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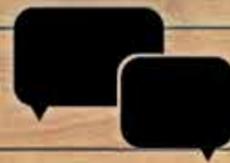
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OPERATIONAL RESOURCES

Dear arVC Members:



Paul Bambei
arVC President/CEO

IT'S THAT WONDERFUL TIME OF YEAR when the days get longer, Mother Nature reawakens, and campgrounds all around the country figuratively "turn over a new leaf" in some fashion or another. Whether your business is seasonal or year-round, spring is the ideal time for renewal and reassessment.

That's why we've dedicated this issue of the *arvcVOICE* to the importance of keeping your business front and center 24/7/365. Even if your park isn't open year-round, it's important to keep your brand relevant all year with continuous marketing efforts and messaging. Research shows that most of your customers actually begin seeking seasonal reservations six months in advance.

This is also a good time to think about how you can fill any gaps you typically have in your booking calendar. Hosting weddings, retreats, reunions, and charitable events at your grounds during the off season, on weekdays or in the shoulder seasons are great ways to do this. Yes, you will need to keep your park fired up and staffed during these times, but the community *will* notice and those who are experiencing your park for the first time *will* remember you and probably return and tell others about what you have to offer.

So why not experiment a little this year to see what happens? In the following pages, you'll find inspiration in the stories of your arvc peers who have successfully strengthened their parks' brands by hosting special events or by giving back to their local communities. We think you'll be as impressed by their creativity and spirit of innovation as we are.

Have fun,

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arVC VOICE

The Voice of the Outdoor Hospitality Industry

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National School of RV Park and Campground Management

▪ **NEXT SESSION:**
JULY 10-14 AT THE
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CAMPUS IN DENVER

National School

Eastern Campus Session a Great Success,
Western Campus Session Slated for July



THE FIRST SESSION OF THE 2017 NATIONAL SCHOOL OF RV PARK AND CAMPGROUND MANAGEMENT was a great success with 42 park professionals in attendance. It was held at the school's Eastern campus at Oglebay Resort & Conference Center in Wheeling, West Virginia on February 20-24. During this time, 28 students completed their first week of the program, and 25 of them received their Management Certificates. In addition, 14 students completed their second week of the program to earn their Professional Certificates and graduate from the school.

The National School is an intensive, industry-specific educational program that focuses on business management principles and best practices for RV park and campground owners and operators. It is designed to equip prospective and current owners and managers with the tools they need to improve or develop a thriving campground business. The classes are taught by an experienced, interdisciplinary faculty that includes park operators.

The program consists of two, one-week sessions that are offered at both of the school's campuses — the Eastern campus in West Virginia and the Western campus at the Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center in Colorado. Weeks one and two of the program are offered simultaneously

at each campus, giving students the option of attending a single campus in two successive years or attending one week at each of the campuses to complete the program in less than six months. A third session is offered at both campuses for those who are working on their Executive Certificate projects.

All courses offered at the school have been approved by the ARVC Foundation. The Foundation is accredited by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) and is authorized to issue Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Students receive three CEUs for each week of the National School that they complete. CEUs represent an individual's commitment to lifelong learning that goes beyond any degrees or certificates they've earned. Earning CEUs also helps industry professionals ensure that they have the latest knowledge in their field.

Please join us in congratulating our recent graduates as well as those who have now completed the first half of the program. The next session of the National School will be held on July 10-14 at the school's Western campus in Denver. For more information and to register, visit OHEPonline.org or contact Lisa Maurer at lmaurer@arvc.org or 303-681-0401, ext. 121. 



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UPDATE



Member Benefit Providers

Exclusive Savings Now Available from Club Car and John Deere

We are very pleased to announce that we have negotiated agreements with two major manufacturers to provide arvc members access to special pricing on equipment purchases through our Member Benefit Provider (MBP) program:



"We chose Club Car as our top golf car MBP for the quality of their products which feature all-aluminum frame construction," states arvc's Director of Membership Candra Talley. "They are arguably the best in the industry. Now, Club Car has backed up their product line with an enhanced discount program tailored to meet the needs of our members." Through the MBP program, arvc members can receive discounts of up to 25 percent off of Club Car's MSRPs. Club Car offers electric, gasoline and diesel powered vehicles and is the world's largest manufacturer of small-wheel, zero-emissions electric vehicles, including light-duty utility vehicles, heavy-duty 4x4s and multi-person transports.



"We recognized that nearly every member has a need for equipment in the landscape/property maintenance space, which is why we negotiated this agreement with John Deere, one of America's top brands," explains arvc President and CEO, Paul Bambei. "Though arvc's exclusive benefit program with John Deere, members will now enjoy significant discounts on Deere's product line, from popular gasoline and diesel engine zero turn mowers to commercial grade tractors, mini-excavators, back hoes and Gator utility vehicles."

arvc members who purchase equipment through John Deere will automatically be enrolled in the company's GreenFleet™ Loyalty Rewards program and will be upgraded to Platinum 1 status. Along with valuable equipment discounts, arvc members can also now take advantage of special savings on parts, discounts on home and workshop products, and other exclusive promotions. Members can save even more by combining their Green-Fleet discount with John Deere's other national offers and financing programs.

Please join us in welcoming Club Car and John Deere as our newest MBPs. To learn more about their exclusive discount programs for arvc members as well as those offered by our other Member Benefit Providers, log on to the member section of arvc.org and click on Member Benefit Providers under the Marketplace tab. 

hello!

MEET YOUR NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PLEASE JOIN US IN WELCOMING the following officers who have been elected to serve on the arvc Executive Committee for a period of one year, beginning on November 10, 2016:

- **Chairman**
Tim Deputy, OHM, Sun-N-Fun RV Resort, Sarasota, Florida
- **Chair Elect**
Al Johnson, OHE, Mt. Rushmore/Hill City KOA, Hill City, South Dakota
- **Second Vice Chairman**
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- **Treasurer**
Bert Davis, OHC, Badgerland Campground, Stoughton, Wisconsin
- **Secretary**
Michael Hobby, CPO, OHC, Moon Landing RV Park & Marina, Cross Hill, South Carolina
- **Past Chairman**
Marcia Galvin, CPO, OHC, Normandy Farms Camping Resort, Foxborough, Massachusetts

The role of the Executive Committee is to advise the arvc CEO and President on the development and implementation of the strategic direction of the association. We thank these industry professionals for their dedication and commitment. 



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Going All Out to GO GREEN

This year's Plan-It Green Friendly Park of the Year Winners Demonstrate Their Strong Commitment to Protecting the Environment

ARVC member parks that have earned the distinction of being a Plan-It Green Friendly Park have demonstrated their commitment to going green by meeting at least nine of 16 eco-friendly criteria. Each year, as part of our Awards of Excellence that are presented at our annual Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo in November, several parks are honored as Plan-It Green Friendly Parks of the Year in recognition of their outstanding efforts to show leadership, innovation and commitment to running a green park. Here are this year's winners:

True West Campground, Stables, and Mercantile Jamestown, Tennessee Small/Medium Plan-It Green Friendly Park of the Year



True West uses solar lights to reduce energy costs.

