



CHECK-IN

with American Hotel Register Company

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

✓ Hospitality schools are not only thriving but also **growing in popularity**, according to the Chicago area's *Daily Herald*. Roosevelt University, which operates the only Illinois master's program in hospitality, says its program will grow about 20 percent this year. International students comprise about 30 percent of students in the graduate program, and Roosevelt is planning on expanding the program to China and Greece. Other Chicago-area schools with hospitality classes include the Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago, and Kendall College's Les Roches School of Hospitality Management, which is affiliated with a Swiss school and has seen its enrollment rise 150 percent in the last two years.

✓ The newest trend under the sun? **Babymoons**, for couples who want one last fling before their new baby arrives. Many major hotels, resorts, spas, and B-and-Bs are now designing packages that include indulgent amenities, prenatal yoga, couples massage, milk and cookies at bedtime, childbirth education programs, and, oh yes, parenting classes.

✓ On the other end of the spectrum, **The Empty Nesters Package**, which offers parents the chance to turn their attention back to themselves after the kids have left, is available at the Wentworth Mansion, Charleston, SC. A package includes spa treatments, carriage rides, sailboat excursions, breakfast, and refreshments.

✓ Did you know? You probably do! **Most bookings are for trips that begin on Friday**, followed by Saturday as the second most popular, while New Orleans and Houston are the fastest growing destinations for last-minute travel.

✓ **Trivia time!** According to *National Geographic Traveler*, if everyone in the world decided to move to Texas, the Lone Star state's population density would still be less than that of New York City!

As our sales staff visits hospitality properties around the US, they let us know when they come across interesting stories and ideas.

Three NJ hotels, Holiday Inns in Somerset and Saddle Brook, and a Wyndham Garden Inn in Mount Olive, have started Project RoundUP. According to **Joe Schneider**, their mission is to raise funds to assist returning servicemen and servicewomen who have experienced financial hardship as a result of deployment overseas. The primary focus is on paying rent or mortgage payments, and the group's goal is to help stabilize lives as the returnees seek employment or return to a former job.

The hotels are asking their guests to round up their hotel bill to the nearest \$1, \$5, or \$10. The difference between the actual and newly rounded-up bill is a donation to Project RoundUP, and the hotels match every guest's donation dollar for dollar.

The CEO of the Northstar Hotel management group the hotels belong to, Reza Ghassemi, CHA, CFBE, said that he sees "one percent fighting to protect 99 percent of us." As part of the 99 percent, he feels he has to help. You can find more information about this worthwhile project at www.ProjectRoundUP.org.

Doug Stelnicki was on his way to the Westin Convention Center Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA, when he did a double take: A giant blue cat was walking down the street! When he got to the hotel lobby, he found not only other giant cats but also raccoons, sheep, dogs, and

rabbits — all present for the annual Furry's convention. More than three thousand people dressed up as stuffed animals and cartoon characters, many in full costumes and others in just ears and tails. The festivities included a parade, masquerade ball, and dance tournament, along

with seminars and art exhibits. The convention raised more than \$5,000 for the Pittsburgh Parrot Rescue group.

While meeting Spa Manager Rachel Wasmund at the KeyLime Cove in Gurnee, IL, **Jody Duda** asked for her business card. Because her cards weren't ready, she wrote her number on the back of a piece of paper. When Jody looked at it later, this is what she read:

- The Seven Habits of Effective Service Providers
- Sensitivity:** The strength of compassion
 - Flexibility:** The strength of adaptability
 - Positivity:** The strength of hope
 - Humility:** The strength of self-confidence
 - Responsibility:** The strength of respect for others
 - Maturity:** The strength of experience
 - Connectivity:** The strength of communication

Originally printed in a spa industry magazine, the philosophy has been adopted not only by the spa but also the entire KeyLime Cove hotel. Once a month, a department manager talks about one of these habits and how their department has used the habit in their commitment to customer service.



Are Your Littlest Guests Sleeping Safely?

Beware of older cribs that may predate current safety standards: Look for mattresses that don't fit snugly, slats or spindles with gaps between them exceeding the width of a soda can, and loose, missing, broken, or improperly installed hardware. To check if your cribs have been recalled or subjected to a safety warning, search on www.CPSC.gov using key words, and sign up for email alerts.

