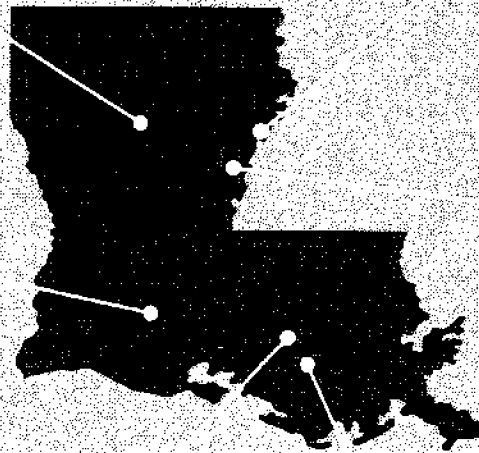


SUCCESS STORIES

**Ninth Louisiana Rural Tourism
Development Conference
October 26-27, 1999
Marksville, Louisiana**





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SUCCESS STORIES

**NINTH LOUISIANA RURAL TOURISM
DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**

October 26-27, 1999

Marksville, Louisiana

SPONSORS

Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
Louisiana Travel Promotion Association
Avoyelles Commission of Tourism

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ATTRACTIONS/TRAVEL COUNSELORS FORUM

October 26, 1999

The Louisiana Attractions Association (LAA) met with 14 Louisiana Office of Tourism (LOT) Travel Counselors (TCs) on October 26, 1999 in Marksville to explore ways of improving lines of communication and to discuss several topics of mutual interest. The meeting took place in conjunction with the Ninth Annual Louisiana Rural Tourism Conference. The 14 TCs included representatives from the 10 Welcome Centers (WCs), as well as the state and regional offices. The LAA was represented by its Board of Directors and several other members. The Forum, which was open to the tourism community as a whole, was attended by over 70 persons, and involved a facilitated discussion where responses were given to questions that had been drafted in advance by both groups.

Topic: VISITORS

LAA question:

"What type of information does a visitor request when he/she talks to a travel counselor?"

Travel Counselors' responses:

- Fees "Are any fees charged for visiting particular attractions or attending specific events?" TCs will only discuss fees with visitors if the attractions or event organizers provide such information. Otherwise, TCs are instructed to respond, "I don't know" or "I am not sure".
- Discounts "Are any discounts available for senior citizens? Children? Large groups?" Coupons are desirable as stand-alone pieces, and they can be distributed at Welcome Centers.
- Attractions should provide WCs with newspaper clippings, brochures, radio spots, etc. Flyers promoting special events are also encouraged.
- It is regrettable that the annual Louisiana Tour Guide is not complete and missing

many attractions. The CVBs and tourist commissions should redouble efforts and work with these attractions to assure their inclusion in upcoming Guides.

- WCs have the goal of keeping visitors in Louisiana as long as possible. Visitors are usually headed to or through New Orleans. TCs view themselves as "sales people for Louisiana" and can only fulfill their role if they have adequate information.

Travel Counselors' question:

"Do the visitors to your attractions ever mention the Welcome Centers as a source of information? If yes, what are their comments?"

LAA responses:

- About 50% of the walk-in visitors heard/read about the attraction at the WC.
- Individual attractions should take advantage of this fact and have familiarization trips for TCs.
- Attractions and bureaus/commissions should also take the "show" to the WCs. Example: Acadia Parish Tourist Commission sponsored a trip for the attractions, motels, and restaurants to the Vinton Welcome Center during Tourism Awareness Week.

Topic: BROCHURES

LAA question: *"What kind of information should a good brochure contain? Is size important?"*

Travel Counselors' responses:

- Good brochures should address: Who? What? Where? When? How?
- Price information is desirable.
- A map is a must. Clear and concise directions need to be given.
- Quality of paper is important. Use 60-70 lb. paper for tri-folds and 100 lb. for anything smaller.

- The LOT has brochure distribution guidelines. Obtain them.
- Biggest brochure shortcomings are size, incomplete information and quality of paper. Don't forget the name of the attraction/ event! Need telephone number and e-mail address. Don't be wordy or clutter the map. Be factual.
- Brochures in French? For internationals, yes. Also, German.
- The name of the attraction should be displayed prominently on the first page of the brochure at or near the top of the page, so that it can be read in the brochure rack.

Travel Counselors' question: *"How do you decide on the design and quantity of brochures you need? Is LOT or LTPA involved?"*

LAA responses:

- LTPA is vital to the design and quality of brochures.
- Large printing companies often have graphic artists who can help with design.
- TCs will work with the attractions to familiarize them with state guidelines.
- Have a creative design. Use pictures/ illustrations, little copy, a lot of color!
- Attractions rely on the LTPA to notify them of brochures that are in short supply at the WCs. Attractions are encouraged to place a reorder card at the bottom of brochure stacks to notify them of short supply.

LAA question: *"How does an attraction know when more brochures are needed at a welcome center?"*

Travel Counselor Responses:

- Attractions cannot expect the WCs to call and notify everyone. Attractions need to call, fax, or visit to find out about brochure volumes.
- WCs should not be out of brochures.
- Send sufficient volumes to the WCs ; sending less than 500 brochures is a waste of money.

- A good inventory rule-of-thumb is 15,000 brochures, but check with the LTPA re your attraction's track record.
- LAA/LTPA will add a brochure request number in future correspondence with their members.
- The new LAA Attractions brochure is compact and attractive, but it's too early to tell about its effectiveness.
- All Welcome Centers, not just the state's 10, need complete information about the state's public and private attractions.
- Please remove the old brochures. The attractions need to notify LTPA and WCs.
- "Old" brochures are disposed of through various means. Some WCs recycle, some take them to schools and libraries, others throw them away, and (if requested) will return them to the attractions. The WCs will do "whatever the attractions want done".

