On January 15, 2014 Historic Tours of America, in conjunction with our close industry partners, held our first annual Season Kick Off Party in Mallory Square. Over 150 guests were in attendance and it was a successful first annual event. Invitations were sent out city wide to a variety of concierge personnel, sales representatives, hotel general managers, etc. to thank them for being our community partners. We look forward to another year of making vacations better for all our visitors.

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Remembering the Old

by Chris Belland, CEO of Historic Tours of America

Because Historic Tours of America is spread geographically over pretty much the whole country and because we have something like one thousand CAST members serving over two million guests each year, you can be sure there is always something happening in our little part of the world.

Remembering Our History

Everybody knows what the Fourth of July is. We all know that the Fourth of July is Independence Day. As well, we all have some idea about the importance of the Boston Tea Party but, really, how many of you know when it actually occurred? It was on December 16th, 1773. The Boston Tea Party was inarguably, “The single most important event leading up to the American Revolution.” In fact, the Boston Tea Party is one event in American history that is literally taught worldwide. It still resonates in today’s world and has been more than a subtle influence over such initiatives as the Arab Spring or, even more recently, the revolt in the Ukraine.

Simply, the Boston Tea Party represents an iconic moment in the great experiment of the United States of America that defined a people’s struggle for freedom. While it now may belong to the world and may have happened anywhere in pre-Revolutionary War America, it happened in the colony of Massachusetts at Boston.

The Boston Tea Party was the first organized act of rebellion against the Crown. King George’s response was so harsh that, within sixteen months, the “shot heard round the world” was fired at Lexington and Concord on April 19th, 1775 and America and Great Britain were at war.

We are honored to be custodians of the new attraction, the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum. Part of what our CAST does there is a re-enactment of December 16th whereby the meeting is held at Old South Meeting House and, upon Sam Adams’ signal of, “There is nothing more we can do to save the country”, the angry “mob” makes its way down to Griffin’s Wharf where the tea is once again symbolically destroyed as a remembrance of the bravery of our forefathers.

This past December 16th was a grand celebration that was marked by outgoing Mayor Thomas Menino’s final speech to the public. It is the vision of Historic Tours of America, and especially the CAST of the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, to elevate the date of December 16th to equal status of July 4th for, had there been no Boston Tea Party, there may never have been a Declaration of Independence. Huzzah!

Remembering Our Partners

Taking a cue from our operation in St. Augustine, Key West held its first annual Industry Appreciation Celebration in Mallory Square. Monica Munoz, the editor of this very newsletter, took the lead and pulled off what was roundly acknowledged as the party of the year on January 15th.

The object here was not to do business but to acknowledge the business that makes Key West work: tourism. The entire area of Mallory Square was closed off in front of the Key West Aquarium and our industry partners participated to showcase their businesses as well. The participating partners were: Half Shell Raw Bar, Turtle Kraals, Rum Barrel, Island Dogs, Charlie Mac’s, Green Parrot, Red Fish Blue Fish, Kermit’s Key West Key Lime Shoppe, Rick’s Bar, Papa’s Pilar Rum, Fury Water Sports, El Meson de Pepe, Key West Rum Distillery, Key West Butterfly & Nature Conservatory, Yankee Freedom III and Cupcake Sushi. The restaurants provided a unique assortment of foods including everything from ceviche, grilled buffalo shrimp, pork belly sliders, mini lobster rolls, pork tenderloin, beef tenderloin, crab cakes and Key Lime Pie on a stick. We even had the house band from Mark Rossi’s Rick’s Bar, the Durtbags, who were way better than their name might lead you to believe. There was also plenty of Key West fuel for a good time, including beer, wine and offerings from the two new rum distilleries opening here in Key West: Pilar and Key West Rum Distillery.

The event attracted those in the industry who hardly ever get to see each other in an atmosphere such as was provided. We had folks from the attractions industry, lodging and the restaurants. It was a great event for friends connected by what we do, to get together and have a good time. We intend to do this every year from now on, just before our season starts in January. See you there?

Remembering Marina

Not everything that has happened at Historic Tours of America has been a joyful occasion. On November 9th we lost our good friend and partner, Marina Mosher, the wife of Moe Mosher. Marina was born in 1927, here in Key West. She met Moe who was a young Navy officer and they were married here in Key West and honeymooned in Cuba in 1954. Moe was the main barber in Key West for many years and Marina taught school. She and Moe were world travelers, taking their children and grandchildren with them to exotic places all over the world.

Without a doubt, Marina was the funniest lady I ever met. She has been the inspiration in many short stories I have written and an inspiration about how to live your life. She is missed by all who knew her. Please visit page 24 for more on this spectacular woman.
BOSTON
Holiday Happenings!
by John Welby; General Manager

On December 10th Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston held the annual Holiday Party at a new venue for the first time in over ten years, the Summer Shack. This location turned out to be the perfect place for our annual shindig as the setting was more conducive to socializing and having a good time. We were honored to have co-owner and world-renowned chef, Jasper White, serving the food himself. The food was, to put it in a single word, fantastic! After a VERY brief awards ceremony, we went on to dinner, dancing and having a great time, which I’m fairly certain everyone had. A very special “thank you” goes out to conductor Stephen Kent for supplying the DJ services and to Cheryl Desimone and Michael Chandler for putting the event together for us.

December is a very busy month in our Vendor Sales Department as our Vendor Reps are hard at work recognizing all of our loyal vendors with special “thank you” gifts and with close to 400 vendors here in Boston that is no small task. Vendor Rep Beth Cohen is currently out on maternity leave so all of that work fell on our other Vendor Rep Cathy Hutchinson. True to form, Cathy stepped up and faced the challenge head on and made sure that all of our vendors received their gifts.

By the middle of the month, Cathy did receive some more help with this task with the addition of a new Administrative Assistant position in the Sales Department filled by veteran Sales Rep Kris Fabroski. Kris will now assist the Sales Department (Advertising, Charter and Vendor) working closely with Michael Chandler, Leslie Nagy, Cathy Hutchinson and Beth Cohen.

January began with a major snow storm or as we call them around here, a Nor’easter! The City of Boston only received about a foot, but some areas got up to three feet. So, we were forced to close operations for January 2nd and 3rd. That was followed by record cold temperatures, thank you “Polar Vortex”. The weather didn’t slow us down though, as we continued to break our daily ridership goals, thanks to our ever-professional line up of sales reps and conductors.
Elsa Arruda-Ziniti must have hospitality running through her veins. She started out by scooping ice cream in Harvard Square at the age of fourteen and worked her way up through the hotel business to become manager of the Comfort Inn in Woburn, MA. She started working in the hotel business back in 1996 and has been at the Comfort Inn since 2001. When asked why she stays in the business Elsa said it is because of the daily challenges, she has a great team working with her, enjoys meeting new people, and she loves all her returning guests. And there are a lot of them due to the hotel being located near a business park and many of New England’s finest hospitals. There isn’t a time when I stop the by Comfort Inn that Elsa is not greeting guests checking in by name. She knows them all!

Elsa loves to travel in her spare time and likes to go someplace warm in the winter. If you live in Boston you appreciate sunshine this time of year. The past several years she has gone to Florida or California where she and her husband Joseph enjoy relaxing at the beach. This year they are off to Sanibel Island, FL for a much deserved vacation.

Elsa started selling Old Town Trolley Tours way back in her first hotel job and now offers her guests Old Town Trolley and many other attractions by using Trusted Tours & Attractions eTickets. She has continued using OTTT for our reputation and knows that we will take care of her guests...guaranteed! We have enjoyed a long relationship with Elsa Arruda – Ziniti and look forward to many more years partnering with her and the Comfort Inn.
Elaine “Mata Jones” Orsillo
Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston

BACKGROUND

Born into a large Italian family, I was raised in the historic town of Lexington, Massachusetts. My earliest memories were of music. In fact, it was an integral part of every family gathering. No family party at my house would be complete without good food and all of my uncles, aunts and cousins assembling around our piano singing for hours on end. So, it comes as no surprise that I developed an early love for music. My greatest joy as a child was to sit by the family stereo and play records and sing.

Attending school in such a historic town like Lexington prepared me for my future employment with Historic Torus of America. Every year from kindergarten on through 12th grade we would go on field trips to visit the historic sites in Lexington and in the surrounding towns and cities. Upon my graduation I found employment at the Legal Service Institute in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. It was a poverty law clinic to aid low income individuals with civil legal problems sponsored by Harvard University. I began to contemplate going back to school to become a paralegal when my life took an abrupt turn. I had been taking private voice lessons from a professor at New England Conservatory of Music. She convinced me to apply to La Firenze Lyrica Studio in Florence, Italy, an eight week program for aspiring young opera singers. I was accepted and traveled to Italy where I remained for the next 27 years. Jobs as an opera singer were few and far between, so I began to subsidize my income by performing all types of music from Jazz to Dance. I had a blast doing so. Performing throughout Europe and Northern Africa in clubs and theatres, I also appeared many times as a comic actress on Italian TV and films.