Reader Responses Reader Responses

It's the little things that make guests happy! We all know this, and **Barbara Swanson, Sugar Beach Townhomes, Navarre Beach, FL**, tells a story to prove it: "We had a 'snowbird' couple check in at 2 pm on the first of January. At 2:15 pm, the husband came into the office and very indignantly announced that there were no EGG CUPS in their unit. I could hardly believe what I heard, and if I was younger than thirty years old, I probably wouldn't even know what an egg cup was! Of course I told him I would take care of it, so on my lunch break, I drove over to the nearest 'dollar store' and bought four egg cups for a dollar.

"That afternoon I delivered them to his unit, and they were overjoyed. At that moment I realized how little it takes to make some folks happy. I love meeting people all day from all over the country, and sometimes from other countries, and part of our job is making our guests comfortable and happy and wanting to return to us again. This particular couple

has been staying with us for four years now and has never asked for another "strange" item!"

Betsy LaBarge, Cascade Property Management, Welches, OR, let us know that she enjoys reading *Check-In* but that the blue background used in our newsletter sometimes makes the text hard to read. We are working with our printer to lessen the color intensity, and we hope you find this issue easier to read. Thanks, Betsy, for letting us know about this problem.

And now, on to "green" issues! **Julie Brown, Assistant General Manager, The Banyan Resort, Key West, FL**, wrote to let us know that the Banyan Resort proudly works to incorporate the "4 Rs" into every aspect of their operation.

"REDUCE: Purchase in bulk and/or concentrate, refill rather than replace. Give all guests a free canvas bag to reduce reliance on plastic bags.

"REUSE: Donate shipping boxes and packing materials to local artists,

furniture and accessories to Habitat for Humanity, and turn slightly used office paper into notepads.

"RECYCLE: All items accepted by local Waste Management from everywhere on the property, including guest units, offices, and Tiki Bar.

"ROT: Compost all applicable materials from the property and Tiki Bar.

Julie adds: "Through education and by example, The Banyan Resort also encourages all guests to participate in our efforts to reduce our impact on our environment and our precious island paradise."

All good ideas, and as many of us start another school year with someone in our family, we can help the environment too by remembering that there are now 4 Rs, not just 3!

Your thoughts are worth \$25! Send them to us! All addresses are printed on the back page. Make sure to include your full name, property name, and address.

**What is your property doing to entice guests to visit again?
Free nights? Gas cards? Free champagne? Got a great idea? Send it in!**

All contact info is on the back page! Please include your full name, property name, and address.

Maintenance news



Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

Storing Hazardous Chemicals Safely

Safety cabinets come in a wide range of sizes and shapes, and in addition to choosing a cabinet that meets NFPA and OSHA requirements, and carries an FM approval, other factors need to be considered.

It is important to identify and inventory all chemicals to be stored in an area. For instance, the housekeeping area may have cleaners and aerosols. In the maintenance area, you may find paints, spray paints, thinners, cleaners, gasoline, WD-40, or fertilizers. The pool

area will have pool chemicals. The kitchen, banquet, and dining areas may store Sterno, propane torches, and cleaning chemicals.

A review of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for a chemical will determine its characteristics and recommended storage practices. To avoid generating toxic explosions and to prevent fires, it is critical to segregate incompatible chemicals.

One factor in choosing a cabinet is how the chemical relates to the cabinet construction material. Non-flammable acids and corrosive liquids should be stored in polyethylene or wood laminate. Less aggressive corrosive liquids that exhibit flammable characteristics need a chemically-resistant steel cabinet with polyethylene-lined shelves.

Industry has customarily observed certain cabinet colors for defined fluids:

Yellow: Flammable liquids

Red: Paints, inks, and other combustible liquids

Blue: Corrosives

Green: Pesticides and insecticides

White or Gray: Waste materials or outdoor lockers

Safety cabinets come in single or two-door closure styles: manual or self-closing. Manual-close doors open a full 180 degrees and require the user to physically shut the doors. Self-close, self-indexing doors have a mechanism that automatically shuts doors upon release. Fusible links hold the doors open during use, but if inadvertently left open, the links will melt in the event of a fire to automatically close the doors.

