

NATURAL APPEAL

Greening Up Your Park

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Turning Them into First Bookings

RV RALLIES

How They're Good for Business

the Voice



GREAT WAYS TO GIVE BACK

CELEBRATING THE GENEROSITY
OF OUR MEMBERS

FALL 2019

PLUS

Conference Preview: See What We
Have in Store for You in Knoxville



Good Sam

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Web



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PAGE 22 STEPPING UP TO GIVE BACK

Staff members at Lake Arrowhead Campground in Montello, Wis. enjoy one of several corn boil fundraisers the park hosts each year. Photo courtesy of Lake Arrowhead Campground.

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MARKETPLACE

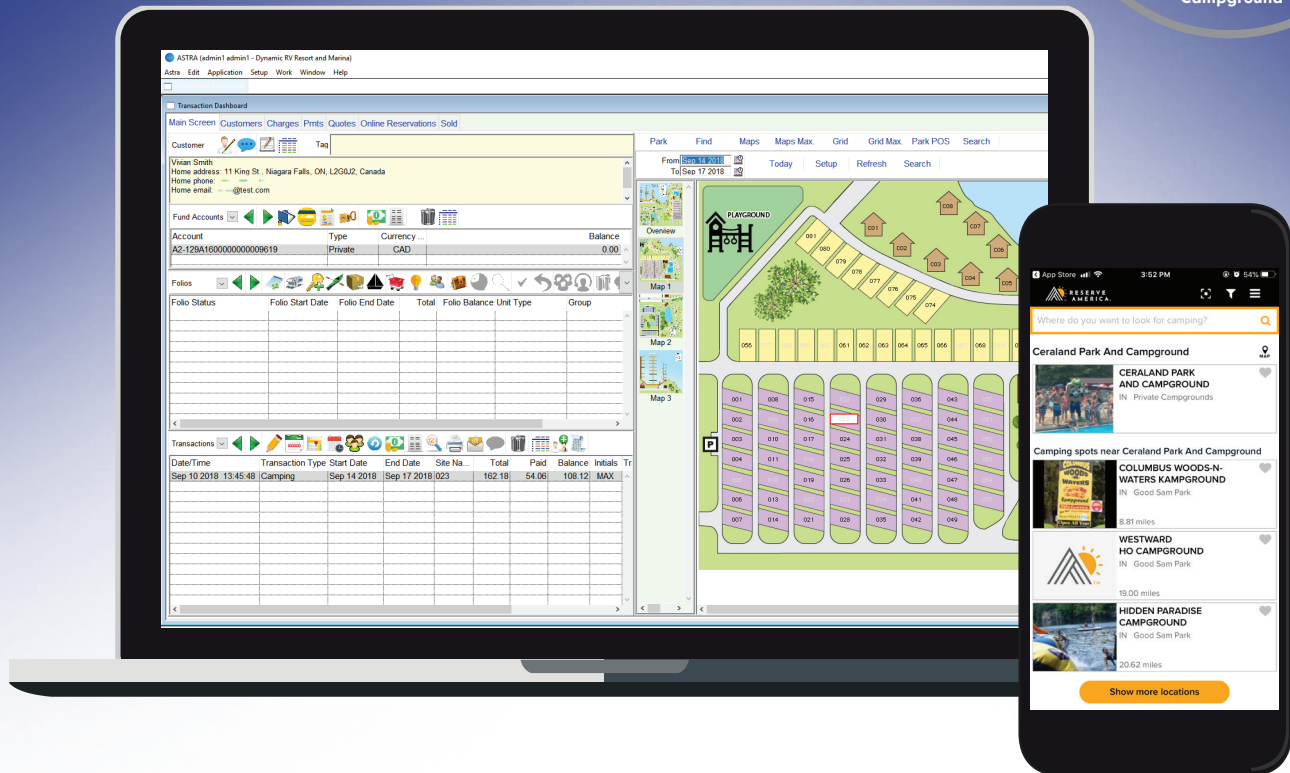
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A comprehensive marketplace featuring products and services from ARVC Member Benefit Providers and Supplier Council members.

On the cover: Larry and Cathy Reiss, Butterfield RV Resort, Benson, Arizona.

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ARVC On the Move...

My father used to say, "Don't let the grass grow under your feet."

It was an expression often heard in my midwestern home that meant don't stand still; always move forward.

Many years later, my father's direction continues to ring true with me. One of the best things about the ARVC team is the energy and passion we all have for continually improving your member experience. In 2019, there's been very little grass growing beneath our feet.

The recent unveiling of ARVC's new member profile database took many months to plan and execute. This was a major investment in our future and will allow the ARVC community to have a more sophisticated system of communication and secure data storage than ever before.

A fresh, new arvc.org website has also been developed, which runs tandem to the database and allows for synchronous integration. Together, these improvements mean you'll have more streamlined access to ARVC and the valuable benefits that mean the most to you.