Q | What is your idea of perfect happiness?
A | Relaxing on a beach on the island of Sardinia with my husband.

Q | What trait do you most deplore in others?
A | Dishonesty

Q | On what occasion do you lie?
A | To not hurt someone’s feelings

Q | If there were one place you would like to live besides your current city where would it be?
A | Anywhere where there is a warm climate, sandy beaches and a sparkling sea.

Q | What three things will you always find in your refrigerator?
A | Onions, tomatoes and Parmesan cheese

CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Seven years ago I decided to return to Boston, as I wanted to be near to my mother who was now eighty four years old. My original plan was to stay in the U.S.A. for a year but I ended up meeting my husband and decided to settle down with him. I found a job but was constantly on the lookout for employment that would be more fulfilling and interesting. When I came upon a job posting on Craigslist saying performers make the best tour guides, I immediately applied and was hired. I made it through the ten week training program with the constant support and encouragement from the training staff and conductors at Old Town Trolley. I am grateful to work with an exceptional group of talented and fun individuals. I love the fact that I can en-tour-tain the visitors to the beautiful historic City of Boston.

In The Kitchen With The Professor

Mrs. Professor’s SuperBowl Taco Casserole

Around The Professor’s home, something is always cooking, for the lovely and talented Mrs. Professor is one of the great cooks of the Modern Era. Usually given to complex dishes filled with the gentle aromas of the Far East or the swirling pungent flavors of her homeland (Baltimore County, the epicenter of great cooks!), occasionally, very occasionally, she gives in to The Professor’s simple farm boy tastes and prepares a dish that carries him back in time to December 28, 1958... that dish, the ultimate in football comfort food, prepared as only Mrs. Professor can prepare it... The SuperBowl Taco Casserole!! Tell me you are not salivating at the mere sound of the words, because I can tell that The Wonderful Will and The Mighty Finn certainly are.....and you can’t wait for the recipe. You are in luck, because Mrs. Professor has agreed to share it....

Ingredients (and no skipping on quality....get the good stuff)
- 4 cups of shredded cooked chicken (no tofu chicken)
- 2 10.75oz cans of condensed Campbell’s Cream of Chicken soup (no fat free)
- 1 cup of Breakstone’s sour cream
- 1 large can of Hunt’s kitchen ready diced tomatoes with the can juice
- 1 large can of undrained green chiles
- 1 15 oz can of black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 envelope (about 1 oz) of taco seasoning mix (tbsp. for milder effect)
- 5 cups of coarsely crushed tortilla chips (recommend reduced salt, not because we care about your blood pressure or water retention....it tastes better!)
- 2 cups (about 8 oz.) of shredded cheddar cheese
- Some chopped fresh tomato & sliced green onion and chopped fresh cilantro leaves

Directions (and don’t use the microwave, do it in the oven)
1. Heat oven to 350. Lightly grease a 13 x 9 x 2 inch baking dish. Stir the chicken, soup, sour cream, tomatoes and green chiles, beans and seasoning mix into large bowl.
2. Layer half the chicken mixture, 3 cups tortilla chips and half the cheese in baking dish. Stir the chicken, soup, tomatoes and green chiles, beans and seasoning mix into large bowl. Layer with remaining chicken mixture and tortilla chips. Cover the baking dish.
3. Bake for 30 minutes. Uncover the baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.
4. Bake, uncovered, for 10 minutes or until hot and bubbling and the cheese is melted. Sprinkle with the chopped tomato, green onion and cilantro before serving, if desired.

Serve with extra sour cream, cilantro and diced tomatoes...and Sam Adams Winter Ale. Good luck and enjoy!....
-Mr. & Mrs. Professor
On December 16, 1773, the daring Sons of Liberty stormed Griffin’s Wharf and threw 340 chests of East India Company Tea into Boston Harbor. The Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum and The Old South Meeting House are proud to reenact this important moment in history every year on December 16. In 2013, the 240th Anniversary was a theatrical event told in three acts. Beginning at The Old South Meeting House, marching through the streets of Boston down to the water’s edge – the reenactment allows the spectators to follow in the footsteps of the Sons of Liberty. The dedication to this event will help us in making December 16th a nationally recognized holiday. Huzzah!
As I look around the office I see several CAST members hard at work moving towards a common goal. That goal is to provide the safest, most customer friendly, historically accurate narrated tours of Washington, DC. For those who know Washington, this is not an easy task. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication from a lot of good people to make this operation work. This is a choice that we all made but it’s not the only choice.

Every day we face a choice of going one of two ways. We can go the easy way or the hard way. The easy way is the way of procrastination. It is the way of staying in bed. It is the way of saying it doesn’t matter whether I work today or not, it doesn’t matter what time I show up at work, it doesn’t matter if I check out of here a few minutes early. The easy way is the way of saying the boss isn’t around, nobody is seeing me, it is good enough for government work. The easy way is saying take it easy, slow down, back off, don’t have a heart attack. It is saying tomorrow. It’s the way of no plans, no forethought, no enthusiasm, no diligence. That’s the easy way. It’s the soft and cuddly way. It’s the pleasurable and luxurious way. Understand something. All of us are born on the easy way. The Bible says “Foolishness is born in the heart of a child.” We’re born wanting to go the easy way. Life says, “Take a short cut. Cheat if you have to. Cut some corners. Pull some strings. Take it easy. Don’t work too hard. Where’s the fire? Slow down, man.” That’s the way our society is going today. During one of our Leadager meetings we were talking about recruitment and what potential CAST members want. The number one concern now is not what is the work, but how much vacation time do we get? It’s not what job do you want me to do, but how many benefits can I get? How much time off? How many days and weekends off? That’s where our society is today.

Currently, we are in the middle of the busiest off-season that I have ever experienced. I’m not talking about busy by ridership standards but busy making improvements to the greatest show on earth. I hope it’s OK to use that. We are improving both the on-stage and off-stage aspects of our operation. There are so many different projects going on that it would be easy to drop the ball on any one of them. The only thing holding us together is the light at the end of the tunnel.

I just finished day three of an orientation program for two conductors and three Duck captains. The last topic for today was “Hospitality Pays” and I showed the “Give Them the Pickle” video. The last of the four topics is teamwork. During class I talked about the importance of a new CAST member joining our company to embrace this concept. Right now I have a visual of what it looks like in action. It’s that teamwork that doesn’t allow us to take the easy way out. It’s that team work that doesn’t allow us to give up. It’s that team work that says, it doesn’t matter if no one is watching I’m going to do my job to the best of my ability. It’s that team work that prompts us to help one another. It’s that teamwork that allows us to provide our guests with excellent service. It’s that teamwork that drives us to work hard and never give up.

I have to go now. There’s more hard work to be done.
CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT
Eboni Lynch
Sales Representative; Washington DC

BACKGROUND
I was born and raised in Washington, DC, on January 3rd, 1989. While raising my daughter who is now eight years old, I graduated from Cardozo Senior High School in 2007. Throughout my life I lived in many places including North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

While on atour with Old Town Trolley DC, I became intrigued with the possibility of employment. I then visited their local office to submit an application. I started working here in early 2009. When I’m not working, I enjoy spending quality time with my daughter, watching movies, writing poetry, and playing video games.

Q | On what occasion do you lie?
A | To my daughter when she asks where babies come from.

Q | Who is the greatest love of your life?
A | My Daughter.

Q | What is your favorite occupation?
A | Nursing.

Q | What do you most value in your friends?
A | Loyalty.

Q | What three things will you always find in your refrigerator?
A | Sparkling water, Greek yogurt, and eggs.

It’s what I do. If you could explain this concept to him, I would appreciate it. Also, if you could remind him that my name is not Spoiled, it’s Kobe. He’s getting old, you know, so I think it’s just his memory playing tricks on him.

I miss my long Sunday walks with Daddy down St. George Street in St. Augustine. I always got lots of attention there. I wonder if my public misses me. Do you think they could move that street to Washington DC? Who should I woo to get that done?

The best part of my day is when Daddy picks me up and puts me in his bed at night. That’s when I know he loves me. I love my Daddy. He is my Forever Human.

PS: Do they make anything that will stop that horrible sound he makes when he’s sleeping? It’s so loud sometimes, it wakes me up and I need my beauty sleep. My public deserves it.
ST. AUGUSTINE

Nights of Lights
‘Twas St. Augustine’s Christmas
And all through the nights
Every creature was hoping
To see the bright lights.

And sometimes it seemed that every one of those creatures was coming to ride our Holly Jolly Trolley!

This was a record year for the Nights of Lights Trolley Tour in St. Augustine! We carried well over 55,000 (up from 47,209 last year). And not only that, because of the late Thanksgiving this year, we achieved this over just 49 operating days – almost a full week less than the 55 days we operated in 2012.