Donna and Shawn Martin, owners of True West Campground, Stables, and Mercantile take water conservation pretty seriously. They explain, "As an equine facility, we go through a LOT of water with horses being able to drink up to 20 gallons a day! Campers also need to give their horses a bath after each ride." When you consider that True West has enough stalls to accommodate up to 67 horses, that's a lot of water!

True West has implemented a number of water-saving initiatives, including installing overhead wash stations to prevent the horses from stepping on the hoses and causing leaks, and taking steps to ensure that customers turn off the water supply from the hydrants when they are done. True West also uses drought-resistant plants and perennials for landscaping that are native to the area, and they are currently installing gutters along the exterior of the barns. Rain water from the gutters will empty into barrels and will be used to water vegetation,

eliminating the need to purchase this amount of water from the town.

Recycling also plays a big role at True West. Recycle bins are placed in convenient locations, and the recycling of all cardboard and aluminum cans reduces the need (and associated cost) to empty the dumpster as often. True West donates the aluminum cans to the local animal shelter so they can turn them into cash — which totaled about \$200 last year. In addition, that unavoidable byproduct of having a lot of horses around — manure — is picked up by a local farmer and recycled as fertilizer.

True West has also installed water-saving faucets, shower heads and pressure regulators as well as solar lights and energy-efficient light bulbs as part of their green initiatives. Overall, they meet an impressive 15 of the 16 Plan-It Green Friendly Park eco-friendly initiatives.

Far Horizons Tucson Village RV Resort Tucson, Arizona Large/Mega Plan-It Green Friendly Park of the Year



Guests are invited to participate in Far Horizons' community garden.

Far Horizons Tucson Village RV Resort (FHTV) has also met 15 of the 16 Plan-It Green Friendly criteria and guest education and participation play a big role in the park's green practices. As Roseann Haines, the park's newsletter editor says, "At FHTV, 'green' is the most popular color. In addition to making it convenient for our guests to 'reduce, reuse and recycle' with attractively placed and numerous bins, we make sure to help our visitors by communicating local recycling guidelines (since they are different for every municipality)."



The entry at Far Horizons features mature native plants that almost never require watering.

Photo courtesy of Far Horizons Tucson Village RV Resort

FHTV has also built and outfitted a community garden that guests can participate in and enjoy, and they're encouraged to do simple things like adding coffee grounds and vegetable peelings to the park's agricultural-grade compost bins. Guests can also help save energy by taking advantage of the line-drying area the park has created in its laundry facility.

The landscaping at the park's entrance is done with xeriscaping — mature native plantings that almost never require water. FHTV has also implemented a "We Speak for the Trees" campaign which is expected to save approximately two tons of paper each year along with the energy it would take to produce it. As part of its paper-reduction initiative, the park completed a massive upgrade and expansion of its Wi-Fi technology and is moving more of its printed materials online. And while there will still be traditional versions available, they will be printed far less often and in a more eco-friendly format.

As FHTV has found, many guests are willing to participate in environmentally-responsible practices when they're given the opportunity to do so. As Haines explains, "A surprising and unexpected benefit comes in the form of more conscientiousness from our guests. As they are more mindful of generating waste — and are more careful with its disposal — we have a slightly lowered need for trash pickup and lowered need for grounds perusal. It is a wonderful consequence of our resort being committed to the process and having that commitment shared by our community."

Please join us in congratulating this year's Plan-It Green Friendly Park of the Year winners. They've clearly demonstrated that even the smallest steps can have a big payoff in terms of cost savings and protecting the environment. To learn more about the **Plan-It Green Friendly Park program** and how your park can qualify to earn this designation, log on to the member section of arvc.org and go to "Programs" under the Member Resources tab. 



Training Your Staff Just Got Easier!

The Outdoor Hospitality Generalist Certificate Program is Now Online

MANY OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE ASKED for additional ways to access training specific to the outdoor hospitality industry, and ARVC and the ARVC Foundation are excited to announce that our Outdoor Hospitality Generalist Certificate program can now be completed online at **OHEPonline.org**. It is one of four certificate programs offered through the Outdoor Hospitality Education Program (OHEP).

This online Generalist Certificate training is available 24/7, so it can be accessed from anywhere at any time that fits into the student's schedule. The OHEP online learning center also offers flexibility — this self-paced program is designed to help students identify areas where they need additional knowledge, while allowing them to skip material that covers knowledge they already have. The topics covered in the Generalist Certificate program include industry basics, ethical behavior, personal and professional growth, guest expectations and risk management.

Once students have completed their coursework for their Generalist Certificate, they will be asked to demonstrate their knowledge by completing a two-part exam. The first part covers basic knowledge and the second part covers the application of this knowledge.

OHEPonline.org also serves as a one-stop education portal for ARVC members. In addition to offering the online Generalist Certificate program, the site will include information about all OHEP professional development programs that are available with new content being added on a regular basis.

If you have questions about our new OHEP online learning center, contact Barb Youmans at byoumans@arvc.org or Lisa Maurer at lmaurer@arvc.org or at 303-681-0401. 

HOW TO CAPTURE SUMMER WEEKDAY BUSINESS BY RUNNING A DAY CAMP

Kidding Around

By Jeff Crider, Contributing Writer



Photo courtesy of Smokey Hollow Campground

ONE STRATEGY PARK OPERATORS can use to boost their business during the week is to create a summer day camp. “Parents have got to put their kids somewhere during the week. Why not put them in your park?” asks Bud Styer, a longtime campground industry consultant who runs a successful summer day camp for 150 kids at Smokey Hollow Campground in Lodi, Wisconsin.

Styer says it made sense for him to create a day camp because of the investments he made in inflatable water toys, playground equipment and other attractions at his park which weren't being used during the week. “We have a huge investment in assets that are primarily used Friday, Saturday and Sunday. But we've got all these assets laying idle during the week. Why not use them?”

One factor to consider when deciding whether to start a day camp is the competition because many communities already have various daycare and summer school options. “You have churches and schools,” Styer says, “and the bigger the town, the more options parents have.” But campgrounds are unique, he says, because of the experiences they can provide for children, which range from arts and crafts activities to swimming, hiking and other outdoor recreation activities.

Another factor to consider is that summer day camps may not work in every park location. Garry and Vickie Cole ran a summer day camp at the Shelby/Mansfield KOA in Shelby, Ohio for four years, but found that their location was too remote to generate the number of kids they needed to make a summer day camp business viable.

But Styer says that for parks that are located closer to towns or cities with large numbers of children, having a summer day camp can be a worthwhile business option. As a first step in the planning process, he recommends checking with state authorities to find out what they require to run a summer camp or day care business, including the necessary permits. In Wisconsin, that means working with the Department of Health and Family Services.

