My name is Lauren Sheldon and I have the pleasure of managing our new National Guest Services and Sales Center in St. Augustine, FL. It has been a whirlwind since we began operation on December 8, 2014. We began with answering calls in Washington, DC and have slowly added St. Augustine, Savannah, Boston, Key West, and then San Diego each month following. The team here is small, but vibrant and smart and I could not be more proud of them. We take calls from guests around the country and do everything in our power to answer their questions and make their vacation as enjoyable and relaxing as possible. As we ramp up into our busy season, we will be adding more CASTmembers to accommodate the additional call volume. The team cannot wait until the summer time chaos begins and the weather becomes a little bit more agreeable (shout out to my hometown of Boston with all of this snow!).

A typical day in the National Guest Services and Sales Center begins with checking in with each of the cities and learning if there is anything going on that our guests may need to know. It is so vitally important that we stay up to date on current events so that we can best serve our patrons. From there, the phones begin to ring and we are off! On average, agents take over 100 calls per day with an average call time of two minutes and forty seconds. This could be daunting to some, but they have risen to the challenge and are able to switch between cities (and the respective information) with ease. This is not to say we won’t make mistakes, because we will at times, but please know our hearts are in the right place.

We thank all of you for your patience, encouragement, and positivity as we grow this new operation. On a personal note, I could not be more grateful to the local operations for their continued support and for hosting myself and the NCC (national call center) team in each of your beautiful cities. We are located on St. Augustine Beach so if you ever find yourself in the area, please stop by and see The National Guest Services and Sales Center Team!
from the desk of the chief conductor

Ding Dong the Budget’s Dead

by Chris Belland; CEO of Historic Tours of America

In case no one at the operational level noticed in the recent past that the General Manager kept disappearing for hours and days on end or they were not their usual cheery self, I can tell you now that it had something to do with budgets.

The budget season comes in the last quarter of our fiscal year, which is April 1 through March 31, so you can attribute this annual tradition of General Manager absenteeism and snappy responses to the requirement of putting together an insane amount of information in a concise format that, as best they and we can tell, predicts the coming year.

As the late night advertisement for Ginsu knives says, “But wait … there’s more!” Yes, there is a lot more. In the several weeks of March (the REAL March Madness) the General Managers and their Operations Managers are put through their paces in what we loosely call “budget hearings”. Hearings may be a bad word here because, generally, it might better be attributed to something you do before a judge slams down his gavel and says, “Guilty!” and they haul you off to the gallows. I know some of the General Managers probably feel that way, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Budgets are an extraordinarily interesting, sometimes wonderful, sometimes painful process where we, the Executive Staff and the operations chew the cud of last year’s results and, hopefully, come out the other end still friends and with something more than cow pies.

We start first with the retail budgets and, though many of you may only see one or a couple of our stores, they involve no less than 17 different retail units, most ably run by Nelson Nodal and Leah Benner, with a supporting CAST of our Buyers, Rosemary Pumar, Lisa Chubbuck, Dahlia Angelosanto, Lynn Dalton and Kristina Agent, all topped off with the stars of the show, the General Managers. From just a couple of stores in Mallory Square, we have expanded into a multillion dollar enterprise inside Historic Tours of America.

Attractions are scattered throughout our cities and are under the supervision of Bobby Bernreuter, Ed Swift IV and me as it pertains to the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum. I almost laugh when I think back on the days when we had but one attraction, the Key West Aquarium, that when we inherited it, had more dead fish than alive. I’m not kidding! A funny story was that when a tourist came to one attraction, the Key West Aquarium, that when we inherited it, had more dead fish than alive. “No, they’re not, they’re just sleeping!” True story.

Now under Greg Gerwin and Clinton Curry, the Aquarium and Mallory Square attraction is something of which we are very proud showing off the local fish life of the Florida Keys. We discovered long ago that having a captive audience on the Trolley and the Conch Tour Train gave us an interesting ability to ably go into the attraction business with very many of the same disciplines. Although off the beaten path, the Truman Little White House is an incredible step back in time (I was born during his administration to give you a sense of how far back) and something which we view as a sacred trust.

Finally, we got to the meat of the coconut which is our core businesses in sightseeing. I have said it many times and will say it again here, the General Manager job in Historic Tours of America is the most difficult there is in the company. It requires extraordinary dedication, love of what we do, a sense that the needs of the CAST come before themselves and an infinite amount of patience for the ongoing “interface” from me and my partner Ed who probably have less and less of an idea of what they are going through as the years march by.

It cannot go without saying that we have become a different company since Ed Swift IV took over the reins as Chief Operating Officer. Having come up through the company from scooping ice cream, selling tickets and giving tours, he has not only an intimate and compassionate understanding for the business, but also a keen eye for how to make the parts come together in the most profitable way possible. So, to Linda Test, Eva Conaway, Dave Galvan, Dave Chatterton, Charlie Brazil, Jerry Miller, John Welby and David Thornton, here is a tip o’ the hat for a job well done for a record year and, by all indications, another record year ahead. You are all amazing in your different ways and what you do every day never ceases to amaze me. And, with our new tour in Arlington National Cemetery, that will be more true than ever before.

As the jewel in the crown of Historic Tours of America and the one particular attraction with which I have had the most to do, it was an ever-increasing pleasure to listen to the budget and plans of Shawn Ford and Ted Gato. Whenever we have a new operation, such as the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, Potter’s Wax Museum or Arlington National Cemetery Tours, I always make it a point to get those comment cards first and continually review the accounts on Trip Advisor. With no single doubt in my mind, because of what Shawn and his team of creative geniuses have been able to do, the storytelllers have shown us why the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum has risen from a brand new attraction to the ninth highest ranked attraction in Boston, even ahead of the JFK Library! This is going to be one heck of a year if all those people do what they say, which is to come back and tell all their friends “this is a must do in Boston.”

In the attraction arena, but on the water, the Yankee Freedom III ferry to the Dry Tortugas is entering into its fourth year as a National Park concessioner. Under the capable hands of Terry Strickland, it is now running full and as I write this in the last week of March, it looks like we will have the best year in history. Being a National Park concessioner has not been without its trials and tribulations because you really do have “big brother” looking over your shoulder which is not all bad. Captain Rick Gauren and Terry have made the operation a flawless execution of carrying thousands of people 70 miles across open waters to one of the most extraordinary National Parks in the United States. They deserve more credit than I can express.

We even have first timers in the mix. Our new National Call Center, headed up by my son Christian and Lauren Sheldon, may possibly become the most exciting thing we will do this year. I cannot wait to see the conservative budget thrown out the window.

Finally, and this is after days and weeks of being in a windowless room with piles of pretzels, jelly beans, apples and oranges, chocolate bars and every kind of cookie you can imagine, we get to the executive staff budgets. For those of you who have ever seen me in orientation, I describe Historic Tours of America as an upside down organization. Most companies show the organizational chart as a pyramid with the President and CEO at the top and the little people below. I have always felt that we (including the executive staff) are at the bottom and our sole function is to support the efforts of those “on the ground” who meet and greet our guests.

Many times, these CASTmembers who are playing a support role do not get the credit they deserve but I can tell you that Piper Smith and Monica Munoz in Advertising and Marketing, Joanna Huestis in HR, Bill Meagher in Risk Management and Ben McPherson and Freddy Varella down in the bowels of the cellar with the rest of the bean counters make the operation seem from the outside an admirable and many times flawless company that has the industrywide stature that we have. Otherwise, how can you explain going from 13 original CASTmembers carrying 70,000 guests in our first year, to a company of over 1,100 CASTmembers entertaining 3,000,000 guests? It is truly a team effort that requires all of our dedication, focus, energy and goodwill towards each other and our guests.

Now, it is time to put the jelly beans and cookies behind me, go on a diet and see how the budget process plays out over the next exciting year.
Seasons Change
John Welby; General Manager

Although there may be fewer tourists in Boston this time of year, Old Town Trolley Tours has had plenty going on. For as long as I’ve worked here (which is a long time), OTT has provided trolleys for the mayor for three days in a row to visit each of the city’s neighborhoods and light the Christmas trees. We were thrilled to find out that our new mayor, Martin J. Walsh, decided to continue the tradition of his predecessor, the late Tom Menino, and use Old Town Trolley for the annual “Enchanted Trolley Tour and Tree Lightings”! The mayor is accompanied by a host of holiday characters, including everyone’s favorite jolly old elf, Santa Claus. It is the highlight of the holiday season for many of the residents, young and old alike.

We had such a good time last year that for the second year in a row, Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston held its annual Holiday Party at the Summer Shack. Partners Jeff Duggan and world-renowned chef Jasper White and their staff pulled out all the stops for us and made sure everyone had a great time. It was a festive evening full of fun, food, drink, dancing, prizes and awards. Special thanks to our very own resident Disc Jockey, conductor Stephen Kent for providing the tunes and PA. Thank you also to Operations Manager, Brian Buckley for acting as Master of Ceremonies and doing a great job at that. Of course the entire evening would not have been possible if it wasn’t for the tireless work of Michael “The Professor” Chandler who took care of all of the details. Thank you Michael!

December is a time for giving and the CASTmembers of OTT Boston stepped up big time to help the “Toys for Tots” campaign. The toy drive was spearheaded by Administrative Assistant, Kayla Sweeney and Office Manager, Tracey Paturzo. For the first couple of weeks of the month there was a beautifully decorated collection box located in the Briefing Room and everyone was encouraged to help out any way they could. Day after day, CASTmembers would bring in gifts for those less fortunate. The response was fantastic and within no time we had two boxes of toys! So, on Friday, December 12th, in true OTT fashion, we loaded the boxes onto a trolley and headed for the local drop off location, the American Legion Post on West Broadway. Being South Boston residents themselves, the guys were very familiar with Old Town Trolley and thanked us profusely for our donation.
The off-season for us is a time we spend planning for the next season. So, without wasting any time, we started our first training class in December with four new recruits; William “Chappe” Chappell, David “Little Dave” Ryan, Ty “Hollywood” McGee and Joey Kantor. The guys are off to a great start spending day after day at the range with Trainer/Safety Officer, Sue Pye and Lead Conductor Michael “Bear” Giobbe. By the way, spending a day at the range this time of year is no treat……. can you say winter? The average temperature has been about 20 degrees and when you factor in the wind it feels more like 10 degrees!! If that’s not an encouragement to get your license quickly, then I don’t know what is. By the time you read this I expect that, not only will they have their licenses, but they will be certified as well.