LAA question: *"How do WCs decide whose brochures go into the racks?"*

Travel Counselors' responses:

- Space is not a problem. The standing racks can accommodate all materials.
- Future WC racks will be on the walls and capable of handling even more brochures.

TOPIC: Communications

Travel Counselors' question: *"When a question arises concerning your attraction, where should the Travel Counselor go for information? LTPA, your frontline employee, your manager, etc.?"*

LAA response:

- Each attraction should make personal contact with the WCs. They should leave a calling card identifying the contact person(s).

LAA question: *"What is the best way attractions can inform the travel counselors of changes in operating hours, special functions, etc.? How far in advance?"*

Travel Counselors' response:

- Fax the information concerning the changes directly to each of the WCs Monday before the weekend, at the very latest. Two weeks earlier is preferred. Send all information concerning special events taking place at the attractions.
- Encourage attractions to appear in LOT's quarterly listing of events. Travel counselors also monitor newspapers, particularly weekend sections such as "Lagniappe" in the *Times-Picayune* and "Fun" in the *Advocate*.

TOPIC: Other issues

LAA question: "How are the Travel Counselors instructed to respond to negative publicity or crisis situations (hurricanes, tornados, etc.)?"

Travel Counselors' responses:

- An official position is received from the Lieutenant Governor or designee and shared with those who inquire.
- LOT is working with DOTD, Public Safety, and the Office of Emergency Preparedness on response strategies for crises.

- Individual attractions are encouraged to fax WCs with information about closures.

LAA question: "How can I get the Travel Counselors to conduct a fam trip of my attraction?"

Travel Counselors' response:

- The Travel Counselors schedule two fam trips per year. The first step would be to work with your CVB or tourist commission to insure that proper accommodations (motels, cabins, etc.) are available to handle the 40 or so counselors that make the trip. Trips begin on Sundays. The CVB or tourist commission would then need to issue a formal letter of invitation to Ms. Flo Hatcher, the Tourism Programs Director with the LOT. Four to five months advance notice is needed.
- The Travel Counselors are working on three-day exchange programs to learn about each others operations and differences. TCs from larger centers will go to smaller ones, north to south, etc.

CHARTING A COURSE FOR SUCCESS

Trends Shaping Louisiana's New Tourism World

J. Gary Ellis, President
VisitSouth Solutions

A New University Opportunity

- Robust Economy
- Growth Industry
- Favorable Demographics & Lifestyles
- All Segments are Optimistic

Greater, Faster, Easier Access

Greater Access

- Globalization of the Marketplace

Faster Access

- Technology
- Airline Lift - Regional Carriers
- Communications

Easier Access

- Streamlined Customs
- Enhanced Trade Environment

The Power of Lifestage

Evolving Demographics

- Echo Boomers (6-22)
- Generation X (23-34)
- Boomers (35-53)
- Swing (54-63)
- Seniors (64+)

Lifestyle Variables

(activities, interests, values)

- Quest for the Casual
- Value-Driven
- Healthier Lifestyles

Changing Social Climate

- Increasing Self Reliance
- Acceptance of Alternative Lifestyles
- Spirituality, Community Abound
- Volunteerism on Upswing

Quest For Simplicity

Time The Critical Commodity

- Voluntary Simplicity Movement
- Stress-Related Consultants, Seminars, Workshops
- Travel Patterns

Market Segmentation

Experience-Based

- Nature/ECO

- Heritage/Culture
- Adventure (both pseudo and real)
- Sports

Changing Channels

- New Distribution Channels
- All-Inclusive Pricing
- Rapid Informational Exchange
- Travel Agent Evolving
- Packaging

Regal Marketing

- Power Branding
- Micro vs. Macro
- Relationship/Loyalty Programs
- IMC-Integrated Marketing Communications

Technology... The Enabling Connection

On-Site

- ATMs
- Kiosks
- n-Room TV
- The Mighty Web
- The Numbers
- Audience
- How Used

United Federation of Partners

Private

- Florida
- Virginia

Alliances

- Capital City Region
- Golden Triangle

Partnerships

- South Carolina/Golf
- Louisiana/AAA
- Baltimore/VISA
- Rocky Mountain International

Implications For Louisiana

- Drive Time
- Niche Markets
- Regional Cooperation
- Package! Package! Package!

DO YOUR HOMEWORK BEFORE PROMOTING

Paula Finley
Global Wildlife

1. Visit every facility that is in anyway similar to yours. Steal the best of what they offer.
2. Who wants what you have? Are you Kmart, Dillards, or Saks?
3. How much will they pay? How much do others charge?
4. What is your primary market? Your secondary market?
5. Develop your primary market hardest, first. Secondary market longest range. Long term planning, long term goals. Bus companies/tour operators take the longest. Don't drop the ball down the road!
Keep it up!
6. Why will they come to you instead of someone else; what makes you different? Have you told them that?
7. How will you tell people about what you have? Mail, Mail, Mail.
Partner with other area attractions or accommodations.
8. Have you created your image? Is it appropriate for your market?
Does it portray you in a realistic light?
9. Credibility—Fulfill your promises and give them more than they expected. Disney—1 happy tells 4—1 unhappy tells 10.
10. TRAIN your staff. TRAIN your staff. TRAIN your staff.
11. Develop company policies. Make sure your staff knows how important those policies are ...and why.
12. Keep it Clean!!!
13. Pay attention to detail!
14. Make sure all the Welcome Centers know all of the above!!