In our next issue: Guidelines for managing flammable liquids.



Katie Snider
Human Resources
Editor

Encouraging a Healthy Lifestyle

More employers are encouraging their employees to become aware of their health habits, realizing that healthy workers will improve the bottom line of the organization.

With the increasing cost of current and future healthcare, companies are turning their focus of health promotion to wellness programs, which are just a part of an organization's overall strategy for a healthy workplace. Through wellness programs, employers can encourage employees to consider healthier lifestyles by providing incentives and education in an effort to improve those health habits not only at work but at home, and including family members as well.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), more than 60 percent of adults do not achieve the recommended amount of regular physical activity. In fact, 25 percent of all adults are not active at all. Inactivity increases with age and is more common among women and those with lower income and less education. See www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/ataqlan.htm.

In addition, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for every 100 employees in this country:

- 27 have cardiovascular disease.

- 24 have high blood pressure.
- 50 or more have high cholesterol.
- 26 are overweight by 20 percent or more.
- 10 are heavy drinkers.
- 44 suffer from stress.

In addition to increasing your health care spending, how do these statistics affect you, the employer? Employees who exercise regularly and see a physician on a regular basis for treatment tend to have better attendance and be more productive at work.

Through a wellness program employers can enable and encourage their employees to become more physically active and adopt healthier lifestyles. But how do we get our employees to embrace this improved lifestyle? One way is to devise creative ways to encourage and motivate your employees to want to feel better.

Many companies offer incentives through their wellness programs to promote healthy changes. Generally, it is better to reward employees for healthy behavior rather than punish them for unhealthy behavior. Of course, organizations must ensure that their wellness program offerings are nondiscriminatory and meet the requirements of a bona fide wellness program under HIPAA.

Here are some changes your organization can make to encourage employees' healthy lifestyles:

- Reduce insurance premiums for participation in wellness activities.
- Encourage exercise by offering to pay for membership to a health club, tennis club, racquetball club, or swim club. Maximum limits could be established on the annual

membership.

- Encourage weight loss by establishing a weight loss program where the employee is paid for each pound lost.
- Encourage competition between departments by holding a "Biggest Loser" contest, with the winning team receiving prizes.
- Change the selection of items in your vending machines. Replace chips, sandwiches, candy, and sodas with water, juice, salads, and fruits. Many vending companies now offer healthier options.
- Organize and support a lunchtime walking club.
- Provide pedometers to employees complete with your company logo.
- Take a look at that extra space and consider a company fitness center.
- Find out if your health insurance carrier has a personalized employee website. Many offer confidential health-risk assessments that permit spouses to participate at home. They also offer many educational articles about improving your health.
- Offer incentives to your employees who choose to quit smoking. Reimburse them for nicotine patches, smoking aide gums, counseling sessions, and even hypnotism.
- Educate your employees to become better health care consumers.

Successful wellness programs not only improve the bottom line for employers but help employees feel better about themselves and more positively about the organization they work for.

Source: Barbara Bluemel, PHR, HR Manager, HR Digest, MRA—The Management Association, Inc., May 2008

Don't Throw Out Those Old Televisions!

As many hotels, extended stay properties, and other hospitality venues strive to meet the growing demands of travelers by furnishing rooms with flat-panel televisions, the disposal of old televisions is posing a great risk to the environment. This will be further compounded with the switch from analog to digital broadcast in February 2009.

Many of the components inside a television are toxic, including mercury, lead, cadmium, arsenic, and other harmful substances. In a landfill, these toxins seep into the ground and eventually into the water supply. While one or two televisions may not cause irreparable harm, discarding dozens or possibly even hundreds at a time could make a severe impact. Multiply that

number by the total number of hotels that are making the switch and you can imagine the effects that may take place.

John Shegerian, CEO of Electronic Recyclers, Inc., estimates that there are currently 268 million televisions in the United States. 80 million of those will be thrown away in the next two years, many due to the switchover from analog to digital broadcasting on February 17, 2009.

