



LETTERS FROM THE LEAGUE

League Membership,

We are excited to publish our third edition of the *Letters from the League*, a semi-annual digital publication of articles submitted by our CMEC graduates. At the Symposium held in Tulsa, Oklahoma in January, we were happy to welcome four new CMEC graduates to our ranks! Lynne Dickinson from Dripping Springs Ranch Park & Event Center in Dripping Springs Texas, Bert Rodriguez and Chris Pohst from the Southwestern Fair Commission in Tucson, Arizona and Matt Buchanan from WNC Agricultural Center in Fletcher, North Carolina. This brings us to a total of 23 graduates and we are expecting a large group to seek certification in 2020! Those eligible should expect to receive a certification application via email in July with the application deadline of September 1st. One piece of the CMEC certification is to attend a League Footing Academy and we just happen to have one scheduled in Dripping Springs, Texas, just 25 miles west of Austin, on May 21-22, 2019. Dripping Springs Ranch Park & Event Center is hosting the summer academy. Attendees will learn the secrets to preparing ground for multiple disciplines. [Click here](#) for registration forms and more information. Note: hotel reservations must be made by May 6 to get the League discount so don't delay in getting your reservations finalized.

Back to this edition of the Letters from the League....it consists of articles written on some of the topics that were discussed at the past Symposium as well as a topic important to all of us...traffic control. The first article is on getting involved with your CVB, then there is an article on professional development, one on attracting clientele, information on renovation standards, previously mentioned traffic control and the final article is on what show managers or producers look for when choosing a facility. We hope you find these articles to be a good source of information. Reviewing them is another opportunity to revisit the topics discussed at the Symposium or maybe if you couldn't attend it is a glimpse into what you missed. Continuing education is so important to the success of our facilities and we are happy to offer these articles for our membership. Mark your calendars for next year's Footing Academy & Symposium which will be held in Asheville, NC on January 17-22, 2020. It is sure to be a good one!

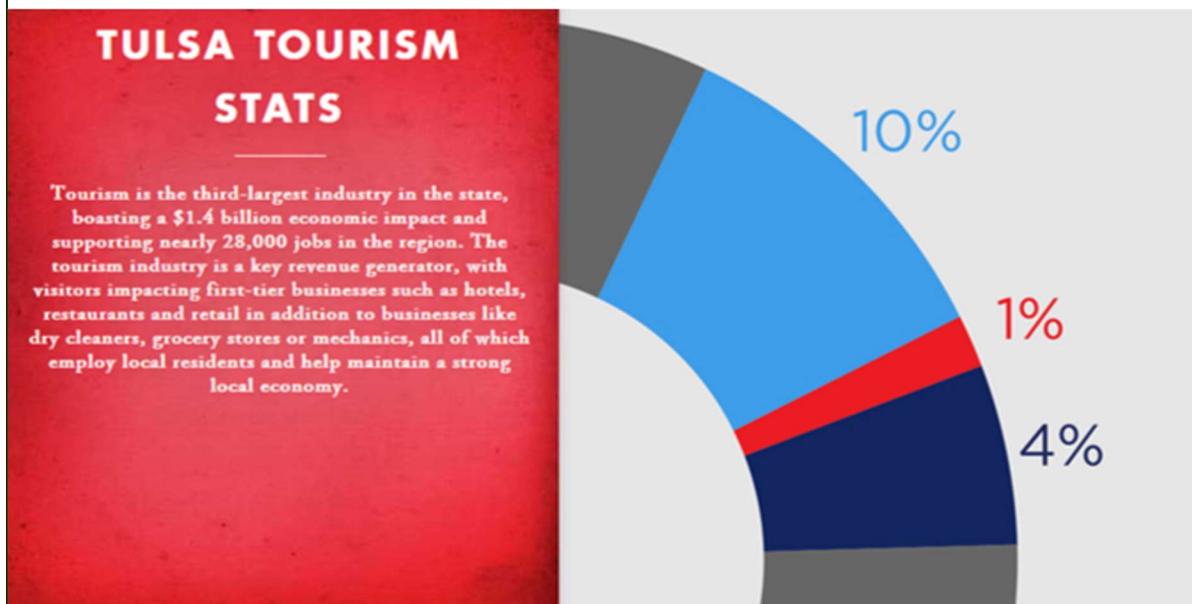
The League Education Committee

Getting Involved With Your CVB

Summary By: Jil Goodson, CMEC

Presented by: Ray Hoyt, President
Tulsa Regional Tourism

Tulsa has a lot to be proud of. From the picture below, you can see why!