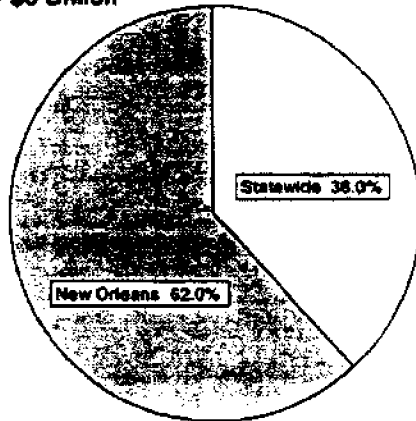
MARKETING ON A LIMITED BUDGET TIPS ON MARKETING STRATEGIES AND BUDGET BUILDING

Wynne Waltman

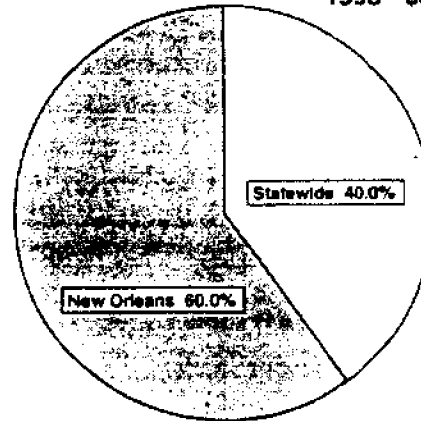
Peter A. Mayer Advertising, Inc.

New Orleans' Market Share

1995 - \$6 Billion



1998 - \$8 Billion



Louisiana Tourism Growth by Parish 1995-1998 Top 10 by Percentage Growth

Avoyelles	45.4%
St. James	42.8%
St. Mary	41.9%
Caldwell	36.9%
W. Carroll	35.6%
St. John the Baptist	34.8%
Bossier	34.8%
Pointe Coupee	33.5%
Evangeline	33.5%
Franklin	31.3%

Cultural/Historic Tourism

- 54 million visited a museum or historical attraction in the past year
- 33 million visited a cultural attraction such as an art or music festival
- These travelers spend more, stay in hotels more often, visit more destinations, and are twice as likely to travel for entertainment purposes than other travelers.

Whos, Whats & Get Creative

- Who do you want to reach?
- Who is your competition?
- What is your competitive advantage?
- Get creative with scarce resources.

Who Do You Want to Reach?

- What type of visitor do you attract?
- You are not your target market!
- Resources
 - Local or state tourism bureau
 - Travel Industry of America
 - Similar business in a nearby market
 - Statewide associations

Who Is Your Competition?

- Start in your own backyard
- Check with local tourist bureau
- Cooperate with them

What Is Your Competitive Advantage?

- Why should someone come to you over going to your competition?

- What do you do better?
- Perceived value
- Everything hinges on this item.
- Don't try to say too much at once.

Examine Your Resources

- Don't waste dollars talking to people who are not likely to come to you.
- Piggyback on the state's research and advertising efforts as well as local CVBs.
- Get together with your competition and market together.

Ad Budget Boosters

- Promotional Items
- Public Relations
- Internet

Promotional Items

- A printed piece
 - Simple rack card
 - Doubles as a postcard
- Print enough
 - Rack cards
 - Mailouts
 - Basic information

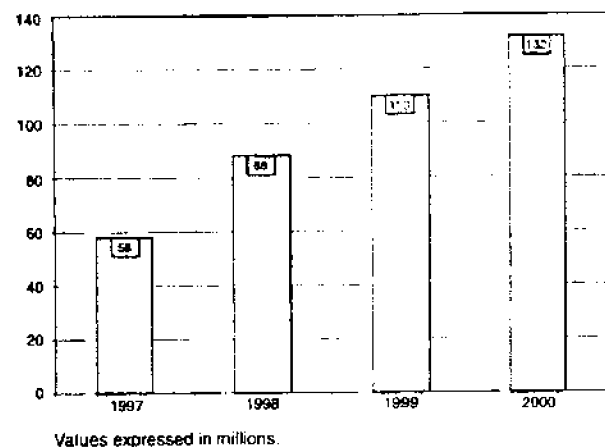
Public Relations

- Send stories to local, regional papers
 - Learn to write a press release
 - Use Louisiana Press Association and the Louisiana Association of Broadcasters
 - Send story ideas to travel and food editors
- Use teasers prior to invitation for big events
- Involve the community

The Internet

- Market worldwide
- 6 million travelers booked trips just in 1997 and that number is skyrocketing
- There has been a 19% increase of those who prefer the Internet for travel reservations over travel agents in the last year.

Growth of Internet Users



Online Travel Revenue

1996	\$275 Million
1997	\$911 Million
1998	\$2.1 Billion
2002	\$11.7 Billion Projected

Travel and Tourism Growth on Net

- Travelocity books about \$5 million in reservations per week, with 250,000 new users a month.
- TurboTrip.com has booked almost 90,000 room nights for almost \$11 million in revenue
 - This figure is doubling every 2 weeks as new properties are signed on
 - Will be on louisianatravel.com next month
 - Signing up properties throughout the state
 - Free sign-on

Internet Marketing

- Use the Internet as part of a marketing, advertising, public relations strategy
 - Direct e-mail vs. direct mail
 - Direct response vs. 800# in an ad
 - E-Commerce vs. storefront

Developing Your Site

- Check local/university sources/software
- Quick download times, easy to navigate
 - Few pictures
 - Menu bars, copy on second level
 - Searchable

- Have a way to get in touch with you
E-mail/Reservation System
Order forms/Guest Book

What Drives Traffic?