We did some things differently this year, hoping to improve the guest experience across the board. We added entertainment at the Visitor Information Center on the busier nights, and worked with the City to provide more lighting at that location as well. We added an information desk and signage to assist our guests as they arrived. We posted signs along the line, telling them how long they should expect to wait from that point. We handed out candy canes to the kids, and we also had special kid-sized glasses this year.

I could not be prouder of how our team pulled together, putting in long hours night after night, but always staying in the holiday spirit and focusing on making our guests happy. It was a pleasure to watch the tours pull back in with a trolley full of people laughing and singing carols.

St. Augustine Art Department
The St. Augustine Art Department has been in high gear over the past few months, making wide-ranging improvements to Old Town. In addition to reworking several exhibits in the St. Augustine History Museum, significant upgrades have been made that tie the whole property together thematically – a brick path that runs around the circumference of the complex, along with spaces carved out for guests to sit comfortably, enhancements to the exterior and interior of the Cracker House, and adding decorative elements, lots of charm, and a horse!

The brick path runs past the trolley slot, the three museums, Gator Bob's, the Cracker House, and the Spice and Tea Exchange, with signage and informational panels along the way. The Cracker House is equipped with a handicapped ramp, and our brand new horse is hitched up beside the Oldest Store Museum, adding another bit of authenticity to this 1908-themed space.

Our thanks to Monty Triz, Brianna Serna, Chris Williams and Ernie Poore, for their vision, their hard work and their dedication to creating a first-class atmosphere, as we continue to improve Old Town Plaza.

But wait ... there’s more! Monty and his crew have also been busy redecorating the Ghosts & Gravestones trolleys. With autumn vines snaking along the trolley’s ceiling, embroidered Victorian curtains waving eerily in the wind, a pirate treasure chest for weather ponchos, and a skull and bone steering wheel, the stage has been set for a supernatural evening of old-fashioned ghost hunting!

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old town trolley tours of st. augustine

More Photos from After the Holiday Party!
VENDOR SPOTLIGHT

Courtyard by Marriott
by Melissa Mezick; Vendor Representative

“The Newest Hotel in the Oldest City” opened its doors in July 2009. Still one of the newest hotels in St Augustine and one of the most popular, the Courtyard by Marriott has proven to be a wonderful partner with Old Town Trolleys. The front desk associates frequently use our free hotel shuttle service to pick up their guests in a timely manner and bring them to Old Town, where they start their trolley tour. And don’t forget to reserve your room early for St. Augustine’s world-famous Nights of Lights in 2014!

The Courtyard by Marriott in St. Augustine blends rich texture, captivating design and the most modern conveniences. Located near I-95, at Exit 318, this St. Augustine hotel is just one mile from Prime Outlets St. Augustine and St. Augustine Premium Outlets malls.

The hotel is centrally located within 10 minutes of many St. Augustine attractions, including Historic Downtown St. Augustine, the Fountain of Youth, Old Town Trolley, the St. Augustine Alligator Farm, World Golf Village and Flagler College. With all there is to do, your St. Augustine vacation will be one to remember.

Spacious guestrooms feature Wi-Fi & hi-speed Internet, deluxe Marriott bedding package, a microwave and refrigerator. Guests can maintain their fitness routine in the fitness center or in the outdoor heated pool, meet friends for breakfast or dinner in the Bistro, or relax by the beautiful outdoor fire pit located next to the heated swimming pool and whirlpool.

The Courtyard’s professional sales team can assist in planning weddings, meetings, reunions and more. They can be reached at (904) 547-3000.

The spacious King Studio room has everything a traveler could want, and is easy on the eyes as well.

The Courtyard’s double studio room offers guests a restful and elegant refuge for guests.

When the weather is chilly, Courtyard guests can cozy up to the fire pit.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER

Robert Makin, 7 years
Mark Little, 5 years
Amanda Pinkerton, 3 years
Kathy Burnett, 3 years
William Mays, 2 years
Terry Herbert, 2 years
Little Fredette, 1 year
Charlotte Harris, 1 year

JANUARY

Teresa Akras, 13 years
Humberto Cabanes, 6 years
William McComb, 5 years
Thomas O’Brien, 4 years
William Chambers, 3 years
Kevin Baetz, 3 years
Noble Lester, 3 years
Colleen Kulluk, 2 years
Meghan Crawford, 2 years
Davey Hairston, 2 years
Justin Register, 1 year
Charlotte Harris, 1 year

Before: This rare early 20th-century National cash register was donated to the Oldest Store Museum. It was a little worse for wear after decades of use in several stores in Palatka, Florida, and then a long time in storage. Conservationist Kathleen McCormick was delighted to get her hands on this diamond in the rough, and the results are spectacular.

After: Here it is, lovingly restored and now on display at the Oldest Store Museum. Come by and have a look at this gorgeous artifact from bygone times.

Many thanks to Brandon Wheatley (pictured) and to the rest of the staff of the St. Augustine Distillery, who hosted a recent CAST meeting. It was a fascinating sneak peek at what is sure to be a premier attraction in St. Augustine.

Welcome Aboard
Lindsay Gray
Jessica Janes
John Rodgers
Dawn Williams
Geraldine Wright
Paul Gasperini
Jennifer Johnson
Joni Smith

December - January 2014
The H.T.A. Entertainment, Service, and People (E.S.P.) Award is presented to an individual who has gone beyond their normal call of duty in their given field of endeavor. It is not often that a member of our HTA office CAST has a chance to interact with our guests on a very personal level. However, one individual did in fact accomplish such a deed. Charlotte Harris, our Director of First Impressions for Old Town Trolley of St. Augustine, during the normal course of answering the phone recognized an opportunity to go above and beyond the normal aspects of her job and serve our guests in an extraordinary way.

The guests, Cleo and Chuck Menges, shared with her on the phone that they were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary and wished to renew their vows in St. Augustine where they were married. At the time of their wedding they could only afford to spend one day in St. Augustine and now, with Chuck in remission from stage four cancer, they were back to enjoy the city with five days of sightseeing. Charlotte could have given them the number of several local churches, wedding planners, or recommended a Justice of the Peace, but no, epitomizing the highest level of the HTA philosophy to take care of our guests, she:

- Arranged to have them renew their vows at the mission chapel.
- She went with them on her lunch break to take videos and pictures of the couple during the ceremony.
- And followed up with suggestions for entertainment, touring, and dining to complete their second honeymoon.

Above is what Cleo and Chuck Menges reported in an email to Chris Belland, CEO of Historic Tours of America:

Through her determination, expertise, and dedication to our guests, Charlotte Harris, has proved to be deserving of our company’s highest recognition and is therefore awarded the Historic Tours of America E.S.P. award and a check for five hundred dollars. Congratulations Charlotte!
CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT
Stephanie McBride
Lead Historyteller, St. Augustine

BACKGROUND
I grew up in the very inner city of Indianapolis, Indiana as the oldest of five children. It was my senior year of high school when I realized what I wanted to do with my life – I wanted to teach people, but I didn’t want to be a teacher. Girl Scouts was a major influence in my life at that time; my Gold Award project involved coordinating activities at a nature center in Hoosier National Forest. During that time I realized I could make a career out of that skill set. I attended Ball State University in Muncie, IN and obtained a degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Management. This led me to take jobs in Ohio during the summers, gaining new experiences in informal education.

After college, I took a job with a company called “Nature’s Classroom” based out of Massachusetts. During my year as an Outdoor Education Instructor there, I lived in nine cities in four states, teaching youth about nature, conservation and ecology. From there I returned to my home state, working first for the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources as a park naturalist, then moving on to the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department as a recreation coordinator. I began a whole new realm of program development and facilitation when I started working at Minnetrista, an indoor-outdoor museum, first as an educator, then as the manager for the Education Department. It was during that six years that I realized my love of programs and education was a perfect fit in the museum community.

In 2012 my fiancé (now my husband) received a job offer in northeast Florida and so we moved. I had to start my career over, but knew my passion and talent was in museums. My first St. Augustine job was at a local museum as a part-time tour guide. Seeking full-time work, I found Old Town Trolley. I was hired in April of 2013, beginning as a part-time tour guide for school groups in the St. Augustine History Museum. When the Lead History Teller position became vacant in May and I was invited to take on this new position, I immediately accepted the offer. I learned the responsibilities of the position while becoming familiar with the Oldest Store Museum. In August I officially became certified to conduct the Old Jail tour. This job encourages me to use my skills and interests to move our mission of being “The Nation’s Storyteller” and facilitate great experiences with OTT’s unique brand of edutainment.

Q | What do you consider your greatest achievement?
A | Putting myself through college.

Q | What do you most value in your friends?
A | Intelligence and witty conversation.

Q | What three things will you always find in your refrigerator?
A | Potatoes, taco sauce and jalapenos.

