality of life for citizens of Shreveport. The group included approximately 50 elected officials who met with key leaders to discuss topics from downtown revitalization to economic development.

Chris Jay attended Travel Media Showcase in September to promote food, festivals and film in Shreveport-Bossier to travel writers. While there, he was awarded the “Journalist’s Choice Award,” an award presented to one convention and visitor’s bureau each year for being “most prepared and most professional.” There were about 80 destinations across the nation in attendance.

Melody Melanson, production development and research manager, traveled to Los Angeles, Calif., with the Shreveport-Bossier Film Office and Mayor Glover in October on a sales mission. They met with a number of film studios, production companies and independent film makers in the hopes of bringing future movie projects to Shreveport-Bossier. Kathy also traveled to London in November to attend the World Travel Market. She met with tour operators from all over the world to bring potential group tours to Shreveport-Bossier.

Chris Copellar, graphic designer for the tourist bureau, was awarded a Silver 2011 Davey Award for The International Academy of Visual Arts for a concept he designed for the Orchestra Dance Company event held at the Strand Theatre.

This year was defined as a “hurry and catch up” kind of year for the meeting and convention business in Shreveport-Bossier, according to Kim Brice, vice president of convention marketing. This was a somewhat good challenge compared to the prior months in advance. So far, the number of business events has been up. “We didn’t have any definite bookings going into 2011,” Brice said. “Meeting planners were just tentative about booking business events six to seven months in advance. So far this year, everything was even busier and tighter, and this year, which meant there was a quick turn around and planning on our end.”

Throughout October 2011, there have been 252 definite bookings with another 77 tentative. Tentative bookings are those that have selected Shreveport-Bossier as a destination, but are awaiting to select their host hotel. These numbers are down compared to 2010. However, the number of convention and meeting leads issued is 18 percent higher in 2011 compared to the same period last year. Also, the group tour market saw a number of successes in 2011, including ten booked tours from Globus, a group tour company from the United Kingdom that had not traveled to Louisiana since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Shreveport-Bossier hosted approximately 50 tour operators from 34 states in 2011 with more than $500,000. This is on par with 2010 when 51 groups came through the area.

One coup in the group tour market is that the Travel Alliance Partners selected Shreveport-Bossier over two other destinations to host their conference in 2012. This will be the group’s first time in this part of Louisiana. It will bring 38 of the nation and Canada’s premier group tour operators, as well as 275 delegates. But the residual, future group tours will have an economic impact that will be far reaching into the future.

In 2012, the convention and group tour sales staff will be more targeted in the markets they go, with a continued focus on face-to-face sales missions and partner as much as possible to stretch resources and improve the sales process.

Convention, group tour business held steady in 2011

Though the national economic pressures are squeezing tourism locally, 2012 has a number of significant events that will have a positive economic impact. The Louisiana Travel Promotion Association will host its annual tourism summit in Shreveport-Bossier, Jan. 24-26 at the Shreveport Convention Center.

Bassmaster Classic, the super bowl of bass fishing, will be back. After hosting one of the organization’s most successful events ever in 2009, the excitement and magic of bass fishing will take place again on the Red River, Feb. 24-26. The expo will be held at the Shreveport Convention Center, weigh-ins at CenturyLink Center and daily take off at Red River Marina South.

Other promising events for the first half of 2012 include: American Advertising Federation, April 11-14, USA Weightlifting, April 13-15, Louisiana High School Athletic Association, April 22-24, and the Travel Alliance Partners Conference, June 3-8.

2012 shaping up to be a banner year

It’s time to spread holiday cheer and hang some holly as the sister cities bring in the Christmas season with the official December on the Red Christmas Tree Lighting Event at the Louisiana Boardwalk. The event will be held at the main entrance beginning at 6 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 17. This year’s event is shaping up to be a frosty, fun event everyone can enjoy.

The first 500 kids will receive a free Christmas gift. Entertainment will include glee club performances by area schools and the official tree lighting of the 40-foot Christmas tree by Maysor Lorenz Walker and Cedric Glover. Cumulus Media is hosting the “Tacky Christmas Sweater” contest that night too. Of course, Santa and Mrs. Clause and his elf friend will be on hand for photos.

Boardwalk officials, promise it will snow that night. This kick-off will usher in parades, special holiday exhibits, shopping and fireworks. Visit the newly-designed, www.holidayattheboards.com to plan your Christmas activities in Shreveport-Bossier and all other participating Holiday Trail of Lights partners: Minden, Monroe-West Monroe, Natchitoches and Alexandria-Pineville.