- Search engine visibility
- Fresh content
- Address on all traditional advertising, brochures
- Outside link and 3rd party relationships
- Online media (banner advertising)

Online Advertising Media

Company	Impressions	Amount	Cost/ Impression
24/7	18,099,129	\$25,000	\$0.001
Travelocity	250,000	\$10,000	\$0.040
1Travel	200,000	\$5,000	\$0.025
TheGlobe	250,000	\$5,000	\$0.020
Conde Net	174,418	\$7,500	\$0.043
USA Today	107,000	\$5,740	\$0.054
Jazz Central	250,000	\$5,000	\$0.020
Preview	1,170,970	\$50,000	\$0.043
Clignow	160,000	\$5,000	\$0.031
Total	20,661,517	\$118,240	\$0.006

www.louisianatravel.com

- \$6 million worth of advertising
- Content appropriate
- Various spaces available
Basic expanded page - \$200/year
Banners - various prices - \$250 for 15,000 impressions, home page

Online Inquiries 1997-1999

1997	292,919
1998	833,174
1999	1,125,349 (through Sept.)

Track Your Results

- Call sheets/Poll visitors
- Follow-up on guestbook entries
- Professional surveys and analyses—check with a nearby university
- A guestbook on your web site

Get Your Message Out!

- Find out who you need to talk to and talk to them however you can
- Let people know what you know
- Current customers are your most likely target for business, both repeat visits and referrals—give them more than you promise

MUSIC ENRICHES THE PARISH AND ATTRACTS VISITORS

Eugennia E. Robbins, Ed.D.

St. Joseph

In an isolated, rural, agricultural Mississippi River Delta parish exists a very small town of about 1300 residents with the lofty name of "St. Joseph." Even though it advertises itself to be the "Capital of Tensas" (with only 7000 residents in the entire Tensas Parish), it seems to be a town that time almost forgot. Many aspects of life have changed little since the time when cotton was king. Cotton land is still the king here, because not only is it the economic salvation, it dominates the way of life of all socioeconomic levels. The "haves" and the "have nots" are all working together to survive a way of life in which making a living is becoming more and more difficult.

In this parish no string music has EVER been taught. There has not even been a band in the parish for at least twenty-five or more years. Most students could not even identify pictures of the stringed instruments—violins, viola, cellos, string bases.

But now (in the last three years) twice a year, at least a thousand or more people will come to the high school gymnasium to hear an "orchestra" play formal "concerts" of various types of music—including classical. And the amazing thing is that most of the players are from Tensas Parish and its closely bordering parishes and counties. As word of this phenomenon has spread, other players are now driving sometimes two hours one way to attend these rehearsals and play in the concerts!

Picture now, if you will, those huge cotton fields of thousands of acres. On Monday afternoons, tractors pull out of the fields. Their drivers jump down tired, dusty, and dirty, but do not (on Monday afternoons, that is) linger to talk. They are on their way home to quickly shower, grab their instruments, and go to orchestra. Other field workers come home to clean up, grab their instruments, and go to orchestra. Entomologists (Louisiana State

University professors in the Research Station here) clean up and go to orchestra. Teachers leave their classrooms; nurses drive from Vicksburg and Port Gibson (MS) to play in the orchestra; paper mill workers, state employees, some from as far away as Natchez (MS) come to play in the orchestra; Lake Providence, Tallulah, Wisner, even Monroe send players. Numerous retirees get to the rehearsal room early to arrange music, chairs, and stands and to get their instruments warmed up and ready to play from 6:30-8:30 p.m. every week. Actually, being retired is the looked-forward-to way of life here now since this will allow one more orchestra time. Laughter, excitement, motivation, pursuit of goals fills the air. Even weekly rehearsals seem like opening night because a new way of life has been created here.

By 6:30 on Monday evenings, those tractor drivers, entomologists, papermill workers, nurses, and retirees all seem as one as they function as players in the orchestra. And when you see the Saint Joseph Orchestra performing numerous times during the year with about sixty or so members in their black and white concert attire, you could never believe that this was a group of agricultural, rural people who had recently either just started to learn their instruments or who had recently "gotten back in practice" from many years of not having played.

And, that's not all. From this orchestra has developed two fully-functioning ensembles for hire! The Jazz Ensemble is now highly sought after in the larger region (both in LA and MS); so too, is the Chamber Ensemble, a group of six string players who is sought after for softer, classical music. The Wind Ensemble is beginning to also be recognized now.

But, that's still not all. In this little town of St. Joseph, there exists (as a larger part of the orchestra), a School of Music, now in its second

year. The stringed instruments (especially violin) and piano are the major instruments taught now. During the Fall Semester of 1999-2000, group violin is being made available to students in the schools for the first time ever. In fact, during the Orchestra's Christmas Concert this year, the full orchestra will stop for a few minutes to listen to the pre-schoolers through sixth grade play a selection or two.

And that's still not all. This musical effort includes participants (other than orchestra players) from as far away as Lake Providence and Tallulah. These two towns will bring their choirs to sing with the orchestra as it closes out its Christmas Concert with two choir and orchestral numbers from Handel's *Messiah*. Can you imagine that?

And that's still not all. Numerous volunteers other than instrument players and vocalists will have worked long days before the performance to assure that all goes well. The marketing of the annual memberships, the selling of advertisements for the yearly program book, the decorating of the unair-

conditioned gymnasium (the only place large enough to hold the 700-800 attendees for the concerts since St. Josephs has no auditorium, or conference center yet, that is!), the borrowing of chairs from throughout the town for gymnasium seating, and then the next day the breaking down of it all and its being returned to its proper place.

If you want to see an unbelievable sight of COOPERATION, vision, excitement, quality performances, and the budding of new players from as early as the age of three, come to a concert of the Saint Joseph Orchestra. Visualize those proficient concert players in their work clothes a few hours before performance, and you'll believe the difference after you see and hear them especially after you sense the excitement, togetherness, and change in the air!