Q | What is the trait you most deplore in others?
A | Lack of personal responsibility.

Q | Who is your favorite writer?
A | Dr. Seuss

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November
David Wright, Conductor
Michael Brown, Sales Rep.
Greg Coleman, Supporting
Nicole Bird, Historyteller
Kevin Baetz, Ghost Host
John Hunter, Golden Pickle

December
Michael Williams, Conductor
Maria Rivero, Sales Rep.
Brett Milhorn, Supporting
Michelle Fredette, Historyteller
Julie Ferry, Ghost Host
Robert Hrifko, Golden Pickle

Of the Year
Thomas O’Brien, Conductor
Maria Rivero, Sales Rep.
Brett Milhorn, Supporting
Jeffrey King, Historyteller
Davey Hairston, Supporting
Julie Ferry, Ghost Host
David Wright, Rookie of the Year
Michael Parkerson, Grand Pickle
Generally Speaking
by Charlie Brazil; General Manager

In an attempt to refine an already terrific publication, we have been asked to decrease the verbiage of our “City Scoop” and increase the visuals we send about our city’s happenings. As such, unless something is omitted in the departmental reports, I will make sure my contributions are brief. Happy New Year to our entire CAST and WELCOME to our new CASTmembers joining our family in January. I hope 2014 holds many “play days” for you and that you receive and appreciate many blessings, including the rare gift of loving what you do and the people you do it with. Thanks for all you did to make us the best in the HTA Nation in 2013!

Operations
by Marcie Larkin; Operations Manager

Christmas is a special time of year and a time when most people surround themselves with their family and friends. However, some people are separated from their family by distance. With this situation, Christmas feels really lonely!

One morning after briefing, I overheard a conversation between two CASTmembers. They were talking about how another CASTmember was unable to have his wife here in Savannah for Christmas. After hearing this, I sat in my office and thought about how I would feel if I wasn’t surrounded by my family on Christmas day. That night I just couldn’t sleep. I had this overwhelming feeling of sadness. This CASTmember always has a smile on his face and you couldn’t tell anything was even bothering him. He had even volunteered to work Christmas Day and never gave me the impression that it was just because he didn’t want to be home, without his wife. So after a few sleepless nights, we decided that we would give a Christmas gift to this CASTmember. On Christmas Eve night, we had the CASTmember come over to the beautiful Christmas display at the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort and presented him with “The Perfect Christmas Gift”, his lovely wife. I have never seen such an emotional reunion in my life, and this event has completely made me think of Christmas in another way. This is what Christmas is all about!

We all spend so much time and money celebrating Christmas when we already have all the gifts we need, our family and friends. I have been with Old Town Trolley Tours of Savannah for over five years now and I have had the opportunity to work with so many amazing people. Many mornings in briefing, we are “faking it, until we make it.” But at the end of the day, I am SO PROUD to work with each of them. I hope that all of our CASTmembers, in all of our cities, had a very Happy Holiday! We thank you for all that you have done and continue to do.

Safety and Training
by Kenny Gresham; Safety and Training Officer

On the 31st of December our overwhelming training class of 2014 began with our HTA Orientation. Both students appeared ready. We were looking for sixteen and got two, but two of the highest quality. We welcome Sharon Horne and David Giver! The sixteen didn’t materialize before Christmas, but will. Jon Watkins, our HR Guru, will settle for nothing less. We’ll get two a week if needed until we get our sixteen. Those sixteen will be quality conductors.

Training began a little early this year for safety reasons. We had an April last year to forget. It was rookie bumper car month. Won’t go into detail, but we believe that if we give the rookies the extra driving time, the better trolley life will be in Savannah in April when all hell breaks loose. April is the Super Bowl in Savannah trolley world.

Speaking of safety, I’m looking for great things from our CAST in 2014. We had some highlights in 2013 but need overall consistency. One of the highlights was the 90% of all eligible conductors receiving a safety bonus at the end of the year. Leading the way was Irenette Clark with seven years accident free and Michael Smith with five years was a close second. Congratulations to all the drivers for their fine effort in 2013. Looking for a safer tomorrow!
Ghosts and Gravestones
by Gary Patrick; Ghosts and Gravestones Manager

Happy New Year from the land of the black trolley. Our off season is racing by and we are counting down the days to the hustle and bustle of March. We are currently learning our new script and we plan on going live for February. We have incorporated many changes and improvements to the tour and the troops are training hard to learn the new product. See you next edition!

Human Resources
by Jon Watkins; Human Resources Manager

Lots of changes have been underfoot for the admin folks in Savannah. In December we hosted Vince Leone from St. Augustine (who by the way started as a Sales Rep in Savannah) and Carlos Murray from IT. They were in town for a week to set up our Resource Management software and teach us how to use it. This is a huge change for our admin and sales CAST away from our pencil, paper and two way phone routines. It will make things much simpler and quicker for everyone...including the guests who can now reserve Ghost Tour times online.

We celebrated Thanksgiving and Christmas for our CAST working those days with our usual "pot luck" lunches. The Company provides turkeys and ham and everyone brings things that are their "specialties". Thanks to our Maintenance Manager Bruce Smith and his wife Sales Rep Jane for frying up the birds and cooking the ham. It was delicious as usual. Leadagers deliver the prepared plates to the Welcome Center for the Conductor and the sales locations for the Sales Reps and Concierges. Thanks to everyone that worked Thanksgiving and Christmas while our guests got to enjoy our great Savannah hospitality.

I have been recruiting our annual Conductor class and also lots of other positions. This spring we are planning for increased ridership and are hiring sixteen Conductors, three Ghost Conductors, five Ghost Hosts, five Sales Reps and one Concierge. All will have joined the HTA family and started training for their positions by January 28th.

Vendor Happenings
by Robert "The Colonel" Hunter; Vendor Sales Manager

Well, the holidays are behind us, and hopefully so is the bone chilling cold! We saw low temperatures we are unfamiliar with and haven’t seen in many a year! Come on Mother Nature, bring on some warm weather! Though ridership is low this time of year, our vendors continue to do their best to inform their guests of our services and sell, sell, sell!

Depot Sales
by Jim Rafferty; Depot Sales Manager

We had a great October as the weather was perfect. November was also very busy with the Rock and Roll marathon in town and the beginning of our annual Holly Jolly Tour and Festival of Lights. All the sales reps did an outstanding job throughout the fall. They continue to excel. Congratulations go out to our Sales Representatives of the Month. Michael Lenze for October and Tim Conway for November. Great job!

Savannah Story Continued on next page...
Groups and Charters
by Joyce Ellis; Groups & Charters Manager

On December 7th we provided transportation for the Savannah Bridge Run using sixteen trolleys to carry runners, walkers and crawlers over the Talmadge Bridge to the starting line on Hutchinson Island. Savannah’s Talmadge Bridge has one of the steepest inclines in the Southeast and I’m proud to say this is my 3rd year walking/jogging, (but never crawling) to complete the 5k run, after organizing and loading the sixteen trolleys three to four times each; hopping on the last trolley and heading to the start line. Also in December we provided transportation for Savannah Christian Church’s “The Journey”, which is when Bethlehem comes to life with the story of the birth of Jesus, starting with Mary & Joseph’s Journey. The church starts months in advance building this live interactive city outside of their main campus. The production includes several hundred in the cast. We shuttle guests from the end of the Journey back to the main parking area. This year approximately 30,000 went thru the Journey in the seven nights it was presented.

Once again we provided transportation for all the local holiday parades using our festively decorated Holly Jolly Trolleys; Savannah’s Parade of Lights, Pembroke Christmas Parade, Richmond Hill Christmas Parade, Tybee Island Christmas Parade, and Bluffton SC Christmas Parade. We have plenty of experience with parades!

Going into January, we renewed our contracts with Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation and will be providing transportation for all their new hire orientation; two to three trolleys every Monday thru 2014. Yes, THAT Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation, with the G650 in production now.

Speaking of Parades, we will have 16 trolleys in the MLK Jr. Parade in Savannah. It’s one of the largest in the nation with approximately 350 entries. We have provided trolleys for the MLK Jr. Parade Judges and participants for the past 16 years or so.

Great times and even better things happening in the Groups and Charters world. ♡
vendor spotlight

the holiday inn express
and hampton inn

by Robert “The Colonel” Hunter; Vendor Sales Manager

We are sad to announce that two of our BEST vendors will be leaving us. The Holiday Inn Express and Hampton Inn, both here in the Historic District (right across from each other actually!), will no longer be under the Vendor Department by the end of January. Good news though, they are staying with the Old Town Trolley family! Both hotels have signed agreements to have our concierge in their hotels. These hotels have been great performers for the Vendor Department so we are sad to see them go, but the revenue potential from the concierge team is even better!

