

Local hotels provide a good first impression

By Ronni Hannaman

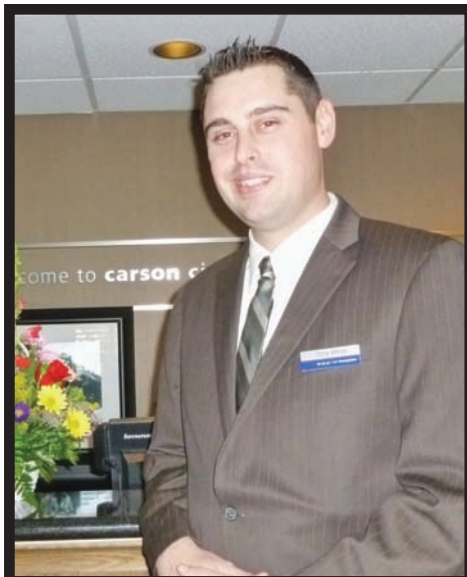
Often overlooked in many small communities are the local hotels and motels that provide that all-important first impression of who we are to our visitors. Too, not always appreciated is the role the lodging community plays in local economics, for those who stay at local hotels spread their money far and wide providing us with additional tax revenues as they provide additional or "fill-in" business for restaurants, car rental companies, casinos, entertainment venues and retailers.

Up until about six years ago, Carson City was unable to provide visitors and business travelers with the opportunity to book mid-scale hotels preferred by most travelers, whether for business or pleasure. Ours was a city of budget properties offering little for the brand-conscious business travelers who prefer familiarity and multiple pillows on their beds. Since there was – and still is – no public transportation between Reno and Carson City and a car is necessary to travel between the airport and Carson, it was just as easy to book a hotel in Reno, do business here and go back to Reno for dining and entertainment. Thus, many important dollars were lost and the local economy suffered.

In the past six years, we have been fortunate far-sighted investors saw the need and potential to attract the mid-scale traveler to keep travel dollars at home. The completion of the Carson Tahoe hospital campus saw two hotels built in north Carson just east of the campus: The Hampton Inn & Suites and the Holiday Inn Express. The south end of the city saw the owners of Casino Fandango add to their successful casino by building a Courtyard by Marriott for their high rollers. With these new lodging offerings, we were finally able to compete in the competitive tourism market.

Terrie McNutt, Director of Sales & Marketing of the Courtyard by Marriott tells us, "Our owners chose the Marriott brand to complement the Casino Fandango, for the Marriott names speaks for itself." Linda Barnett, Regional Manager for the Hampton Inn & Suites adds, "Our owners saw the need for a limited service mid-scale hotel in Carson City because when they wanted to stay in our city, there were none. Thus, they decided to build a hotel in which they would themselves stay and found the Hampton Inn brand to be the best fit."

There's been other movement on the lodging front in recent years: The former Pinion Plaza was purchased by Gold Dust West in 2005 and most recently, the Best Western Carson Station was purchased by 777 Gaming of Las Vegas. The first order of business for both companies was to remod-



Hampton Inn and Suites General Manager Cory White greets guests at the front desk to provide that extra welcoming touch so appreciated by their guests.

spaces and guest rooms."

While maintaining and updating properties adds to the success of a property, branded properties such as the Courtyard, Best Western, Hampton and Holiday Inn must adhere to strict corporate standards and be subject to constant inspections and directives demanding what must be done to maintain the brand. Rooms are constantly updated and even the public spaces must receive a full face-lift from time-to-time (needed or not) to keep in compliance, thus keeping the brand fresh.

Hampton Inn General Manager Cory White, 27, states, "The Hampton Brand is strictly monitored by Hilton Hotels and the level of service provided by our staff is consistently high, gaining us the recognition of being in the top 1% of all Hampton's nationally for the past 18 straight quarters." Human added, "With all the technology now in

el the aging properties, bringing them up to standards expected by today's traveling public and their respective brands. Best Western Carson Station General Manager Sharon Human states, "777 Gaming had wanted to add to their business mix and thought purchasing and remodeling the Best Western Carson Station to be a good fit. They fell in love with the "hometown appeal" of our city and have made great upgrades in the public

greater sports tourism. A recent trip to Sacramento by various properties cemented relationships with those who book tournaments thus assuring another successful year for sports tourism.

While the convention and visitors bureau is the prime marketing agency for local tourism and receives its primary funding from the 10 percent room tax levied on guests, the properties promote the majority of their own business. The branded hotels have the advantage of worldwide reservations systems, but all go out and seek business on their own with many employing sales directors.

Creative packaging has become an important marketing tool. Human is proud of their highly successful "New Year's Eve Package" and has plans in the works to further attract locals and out-of-towners to stay and play. White cites the Hampton's popular Cowboy 101 package put together last year, the soaring flight package and packages offered as part of the Hilton promotions as another source of attracting visitors. McNutt chimes in by supporting the sports tourism programs now so popular in our area.