In a recent member survey, we learned 70 percent of you were not aware of all the money-saving benefits your ARVC membership, combined with your state association membership, provides. To make your savings easier to understand, we developed the ARVC Savings Calculator, which can be easily accessed at arvc.org/savings. The ARVC Savings Calculator will help you understand how your annual dues compare to the literally thousands of dollars in savings you can receive as a member of ARVC. In most cases, you'll see your savings far surpass the cost of your annual membership.

This year, ARVC will launch our online education portal—a first in our industry. Every ARVC member will have access to the full, nine-course NFPA 1194® education series at their own convenience, thanks to the miracle of continuing adult education being offered online by ARVC.

This is just the beginning, folks, as the full IACET-accredited certification program will be offered as online content in 2020, providing differing skillset training to campground employees, managers and owners in unique ways.

We are also taking a serious stab at reinventing the Outdoor Hospitality Conference and Expo (OHCE) this year. A completely unique slate of education sessions was created directly from member feedback—you told us what you wanted and we're delivering. Plus, more than 70 percent of those sessions are being taught by new speakers. At the Expo, more than 30 percent of our trade show vendors this year are new. You can come see for yourself how these fresh faces might impact your campground's performance. If you haven't experienced OHCE in a while, I want to personally invite you to Knoxville, Tenn. this November 4-7. Now's the time to re-engage—and enjoy the beautiful color and culture of the Smoky Mountains, too!

Our public affairs and government advocacy work hasn't stood still either this year, with more than 10,000 bills which affect our industry being monitored to date in 2019, far outpacing any year in recent memory. One issue in particular, which threatens to force 30- and 50-amp Ground Fault Correction Indicators (GFCIs) into every electric pedestal across the country, at \$400 per pedestal, has been vigorously fought by ARVC. The \$280 million potential savings to our collective membership across the country makes this our number one advocacy priority. As of this writing, the National Electric Code (NEC) has made a decision to revert back to the 2017 code leaving the GFCI issue open to interpretation. ARVC's advocacy team continues to fight for you on this issue and we will continue to do so to ensure the standard is clearly benefiting RV park and campgrounds. In the meantime, we have created a GFCI Toolkit to help you navigate any questions that arise regarding this issue at your park or campground. As an ARVC member you can access this toolkit by logging into your profile on arvc.org and downloading it from the Document Library.

Finally, perhaps the most important evidence that ARVC has its eye on the future is the addition of a new seat on the ARVC Board that will represent young professionals (aged 18-40) within the ARVC community. The ARVC Young Professionals group are our future leaders and they need to be given a respected voice to ensure ARVC passes the torch to them in a wise and protracted way.

These are just some of the ways ARVC has been moving forward and working on your behalf this year. It is our hope you continue to see the value of your ARVC and state memberships and, more than anything, that we stay united for the benefit of our entire community.

Paul Bambei
ARVC President/CEO



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Join us this November in Knoxville, Tennessee for the greatest gathering of campground industry professionals, with exciting new ways to network and grow your business. Register at arvc.org/OHCE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3

4:00 pm - 6:30 pm Welcome Desk Open

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4

7:00 am - 12:00 pm Welcome Desk Open
 1:00 pm - 5:30 pm Welcome Desk Open
 8:00 am - 5:30 pm **[NEW!]** Takeaway Tours*
 8:00 am - 5:30 pm **[NEW!]** Emergency Response Planning Workshop*
 8:00 am - 5:30 pm NFPA 1194 Completion Certificate*
 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm Welcome Reception, *sponsored by NewBook*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

7:00 am - 12:00 pm Welcome Desk Open
 8:00 am - 9:00 am Opening General Session
 9:20 am - 11:45 am Education Sessions
 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm **[NEW!]** Membership Lunch
 1:45 pm - 2:45 pm Education Sessions
 3:00 pm - 4:40 pm Cracker Barrels
 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm Young Professionals Meeting
 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm Joint 20 Group Meeting
 8:00 pm - 11:00 pm Young Professionals Networking Event

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6

7:00 am - 12:00 pm Welcome Desk Open
 8:00 am - 9:00 am **[NEW!]** Trends and Insights Presentation
 9:30 am - 11:45 am Education Sessions
 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm Keynote Lunch
 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm Welcome Desk Open
 1:45 pm - 2:45 pm Education Sessions
 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm Reservations Systems Panel and Q&A
 4:45 pm - 5:45 pm Town Hall and Voting Area Caucuses
 5:45 pm - 6:00 pm **[NEW!]** Expo Welcome Reception
 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm Welcome Desk Open
 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm Expo Hall Open
 6:30 pm - 8:20 pm **[NEW!]** 4 Campfire Sessions

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7

7:00 am - 4:00 pm Welcome Desk Open
 7:30 am - 8:30 am Annual Membership Meeting & Breakfast
 8:30 am - 4:00 pm Expo Hall Open
 9:30 am - 3:20 pm **[NEW!]** 8 Campfire Sessions
 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm Expo Lunch
 5:30 pm - 6:00 pm Awards Reception
 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm Awards of Excellence Dinner & Foundation Auction
 8:30 pm - 10:30 pm After Party, *sponsored by the ARVC Young Professionals*

Schedule subject to change. Visit arvc.org/OHCE for the latest updates!
 *Add-On Experiences require additional registration



FALL 2019

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The Voice is published three times a year by the National Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds (ARVC).