To Chris Belland,
I wanted to write to thank you so much for the refund you provided for my husband and me after our Savannah trolley tour. I did not write to you to complain as much as I wanted to let you know how things went on that evening. I was so shocked to get the refund and to also receive two tickets for future tours. Thank you so much for your kind letter and the refund. I can see that you have a very top notch company and we wish you the best for your business in future years!

With our appreciation,

Joanne Bina

Original comment card from Joanne Bina who took our tour in Savannah on Halloween. Joanne experienced some microphone problems during her tour and was unhappy about the overall sound. She wrote: “7:40pm x 2p - 10-31-13. Our guide speaks fast and audible. But w/ microphone she wound up screaming. When she speaks fast the words run together & the story is inaudible. In boat house the man needs a microphone. He can’t speak over sound effects. If he turns his head we all can’t hear.”

A replicated version of her response back to us after receiving her refund.
St. Augustine's After-the-Holiday
Norm Niles Retires

by David Thornton; General Manager

Norm Niles spent 19 years with Old Town Trolley as a trolley driver in San Diego and Key West and then Maintenance Manager in San Diego before retiring. Norm said he had been filling up a bucket list and it was about time to start “emptying the bucket”. GM David Thornton and the San Diego Leadagement presented Norm with a clock; after all what do you give a man that has everything?... Time! The clock was inscribed “It’s Just a Thing.” Norm headed out from here to Key West for a visit before it becomes too warm then maybe off to Colorado, and then who knows where. We will miss having Norm around but he promised to stop by every now and then.

New Maintenance Manager

Please join me in congratulating Albert Guzman as our new Maintenance manager. Albert began his career with Old Town Trolley in November of 1998 as a mechanic. As the new fleet maintenance manager, Albert will be overseeing a team of 12 mechanics and detailers servicing a fleet of 38 company vehicles.

Drought in San Diego helps the San Diego SEAL Tours

The planets misfortune provides the SEAL’s good fortune. December 2013 was the driest December on record. So far this has also been the driest rainy season on record in Southern California. The sunshine brings SEAL riders and if it weren’t for the extreme low tides after Christmas our numbers would have been even higher.

Holly Jolly Trolley Tour

by John Savage; Operations Manager

The 2013 Holly Jolly Holiday Trolley Tour was a tremendous success. Our ridership was up over 41% over last year! Also improved this year was a preshow that really set the mood for our guests. We held a “most festive” dressed contest that had some outrageous outfits. Once everyone was in a sing along mood it was out on the road in Trolley caravan style. The highlight was Garrison Street in Point Loma and its spectacular houses, and ending with the song Feliz Navidad as we entered into Mexican themes of Old Town State Historic Park was perfect. A big thanks to the conductors that made it all happen: Chris “Curly” Chiotras, Chris Rosal, Ken Hill, Larry Usall, Richard Smith and Susie Vetter.

Big Bay Whale Festival

by Tyler Grubenhoff; Depot Sales Manager

The Sixth Annual San Diego Big Bay Whale Festival was held on Saturday January 25th. It’s a free family fun festival put on by local Embarcadero businesses including hotels, restaurants, retailers, and museums. Operations Manager John Savage and Depot Sales Manager Tyler Grubenhoff participated in helping to plan the event. At the Festival people learn about California gray whale ecology and conservation or stop by the local sponsor booths. This year Old Town Trolley had both a trolley and a SEAL boat displayed at the festival so guests could get an up-close look at them.

La Jolla Christmas Parade

by Erica Frost; Charters and Group Sales Manager

Old Town Trolley Tours of San Diego was honored to take part in our first ever La Jolla Christmas parade on December 8th. The new Beach Tour Trolley made its debut for the parade which was perfect because the theme this year was “Christmas in the Surf and Sand”. We had the pleasure of carrying students from the Gillispie School through the parade. The Gillispie School provides a forum...
for educational excellence for children in preschool through sixth grade. Their aim is to act as a springboard for children’s love of learning, creativity, and readiness for the future. Kindness, respect, and individual commitment to the larger world are the school’s core values. This was the 56th annual parade that featured floats, beauty queens, marching bands, fire engines and clowns with a special touch of small hometown charm you would come to expect with this “Jewel” of a coastal beach community.

**Holiday Bowl Big Bay Balloon Parade**

The 36th annual National University 2013 Holiday Bowl kicked off with ‘America’s Largest Balloon Parade’ down along San Diego’s waterfront at the Embarcadero. Old Town Trolley once again was honored to transport the famous “Balloon Platoon” (balloon character "handlers") down to the staging area. The game itself was an exciting matchup between the Texas Tech Red Raiders (and their dreamboat coach Kliff Kingsbury!) and the Arizona State Sun Devils. Texas Tech defeated ASU 37-23.

**Exciting Changes in the Office!**

*by Erin Smith; AP/AR Manager*

Old Town Trolley Tours of San Diego is growing, and with growth comes new opportunities! In the past, the AP/AR Department and the HR Department were separate, but for the past several years Office Manager Carmen Thulin has managed AP/AR and HR with the help of her assistant Erin Smith. Now that the company is expanding with more tours (Ghost & Gravestones, Beach Tour, Holly Jolly Holiday Trolley...), it would be beneficial to separate the departments again as the workloads are getting heavier. Carmen Thulin will now focus on HR and Payroll, and her assistant Erin Smith will now be the AP/AR Manager. They will still work as a team to support one another, but this division will create a much more efficient work environment. We look forward to a busy season and we are definitely preparing for it!

**St. Vincent DePaul Village Children’s Holiday Party**

*by Brenda Martin; Old Town Market Operations and Leasing*

Christmas is the time for giving. For the tenth year the CAST of San Diego Trolley along with our Old Town Market Merchants presented a holiday party for children from the St. Vincent de Paul Center, a downtown shelter. Over 140 children, with one or both parents, live at the downtown San Diego shelter. The children’s ages ranged from infants to 17 years. Thirty children, ages 5-11, were treated to a pizza party, posada piñatas, and holiday fun at the Old Town Trolley Barn. On the way home, the Trolley and its conductor Bob “Hatch” Hatcher took the children on an evening tour of holiday lights around the city. The highlight of the party was a gift to each child by Santa and Mrs. Claus, played by our very own maintenance manager Norm Niles and office manager Carmen Thulin. For the children five years and under, Mr. and Mrs. Claus, this time played by maintenance detailer Christian Perez and Office Manager Carmen Thulin, brought their gifts to St. Vincent DePaul and personally delivered them! The children had filled out wish list cards earlier in the month so that Santa knew exactly what they wanted.

**Old Town San Diego Las Posadas**

Las Posadas was held Sunday December 16th, this centuries-old procession has been celebrated down San Diego Avenue for 62 consecutive years. The procession reenacts the biblical journey of Mary and Joseph through the town of Bethlehem. Family activities were held throughout the day and then the candle light procession started shortly after sunset. Over three thousand people joined the procession to sing carols and enjoy this spirited Park tradition.
Blessing of the Animals

On January 19, Old Town San Diego went to the dogs...and cats, and birds and other pets!

The community brought their animals to Old Town for a blessing from our Old Town Market neighbor the Father of the Immaculate Conception Church but all faiths and convictions are welcome to celebrate the animals that make our lives so special. The annual Benediction of the Beasts celebrates St. Anthony of the Desert, the Patron Saint of Animals.

Old Town Trolley Tours of San Diego was recently featured in the Land's End Business Outfitters print and online clothing campaign. We have an online video you can watch at www.landsend.com/business. Above is the cover of their latest catalog.
CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Chris “Curly” Chiotras
Assistant Head Conductor

BACKGROUND

I was born in beautiful San Francisco on January 24, 1954 to second generation Greeks. And I can make the stuffed grape leaves to prove it. My grandfather opened a grocery store and like good Greeks do, my daddy worked there, so did my mom, uncles, aunts, cousins, and at the tender age of 10 so did I.

The hippies of the 1970s were my heroes so this should not surprise you. At the age of 14 a few of us snuck into the Fillmore West, and if you don’t know what that is shame on you, to watch the Jefferson Airplane rehearse. Just before they discovered us and we got tossed out on our butts. I got a kiss from Grace Slick. She tasted like whiskey and I’ve been in love with her ever since (don’t tell my wife). It was just about then that mom and pop decided to ship me off every summer to my cousin’s ranch, yup more Greeks, in Byron Ca. I dare you to find it on a map.

I graduated from S.F. State with a BA in radio and television. Around 1980 I decided to move to Lake Tahoe Nevada to chase my career as a radio DJ. Then I moved to Carson City Nevada where I lived for about 20 years to do the same thing. As a radio gypsy I got to see some interesting things. I raced stock cars, played rodeo cowboy, and rode camels in the Virginia City Camel races. The cars never spit on me.

I met the love of my life, Kim. Our first date was in the Virginia City grave yard, and we were married in Disneyland. Do you see a pattern here?

