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Association Management Solutions

State B&B Associations - - Evolving and Strengthening

by Donna Powell

The Bed & Breakfast industry is thriving in the United States. Most innkeepers reported a strong increase in occupancy rates throughout the spring/summer/fall seasons in 2008 as the traveling public discovered the value of the B&B experience. Value is measured as the amount of money spent versus the return of enjoyment for good food; clean and comfortable accommodations; concierge services; and memories to last and share.

State associations are vital to sustaining a healthy B&B industry. These associations evolved from small groups of innkeepers joining together to set standards, market their B&B's and interact socially. Today associations are multi-faceted and provide information and guidance on many issues.

- Innkeeping is becoming a very appealing career, and a state association is usually the first responder when a person has a question about opening a B&B. The association serves as a resource for information about the rules and regulations for operating a B&B and can save a potential innkeeper time and money as they prepare to open a business.
- A state association is concerned about maintaining quality in the industry. State associations work to assure quality standards by accepting members that have passed quality inspections or evaluations.
- A state association can fill the role of mediator when there is a complaint about a member B&B/Inn by listening to both sides of the story and affecting a solution or compromise.
- A state association realizes that education is an ongoing and exceptionally important component of a successful state B&B association. The business of innkeeping is becoming more complex and time consuming. Sharing knowledge and experiences with members through newsletters and blogs keeps innkeepers informed and current. State associations plan and implement conferences that provide educational opportunities for innkeepers as well as a time to relax, interact with other innkeepers, and rejuvenate.
- A state association has the membership numbers needed to affect cooperative advertising. Various marketing opportunities are presented to innkeepers daily. Maintaining a competitive edge within a budget can be difficult, but cooperative advertising opportunities (strength in numbers) provide the association a platform for negotiation. As president of ESBBA, my dream was to have videos of quality tourist attractions made for each of the 11 tourist regions in New York State and to use the videos for regional pages on www.esbba.com. This was an awesome undertaking time-wise and money-wise for ESBBA. We were able to negotiate a very reasonable price with a professional videographer. It will be a Win-Win situation for him and ESBBA members. The

members have bought sponsorship rights and will be advertised on the regional Web site pages, and the videographer has been introduced to members and has the potential to make a video of their B&B properties in the future. An engaged state association will seek out opportunities for marketing by establishing strategic alliances. Empire State Bed and Breakfast Association worked with Parks & Trails New York to write a grant for a Bicyclists Welcome! Project. Bicycling is the second most popular outdoor activity, bird watching is first. The funds received will establish an interactive Web site for bicyclists showing 100 trails in New York State and ESBBA B&Bs and a print travel map showing the trails and members that will be inserted in the ESBBA directory.

As we move forward in these new times, leaders in the B&B industry must stretch for creative and innovative ways to keep our industry moving forward, sharing ideas and systems that will unite and strengthen us as a whole. Dedicated leadership with vision and commitment will continue to shape the future of state associations.

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Bio: Donna is president of DP Association Management Solutions (DPAMS). DPAMS is a B&B specific business that handles association management, membership functions and recordkeeping. Donna served on the board of directors for Empire State Bed and Breakfast Association for eight years (four years as membership chair and four years as president). She and her husband, Rick, have operated Rufus Tanner House in Pine City, New York for 10 years.