You'd never believe it could happen, but it HAS. It has been the "miracle" orchestra, and the "miracle" music school. And they will continue to be. Who knows what we might be visualizing a few years from now? You might be surprised, as well as we!

AN AMBASSADOR HELPS REVITALIZE A COMMUNITY

Chef John Folse

Lafitte's Landing Restaurant at Bittersweet Plantation

I wish to thank the members of the Louisiana Sea Grant Program for recognizing our tourism efforts. However, I must say that tourism and the great marketing efforts of Louisiana has guaranteed our success over the past 20 years. Louisiana has a fabulous story to tell and I am fortunate to have been one of its storytellers serving up cuisine and culture in an industry I so dearly love—the hospitality industry. It's been a pleasure, along with other Louisiana culinarians, to have been chosen to bring Louisiana's unique cuisine around the globe having opened our "Taste of Louisiana" restaurants in over 14 countries. But home is where the heart lies and nothing has given me

more satisfaction than to witness the smiles and satisfaction of those experiencing our fabulous food and friendship for the first time. It is their encouragement and willingness to return for another visit that has sustained us in the restaurant business for so many years. In closing, I wish to thank the people of Louisiana who have supported our every endeavor over the years and the great marketing arm of our state. They keep people coming to our doors, ready to experience a "taste of Louisiana" for the first time. There's no doubt about it ... a sample of our food and people will make family and friends of these visitors for life. Thanks for this great honor.

INTERPRETING OLD INDUSTRY FOR TOURISM FROGMORE COTTON PLANTATION AND GINS

Buddy and Lynette Tanner

While many couples spend Saturdays or Sundays going to the movies or watching ESPN, Buddy and I roam the countryside looking for the tops of old tin roofs barely exposed through the vines and weeds that have covered them for decades. Our children never want to see another old house.

Our searches were not because we were bored. In 1990 we built 560 acres of catfish ponds; in 1991 we built our modern 30,000+ bale cotton gin; in 1992 we built another cotton gin in Loxley, Alabama; in 1993 we moved into an apartment and restored our raised plantation home; in 1994 we purchased the remainder of Frogmore Plantation; and in 1996 reconstructed the raised kitchen adjacent to our home. We were ready to rest and definitely did not want to start another project. We just wanted to sit on our back porch and view the cotton fields, but it would be nice to put a few of the cabins back that used to sit besides the field. We had a vision of a bed and breakfast in our retirement years since we enjoy visiting with people from other locations.

A surprise visit from my mother and her husband, Carl, changed our dreams into action. It was March 21, 1997, our wedding anniversary, and they drove to hand us an anniversary card. Mother is always thoughtful, and I was expecting money for a quiet dinner. Instead, she brought the deed to three antebellum structures we had mentioned to them, along with a check to have them moved to Frogmore. Buddy has stated many times this was the most expensive anniversary gift he has ever received. We ended up paying for thirteen more antebellum buildings.

All of the buildings were in despicable repair. After carefully surveying the amount of deterioration and documenting the chimney construction, Buddy, along with a crew, cleaned

the sites, cleared the mounds of junk or hay from the buildings and braced them for moving. Upon arrival of the first few buildings, the nearby tourism leaders repeatedly visited us asking that we consider opening for tours. That idea had never entered our minds.

By midsummer we had four cabins secured and just needed two more to have one of the original slave rows back in tact. While out canvassing the Lorman, Mississippi, area, Buddy met Mike Piazza whose father and uncle had purchased an antebellum steam gin in the early 1930s and ran it until 1948. Also Mike's family had one original log cabin still on the premises but had just sold it to the owner of Ralph & Kacoo's. The steam gin had been inherited by Mike's cousins, and the log cabin had been sold. These appeared out of our reach, not only financially, but legally.

I had been active as a hostess in the Natchez spring pilgrimage and knew first hand the interest of the tourists in cotton and history of the area. They weren't just interested in antique furniture and big houses. I tinkered with the calculator and estimated the revenue from minimum visitors. I felt we could make a tourism venture pay. I just had no idea how much work would be involved.

We called Mike's cousins, and we rode a four-wheeler through the woods to find not only an original 1884 Munger steam gin with all the wooden machinery intact, but also a rare seed cotton storage house nearby. If you have ever watched a boy open his favorite Christmas present, then you know the look I saw on Buddy's face as he opened the door to that old gin. After several days of negotiations, we purchased both buildings. Also Mike called to tell us that he had convinced the purchasers of the log cabin to sell it to us so that it would be restored with the gin.

We had dismantled a tremendous 1840s barn and moved a two-story corn crib intact, dismantled tumbling porches, and torn down nine chimneys, carefully cleaning and stacking the brick, but this gin would be the most challenging yet. The building was surrounded by trees since it has been dormant for fifty years; so, we sent bulldozers to clear the immediate area and to clean a path to the nearest blacktop road. The first floor and the roof had to be dismantled in order to lower the second floor down with hydraulic jacks so that it could be moved in tact. The height should just clear the bridge.

Finally by October, during our cotton harvest and ginning operation which runs 24 hours a day, we were ready to move the buildings. Mississippi highway patrols do not offer the same service and protection that Louisiana does, and we were concerned about liability since our men had their own caravan stopping traffic heading 60 miles south to Natchez. A Louisiana State trooper was helpful and met us outside of Natchez to escort us across the bridge. He arranged for both lanes of the bridge to be closed. The moving truck eased onto the bridge but could go no further. One side of the building was two inches taller than the clearance. Somehow the building had shifted in transit. After 45 minutes of blocking traffic, Buddy and I arrived. He quickly released air from the tires on the high side and put 2x4s under the low side to re-shift the load which then carefully crossed the bridge.