ARVC, a leader in the outdoor hospitality industry, is the only national association dedicated to representing the interests and needs of private RV parks and campgrounds in the US and Canada. We are deeply committed to providing our nearly 3,000 members exclusive access to continuing education, networking, business and marketing tools, member-only benefits and discounts, and advocacy at the local, state and national levels.

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Readers

We welcome your feedback. Send us comments, questions, letters to the editors or any suggestions and photos for the next issue to Rebecca Maguire at rebecca.maguire@arvc.org

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NEW AND EXCITING EVENTS YOU CAN'T MISS



Add-On Experiences*

Monday, November 4

NEW Emergency Planning Workshop, where attendees will participate in an emergency preparedness training and interactive drill! You'll walk away from this workshop with the skills, resources and confidence to successfully plan for the safety of your park and guests.

NEW Takeaway Tour, where you will get a behind-the-scenes tour of Clayton Homes, one of the nation's leading park model RV manufacturers, as well as visit and tour two (2) of the best ARVC member-parks in the Knoxville area.

The **NFPA 1194® Completion Certificate** class is designed to ensure park owners, operators and managers have an in-depth understanding of the current standards for RV park and campgrounds. The class is led by a selection of experts in each of the key topic areas, including general park design, fire, electrical, water and sanitation and risk management.



Keynote Lunch: Stop Acting Your Age! An Entertaining Keynote to Help You Avoid Generational Warfare

Wednesday, November 6

Matt Havens brings more than a decade of experience at the forefront of leadership and generational issues for a Fortune 50 company, but spices things up with a background in standup comedy. During his OHCE keynote, attendees will learn how to understand, recognize and resolve every generational issue facing today's workforce.



Reservation Systems Panel and Q&A

Wednesday, November 6

This interactive panel session brings together representatives from **nine (9) reservation systems**. You will learn about all the reservation systems in one place, and then be able to head to the Expo prepared to talk with the one(s) you feel are the best fit for your RV park or campground.



Campfire Sessions

Wednesday, November 6 and Thursday, November 7

NEW Looking for even more insight to take back to your parks? Be sure to take in our new "Campfire Sessions!" Taking place on the Expo stage, these **"TED-talk style" sessions** offer additional tidbits of information to expand your knowledge on trending topics in the industry.

THANK YOU TO OUR TITLE SPONSORS



AMAZING ANNIVERSARIES

Please join us in congratulating (and celebrating!) the following ARVC member-parks that marked a major milestone this year.

**65
YEARS**
Anvil Campground
Williamsburg, Va.

This ARVC member-park is having a banner year! In November, **Anvil Campground** was named ARVC's Park of the Year in the small park category and on May 1, it received the Small Business of the Year award from the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance. Then to top it all off, the campground celebrated its 65-year anniversary with a weekend (May 10-12) packed with events with the proceeds benefiting the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Anvil is now one of the longest operating parks in the country, but like many ARVC-member parks, it had a very humble beginning. In 1953, its original owner, **Ralph Raymon Jump**, bought a soybean farm where he lived with his wife and son Jerry. The following year, a traveler approached the Jump family asking if he could park his camper overnight on their property. Ralph said yes, passed an extension cord out the window to the man and Anvil Campground was born. The soybean field was then leveled by hand to make way for the first six campsites. Ralph Jump eventually passed the business to his son, **Jerry**, who ran the campground until his death in 2005. Jerry's son **Chris Jump** took over the family business in 2005 at age 23 and bought it outright in 2011.

The campground's name was inspired by the family's history. Chris says his grandfather and great-grandfather were both blacksmiths who contributed to the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg from 1929 to 1935.



Left: The first Anvil Campground road sign was installed in 1979 and features lettering inspired by a brochure the family's Aunt Debbie designed for the park in 1974. Above: One of the campground's Premium Log Cabins which was installed in 2017.



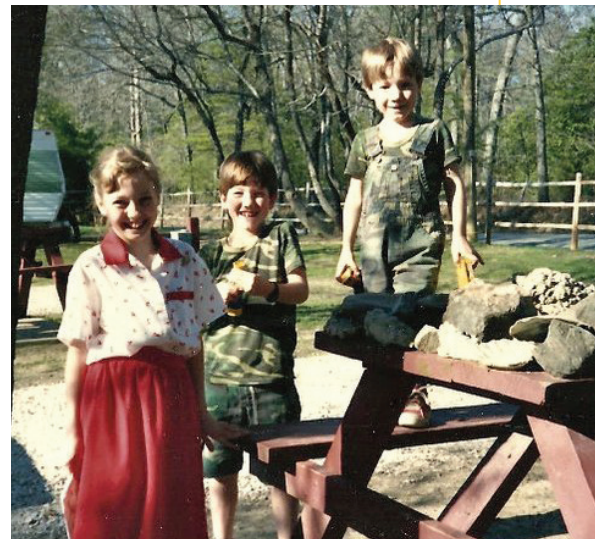
Above and right: Anvil Campground's General Store is fully stocked with many unique offerings. Second generation owner Jerry Jump was inspired to name it the "General Store" after visiting the general store at Disney's Fort Wilderness.