The month of January brings us the start of the Chocolate Tour. Thanks to the help of Michael Chandler, Steven Johnson and Meg Fezcko the Chocolate Tour got off to its best start in many years, carrying fifteen guests on its opening day. That is by far the most we’ve had on an opening day in many, many years. To make it even easier for guests to book the Chocolate Tour, we have made it possible to make reservations and purchase tickets online for the first time ever. Thank you Stephen and Meg for all your efforts making that dream a reality. With the help of online reservations, I expect our numbers will continue to grow and this will be the Chocolate Tours’ best year yet!

The Chocolate Tour isn’t the only big news for Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston in January. We have even bigger news to share; actually REALLY BIG…….we took delivery of our first “stadium” style trolley! Although this style vehicle has been on Boston’s streets for several years, this is the first one for us, so it is a really big deal. Seeing it parked in the barn next to the other trolleys, it looks like a mammoth, measuring 13’ 4”, which is almost two feet taller than the rest of the fleet. It’s so big that we were able to have our January CASTmeeting onboard and it fit all but three of us! It will take some time to get everyone trained on them, but by the time our season hits we’ll be ready to go!

For the month of January we held a contest called “50 for 50” for sales reps to encourage sales of our Essential Guide Books. The first rep to sell 50 books in the month would receive a $50 gift card from Dunkin Donuts. It was a close race with four reps battling it out for the lead, but in the end it was veteran Sales Rep, Fred Gefteas who walked away with the prize. On January 26th, Fred reached the “50” mark and ended that day with a total of 51 books thus far for the month. Congratulations Fred! Honorable mention to the Sale Reps who were in close contention; Bernice Kinyanjui, Mandy Greer and Andrew Quinney and thank you to all the sales reps for embracing this challenge.

Photoed above are Sales Rep, Fred Gefteas and Depot Sales Manager, Bernie Casco

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facebook.com/bostontours
I would like to start by giving a shout out to Natalie Watkins, my number one eTicket vendor in sales for 2014, congratulations and thank you! Natalie worked in PR before starting her career with Starwood Hotels, first as the private dining coordinator at the W Hotel, then moving over to the Westin Copley Place Hotel as a concierge in 2010. While she didn’t even know what a concierge did when she took the position. She has come to embrace the job and takes great pride in helping her guests navigate around the culture, the streets, and the subway of Boston. What Natalie most loves about her job is that she gets to meet and interact with families and business people from all over the world that she would never have met had she not become a concierge at one of the largest and busiest hotels in Boston.

Natalie is Boston born and bred. As the sociable person that she is, she likes to take care of her guests, advising them about the ever changing happenings in the city and help them have a good time away from home. One way she does this is by sending her guests sightseeing with Old Town Trolley Tours and to other area attractions that are available on the Trusted Tours & Attractions vendor website. What she likes about Old Town Trolley Tours is that “it is a quality tour”, a good value, it’s affordable to her guests. She has never received a complaint about the service and it makes the Westin Copley Place Hotel look good. She has taken the Old Town Trolley Tour twice and, even as a local, Natalie said she has learned something about her native city each time. Now that is a compliment!

Natalie is a homebody and in her spare time likes to spend time with her family, boyfriend Gedeon and their toddler son Elias. She met Gedeon, her best friend (who also happens to be a concierge) when they worked together at the Westin Copley Place Hotel. That was just another perk of working at the Westin. Since becoming a mom, Natalie said that Elias has taught her to be a better listener, more patient and motivates her to be the best person she can be. Of course, these are all the traits a great concierge needs.

I would like to thank the concierge team at the Westin Copley Place Hotel, Jen Morotto, Dennis Sawyer, Frank Gallagher, Marise Rice, Lori Coyle, Regina Rossi, as well as Natalie Watkins, for all they do to promote Boston, and Old Town Trolley Tours, to their guests. It is a joy to work with them.

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In The Kitchen With

Cathy Hutchinson

It is January in Boston and everyone has resolved to eat healthier in 2015. This recipe is so easy to make, even the quinoa is cooked right in the pan for a quick, healthy, nutritious, and tasty one pot meal.

**One Pan Mexican Quinoa**

**Ingredients**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 jalapeno, minced
- 1 cup quinoa (red or white, your preference)
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- (15 ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 cup corn kernels
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 avocado, halved, seeded, peeled and diced
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro leaves

**Directions**
1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add garlic and jalapeno, and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 1 minute.
2. Stir in quinoa, vegetable broth, beans, tomatoes, corn, chili powder and cumin; season with salt and pepper, to taste. Bring to a boil; cover, reduce heat and simmer until quinoa is cooked through, about 25 minutes. Stir in avocado, lime juice and cilantro. Serve immediately.

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Prep Time 10 minutes
Cook Time 25 minutes
Total Time 35 minutes
Yield 4 servings
BACKGROUND

My name is Bernie Casco and I was born and raised in San Francisco, California. I loved growing up in San Francisco because of its diversity and stunning scenery. There are so many views that catch your eye that even being a native I would have to stop and appreciate. There was always so much to explore growing up and every neighborhood had its own charm and something new to discover.

For college I decided I wanted to have an experience that was different than anything I was used to so I decided to go to college in the desert. I earned my degree in Sociology with a minor in Spanish from the University of Arizona. After college I moved back to San Francisco and eventually found my way into the tourism industry and I was hooked.

My last job was as Site Manager at Red and White Fleet, a sightseeing cruise company that operated tours under the Golden Gate Bridge and around Alcatraz. I took a lot of pride in being able to share my enthusiasm and develop a team that showcased my hometown to visitors from around the world. It’s the enthusiasm and pride of being the face of the city you represent that leaves a lasting impression with guests and makes all the difference in their experience. While in that position I also had the opportunity to travel and represent our sightseeing cruise company at a few trade shows in Buenos Aires and Mexico City opening me up to a whole new level of excitement about the tourism industry.

Knowing I had found an industry I planned on being in for a longtime I decided to challenge myself and move across the country and try my hand on the East Coast. I chose Boston because of its familiarity, as I spent a few of my summer breaks as a kid exploring the city with my sister who was in grad school here at the time. Plus, what better place than Boston where it all began? I moved in the winter so I had some time to adjust to living in snow for the first time and I still get pretty excited when I see flurries. In the spring I found an opening as a sales rep for Old Town Trolley and haven’t looked back since!

Q | What is your most treasured possession?
A | Technically not in my possession yet but my father’s Purple Heart medal is something I value immensely. In my possession…would be an authenticated champagne bottle used in the locker room celebration from the 2010 World Series. I’m a die-hard San Francisco Giants fan and it was their first title since relocating to San Francisco in 1958 so it’s priceless in my opinion.

Q | If you could choose one reality TV show to be on, what would it be?
A | It would be Hotel Impossible on the Travel Channel. It would be fun to be one of the guests that got to share my opinions with Anthony Melchiorri and see the positive changes inspired by better business and hospitality practices or sometimes lack thereof because of stubborn owners reluctant to change. I’ve been obsessed with this show since its beginning.

Q | What is your favorite vacation spot?
A | Isla Mujeres, Mexico. It’s an island in the Caribbean Sea just outside of Cancun. Great beaches, coral reefs, sea turtles, and at night when most of the tourists have left it is overcome with a peaceful calmness.

Q | What is your greatest fear?
A | Somewhat random considering I previously worked on and enjoy being on the water, but getting lost at sea is one of my biggest fears.

Q | What three things will you always find in my refrigerator?
A | Cheese, salami, and a gallon of milk
On December 10, 2014, I finally received the okay to move forward with Washington DC’s newest tour offering, Arlington National Cemetery Tours. When I received Chris’ email, I remember thinking, “Wow! How are we going to pull this off?” The previous provider reported annual ridership of 350,000-400,000 and at the risk of sounding arrogant, are we really that good? Of course we are! “We Got This,” I said to myself.

Then the leadagement teams in Washington DC, St. Augustine and Key West collectively got down to business. People throw around the phrase, “All hands on deck” all the time, but over the past month, we have lived and breathed it. This was when the phrase, “We Got This” was first uttered.

Our marketing efforts would have to include designing a new website, updating existing websites and designing a logo, rack card, [eventually] a brochure, pull-up banners, box office murals, pricing boards, tram wraps, trolley wraps, shuttle bus wraps and tour stop signs. But that team made it all look so simple.

Our human resources efforts would include naming an Operations Manager, Assistant Operations Manager, conducting a job fair and onboarding approximately fifty CASTmembers. Job descriptions had to be developed, wages had to be determined, and paperwork (my goodness…the amount of paperwork) had to be completed. We then had to determine the uniform and name tag design. But that team made it all look so simple.

Operationally, we had to write a script for a 45-60 minute tour, plan a route and train CASTmembers on both. We had to “find” trolleys, shuttle buses, trams, and a golf cart. We had to take vehicles that were slated to go to other HTA locations. We had to find a facility somewhat near the cemetery, register all of the new vehicles as well as the HUGE existing fleet. But that team made it all look so simple.

On the IT front, we had to get our hands on desktop ticketing machines and all peripherals, mobile ticketing machines, phones, computers, printers, modems, routers and radios. Looking at all of the the cabling alone gave me a headache! We also had to get internet service, phone service, ticketing software licenses and a myriad of other IT-related “stuff” that this operational guy can’t even imagine. But that team made it all look so simple.

Our Maintenance Department also had to be included because after all, we’ve never had tram-type vehicles here in DC, so we don’t have much experience in maintaining them...but we had about 45 pieces of equipment on their way. But that team made it all look so simple.

Who would do group sales and charters? Yep...another position and process that had somehow slipped through the cracks. Procedures, phone numbers, computers, printers, credit card machines all followed.

Now, let’s revisit the notification date. We were given the green light on December 10 that tour operations would need to begin on January 1. Easy mathematics told us that we had 21 days to get all of this done. Everyone agreed, “We Got This!”

On a personal note, during that 21 days, my son graduated from college in a city almost 700 miles away and we also had Christmas. Vacation? Yeah, I had planned a two-week vacation to attend my son’s graduation and spend Christmas with my out-of-state family. I met with my local leadagers and was assured “We Got This.” They actually went on to say that I would only be in their way if I didn’t take my vacation. I wasn’t quite sure how to interpret that, but on December 13, I left on my two-week vacation anyway.