Buddy spent a wet winter with a crew restoring buildings and locating craftsmen to

replace missing hand-forged hardware while I researched extensively about cotton, cotton gins, slave culture, gospel music, and primitive antiques. We also searched for furnishings and tools for the cabins, barn, commissary, planter's office, overseer's dogtrot, and smokehouse. The items we couldn't find, Mother found from Illinois to Dallas. We even found artificial loins in Ohio to hang in the smokehouse. I wrote the text for the tour and located a professional video firm to film living history re-enactments which we staged. We also filmed footage of the farming and ginning process so that the visitors could still see and understand cotton in our off season.

I'm an ex-school teacher, and I wanted the tour to be educational and comprehensive. When tourists leave Frogmore, they have experienced life as a pioneer clearing a plantation in the 1790s; they have been a cotton ginner in the 1800s; they have walked in the shoes of a slave who was freed to become a sharecropper. Finally, they have learned modern day agriculture, computerized cotton ginning, and diverse products from cotton and cottonseed.

Like our visitors, we, too, have learned. Tourism is unlike restoring a home whose beauty is revealed upon completion or planting a crop whose fruits can be harvested in six months; tourism takes time, diligence, creativity, and cooperation. Our family and employees assists us with the tours. One last, but best lesson we have learned: if the product is there, the people will come.

PROMOTING TOURISM STIMULATES NEW BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES

Kathy Terracina

Thibodaux Chamber of Commerce

Several years ago in its infinite wisdom, the Board of Directors of the Thibodaux Chamber of Commerce, realized the positive impact that tourism fosters upon economic and community development. The mission and purpose of chambers of commerce is the promotion and development of business and industry. In 1994 it was decided that because our city and the surrounding area is so rich in history and culture, promotion of tourism would be a natural enhancement to our Chamber's program of work and a benefit to our business community.

At that time, it was decided to provide a Visitor's Center through the Thibodaux Chamber of Commerce Office, in cooperation with city government and other non-profit organizations. Because funding is limited to membership investments, the Chamber has had to appeal to the community for support of the center.

The Chamber office with a staff of two full-time and one part-time contract employee, has become a one-stop information center for business, history, culture and tourists. The staff has trained numerous volunteers who provide countless hours of service to the Visitors Center, and boasts of its Chamber Ambassadors who are truly ambassadors to the city, through their volunteer involvement.

As part of its commitment to tourism, the Thibodaux Chamber of Commerce recently produced its first annual *Membership Directory and Visitors Guide*. The publication will be produced annually and once again, combines business with pleasure! The directory lists not only business information, but it also contains information related to tourism including attractions, hotels, motels, bed and breakfast locations, restaurants, relocation information,

city information, history and more. Approximately 8,000 copies of the directory have been distributed around the country since July 1, 1999.

Thibodeauxville Fall Festival is a product of the Thibodaux Chamber of Commerce. Its purpose is to promote both tourism and business. Held on the streets of the downtown area in Thibodaux, the festival has doubled in vendors and participants in the past two years. Extensive advertising efforts, primarily through public service announcements, television appearances and any free media available, throughout the state has attracted vendors and shoppers from the entire southeast including the state of Louisiana, parts of Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, Georgia, Alabama and this year, Colorado. The festival has grown from a thirteen-booth arts and crafts show, to a festival of 120 vendors of food, arts, crafts, music, dance teams, and hands-on learning opportunities for thousands of locals and visitors.

Although the festival is a one-day event, vendors and participants from out of town spend the night in our motels, eat food in our restaurants, shop in our shops and then later ... come back for more Thibodaux because there is much too much to see and do during a one-day event. More importantly, Thibodeauxville reminds our local residents of all of the treasures that can be found in our town.

With virtually no budget for promotions, the Chamber uses revenue from Thibodeauxville to continue its efforts in the promotion of tourism. The Chamber has developed a very close working relationship with city government in accomplishing mutual goals. The production of city brochures is funded through the city, produced and distributed through the Chamber of Commerce.

A recent endeavor with the City is the process of application to the Main Street Program, another mutual goal to increase both economic prosperity and tourism.

Through our monthly *Chamber Insights* (distribution 7,000) the Chamber works to

promote a self-awareness program to all our residents what there is to see, to do, and to appreciate in our fine city.

P.S. Thibodeauxville is the founding name of the city of Thibodaux dating back to the 1830s.

SHARING HOME AND HERITAGE RESULTS IN GROWTH

Cheryl McCarty

Festival Ray*La*Ne

Growing up in Louisiana, there are a lot of things that we take for granted. Things like there will always be a bowl of gumbo around the corner... there will be a party happening down the street at a neighbor's house... your family will meet at grandma's for Sunday dinner and hot, boiling crawfish is as close as the effort to catch them in the local rice field. Those of you that grew up here know exactly what I'm talking about. And if you never moved away, you may never appreciate exactly what we have to share in each of our little communities we call home.

