

FRONT & CENTER

INFORMATION AND EVENTS FROM THE GEORGIA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER



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FOR A DYNAMIC AND CONTEMPORARY place like the GICC, institutional food would be inappropriate. From sandwiches for the exhibit floor to elegant dinners in the International Ballroom, food at the GICC emerges from its Culinary Arts Center, prepared by the chefs of Atlanta's acclaimed caterer, Proof of the Pudding.



Even a midday buffet can be elegant and innovative, as was discovered by the 600 attendees — members of the Atlanta international community — to the October 7, 2010 “Atlanta World Showcase and Governor’s International Awards,” sponsored by the city’s business newspaper, the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*.

Initially the staff passed through the crowd with hors d’oeuvre trays of New Zealand Lamb “lollipops” with sesame oriental citrus glacé. Yum! Then the buffet, set up in the generous pre-function area, over the Axminster carpet that extends through the GICC hallways and rooms, and directly under one of the boldest of the GICC’s commissioned art collection, the Brad Howe painted aluminum mobile sculpture, *Boardgame in Flight*.

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Herbalife: 30 Years of Healthy Products and Healthy Business

WHEN IT COMES TO NETWORK MARKETING, Herbalife sets the standard for health and wealth. The company, a leader in direct sales and nutrition, began doing business in 1980 and today boasts more than two million independent distributors in 73 countries. It is traded on the New York Stock Exchange, valued at \$3.78 billion.

In the U.S. alone, there are 383,000 independent Herbalife distributors doing business person-to-person and through nutrition clubs. Two hundred thirty-nine thousand of those serve the Latino market, and more than 9,000 of those attended this year’s annual Herbalife distributor meeting, October 15-17, 2010, at the GICC.



“This is our biggest annual event,” noted Ibi Fleming, vice president of Herbalife’s U.S. Latino Division. Big, indeed.

In fact, the meeting has gotten so big that Fleming and her staff now conduct two such events, one in Atlanta for East Coast distributors and another in Los Angeles for the West Coast. And they continue to get bigger, with this year’s Atlanta gathering celebrating the company’s 30th anniversary outdrawing pre-meeting expectations by more than 1,500.

The number of attendees reflects the growing U.S. Latin market for Herbalife, which now represents roughly 70% of its U.S. business, Fleming pointed out. It also reflects the increased appetite nationally for products, like Herbalife’s, that promote good nutrition and support a healthy, active lifestyle.

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MEETING PROFILE

Herbalife 30th Anniversary Celebration
Herbalife International
Oct. 15-17, 2010
Attendees: 9,000



Festive “take-out” boxes adorn the inventive international buffet.

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College Park, GA 30337

The biggest challenge was handling the more than 1,500 additional attendees who showed up opening day.

Herbalife: 30 Years of Healthy Products and Healthy Business

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GROWTH WITH INTEGRITY

Attendees, who came from as far away as Nebraska in the U.S. and several foreign nations, including Venezuela and Mexico, were treated to a broad program designed to help them improve their sales and, not insignificantly, remind them of the corporate culture they represent. Herbalife Chairman of the Board and CEO Michael Johnson's address to a qualifying crowd of the most productive distributors focused on marketplace conditions and growing sales, but also on the company's reputation for high integrity as the key to continued success. Exhibits offered insights on new products and sales support materials, but included such unique features as the Herbalife clothing line, a book signing and information on the Herbalife Family Foundation and its *Casa Herbalife* program dedicated to improving childhood nutrition around the world.

SAME TIME NEXT YEAR

As might be expected, the biggest challenge of the meeting, Fleming pointed out, was handling the more than 1,500 additional attendees who showed up opening day to buy tickets at the door.

"But the GICC staff is great," she said. "Everyone is flexible, proactive and eager to do whatever it takes to make things work smoothly."

The 2010 meeting was the second consecutive annual Herbalife meeting hosted by the GICC. Once the company decided on Atlanta as the logical eastern meeting location,

"We love the GICC. Our committee will meet to approve a venue for next year, but I've already reserved the dates."

— IBI FLEMING | Vice President, Herbalife's U.S. Latino Division



because, "It is so easy to get to, from virtually anywhere," Fleming said, the GICC, with its proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, became the logical venue choice.

"Having the Marriott on campus and the rail service to the airport were great conveniences," Fleming said.

Fleming said that she has already reserved the GICC for next year's meeting.

"We love the GICC," she said. "Our committee will meet to approve a venue for next year, but I've already reserved the dates." ■



The Buffet: An Innovation

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"Our goal was to get 'Wow!' from those prominent international citizens ... and that's what we heard, loud and clear."

