

Centerpoint

Volume III Issue 1

A Newsletter for the Tourism Industry

Spring 1995

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MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



Customer Service Program Up and Running

This February, representatives of the tourism industry participated in the first instructor training for *Minnesota At Your Service*, the Tourism Center's new customer service program. Along with Tourism Center staff, they are piloting the program in communities and businesses around the state this spring.

Attendees at the February training included a mix of tourism business owners, Extension educators and others involved in Minnesota tourism. Among the trainees were Sandy Lein, Minnesota Restaurant, Hotel and Resort Association; Brian Majerus, Windom Area Chamber of Commerce; Lynn Scharenbroich, Black Pine Beach Resort; Lori Blake, Nisswa Chamber of Commerce; and Patti Watt, Waldheim Resort. In addition, Renda Rappa, Minnesota Office of Tourism; Bob Defries, Alexandria Technical College; Linda Seaton, Hennepin County Parks; and Mary Thorvig, Pine County, attended the training.

Trainee and resort owner, Lynn Scharenbroich, is focusing her training on 14- to 18-year-olds, who make up a large percentage of the area's seasonal

tourism employees. "These kids are often front-line staff but may not be as well-versed in customer service skills as they ought to be," says Scharenbroich. "The *Minnesota At Your Service* program will give them the customer service

background they need," she adds.

Scharenbroich has had a wonderful response from the Pequot Lakes community, where chamber members are sponsoring teen participants to defray training costs.

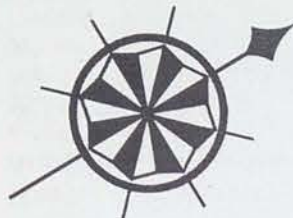
Developed in response to industry demand, this two-part project includes a core program for front-line staff and management and another component specifically for business owners and managers.

The core program guides participants as they develop customer service skills based on quality service concepts. The second component, to be piloted next fall and winter, helps owners and managers develop individualized customer service programs for their businesses. Center staff are confident that the newly designed *Minnesota At Your Service* program will fill the gap in customer service training for Minnesota's tourism industry. If you would like to offer this program in your area, contact the Tourism Center at 612/624-4947.



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Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.



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A Newsletter for the Tourism Industry

What the ADA Means for the Tourism Industry

The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) was signed into law in July of 1990, providing civil rights protection against discrimination to 43 million disabled persons. The act consists of five basic sections or titles. Title I deals with employment discrimination, Title II with public services, Title III with public accommodations, Title IV with telecommunication relays and Title V with miscellaneous concerns.

While there are many facets of the act that have ramifications for tourism businesses, the public accommodation requirements under Title III are of particular interest. Under Title III, January 26, 1992 was set as the deadline for the removal of architectural and communication barriers from public areas of existing facilities when their removal was or is readily obtainable. According to that law, companies that own, lease or operate places of public accommodation in existing buildings are responsible for complying with the barrier removal. The regulations do not define how much effort or expense are required to meet this obligation and cases are to be judged individually taking into account facility size and type, overall financial resources, and the cost and nature of the needed improvements. As of September, 1994, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) had approximately 1500 complaints in this category under investigation.

Title III regulations assign priorities for planning readily achievable barrier removal projects as follows:

- 1) accessible entrance into the facility
- 2) access to goods and services
- 3) access to restrooms
- 4) other necessary measures

These methods of barrier removal can help your business comply with this part of the ADA.

It is advised that accessibility be evaluated by companies annually and be included in all discussions of redecoration or renovation. Before making any alterations, an accessibility survey should be done. The Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center can provide accessibility surveys to your business. For the phone number of your regional center call 1-800-949-4ADA.