Tourism is the third-largest industry in the state, boasting a \$1.4 billion economic impact and supporting nearly 28,000 jobs in the region. The tourism industry is a key revenue generator, with visitors impacting first-tier businesses such as hotels, restaurants and retail in addition to businesses like dry cleaners, grocery stores or mechanics, all of which employ local residents and help maintain a strong local economy.

Tulsa inspires choosing your own adventure and offers the perfect welcome mat to attract business. Offering over 186,000 hotel rooms, Tulsa's Convention and Visitors Bureau extends the boundaries of how to attract guests. The CVB, local businesses, investors and an army of volunteers work as an integrated team to spike interest in Tulsa. They do it passionately and this formula seems to achieve success.

Tulsa markets "a new way to play," and does it very well. The Gathering Place, The Pop Culture Expo, Family Friendly Attractions, Professional Sports, and unique Shopping Districts all make the brand, Tulsa Inspires, easily understood.

Mr. Hoyt spoke of investing in events to increase your marketability. He stressed the importance of partnerships, investors, as well as community, to foster the necessary relationships to become successful. Tulsa has mastered this understanding and with substantial investments in potential events/clients, the magnet is even stronger.

He touched upon the importance of utilizing your CVB to serve as a welcome committee for your guests, provide information about your community and above all else, "tell your story." With a vested team, well trained and passionate about their home, there is no need to be anything but genuine. The community buy in speaks volumes, generating successful results.

A great example of how your community, elected officials and investors can work together was the addition of the newest jewel to Tulsa's treasure chest, The Gathering Place. A 66.5 acre privately funded park designed as an outdoor getaway for Tulsans and visitors to play, relax and engage. Gathering Place is the largest private gift to a public park in U.S. history. The park is funded by a combination of more than 80 corporate and philanthropic organizations. An amazing accomplishment that deserves recognition.

Personally, I could feel the excitement and energy when Mr. Hoyt spoke to our group. His passion is certainly demonstrated in all that he does to encourage all of Tulsa to "Be Inspired." We are not all as fortunate as Tulsa to have this level of interaction with our respective CVB's but he did provide wonderful insight as to why this relationship is so important. No matter the size of your respective organization, the relationship needs be created. Even if baby steps must be taken, take the steps to generate a marketable community. I have always heard that so many times, it is the people in an organization that are the final deciding factor. From the very first person a potential client comes in contact, an impression is made. Make sure the your "front" staff reflect the mission of your organization.

I downloaded Tulsa's Visitor's Guide. All 116 pages were full of fun, inspiring as well as educational experiences to explore. Tag lines such as, "A New Way to Play!" "Dine At The Park," "Root For The Home Team!" "Vibrant City Life," and the list continues. An excellent example of ones' passion for their community and the desire to share! I can definitely understand why Tulsa, Oklahoma is a destination!

Professional Development "Link to Last"

Summary By: Rebecca Fyfe, CMEC

Presented by: Amanda Blair

While reflecting on the professional development topic by Amanda Blair, I first want to point out what a fantastic motivational speaker she was, the enthusiasm and passion that she has for her job is incredible and inspiring. Making sure that everyone on your staff is "Linked" together and feels important is key. Every single employee at our venue plays a very key part in the success of our facility.

Building Loyalty is important not only with our producers, but amongst the workplace as well. Leading by example is a motto that I use at the Tunica Arena. The example Amanda used is not being too high up to get out and pick up trash. There is no one on our staff that is in a position that is too high to contribute to the cleanliness of our facility. When the workers see you working beside them, you get a lot more respect from them.

Be Passionate about your work and work with enthusiasm. A positive attitude goes a long way. If you have one member of your team that is negative, it can affect the entire group. Work closely with your staff and help be a positive motivator.

Collaborate and make your staff feel like a team. If everyone works together, the work process will be much smoother and the efficiency of your staff will be much more successful.