Today, the campground is home to 60 campsites and four cabins. Chris and his brother **Raymon**, the campground's operations manager, have worked to modernize Anvil by adding Wi-Fi, games and activities for families, and marina-style pedestals at each campsite. The park's latest additions include premium RV campsites with concrete pads, stone fire pits, recycled plastic ADA picnic tables, grills and swings.

Anvil is the closest RV park to the area's many attractions including Busch Gardens Williamsburg, Water Country USA, Colonial Williamsburg and Jamestown Settlement. The Williamsburg Area Transit Authority runs hourly shuttles to local attractions and Anvil is the only campground in the area to have a stop on the shuttle route.

"I'll never forget, they told my grandpa Ralph that he was never going to make any money because we were so far out of town," Chris says. "Three miles from Williamsburg, and back then that was way out of town, but now everything has grown around us."



Above: Heather, Lee and Peter, campground kids from Louisiana, on a visit to Anvil in 1988; Right: Left to right: Chris Jump (current owner), Raymon Jump (Chris' brother and current operations manager), Jenny Jump (Chris' twin sister) and Jerry Jump (father and second generation owner). Mother Patricia Jump is in the background. Photos provided by Chris Jump



50 YEARS

**Walnut Hills
Campground**
Staunton, Va.

The 44-acre parcel now known as **Walnut Hills Campground** was first developed around 1736 as part of a larger land grant from the king of England. This former walnut plantation survived a revolution, civil war and the internal combustion engine. The campground's office and camp store are housed in what was the plantation's stable, its horse troughs used for storing videotapes, board games and, fittingly, horseshoes for the horseshoe pits. The plantation house still stands and is now located on a separate lot.

The walnut business eventually became unprofitable, but new economic life was breathed into the region with the mid-1960s construction of Interstate 81. In 1965, shortly after the last of the original settlers' descendants had passed away, the plantation was bought by the Koogler family and within a few years was developed into a campground serving the growing flood of visitors to the Shenandoah Valley. In early 1990, the property was purchased by **Steve Albrecht**, who owned and operated it for nearly a quarter of a century before selling it to **Andy and Carin Zipser** in early 2013.

When Albrecht purchased the campground, many of its 85 sites were primitive and most of the developed sites had only 15-amp electrical service, because RV needs in those days were minimal. Through the years, however, the Albrechts — and now the Zipsers — have implemented a steady stream of upgrades, adding more amperage, additional sewer sites, digital cable TV and campground-wide Wi-Fi, cabins and numerous recreational amenities. Now offering 137 campsites and 13 rental units and open year-round, the campground is consistently rated as one of the best in Virginia and has earned TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence for the fourth consecutive year.

Walnut Hills Campground celebrated its 50-year anniversary on June 8 with food, fireworks and live music, and is looking to another 50 years of adapting to changing times while reveling in its rich history.

Above: Hilltop campsites at Walnut Hills Campground;
Below, left: Waterfront RV sites on the park's Kerplonken
Lake; Below, right: Walnut Hills Campground offers
campers a tranquil setting in Virginia's beautiful
Shenandoah Valley. Photos provided by Andy Zipser.





Left: The Ranger Station at Yogi Bear's Jellystone Camp-Resort at Daddy Joe's; Top left: An aerial view of the park captured by using drone photography; Top right: Kids get ready to take a refreshing dip in the park's indoor pool. Photos courtesy of Yogi Bear's Jellystone Camp-Resort at Daddy Joe's.



20 YEARS

Yogi Bear's Jellystone Camp-Resort at Daddy Joe's Tabor City, N.C.

The award-winning campground now known as **Yogi Bear's Jellystone Camp-Resort at Daddy Joe's** first began welcoming guests in 1999 when the Coleman family opened a 350-acre fishing and hunting preserve and named it Daddy Joe's to honor their father **Joe Coleman**. To create the preserve, they converted the property's existing tobacco and corn fields, pastures and irrigation ponds into areas for guided hunting trips and lakes for freshwater fishing. In its opening year, Daddy Joe's won the national Stewardship Award from Progressive Farmer Magazine for the unique design of its stream and lakes. The next year, they added yurts and a bathhouse, but soon realized they needed campsites, too, because more and more fishermen and hunters were bringing their campers and RVs. So in 2001, they added 36 campsites, followed by the construction of the campground's first swimming pool.

