

South Shore

Convention & Visitors Authority

LCCVB Changes Name to Incorporate "South Shore" Brand

The Lake County Convention and Visitors Bureau is now known as the South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority.

"We have been marketing the region as the 'South Shore' to visitors for some time because the guests do not make travel decisions based on county name. There has been mention of a name change for the past three years, it is now official," stated Erika Scheeringa, Director of Public and Community Relations. "There are almost a dozen 'Lake Counties' in the United States and it's hard to differentiate one destination from the next," Scheeringa continued.

The resolution was passed by the Board of Directors at the CVA's monthly meeting and makes the South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority the official DBA (Doing Business As) name. According to the resolution, the CVA is the "...only convention and visitors bureau in Northwest Indiana to actively and comprehensively generate enough business to necessitate marketing the three county shoreline region."

The South Shore brand is reflective of the area from Chicago to New Buffalo, Michigan and is the geographic region the CVA markets to leisure and business travelers. The Resolution also states, "...the Lake County Convention and Visitors Bureau has long advocated a customer driven, research supported, comprehensive branding approach to is marketing."

The South Shore label stands as a nationally recognized term reinforced by the South Shore Line Railroad that runs from South Bend to Chicago and the popular South Shore Poster Series; both have existed for nearly a century.

Visit the SSCVA's new website at www.southshorecva.com. The Authority's executive offices remain at the Indiana Welcome Center located in Hammond.

South Shore CVA Opposes Use of Hospitality Tax to Fund Busing



The local public has seen an enormous amount of media coverage on the issue of the food and beverage tax to be used to fund busing in Lake County. In the past, the South Shore CVA has been outspoken on the issue of using hospitality taxes for non-hospitality related projects, and will continue to be opposed to policy that will eliminate jobs and close businesses.

The Regional Bus Authority, in cooperation and with express support of the Regional Development Authority, is continuing to pressure the Lake County Council to pass a 1% food and beverage tax in Lake County to bailout unfunded bus systems in north Lake County.

A food and beverage tax at this time would be detrimental to the hospitality industry – given the current economic climate. Speros A. Batistatos, President/CEO of the SSCVA has been quoted saying, "this is the wrong project, at the wrong time for the wrong tax." Batistatos also stated, "The SSCVA Board and hospitality partners believe transportation is an issue that needs to be addressed, but an appropriate funding mechanism must be used." The hospitality industry's principal is that it carries its own weight; any tax on the hospitality industry should be reinvested to create direct tourism opportunities. Transportation related taxes such as a wheel or fuel tax would be an appropriate tax to fund projects like busing.

The 1% tax on food and beverage proposal must be approved by the Lake County Council before it moves forward. The County Council, at their regular monthly meeting, decided to schedule a special meeting to hear more public input before voting on the measure. More than one dozen citizens spoke at the January meeting; more than half opposed a tax and questioned the Regional Bus Authority's use of the \$6 million that could be raised through the food and beverage tax.

At the time of publication the Lake County Council had not scheduled the public meeting to discuss the food and beverage tax. Please visit www.southshorecva.com/tax to learn more and view past articles on the food and beverage tax.

PBA Bowling Event Benefits TradeWinds Services



Left to Right: TradeWinds's Director of Marketing, Crystal Baumgartner, holding Ashley Pohlman, who attends the TradeWinds service programs, accepts a check for \$13,800 from Angela and Nick Loxas representing Olympia Lanes. Hammond's Olympia Lanes hosted the Professional Bowlers Association Corporate Charity Challenge this year. The Challenge was a Pro-Am event where corporate businesses bowled with the PBA Pros.

NSA Returns in 2009

The National Softball Association (NSA) will return to the South Shore for the 2009 NSA World Series July 19 - 24. The event returns to the area after South Shore Sports Promotions hosted the event in 2007. The estimated economic impact will be approximately \$1.2 million.

After the paramount success of the Girls Fast Pitch "B" North World Series in 2007, NSA officials look forward to returning to the South Shore. It was the professionalism, support and cooperation of South Shore Sports Promotions that made the region an easy choice for this year's event, according to Bill Horton, NSA North Central Zone Vice President. "...Jason and the South Shore CVA pay attention to detail and keep everyone working on the same page... I'm very excited to be coming back there," Horton said.

The event will spread across 27 fields in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties at various softball facilities. In 2007, 264 teams competed resulting in 10,000 athletes and their families visiting the area. Close to 300 teams are expected this year.

"We want to go above and beyond what we did in 2007, and we're looking forward to a great event," said Jason Sands, Director of Sports Development.

