



July 2016

Hospitality Hotline

Connecting the industry through
Advocacy, Education and Partnerships

News from...
SUSAN JONES,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Your Opinions Matter ~ Destination NEXT

Recently, we attended the State Office of Tourism's (OTD) regional meeting of tourism leaders to discuss strengths and opportunities. Part of the exercise was DestinationNEXT, a web-based diagnostic tool measuring 20 variables related to destination strength and community support and engagement. By objectively measuring these factors, DestinationNEXT will enable OTD, DMOs and industry partners to identify strengths, priorities, areas for potential improvement, and to develop strategies for future growth. To accurately and efficiently utilize this powerful tool, OTD needs your help. By completing the DestinationNEXT survey, a better assessment can be made to understand our fit into the Maryland tourism scheme and will allow OTD to determine how best to help us reach the next level.

Communication and collaboration are the best ways to achieve success, so please complete the survey by August 15th.

Click here: <http://sgiz.mobi/s3/DestinationNEXT-Maryland>

REMINDER:

MD State minimum wage will increase to \$8.75 per hour on July 1, 2016. The current minimum "Tip Wage" in Maryland is frozen at \$3.63 per hour for tipped employees; however, a restaurant is permitted to pay more than the Tip Wage.

Also, establishments selling food for on-premise consumption grossing less than \$400,000 per year are exempt from State and local minimum wage and overtime requirements, but must still comply with federal minimum wage and overtime law.

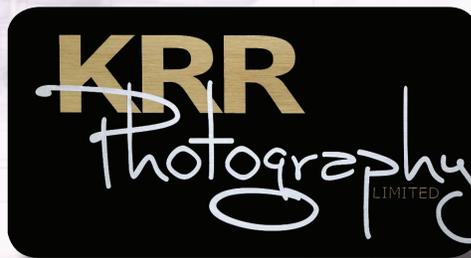
For complete info and required posters, visit <http://www.dlir.state.md.us/labor/wages/>

Legionella Prevention, Response and Management

Mark your calendars Nov. 7 for an informative conference on Legionella, brought to you by Worcester County Health Department and Ocean City Hotel-Motel Restaurant Association. Join us at the Holiday Inn Oceanfront 67th Street and we will cover:

- Legionella Basics
- Legionella Assessment and Prevention
- Planning for the Worst: Outbreak response
- Water System Remediation
- Risk Communication: Responding to Guests and Media

The conference is FREE and will include breakfast and lunch.



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BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: SPIRO BUAS



A recent addition to the HMRA Board of Directors is Spiro Buas. Originally from DC/ MD suburbs, Spiro got his start in the lodging industry at the young age of 12 when he rented rooms at his family's rooming house on 8th Street. During his summers at the beach and until he graduated from college, Spiro worked for the Harrison Group. In 1985, he graduated from Towson State with an economics and finance degree and also married Marianne. Through the years, he's purchased the Buckingham Hotel, Madison Beach Motel and South Beach Apartments. In addition to Ocean City motels, he has acquired the Sands Motel in Fenwick. He and Marianne have 6 children, Pete, Alexia, Miranda, Thomas, Luke and Anna. With that many children, there isn't a lot of down time. However, when there is a free minute, you'll find Spiro relaxing, cruising around on the boat or following his passion and looking at real estate. His most proud detail of his life to date, "my best accomplishment is my family."



Member highlights

Congrats to **Phillips Seafood & Restaurant** on their 60th Anniversary! Congrats to **Mike Meekins** who was promoted to General Manager of **Phillips Seafood House**. Welcome to **David Meyerson**, who joins the team at **Baltimore Sun** as new media consultant. Congrats to **Steve Pastusak** on his promotion to Vice President of Operations at **Jolly Roger Amusement**

Parks. Congrats to **Brian Mushrush** who is joining the **Hooked Restaurant** team.

Condolences to **Pat Ambler-Perry, Boardwalk Hotel Group**, on the loss of her father.

Condolences to **Ann Hillyer, OceanCity.com**, on the loss of her mother. Condolences to the team at **Clearent** for the loss of **John Dux**.



REST EASY: Lodging industry trends

HOTELS MANAGERS SHOULDN'T OVERDO RESPONSES TO ONLINE REVIEWS

Ithaca, NY, April 18, 2016 - A new study from Cornell University suggests that hotel guests appreciate substantive responses to negative reviews, but operators should go easy on review responses. The study found that revenue levels increase as the number of management responses increases, but only to a point. After about a 40-percent response rate, hotels seem to reach a point of diminishing returns. A full description of the study, "Hotel Performance Impact of Socially Engaging with Consumers," by Chris Anderson and Saram Han, is available at no charge from the Cornell Center for Hospitality Research. Anderson is an associate professor at the Cornell School Hotel Administration, where Han is a doctoral student.