In 2003, the family decided to close the hunting and fishing operation to focus on the family market and the following year, Daddy Joe's joined the Yogi Bear's Jellystone Camp-Resort system. In 2008, and again in 2017, the campground received Jellystone's highest level of recognition by being named Camp-Resort of the Year.

Through the years, the campground has continued to expand with additional RV sites, cabins, yurts, bunkhouses and numerous amenities including a splash zone, jumping pillow, miles of hiking and biking trails, a golf cart rental fleet, volleyball pool, waterslides, a miniature golf course, a camp ministry and camp store.

In 2011, the family made the very popular decision to convert the campground's clubhouse into The Creamery, an ice cream shop featuring homemade ice cream, locally-roasted coffee and other treats. In 2017, they converted the first pool into a heated indoor pool and added an AquaPlay water park for summertime fun. Today, the campground offers 176 RV sites, including 14 unique quad sites accommodating up to four RVs each sharing a common courtyard with picnic tables and fire pits for creating a small community.

The Coleman family, **Joey and Deb, Rick and Cathy, Richard and Heather, Jesse and Amber and Christian**, are excited for what the future holds as they continue to move forward in the camping industry to provide their guests with the best camping experience possible.

Learn More at OHCE!

If your campground is a family business, you won't want to miss our session on **Family Business Dynamics: Tips for Working through Challenges** on Wednesday, November 6 from 1:45 pm - 2:45 pm.

Is your park celebrating a milestone anniversary next year? Let us know by emailing **Rebecca Maguire** at rebecca.maguire@arvc.org.

Jacob Hagofsky, O

**Jacob Hagofsky, OHE
Buttercup Woodlands Campground
Renfrew, Pa.**

330 RV sites, tent sites and cabins

(large campground category)

How would you describe your campground?

I run a park just north of Pittsburgh, Pa. with 330 sites on 55 acres and just over two miles of paved roads. Roughly 40 of our sites are divided between transient sites, tent sites and cabin rentals, with the rest being permanent/seasonal sites. We're open six months of the year.

How did you get started with ARVC?

I've been a part of ARVC's Young Professionals (YPs) for three years now, since we started the group.

How does the YP group help you in your day-to-day life as a park manager?

It's great, because the group sets up educational seminars online every two weeks, so you're constantly learning. And then there's the networking. I've met a lot of great people and we're always bouncing ideas off each other. I posted the other day to the Facebook group, asking for some ideas about store hours, and everybody pitched in. It's a very active and opinionated group, which I think is good and helpful to anybody who is in my position, whether they're managing a park or just coming into the industry.

What was it like to attend the YP events at the Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo (OHCE) last year in Oklahoma City?

We had a fantastic turnout. There were 62 of us. I remember when we started there were 23 of us. You're meeting everybody and learning about them and their parks. It's very interesting how everybody connects at our age. There are no barriers. It's just a free, open conversation.

YPs are going to play a critical role in the future of our industry. How do you envision this group continuing to grow?

Here in Pennsylvania, we just started our own YP group. I'm on the Board, and I'm chairing the YPs for the Pennsylvania Campground Owners Association (PCOA). We're working hand-in-hand with ARVC, but at the same time, we're doing our own things like private scholarships for YPs to attend the National School of RV Park and Campground Management. It's a fully-paid, all-inclusive scholarship. We're also sending someone to OHCE, at no cost, who's never attended before. We're drafting people in so they can understand how the industry works, get involved and realize the benefits.

What would you tell others in your age group who have not yet joined the YP group?

I would tell them this will be the stepping stone to your future in this industry. We are the next generation.

To join our YP group or to learn more, visit arvc.org/YoungProfessionals or contact **Madeline Hinkfuss** at madeline.hinkfuss@arvc.org. We're proud to showcase our members. Watch for additional "We Are ARVC" profiles in future issues of The Voice.



OHCE



Learn More at OHCE!

Are you a park professional age 40 or younger? Attend our **Young Professionals Meeting** on Tuesday, November 5 from 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm followed by the **Young Professionals Networking Event** from 8:00 pm - 11:00 pm.



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Learn How One ARVC Member-park has already saved \$700!

Email marketing can have a powerful impact on your business. A survey of US marketers conducted by the Direct Marketing Association and Demand Metric in 2016 found that email has a median return on investment of 122 percent—more than four times higher than the other marketing methods the survey studied which included social media, direct mail and paid searches.

Now, as an ARVC member, you can take advantage of exclusive savings on the email marketing services you need to build strong relationships with your guests. These savings are offered by Member Benefit Provider **Constant Contact**, a premier provider of email marketing and online survey tools that can help you connect to your guests quickly, easily and affordably. As a Constant Contact customer, you can send unlimited emails and track the success of the emails you send.

With your ARVC membership, you are entitled to receive an additional 10 percent off of Constant Contact's standard prepay discounts. This can result in a total savings of 20 percent on a six-month plan and 25 percent on a full-year plan. Prepayment is required to take advantage of these exclusive savings.