While I was gone, flights and hotels were booked; meetings, conference calls, phone calls, emails, and text messages all ensued; and what I found when I returned from vacation on December 29 was truly unbelievable! From the local team, to the regional team in St. Augustine to the corporate team in Key West, this company came together in an awe-inspiring manner and [quite literally] got down to business.

HTA Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operations Officer, Chris Belland and Ed Swift IV, respectively, visited Washington DC to lend the moral support they both are so fondly known for. After spending these few crucial days with Chris and Ed, I know now more than ever, why this company is so incredibly successful. These men gave their opinions and tried to keep everyone motivated, but they essentially let us run full
throttle with our new product. Not too many executives would do that. Most would want to micro-manage the process to death. For this, gentlemen, the CAST of Washington DC salutes you both. At one point, I remember saying to Chris, “I mean no disrespect by this, but We Got This.”

January 1, 2015 was the first day of operation for Arlington National Cemetery Tours, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Old Town Trolley Tours of Washington, Inc. As I stood outside on that chilly Virginia morning, gazing out over Arlington National Cemetery, I reflected on the magnitude of what we had been charged with. I reflected on the honor and privilege of being chosen to provide this tour. I reflected on the pride that I can’t even describe. I reflected on the enormous effort that went into getting this tour up and running. I reflected on the caliber of individuals who, at a moment’s notice, came together in an act of solidarity that I will always remember. And finally, I reflected on those words that had been uttered a hundred times during the month of December: “We Got This!” No truer words were ever spoken.

The Arlington Chapter Begins
by Loretta Pinkney; Operations Manager, Arlington National Cemetery Tours

January 1, 2015 kicked off a new chapter in the history of Historic Tours of America, and a new chapter in the lives of 35 dedicated CASTmembers. The first tour rolled out from the Arlington National Cemetery Welcome Center carrying Chris Belland, CEO, and Ed Swift IV, COO. David Curtis had the honor of being our first narrator, and did an outstanding job. Our tour is swiftly gathering kudos from Cemetery staff and guests alike.

After spending the past year training with both OTT DC and the DC Ducks, I was selected to be the new Operations Manager for ANC Tours, and Dwon Gillis joined me full-time as the Assistant Operations Manager. I cannot begin to express how exciting and humbling this opportunity is to me. Our tour is swiftly gathering kudos from Cemetery staff and guests alike.

Beyond The Hat
by Jamie Todd Hamilton; Super Conductor

Being a tour guide in DC is fantastic. Touring the nation’s capital with friends from all over the world constantly refreshes my experience and deepens my understanding of how the government is viewed by, “We The People.” It’s especially rewarding when someone thanks you for your insights, laughs at your jokes or sends in a comment card with your name on it. When you’re having a great day, it’s usually reflected in your hat. Your hat is personal. It has over the years gained mementoes; pins, notes, and currency from all over the world. It’s that place where people show you that they’ve
enjoyed the moment with you.

There are some days, however, that go beyond the hat. Sometimes it’s not about a tip or a laugh or the WOW of information. Sometimes you really learn a lot; most of the time you never see it coming.

I was conducting a Monuments By Moonlight tour on a rainy night in November. The nights were getting longer and the air was cold; especially cold down by the Potomac. It had been a pleasant day, but the weather changed rapidly and a cold rain came through for a few hours before nightfall. The Lincoln Memorial glowed in the cool after rain as I pulled to our stop. I gave the lay of the land to our guests and asked them to return in half an hour. I smiled as I watched the ponchos come on and the umbrellas open. Looking after the last of our guests I saw the slow moving outline of a family walking slowly against the grain. Dad was shivering. Mom, wearing dad’s coat, was pushing a baby’s buggy with a competitor’s poncho stretched across the top. Two young boys looked exhausted. They walked toward the trolley.

“You look like you’ve had a long day,” I said. “Can you help me find something?”

“So you know where the other company picks up?” He asked. “We haven’t seen them in a long time.”

“I believe their pick up for the night tour are the same as ours.” I said. “But, I haven’t seen them here yet.”

“They told us it was along Constitution Avenue. “ Dad was saying and then Mom broke in. “That was almost two hours ago.”

I understood then that they had been on a day tour with another company and that they had been waiting without shelter throughout the height of the rain storm. “Where are you trying to get to?” I asked.

“We just want to get back to our hotel, get out of these clothes and sit down somewhere comfortable and eat.” Mom’s voice was waverer as she tried to hold back the frustration and tears from a long and trying day.

“What hotel?”

“Fairfax.”

I made a call. “Dispatch, I’m at, The Lincoln Memorial and I have guests here that need assistance. I’m going to run them to their hotel and I’ll be back in ten minutes if anyone is looking for me.”

“10-4.”

“Climb in friends,” I said, “your hotel is not very far away.”

“We weren’t sure exactly.” Dad said helplessly.

“I know, Washington is a confusing city.”

So, what’s the point? Did they leave me a great tip? No. “I’m sorry,” said dad, “I can’t give you anything for your trouble. You really have been wonderful.”

Did they say nice things about me to the company? I hope so.

As mom was leaving I could see that she had been taken to her emotional limit. “Hey,” I said, “I don’t think they tried to hurt you on purpose.” She walked up to me, put her hands on my cheeks, and kissed me above the eyebrow. The electricity of that kiss spoke volumes. She felt abandoned and then rescued. I spent ten minutes doing something that I do everyday, and for that I was given something that I’ll never forget.

So, what did I learn?

I take time to give clear directions. I ask if everyone understands me. I remember that not everyone knows the city the same way that I do. I say to myself, “They’re on vacation today. How can I help them?”

I help as best I can, because I don’t ever want someone to get the kiss that I got because of me.

It’s Training Time in Our Nation’s Capital

by Eric “Mr. E” Whitehead; Head Tour Conductor

January welcomed a brand new class of 19 trainees to OTT DC. And let me tell you something, they are excited and they are making us excited about our upcoming season. We intend to have them in tip top shape before our beloved Cherry Blossom Season. With names like Professor Jim, Grasshopper, Sunny and Mr. Wonder, we believe that we have a GREAT group of trainees on our team. With the acquisition of Arlington National Cemetery, we are beefing up our CAST here in the city to ensure that we have a highly successful 2015 season. Under the direction of our esteemed Operations Manager, Eric Chapman, this class is far more advanced in their training than classes before them. By the end of the very first week, because of some great planning, several new CASTmembers were already prepared to take the test to become professional commercial drivers. Within the first week, they had somewhat, already learned to give our guest “The Pickle”. They definitely know what the pickle is and how we use it.

Everyone on staff is pitching in to ensure that this class receives nothing but first rate training. Our Safety Officer, Mr. Holiday, came in to ENSURE that they were well versed in safety. Our Charter Manager, Abe Burgos, gave them a fantastic session on enthusiasm. Lead Conductor Colin McLaren, and I are pitching in to help with the orientation and training as well. CDL trainers, Michael Hart and Jamie Hamilton, are working with them to make sure that the circle check and all CDL requirements become second nature. Loop training and night tour training is coming up fast. OTT DC is moving swiftly with this class, but we are effective and efficient in our training processes. We aim to turn out the best new class in the company. Our plan is to have them enjoying the job and making money in the tip hat as soon as possible. By preparing them as early and as best we can, we anticipate that this group will be with us for a long time to come. We anticipate longevity.

Safety, training and instilling a love for what we do, will be the catalyst in creating future leaders from this class. We have already had several of our trainees comment that they really didn’t know what they were getting into when they came to our job fair, but they had no idea that it would be this much fun. It’s week two now and the class is moving in several different directions. Those with CDL licenses are working on obtaining their B Class and passenger endorsements and honing their driving skills. Those needing their license are working as quickly as possible to obtain a permit and a license. Some are studying the city and its rich history but all in all EVERYBODY is doing something to prepare them for an exciting, fun filled and rewarding 2015 season. Again, we are super excited about this class and we can’t wait to show them off to the world. Look out Boston, Key West, San Diego, St. Augustine and Savannah, here comes Washington, DC, full steam ahead.
Onboarding is an Art, Not a Job
by Nazha Salhi, HR Specialist

Lately it seems all I do is benefit packaging for the open enrollment period, 90 day benefit packages, and onboarding new CAST members. I’m up to my elbows in new hire paperwork right now. Not only have we hired more than 30 new CAST members for Arlington National Cemetery Tours, Inc, but we have hired over 25 new conductors for the trolleys. It seems every month is a new job fair, every week is a new audition, and every single day is a new class starting. This kind of off season keeps a girl wishing for the slow days of the season. Onward and upward we go, to heights we have never seen before.

We Aren’t Just Selling, We are Running
by Abe Burgos, Charter Rep

There’s actually not much to report on my front. I know Norm Allen is busy with groups in Arlington Cemetery. It’s advertising season, so Terrie Thomas is crazy busy on her side. Trolley charters made its yearly goal before Thanksgiving. How do we remain successful and still keep our customer service in tact?

We wake up running.
“What?” you may ask yourself.
We wake up running.

Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up, it knows it must outrun the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the slowest gazelle, or it will starve. It doesn’t matter whether you’re the lion or a gazelle-when the sun comes up, you’d better be running.

That’s our secret. We are runners. Are you?
Happy (Conventional) New Year!

by Charlie Brazil; General Manager

As you will see in the article below, we have much to have celebrated in 2014 and to be excited for in 2015, and I for one feel supremely blessed to be able to work in such a lovely city for a wonderful company and alongside a spectacular CAST! I want to recognize our OF THE YEAR CASTmembers, who will be given their awards at our annual “post” holiday party on 1/23. I can tell you that it is insanely difficult to pick one exemplary CASTmember from each of our categories as we have so many that go over and above on a regular basis, but I do believe we have chosen the best of the best, so I am sure these folks will be as proud to represent their operation as we are to recognize them. Join me in congratulating Ralph Cowart- Conductor of the Year, Jane Erskine- Sales Representative of the Year, Joe Pellatreau- Supporting CASTmember of the Year, Spangenberg- Ghosts & Gravestones CASTmember of the Year and last, but certainly not least, Dennis Pellegrino- Rookie of the Year. Great job folks, your ability to shine in a sky full of stars is worthy of high praise and I am so thankful to have each of you on our team!

As the best year in this company’s history draws to a close, I want to be sure to thank my entire CAST and in particular my Leadagement Team- a group that does a terrific job assuring the highest level of excellence in what we do and who we are, every day. Thank you all for the great work you do EVERY DAY! I am abuzz with enthusiasm as to what 2015 will bring us, hold on, just like 2014 we are going to get there, FAST.