Make sure that everyone on your staff is willing to **Elevate the Experience** for your customers. It does not go unnoticed if your staff is friendly and helpful to all of the exhibitors on property. If you are approached with a situation that you can't handle, you can always find someone that can find a solution. Most of us have repeat customers from year to year and it is comforting for our customers to see the same smiling faces every year.

Be sure to make your employees feel like they are a part of **Driving Success** for your business. It is not just the boss who makes the important decisions that is responsible for the success of your facility. Each and every person on your staff contributes to the success. Be sure to communicate with your staff and make them feel appreciated.

Here at the Tunica Arena we have found that a pat on the back for a job well done goes a long way. Don't ever hesitate to let your staff know what a great job they are doing. When we get positive reviews from promoters or on social media, we are sure to print them out and post where everyone at the facility can see the praise given to our staff. Linking your staff helps contribute towards a lasting relationship with each event promoter.

Attracting Clientele

Summary By: Lonnie Abercrombie, CMEC

Presented by: Angie Teel

Session # 6 of the 2019 League of Agricultural and Equine Centers' annual symposium was presented by Angie Teel of Cox Business Center and focused on 'Attracting Clientele'. Angie's approach on attracting and keeping customers follows the outline of it being a team effort. Angie outlined her formula for success as:

Build Loyalty

- Customer loyalty begins with your team's passion

Be Passionate

- Teams must believe in their work

Collaborate

- Teams must communicate
- Teams need to be engaged in what they do and need to be engaged with the customer
- There needs to be a meeting of the minds to complete something

Elevate the Experience

- Anticipate the needs of the Customer
- Make the Customer part of the team so it is a 'Team Effort'
- It's not just an event, it's an experience

Drive Success

- Use Win-Win strategies

- Avoid Negativity

Angie supported her theory with two short film clips. The first clip was a prime example of what a team should not do.

The clip began with a customer entering a store for a couple of items. The first employee approached made no effort toward engaging or communicating with the customer. The customer continued through the store seeking help in finding the items needed. The employees he found showed no passion in their job, they instead tried to distant themselves from him and let him help himself. By avoiding him they showed they did not wish to communicate or engage with the customer to better understand his needs. Instead they came across as negative and not very well trained. The employee's interactions with one another were not that of a team with a common goal, but that of group of individuals that were too engaged in other things to be bothered. The experience of the customer was not good and left him ready to tell others of his displeasure.

The second clip began in the same way with a customer arriving at a store for a couple of items. His first contact with an employee is positive as he is greeted with a smile and a, "How can we help you sir?" The employee walks the customer into the store and introduces him to someone that can better assist him. That employee asks questions that gives a better understanding of how to assist the customer and then begins filling the order. While the order is being collected the employee continues to ask questions and introduces him to another employee that specializes in another part of the order. When the original needed items are in hand, the employees have asked enough questions to know of other items that may be needed for the customer's project. Pointing out those and relating to the customer's needs give him the feeling of importance. He now has his items, found that he needed other items that he wasn't aware of, and feels he has a team that is looking out for his needs. The experience was pleasant and like the ending of the first clip, he wants to tell others of his experience.

In summarizing the presentation, one thing stands out no matter what the experience. Customers 'want to tell others' of their experience. When the customer works with an enthusiastic, passionate, and dedicated team, they feel they have succeeded in their goals. This kind of experience brings loyalty and they will return to that team for their future needs. With the conclusion of this presentation comes the best advice, "Advertise through your team's enthusiasm".

Renovation Standards

Summary By: Jamie White, CMEC

Before you start a renovation, you need to ask yourself a few questions- who are we? why do we want this? And how are we going to do it? These are just a few questions that need answering before you ever start. Then you will need set your priorities. What do we need to do first? First you will need to get a plan together how are we going to succeed. Get with a company that is known and knows equine, event centers, and fairgrounds. Then bring in your clients get their input on their wish list, the dos and don'ts what they wish to see. You want them to be proud of the facility as well. You want to make them feel as if they are part of the operation and renovation. Once you have met with key users then sit down and talk about your priorities with the Design Company. I would suggest come up with phases and the cost associated. Then once you have all of this, start seeking funding. Whether it be