Methods of Barrier Removal:

1. Install wheelchair ramps
2. Make curb cuts in sidewalks and entrances
3. Reposition shelves so those with disabilities can reach materials
4. Rearrange tables, chairs, vending machines, display racks, and other furniture
5. Reposition telephones and water fountains
6. Add raised markings on elevator control buttons
7. Install flashing alarm lights
8. Widen doors
9. Install offset hinges to widen doorways
10. Eliminate turnstiles or revolving doors or provide an alternative accessible path
11. Install accessible door hardware, such as levers, instead of or in addition to doorknobs
12. Install grab bars in toilet stalls
13. Rearrange toilet partitions to increase maneuvering space
14. Move lavatory pipes underneath sinks to prevent burns.
15. Add raised toilet seats
16. Add a full-length bathroom mirror
17. Reposition paper-towel dispensers
18. Create designated accessible parking spaces
19. Add a paper-cup dispenser at existing accessible water fountains
20. Remove high-pile, low-density carpeting
21. Install vehicle hand controls

For the Asking ...

Q: We are just a small town with nothing for tourists to see. Why would anyone want to visit here?
Tyler, Minnesota

A: Believe it or not, the things that actually attract people to a town are friendly people, scenic beauty, local history and culture, interesting architecture, local festivals and curiosities. Many visitors to small towns come just to get away from the big city pace.

If you are seriously trying to become a tourist destination, you should try to look at your town as a visitor would, rather than as a resident. Drive slowly through your community, really looking at what is there and imagining how pleasant or interesting a visitor would find it. Look for those hidden treasures such as the great buildings in disrepair or those that have suffered a bad remodeling job. Maybe there's a historic bridge or a prize-winning sycamore tree in someone's yard. There is always more of interest than residents think.

There will be many skeptics and people who think you have lost your marbles for wanting to bring tourists to town. Don't let them deter your efforts. Find a core of interesting things and organize to invite people to visit. As one tourism expert says, "People come where they are invited and stay where they are welcome!"

Glenn Kreag

For the Asking is a regular feature of *Centerpoint*. Readers should direct brief tourism questions to the Tourism Center, 116 Classroom Office Building, University of Minnesota, 1994 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108. Center faculty will answer questions in each issue.

SHORT TAKES...

Barb Koth Takes Job with World Bank...

After 9 years with the Tourism Center, Barb Koth has taken a post as World Bank Advisor with the Commission for Tourism in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The Tourism Center wishes Barb well in her new position. You may E-mail her at: bkoth@worldbank.org.

Free Tourism Resource Handbook Now Available...

The Tourism Works for America Council is now offering the *Tourism Awareness Resource Handbook* free to non-profit public sector organizations. To receive a copy, notify the council on your organization's letterhead and send to: Tourism Works for America Council, 1100 New York Avenue NW, Suite 450, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Apply Now for '96 and '97 Governor's Fishing Opener...

Communities or properties interested in hosting the 1996 or 1997 Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener are encouraged to apply to the Office of Tourism. Call Dave Gaitley, 612/297-1922 or 800-657-3638, for more information.

Hosts Needed for Outdoor Writers of America Association Convention...

The OWA will hold its annual convention June 16-20, 1996 in Duluth. Convention organizers and the Office of Tourism are seeking areas, properties and tourism businesses interested in hosting tours for media participants. For additional information call Dave Gaitley, 612/297-1922 or 800/657-3638.

Tourism Industry Packs for Washington

The travel and tourism industry will come of age this fall when approximately 1700 state-selected delegates will attend the first ever White House Conference on Travel and Tourism. Such rare opportunities are reserved for topics deemed of great importance by the Administration. "The White House Conference will provide you and your colleagues an opportunity to meet with leaders in the Executive branch and Congress and, I hope, develop a shared vision — both of the industry's future and the role of the industry in our nation's future," stated President Clinton. The event is set for October 30 and 31, 1995.

States will make recommendations on nine issues that have been identified on the federal level. They are: research; technology; infrastructure development; product development; promotion; facilitation/barrier reduction; education/training; environmental concerns; and traveler safety and security. The Conference will examine these areas in the context of the broader themes of job creation, export growth and return on investment. Delegates will discuss industry challenges and plan a national tourism strategy during the Conference.