Marcia Galvin, CPO, OHC, human resource director for ARVC member-park **Normandy Farms** in

Foxboro, Mass., uses Constant Contact to stay in touch with past campers and attract new ones.

"We have all kinds of groups set up," she says. "We send emails out constantly, to upcoming guests, to guests that are here in the park that need to know something and to our team members. We have newsletters and surveys. We do a survey to every guest that checks out of the park. That's all through Constant Contact.

"We actually print out our survey once a month and the management team gets together and talks about all of the different things that have come up. Then we make an action plan from that."

Galvin says it was easy to switch their existing Constant Contact account to the ARVC program.

"Once I found out about the benefit through ARVC, we just called Constant Contact and they switched our account to the ARVC account. We had to prepay one year, but we saved \$700!"

To get started with Constant Contact or to learn more, log in to your member profile at arvc.org and go to the Member Benefits Providers section under Benefits and then Discounts. If you already have a Constant Contact account, call **855-339-0045** to get your account set up to receive the ARVC member discount.

STAY UP-TO-DATE ON YOUR ARVC-MEMBER BENEFITS



Check out all the product and service discounts available to you as an ARVC member! Visit our ARVC Savings Calculator at arvc.org/savings to create a custom savings report for your park.

Make sure you learn about new benefits and discounts available to you as an ARVC member as soon as they are announced. Every other Wednesday, we send out ARVCNews via email to all ARVC members. It's the best place to learn about new benefits and discounts.

Not currently receiving ARVCNews? Go online and make sure your contact information is correct by updating your profile. It's easy. Just log onto your account at arvc.org and follow the prompts to update your contact information.

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Turning First IMPRESSIONS into First BOOKINGS

How to Capture Prospective Campers' Attention Online

As the famous American humorist Will Rogers said, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” But have you ever stopped to wonder where campers are getting their first impressions of your park? The answer isn’t as simple as it may seem.

“The first impression they get of a park is not the impression they get at the gate,” says **Mark Koep**, founder and CEO of the online campground directory and ARVC Supplier Council Member **CampgroundViews.com**. “It’s the impression they get online.”

You may assume it’s your website that makes the first impression, but that may not be the case.

“The first impression is almost never your website unless they already know about you, at which point they’re likely a repeat guest or they already have some kind of impression about you from word of mouth or another source,” says ARVC member **Brian Searl**, founder and CEO of the campground marketing agency and ARVC Supplier Council Member **Insider Perks**.

Searl says campgrounds naturally need to have a good website, but owners also need to consider how prospective campers are getting to their website. Is it through Google or Facebook? GoCampingAmerica.com, TripAdvisor or Yelp? Instagram or LinkedIn?

He described the way people typically conduct their Internet searches. The process they go through underscores why it is important to ensure that every site they may visit is optimized with updated information and photos.

“People will go to Google and look at your campground and then go to your website. And then they’ll go to Facebook, and then they’ll go back to Google and look at reviews. And then they’ll go to TripAdvisor. If you’re only

optimizing for the first impression, the second, the third or the eighth one could lose them.”

As a first step in ensuring campers get a good first impression online, Searl recommends park owners check their Google My Business listing to make sure it’s accurate, since it’s often one of the first things campers will see when doing an online search. (If you don’t already have your Google My Business account verified for your campground, you can set it up easily at [Google.com/business](https://www.google.com/business).)

“They’re going to Google search ‘campgrounds near me’ or ‘in St. Louis,’ or wherever they’re looking and they’re going to see your Google My Business listing on the right side,” he says. “They’re going to see the name of your campground, but more importantly, they’re going to see photos of your park, the star rating of your reviews and the highlighted reviews.”

He says there’s one important section of their Google My Business listing campground owners frequently overlook—the Q&A section.

“Park owners don’t realize anyone can answer these questions. Somebody can ask ‘what’s check-in time?’ And if you’re not paying attention, somebody could just say ‘it’s eight o’clock in the morning’ and it could sit there for two years.”

As a campground owner, you can log onto your Google My Business account to correct any inaccuracies once you have it verified. Once the listing is optimized with accurate



Photo above: Erin Thiem, co-owner of Inn Town Campground in Nevada City, Calif. makes sure the photos she posts online capture the essence of the beautiful natural setting her guests will enjoy. Photo courtesy of Inn Town Campground, featuring Janine Pettit, Girl Camper.

BEST PRACTICES

information and current photos, it's time to do the same with the other sites campers may visit to learn more about your campground.

"Google, Facebook and TripAdvisor are probably the top three," Searl says. "And then you can segment from there. If you're targeting a younger audience, then make sure Instagram and Snapchat are optimized. If you're targeting older people with disposable incomes, make sure you focus on Bing, too, because it represents 30 percent of searches. It skews 45 and older." (To claim your listing on Bing Places for Business, or to add a new one or complete your listing, go to Bingplaces.com.)

Searl says that optimizing these sites is not as time-consuming as people think. In addition to ensuring the information on each site is accurate, he recommends updating photos twice a year. He says the same photos can be used on all of the sites.