— GUY THOMSON | Proof of the Pudding



Attendees were treated to a variety of entertainment, from elegant dining to enthusiastic presentations.



The buffet presentation consisted of square-built pasta bar of stainless-steel kitchen tables and top-lighted buffet tables. Oval roasting pans offered a variety of selections:

- Penne and tortellini pastas with Alfredo, marinara and pesto sauces
- Caribbean flavored tilapia
- Chimichurri-sauce steak
- Oriental stir fry: garlic, ginger and scallions; fried rice; beef and shrimp

Desserts were hand-made and served in individual portions in various creatively shaped vessels.

“Our goal was to get a ‘Wow!’ from those prominent international citizens as they came out of the ballroom where they were meeting and into the buffet area,” noted Proof of the Pudding’s Guy Thomson. “And that’s what we heard, loud and clear.”

“It was so impressive,” added GICC’s Tamara McLauren, “that my client thought it was for another event. She just couldn’t believe it was for her event.” ■

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— TAMARA MCLAUREN | GICC



FOCUS

by Hugh Austin
GICC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IAVM Addresses ‘Trying Times’

“TRYING TIMES.” It may have been just part of the title of the keynote address by Navy Rear Admiral William D. French at the 2010 International Convention Center Conference sponsored by the International Association of Venue Managers. But it was also, unavoidably, the focus of virtually all discussion at the meeting in San Diego in September.

The U.S. exhibition industry just completed its worst year since record keeping began some 40 years ago, reported Douglas Ducate of the Center for Exhibition Industry Research. A 12.5 percent decline in 2009 was four times greater than the second largest decline, just the year before. The scope and scale of such a decline has prompted the industry to question its business model and what the future holds.

The truth is that the model for the exposition industry, like all types of businesses around the world that have been inextricably altered by the Great Recession, must change.

Our challenges are great, including increased global pressure (like many industries, the exposition business is booming in China). As well, technology in such forms as social media, mobile technology and location-based applications will change our industry dramatically in the next two to three years.

I am proud of the position of the GICC at this time in our history. We are unique among venues in

the convenience we can provide our guests in terms of our proximity to the world’s busiest airport, our on-site hotels and our transportation system. We are taking advantage of the new technology, with such things as our new GICC “myGICC” smartphone app for event planners to help us and our clients work more efficiently and effectively.

“The truth is that the model for the exposition industry, like all types of businesses around the world that have been inextricably altered by the Great Recession, must change.”

— HUGH AUSTIN
Executive Director, GICC

We are anticipating and addressing the issues that challenge our meetings industry. We understand that what is at stake is no less than the future of exhibitions and conferences as essential aspects of business, professional and economic development. ■



Giving Back

GIVING BACK. It is something responsible business people do. And it is something that has become habitual for the people of the GICC. "Every department head is involved in some sort of community service or volunteer work," noted Assistant Director Mercedes Miller.

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— MERCEDES MILLER
Assistant Executive Director,
GICC

From Executive Director Hugh Austin's work to establish a local charter school to Miller's travels around the Atlanta area to speak at

high school career days to GICC's Proof of the Pudding chefs cooking Thanksgiving turkeys for the College Park Boys and Girls Club, much of the work is targeted to the area's youngsters.

And much of what the volunteering involves is to expose school age youngsters to the meetings and hospitality professions, including regular appearances at area schools' "career days."

Parking Manager Frank Giles speaks to an area middle-school class about working in the hospitality industry.



"We send employees from different departments to elementary, middle and high school career days to talk about what we do here at the GICC and talk to them about future career opportunities in the hospitality industry," explained Andria Towne, GICC's Director of Marketing and Public Relations. "And we have done events here at the GICC where school classes come and shadow different departments to get hands-on experience of working in events."

And the more kids learn about the industry, the more interested they become. Many, like this from a local high school student following a Mercedes Miller presentation at his school, respond with letters displaying their newfound interest in our business:

"Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to come speak with my class and me! I found your talk on networking to be extremely interesting because of your unique and exciting experiences and your description of the hospitality industry. I would have never thought that the hospitality business would give so many opportunities." ■

KEY CONTACTS

To book your next meeting or trade show at the GICC, contact the Sales Department:
Phone: 770.997.3566
Email: dcole@gicc.com

To book hotel reservations directly with the on-site Marriott or SpringHill Suites hotel:
Phone: 404.459.5681
Website:
www.SpringHillSuitesAtlantaAirportGateway.com

For leasing information on the Atlanta Gateway Center Office Building, contact:
Lee Evans, III; Colliers Spectrum Cauble, Inc.
Phone: 404.877.9203
Email: lee.evans@colliers.com

Leadership Roundtable

Leadership in a Post-Recession Era

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS help members understand industry issues and trends and make the critical decisions that will drive their businesses. Leaders of those associations are charged with understanding industry economic environments and charting courses to benefit their members. *Front & Center* gathered key industry association leaders and asked them to comment on today's critical issues and how they are addressing them.