Kim’s family lives here in San Diego and we would drive down every summer to visit. One day we took the Old Town Trolley tour to see the city. I turned to Kim and said… If we ever move here this is where I would like to work. That was almost 11 years ago. Kim manages a doggie day care place. She’s been there for almost 11 years. She says she likes the dogs better than the kids at the YMCA where she worked before. Do you see a pattern here?

I like baseball so this year I have become a Chicago Cubs fan. Why? More Greeks! My cousin is Sam Sianis, the man that put the curse on the Cubs. I figured if a family member can do a curse, I can take one away. Go Cubbies!!!!

Q | What is your favorite vacation spot?
A | My favorite place to get away is Disneyland. We go often. If I could live in that little shack on the river on the Pirates ride I would.

Q | What is your idea of perfect happiness?
A | My idea of perfect happiness is laying on the ground under a blanket of stars listening to crickets. And have nothing to think about.

Q | What three things will you always find in my refrigerator?
A | You will always find pickles, ice cream and feta cheese in my fridge. Damn that sounds nutty. Well consider the source.

Q | Which living person do you most admire?
A | Walt Disney will always be alive in my mind. Look at where he came from and what his mind created.

Q | Who is your favorite hero of fiction?
A | My greatest hero of fiction is Percy Jackson, Son of Poseidon. Now there’s a Greek for you…

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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER
Carrie Nunez, 11 years

JANUARY
David Thornton, 11 years
Erin Smith, 8 years
Kelly Gonthier, 2 years

December - January 2014
It all started when I was a Navy Aviation Mechanic at the Naval Air Station in Boca Chica in the Florida Keys. I gave so many haircuts in the barracks at night, they assigned me to the air station Barber Shop. One day they asked for a volunteer to go to the Seaplane Base in Key West and cut hair a couple a days a week, which I thought was a nice change.

It was a great little Barber Shop located in the same building as the Navy Exchange and Snack Bar for the base. Well wouldn’t you know my first lunch there I spotted this great looking girl wearing a navy blue striped skirt and a white blouse. I couldn’t keep my eyes off her and of course she wouldn’t even look my way.

I continued to go over to the snack bar on my breaks in hopes of seeing her. I found out that she worked in the exchange office where she was in charge of purchasing the cigars, cigarettes and candy for the Navy. I found out her name was Marina.

Over the days, I worked very hard at trying to make small conversation with Marina. I learned she graduated from Florida State University. She was four years older than me and she wanted to go out with an older man. In the meantime she had sent a Navy Chief to find out all about me.

Marina was of the Catholic faith and had just gone to midnight mass at St. Mary’s. I said to her, “I have always wanted to go to midnight mass but as a Protestant I have never had the opportunity.” She replied, “They were going to have a Benediction and Midnight Mass New Year’s Eve and I could go to that.” With that I asked her to go with me and show me what to do. She accepted.

I picked her up dressed in a suit, which really impressed Marina and her family. We went to Mass and then I borrowed her father’s car to go to an all night drive-in restaurant called Jimmy’s.

We were very attracted to each other and I wanted to get married right away. We waited for over a year and finally got married at St. Mary’s on February 7, 1954 and went on a two week honeymoon to Havana, Cuba afterwards. Our son Michael was born November 15, 1954. Marina became a homemaker. I got my license and opened Moe’s Barber Shop at 608 ½ Duval Street where I worked nights until I was discharged from the Navy on March 8, 1955. We built our house in December of 1955 on the corner of Ashby and Laird Street where our daughter Pamela was born on February 2, 1959.

Marina was a talented lady, who majored in dress designing and sold clothing to supplement our income. She volunteer taught school at St. Joseph and at St. Mary’s schools as well.

In the mid 1960’s the Navy pulled out of Key West and long hair came in. I almost had to close my Barber Shop but kept it open half days. The other half of my days were spent helping Ed Swift III in his camera store, Swift Cameras.

Marina eventually got her teaching certificate and started teaching first and second graders at Truman School. This helped immensely with the bills. She taught until 1992 when she retired from Glynn Archer School.

In the meantime, I partnered with Ed Swift and Chris Belland in the revitalization of Duval Street where we started renovating it and marketing it to visitors as a vacation destination. Marina loved helping out with Duval Street Days, Bicycle Races, and all the events we threw. Years passed and eventually Ed and Chris opened operations in different cities. Marina couldn’t get to go to all the openings but she did get to go to some special events.

She traveled with me to the San Diego Trolley and Boston for the Tea Party Ship openings and loved them both. She was always up to travel and we have been all over the world except Australia and New Zealand.

She loved spending time with her grandchildren and missed the fact that Michael’s kids lived in Miami where she couldn’t spend as much time with them.

During her later years, Marina and I bought a cabin in the mountains of North Carolina where we would spend summer breaks sitting out on the deck drinking a scotch on the rocks. She loved country ham and biscuits at Hardy’s and Bojangles. It reminded her a lot of Tallahassee where she went to college.

Marina was an outstanding person who never met anyone she didn’t like and would strike up conversations with total strangers to make them feel welcomed. She was my rock, my partner and my best friend. I will miss her dearly.
I am honored to spotlight the staff at the newly renovated Holiday Inn San Diego Bayside. The property is located near the San Diego International Airport just across from San Diego Bay. The staff is lead by two brothers Manny and Alex Granillo. Manny is the Transportation Manager and has been with the hotel over 20 years and a great supporter of Old Town Trolley all those years. Alex is the Bell Captain and has been with the hotel for 12 years and he has always been a big supporter as well. The staff uses our boarding pass program and Manny recently signed up with our Trusted Tours online ticket program. The property is owned and operated by Bartell Hotels and it recently underwent a 13 million dollar renovation. They added a beautiful new four-story, 44,000-square-foot expansion which consists of 57 oversized guest rooms and suites with bay views, a 3,400-square-foot ballroom and a boardroom complete with the most modern technology. Thank you to Manny and Alex as well as their staff Andre, Robert B., Robert H., Patrick and Rhinna for all their support and business which has contributed to our success the past 25 years!
What a Team!
by Steven Burress; Operations Manager
As we roll forward into 2014, I believe it is a good time to thank all the CASTmembers at Old Town Trolley for the amazing job that they do each and every day. Through busy times and slow, I have a family which makes each day bright. I would love to name each one here and personally thank them, but the list would fill the storyteller. Mechanics, Conductors, Sales reps, Leadagers...Thank you for making my job one that is a highlight each day. Your smiles, your enthusiasm, your willingness to go above and beyond make me happy that I’m here with you every day.

The Holidays
by Justin Bahl; Depot Sales Manager

One of the best times of the year in Key West is certainly during the holidays. To no surprise, this is also one of our busiest times. In the winter, people from all over the globe flock to Key West to enjoy the beautiful weather, turquoise blue waters, and immerse themselves in the rich heritage our island has to offer. When they get here, we are often the first ones to welcome them and share with them the great attractions that HTA has to offer. From sun up till sun down, full trains and trolleys go down the famous streets of Key West, with our conductors and engineers entertaining our guests at every turn. In fact, even after the sun sets our Holly Jolly light tours continue to stroll through the historic neighborhoods, sharing the eccentric holiday cheer and festive light displays illuminating the entire island. I want to thank all the CASTmembers in Key West not only for their hard work and bright spirits during this busy time, but for making me proud to be a part of HTA and able to come to work each day and experience something new and exciting. I look forward to the future and all that 2014 will bring!

Welcome!
by Laurie Skinner; Head Conductor

Jimmy Garcia has joined the Old Town Trolley CAST as a driver for shuttles and Ghost and Gravestones Tour. Jimmy comes to the trolley from the maintenance department at Tropical Shell and Gift. Welcome Jimmy!

We were very proud to honor our veterans who visited Key West with the Wounded Warrior Project. During their time in Key West, they toured the city on the Trolley, swam with dolphins at the Dolphin Research Center, and dived on the reef!

Cruise Ship World
by Kevin Delahanty; Old Town Trolley Excursions Liaison

We are now in the busy season. Winter in the Keys beats the cold up North. The northern states are trying to escape the cold and coming to the Keys for the warmth. November was a good month. We carried 8000 cruise ship passengers off of 30 ships. December was even better, with over 10,000 passengers with 44 ships. Merry Christmas!!! The New Year is off to a bang. In January, we have 37 ships in port during the month. The excursion team, along with the hard work of the sales reps, is increasing ridership every day. The multi language tour is beginning to take off. RCCL has worked hard to sell that tour. We look forward to a busy new year.

Santa’s helpers Suzanne Egle and Mary Martinez prepare gifts for the CAST

Veterans visiting us for our the Wounded Warrior Project

The train and trolley line up to shuttle cruise ship passangers.