Batistatos Given TradeWinds Ambassador Honor

Speros Batistatos was named TradeWinds Ambassador of the Year at the center's annual luncheon at Ameristar Casino in East Chicago. TradeWinds, a rehabilitation and development facility located in Gary, serves children and adults throughout Lake County.

"We choose to recognize an Ambassador each year because it is a way for businesses to give back to TradeWinds through a business service they need throughout the year," said Crystal Baumgartner, Director of Marketing, TradeWinds. The TW Sign Shoppe provides professional quality signs using cutting edge technology at an affordable price. Monies received through the Sign Shoppe help support services and programs for children and adults with special needs.

The TradeWinds Sign Shoppe has produced signs and banners for the SSCVA's Sports Legends exhibit, Gary's South Shore Air Show and other special events.

For more information on the Sign Shoppe, visit tradewindservices.org.

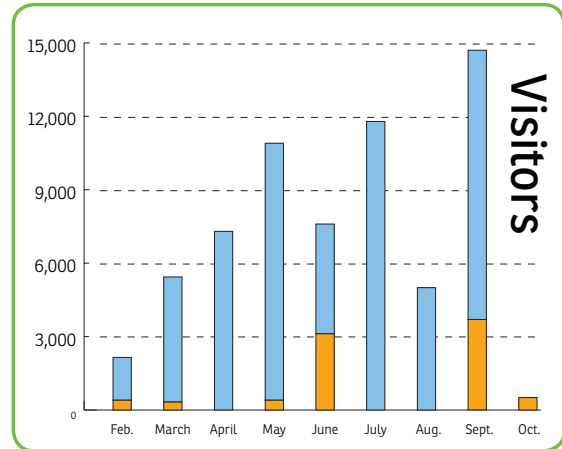
2009 Events Bringing \$6.5 million to the South Shore

South Shore CVA sales team has been busy booking more than 25 conventions, meetings and sporting events for 2009. These meetings and events will bring in more than 65,000 visitors and produce an estimated \$6,500,000 impact on the local economy.

National, state and local organizations as well as championships and tournaments will fill 26,000 rooms throughout Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties. "...and with our new direct Email Marketing campaign, it will be easier to market directly to the attendees," said Kate Hurey, Sales Manager, SSCVA. (See story on page 3 to learn more about the Email Marketing Program.)

"Our restaurants and attractions should stay busy throughout the summer with these events," said Jason Sands, Director of Sports Development, "and according to the National Association of Sports Commissions, sporting events will continue to be a profitable segment of the tourism industry, despite the downturn in the 2009 economic forecast."

For a list of 2009 meeting and sporting events in the South Shore click the "2009 Bookings" banner on the website, www.southshorecva.com.



Nearly 30,000 Visitors View A Christmas Story Comes Home

After 25 years, *A Christmas Story* returned home to Hammond, Indiana. The holiday movie classic is based on former Hammond, Indiana resident, Jean Shepherd's book, *In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash* and other short stories. The fictional town of Hohman, where the Parkers lived in the movie, is a guise for Hammond, Indiana.

The Indiana Welcome Center housed six animated displays from November 28th to January 11th and had 28,903 visitors from across the nation. The displays were originally showcased in Macy's in New York City and purchased by the Authority in 2008.

"A Christmas Story Comes Home was a huge success and we are honored we can bring the story back to Hammond year after year," said Katie Holderby, Executive Vice President, SSCVA.

The South Shore CVA plans to extend the exhibit in 2009 from early November to January and expand the special events associated with the exhibit. "The Mommy's Little Piggy eating contest, Tire Relay, Write a Theme contest and Meet Flick were very well received and had hundreds of entries," stated Adrienne Binder, Special Events Manager, SSCVA.

Check the website, www.southshorecva.com/christmas for updates on the 2009 exhibit and events.



Left: Actor, Scott Schwartz and Speros Batistatos, SSCVA's President/CEO visit Santa's Mountain during the "Meet Flick" event at the Indiana Welcome Center. Scott Schwartz played "Flick" in the movie, *A Christmas Story*.

2008 Professional of the Year, Karen Maravilla



Karen Maravilla, President of the Downtown Hammond Council, was named Professional of the Year at the South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority's 2008 Hospitality Awards. Maravilla serves as the President of the Downtown Hammond Council, Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Munster Chamber of Commerce and Marketing/Public Relations Director for El Taco Real restaurant in Hammond.

It is under Maravilla's leadership of the Downtown Hammond Council, and the creation of special events centered around Hammond's Downtown, that the city is seeing opportunities for future growth and economic development.

As Board Chairman for the Munster Chamber of Commerce, Karen oversees the progressive strategies and implementation set by the Board of Directors. Maravilla has also created several successful marketing and public relations campaigns for El Taco Real restaurant.

