

# TOURISM MARKETING TODAY

The Official Newsletter of the Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations

September 2013

## Online Retailers Rebuked as State Lawmakers Send Important Message

The primary association for state legislatures is urging states to consider legislation that would require online travel companies to collect and remit sales tax and hotel occupancy taxes on the full retail price paid by customers, and not pay tax only on the wholesale rate negotiated with hotels.

As reported by Bloomberg BNA, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) committee studied the issue and unanimously resolved at its meeting in August that states should require these companies to publically and explicitly display charges and resort fees leading to the final price to the user, and should also require that taxes, fees and service charges be separately stated instead of bundling them together. The NCSL is made up of elected officials from throughout the country.

In Florida, the State House of Representatives has twice approved legislation (in 2010 and 2011) that would have taken the reverse route, instead exempting millions of dollars of sales and Tourist Development Taxes. Each time, the bill died in the Senate.

In summer 2012 in a case brought by several Florida counties, the First District Court of Appeal chose in a 2-3 ruling to exempt internet retailers from collecting and remitting the tax. The counties are expected to appeal the case to the Florida Supreme Court.

The recommendation by the NCSL sends an important signal to elected officials in every state that laws need to be clarified to ensure that hotels are not placed at a competitive disadvantage because identical transactions by online companies now have a preferred tax treatment.

## Governor Promotes Tourism During Rowing Championships in Sarasota

Governor Rick Scott addressed a crowd of local officials and leaders and representatives from the rowing community at Nathan Benderson Park in Sarasota, Fla., on August 15. During an eight-minute speech to welcome participants and spectators to the U.S. Masters Rowing Championships, held Aug. 15-18, the governor noted Florida's increase in tourism. Scott said hosting events such as the rowing championships are needed to make Florida the No. 1 tourism destination in the world. The rowing facility at Benderson Park is the leading candidate for hosting the 2017 World Rowing Championships.



Governor Rick Scott (left) at the U.S. Masters Rowing Championships in Sarasota, Fla.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



## Preparing for Session 2014: Doing Our 'Homework' to Get the Job Done for Tourism

by Robert Skrob, CPA

My son and daughter are both in high school. It's hard to imagine. When I started working with FADMO (or FACVB as it was known then) in January 2001, they were just 6 and 2 years old.

Whether we like it or not, time continues to march ahead. This year's county budgeting process has been one of the most difficult I can remember. Facing deficits, county governments have been looking to Tourist Development Taxes to fill the gaps. While in most cases we've been able to help tourism leaders come out relatively unscathed, it has been a challenging year.

We'll discuss this at the FADMO annual meeting in beautiful Panama City Beach, Fla., including what messages

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## DIRECT YOUR DESTINATION TO HIGH PERFORMANCE

### 2013 Annual Meeting | October 16-18, 2013

#### WEDNESDAY | OCTOBER 16, 2013

- 2 p.m. - 5 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting
- 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. Registration Desk Open
- 5 p.m. - 6 p.m. Welcome Reception Sponsored by VISIT FLORIDA



#### THURSDAY | OCTOBER 17, 2013

- 7:30 a.m. Registration Desk Open
- 8 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. DMO CEOs Have to Have a Dream  
*Dave Nolan, Horizon Hospitality Associates Inc.*
- 9:45 a.m. - 12 noon How to Boost DMO Performance, Increase Customers and Maximize Market Share  
*Marshall Murdaugh, Marshall Murdaugh Marketing*
- 12 noon - 1 p.m. Networking Luncheon
- 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. Sellers of Travel – Division of Consumer Services Update  
*Paul Pagano, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*
- 2:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Don't Tell Me, Show Me  
*Tim Connor, Connor Resource Group*
- 6 p.m. - 10 p.m. **Miles Evening Event**



#### FRIDAY | OCTOBER 18, 2013

- 8 a.m. - 9 a.m. Continental Breakfast
- 9 a.m. - 12 noon Destination Marketing Industry Discussion

**Wyndham Baypoint Resort**  
4114 Jan Cooley Drive  
Panama City Beach, FL 32408  
850/236-6000

**Reservations:** Call 866/269-9165 and mention Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations before Friday, Sept. 27, 2013, to ensure rate and availability. FADMO rates begin at \$109 per night.

Visit [www.FADMO.org](http://www.FADMO.org) to download a meeting brochure and to register.



*Samantha and Robert W. Skrob on the first day of school 2014; Samantha is a senior, and Robert is a freshman at Leon High School. (Robert is on crutches because he broke his leg at the beginning of August, a stress fracture of the tibia from running seven miles up a mountain during pre-season camp for the Leon High Cross Country Team. The doctor prescribed crutches and an immobilizer for two to four weeks.)*

worked, what didn't seem to make much difference and the results of everyone's efforts. I know you'll want to be there for that discussion as well as for the powerhouse training curriculum we have assembled to help you create an organization that effectively attracts customers to your community.