The '80s found Louisiana's economy suffering due to the infamous oil bust, so circumstances mandated that I move away from Louisiana in 1987, living out of state for almost eight years during my husband's military career. The stark reality of what I'd left came thundering back to me when I couldn't run over to the grocery store to get a bag of Community Coffee. The simplicity of that one thing made me realize my home and heritage was something I was very proud of. All during the years I lived away from Louisiana, when friends learned of my origins, they always commented on stories they'd heard about the lifestyles we led here in our corner of the world and how lucky we must be to be able to enjoy life in the manner in which they'd heard. Constant reinforcement of how Louisiana was THE place to visit for enjoyable experiences. And then I came back to Louisiana and found that the entire state had realized what a treasury of attractions we had to offer and had

begun an earnest campaign to make tourism one of the leading industries in Louisiana. Jumping right back into things in Rayne (jumping is appropriate since Rayne is known as the Frog Capital of the World) I, in the five years that I've been back, have tried to find ways to introduce tourists to the charm of Rayne. Now, when you live in a community that is fortunate to have leaders and resources as we have in Rayne, the job of bringing tourists into Rayne becomes quite easy. For those of you that aren't aware, Rayne is also known as Louisiana's City of Murals. Our mayor, Jim Petitjean, has been instrumental in creating an environment that is conducive to pleasant visits to our city. So much so, that he, too, was awarded a rural tourism success award two years ago for his work in promoting tourism in Rayne. We have a community that is very proactive in promoting tourism and I've just been fortunate to find myself in the right place at the right time.

I am involved in a local business women's group, who hosts the annual Golden Frog Festival pageant which honors our golden citizens, the people who form the foundation of a strong, family-oriented community. My sorority gets down and dirty each year by picking up trash along the streets in anticipation of the Cleanest City Contest of which the City of Rayne has won numerous times over the years. Then we dress up and host the Annual Frog Festival Queen's Ball which draws hundreds of people and sets the stage for the annual Frog Festival. The Frog Festival is

hosted by the Chamber of Commerce and brings thousands of people into the community of Rayne. Being seated on the Rayne Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has afforded me the opportunity to get into a multitude of projects all designed to promote Rayne and its heritage. The anniversary celebration of FrancoFete gave me the opportunity to design and create specific activities that showcased our French heritage as well as being able to work on committees that labored throughout the year to keep tourists coming back for more. And just recently, we've started working on revitalizing our downtown area with a Christmas business merchant promotion dubbed "Main Street Magic" that is designed to bring tourists and reintroduce our own citizens to the glitter of our community.

I try to involve my business dealings with state, national, and international organizations that promote tourism. As a district board member of the Louisiana Association of Fairs and Festivals, I represent festival members in Southwest Louisiana and talk with them about tourism in their communities and the impact of revenues generated by their events. We share ideas and success stories and yes, even horror stories. One of the areas I've concentrated on gathering information is in the area of interactive children's entertainment. Aspects of finding and funding these types of child- and family- oriented entertainment has been the focal point of many of my endeavors in recent years. Quality family entertainment is an area that seems to be garnering a lot of interest, and I try to share research I've pulled together with other events that want to focus on more family activities through workshops and book publications. I'm currently serving as President of the Louisiana Festival and Events Association and hope to uphold the integrity and standards of businesses that service the special events and tourism industry. I spend a great deal of time attending conventions across the country to learn of the latest in festivals and events, and I try to implement many of these ideas in the activities that wind their way throughout my community. As a speaker at international events conferences, many of my

presentations revolve around the unique activities that I know of firsthand. I am always amazed at the number of people who are very knowledgeable about Louisiana's attractions and find many have spent their tourism dollars in Louisiana when traveling. I can only hope that I have contributed in some small way to promoting what we all know... that Louisiana is a great state and my hometown of Rayne is a magical place.

And in my spare time, I've gone out, gathered up some friends and started a spring festival to compliment the fall Frog Festival. Festival Ray*la*ne was born out of the desire to share the charm of Rayne and to celebrate the heritage of my community. I sought the opportunity to be more proactive in the arts and arts education. In doing so I embraced the directive set forth by the Louisiana Division of the Arts which asks that we work to increase the number of Louisiana citizens and visitors participating in and experiencing arts activities. It also tells us to encourage collaborations between the state's arts and educational communities. I hope to be able to perpetuate their efforts by funding grants and awards to teachers who want to promote arts in their classrooms. Students at Rayne High have already enjoyed funding for a storytelling workshop that helped drama students learn to tell and preserve stories of our heritage that they, in turn, share with elementary students and tourists visiting area festivals. Each year, the Ray*la*ne Foundation, which is funded by Festival Ray*la*ne, presents a cash scholarship to graduating seniors who actively participate in the promotion of our culture, heritage, and community.

Throughout all of my endeavors, I've grown closer to many of the people and businesses in Rayne. We've given non-profit and civic organizations the opportunity to raise funds. We've done business in Rayne, from the artists that designed our poster to the supplies of the promotional materials to the merchants that help sponsor our events. We've given our community the opportunity to host visitors from all over the surrounding area, which in

turn increases retail sales and tax revenue for our city. We've made tremendous contacts, networked with some of the leaders in special events promotion and made some lifelong friends. But above all, we've had FUN!

Festivals in Louisiana are so much more than a party. They are an entire community's

attempt to stay grounded. We live our lives at such a fast pace that we have needed to create events that remind us to slow down and celebrate where we came from and to thank all of those before us that had the foresight and resilience to salvage and nurture our unique heritage. And, of course, we invite all of our friends to join us and come pass a good time!

SPECIAL EVENT BECOMES UNIQUE ATTRACTION

Claude O'Bryan

Uncle Earl's Hog Dog Trials

In 1995, in conjunction with the Centennial Celebration of Earl K. Long, we organized and founded "Uncle Earl's Hog Dog Trials." Uncle Earl was an avid hog hunter. This Centennial celebration event was such a success that I enlisted assistance from the Bayed Solid magazine, Bill and Jimmy Griffin, Jr., who are fifth generation hog hunters, to make this an annual event in Winnfield. In the beginning there was some doubts among folks in Winnfield but the idea and the event exploded, and we are now making plans for the Sixth Annual "Uncle Earl's Hog Dog Trials".