“You have to know the rules first,” Styer elaborates. “The state tells you the hours, what to feed them, the number of counselors. You have to sign the kids in and sign them out. It's pretty strict. All of our counselors have to have background checks. Everybody is subject to drug testing. Everyone wants to be assured that their child is in good hands. Some kids

have allergies. Some kids have to be medicated at lunchtime. If they fall down, it has to be documented.”

“When we decided to do it, it took five months to get a permit,” he adds. “We started with six kids, and then went to 30 kids. Then to 75, to 100 and to 150 kids.” In his busiest years, around 2004 and 2005, Styer says he had as many as 243 kids, which provided a significant revenue stream for his park. His day camp business dropped after the recession of 2008, but it has gradually built back up again.

Styer says it was an adjustment for him and his staff to learn how to run a campground and a summer day camp simultaneously. He says that separate staff members need to oversee the day camp and supervise the kids. Styer found he needs to have at least 90 kids for his day camp business to break even on his costs for food and drinks as well as labor costs for his 12 camp counselors and two administrators. The younger the kids, he explains, the more counselors you need to comply with state requirements.

On rainy days, Styer sometimes loads the kids onto buses and takes them to the movies in town or to play indoor soccer or tour the capital city of Madison. He even has a science teacher who visits the park. “He has been nominated five times for teacher of the year. You talk about having the kids engaged. He'll have the kids making rockets in the morning and root beer floats in the afternoon using liquid nitrogen!”

Styer has developed a separate website to promote his summer day camp business, which is now in its 20th year. “We expect 2017 to be another great year,” he says. 



Photo courtesy of Smokey Hollow Campground



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Bud Styer offers a few more words of advice for campground owners who are considering developing a day camp program:

Remember, you're doing this to make money.

"You're doing this to make a profit, not just to be a nice guy," Styer stresses, adding that there are already childcare facilities in most towns, some of which have volunteers rather than paid staff.

Don't get into the day camp business unless you're serious about it. "This is a big commitment," he says. "It's not something where you go in and think you're going to print money. We start at 7 a.m. because that's when the kids' parents are on their way to work."

Get a sense of how a day camp works.

Styer advises going to a local YMCA and paying attention to how the staff interacts with the kids.

Summer day camps are typically run during a short, intense period of time.

"I only do it for 11 weeks," Styer explains. "Here in Wisconsin, school doesn't get out until June 11. Then you have graduation, so you can't start until the middle of June."

You can staff your day camp with high school graduates, college kids and teachers who are unemployed during the summer months. "Most of my staff

have been with me three to six years," Styer says. The kids who attend his summer camp typically come back every year, and several of them eventually seek part time employment at the campground. "This last summer, one-third of our labor force came from our kids who attended summer camp. They got work permits and they turned out to be excellent employees. While they're too young to be working in the summer camp program, they can work in the store, clean bathrooms, pick up garbage and clean fire rings. You're grooming your future talent for the campground!"

You need a well planned activities program.

"You have to have a lot of activities to keep them engaged," Styer says. "When children are not engaged and they're bored, you've got a problem. If you give them too much space and too much free time, it gets out of control." Styer offers his summer camp attendees a variety of activities each day, including two to three hours of swimming, arts and crafts, glitter tattoos, bikes and trikes, miniature golf, jumping pillow time, bocce ball, gaga ball, dodge ball and donut decorating. "Every activity you've ever planned for your customer can be executed during the week," he adds. 

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The stage at Campland by the Bay faces San Diego's Mission Bay.

"HONESTLY, IT'S ONE OF THE BEST JOBS IN AMERICA, TO BE ABLE TO COME OUT AND HAVE SOME FUN WITH PEOPLE AT A CAMPGROUND LIKE CAMPLAND ON THE BAY. "THEY'RE ALREADY HERE TO HAVE A GREAT TIME." — KENNY JOHNSON, RECREATION MANAGER, CAMPLAND BY THE BAY

MUSIC CONCERTS ARE A BIG DRAW AT SAN DIEGO'S CAMPLAND BY THE BAY

The Sounds of Success

By Karen Brost

FOR THE PAST 14 YEARS, Kenny Johnson has served as Recreation Manager at Campland by the Bay, an RV park, campground and marina set on the shores of San Diego's Mission Bay. The park has a jam-packed recreation calendar that includes a wide variety of activities such as water aerobics, yoga, pickle ball, trivia nights, bingo, soccer and much more.

Campland has been open for nearly 50 years and has always incorporated some form of live music into its programming. They began by offering performances of acoustic music and have now evolved to the point where they are presenting nearly 50 concerts a year which are included in the recreational amenities for guests staying at the park.



Campland by the Bay hosts nearly 50 musical events each year.

Johnson has named the park's annual summer live entertainment series "Campland Rocks," and every year he has tour-style t-shirts that feature the park's mascot Friendly the Wolf dressed up as a rock and roll performer and a list of all of the bands and dates. "People go crazy for them," he says. "They're fun stuff and a good way to help pay for the bands by selling merchandise."

Music is Johnson's passion, and over the years he has been able to zero in on what the park's guests really want. In the past, he tried bringing in local bands that were very popular, but their original music was not what guests wanted to hear. "It was like crickets out there because folks want to hear songs they know," Johnson explains. "Now we primarily stick with cover bands and tribute bands. I've learned from my mistakes."

It was about five years ago that he started bringing in tribute bands with names like Fan Halen, Led Zepagain, Greentoday and Fleetwood Max. "The people just really, really love it," he notes. Johnson also brings in cover bands as another way for guests to enjoy listening to songs they know and he books acoustic musicians for the park's new Campland Raised Cantina.



Each year, the campground sells tour-style t-shirts to help cover the costs of bringing in bands.

Johnson has tried a number of ways to book the musicians, including going through entertainment agencies, but in the end, he found that he prefers to do the booking himself. "You can reach out directly to the band," he explains. He cautioned that there can be a little drama involved when working with some of these groups. "All of these guys play in different bands. They might be in an Elton John band and the next day they might be in an Abba band and now they don't like each other."

He shared a funny story about booking tribute bands at a campground. "When I first started getting the larger bands and tribute bands, they would see where they would be playing and think, 'Oh, great. We're going to a campground. This isn't the House of Blues.'" They thought they would be playing to people sitting around singing Kumbaya. "Then they'd get out to Campland and our stage is right on the bay and the fireworks go off at 9:55 p.m. at Sea World and they're standing out there saying, 'Oh my gosh, this is awesome!' They underestimate it, initially. I actually like seeing their faces when they pull in with their mouths open."

When asked about what type of equipment the park provides for musicians, Johnson replies, "We provide the sound and lighting. We have speakers. We have a full on P.A. system that could run Aerosmith if we needed to, but we don't have Aerosmith, we have Aeromyth. It's a little different."

Johnson also makes sure that the park has the proper music licensing in place, both for the use of recorded music and live performances. "We have our licensing, absolutely," he says. "It's important to have because you need to keep within the rules."