Operations

by Jon Watkins; Operations Manager

Our daytime ridership results for the week of Christmas and into the New Year have been absolutely amazing! We aren’t sure where everyone came from but they were definitely in Savannah. The week that ended January 4th we were over our ridership budget for the daytime tour by 1,999 riders! The string of successes carried on through January 7th when we came back to earth and are officially in off season. The tumbleweeds will be rolling down River Street until Valentine’s Day when things start to ramp up again and we reenter season.

The Golden Pickle has been having quite a few lives in the last month or so. Sales Rep Holly Edenfield was the second winner of the Golden Pickle and has been having a lot of fun with it. You can find the Golden Pickle’s Facebook page at “OTT Golden Pickle page” and follow along as the golden pickle makes its way around Savannah. Holly had the Golden Pickle dressed up as a Ghost, Batman, Super pickle, Santa pickle and a Georgia Bulldogs tailgater. The Golden Pickle has been a topic of conversation many mornings while the CAST is gathering for morning briefing.

We officially entered the world of high tech here in Savannah on January 8 when we went live with a GPS system on all of the trolleys. David Roman from Synchromatics was here that week getting everything installed and all of the Conductors and Leadagers trained. Our mantra for rolling out the GPS has been “keep it simple” as it is a new way of operating the business for everyone involved. By April we should have the system fully implemented and all of the advertising in place for the guests to access the system. The guests will then be able to access the GPS website and find out the anticipated time that every trolley will be arriving at the stops and how many seats will be available on each trolley. How cool is that!! We hope that this change will reduce the tremendous amount of calls that we get asking when the next trolley will be arriving at the stops and how many seats will be available on each trolley. How cool is that!!

We made it through another Holly Jolly and Festival of Lights season and the numbers were up yet again this year. We partner with the Davenport House and the Westin hotel for the Holly Jolly tour. The tour is a great value for the guests and over and over the comment was made that they couldn’t believe all they got for the price. Guests got to enter the Davenport House and get a guided tour with it decorated as it would have been in the 1820’s. That was followed by a drive through the historic district where they learned about Christmas traditions from the past and had a lot of fun singing carols. The next stop was at the Westin for hot chocolate and a cookie and some time to wander through their great gingerbread houses display. The tour winds up with a trip through the Festival of Lights before the
old town trolley tours of savannah

guests return to the Welcome Center. The Holly Jolly tour is a lot of fun for the Conductors. Tony Hall had a great hat this year and I learned from Michele Price what a “Who” is. The Festival of Lights completed its third year and continues to grow each year. This year there were over 100 light displays set up along the racetrack course on Hutchinson Island. Guests on the Festival of Lights tour also received a voucher that they could use on anything at the Westin’s attractions on their Esplanade. These included a ferris wheel, bouncy, food and a number of other things. We met with the Westin for the wrap up and they have lots of great ideas for next year that will make both tour products even better.

Safety
by Kenny Gresham; Safety and Training Officer

Willie Dennard, a member of our Savannah Safety Committee, will be departing for Washington, D.C. in February and will become Depot Sales Manager there. Willie represented our sales reps in our monthly Safety Committee meeting.

Our Safety Committee was formed a few years ago to improve our safety program in Savannah. This was a huge endeavor, for we had covered safety issues during our monthly CAST meeting and called that a safety committee meeting.

This approach yielded some fruit but that was miniscule. When we first formed the committee, that has become so successful today, it centered on the inadequacies of a very old trolley fleet. We spent an endless amount of time bashing the mechanics for the failure of our trolleys. No matter how hard I tried to direct the discussion to issues that may hurt our guests or CASTmembers, the discussion always reverted back to the vehicles. Only when Willie and a couple of others from different departments joined the committee, did this change.

We finally began to look at the big picture. Some of the trolley discrepancy discussion was replaced by questions like, “Why did that depot umbrella blow into our guest’s Volvo?” “Could we have a better depot booth cover for protection against the sun at the Visitor Center to protect the sales rep?” (This came from Willie) “Can we call the city about tree limbs striking the G&G Trolley while it’s on tour?” All areas of the operation were represented and their safety concerns voiced.

The committee next voted to have the Of The Month winners for the first time come to the meeting. Jack Barrett came to one meeting and suggested we add a big oval mirror at the mirror check station so drivers could check rear lights when pulling into the barn at night. Boy was that a success! Lynette Williams representing the G&G Tour had the city fill in pot holes at the Gribble Haunted House. Once the issues were discussed and no finger pointing (Especially at the mechanics), a solution and someone responsible for that resolution was generated.

At the very next meeting, we go over the suggestions from the previous meeting and find out the status of the safety issue; whether it’s been resolved, getting resolved, or a resolution hasn’t been realized. Some things do get passed over, but by the second meeting, they are all too obvious and someone will be assigned responsibility for completion. The same procedure is followed meeting after meeting. The influx of new ideas, especially with the rotating Of The Month winners and keen eyes of our members looking for areas of improvement keeps the topics fresh.

Willie will leave big shoes to fill. Along with being a Safety Committee member, Willie commanded the larger depots where the majority of our guests, trolleys, and CAST members converge. Our very new, completely updated sign for guest boarding at the Visitor Center is pictured. Thank you Willie! What an idea!!

Vendor Happenings
by Bob “Colonel” Hunter; Vendor Representative

Well, the end is in sight, March 31 is just around the corner. We continue to grow in the vendor department and have added a couple of hotels. We have also added more & more people to do the on line vendor program. Through November we are about $145k over budget, which we are happy about! Planning now for next year to be even bigger and better.

Greetings from the Grave
by Garry Patrick; Ghosts & Gravestones Manager

The quieter months are upon us but we continue to show excellent numbers for the year. The Christmas-New Year’s period provided a good winter boost to our guys and we stayed very busy.

We are fortunate that we have kept our entire CAST over the slower months and, with the help of some new additions, we look to expanding our program with a second Ghost Tour product and a five loop schedule. That’s five trolleys running the loop each night, giving us the ability to run 15 tours a night!

Rest assured, we don’t sit still in Savannah.

Congratulations to Dennis, Travis Spangenberg and Mary Bright on being Ghosts & Gravestones CASTmembers of the month during this period.

Last of all, I want to thank everyone in the Savannah office for putting up with my occasional state of exhaustion as I try to come to terms with my twins. It’s been a testing period for me but I feel sure with all this new invigoration, we are going to have an even bigger and better 2015 with Ghosts & Gravestones! Till next time.
December 2014 - January 2015

Depot Sales
by Jim Rafferty; Depot Sales

As we head into the off season we continue to exceed our ridership and depot sales goals. It has been an amazing year and our sales staff continues to crush the competition. We have been fortunate to not really see too much winter weather. Most days have been almost like spring.

Human Resources
by Renee Mercer; Human Resources Manager

I hope everyone had memorable Holiday experiences this year! We were knee deep in recruitment during December and January. We held one job fair in December and two in January and were lucky enough to bring some great new CASTmembers on board for sales, admin, ghost and conductors. It was no easy task, but thanks to the input from several Leadagers, success was achieved. Ahh, teamwork!

We ended January with our Annual Holiday Party, which was graciously organized by our handy (unofficial) in-house event coordinator, Marcie Larkin (Groups and Charters Manager). Marcie worked her magic to ensure that everyone would be wow’d; needless to say, she was successful! The end of January also marked six months that I’ve been a part of Old Town Trolley Savannah, and although it hasn’t been without its challenges, I’ve definitely appreciated the learning, support, encouragement, laughter, and all around fabulousness of the OTT family! Now...let’s get to the warmer weather!

Maintenance
by Bruce Smith; Maintenance Manager

We are again in our off season, we are working diligently getting our fleet ready for the summer.

We are replacing carpeting, wood paneling, painting, and rebuilding complete dashes.

We added #173 to our ghost fleet and it is now receiving a new decal wrap to help improve the look of our ghost fleet, and #165 will soon be added to the ghost fleet.

We will be starting off the season with six new Mollys, that gives us 13 Mollys in all. That gives us the availability to run the day time loop and book more charters to help to increase our revenue. We had a great year and look forward to many more. Thanks again to all responsible for all the new Mollys. Have a safe year!

It’s “Off” Season!
by Kayla Black; Training

We have officially come into the off season here in Savannah, but that’s when the Training Department really kicks it into gear. This is Rookie Conductor training season, and it is in full swing. As of right now, OTT Savannah has welcomed six new conductors on board, who are all in various stages of the six week training process—from new hire orientation, to CDL training, studying for the tour guide badge, all the way up to script training. Helping with the CDL and Script training are several seasoned drivers. Just as I have in years past, I’m relying on Carl Williams and his CDL knowledge to help our rookies get through the ordeal of road testing. Ruben Algeria, Ralph Cowart and Tony Hall have all volunteered to help with the script training. It’s a daunting task to keep track of where everyone is and where they are going, but our new rookies are fantastic! I look forward to seeing them grow in the coming year!

Groups and Charters
by Marcie Covington; Group Sales Manager

December is such a wonderful time of year in Savannah! Savannah Christian’s performance of “The Journey” is unbelievable! The Journey draws tens of thousands from across the Southeast to experience life the night Christmas began. Our Vendor Manager, Robert Hunter plays the part of King Herod in this amazing production. Our orange and green trolleys are used exclusively by the church to provide transportation for all their guests. We feel honored to have this privilege and it turned out to be a total success.

As we move into January, we start with the transportation for Enmark’s Savannah Bridge run. It was amazing to see the fleet transporting thousands of runners over the bridge to start their run. As usual, our CASTmembers did an outstanding job without any major hiccups!
VENDOR SPOTLIGHT

DoSoto Hilton
Kim Chambless

by Robert “The Colonel” Hunter;
Vendor Sales Manager

Greetings from the Hilton Savannah DeSoto! I have had the pleasure of working with our team here at the DeSoto for just over 20 years and as many of my tourism partners we love what we do! Our property, the Hilton Savannah DeSoto is located in the center of Historic Savannah, we are surrounded with rich history, beautiful mansions, garden squares, theaters, shopping and restaurants all at our guests doorsteps. We feature 246 guestrooms with great views of our city and 20,000 square feet of flexible meeting space including our newly renovated Harborview room located on the 15th floor with panoramic views of our beautiful city. A great way to explore our historic district is with a historic tour or ghost tour package. We have enjoyed through the years our partnership with Old Town Trolley Tours for taking care of our tour and concierge needs; their gracious and knowledgeable team assists our guests on a daily basis taking care of the many questions and requests.