local, county, or state. Tell your story and get them to buy into the project. Be sure you can provide economic impact study and what the revenue means to the community, county, and state. Show them the dollars that your venue brings in. Most all renovations are needed due to deferred maintenance. Which are small decisions that have compounded over the years as well as normal wear and tear. Another huge part is air quality and air control. Talk about the cost savings of adding fans to your venue. If you already have HVAC in the building by adding fans you can greatly reduce the cost up to 20% of heating cost by turning fans on to push the warm air down. Heat rises and will be trapped at the top of the building by slowing turning fans on it will disperse the heat evenly through the venue. In the summer time you can save up to 30% on cooling costs by turning fans on to thoroughly disperse the air making it feel 3-5 degrees cooler by air just moving over you. Adding exhaust fans are crucial during livestock shows and events. There need to be 8-10 air exchanges per hour during livestock events. Air quality is vital not only to the animals but us humans as well. The hotter building the more air borne illness and bacteria you will have.

Have your plan and talking points when you are seeking funding. Once you have secured your funding be sure you are involved in writing your RFQ. Your county and state RFQ will more than likely be different in some ways. Each will their own rules and regulations that you must follow in order to receive funding. Be sure that you follow them and if reimbursements are due you must follow them exactly. When you write the RFQ be sure to add a personal interview is required before the decision is final. This will greatly help you get know whom you might be working with over the next we years until the project is complete. Let them know that you will continue to have scheduled events and that there will be need to planning done weeks prior to certain events. Sit down and make an attentive schedule for the first 3 months before they ever start the renovations. This will make your life and theirs much easier. Also be sure that you both understand what is expected from each side. Be sure you have plenty of signage if areas are off limits due to construction. Just know from first thought to completion is a lengthy process. It is not something that is done overnight. It may take years to even get funding much less finish the project.

Traffic Control

Summary By: Roe DeLecce, CMEC

The big day is here! The event you have spent hours to secure a contract with has arrived. It is the event that will bring prestige to your venue. Every detail was thought out and visions of success are floating before your eyes...until the dreaded call of dismay from a staff member rings out.... there is no parking left and there are several trailers that are stuck in the barn area and can't turn around. People are yelling, threatening to push cars out of the way with their big rigs...a promoter and venue operator nightmare!

Well, maybe I have exaggerated a bit, but believe me this is not that far-fetched, and without proper planning a simple event can have your head spinning.

So, the information I've included below is for event planning, and management that recognize the challenges associated with small and large-scale events. One of the most obvious, but sometimes overlooked, details is that timely, effective planning, communication, and training are critical. Of course, this applies to all facets of the event business, but here we are looking at traffic control.

Timeliness.... that thing we all try to get a good grasp on. Well, make sure you do. Planning should start as soon as the contract is signed. A walk through of the venue with the promoter can never hurt. Are they planning any special activities, or will they have any special set-up that may hinder traffic flow? Keep in mind flow is critical especially for large-scale events.

Planning.... not only for the perfect event, but for when things start to go wrong. Will vehicles be able to pull in and pull out; is there enough room if someone parked wrong to keep the flow of traffic going? Where will vehicles go if everyone arrives at once? What if the weather is bad and areas are inaccessible? What is the plan for illegally parked vehicles? Better be prepared, because when Mr. Jones arrives late at night to find his RV space that he reserved months ago, taken, trust me, he will not be happy! And when the barn aisles are so congested with trailers that people start unloading horses in the passing lane, you now have safety issues. So, plan and plan some more for things that you are pretty sure will never happen.

There are also several key points in planning to keep in mind: pedestrian/equine crossways, speed control and direct traffic flow.

Crossways: make sure to mark crossways. It can be as easy as a cone or putting down rubber mats for equine to cross a slippery paved area

Speed control: make sure signage is up, put down speed bumps or have security personnel at assigned posts to slow traffic if necessary

Direct traffic flow: designate the flow on roadways; don't leave it to chance attendees will know which way to go or where to park

Communication...between both staff and promoter is critical. You all need to be on the same page. The promoter needs to be made aware of the policies of the facility regarding traffic. What are the ingress and egress roads? Where are the fire lanes and no-parking zones? How will parking be assigned or will it be on a first come basis. Are there specific lots for cars, trailers and RVs? Will there be a parking service hired? Do they know how to park trailers? Will there be security to check credentials of authorized vehicles? All of this should be dealt with prior to the big event and on event day everyone needs to be reminded of the driving and parking policies During the event communication should still be taking place and there should be an appropriate number of staff members assigned to handle traffic.