"Another lesson that I learned is when you have 500 people out there for two hours, you have to be able to really have a major presence, I believe, to provide information and security. We don't have any real issues, but it's worth the extra money to have a few extra people around to answer questions or if someone gets hurt." They also take a proactive approach to lost children. "We've got a spot where parents are able to show the kids before the concert, 'if you get lost, go over to that booth over there.' That's really important to us."

Johnson says that the concerts also give parents a great way to introduce their kids to live music without having to take them to a major arena. "The neatest thing about the tribute bands for me personally is watching the kids. They're sitting watching a Van Halen or Kiss (tribute band) or whoever. This could be their first concert."

He says that the tribute bands love to see the kids rockin' and rollin' along with them. "They'll bring a couple of kids up on stage and they're having a great time. You see the look on their faces and they think they've made it. It's like 'I want to do this someday.' That's a neat little bonus. Afterwards, they're going for autographs and pictures. It's great to see the younger kids get introduced to live music. I have a lot of kids come up to me when they're grown, saying 'I remember the first time I was here and you had Prince.' That sticks in their mind."

"We love our live music here at Campland," the park's website states. "It's a really fun place," Johnson says. "The music is an added bonus. It's something fun for guests to plan their night around." 

LISTEN UP! Why Music Licensing Matters

If you play copyrighted music at your park, you need to have the proper music licenses from the performing rights organizations (PROs) who represent the songwriters, publishers and performers whose music you are playing. There are four PROs, ASCAP, BMI, SESAC and GMR, and parks that do not secure the applicable licenses from them could face steep fines.

Music licensing requirements cover all types of copyrighted material, including music recorded on CDs, DVDs and cassettes; on-hold music and music broadcast through TV, radio or digital music services. You must also be properly licensed if you bring DJs, bands or other live entertainers to perform at your park. Some people mistakenly assume that it's the entertainers who must secure the licenses. However, as a business, your park is benefiting from the performance, therefore you are responsible for securing the proper licenses.

As a member benefit, arVC offers the arVC combined music license that covers ASCAP and BMI at a discounted rate. A separate SESAC license is also available at a discounted rate. arVC does not currently have a discounted rate secured with GMR. The next open enrollment period for the arVC combined music license begins on August 1, 2017.

If you currently have the arVC combined music license and/or SESAC license and have questions about coverage, contact arVC at **(303) 681-0401**.

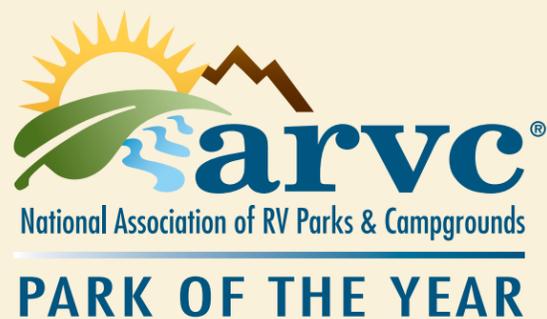
HOW THEY GIVE BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

2016 Park of the Year Award Winners

By Karen Brost

EACH NOVEMBER, AT OUR ANNUAL OUTDOOR HOSPITALITY CONFERENCE & EXPO, four parks are named “Park of the Year” in their respective size categories and are honored at our Awards of Excellence dinner. These awards recognize each parks’ dedication to achieving excellence in operations, marketing, management and their involvement in the outdoor hospitality industry.

Another way these parks stand out is through their commitment to supporting their local communities. They serve as great examples of the many ways in which parks can make a difference. Here are a few examples:



The annual Crock Pot Cook-off at True West Campground benefits a local animal sanctuary.

Photo courtesy of True West Campground, Stables and Mercantile

Park of the Year - Small True West Campground, Stables and Mercantile Jamestown, Tennessee

At True West, every weekend in July is “Thank Our Heroes” weekend where all active and retired military, police, fire and volunteer emergency medical technicians are entitled to receive special discounts on two-night site rentals or lodging. The campground also hosts a ceremonial burning/retirement of the flag in November in conjunction with the local American Legion post to honor veterans and show that the spirit of the American flag lives on.

In September, True West hosts a Crock Pot Cook-off and Best Friends Fundraiser. The cost to participate is

\$10 per person for both cooks and diners. Half of the money raised goes to the winning cook and the other half goes to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. Last year, the group received \$500 from the proceeds of the cook-off and the event’s silent auction. This year, True West is adding a Pet Talent Show to its activity calendar to benefit Best Friends. The registration “fee” will be a donation of dog food for the shelter, and volunteers from the organization will be the judges.

“We also try to help out our local community businesses by having a ‘Market Place’ weekend,” explains Donna Martin, OHP, who owns the campground with her husband Shawn. “This is where local shops can come and showcase their businesses here at

True West. This could be anything from equine massages, farriers, groomers and trainers to local spas, bakeries, homemade crafts and more. We do not charge for this. We are a small business, too, and we want our community to know that we are in this together!” As Donna says, “Campground owners definitely know what hospitality is all about, but here at True West, we know HORSEpitality™ best!”

Park of the Year - Medium Shelby/Mansfield KOA Shelby, Ohio

Owners Garry and Vicki Cole, OHE, support their local community by hosting field trips for elementary schools. The students visit stations to learn



Photos courtesy of Bethpage Camp Resort

Bethpage Camp Resort is a major supporter of the annual RE STRONG run to raise funds for cancer research.



The annual Walk to End Alzheimer's at Bethpage Camp Resort.

about energy and going green and the park’s mini-golf facilities, pedal carts and jump pillow give them a fun way to study the effects of forces and energy. The kids also study rock classifications by visiting the park’s gem mine and use their mapping skills to go on a treasure hunt.

Garry and Vicki also support local schools districts by providing coupons for “Most Improved Student” in each class and prizes for “Right to Read” week. They also purchase ads in local sports venues to support the schools in their area.

Park of the Year - Large Lake George RV Park Lake George, New York

“Giving back to our community is a major factor in our continued success over five decades,” states Lake George RV Park’s President and CEO Dave King. One way his park does this is by contributing to the cost of a fireworks show held in its community every Thursday night in the summer. “This is a local project that helps the entire community and promotes tourism at the same time,” he adds. “Our guests report to us that they have created new family traditions of visiting our area firework shows on Thursday nights in the summer.”

Lake George RV Park also supports the Adirondack Theater Festival, a

professional, equity theater company located in nearby Glens Falls, New York. The park provides financial support and in-kind donations, and for over 13 years, the park’s office staff has dedicated over 100 hours each winter to administer a large silent and live auction to benefit the theater company. The event raises over \$50,000 each year.

Lake George RV Park also uses the proceeds from bottle returns and other recycling programs to support the Sponsor-A-Camper program at Double H Ranch, an organization that serves the needs of terminally ill children from all over the world. Each year, the park raises enough money to support one to four weeks of camping for children at the camp.