Old Town Trolleys has been a valued partner as well with our conferences and group business assisting in arranging specialty tours or off-site transportation to unique venue events thus making a groups experience seamless and memorable. We have enjoyed our partnership and the support from their team.

Savannah Continued...

Next we have an event that is especially special to my heart! In 2009 The Savannah Wedding Counsel launched the project entitled Weddings for Warriors. The event provided free wedding ceremonies and vow renewals to active US Military personnel. That project turned into Weddings for Warriors, Inc.

Weddings For Warriors, Inc. (W4W) joined other businesses in the wedding, hospitality and tourism industries in the Savannah area to create individual ceremonies for each couple. Warriors are invited from across America to participate in the event. In the past years, volunteers from across the Southeast, from Wisconsin to Florida provided goods and services at no cost to the SWTC or to the couples. This is how I got involved in this amazing event. I am a certified Event and Wedding Planner and was asked to direct ceremonies on that magic day. When I arrived for the first time and brides started to arrive for hair and makeup, the emotions that they all had for us volunteers was amazing. I made sure that each of them knew that we all couldn’t give enough time for them for the sacrifices they have made for our country. Can’t keep from shedding tears at each wedding ceremony, first dance and cake cutting. I will continue to volunteer for the life of this project and can’t say thank you enough to all our warriors.

We will end our big events in Savannah with the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade where we transport some of Savannah’s finest community leaders. Our parade is around three hours long and shuts down the historic district to allow everyone to honor Mr. King. Hope everyone is staying warm and we will see ya’ll in the spring!
Savannah Fresh New Photos!

In November, Historic Tours of America’s Marketing Department, Monica Munoz and Tania Alpizar joined forces with John Penney and Blackdog Advertising to capture Georgia’s First City, Savannah. Here are some photos from the shoot!

facebook.com/savannahtours
twitter.com/savannahtours

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER
Linda Ferguson, 5 years
Garry Patrick, 4 years
Travis Spangenburg, 1 year
Jennifer Laraway, 1 year
Sharon Horne, 1 year
Oscar Floyd IV, 1 year

RETAIL
Venice Sharon, 12 years

JANUARY
William Haegelin, 8 years
Alex Alexander, 8 years
Larry Strong, 5 years
Jody Leyva, 4 years
Donald Hendrix, 4 years
Sharon Gray, 4 years
James Beam, 4 years
Timothy Conway, 3 years
Paul Chauvin III, 3 years
Gregory Beach, 3 years
Cheri Barclay, 3 years
Cathy Vaccari, 2 years
Margaret Benevides, 2 years
Levinie Wooten, 2 years
Barri Marshall, 2 years
Judith Hightower, 2 years
Michael Harris, 2 years
Oscar Floyd, 2 years
Ralph Cowart Jr., 2 years
Brenda Hankinson, 1 year
Khamilla Shellman, 1 year
Michele Price, 1 year
Dennis Pellegrino, 1 year
Theresa Floyd, 1 year
James Fields, 1 year
Richard Anderson, 1 year

WELCOME ABOARD

Jenny Shear
George Hickman
Scott Leekley
Sherree Teston
Lea Adams

DECEMBER
Andy Anderson, Conductor
Mark Sullivan, Sales Rep
Kim Evans, Supporting
Melody South, G&G

OF THE YEAR
Ralph Cowart, Conductor
Jane Erskine, Sales Rep
Joe Pelletreau, Supporting
Travis Spangenburg, G&G
Dennis Pellegrino, Rookie

December 2014 - January 2015
Sea Lion Rescue  
by Captain George Adams; SEALS

It’s days and times like these that we realize here at San Diego SEAL Tours, that we truly are part of our community. From Christmas through the New Year we spotted several new sea lion pups being born down at the San Diego Bait barges. One sea lion pup in particular, now known as Ducky or sea lion 16, caught our attention, this particular sea lion pup was without mama and no daddy to be seen anywhere. We kept close attention to this little guy and through the weeks he was getting thinner and thinner with less mobility, looking fairly emaciated. We had contacted Sea World in efforts to collect this pup and rehabilitate him, in order to bring him back to the wild.

One rainy Sunday here in San Diego just happened to be this guy’s lucky day heading out on our first tour leaving Seaport Village at 10:30am with a crew of seven aboard. We conducted our tour as normal, heading down towards San Diego Bait barges to see these magnificent mammals in their natural habitat (lazing all day). We got down to the bait barges and spotted once again this little sea lion pup all by himself, all alone, no mommy, no daddy, so First Mate Heidi took a pic and we sent this pic to Sea World Mammal Rescue; they responded, telling me that they had a captain and a boat at the ready asking me to make certain that the sea lion would still be there by the time they were able to get out. On our second tour leaving Seaport Village at 1:15pm heading out into the bay passing the rocks commencing our water portion, a small sea lion was spotted in the middle of the channel circling looking somewhat in distress. We turned in his direction, now on scene, we stopped our prop, floating in position and this little sea lion pup circled our boat two times. We realized he had an orange peel (of all things) in his mouth. This told us that he had not been taught to hunt for himself, he had not been taught the basics of catching anything to live off of. After the second circling I had Sea World on the line, speaking with Jennifer from Sea World rescue; I had lost visual contact with the small sea lion after getting off the phone with Sea World. I asked our guests if they had seen the sea lion, everyone had lost visual contact. I explained to them that this could be a good thing, that he may not be as weak as I had initially thought and that he most likely went off to a platform to get up and out of the water to take care of himself. Continuing on and completing a tour, getting out of the water to commence a kelp check (to verify there was nothing on the bottom of the boat) before heading back underway and getting on the road again, walking around the vessel, there he was! We spotted this small, emaciated, young, scared, sea lion. We obviously stopped our tour and asked for a trolley to come collect our guests. Sea World was notified again and quickly responded. Sea World came out to collect this beautiful mammal and he is now safe and sound at Sea World rehabilitation center where he will be fed vitamins, taught to fish and rehabilitated to be sent back out into the wild again within three months. As time goes by I have been invited to call and ask about how he’s doing and get updates from sea lion 16 aka Ducky. All in all, one rainy Sunday here in San Diego turned out to be a wonderful day all around.

St. Vincent DePaul Village  
Children’s Holiday Party  
by Sebastian Biagioni; Old Town Market Leasing & Operations Manager

Thirty children ages 5-11, living in a Downtown shelter, joined us at the Old Town Market for our 11th annual St. Vincent DePaul Holiday party. The children enjoyed pizza, sodas, piñatas and holiday fun. The highlight of the visit was a gift to each child given by Santa and Mrs. Claus. The children had filled out wish list cards earlier in the month so that Santa knew exactly what they wanted. Santa and Mrs. Claus were played by our very own Christian Perez and Carmen Thulin. On the way home, the Trolley and its conductor Hatch took the children on an evening tour of holiday lights around the city.

For the children five years and under, Mr. and Mrs. Claus bring their gifts to St. Vincent DePaul and personally deliver them! A huge thank you to Trolley CASTmembers, Old Town Market Merchant, and staff as they all partnered together to make sure every child received a gift.

Over 170 children, with one or both parents, live at the Downtown San Diego shelter. All 170 plus children at the shelter were given a personalized gift. The children’s ages ranged from infants to 17 years of age at the shelter.

Jennifer Ryan, Children’s Services Program Manager, St. Vincent DePaul Village writes:

Hi Sebastian,
The kids had a FABULOUS time tonight. While on the Trolley one of the children said to me, “This is the best night ever!”

I can’t thank you enough for everything that you and your team do for our kids each year. Please make sure they all know how much the kids appreciate them.

Jennifer Ryan  
Children’s Services Program Manager,  
St. Vincent DePaul San Diego
Las Posadas

63rd Anniversary Las Posadas

This centuries-old tradition is being celebrated in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park for the 63rd consecutive year. The Park Merchants Association reenacted the biblical journey of Mary and Joseph through the town of Bethlehem. The event began in the afternoon with carolers and children’s choirs in the state park, with the live theatrical procession starting at Sundown. There was a piñata party for all the children in the park’s activity area. The Old Town Market was at the center of it all distributing and lighting candles throughout the night’s procession. The Market was able to be the main point for donations and information.

Holly Jolly Trolley Tour
by John Savage; Operations Manager

The 2014 Holly Jolly Holiday Trolley Tour excelled its second year in a row. Last year our ridership was up over 41%. This year it increased 43%! The preshow in the Old Town Market courtyard really set the mood for our guests. Once everyone is in a sing along mood it’s out on to the Trolley for a Holly Jolly caravan. The highlight of the tour is Garrison Street in Point Loma with its spectacular houses and City views. To make the guests want to come back next year we end with the song Feliz Navidad as we return to Old Town State Historic Park. A big thank you our Conductor Elves: Chris “Curly” Chiotras, Larry Usall, Richard Smith, Tony Salter, Brian Richard, Patricia Vanderwerff, Susie Vetter, Rodney Foster, John “Red” Lindsey and Craig Johnson.

New Offices Finally Completed
by Erin Smith; Office Manager

It has been a long, difficult process to get settled into our new offices here in San Diego, but we worked together as a team and we are now fully operational! There was a surprising flood that foiled our first attempts to move in. New carpet was soaked with street water, files were damaged, and lower walls were ruined; but after a relatively short period of time, after the construction crew worked their magic, we were able to make the move. The upside to the unfortunate flood was that it forced us to purge the offices! We successfully cleaned up our spaces, recycled anything we could, trashed the remaining items we could and reorganized everything. Things are going smoothly now and with our move taking place on December 24th, it was the perfect Christmas gift for all of us.

Safe Driving Awards
by Bob Ross, Safety Officer

In 2014 Old Town Trolley and SEAL Tours had a total of 39 Conductors and Captains that, combined, drove about a half million miles. Thirty five of those drivers (90%) qualified for safe driving awards. 100% of the drivers receiving safe driving awards earned the maximum award available.