Maravilla's significant contributions to the hospitality industry and South Shore business community made her an outstanding choice for the 2008 Professional of the Year.

Other organizations and professionals received Hospitality Awards at the Annual Holiday Reception (listed below). More than 250 hospitality professionals and elected officials gathered at the Indiana Welcome Center for the holiday event.

- 2008 Restaurant of the Year - Asparagus, Merrillville
- 2008 Attraction of the Year - The Venue, Horseshoe Casino Hammond
- 2008 Festival of the Year - Covered Bridge Harvest Fest, Crown Point
- 2008 Sports Event of the Year - Midwest Regional League, 1st District Playoffs
- 2008 Facility of the Year - Olympia Lanes, Hammond
- 2008 Hotel of the Year - Hilton Garden Inn, Chesterton
- 2008 Elected Official of the Year - Gerry Scheub, Lake County Commissioner

South Shore CVA Unveils New Website

The SSCVA launched the new website at the end of December adding features to make it more user-friendly.

The new site has been completely redesigned and reflects the South Shore brand by representing hotels, restaurants and attractions from a tri-county region. The site also features personalized sections tailored for leisure and business travelers, journalists and meeting planners and will soon have the 2009-2010 Visitors Guide online.

Partners are able to access convention and group tour leads, submit printable coupons and update their listing information. Meeting planners can submit RFPs (Request for Proposals) and any organization can enter their festival or event in the calendar section.

The South Shore CVA's homepage now features the calendar of events, the SSCVA's blogs and podcasts. Log on the new South Shore website at www.southshorecva.com.



Partner News

SSCVA Offers Direct Marketing Email Program

South Shore CVA partners for the 2009 calendar year can take advantage of the newest marketing and advertising opportunity with the South Shore CVA - direct email. The program, available at varied levels, will provide direct access to more than 60,000 visitors who are planning to visit the South Shore. An email will be sent directly to visitors approximately one week before their arrival to the area.

The Email Program gives businesses the ability to track ROI (return on investment) to the penny and the SSCVA will provide a year end report detailing the email open ratio, number of visitors reached and click through statistics.

The Email Program will put SSCVA partners directly in front of visitors attending dozens of the largest events in Northwest Indiana in 2009.

Call Heather Becerra, Director of Sales & Marketing, SSCVA at (219) 554-2224 to learn more about this opportunity.

Grant Seminar Cancelled

The South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority has cancelled the Grant program this winter as well as the Grant Seminar usually held at the beginning of the new year. The SSCVA's matching grant program was cancelled due to unexpected flooding at the Indiana Welcome Center, which depleted funds that were used for grants.

The program has been suspended until further notice. If you have any questions, please contact Katie Holderby, Executive Vice President at (219) 554-2222.



2008 R.O.S.E. Winners

The 2008 R.O.S.E. (Recognition of Service Excellence) Awards were held in October at The Venue at Horseshoe Casino. One dozen winners were chosen from more than 100 nominations. Winners included hospitality employees from Lake and Porter counties. To nominate a front-line employee for the 2009 R.O.S.E. Awards, visit www.rose-awards.com.

- Judy Ehlin - Ramada Conference Center, Hammond
- Stacy Venable - Ramada Conference Center, Hammond
- Anita Gutierrez - Horseshoe Casino, Hammond
- Steve Pawlowski - Horseshoe Casino, Hammond
- Dave Hunt - Hilton Garden Inn, Chesterton
- Maria Pabey - Hilton Garden Inn, Chesterton
- Pamela Pilon - Hilton Garden Inn, Chesterton
- Rosie Jackson - Radisson Hotel at Star Plaza, Merrillville
- Joan Kolozenski - Post-Tribune, Merrillville
- Tammy Lozer - Amerihost Inn, Hammond
- Sheri Emmart - Lucrezia's Ristorante, Crown Point
- Sandra Hall Smith - Indiana University Northwest, Gary

The South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority is the sales and marketing organization leading the hospitality industry and supporting its partners in the development and promotion of tourist attractions throughout the region.

The SSCVA Executive Offices are housed in the Indiana Welcome Center:
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Hammond, IN 46323
Phone: (219) 989-7770



This newsletter is a quarterly publication of the South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority. Comments, suggestions, or materials for submission consideration should be directed to Erika Scheeringa at (219) 989-7770, Fax (219) 989-7777, Email erika@southshorecva.com, or by mail to 7770 Corinne Drive, Hammond, Indiana 46323.

Additional copies of the SSCVA Newsletters are available at the Indiana Welcome Center, Hammond or by contacting Erika Scheeringa, Director of Public & Community Relations.

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