Park of the Year - Mega Bethpage Camp Resort Urbanna, Virginia

Bethpage Camp Resort has a very personal reason for its commitment to raising funds for cancer research. In January of 2014, Ruth Ellen Hurley, wife of the park’s owner Walt Hurley, tragically passed away from breast cancer at the age of 48. That summer, a team of community leaders, friends and the Bethpage staff decided to hold a large-scale running event to benefit the Virginia Commonwealth University Massey Cancer Center where Ruth Ellen received much of her cancer treatment.

The event, which is now held each year, is called RE STRONG and has drawn the support of many major corporate sponsors. It includes a family fun run and 5K and 10K races. Last year, the race attracted 700 runners and raised over \$60,000 for cancer research. “We plan to beat both those number this year,” says Bethpage’s Director of Marketing Ryan Orton.

Also in 2014, Ellie Galloway, regional director of the Alzheimer’s Association and a seasonal resident at Bethpage for many years, recognized that the resort offers the space, equipment and staff to host a “Walk to End Alzheimer’s,” and an annual tradition began. The event is now in its third year and attracts over 500 participants from all over the region, including guests at Bethpage.

“Being a leader in our industry comes with many responsibilities,” King explains, “and giving back to our community is right at the top of the list. Our commitment and involvement with community projects raises the morale for our staff that feel compelled to go above and beyond to serve the needs of others. This translates into guest appeal as our new and returning camping guests share our pride in supporting these projects.” 



Many campground operators have found that they can bring people back to their parks again and again if they offer fun family activities. These activities also give parents a chance to act like kids again, while reconnecting with their children without the distraction of electronic devices.

One popular way for parks to do this is by offering themed weekends and events, and arvc members across the country have come up with plenty of creative ways to do that:

SEARCHES FOR SASQUATCH

Indian Creek Campground in Tecumseh, Michigan offers a Bigfoot week in June that includes a Sasquatch coloring contest and a guided search for Bigfoot in the woods in which campers try to see if they can capture the legendary beast on camera.

JURASSIC ADVENTURES

Lone Oak Campsites in East Canaan, Connecticut has an annual Jurassic-themed weekend that includes a dinosaur dig and a reptile show that features live alligators, snakes, turtles

and lizards which are provided by a company named Rainforest Reptile Shows. The shows are put on by professional reptile handlers who teach park guests about the reptiles' natural behaviors and habitats.

CARDBOARD BOAT REGATTAS

One of the funniest events that park operators offer is a cardboard boat regatta in which guests compete against one another in homemade cardboard boats held together only by duct tape.

Races often involve seeing which team can make it the farthest across a lake, swimming pool or other body of water before their homemade watercraft sinks into the water. The Meadville KOA in Meadville, Pennsylvania has a cardboard boat regatta every year with three categories of contestants: Teams of one adult and one child under 12, teams of two teens between the ages of 13 and 17 years old and adults who compete singlehandedly. Guests bring their own cardboard and assemble their boats on the day of this annual competition.

Tall Pines Campground & Canoeing in Bainbridge, New York has a Hillbilly Week that includes a Redneck Regatta. "People build their own boats," says park co-owner Gayle Bennett. "We have had everything from bathtubs to homemade paddleboats. Last year, we had our biggest turnout with about 20 different boats."

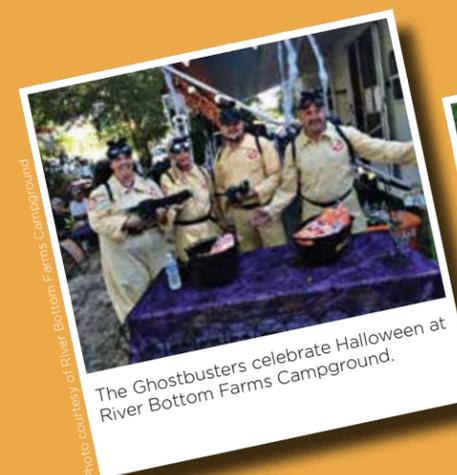
THEMED WEEKENDS DO HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON: THEY OFFER PLENTY OF FUN AND WAYS FOR FAMILIES TO CREATE NEW MEMORIES TOGETHER.

CHOCOLATE THEMED WEEKENDS

This is one sweet idea that appeals to all ages. Chocolate-themed weekends typically involve chocolate crafts, such as chocolate finger painting, as well as chocolate eating contests of one sort or another. For its "Everything Chocolate" weekend event in June, Buttonwood Campground in Mifflintown, Pennsylvania has a chocolate pudding slip and slide and an after dark chocolate candy hunt by flashlight. >>>

SPECIAL EVENT WEEKENDS ARE A BIG DRAW FOR CAMPERS
VARIATIONS ON A THEME

By Jeff Crider, Contributing Writer



The Ghostbusters celebrate Halloween at River Bottom Farms Campground.



Tall Pines Campground hosts a "Redneck Regatta" as part of its Hillbilly Week celebration.



River Bottom Farms' haunted house features a scary cast of characters.

>>>

MURDER MYSTERY WEEKENDS

One of the more elaborate murder mystery weekends is an adults-only three-day event held at Point Sebago Resort in Casco, Maine where murder mystery actors mingle, converse and dine with park guests. As the park's website states, "It all seems pretty innocent and friendly until someone dies. Then those friendly characters become suspects. The rest of the weekend, amidst shootings, stabbings, explosions and whatever else may happen, you interrogate the characters, search for clues and try to put the pieces together. You can be as involved or uninvolved as you like. Some guest are content to sit back and simply laugh all weekend. Other are intent on solving the crime and winning the grand prize, a getaway weekend for two at Point Sebago." With guests coming back year after year to try to determine 'whodunit,' the murder mystery weekend sells out every year.



Tall Pines Campground hosts a "Redneck Regatta" as part of its Hillbilly Week.

Photo courtesy of Tall Pines Campground

KARAOKE AND TALENT SHOWS

Many campgrounds schedule talent show competitions, including Land-O-Pines Family Campground in Covington, Louisiana which hosts an annual "Star Search Karaoke" event. Contestants are invited to compete to become "The Voice" of LOP and trophies are awarded.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Why wait until December to celebrate the holidays? The Jellystone Park in Williamsport, Maryland offers Christmas caroling, a Christmas campsite decorating contest and a cookies and milk party with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Guests at Wolf's Den Family Campground in East Haddam, Connecticut can make ornaments with Santa and participate in a cookie swap, while guests at Misty Mountain Camp Resort in Greenwood, Virginia can get into the holiday spirit with a summer snowball battle and an ugly sweater contest.

While these themed events cover a wide range of subjects, they do have one thing in common: they offer plenty of fun and ways for families to create new memories together, which is what camping is all about. 