What do they see as the future of tourism now that we have better lodging choices to offer our visitors? McNutt thinks the city should be putting efforts into "attracting investors to build an events center that would house tournaments all year round and would provide locals the opportunity to play indoor sports as well as serve as a meeting facility so needed in our community to grow our tourism base." Human thinks "cooperative marketing between the visitors



The welcoming "team" at the Best Western Carson Station includes (from left) Judy Pigati, General Manager Sharon Human and Donna Brown.



Terrie McNutt, Sales Director of the Courtyard by Marriott, poses in front of the lobby fireplace creating a warm and welcoming ambiance for guests.

place, guests are better equipped to make choices consequently, properties like ours have become more in tune with the wants and needs of our travelers."

With the downturn in the economy, lodging properties have found it harder and harder to fill rooms thus creativity has become key, and a greater emphasis has been placed on sports tourism - the current hot ticket in filling every room in the city. A local lodging association was formed to determine how to best attract this important travel component and to support the parks and recreation department in attracting even

bureau and the lodging properties" is key to filling rooms.

While we will never reach the recognition or hotel capacity offered in Reno, local hoteliers are comfortable with the fact that what is here now is a good step forward in building the all-important tourism base. If and when the Ormsby House is ever finished, this would add much needed meeting space and an upscale component to our market. Another if – and this is a big IF – is if the former K-Mart building is converted to an expo-type facility, our tourism base would grow by leaps and bounds thus growing other businesses such as restaurants and retail that would contribute further to our quality of life.

We all become tourists when traveling to other cities and spend our local dollars in those communities. It is way past time for visitors from other communities to spend their monies here and enjoy what this city has to offer and what we have taken for granted. Attracting visitors will add to our overall economic development. This is a job that cannot be filled by the lodging properties alone, although they make every attempt to keep the visitor home fires burning and present our city in the best possible light. ■

OUT & ABOUT IN THE CITY

Carson City Leadership Institute 2012 In Session

Carson City Leadership Institute 2012 held their first session on January 12-13 and met with Assemblyman Pete Livermore and Senator Ben Kieckhefer. Pictured are (front row) Destinee Edison and Rebecca Jackson of Harley Financial; Livermore; Eva O'Dell of GNCU Mortgage Services and Julie Garcia of Lone Mountain Veterinary Services. (Back row) Kyla Rios, GNCU; Lani McKinley of the Carson City Sheriff's Office; David Steiger of WNC; Janet St. Peter, US Bank; Kieckhefer; Eric Von Schimmelmann of the Carson City IT Department; Patrick Tatro of State Farm Insurance and Marena Works of the Carson City Health & Human Services Dept. The class will be spending the next nine months learning the good, bad and ugly of our community. Leadership Institute is a program of the Carson City Chamber of Commerce specializing in growing our future leaders.



Do you think Chamber Ribbon Cutting's are a dull affair? Never!

The Carson Mall continues to attract a variety of businesses to serve our residents. Two recent ribbons cuttings celebrated the openings of Tahoe Dive Center (above) and Bellissimo Boutique (right).



By Ronni Hannaman

We're embarking on the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Dragon, beginning on January 23 and ending February 9, 2013. For those who like this sort of stuff, know that whenever there is a dragon involved, it is a very good thing: prosperity and happiness. Let's hope this is a strong dragon, indeed!

Want to hear from the "horse's (or maybe the dragon's) mouth" on what to expect in the city's future? Come to the Chamber's annual **State of the City luncheon** featuring those in the know: **Mayor Robert Crowell, Supervisor Shelly Aldean, Sheriff Kenny Furlong and City Manager Larry Werner.** This is open to the public: Friday, February 10, 7:30 a.m. at Gold Dust West. Includes a full breakfast for \$20 per person. You must RSVP by calling 882-1565. Q&A encouraged. No need to be shy.

Joel Dunn, recreation director for the parks division, has already been able to book 31 tournaments in our city for 2012. These tournaments bring in lots of needed revenue for the state, the city coffers and a score of businesses plus keeping our taxes low.

There's a new TV show launching January 26 at 7:30 p.m. on Cable Channel 3 hosted by **Carol Paz**. The show, **Women-to-Women**, features successful female guests who have made a difference in northern Nevada. Carol is co-owner of **Carpa Nevada, LLC** purveyors of the finest teas, olive oil and perfumes around. Visit (better yet, enjoy breakfast or lunch) at **Villa Basque** in north Carson City just off Roop Street and check out the assortment. The energetic Chef Don Pepe (aka **Jose Noriega-Paz**) is co-owner.