Hog dog fans from across the United States and Canada have participated, bringing around 6,000 visitors to Winnfield. This event has progressed from a weekend to a four-day event that is held the fourth weekend of March yearly. The Hog Dog Trials have continued to grow and competition seems to expand in each class division and now is billed as the "World's Largest Hog Dog Trials" and has become the "Super Bowl" of Hog Dog Baying. This event has brought in a \$50,000 impact on Winnfield, Winn Parish, and surrounding areas.

Hog hunting is a tradition in Winn Parish and a lot of times was not done for the fun of it but rather to put meat on the table for their families. Hog hunting is part of the heritage of Winn Parish and it shouldn't be forgotten or overlooked. We have families who have been hunting hogs on the same land for generations.

We initiated a yearly display at the Louisiana Political Museum for our many visitors that come during the trials. The Winn Hog Hunters Association entices visitors to the museum grounds, there we build a smoke house and try to keep the fires burning and the meat smoking during the days of the trials. Of course, the wild boar in a pen helps to bring visitors inside the museum quickly.

This is a story of shared success, because as Winn Hog Hunters are a non-profit organization, the trials have a domino effect in Winn Parish. The Sons of the Confederate handle and take the proceeds of the gated during the trials; the museum collects the profits from the T-shirt sales that are handled by them; and the Winn Riding Club mans the concession booth during the baying competition at the fairgrounds. But, most importantly we through the success of "Uncle Earl's Hog Dog Trials", have been able to establish a scholarship fund for our youth. Last year we raised over \$10,000 dollars.

The success of "Uncle Earl's Annual Hog Dog Trials", is the result of close knit teamwork...Jimmy Young of Bayed Solid magazine (producer of the event), Bill and Jimmy Griffin, Jr. of the Winn Hog Hunters Association, the City of Winnfield, the Winn Parish Chamber of Commerce, citizens of Winnfield, Winn parish, and myself.

LOUISIANA RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS STORIES — 1991-1999

1991

The Old Lecompte School House, Ann Johnson - Lecompte
Small Business Development Center, Northeast Louisiana University, Paul Dunn - Monroe
Ponchatoula: America's Antique City, Charlene Daniels - Ponchatoula
The Piney Hills Regional Association, Sue Edmunds, Ruston Lincoln Parish Convention and
Visitors Bureau - Ruston
Mayor Greg Marcantel, City of Jennings - Jennings
McGee's Landing, Mark Allemond - Henderson

1992

Sabine River Authority, Linda Curtis-Sparks - Many
Pack and Paddle, Inc., Joan Williams - Lafayette
West Baton Rouge Museum, Karen Babb - Port Allen
Southwest Louisiana Marketing Consortium, Shelley Johnson - Lake Charles
Claiborne Parish's Handmade/Homegrown Festival, Lubertha Powell - Homer
CoCo Marina, Johnny Glover - Cocodrie

1993

Plantation Pecan and Gift Co., Buddy and Carol Lee Miller - Waterproof
RV River Charters, Inc., E.G. Conrad, Jr. - New Orleans
Loyd Hall Plantation, Anne Fitzgerald - Cheneyville
Constable Dale G. Nix - Mooringsport
Sue and Harry Hebert, City of Plaquemine - Plaquemine
Southwest Louisiana Zydeco Music Festival, Wilbert Guillory - Opelousas

1994

Jean Lafitte Tourism Commission, Nancy Ting - Lafitte
Global Wildlife Center, Paula Finley - Folsom
Rochelle Michaud Dugas, Abbeville Main Street - Abbeville
The Nature Conservancy's Little Pecan Island Preserve, Allen May - Little Pecan Island
Mayor John Joseph, City of Opelousas - Opelousas
Sue Norman - Minden

1995

St. Francisville Overnight Association, Madeline Neville - St. Francisville
Virgie Ott, City of Gretna - Gretna
Kay LaFrance, Columbia Downtown Projects - Columbia
Ed Kelley, Cameron Parish Tourist Commission - Cameron
Doorway to Louisiana, Inc., Paul Rosenzweig - Lake Providence
River Road Plantation Parade Association, Zeb Mayhew, Jr. - Vacherie

1996

River Road African American Museum and Gallery, Kathe Hambrick - Gonzales
Southern Seaplane, Inc., Lyle and Rhonda Panepinto - Belle Chasse
Tammany Trace, Kevin Davis - Slidell
Louisiana Nursery Festival, Clyde Holloway - Forest Hill
City of St. Martinville, Mayor Eric Martin - St. Martinville
Baldwin's Guide to the Inns of the Deep South, Winnie and Jack Baldwin - Bernice

1997

Merryville Historical Society, Keitha C. Donnelly - Merryville
M. Leroy Harvey, Jr. - Jackson
Richard Seale - Natchitoches
Mayor Jim P. Petitjean, City of Rayne - Rayne
Wildlife Gardens, James and Betty Provost - Gibson
Laura: A Creole Plantation, Norman Marmillion - Vacherie
Lt. Governor's Certificate of Appreciation for Contributions to Nature-Based Tourism - Annie Miller

1998

Carolyn Phillips - Winnfield
Alligator Bayou Tours & Bluff Swamp Wildlife Refuge, Frank Bonifay and Jim Ragland
Frederic Hoogland - Ruston
Kay Radlauer - Baton Rouge
St. Augustine Historical Society, Terrel Delphin, President
Mayor W. Richard Zuber - Jonesboro

1999

Chef John D. Folse - Donaldsonville
Eugenia E. Robbins - St. Joseph
Buddy and Lynette Tanner - Frogmore
Thibodaux Chamber of Commerce - Thibodaux
Cheryl McCarty - Rayne
Claude O'Bryan - Winnfield