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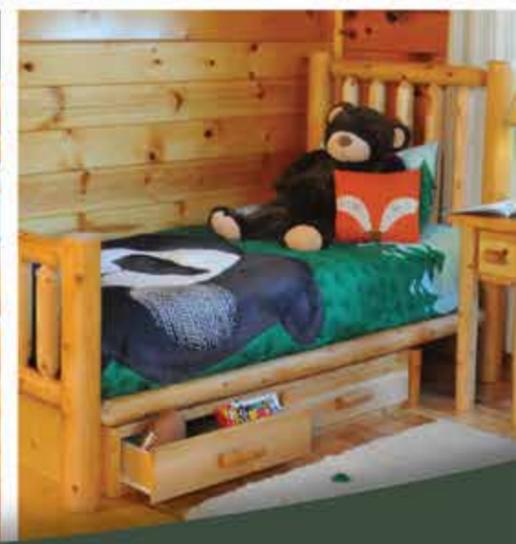
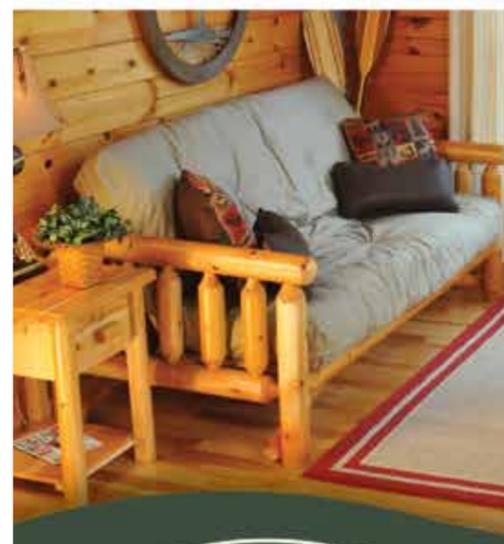
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Scaring Up More Business with Halloween Events

One of the most lucrative activities parks can plan to bolster their late summer and fall shoulder season business is Halloween-themed weekends. According to a recent survey, Halloween spending is at an all-time high, so it's only natural for campground owners to want to get in on the fun (and extra revenue) this holiday can generate.

Some campgrounds get into the spirit of Halloween as early as several weeks before the end of October. Dana Gabriel, who co-owns and operates River Bottom Farms Campground in Swansea, South Carolina says that her six Halloween-themed weekends are her busiest weekends of the year. Her park includes a haunted house in an old barn that contains animatronic figures. She also uses about 20 actors to staff the haunted house.

Lake Rudolph Campground & RV Resort in Santa Claus, Indiana offers seven consecutive halloween-themed weekends that include bonfire ghost stories, haunted hayrides, scary film classics, Halloween parties and trick or treating, as well as costume and campsite decorating contests.

The Jellystone Park in Brandon, South Dakota creates a massive corn maze with over seven acres of twists, turns and dead ends. Guests can navigate the maze in daylight or at night with the aid of flashlights, making it suitable for all ages. The park also offers Yogi Bear's Pumpkin Patch and a special, one-day event called Mutts in the Maze! where guests can guide their furry friends through the maze. A portion of the proceeds is donated to the Sioux Falls Humane Society.



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Duck Puddle Campground hosts wedding receptions in its 100-plus-year-old barn.



Wedding ceremonies take place at a lakeside setting at Duck Puddle Campground.

Photos courtesy of Duck Puddle Campground

A Successful Marriage

WHEN CAMPGROUNDS AND WEDDINGS JOIN TOGETHER

By Jeff Crider, Contributing Writer

One of the best ways to generate new shoulder season business is to host weddings and wedding parties, particularly if your park is located in a scenic setting and has rental accommodations. So we asked three park operators who have recently gotten into the wedding business why they made this decision, how they handle food and other wedding party needs and how they market themselves as wedding venues. Here are a few tips that they shared:

Find the Perfect Setting

Like many campground operators, Susan James had never thought about hosting weddings at her Mountain Lake Campground in Summersville, West Virginia until her guests started asking her about it. But after she and her husband Shawn walked their 250-site park, which is densely forested with maples, poplars and pines, they soon discovered they had the perfect setting for weddings — a hill with a huge rock overlooking Summersville Lake, the largest lake in West Virginia. “We named it Serenity Point,” she says. “It’s just beautiful out there.”

James and her husband created a short foot path that winds through the woods to Serenity Point. Then they recycled several old trees into rustic benches, which provide seating for about 40 to 45 people at the site.

Duck Puddle Campground in Nobleboro, Maine is another example of a park that has gotten into the weddings business. Located roughly an hour north of Portland, the 150-site park has a scenic setting on Pemaquid Lake, which is seven miles long. The campground has six cabins, a three-bedroom lake house rental and a 100-plus-year-old barn, which the park initially used for dances and other recreational activities.

“One day, a young girl came to me and asked about having her wedding there,” says Meredith Blakesley, who co-owns and operates the park with her dad, Jim Grimes. “I didn’t

think it was nice enough for a wedding. But people like the old barn, the rustic look.”

The idea took hold and Blakesley set about the task of cleaning up the barn. “We had a lot of street signs hanging in there,” she says. “So we took all those down and scrubbed down the walls. We also resurfaced the floors and repainted the outside of the barn, which is red with white trim.”

Blakesley also found the perfect spot for a wedding ceremony — a scenic area of her park with lakefront campsites. She simply ropes off the campsites when she wants to use the lakefront area for a wedding.

Another increasingly popular destination for campground weddings is Flying Flags RV Resort and Campground, which is located next to the Danish-themed town of Solvang in California’s Santa Inez Valley. “We already have more than 10 weddings scheduled this year,” explains Didiayer Snyder, director of marketing and sales for Highway West Vacations, which owns the Flying Flags resort.

Some weddings take place on an open grassy area of the resort, while others take place in nearby wineries with the wedding guests spending the night in Flying Flags’ unique rental accommodations which include furnished safari tents, park model RVs and vintage Airstream trailers. Flying Flags is now putting the finishing touches on a picturesque barn that is being built to accommodate weddings, family reunions, corporate retreats and other special events.

Count on Caterers

When it comes to providing food for the weddings, park owners often find that it’s best to rely on professional caterers. Blakesley has found plenty of capable caterers within an hour’s drive of her park that provide everything from Maine lobster bakes to barbecued pulled pork.

She has found that caterers often have their own cooking equipment, from special stoves to smokers, >>>

>>>

which means that campground operators do not necessarily need to invest in costly commercial kitchen appliances to accommodate wedding parties. She added that there is a back room in her barn where the caterers can prep. “Most caterers are self-contained,” she says. “They just need electrical outlets.”

Mountain Lake Campground has an onsite restaurant that specializes in barbecued entrees, so it can easily provide catered food for weddings held at the park. There are also other caterers in town that wedding parties can use, depending on their needs, James says.

Flying Flags can provide food for wedding parties through its onsite Campfire Cafe. “We can tailor the catering to our guests’ needs,” Snyder says, adding that there are other caterers available in town, if needed.

Be Clear About Equipment

Campground operators typically invest in enough tables and chairs to accommodate a certain number of guests. But if they book a larger wedding, they simply ask the wedding party to rent what they need.