PARTICIPANTS



(L-R) STEVEN HACKER, President, International Association of Exposition Executives

DEBORAH SEXTON, President and CEO, Professional Convention Managers Association

LARRY ARNAUDET, Executive Director, Exhibition Services and Contractors Association

F&C. *As you know the economy has taken a toll on the entire exhibition, events and meetings industry. What would you say is the most compelling issue your association's members face heading into 2011?*

Hacker. For IAEE, it is helping our members to recalibrate their thinking and event business processes. The Great Recession turned much of what all businesses do inside out. Timelines, for example, have been significantly compressed. Customers want answers now, but those same customers don't want to register for our members' events until two weeks out. Same is true of many exhibitors.

Engaging social media to market and sell is another new challenge. When we first discovered the potential social media holds for our industry we leapt in to learn all we could about it. Then we released a torrent of tools and resources for our members with incredible results.

Likewise we have increased the volume of our advocacy messaging on issues like exclusive in-house services. We hear exhibitors and attendees call for more ROI for their participation in our events, then layer on 10-15 percent or more additional cost for a service that does not increase value. It's a challenge that organizers, contractors and facilities have to address together – and with no preconceived notions.

Arnaudet. As an association, ESCA's biggest challenges are providing sufficient value to the industry and our members so they value their membership investment. Relevance and value are always important aspects of the relationship between an association and its members, but critically important in a difficult economic environment.

We have exponentially increased our efforts in the area of advocacy and are working to ensure that our members and their clients continue to enjoy a market driven and open environment to conduct business. As all parties in the industry face reduced revenue streams and compressed budgets, the temptation is great to close some of these traditionally competitive services off through exclusive provider relationships, which historically have driven prices up and service levels down. ESCA believes our members' clients get the best value when they are able to choose their provider for services from a broad group of competing entities. We will always work to protect critical market dynamics.

F&C. *What are you doing for your members to help them ride out the current economic storm?*

Sexton. PCMA will continue to provide the industry's leading education in both face-to-face and online formats, addressing issues that are important to our members such as attendance building, cost of doing business, demonstrating ROI, and reinforcing the value of face-to-face meetings. We will also explore the industry's hottest topics such as virtual and hybrid

meetings. An example is the co-location of Virtual Edge Summit with the PCMA Annual Meeting, *Convening Leaders*, which will provide added value to members and attendees by offering cutting-edge education so attendees can learn best practices and strategies to execute a virtual experience. We will also introduce PCMA365, a virtual environment that members will help us build to enhance their online education and networking.

Hacker. We believe serving members is a one-on-one proposition and has to be in rapid response. For example, a member inquired about difficulty negotiating hotel contracts for new events in Latin America. They encountered pushback from local hoteliers who don't want to include provisions in their contracts addressing *force majeure*, indemnification and insurance. We contacted three attorneys with expertise in the subject and several major hotel corporations, and created a memorandum to provide guidance, all within 18 hours after the request. That's the kind of service we are proud to render.

"One of the best ways for our members to recover from the Great Recession is to increase international attendee and exhibitor participation in U.S. events ... We [are working for] a more rational government [immigration] policy and more business for our members."

— STEVEN HACKER
President, International Association of Exposition Executives

One of the best ways for our members to recover from the Great Recession is to increase international attendee and exhibitor participation in U.S. events. But too often qualified business people from nations like Brazil, China and India can't get U.S. visas. We deployed a \$100,000 CEIR (Center for Exhibition Industry Research) study in June to measure the economic impact on U.S. exhibitions and on the U.S. economy that will be unveiled at our December 2010 meeting in New Orleans. We will use that study to provide the Secretary of Commerce with hard evidence that U.S. immigration policy is costing us, and the nation, enormously. We hope the result will be more rational government policy and more business for our members.

Arnaudet. We continue to work hard at delivering education customized to the circumstances and challenges that our members face today. We are also continuing to expand the ESCA Worker Identification System, which not only provides efficiencies and savings to our members, but is an important step in providing uniform procedures to an aspect of the industry that has been fragmented as long as I can remember. As the program continues to grow and expand across many venues in the industry it will continue to evolve to meet the current needs of all users. ■

For information on booking space, please call the GICC Sales Department at 770.997.3566.



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