



# The Group Travel Leader

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## Tops with ABA

American Bus Association announces its Top 100 Events for 2010.

See page 4

## Montreal montage

Montreal offers European charm and flair within sight of the United States.

See page 10

## Wisconsin Dells stays hip

Wisconsin's water park capital still draws many adults with its wide variety of attractions.

See page 12

## White cooks up ideas

Rhode Island's Katrina White uses creative itineraries and johnnycakes to attract groups.

See page 26

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## It's not bragging if it's true!



Courtesy Santa Monica CVB

## CVBs work hard to create community awareness

By Herb Sparrow

It's hard to miss the Mobile Visitor Information Center (MVIC) at local events in Oregon's Mount Hood region. The van is brightly painted with images of blue skies, green trees and the snow-covered, iconic Oregon peak.

"When it's parked, it also has a good-size inflatable brown suitcase on top," said Jae Heidenreich, public relations and communications officer for Clackamas County Tourism, which markets itself as Oregon's Mount Hood Territory. "You can't miss it."

Volunteer ambassadors for the Round Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau in Texas are also highly visible with their matching red shirts.

"We have three high school students and seven adults, from a retired Dell employee to a high school P.E. teacher," said Nancy Yawn, director of the CVB. "They will be out at different events."

The mobile van, which promotes local events, festivals and attractions,

The Santa Monica CVB organized a Brand Summit to solicit local input into developing a brand for the California destination. Below, Oregon's Mount Hood Territory's visitor van sets up at a tulip festival.

and the red-shirted ambassadors are two of the more visible ways that convention and visitors bureaus connect with local residents.

Although much of their marketing is aimed at attracting visitors from outside their local areas, convention and visitors bureaus also consider it important to promote to local residents.

Such efforts generally have two goals: first, solidifying local support for CVBs by making people aware of what they do and how tourism contributes to the local economy, and second, encouraging people to visit local attractions and restaurants and to use local accommodations for visiting family and friends.

CVBs use a variety of methods to reach out to the local community. They

See CVBs, page 18



Courtesy Oregon's Mount Hood Territory

## Enjoy a presidential address

By Herb Sparrow

After leaving office, President Rutherford B. Hayes took a daily interest in the upkeep of the grounds at his Spiegel Grove estate in Fremont, Ohio, maintaining detailed journals and often helping do the work himself.

"He would get out and do some of the pruning," said Tom Culbertson, executive director of the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center. "Sometimes, he got really bad poison ivy."

Many sites around the country not only preserve the history of the 43 men who have been president of the United States, but also help put a human face on the historic figures who have



Courtesy President James Buchanan's Wheatland

President James Buchanan purchased this Wheatland estate near Lancaster, Pa., after serving as secretary of state.

See THE PERSONAL, page 24

## After a slow start, Oberammergau officials look for a strong finish

By Brian Jewell

When one of the biggest tourism events of the decade happens in the midst of the biggest economic downturn in a generation, unusual things happen. For groups interested in attending the Oberammergau Passion Play in Germany next year, it means a wealth of different travel options, as well as unprecedented price points and payment policies.

You've probably heard the word Oberammergau a lot lately. Every 10 years, as fulfillment of a vow made by their ancestors hundreds of years ago, residents of the small Bavarian village come together to

See PASSION, page 8



Courtesy Oberammergau Passion Play

Thousands of village residents cooperate to produce the Oberammergau Passion Play every 10 years.

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## Green Travel Gains Awareness

**58%** 58 percent of travelers say they believe that environmental programs by travel service suppliers could have a positive effect on the environment.

**51%** 51 percent of consumers will continue to patronize "green" travel service suppliers regardless of an economic downturn.

**48%** In fact, 48 percent of travelers say that continuing to support environmentally responsible travel service suppliers is a necessity, even in an economic downturn.

Source: U.S. Travel Association

# CVBs pull out all the stops to showcase their special features



Courtesy: Round Rock CVB

Continued from front page  
 sponsor events or have booths at local festivals, write columns for local publications, appear on local television and radio shows, speak to local organizations, send out print and e-mail newsletters, conduct hospitality training, serve on local committees and boards, and sponsor contests.

Here's a look at what some CVBs are doing to promote themselves locally.

**Movin' on**

"The van serves as an opportunity

to connect with locals, [to] educate residents who may not know the wealth of attractions and activities located in our own region and to build a closer working relationship with our regional partners," said Heidenreich.

"Local communities can act as wonderful ambassadors to the traveling public. We realized that a very effective way to reach this group was through our attendance at local festivals.

"Volunteers from various festivals and events can work with the MVIC at the events preceding their own event,

**This year, the Round Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau in Texas created an ambassadors program to involve local citizens in a grassroots effort to educate people about what the CVB does.**

up to one month ahead of time," she said. "Volunteers are encouraged to promote their event, [to] provide demonstrations or entertainment, and to distribute information and promotional items."