- 6 YEARS: Stan Henson and Don Kaye
- 5 YEARS: Richard Smith, Larry Usall and Capt. Bob Williams
- 4 YEARS: John “Bones” Barton, Deb Hildebrand, and Bill “BW” Walker
- 3 YEARS: Mike Devin
- 1 YEAR: Arthur Burgess, Rick Diaz, David Erdman, Philip Fondaw, Rodney Foster, Bill Fox, Jim Fraley, Jon Laws, Brian Richard, Tony Salter, Stephen Scott, Vidal Sisneros and Susie Vetter

Congratulations to all for driving safe! Safety FIRST!
The Annual Mother Goose Parade in El Cajon, California kicks off the Holiday Season in Southern California and this year was no exception. Each year a few trolleys and our SEAL vehicle are invited to carry dignitaries and celebrities in the Largest Parade of its kind west of the Mississippi.

Captain George Adams and First Mate Heidi Aylen, crewed our amphibious vessel down the streets of El Cajon. Even though El Cajon is 25 miles inland from where our SEAL Tours operate, there were still cheers of recognition from the enthusiastic crowd.

Safety Award Winners

SEAL and Trolley Join Annual Mother Goose Parade

by Mark Keeler, Head SEAL

The Annual Mother Goose Parade in El Cajon, California kicks off the Holiday Season in Southern California and this year was no exception. Each year a few trolleys and our SEAL vehicle are invited to carry dignitaries and celebrities in the Largest Parade of its kind west of the Mississippi.

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Drought? December was Third Wettest Month in San Diego!
2014 marked the 3rd year of a severe drought in San Diego. We did receive a little relief however when a warm winter storm rolled in from Hawaii. The so-called “Pineapple Express” dumped a significant amount of rain in a very short time and where a double rainbow could be seen from our SEAL at Seaport Village. It caused massive flooding in downtown San Diego not to mention flooding our new offices!

Holiday Party
by Scott Schwarz Advertising Sales Representative
San Diego CASTmembers celebrated the holidays and the end of a prosperous year at the Old Town Tequila Factory. With 140 in attendance the party sprawled out of the banquet room and onto the patio; which featured a lighted fountain, chip and guacamole bar and the highlight was our green-screen photo booth. It was a cool winter night, just after a large storm and the air was a crisp 60 degrees with a wonderful view of Old Town and out to the ocean. The good people of OTT-SD kept warm with hot space heaters and cold margaritas as holiday music and laughter filled the pauses in conversation. The food featured meats and seasonings from Southern Mexico and good cheer abounded. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful night out with a delicious dinner, recognition awards and gift certificates for all.

Teresa Arrives in San Diego
by Teresa Lampert, Depot Sales Manager
Teresa Lampert, new depot sales manager, arrives in San Diego!
As the new Historic Tours of America CASTmember, I’m very excited to be part of the family! My name is Teresa Lampert and I’m the new Depot Sales Manager in San Diego.
I have worked in the Tourism industry for over 20 years, having started as a Leisure Travel Agent, then quickly moving to the corporate side of the business, where I worked with Fortune 500 companies, taking care of their VIPs end executives, as well as organizing conventions, meetings and groups for them.

Because of my excitement for the Tourism industry, I became a Certified Tour Director and as such I have had the opportunity to take groups and travel with them to the Orient, South, Central and North America. I’m also a Certified San Diego Tour Guide.
I’m almost a native San Diegan, having moved here in 1992, but I was born in Peru. I love our beautiful city, its relaxed So-Cal culture, rich history and of course the weather!
I’m looking forward to sharing my excitement and experience in my new position as a Depot Sales Manager with my sales team. One of my goals is to provide our guests with impeccable service, top notch customer service and experiences of a lifetime here in San Diego so when they get back home they will talk about their memorable vacation experiences to their friends and families.

The end result is that our own jobs become more satisfying and rewarding.

Holiday Bowl Big Bay Balloon Parade and Game
by Erica Frost; Group Sales and Charters
The 37th annual National University 2014 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 USC Trojans vs. the Nebraska Cornhuskers. USC went on to defeat Nebraska 45-42 in one of the highest scoring Holiday Bowl games ever.

Coronado, La Jolla and Ocean Beach Holiday parades!
December was a fantastic month for showcasing our trolleys in several of the local Holiday Parades that we annually participate in. There was the 39th annual Coronado Christmas parade where we had a chance to advertise our Holly Jolly Trolley tour. The 57th annual La Jolla Holiday parade seemed like the perfect one to showcase our Beach Cruiser Trolley from our La Jolla/ Mission Beach Tour. Lastly, we had the honor of hosting our Mayor Kevin Faulconer on the Felicity wedding Trolley for the 30th annual Ocean Beach Holiday Parade.
Happy Holiday

G&G actor, Kilian Webster and conductor, Tim "Baron" Franc

Conductor Stephen "Clark" Kent providing the tunes

Charter Rep Leslie Nagy and boyfriend Andy Lehmann

Jennifer "J" LaBarre was awarded Conductor of the year

Conductor Michael "Bear" Giobbe and his wife Beth

Jim Mehigan, Supporting CASTmember of the year

Safety Officer/Trainer Sue Pye, the most popular person there...handing out drink tickets

Customer Service Reps Lauren Quinn, Sam Quaratiello, Tori Defarias, Devon Alves
2014 Party
It is my pleasure to showcase the Hillcrest Bed and Breakfast and my friend Ann Callahan, the Innkeeper. Ann has been a great supporter of Old Town Trolley Tours for many years. She comes from the corporate hotel background working for the Hyatt Corporation and then one day decided to open her own Bed and Breakfast. She is a Board Member on the San Diego Tourism Authority as well as the Hotel Motel Association. Hillcrest House is located in the vibrant, eclectic, urban neighborhood of Hillcrest which also happens to be where I live. It is a great base location for exploring all that San Diego has to offer; just 10 minutes to San Diego Beaches, Airport, Gaslamp Quarter, Balboa Park Museums, the Zoo and Old Town. Ann has several themed rooms such as the Old Town, Zoo, Coronado, Balboa and Gaslamp room. The Hillcrest House Bed and Breakfast has also received the Certificate of Excellence from Trip Advisor for the past three years. Carlos Murray from our Key West IT Dept. just recently stayed there and had an amazing time. Thank you Ann for being such a great supporter and friend!

I'm Philip: that's Philip with One “L.” San Diego native, 24 years a missionary to Japan, retired school teacher. This includes working with 5th graders and teaching English as a Second Language at the senior high level. I’ve enjoyed each of these jobs, but I’ve never had more fun than I am now, driving in circles around San Diego and showcasing my home town to nice people from across the globe. Being recognized by my co-workers is a real honor.

Who am I? Husband of one wife, father of two daughters and grandfather of two grandsons and big brother of one sister.

Q | What is your idea of perfect happiness?
A | Knowing that I am loved.

Q | What is my greatest fear?
A | Heights

Q | What do I most dislike in others?
A | Dishonesty. I value trust and acceptance in my friends more than all else.

Q | What is my greatest achievement?
A | That both of the children my wife and I have raised love the Lord.

Q | What is my favorite vacation spot
A | The mountain village we visited so many times: Karuizawa, Japan.

Q | Who are my favorite writers?
A | Jonathan Kellerman and the writer of Old Testament Psalms, King David.

I am blessed with health and a love of life. Though already drawing Social Security and the benefits of Medicare, I hope to continue conducting trolley tours for another two or three years. Then I may find a worthwhile place to volunteer my service.
San Diego Visitor’s Center Slated to Open in Spring

Sales rep of the Year: pictured David Thornton, Tyler Grubenhoff, Sales Rep Barbie Harrell and Rod LaBranche

SEAL team of the Year: David Thornton, 1st Mate David LaVigne, Captain Jim Saffer and Head SEAL Mark Keeler

Rookie of the Year: David Thornton, Conductor Craig Johnson and John Savage

Supporting CAST of the Year: David Thornton, Carrie Nunez and Rod LaBranche

November
Patricia Vanderwerff, Conductor
Barbie Harrell, Sales Rep.
Captain Jim Saffer and David LaVigne, SEALs
Carrie Nunez, Supporting

December
Stephen ‘Ponch’ Scott Conductor
David Mahl, Sales Rep.
1st Mate Tracy Ibarreta, SEALs
Oscar Alfaro, Supporting

Sales Rep of the Year: pictured David Thornton, Tyler Grubenhoff, Sales Rep Barbie Harrell and Rod LaBranche

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David Mahl, Sales Rep.
1st Mate Tracy Ibarreta, SEALs
Oscar Alfaro, Supporting

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

December
Carrie Nunez, 12 years

January
David Thornton, 12 years
Erin Smith, 9 years
Fausto Reyes Garcia, 1 year
Elena Garcia, 1 year
Fernando De Los Cobos, 1 year
SEALs
Frank Cleaver III, 14 years

San Diego Visitor’s Center Slated to Open in Spring

December 2014 - January 2015
The Nation's Storyteller

24

One of the best times of the year is doing our annual awards! We pull out the HTA Wheel of Fortune, and the Of the Year winners take a spin. From restaurant gift certificates to an iPad, you never know what you might win!

In Key West, we have an award that dates back to the Conch Tour Train before it was part of HTA. The CASTmember of the year award is voted on by the CASTmembers, and not selected by leadagers. This affirmation from your peers is a coveted award, as the person is the one who best exemplifies HTA standards of Commitment, Attitude, Sincerity, and Trust. This year, the CASTmembers of the Year are Grace Spencer, OTT Conductor, and Glenn Evans, CTT Engineer. Congratulations to all of our award members for setting the standards for the rest of our team!

Awards Season

by Linda Test; Key West General Manager

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‘Tis the Season

by David Galvan; Operations Manager

We have all heard the news that we are in the midst of a bad flu season. Reports say that the flu vaccine has missed the mark a bit but it is still highly recommended. We should all take precautions as we come into contact with many people each and every day. That being said I have listed some items that the CDC says will help minimize your chance of getting the flu:

1. Avoid close contact: Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

2. Stay home when you are sick: If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

3. Cover your mouth and nose: Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

4. Clean your hands: Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth: Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6. Practice other good health habits: Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding the Flu, please take a look at the CDC website (http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm).

As our “Season gets into full swing let’s stay healthy and safe so we can feel great and give our guests a great experience.

Winter in Key West

by Mary Martinez; Office Manager

...a bit different from the rest of the world. When the so called cold front comes in, the cast are bundled up, but still wearing shorts. The office staff prepares in October for the Key West Winter. Marta and Sabrina start taking orders for winter apparel in October. You always have those few who say “I don’t need a jacket” in the keys. I beg to differ. I know how the wind can make it feel like it’s 40° and the weatherman says it’s 60°. The snowbirds are here for season and will leave when the steamy weather gets ready to arrive.