If you are ready to toss away those old televisions, what are your options? First, for non-functioning televisions, many communities have drop-off locations for electronic waste, also known as e-waste. Watch for announcements from local government offices. Another reliable source for finding drop-off sites is ElectronicRecyclers.com, which includes

a search engine for drop-off locations and agencies that might take used televisions.

Even though the digital broadcast signal changes in February, older functioning televisions can still be useful. To generate some additional cashflow for your property, try reselling them on websites like eBay, Craigslist, or LiquidationConnect.

Schools, after-school programs, shelters, and nonprofit organizations may be interested in your TVs. Other avenues for donating include Freecycle.org, a website that allows users to donate or locate unwanted equipment. The Computer Recycling Center in California is a third-party company that will take donations, make any needed repairs, and find new homes for televisions.

2008-09 Calendar

Trade shows and conventions are a fantastic way to find out what's new and what's happening in the industry. Here are some events scheduled for the coming months.

Oregon Lodging Association Annual Conference
Oct. 5 - 7; Sunriver, OR; www.oregonlodging.com

Connecticut Restaurant and Lodging show
Oct. 6 - 7; Hartford, CT; www.ctrlshow.com

Michigan Restaurant Show
Oct. 14 - 15; Novi, MI; www.michiganrestaurant.com

Vacation Rental Managers Association Annual Conference
Oct. 25 - 29; Chandler, AZ; www.vrma.com

AH&LA Fall Conference
Nov. 7 - 11; New York, NY; www.ahla.com/conventions

International Hotel/Motel & Restaurant Show
Nov. 8 - 11; New York, NY; www.ihmrs.com

Seattle Travel Show
Jan. 24 - 25, 2009; Seattle, WA; www.seattletravelshow.com

Americas Lodging Investment Summit (ALIS)
Jan. 26 - 28, 2009; San Diego, CA; www.alisconference.com

Las Vegas Hospitality Expo
March 1 - 4; Las Vegas, NV; 1-800-247-3881

Quirky Quotes

The traveler sees what he sees. The tourist sees what he has come to see.

— G.K. Chesterton

Like all great travelers, I have seen more than I remember, and remember more than I have seen.

— Benjamin Disraeli

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✓ Check Out

Your feedback, suggestions, stories, and ideas are what make the pages of this newsletter interesting and useful to everyone in the hospitality field. Please take a moment to jot down your thoughts. Send your responses to:

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Please note: Submitted photos and information are not returnable. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity.

Check-In is published four times a year by American Hotel Register Company. We hope you've enjoyed this issue. If you need an extra copy, just ask!

Editor: Barbara Sirovatka



Jim Leahy

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Like it or not, life calls on us to be "bigger" than we think we are. We're asked to make decisions that we've never made before and be in places that we'd rather not be. We're asked to take stands on matters, stick up for someone, or set boundaries for others when we would rather not.

"Growing up" is never easy no matter what our age. In the hospitality industry in particular, our jobs force us into the company of strangers who may be much different from us. We meet people who look out on a world that may be very different from ours.

Sometimes our feelings are hurt by things people say. Maybe we want to be doing other things but can't. At times, change seems to happen too fast. We take on too many commitments and feel overwhelmed.

Here are some of the things that seem to help me in unfamiliar situations or stressful conditions:

1. Accept the truth as fact and embrace it. What is, IS! Trying to wish it away doesn't work.
 2. Sometimes we find we're resisting or stressing over something because we have no control, rather than just accepting it for what it is.
 3. Feelings and thoughts are temporary. We rarely can remember those of a year ago. Even our fears and worries pass away and life looks less frightening.
 4. It's best to live in the moment. Experience life as it is. Don't dwell on the past nor focus solely on the future.
 5. Seek peace, harmony, and love in your life and relationships. Life isn't all about winning or losing.
 6. Truly listen to the words and thoughts of those around you. Be present to others. Don't focus on being somewhere else.
 7. Create in yourself a person of honor, wisdom, strength, and love. We are our choices. Who we are is what we choose.
 8. Be always grateful for the life you've been given. Our lives are filled with beauty. Focus on it; don't dwell on ugliness.
- When we're living our life fully, things seem to go our way. Answers come easily. We just have to be present to life, listen to others, and be men and women of integrity. Best wishes on a beautiful life.

Love,

Jim

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