While on the topic of television: Welcome the new TV stars in Carson City! Soon you will be able to see those who made such a difference in making us such a sports haven for our youth on the Chamber's new TV series: **A Window to**

Our Past produced in cooperation with **ACCTV**. The series begins with **Dr. Michael Fischer, Assemblyman Pete Livermore**, former parks director **Steve Kastens** and the beloved former CHS coach **Ron McNutt** providing the oral history on what it took to get us to where we are today. This is a companion series to the Chamber's Carson City **In Focus** magazine. The next show will be taped in february and feature the beautiful women who have brought art to our city.

Where to Retire Magazine consistently features Carson City as one of the **top places to retire** so for those who retired here, you made a wise move! We're featured in the January/February edition which is out on newsstands now. The article is entitled "8 Tempting Low-tax Towns." Now to pass this message on to the board of supervisors and the assessor as they plan budgets for FY 2012-13.

It was **NOT** a rumor. The smell of bagels should be wafting in south Carson sometime in April as **Einstein Bagel** creates yet another store in their vast chain.

Be sure to check out **Café Adele's**, now open 7 days a week for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There's a new menu, new prices and new décor. And fortunately, the same Charlie and the same Karen.



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DON'T WAIT - SAVE A LIFE TODAY

Your Community Law Enforcement Agency

Dickey's BBQ is about ready to announce their soft opening by the end of January. They are excited to be able to offer another casual dining alternative, and this coming week will find their employees being trained by corporate on how to provide a quality product and service. They are located off Retail Drive next to the yummy **YoGo Frozen Yogurt** store.

Ugh! It's tax time, but there's relief at hand for those of you who just don't want to do your own taxes and have uncomplicated returns. AARP's **Gil Yanuck** has trained tax preparers ready and willing to do those pesky taxes at the Senior Center. Best of all, the service is free. Call the center at 883-0703 for information and appointment.

Kathy Bartosz has been named Administrator of the Year by the HSN Human Services Network for her work with **Partnership Carson City** chaired by **Mayor Bob Crowell**. The primary goal of PCC is to limit drug activity.

Musicians – especially those who play the strings – are always welcome to play with the all-volunteer **Carson City Symphony** conducted by **David Bugli**. What a great way to keep in tune with your talent while enjoying the camaraderie of fellow musicians. Call 883-4154 for more information.

Though we don't have the need to put on lots of miles in our small city, there are those who may be traveling more. Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, the **standard mileage rates for the use of a car** (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be 55.5 cents per mile for business miles driven; 23 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes; 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

Got some odds and ends that needs to be done, but don't have the energy or desire to take care of them? **Four D Enterprises** has the equipment to remove your snow, sweep your parking lots and do those jobs you don't want/or can't do. **Debra DeSelms** is offering businesses and homeowners 20% off hourly prices now. Call 690-2219 for quote. Seniors are offered even better rates!

Congratulations to **Chas Macquarie, PE.**, Civil Engineer from Lumos & Associates on the Multiple Award Winning Truckee River Legacy Trail Phase 3A! Lumos is a leader in designing bike and pedestrian trail.

The **Hampton Inn & Suites** has promoted **Cory White** to General Manager. Cory, 27, is looking to move his family (4 children) to Carson City upping our demographics by six!


Working hard for the money! That's Alternative Sentencing's **Claudia Saavedra** who makes sure our graffiti is kept at bay by sending out those who have been asked to do public service to commute their sentences. She's been assisting with our seemingly endless task to keep the city trash free. We applaud her cooperation and dedication!

Have you been noticing the difference in the Carson City **Costco**? Well, that's because the original manager, **Bob Tote**, is back and making sure ours is a top-of-the-line store with shiny floors and friendly staff.

The Chamber's volunteer extraordinaire **Bob Williams** has joined **Ponderosa Stamp & Engraving** selling specialty items and more.

Think out of the box this year when it comes to giving something special to your Valentine. The handsome guys from **Chorus of the Comstock** will come to home or office and harmonize 3 songs along with the presentation of a card and a rose for an unforgettable experience. 1-877-857-2220.

Unfortunately, in these interesting times, women may find the need to practice self-defense. **Carson ATA Martial Arts** is offering a **FREE Women's Self-Defense** class on February 11 at 11:30 a.m. Please call 883-5425 to register. This will probably be the best hour you'll ever spend. ■



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Turn in your map at the Carson Nugget at 5 pm for prizes.



Spotlight on: Clinic Services

Carson City Health & Human Services offers a variety of healthcare services to help keep our community well, including family planning, STD/HIV testing, immunizations and Well Child appointments.

Visit us at our 900 E. Long Street location or at Douglas County Community Health (782-9038) at the corner of Spruce Street and Cemetery Lane, Gardnerville.



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