The Nation’s Storyteller
Molly Moyer
Proud Owner Joe and Beth Moyer

I’m Molly. I am a beautiful Golden-Doodle that lives with Joe and Beth Moyer. They rescued me as a very sick puppy in 2008. We are very lucky to have found each other! I enjoy fetching the newspaper each morning, gardening, long naps, and I love to travel. I am a happy girl!

Cruising
by Kevin Delahanty, Excursion Liaison

Here we are in the heart of season. Over the next couple of months we have 139 ships in port. Even in the busy times we find time to continue training with Shore staff from ships. We had a FAM tour with Celebrity Constellation. We are trying to rotate sales reps to further our training efforts. Some of the new tours we are working on are a Rum and Cigar Tour, Art Gallery Tour and Beach Shuttle. Even though it’s cold in the North, the water is still great.

twitter.com/keywesttours
facebook.com/keywesttours

CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT
Kurt Brandt
Safety Officer; Key West

BACKGROUND
I met my wife in high school, we started dating when she was a freshman and I was a sophomore. We fell in love and got married on August 16, 1980. Lust turned to love and we have been hanging out for the past 37 years. (Married 34.5)

We have two children, daughter (Samantha) and son (Zachary). Samantha works for the Maryland D.O.T and Zachary works for Montgomery Public Schools in Maryland. Samantha is married and brought us a wonderful grandson (Darren).

We lived in Maryland until 2005. I was offered a position at our facility in Ohio. We lived there until May 2013. After 34 years with my prior employer I decided it was time for a change. I retired, and my wife and I sold most of our stuff to give us the flexibility to move around the country. Since she really liked Key West and talked about living here someday, this seemed perfect time to give it a try. I discover HTA when I started researching Key West. Seemed like it might be fun, my family and friends thought I’d be good at it.

Q | What is your idea of perfect happiness?
A | I’m living it today with my wife. Katherine Hepburn said “The more you have, the less time you have to enjoy it.” We can fit everything we own in our truck and tow her jeep. Life is simple, and we are enjoying it.

Q | What do you consider your greatest achievement?
A | Being happy with my life, wife and being a dad.

Q | What is your most treasured possession?
A | My family and sharing our new life with family and friends.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER
Pamela Lewis, 4 years

JANUARY
Aaron Andes, 7 years
Marvin Martinez, 6 years
Danial Jones, 4 years
Ashley Van Vleet, 1 year

WELCOME ABOARD
Norman Bruein
James Glavine
Matthew Newman

December 2014 - January 2015
Lessons in Leadership
by Eva Conway, Operations Manager

In November the Conch Train CAST enjoyed a Thanksgiving lunch while they were at work. Every year the Conch Train Gift Shop Manager, Magda Witczak gets the help of the gift shop and ice cream parlor CASTmembers help to cook turkeys for those working on Thanksgiving Day. Other CASTmembers bring in side dishes or dessert to go with it. From all the Conch Tour Train CASTmembers I want to thank Magda for making another Thanksgiving a little more enjoyable for those who had to work that day.

The month of December has the two busiest weeks of the year for the train. That is Christmas and New Year’s week. We also had our Holiday Light tours.

The Conch Tour Train CASTmembers went out on our own Holiday Light tours. We had two train loads and a great time.

As highlighted in the last Storyteller, the restoration of the Train Locomotive #108 was completed and engineer “JC” Schooler is is very happy to have his train back.

Now we’re looking forward to the start of our winter season when all the snowbirds come down to sunny Florida. That’s our busiest time of the year. Some of us are waiting for cooler weather. Happy New Year!

Always be Improving
by Justin Bahl, Depot Sales Manager

One of the characteristics I respect the most about Walt Disney was his desire to always improve himself and his product. There are those mythical stories of Walt Disney going around his amusement park amongst his guests, riding the rides and testing the park’s attractions, inspecting any and all elements in his endless search for ways in which he could make his extraordinary park even better. That mindset still rings true with the never complacent and ever redefining Disney Company even today as they are constantly improving upon their already monumental name. No matter what we are doing or what our job is here at HTA, we should strive to attain this same type of mentality. If you’re in a sales booth, don’t be satisfied with just making goal - instead aim to double or triple it. If you’re a driver, don’t try to just give a good tour - give a GREAT tour that will leave an impression so strong that your guests will come back wanting more. Just as it is important to learn from our faults and mistakes, it is equally imperative that we are able to look at what we already do “good” and further stretch it towards greatness. An outdated quote that I’ve always disliked is, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Well if “it” was broke, you wouldn’t be in business, and if you don’t make an attempt to improve, develop, or advance “it,” then you will find yourself left in the dust as your competition drives you out of business. I challenge everyone to make each day better than the last, pushing yourself and others past the limits of what was previously thought impossible or unattainable...you’d be amazed how contagious success can be.
Holiday Light Tour Winners!

First Place Winner - Bob and Fran Decker

Second Place – Armando Parra

Third place – Ruth and Wayne Kroehling

CHARTER SHOUTOUT!

Fort Zachary Taylor State Park Visitor Services

Known as Key West’s Best Beach, Ft. Zachary Taylor State park provides the best snorkeling from land in the Continental United States and the most popular place in town for beach weddings, private parties and receptions. The Blount family has been providing services in the State Park for almost 10 years. Kirsten B. Corpion is the Special Event Director hosting more than 300 wedding ceremonies per year. Kirsten offers a one stop shop providing everything you need to make your dream wedding come true. The family also runs The Cayo Hueso Cafe, using family recipes, situated right on the beach with a beautiful view of the Atlantic Ocean. There is a rental hut on the beach providing everything you need for a fun day in the sun. The Blount Family has also created the Key West Totem pole, which has become a Key West icon, seen all over the world and featured in magazines from Key West all the way to Italy. Tom Blount, Owner of Cayo Hueso Company, created the totem pole by using driftwood collected over the years, and Taylor Blount hand painted every directional sign on the pole. The Blount family has lived in Key West over 25 years & Cayo Hueso Company prides itself in being a long standing local family, owned and operated business.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER
Bayard “BJ” Andrade-Ward, 4 years
Isabel Perdomo, 2 years
Richard Sanders-Fox, 1 year
Tricia Richmond, 1 year

JANUARY
Frank Glander, 28 years
Cheryl Actor, 17 years
Mary Martinez, 10 years
Bryan Lewis, 6 years
William Kelly, 1 year

WELCOME ABOARD

CONCH TOUR TRAIN
Joseph Suttmann
Dominic Iannotti
Andrew Grzych
Alice Barr

twitter.com/conchtourtrain
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This enchanting guesthouse is located in the “Meadows Neighborhood” of Key West at 725 White Street. Authors Guesthouse was conceived to honor the literary masters who lived and worked in Key West. The historic Conch-style houses, suites, cottages and rooms contain works and artifacts of the author for whom it was named. Some of the more notable authors include: Tennessee Williams, Ernest Hemingway, Harry Truman, Margaret Truman, Thornton Wilder, and John James Audubon.

Upon entering the compound filled with an array of colorful foliage, you will see two charming cottages that were originally the living quarters of cigar makers, who enjoyed a thriving business here during the early 1900’s. The Pool Spa, hidden beneath thick tropical trees, is a delight. At night it is lit by soothing stained glass.

The main house has many windows, French doors, decks and terraces. In the office/lobby you can enjoy the vibrant, local artwork that covers the walls. This is where you can chat with your friendly concierge, Ramsey and plan the rest of your Key West vacation. She will be sure to steer you to the best restaurants, attractions, activities and the Old Town Trolley Tour.

Thank you Ramsey, for recommending the Old Town Trolley to your guests!
13th Annual Anniversary Party
by David Chatterton; General Manager

We held our 13th Annual Anniversary party in November. This has become the party of the year in St. Augustine for the hospitality industry and includes city officials and local business leaders. This year we had live entertainment from the amazing Red River Band. Our outdoor barb-b-que fit well with our 1908 theme here in Old Town and it was made even better with delicious side dishes provided by A1A Ale Works. The Raintree Restaurant provided outstanding desserts, the San Sebastian Winery, the St. Augustine Distillery and the Spice & Tea Exchange all served wine and spirits to our guests. Coca Cola provided soft drinks. And a huge thank you to Mint Magazine for helping to sponsor the raffle where we raffled off lots of prizes to our guests.

450th Anniversary of St. Augustine

St. Augustine has a new countdown clock that will mark St. Augustine’s 450th Anniversary since Pedro Menendez landed at the Mission Nombre de Dios. The idea for the clock came from Dana St. Claire and the 450th Commemoration. Historic Tours of America agreed to sponsor the clock and now the clock is prominently displayed at the Visitor’s Information Center. The clock will continue to countdown the time to Tuesday, September 8th at 8:00 a.m., the time that will mark the official anniversary. We look forward to a year of fun filled events leading up to the City’s 450th Anniversary.

Nights of Lights & Holly Jolly Trolley

St. Augustine celebrated their 22nd annual Nights of Lights in 2014. St. Augustine has been voted as one of the Top 10 places in the world to view the holiday lights by National Geographic. USA Today also voted us the 2nd best place to view holiday lights. This is quite an honor for St. Augustine. We had a record breaking year in 2014 and due to the enormous popularity of the Nights of Lights and the number of guests that ride our trolley each year we added live entertainment at the Visitor’s Information Center on the busier nights. This year guests were able to enjoy live music provided by the local school bands on select nights while waiting for the trolley. We even had OTT elves helping Santa out with serving hot apple cider and cookies at Potter’s Wax Museum.
Holiday Hat Contest

We held a Best Decorated Holiday Hat contest during the Nights of Lights this year. We wanted to encourage our CASTmembers to decorate their hats for the season. We had some awesome entries this year and it was difficult to choose just three winners. All of them were winners! 1st place, Michelle Fredette, won a $100 Amazon gift card, 2nd place, Jennifer Johnson, won a $75 Amazon gift and 3rd place, Dianna Thackwell won a $50 Amazon gift card.

Special Thank You to our Vendors

Every year we like to say thank you to our vendors for supporting us throughout the year by delivering trays of cookies or cupcakes for their staff to enjoy. This Christmas we had our General Manager, Dave Chatterton, and our vendor rep., Melissa Mezick, personally deliver delicious treats and as an added surprise, they brought with them Carolers dressed in Dickens era costumes. What a wonderful treat their hotel guests enjoyed to have Carolers sing Christmas songs while they ate breakfast.