Training.... preferably that should be done before the start of any event season and tweaked for specific events. Is it possible to get the fire department to come out to review road access and parking limitations? There must always be access for a fire truck and ambulance to get around, even in barn areas. Are all staff aware of the policies pertaining to vehicles accessing the facility and departing the facility? Are they aware of parking policies? There is nothing worse than clients getting differing information from staff.

All these items play a role in how well a facility will be able handle traffic. The goal would be to minimize congestion, minimize accidents and optimize available space. When traffic moves fluidly, parking is easy and accessible and patrons both on foot and in vehicles are safe and happy. It's a winning situation for all.

What do Show Managers and Producers Look for When Choosing a Facility?

Summary By: Lynne Dickinson, CMEC

Horse shows are our money-makers; and, because of this we want to make sure that we meet their needs. I recently reached out to horse show managers and producers of many different disciplines to find out their top, most important factors when looking at a facility. Types of shows put on by these managers include 4H, Barrels, Hunter/Jumper, Ranch Horse, Stock Horse and Dressage Shows. (None of my roping folks got back to me 😊).

It was not a surprise to learn that good footing is a must for shows. Consistent, safe footing and good dirt was mentioned by all. As one of my show managers stated “Our horses are our investments.... one small slip due to bad ground can cost a horse it's entire career.”

Safe stalls that latch securely are also very important to show managers. Show managers also like to see water and electric close to each stall. Stall cleanliness was mentioned as very important to all disciplines. Larger shows typically look for a facility with many stalls available for the participants. Another important factor for most disciplines is the flooring in the stalls. Stall mats or a springy surface in the stalls was desirable to help protect their horses' legs.

Cleanliness of the facility and in all areas are very desirable factors. Facility cleanliness and upkeep was more important than being at a new facility to all. While exhibitors enjoy being at a new facility, they prefer a facility that is well kept. More than one show manager stated that when the facility is clean and kept up, they know the staff is invested in the facility and the shows that occur within that facility. Show managers feel that those facilities will have staff that is more responsive and courteous, and this will benefit their show.

Location and space were also important to all. Having a facility in a central location, that is easy to drive to, attracts competitors from a larger geographical area. And, having multiple spaces in a facility allows for areas for schooling, lunging, warming-up horses and holding multiple classes concurrently. More than one arena is an advantage to all. Indoor or covered arenas are preferable to outdoor arenas so as not to have to cancel or delay shows due to inclement weather.

Bathrooms, showers and concessions are also an important factor in selecting facilities. Many shows will have competitors overnight at the facility; therefore, having plentiful, clean restrooms & showers is very important. All shows like to have food available for their exhibitors; having a concessionaire or a kitchen available for shows is important.

Other important criteria for a facility include: a good sound system, ample wash racks, security, good airflow and ventilation and seating for spectators.

The most important factor for all was the staff at the facility. This is good news for all of us! While we can't make changes and upgrades to our facilities quickly, and sometimes we may never be able to make desired changes, we can hire, train and keep the best staff possible. Having staff that is pleasant, knowledgeable, courteous, and easy to work with is something we can all attain. Frequent trainings that are fun, engaging and cover a variety of topics are important. These can include customer service, equipment, footing and dirt, safety and other training topics. Making sure to pass on compliments to staff is very important. And, if a complaint is received, treat it as a training moment to help that staff person shine in the future. Happy people make happy events; thus making happy event holders!



Congratulations again to the 2019 CMEC Graduates!

CMEC grads pictured left to right - Lynne Dickinson, Bert Rodriguez, Chris Pohst, Matt Buchanan,
Education Chair - Cammie Pearson

Thank you for taking the time to read our third edition of the
Letters from the League!

[Click here](#) for more information about the CMEC Program.

SAVE THE DATE!

The Summer Footing Academy - May 21-22, 2019

The League Footing Academy - January 17-18, 2020

Hosted at WNC Agricultural Center

The League Symposium 2019 - January 19-22, 2020

Hosted in Asheville, NC

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