"We see that hotel managers generally want to interact with guests who post reviews on line, but the question remains of exactly how to do that," Anderson explained. "We ran several tests of what happens when the hotels

respond to reviews posted on TripAdvisor. For one thing, simply encouraging reviews is related to an improvement in a hotel's TripAdvisor ratings, compared to competitors. Our study used Revinatate Surveys for this purpose."

Anderson and Han found that the simple fact that managers respond to reviews leads to improved sales and revenue, when consumers click through from TripAdvisor to the hotel's listing at online travel agents. "However, we found a cautionary situation," Anderson added. "It turns out that making too many responses is worse than offering no response at all, in terms of both ratings and revenue. So, managers should focus on making constructive responses to negative reviews rather than simply acknowledging positive comments."

More here.



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THE DISH: Restaurant industry trends

INDUSTRY INSIDERS SHARE THE SECRETS TO SUCCESS

History was made on Monday, May 23, at the NRA Show 2016 when the show's first-ever crowdsourced session was held. The event, "Reality Gets Real," which was presented by Sysco, featured trailblazers and ambassadors chef Robert Irvine of "Restaurant: Impossible" and Jon Taffer of "Bar Rescue."

Both speakers talked about their experiences with helping failing operations identify common pitfalls and address them before they become critical. They provided perspective on what it takes to pull an operation back from the brink of failure, shared horror stories and successful anecdotes and reminded the audience of why so many people choose to work in the hospitality industry.

Both agreed that the No. 1 pitfall that causes a concept to fail is that leaders don't take responsibility for the problems that take place in their operations. In too many instances, a location's leadership doesn't employ "the buck stops here" ideology. "The common denominator in failure is excuses. Owners are always blaming someone else for their mistakes—Congress, road construction, new competitors," says Taffer. "What I've learned over time is that if I can get an owner to admit they are the excuse and reason for their operation's failure, they have a chance at being successful."

Change, however, doesn't come easy. "If leadership blames someone else, then they have no reason to change. When leadership finally accepts the fact that they are the reason for failure, they will take the responsibility to create a desire to change and make improvements," says Irvine. "A

The National Restaurant Association boss will just tell you what to do, but a leader will show you by example how to do something."

Other than not owning up to their mistakes, some leaders don't operate on logic; instead, they operate more on emotions. Many businesses are family owned for years and years, and they've been doing the same thing since they opened. "Change is hard to make, but operating a business on emotions will block your road to success," Taffer says.

Irvine agrees. "When I go into an operation, I need to break down the owner's emotion, get in their face and build them back up the right way of doing business," he says, "which includes everything from the servers, the menu, kitchen flow and, more importantly, the leadership role they have."

A third key area that causes failure is not understanding the power of branding. "Branding is not a logo, a color, an interior design," says Taffer. "A brand is what we do—delivering an experience. A brand is something that's built over time by creating customer reactions."

Irvine suggests that it is the leader's responsibility to change their operation every three years in order to stay ahead of competition. "There's someone always opening a new restaurant or bar where the people are prettier, they have a new bar, it's shiner and newer everything. There's someone always trying to take your place."

Read more here:



Join the Maryland Green Registry

The Town of Ocean City "Green Team" decided to lead by example and submit application for Ocean City to join the Maryland Green Registry. Green Team member Gail Blazer stated that "We get points for joining the program and also for promoting the program. For every business that joins, the Town gets Sustainable Maryland Certified Program points. We felt that we should lead by example and join. It is hoped that the publicity can be used to market the program to all businesses in the town."

To join the Maryland Green Registry is a simple application process and it is free to join the program. In order to join you are required to implement and share information on at least five environmental practices with one quantifiable. The information on the program is located at the following website:

<http://mde.maryland.gov/marylandgreen/Pages/JoinHere.aspx>



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Mark your Calendars!

Thursday, Aug 4th
7-9pm

Sunset Park Party Nights

OCHMRA will co-sponsor OCDC's popular Sunset Park Party Night
with band British Invasion Experience.



Starbucks Ribbon Cutting - Jeff Mathias, John Harrison, Senator Jim Mathias, Hale Harrison, G. Hale Harrison



Hooked Renovation Ribbon Cutting



Phillips Seafood House 60 Year Celebration- Joe Phillips, Steve Phillips, Delegate Carozza, Joanna Phillips



Secrets Distilling Company Ribbon Cutting- Governor Hogan, Rebecca & Leighton Moore