Potter’s Wax Museum Renovations

Potter’s Wax Museum recently underwent some wonderful renovations inside. The new and improved Potter’s now has a Chamber of Horrors, we’ve added a costume display, and a casting and molding display as well.

Not only did the museum undergo these amazing renovations, but the figures got a “facelift” as well. It was a huge task to bring the older figures back to life, but thanks to Monte, Lindsay and their team of helpers, the museum is now livelier than ever!!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER
Robert Makin, 8 years
Mark Little, 6 years
Kathy Burnett, 4 years
Charlotte Harris, 7 years
Jennifer Johnson, 1 year
Paul Gaspereini, 1 year

ATTRACTIONS
Michelle Fredette, 2 years
Terry Herbert, 1 year

JANUARY
Teresa Akars, 17 years
Humberto Cabanes, 7 years
William McComb, 6 years
Thomas O’Brien, 5 years
Noble Lester, 4 years
William Chambers, 4 years
Davey Hairston, 3 years
Juan Salinas Gomez, 1 year
Lisa Romanelli, 1 year
William Rash, 1 year

ATTRACTIONS
Linda Manz, 1 year
Meghan Crawford, 3 years

RETAIL
Stefanie Horstmann, 1 year
Jaybird’s Inn
A Boutique Hotel for Active People
by Melissa Mezick; Vendor Representative

A Boutique Hotel for Active People opened in July of 2013; one of St Augustine’s newest hotels. Scott, the General Manager of the hotel, and his entire staff are dedicated to complete guest satisfaction. “It’s wonderful working with people that have the high standards of Old Town Trolley.”

Welcome to our boutique hotel, which means we’ll treat you like family and provide you the best living and sleeping experience in St. Augustine. As an “active living” hotel we offer clean and “green” rooms and we not only encourage, but will help you be active. We’ll show you how to tour the Old City by following our walking and biking routes (we’ll even provide FREE bikes). Also, you can work out in our “Activity Center”, swim in our beautiful new pool or we’ll arrange a variety of other activities for you.

If you’re looking for a more leisurely way to see the Old City, take an Old Town Trolley Tour; and they’ll even come and pick you up with their FREE shuttle service for a wonderful excursion around St. Augustine. After a day of healthy activity relax at the pool followed by a scrumptious meal at Jaybird’s Restaurant located next door where you’ll receive a 10% discount on all meals. Retire to your comfortable room to watch television on your 42” LCD TV with over 80 channels. Wake up to a cup of tea or Starbucks coffee in your room and then join us for a free continental breakfast in the lobby or have a full breakfast at Jaybird’s Restaurant. We are easy to find: corner of Highway US 1 and State Road 16 in historic St. Augustine.

CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Jennifer Weigle
Sales Representative, St. Augustine

BACKGROUND

I am a St. Augustine, Florida native (rare, I know) and actually grew up between the beaches and the historic district, which is where I work every day and love! I honestly could not see myself living anywhere else. I started with Old Town Trolley as a Sales Representative in October of 2011. Previously, I worked as an innkeeper at one of our historic bed and breakfast inns, actually opening it with a friend who purchased the property in 2008.

I immediately fit in with the Old Town Trolley family from the very first day and after three years continue to find it an absolutely amazing place to work. I cannot think of one single day that I was not excited about the approaching day. Each day is different here as it is a chance to meet new visitors and help make their vacation better. I also thoroughly enjoy watching our fantastic sales team here in St. Augustine reach their goals. Watching the entire organization supersede each year’s numbers and break new records through teamwork puts a huge smile on my face!

My family consists of my wonderful and hardworking Keith and our two young children Desiree (8) and Keith, Jr. (5). I absolutely love spending time with them at the movies, special events during holidays, family trips twice a year and yes – we visit all the sites in St. Augustine together several times a year. (A lot to explore right here in our own backyard). Other than spending time with family, I enjoy weight lifting and spend about five days a week at Planet Fitness and another day at home at my makeshift gym. I also love to swim, curl up with a good book, drink good coffee, and of course shop.

Q | Who is your main hero of fiction?
A | Alex Cross (James Patterson novels)

Q | What is your favorite vacation spot?
A | Harbor Lakes Marriott Resort – Orlando, Florida

Q | What is your favorite occupation?
A | Definitely SALES – where your earnings depend on your effort, believe in your product and attitude!

Q | What three things will you always find in my refrigerator?
A | Asparagus (seriously), sweet potatoes to throw in the oven and vanilla natural bliss coffee mate

Q | Who or what is the greatest love of your life?
A | My family!
If you really think about it, we spend more waking hours with the people we work with than our own families or spouses. This can be a good thing or a bad thing depending on who you work for and who you work with on a daily basis.

I started my career with HTA in 1985—two years after graduating high school! It seems so long ago! I grew up in the company learning everything I know about retail from Ed Swift III—traveling the world with he and Rosemary Pumar on buying trips, going to gift shows, developing custom products, opening new stores, expanding into new cities. We would call ourselves the Three Musketeers (or the Three Stooges depending on how the day was going)!

Now my question is...if Ed taught me everything I know about retail, does that mean if I make a mistake it is his fault? Just kidding! I do not make mistakes! LOL!!!!!!!

In June of 2013 I found out I had breast cancer at the age of 48. No words can express the range of emotions that you go through. First came surgery—single mastectomy, and then a port installed for chemo treatments—chemo was completed in Dec of 2013 and then I had radiation treatment which was completed in March of 2014. Then I had to continue on with one more dose of medicine every three weeks through September of 2014 thus completing all treatments.

When I called my Supervisor Rosemary Pumar and my General Manager Nelson Nodal to advise them of my situation and what I was facing above—they immediately jumped into action in making sure gift shows were covered and that I was not to worry about anything. Luckily I was able to travel for six months during treatments and Rosemary and Nelson made sure that I did not have to worry about anything. I was not able to travel for six months during treatments and Rosemary and Nelson made sure that I did not have to worry about anything. I called Ed Swift III to advise him and before I could finish what I was saying he said not to worry about a thing and that I was to concentrate on doing what I needed to get through this and HTA was behind me 100%.

Chris Belland and Piper Smith also gave me great support with positive emails and the best ice cream on the planet!

Dalia Angelosanto also stepped in and covered my store inventories and some of my gift shows and I am truly grateful for that.

There are a lot of you with HTA out there that sent me emails of encouragement throughout and I thank you.

Rosemary, Nelson, Chris and Ed III—each of you has said to me that you were amazed at my strength and attitude during this—but I think that is because of the support that I had from YOU all and my husband Dean. That support allowed me to have a weight lifted off my shoulders. I cannot thank you enough for what you did for me.

I had my final surgery for reconstruction on January 27, 2015 and my port removed! The final part of this journey. It is now all in the past!

Through the years I have been fortunate enough to work with HTA and feel like a part of a family. We have laughed together, cried together, celebrated accomplishments and overcome failures as a team. As I said—we spend most of our waking hours with the people we work with. I am one of the lucky ones to be able to say I love the people I work with and the company I work for.

One last thing—you would think that there would be no “silver linings” in my ordeal....but here are some:

1. I did not have a bad hair day for 8 months!
2. I did not have to shave my legs for a year!
3. I lost the 30 extra pounds I was trying to get rid of!
4. I got to go to my first New England Patriots game (thank you Shawn Ford!)

I want to wish everyone happiness and GOOD HEALTH!
Buyers Travels…
Gatlinburg, Sevierville and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee Show
by Lynn Dalton; Buyer

In early November, the buyers were off to Gatlinburg, Tennessee which proved to be a very successful show for all cities. Along with the buyers, Dexter Morse, Manager of the Washington Welcome Center, DC joined the team and now has a better understanding of how the buying process works! We were able to find great stock merchandise for most all markets and worked with several vendors to create some custom pieces for Washington and Boston. With these purchases, Dexter and the other markets will be able to have a fresh look for the upcoming season. Some merchandise is already in the stores and are doing very well. The team got an unexpected surprise visit from Ed Swift III, making this trip even more memorable! We were able to show Mr. Swift many of the great items that we located for the St. Augustine, Washington and Key West markets in specialty metal works signs.

Happy Thanksgiving
– Key West Style

Key West celebrated the Thanksgiving Holiday Island Style as we have done in the past on the beautiful lawn of the Truman Little White House. Mr. Greg Curry and a few helpers prepared lots of the side dishes for the event while many volunteers cooked turkeys and hams to share with the TSG/HTA family. Mr. Ed Swift III did the carving of the meats and others brought wonderful desserts of all kinds. There was a great turnout and the weather was perfect for an outdoor event. Thanks to everyone who rolled up their sleeves and pitched in to make this annual event a great success!

Key West Aquarium Sponsors FKOC Holiday Party
by Kirk Zimmerman; Head Engineer

Monroe County children and families in shelters through the Wesley House and Samuels House programs were our guests on Dec. 10, from 6-9pm at the Aquarium. They had a sit-down dinner, Santa and Mrs. Claus, face-painting, and of course gifts to open. Two HTA trolleys provided transportation to and from the party, and the Aquarium staff all volunteering to help out during this time of giving to families a little less fortunate.
2nd Annual Season Kick Off Party!

by Monica Munoz; Marketing Coordinator

HTA and its industry partners threw the 2nd annual Season Kick Off Party in Mallory Square on Wednesday, January 7th, 2015. Over 250 concierge staff, hoteliers, tour, museum, attractions and restaurant personnel came out in celebration. The party was a big THANK YOU for supporting us throughout the year!
List of Sponsors

Monica Munoz, Chris Belland, and Hawkeye

Chris Belland, Monica Munoz and Ed Swift presenting the raffles

KWAQ employees Kyle Knoblock, Kirk Zimmerman, and Jill Enloe-Hamill

Ed Swift and Fury’s Scott Saunders

Linda Test and Nancy Swift

Monica Munoz, Chris Belland, and Hawkeye

El Meson de Pepe’s Jose Manuel and Gabriel Solano

Fury’s Eliza Warren and Ben Hennington

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

December
Marion Hope Casas, 26 years
Freddy Varela Jr., 3 years

January
Benjamin McPherson, 35 years
James Sewell, 17 years
Frank Herrada, 17 years

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