“We’re honest with what we provide,” Blakesley says. “We provide tables and chairs to seat up to 100. If they need more, they have to rent what they need. “With the wedding business, you have to be very clear with what you’re giving them.” Both Blakesley and James said they leave it up to wedding parties to rent the white tents and other special equipment they need for their events.

Marketing Matters

James of Mountain Lake Campground said a friend of hers was so taken with Serenity Point she asked if she could have her daughter’s wedding there as the campground’s first wedding. James agreed to host the wedding at no charge in exchange for using her friend’s wedding photography for marketing purposes.

James promotes her park’s weddings through Facebook and through WeddingWire.com, a website that offers free listings for campgrounds and other businesses that cater to weddings.

“Between WeddingWire.com and Facebook, I get two to three leads a day,” she explains.

“Last year was our first full year (pursuing the wedding business) and we did four weddings. This year, we’ve

“MOST CATERERS ARE SELF-CONTAINED, THEY JUST NEED ELECTRICAL OUTLETS.”
— MEREDITH BLAKESLEY, CO-OWNER, DUCK PUDDLE CAMPGROUND

already gotten 11 weddings booked, and 20 additional families have looked at our park but haven’t booked yet,” James adds.

Blakesley also uses Facebook and WeddingWire.com to promote her wedding business and finds it to be effective. She already booked five weddings this year, and she is continuing to receive leads. She also joined the Maine Wedding Network, a group that helps wedding vendors, photographers and service providers connect with each other. “They have a place they meet each month to network and share ideas,” she says.

Both James and Blakesley said they like the wedding business not only because it provides additional income, but because it exposes their parks to hundreds of potential new campers who may come back to their parks in the future. They have also discovered that once a park is ready to accommodate wedding parties, it can also easily handle other special events, such as anniversary and birthday parties and high school reunions.

James says that hosting weddings is less stressful than she thought it would be, at least in her part of the country. “There is something I have learned about the type of person that wants to have an outdoor destination wedding. They have been the nicest, most relaxed brides I have ever met in my life.” 



BUILDING TEAMS, BUILDING BUSINESS

Photo courtesy of Indian Creek Campground

Corporate Retreats Offer Campgrounds Additional Revenue Opportunities

By Jeff Crider, Contributing Writer

ACCORDING TO AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED BY FORBES, teambuilding is the most important investment a company can make for its people and that the most successful, memorable teambuilding events are ones that don't feel like a day at the office. Since the natural outdoor settings of our campgrounds are about as far away as you can get from a cubicle or board room, they offer great appeal to corporate groups seeking to plan teambuilding activities or retreats. And that, in turn, can provide a new revenue stream for the campgrounds that host them.

Pursuing corporate teambuilding events has proven to be a worthwhile business strategy for Indian Creek Campground, a 66-site park which is owned and operated by Rick and Elisabeth Dorman in Tecumseh, Michigan. It has expanded and diversified the business base for the Dormans' park, which is open from April 15 through October 15. The park has both low and high ropes courses as well as a 45-foot climbing wall and two 700-foot ziplines.

"Not a lot of campgrounds in Michigan have these amenities to offer their campers," Rick says, "so it creates a

powerful draw." The ropes course, climbing wall and zipline take people out of their comfort zones. "We didn't like the idea of people sitting in classes," he explains. "The whole concept of teambuilding is to present challenges to people and have them work as a team to solve problems. When you are up 45 feet, you are literally putting your life in that person's hands. It's quite challenging"

"We probably do a dozen or 15 corporate teambuilding events in the summer," he continues. "It's not a large number, but it's enough to help us with our budget. We use this to build our mid-week business." Many of the events take place during the day from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., but a handful of the corporate events result in overnight business, as well.

He says that the size of his corporate teambuilding groups varies. They've ranged from as small as seven or eight people to as many as 60, but the average group is 15 to 20 people. The Dormans don't have a restaurant onsite, so they utilize an outside company to cater lunches and dinners.

The Dormans promote their corporate team building business through direct mail, advertisements in local newspapers,

e-newsletters to campers, their Facebook page and their park website, as well as through a special website they have created that is geared toward teambuilding activities. They also make their zipline available Wednesday nights as a way of bringing new people into the park who might not otherwise see it. "As soon as people find out we have a zipline, they want to come to our park," Dorman says.

Campgrounds in scenic locations often have an advantage when it comes to hosting corporate team building events because companies are often looking for beautiful, out-of-the-way places to stimulate creative thinking and teamwork among their senior executives. "They find us because of our location," says Kendra Summers, director of sales and marketing for El Capitan Canyon, one of California's first glamping resorts. She says the resort has had executive retreats for less than a dozen people to up to 30 or 40.

Located about 20 miles west of Santa Barbara, El Capitan Canyon features luxurious park model RVs, furnished safari tents and yurts that are set up in a pine- and sycamore-filled canyon that's walking distance from the Pacific Ocean. "Especially in the dot.com market, younger companies are more receptive to this type of location as opposed to a stuffy hotel," Summers adds.

El Capitan Canyon has a high ropes course and also offers guided hikes. The resort also partners with the Santa Barbara Adventure Company to offer kayaking trips, Olympics-type activities and other recreational programs.

The resort also has meeting space on property with audiovisual capabilities as well as large barbecue grills,

which can be wheeled to different locations in the resort to accommodate corporate teams. "We'll also do grilled dining events, where people grill together and cook their own food together," Summers says. El Capitan Canyon also has amenities for relaxation, including hot spas, as well as large buildings that can be rented for yoga classes.

"ESPECIALLY IN THE DOT.COM MARKET, YOUNGER COMPANIES ARE MORE RECEPTIVE TO THIS TYPE OF LOCATION AS OPPOSED TO A STUFFY HOTEL."
— KENDRA SUMMERS, DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING, EL CAPITAN CANYON

Summers explained that the Ventura, California-based company Patagonia frequently sends groups to El Capitan Canyon for corporate team building purposes. "Their creative team comes out here quite often."

She says that much of El Capitan Canyon's corporate teambuilding business has also resulted from word-of-mouth referrals. "We work with people one on one," she explains. "Once we do receive an inquiry, we dedicate time and energy in giving them all the information they are looking for. We invite people out for a tour so they can see the property. Word of mouth is the biggest thing for us." 

Learn the Ropes of Insurance Coverage

If you're considering adding an attraction like a zipline or ropes course, the time to get your insurance professional involved is at the very beginning of the planning process. "Keep in mind that you want to consult with your insurance professional as a key member of your team, just as you would your accountant or lawyer on any major change in the business," says Irene Jones, campground insurance program manager for Marshall & Sterling Insurance.

"You can really affect the outcome so much by making the right choices for installation and construction," she continues, adding that these types of attractions are highly regulated. "The Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) is the organization that does the inspections and sets the guidelines. If you're going to do a high ropes course or zipline, you want it to be professionally installed and have inspections on a regular basis and document that. The inspections are something you're going to pay for every year." She

recommends that campground owners have a professional guide them through the process, including what the requirements are for safety harnesses, helmets and other equipment. "It's not something to be taken lightly."