People at the festivals can have their pictures taken in front of a green screen and choose from a number of backdrops showing various scenic

points in the county; the scene will be superimposed on the final photo. They can access the images free online.

[www.mthoodterritory.com](http://www.mthoodterritory.com)

**Round Rock, Texas**

Round Rock bills itself as the Sports Capital of Texas, and the bulk of the CVB's efforts are aimed at attracting sports events and spectators.

"A lot of people don't even know

## The Party Starts Here



Your senior group tours will never forget this rockin' tent party located in Shreveport-Bossier: Louisiana's Other Side. Choose from the Krewe of Centaur Mardi Gras Bash or the Krewe of Gemini Mardi Gras Bash.

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**Krewe of Gemini Mardi Gras Parade**  
 Saturday, February 13, 2010

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about the Sports Capital of Texas initiative," said Yawn.

Last year, to educate local residents about the CVB's mission, Yawn ran a series of humorous commercials encouraging people to "be a fan." That was followed with 30-second public service announcements with information about what the bureau does, built around the theme "Did You Know?"

"The local awareness PSA was fun, taking off on 'Did You Know?' For example, 'IKEA makes you build your own furniture, but did you know the Round Rock CVB is helping build our community at no cost to you?'" said Yawn.

"We created the ambassadors this year. We are involving citizens in the campaign as a grassroots effort. We have businesspeople and citizens spreading the message for us instead of us just saying it.

"If we can get people involved in our brand, we will start to educate them about what we are doing and why it is important," said Yawn.

[www.sportscapitaloftexas.com](http://www.sportscapitaloftexas.com)

**Kent County, Del.**

The Kent County, Del., CVB had not done much self-promotion until this year, but two events the CVB has sponsored have paid off with increased name recognition.

The CVB sponsored a free "Tourism Gives Back" community concert during the annual Dover Days in May and the "Tourism Gives Back — Give a Child a Bike Campaign" in conjunction with the 23rd Amish Country Bike Tour in September.

During the bike campaign, the CVB asked members of the local community to donate used or new bikes to needy children, located through the Boys and Girls Club of Delaware. A local mission for homeless men helped fix bikes in need of repair.

"One of the nation's best children's hospitals, A.I. Dupont, heard about our program and agreed to donate a bike helmet to go with every bike," said Cindy Small, director of the bureau.

"This one event has brought us so much free publicity and put Kent County Tourism out there," said Robin Coventry, director of public relations. "People are seeing the good we do."  
[www.visitdover.com](http://www.visitdover.com)

**Vallejo, Calif.**

"The Vallejo Convention and Visitors Bureau, located in the San Francisco Bay area, promotes itself in a number of ways to the local community," said executive director Mike Browne. "The single most consistent vehicle is the monthly feature section that appears in the local newspaper, *Times-Herald*, on the last Friday of each month.

"We have the good fortune to have this page provided to us complimentary, and [the page] is sometimes supported by local advertisers if their sales department can get it done."

The CVB also supports local arts organizations, like the Vallejo Symphony, the Vallejo Music Theatre and the July 4th Parade Association, and has monthly e-newsletters and quarterly newsletters.

[www.visitvallejo.com](http://www.visitvallejo.com)

**Santa Monica, Calif.**

One of the most aggressive CVBs in reaching out to the local market is the Santa Monica, Calif., Convention and



Courtesy Kent County CVB

**Visitors Bureau.**

"We want to make people aware that tourism is a really important part of the local economy," said Kim Baker, director of marketing for the CVB.

During the holidays, the bureau works with local hotels to offer discounts to residents and their friends and relatives. The promotion is featured on the CVB Web site, pitched to local media and posted on the participating hotels' Web sites.

The CVB's "I Am Santa Monica" program educates local business and hospitality employees, city staff, police, firefighters and residents about the city and how to best talk about it to visitors.

"The program consists of an hour-long tour that points out visitor center locations and talks about how TOT

**In its initial effort at self-promotion, the Kent County, Del., Convention and Visitors Bureau sponsored a free concert for the community at this spring's Dover Days.**

[the local tourism tax] funds a number of important city programs," said Baker. "That is followed by a class that goes over the different aspects of Santa Monica and ways to effectively communicate things like parking, getting around the city, the smoking ban and more to ensure that visitors have a great stay while in the city and leave wanting to come back."

The bureau also has booths at various events throughout the year; holds an annual community forum to brainstorm ways to improve the beach experience for residents and visitors; encourages members of its staff to sit on the boards of several local charities; submits regular content to

*SeaScope*, a city publication that is distributed only to residents; and has a "Local Community" section on its Web site that features programs, events and local news.

[www.santamonica.com](http://www.santamonica.com)

**Lake Charles, La.**

"We promote tourism in our area to the local community in many ways," said Katie Harrington, public relations manager for the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana CVB. "One of the biggest opportunities we use is through speaking engagements at local Rotary, Kiwanis, etc., meetings. We talk about what the bureau is, how we are funded, what we do