The OTTKW CASTmembers participated in the Key West Holiday Parade, filling the trolley with their family.
**Background**

I was born in Annapolis, Maryland and being a Navy “brat” lived in many different places growing up. From Philadelphia to New England to California and back to Philly, my father was finally transferred to Key West where he retired from the military and opened a private medical practice. I attended the University of Florida as a language major, which gave me the opportunity to study in Europe for my junior year. Being peripatetic was definitely ingrained in me, and I migrated west where I finished college in Spokane, Washington, with a Bachelor’s degree in English Literature.

Being a huge movie buff, I eventually wound my way to Los Angeles, where I was married and raised my son and daughter and worked in the entertainment industry for many years doing everything from casting, production coordinating to legal clearance at Warner Bros. TV.

Key West was always my 2nd home and after visiting many times throughout the years, I decided to move back permanently in 2006. I started with HTA in 2010 as a Sales Rep for the Conch Tour Train and in 2012 made the move to the Old Town Trolley as an Admin Assistant.

**Q | What is your favorite vacation spot?**

**A |** Margate, in the Jersey Shore, which I visited for the first time two years ago and absolutely fell in love with. I could live there year round!

**Q | Which talent would you like to have?**

**A |** I absolutely love dancing and have always dreamed of being a professional ballroom dancer, specializing in Latin dance!

**Q | What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

**A |** Raising my two incredible kids, who are the pride and joy of my life.

**Q | What do you most value in your friends?**

**A |** Loyalty and being non-judgmental.

**Q | If you could choose one reality TV show to be on, what would it be?**

**A |** “Dancing with the Stars”…see question #2!
New Foreign Language Tours
by Linda Test; General Manager

We have always been a sight driven tour company, with our guides pointing out the sights on the left and on the right, and narrating the entire tour. We were challenged by one of our cruise line partners to expand our foreign language offerings. Other than Spanish, our ability to communicate in other languages was limited. Enter AudioConexus, who develops pre-recorded audio tours at some of the premier attractions around the world. With the help of Tommy Defrancesco of CTT, they created a wonderful tour in 6 languages. The background sounds and music enhance the tour as it winds through the streets of our historic town, telling guests the stories that make Key West what it is today. We have expanded to small suitcase versions, which can be plugged into any train or trolley’s PA system, and broadcast in a single language. The response from our guests has been very positive; they enjoy hearing the tour in their own language.

Same Name
by Eva Conway; Operations Manager

We had our Holiday Light tours in December, which sold out as they do every year. What better way is there than riding an open air train to see the island dressed in holiday lights, especially on the nights it is cool! This was our first year for the Holiday Light tour glasses, an idea we stole from St Augustine, and the response was very positive. We chose one night when the Conch Train CASTmembers went on our own Holiday Light tour, and had a great time.

It’s starting to look like you can’t work at the Conch Train unless you have the same name as someone that already works here. We have Mary the office manager and Mary the sales rep. Robert and Bob (Robert), both tour guides, Stormy (Robert) and Bob (Robert) are both mechanics and Roberto is our Maintenance Manager. Gail the tour guide, Gail the sales rep. Tommy the tour guide, Tomi and Allen (Tommy) the sales reps. Eduardo and Ed are tour guides, and Ed is Building maintenance. MJ (Michael) is our Head Driver, Michael is our administrative assistant, and Michael is a sales rep. Hank the Mechanic and Hank the tour guide. Lori Anne is a sales rep and Laurie (who transferred to OTTKW as head driver). Even last names are starting to double up: Karen Fox-Padgett, sales rep, and Rich Fox-Sanders, tour guide, are not related! In the 33+ years I have worked here, I have never seen anything like it!

On January 18th, the Conch Tour Train will have been in operation for 55 years! We are still going strong, and will continue to entertain the visitors to Key West.

Movers and Shakers
by Michael Jordan; Head Engineer

It is full steam ahead at the Conch Tour Train!! Season is upon us down here in Key West and we are excited for a very busy Cruise Ship season with more ships in port than we have had in a long time. From December to April we will have 198 ships in port. In this busy time we have hired a number of new train engineers and Bone Island Shuttle Drivers. We would like to welcome Nick Foster, Ed Guillard, Mark Drais, Phil Lambert, Rich Fox, Chris Lang and Chuck Vinson. We have also promoted Marty Shoeneman and Bryan Lewis to Head Engineers and have been busy training our new engineers. I also want to say a great big THANK YOU to all of the tour drivers, shuttle drivers, sales representatives, maintenance team and office staff that make this company work so well every day. It truly is a pleasure to work with such dedicated CASTmembers.

Winter is Coming...
by April Roskovensky; Key West Safety Officer

Well, as much winter as we get down here in Key West! It was 80 degrees yesterday and it is 50 degrees today; either way, I’m not complaining! With the beginning of the New Year we have seen business pick up down here for the Conch Tour Train and Old Town Trolley Key West. Season means more people on the roads; in their cars, on their bikes, riding their scooters and walking on their own two feet. More people on the roads mean more distractions and more hazards. These things can test even the best of drivers...luckily I think we happen to have some of the best. Speaking of
which, this time of year also means it is the season for end of the year awards. Six months and one year safety awards will be awarding to our safe drivers at our next monthly meeting. This is not to mention the fact that we have some drivers who have just achieved the five year and ten year marks for safe driving. Geoff Hintz with Old Town Trolley Key West and Bob Lutz with the Conch Tour Train have both reached the five year mark. Meanwhile Eduardo Silva and Tommy DeFrancesco with the Conch Tour Train have both reached the ten year mark for safety. Congratulations guys!! These accomplishments aren’t easy to achieve and I appreciate all the hard work and dedication that it takes to get to this point-keep up the great work! As we take on 2014, here’s wishing all of you, wherever you may be, and all of my fellow CASTmembers here, a safe and happy year!

CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Christina Beliles
Conch Tour Train

BACKGROUND
My name is Christina Beliles. I came to work for HTA in June 2012. I was a stay at home mom and home schooled my children. We decided to put them back in school and I wanted out of the house. So I got a job. I was born in Indiana and moved to Florida in 2008. In 2009 I decided to move on a boat and move to Key West. Best move in my life. My children are my pride and joy. Everything I do, I do for them.

Q | Which living person do you most admire?
A | My daughter Kalya. She is her own person and allows no one to intimidate her.

Q | On what occasion do you lie?
A | I don’t. One lie leads to the another.

Q | What do you consider your greatest achievement?
A | My children.

Q | What is your most treasured possession?
A | The pictures and drawings from my child.

Q | What do you most value in your friends?
A | Honesty and just being a true friend.

Q | Who are your favorite writers?
A | James Patterson and Dean Koontz.

2013 Holiday Light Contest Winners!

2013 marked the 7th annual Conch Train / Old Town Trolley annual holiday light contest. Cash prizes and Waterford crystal pieces are presented to the winners of the best decorated homes voted on by CASTmembers. Congratulations to our winners First Place (Above): Ruth and Wayne Kroehling Second Place (Top Right): Bob and Fran Decker, and Third Place (Bottom Right) was Les Steele.
The Storied Curry Mansion Inn
A Place to Stay. A Place to See.
by Cheryl Actor, Director of Account Sales

On an island famous for its beautifully restored, architecturally significant historic homes, the Curry Mansion Inn stands out. It is, in the true sense of the word, a mansion, one with a unique tie to an important period in Key West history. It is a delightful place to stay as well as an intriguing place to visit for a self-guided tour.

Construction on the house began in 1855, at the height of Key West’s wrecking era, time of considerable wealth in the island community. The owner, William Curry was Key West’s first millionaire, a once-penniless Bahamian immigrant who acquired his fortune through wrecking, the legal salvaging of cargo from merchant ships which had the misfortune of being dashed upon the surrounding reef as they made their way up the Gulf Stream in the era before lighthouses. Curry’s rags to riches story was a common one in early to mid-19th century Key West which, as the hub of the wrecking industry, had the distinction of being the richest city per capita in America.

The mansion was not completed until 1899, a task which fell to Curry’s son, Milton, who furnished it with the 19th century antiques seen in the parlor today. Its purchase in 1975 by Al and Edith Amsterdam ensured its legacy. While on an evening stroll through Old Town during a visit to Key West, the couple was captivated by the wedding-cake-white mansion glowing in the soft light of its crystal chandeliers. In front: a For Sale sign. The Amsterdams purchased and restored what was to become the Curry Mansion Inn. Today, it remains the home of Innkeeper, Edith Amsterdam, one she is delighted to share with guests who enjoy the relaxed elegance of the inn and the gracious hospitality of the staff.

Languidly stretching out over a large, tree-canopied estate on Caroline Street, the Mansion offers seclusion, and convenience. On a grand scale, its vernacular architecture, similar to the other historic homes in Key West, reflects the influences of the many ports of call of the island’s seafaring population, who made their living in the maritime trade. Fashionable Victorian elements, hints of the grand “cottages” of Newport, wide porches, columns and colonnades reminiscent of the homes of Savannah and Charleston, ornate trellises and balustrades of New Orleans, and a widow’s walk of coastal New England, are beautifully integrated into the building.