Jones adds that not all carriers are going to be comfortable with the type of exposure involved with ziplines or ropes courses, so sometimes a campground owner will need to change carriers to get the coverage they need. Another factor to consider is having sufficient insurance coverage for the property and workers while the new attraction is under construction.

"When people are going to do something like this, they come to talk to us about safety and how it's going to affect their premiums," Jones says. "Usually, what I say is that you can do what you want to do as long as you're proactive about it and you have the right risk management in place."



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UPDATE

Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act

Members of arVC's Public Affairs Committee and their coalition partners from RVIA and RVDA traveled to Capitol Hill in June, 2016 to ask members of Congress for their support of the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act (Outdoor REC Act). The act was passed by both houses of Congress by unanimous and bipartisan votes in November, 2016 and signed into law by President Obama in December, 2016.

In the U.S., the outdoor recreation economy is a major driver of job creation and growth. Prior to passage of the Outdoor REC Act, the federal government did not track the contributions of the outdoor recreation sector to economic growth, unlike other major sectors in the U.S. economy. Understanding the outdoor recreation sector's economic value is critical to making informed policy and business decisions. This data is crucial to help quantify the economic importance of outdoor recreation and to help inform the decisions that affect businesses and millions of RVers who recreate outside each year.

Al Johnson, arVC public affairs chairman states, "It is imperative for

arVC to work with our industry partners and present a unified voice to our lawmakers on legislation like this that will quantify the RV park and campground industry's impact on the U.S. economy. This bill provides the way for outdoor recreation to receive the consideration it deserves in Congress."

"The private sector of the RV Park and campground industry has been starved for credible, solid industry statistics that truly represent the economic impact of our industry when working with authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ) at the federal, state and local level. The economic data developed will provide the necessary, factual information needed," says Jeff Sims, arVC senior director of state relations and program advocacy.

State Legislation

Year to date, the arVC Public Affairs Department has reviewed over 3,500 proposed legislation and regulations and sent out actionable intelligence on over 300 of these to the respective states. One of the top issues again in 2017 is the minimum wage, followed by local sales, use, rental and lodging taxes.

Members can access the arVC Daily Legislative & Monitoring Report on the arVC website in the Document Library under the Public Affairs tab. The report is updated Monday through Friday and includes bill summaries, bill status and hearing notices for each state.

NFPA 1194 - Standard for Recreational Vehicle Parks and Campgrounds

The NFPA 1194 document is especially helpful for associations and park owners to use when working with state and local authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ) that are developing regulations relating to the RV park and campground industry. It contains nationally-recognized consensus standards that include design and minimum construction criteria and requirements for RV parks and campgrounds including definitions, general requirements, general design criteria, fire safety, and environmental health and sanitation.

The NFPA 1194 is available for purchase at arVC's online store at arvc.org.

Contact Jeff Sims, senior director of state relations and program advocacy at jsims@arvc.org if you need assistance or additional information.



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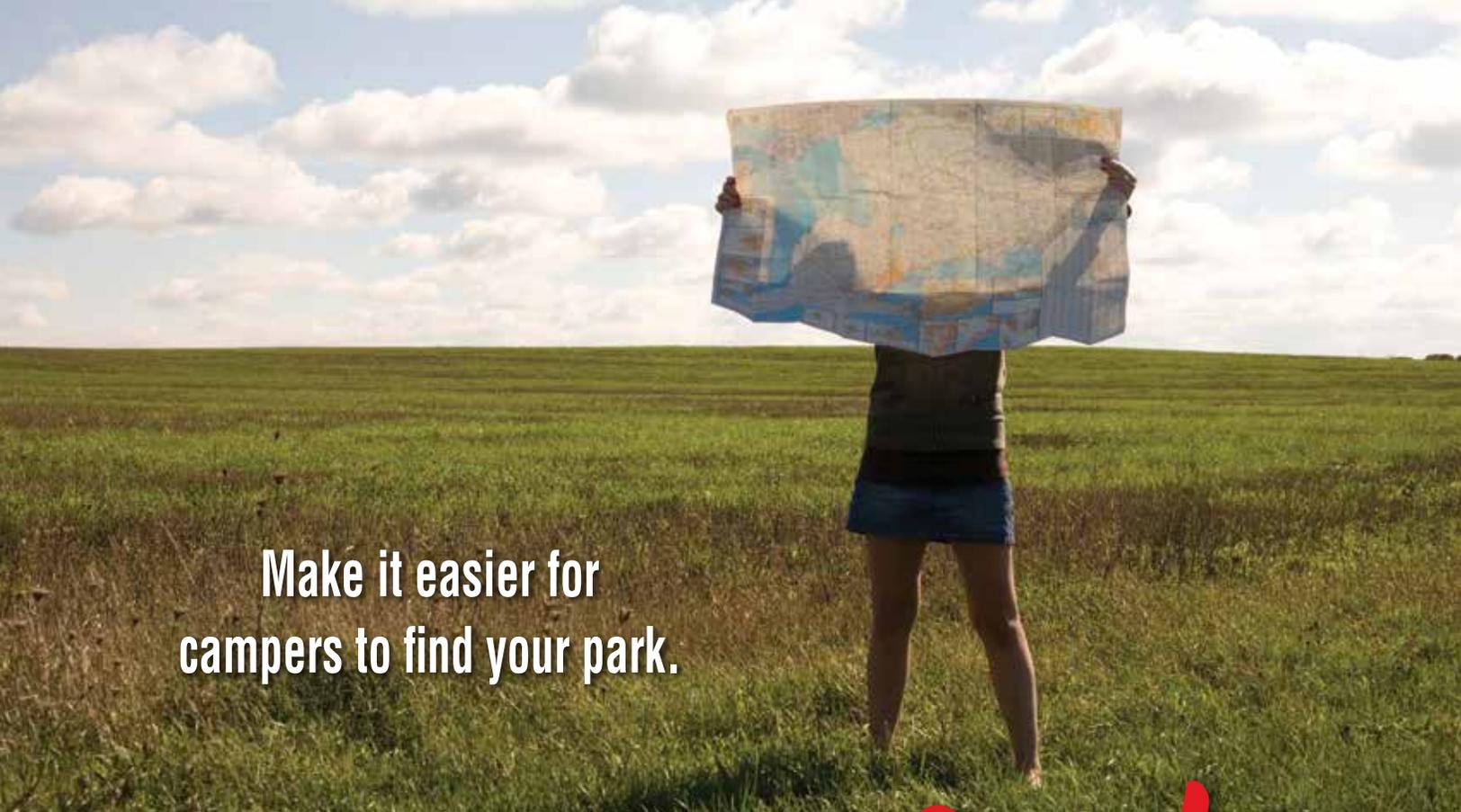
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