Erin Thiem, who owns ARVC member-park **Inn Town Campground** in Nevada City, Calif. with her husband **Dan Thiem**, has two key goals for the photos she posts on her website, social media sites and blog.



"The feeling I am looking to create with all of my visuals is I want the prospective customer, or the current customer, to visualize themselves having that experience. And because we have tent camping, RVs and glamping, I get the opportunity to showcase all the different types of camping. And then the other aspect that I think is really great is to make the potential customer feel like they're going to be a part of our community."

"I have photos of all of our individual campsites with different types of campers—like an RV, a teardrop or travel trailer, a fifth wheel or vintage trailer," she says. "I take photos of these things throughout the year. And then in the offseason, I update my photo gallery."

Thiem is passionate about doing her own photography and she also collaborates with other professional photographers in her area. But she knows many other park owners don't share that passion or don't have time to do their own photography. She says that shouldn't stop them from getting great photos.

"You could easily hire someone to take a portfolio of photos that represent your campground," she says.

She recommends campground owners take photos of their campground (or have them taken) during every season so they can reflect the different times of year, especially if the campground is open year-round.

Thiem takes a creative approach to her photography. A photo of one of their tent sites, for example, was taken from the inside of a tent looking out to showcase the spectacular view campers would get of the towering trees when they open their tent in the morning. She also collaborated with another photographer to use drone photography to capture a unique aerial view of their swimming pool with a colorful mermaid swimming in it. She also posts plenty of photos of the campground's amenities and gathering spaces and she encourages guests to post their own photos on social media and tag the campground in them.

Creating and posting videos of your campground online can also be a powerful marketing tool. Koep says the average guest will visit 28 different websites over 56 different sessions when researching places to stay, but that 73 percent of them will book immediately once they see a video that gives them a clear impression of the park.

"The Internet has changed the way people engage with and find places to stay," Koep says. "The second most popular search engine is now YouTube. The most effective means of communicating via Facebook is video."

CampgroundViews.com produces marketing videos and 360 video tours for clients to include in their listings.

"When we do a video, it answers all the questions campers are going to have about the park, gets them excited about going there, and gives them a path to finish that booking, whether it's a phone number or a link to the website or some other call to action."

One of his clients, ARVC member-park **Natural Springs Resort** in New Paris, Ohio, reported a 244 percent increase in online reservations from mid-April through mid-July in 2018. The park has a marketing video and multiple 360 Videos on CampgroundViews.com.

Koep says since videos can answer so many of the routine questions guests have, they can help cut down on the park's call volume. Natural Springs Resort experienced a 40 percent reduction in calls over the same three-month period.

Videos offer an accurate picture of what to expect and give guests the confidence to book longer stays. Koep says ARVC member-park **Bakersfield River Run RV Park** in Bakersfield, Calif., which has a marketing video and 360 video on his site, saw their guests' length of stay double in 2018.

So just how long should a video be?

“For the marketing videos, we found the sweet spot is between about a minute and two minutes,” Koep says. “The whole goal is to simply be the hook that reels them in and gets them interested in your park. It answers the big question, ‘Is this place going to be right for me and my family?’”

“The 360 marketing videos are kind of like Google Street View-meets-marketing video,” he says. “They allow people to drive the screen and look left, right, up or down or pause to take a closer look. They’ll be anywhere from 10 minutes to 20 minutes long. It’s literally like you’re driving down the roads and you can look at all the sites. The videos are really in depth and answer a whole list of questions. Is the site big enough for my rig? Can I fit down the roads? How far apart are the sites? Do they have nice sites? Do they have shade? All those questions that consumers have. They’re able to see the park, book the park and get the exact site they see and want.”

Painting the best picture of your campground doesn’t end with posting photos and videos. Online reviews also play a major role in a guest’s first impression of your park. Searl says it’s important to keep up with them as soon as they come in.

“Don’t ignore them or get frustrated by them and say, ‘I’m not going to respond to that guest because I don’t want to apologize to him.’ You’re not apologizing to him. You’re apologizing to the whole Internet, people who are using that review to pass judgement on your park.”

In the end, Koep says making a good first impression is all about keeping the main focus on the guests.



A screen shot from the marketing video for ARVC member-park Seahaven Marine RV Park in Sneads Ferry, N.C. posted on CampgroundViews.com. It gives prospective guests an aerial perspective of the park.

“One of the biggest hurdles a lot of individual park owners have is when they design their website, they design the site they like and want versus considering what their consumer is going to think.”

He says the homepage should immediately answer the question ‘is this park right for me?’ by communicating what the park specializes in, whether that’s family-friendly amenities, spacious sites for Class A rigs or other offerings. He says the site should also be designed to make it easy for consumers to look up rates, review a list of the park’s amenities and find clear directions on how



The unexpected addition of a colorful mermaid is a creative way to capture guests’ attention in this aerial drone photo of the pool at Inn Town Campground. Photo courtesy of Inn Town Campground.

to get there.