One step inside the imposing entry, the bird’s-eye maple paneling, hand-wrought spindles, Tiffany glass sliding doors, and antique filled parlor and there is the feeling of being in the relaxed elegance of another era. The spacious guest rooms, decorated in an eclectic mix of comfortable wicker and handsome antiques, and with all the modern amenities today’s guests have come to expect, are located in the Mansion, the adjacent Guest Wing, and in the James House just across the street. The Curry Mansion Inn experience also includes a full breakfast and an afternoon open bar cocktail party around the sun-dappled pool.

Although guests may never want to leave the grounds, there is much to see and do within walking distance. For those who want to experience even more of what Key West has to offer, the front desk staff is always happy to guide them. To assist them in that task, we are pleased that the Curry Mansion Inn has recently signed on to our e-ticket program, where the island’s tours, attractions, and water activities are just a click away.

Visitors to Key West not staying at the Inn, who are nonetheless intrigued to know more about the elegant home with the commanding presence set back off Caroline Street, are not left out of the experience. A self-guided tour of the Mansion, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is available daily from 8:30 am until 5:00 pm.
Key West Operations Annual Awards!

Hank Whitecotton, CTT Rookie of the Year, with Linda Test, Eva Conaway, and Michael Jordan

How many years have you been accident free? Key West Operations Annual Safe Driver Awards.

April Roskovensky gave out 6 month safety awards

5 year Safe Driving Award - Bob Lutz (CTT) and April Roskovensky
5 year Safe Driving Award - Geoff Hintz (OTT) and April Roskovensky

Tommy DeFrancesco and Eduardo Silva proudly showing off their new pocket watches for 10 years Accident Free!

OTTKW CAST Member of the year – Grace Spencer with Steve Burress and Linda Test

December Of the Month awards: Michael Gibson – Sales; Danial Jones – OTT Conductor; Jay Knostman – CTT Supporting; Suzanne Egle – OTT Supporting; Bob Lutz – CTT Engineer

The Key West Leadager team: Justin Bahl, April Roskovensky, Steve Burress, Eva Conaway, Laurie Skinner, Linda Test, Michael Jordan, and Roberto Alvarenga

Sales Reps of the Year Joyce Dahlberg (CTT) and Shirley Porter (OTT) with CEO Chris Belland, Steve Burress, Justin Bahl, and Rod Labranche.

Spin the Wheel for prizes! Tommy DeFrancesco, Tour Engineer of the year, with Chris Belland and Michael Jordan.

December - January 2014
Cruising around Town with the Crew

Practice, Practice, Practice
by Andy Kirby; Conch Tour Train Excursions Liaison

Will Rodgers once said, about Real Estate ‘location, location, location’. Well no matter which task you perform, in order to be better than average you have to ‘practice, practice, and practice.’ If your task requires you to perform in public you must train and practice. In business you have to re train yourself to maintain, training cannot be a one shot thing, it must be ongoing. Training is everyone’s responsibility, it’s up to each of us to continue to accomplish new goals while reinforcing company values and traditions. Trade journals report that $50 billion was spent annually on training employees. In order to be the best ask yourself; are we training the right people, are we getting the results we need to be competitive, and what kind of training should be offered.

As cruise ships and bus business come into town, I work with them all to show them how to sell. It may sound crazy that these folks have all been placed into sales positions but no one has really trained them to do the kind of sales they are required to do. Customer focus has to be everyone’s job and everyone needs to be included in training. Everyone needs to be focused, and committed to the same goals when selling the products they represent. Too many companies employ the “spray and pray” method of training. Which is they spray training on people, then pray that it gets absorbed. When the newly learned skills are reinforced with coaching, practice, and recognition, they become habits. Habits, Skills, Attitude and Knowledge will top your performance track. The goal of top performers is to lead by building positive habits that benefit individuals. And to Always Practice, Practice, Practice.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER
Robert Wolz, 28 years
Clinton Curry, 15 years
Mihail Mihailov, 9 years
Kathleen Luck, 5 years
Rene La Pierre, 3 years
William Avery Jr., 3 years
Susan Wilson 1 year
Vanessa Hedrick, 1 year

JANUARY
Leah Benner, 10 years
Pavel Theinert, 8 years
Delores Boyle, 8 years
Galyna Myakushak, 5 years
Sherry Wright, 4 years
Tudor Cojusnean, 4 years

WELCOME ABOARD

GHOSTS AND GRAVESTONES
Ashley Dixon
William Goins

SHIPWRECK TREASURE
Jeremy Hyatt
Michael Pallansch

KW AQUARIUM
Alyssa Carpenter
Johnathan Davis

LITTLE WHITE HOUSE
Rene LaPierre

RETAIL DIVISION
Christina Marin
Mary Dalton
Nataliya Mansukhani
Karen Brandt
Rachel Friedman
Iulia Cristea
Rebecca Larivee
Freancesca Mueller
Hawkeye
Proud Owners: Piper Smith and Chris Belland

Moonstruck’s Hawkeye Cayo Hueso, or as he is known around the office, Hawkeye, is a Golden Retriever who belongs to Chris Belland and Piper Smith. Hawkeye turns five this April 15 and has been working at HTA for 4 1/2 years. Nearly every day you will find Hawkeye in the executive offices of Building 21, attending meetings, greeting guests and manipulating Hope and Ileana into giving him treats. Hawkeye can often times be found out on Pier B greeting cruise ship passengers. He has a standing luncheon date nearly every day with HTA President Ed Swift. When he is not working at HTA, Hawkeye enjoys swimming, boating, swimming, fetching swimming, riding in the car, and swimming.

Dear Mr. Belland,
I appreciate your letter with a refund and 2 complimentary tickets for another excursion. I have been thinking of returning to Savannah, where I haven’t visited in 40 years, and your tickets are spurring me on.

We took the Key West trolley tour in November and I wrote you a quick note concerning our drivers. Apparently I was somewhat negative – but as I recall the first driver we had was terrific, so I was pleasantly surprised by your letter. I like the format of Hop on - Hop off tours - educational, informative and if your lucky humorous.

Sincerely,
Karen Swanson

Original comment card from Karen Swensen. She wrote: “Hard to hear her. Unclear in speaking and in her commentary she seemed distracted.”

A replicated version of her response back to us after receiving her refund.

Comments Count

In which city are you taking this tour?
Please fill in bubbles.

Boston  Key West  St. Augustine
Savannah  San Diego  Washington, DC

Name: Karen Swanson
Address:

email:

Did you have a good time?  Yes  No
Was it worth the price?  Yes  No
Will you recommend us?  Yes  No

What was your guide’s name?
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

How would you rate your guide?
excellent  good  poor
Where did you hear about us?
hotel  friend  saw us
brochure  advertisement

How long is your trip to this city?
1 day  2 days  3 days  more
How did you arrive?
drive  fly  cruise

Where are you staying?
friends/family  hotel/motel
day trip  other:

Comments
Hard to hear her. Unclear in speaking and in her commentary she seemed distracted.

Buy Historic Tours of America® tickets at www.trustedtours.com
Keys West Industry Party Photos

Dalia and Clinton
Nelson Nodal, Ben McPherson, Nick Monsalvatge, Monica Munoz, Tim Atwell, Fred Varela and Terry Strickland

Tammy Osterhoudt, Linda Test, and Piper Smith
Island Dog’s General Manager Liz Potlucky and Green Parrot owner John Vagnoni

Paul Clarin, Chris Belland, and Debra Clarin
The Dirtbags entertained the crowd

Rick’s Staff, Marty and Joanne
Nelson Nodal, Nick Monsalvatge, Monica Munoz, Tim Atwell, and Paul Toppino

The crowd gathers around the food tents

Ed Swift and City Commissioner Mark Rossi

Sandra Campbell, Hope’s daughter Lisa, and Hope Casas

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY
DECEMBER
Hope Casas, 25 years
Freddy Varela Jr., 2 years

JANUARY
Benjamin McPherson, 34 years
James Sewell, 16 years
Frank Herrada, 16 years
Holiday Picnic on the Lawn

Chefs Freddy Varela and Marcus Davila

TSG’s Marie Jean, Anna T. Ryan, Lisa Quast, David Hecht and Sandra Campbell

Mr Moe serves his famous pork

Natalie Machado, Candice Atwell and Antionette McPherson

One of the many pigs cooked on the lawn

Nick Monsalvatge shows off his pie cutting skills

Marina Timus Retail Supervisor at the Southernmost Trolley Stop and Alexandra Dorsena Jeune, Retail CAST at Shell Warehouse

Michael Cates and Eva Conaway

Ricky Milelli and Bob Wolz

The HPM crew!

Chris Belland, Moe Mosher and Ed Swift address the crowd.

Geoff Hintz and Tim Watson

December - January 2014