Talk about time marching on, Legislative Session 2014 begins this month when Committee Weeks start the week of Sept. 23. Legislators are already filing bills. We expect a long, hard session this year. A huge thank you to everyone who is making a special point to invite your legislators to your office, give them a tour and brief them on what you do to create jobs in your county. I'm happy to help you schedule more of these events, and Mat Forrest is available if you need assistance with getting hold of anyone in particular.

Just as we are getting our "war footing" to prepare for the 2014 Legislative Session, my kids are preparing for a lot of work during school. Coincidentally, school ends just a few weeks after the session ends on May 1. Although Mat Forrest and I won't be doing AP Calculus like my daughter or recovering from a broken leg like my son, we'll be doing our "homework" to ensure the job gets done for you, for the businesses in your community and for the people your industry employs.

I'll see you at the Governor's Conference!



# Quick Trips!

## Music and Lobsters Take Center Stage in Panama City Beach

Panama City Beach is showcasing three major events in September. First up is a classical performance of classic rock, as the Panama City POPS Orchestra takes the stage in the Aaron Bessant Park Amphitheater on Sept. 14 to back up Windborne's "Music of the Eagles," a tribute to the Eagles. Then, Sept. 19-22, Schooners is holding its Lobster Festival



and Tournament. Finally, Sept. 26-28, the Gulf Coast Jam in Frank Brown Park will have nightly headliners like Toby Keith, Trace Adkins and the Charlie Daniels Band. [www.VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://www.VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)

## Collier County Celebrates Hispanic Artists

Collier County Museums invites locals and visitors to experience its compelling new art exhibit entitled Journey of the Hispanic Artist in America, from Sept. 3 to Oct. 21, at the Naples Depot Museum. This exhibit will feature a collection



of works by contemporary Hispanic artists and highlight personal journeys from their home countries of Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru to Southwest Florida. To kick off the exhibit, the museum will host a free

opening reception with live music from 6 to 8 p.m. on Sept. 6. [www.CollierMuseums.com](http://www.CollierMuseums.com); [www.ParadiseCoast.com](http://www.ParadiseCoast.com)

## Hilton Sandestin Donates Funds to Wounded Warriors

Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa in Destin, Fla., donated \$4,352 to local Emerald Coast Wounded Warriors on July 23, 2013, from efforts to raise funds during the Big Dig world record attempt during Independence Day weekend. Unfortunately, the Big Dig was canceled due to inclement weather, but Hilton Sandestin Beach still matched all donations and profits from the Big Dig Daiquiri and T-shirt sales over the weekend. The Big Dig to break the world record for most people buried in the sand simultaneously is being rescheduled for spring 2014. [www.EmeraldCoastFL.com](http://www.EmeraldCoastFL.com)



*Richard Ross, HSB VP of marketing and sales; Gary Brielmayer, HSB general manager; Rob Vickers, ECWW co-founder; Aaron Hale, ECWW member/warrior; Ken Gestring, ECWW co-founder; Mike Petrucci, ECWW board of directors; Megan Harrison, HSB marketing manager; and Jackson Cherry, HSB director of operations*

## Florida's Space Coast Is in the Game

Independent developer Firebrand Games has released Solar Flux HD, a puzzle game for the iPad that tasks players to explore the universe while saving it from imminent extinction. The Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex is joining with the Space



Coast Office of Tourism to cross promote this intergalactic puzzle game. Details are being worked out for a national contest, offering players of Solar Flux a chance to win an all expense paid trip to the Space Coast and possibly an opportunity to help design additional levels of the game. [www.VisitSpaceCoast.com](http://www.VisitSpaceCoast.com)

## Hernando County Tourism Bureau Opens Visitor Center

The Hernando County Tourism Bureau is proud to announce the opening of its new Visitor Information Center at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park. With some 265,000 visitors to the park this year, the tourism bureau's efforts to reach more visitors will be greatly enhanced with the new location. The new Visitor Center will be staffed by Ruby Turner, a long-time resident of Weeki Wachee and former employee of the park. [www.NaturallyHernando.org](http://www.NaturallyHernando.org)



# Happy Birthdelay to

September 13  
**Roland Loog**  
Alachua County TDC

September 21  
**William Talbert**  
Greater Miami CVB



Enclosed is your copy of Tourism Marketing Today.  
A monthly publication of the



1390 Timberlane Road  
Tallahassee, FL 32312

## *"Bringing more customers to Florida"*

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### Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations



The FADMO serves as the single unifying voice for all of Florida's DMOs, providing continuing insight and direction as we face an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace. Organized in 1996, the FADMO strives to increase the overall effectiveness of Florida DMOs' destination marketing efforts through industry education, legislative outreach, enhancing professionalism and facilitating communication.

### Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations

The Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations represents the 54 official county DMOs that promote their communities throughout the world. These tourism promotion activities help to attract 91.4 million visitors to Florida, generating \$71.8 billion in spending and 1,058,000 jobs. These activities are made possible by Tourist Development Taxes provided by Florida Statutes Section 125.0104.