In preparation, Minnesota tourism industry sectors, public officials, economic development representatives, and others met in Duluth in April to examine Minnesota's position on the nine issues. According to Tourism Center Director, Bill Gartner, "The process used in Minnesota to address these issues has been very effective and productive." Minnesota has added its own issues including taxes and access to capital; fees and regulations; national level industry communications/coordination; and domestic promotion of public lands.

Minnesota at-large delegates to the White House Conference are: Wayne Kostroski, Cuisine Concepts; Tom Lebouf, Knott's Camp Snoopy; Christopher Lisi, Holiday Inn Duluth; Mark Ludlow, Ludlow's Island Lodge; Luci Passe, Kahler Lodging; J. Robert Stassen, Metropolitan Airports Commission; Linnea Stromberg-Wise, Valleyfair; and Scott Uttley, Holiday Inn Metrodome. Industry delegates are: Arnold Hewes, MN Restaurant, Hotel & Resort Assns.; Kim Rakos, Mall of America; Jeanne Eaton, Albert Lea CVB; Bob Dickerson, Lake Florida Resort; Rosemary McCormick, McCormick Marketing; Bill Foussard, Americana Inn; Bill Deef, Minneapolis CVA; Carol Lovro, MN Motel & Campground Assns.; Jay Vachal, St. Cloud CVB; Jack Ruttger, Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge; Terry Mattson, Duluth CVB; Rob Buntz, Bluefin Bay Resort; Arthur Eggen, Nelson's Resort; Bruce Kerfoot, Gunflint Resort; Kris Hasskamp, State Representative; and Manley Goldfine, Zenith Management.

For more information contact Sarah Orman, Minnesota Office of Tourism, 296-1880 or 800-657-3637.

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Off the Top

At the Center we receive numerous requests for assistance ranging from investing in a B & B to assessing growth opportunities for large operations. While this is the nature of Extension activity, we believe that the Center can better serve tourism businesses by developing new industry-tailored programs than by simply reacting to phone requests. This has led us to make program development our main focus in the last two years. Our mission is: "to lead in providing education and research that enhances the understanding of travel and tourism and its relationship to people, communities and industry." To accomplish this mission, we operate at four levels providing significant programs at each one.

Our most active involvement in new programs is occurring at the state level. We offer a county-based **Business Retention and Expansion** program which focuses on maintaining the health of existing businesses rather than on attracting new businesses. A partnership with the Minnesota Festival and Event Association has resulted in a well-received **Festival and Event Management Certification Program**. Our most exciting new program, **Minnesota At Your Service**, is a direct result of new initiative money being used to assist the tourism industry.

At the national level we are hosting the **4th International Outdoor Recreation and Trends Symposium** in St. Paul this May.

In the international arena we continue our work on the Ghana project, are taking steps to become a World Tourism Organization Designated Training Center, and are participating in several other activities that increase awareness of the Center.

Finally, we operate internally, positioning the Tourism Center as an integral part of the University of Minnesota and its plans for U2000. We sponsored a lecture series to educate faculty and students about tourism's place in mainstream academia. We also work with students on tourism-related projects and have formed a faculty tourism interest group. Many of us at the Center and across campus would like to see the formation of a multi-disciplinary graduate tourism program. This would mean more research, more course offerings, and more tourism-educated graduates which ultimately would strengthen the tourism industry's ability to compete in a global marketplace.

We are determined to develop the programs that our constituent groups consider high priorities. We still enjoy receiving calls from people with new ideas and in need of assistance. If you haven't taken advantage of one of our programs lately, call, stop by, or take a look at our publication list. You may be surprised at the range of information the Tourism Center has to offer.

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ENDOWMENT UPDATE

The Carlson Endowment will fund the production of an economic impact video now in the planning stage. It is intended for elected officials, non-tourism business people and others not directly affected by tourism activity. The video will examine how expenditures flow through an economy and the eventual economic impact on community residents. The video is scheduled to be ready for fall association meetings. The **Tourism Business Retention and Expansion** program is also continuing. The program has taken place in Cass and Crow Wing Counties, and Itasca County is now involved in the process. The Endowment offers two \$2500 scholarships each year to interested Minnesota communities.

TOURISM CENTER
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