Searl offered some advice for park owners thinking about redesigning their website.

“Hire somebody who won’t try to just take your money and make a profit off of you. There are plenty of good people who design websites in the campground industry. But there are also people who you can look up in the Yellow Pages who live right around the corner from you who are \$4,000 cheaper, and you’re going to get what you pay for. Design isn’t everything. So many people are hung up on making it look pretty. But if it doesn’t load fast, if it doesn’t have the right Search Engine Optimization (SEO) code in the background, it’s not going to improve how Google views you.

“Hire somebody who has been in the industry, who works with campgrounds and other people say you can trust,” he says. “Listen to the people who are willing to volunteer information you’re not asking, because you, as a business owner, may not know all of the questions you should be asking.”

As a campground owner, Thiem works hard to make sure prospective guests get the right first impression.

“I spend a lot of time and energy trying to make sure we’re properly representing what we do,” she says. “I want the customer to come stay with us and have us meet their expectations of what our campground is going to be.”

Learn More at OHCE!

Join Erin and Nichole Poisson, Franchise Development Manager for Kampgrounds of America, to learn more about photos and your campground by attending the session **The Importance of Strong Visuals** on Wednesday, November 6 from 10:45 am - 11:40 am.

GETTING BACK TO NATURE

Manager and Co-Owner Greg Emmert of ARVC Member-Park Homerville KOA is Recognized for his Outstanding Contributions to Environmental Education



Greg Emmert captures kids' attention during an educational nature walk at Homerville KOA. Photo courtesy of Homerville KOA.

Greg Emmert is a great example of just how much someone with a clear vision and a commitment to seeing it through can accomplish. His passion for conservation (and years of hard work) recently earned him the prestigious 2019 “Outstanding Environmental Educator in the Field of Nonformal Education” award from the Environmental Education Council of Ohio (EECO).

Greg and his parents, **Jim** and **Alice Emmert**, own ARVC member-park **Homerville KOA** in Homerville, Ohio. They’ve celebrated 25 seasons as owners, and what the park looks like now is a far cry from what it did when they first bought it in 1994.

“I have always been absolutely passionate about the natural world,” Greg says. “But when we first bought the park, we were probably mowing an extra 25 acres of grass over what we’re mowing now. There were tons of areas that were mowed just for mowing’s sake. We didn’t use them for anything.”

As time went on and Greg’s responsibilities at the park increased, he began to question whether the payroll costs to do all the extra mowing were worth it. Plus, he started to look at the bigger environmental impact picture.

“I realized we were missing an opportunity here to expand our natural areas,” he says. “At a lot of parks, if you wanted to go for a hike or a walk to experience something natural, you might have to leave the campground and go somewhere like a county park. We have all this space. Why not let it start to grow? And why not nurture those areas and cut some trails through them? One of the biggest things that campers like to do is hike, so why not give them a place where they can do it inside the campground?”

That’s why, about 15 years ago, he made the bold decision to stop mowing one of the large unused areas, and then he stopped mowing another large area five years later. But not everyone was on board with Greg’s plan. He says he got a lot of pushback from campers at first and even his parents weren’t sold on the idea.

“People are always resistant to change,” Greg says. “It’s what we do, right?”



Guests at Homerville KOA learn about native plant life from Greg Emmert during one of the many educational walks he leads at his park. Photo courtesy of Homerville KOA.

So, when people complained he was just letting the weeds grow, he responded with the perfect quote from the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson: A weed is just a plant whose virtues haven't yet been discovered.

"At first it just looked like scrubby grass," he says. "But I told people, 'Just wait and let nature take its course. There are going to be more flowers that are going to move in and more woody shrubs.' And that's exactly what happened.

"We've got some really beautiful areas now and they're taking shape on their own," he says. "There are so many species of birds and flowers we didn't have before. Last year I found my first orchids. It's ever-changing and it's beautiful compared to the desert that is a mowed lawn."

He described the various natural habitats that can now be found throughout the campground.

"We've got a large section that is probably 50- or 60-year-old woods. And then we have a large area of what would probably be considered at this point to be late successional habitat (characterized by large trees and plenty of shrub cover). And then we have another couple of swaths of what would be meadow or early successional wild habitat (containing grasses, flowering plants, shrubs and trees that provide excellent food and cover for wildlife).

"We also have a riparian corridor that we've restored by stopping mowing along the 1,800 feet of frontage that we have on a small tributary of the Black River," Greg says. "That's one of the most wildlife-laden places in the campground. When you're first coming in, you cross a little bridge and cross the creek. It's not uncommon to see deer, fox and turkeys. Just last week I saw a mink scurry across the bridge."

Greg's conservation efforts through the years have definitely paid off, making a habitat for happy campers, too.

"I see people using my trails all the time," he says. "We have people who come back to us specifically because they can take their kids for a walk around a pond and feel like they're out someplace in the country and watch dragonflies and butterflies or birds."

He now uses these natural spaces for his conservation education programs which he offers free of charge to guests.

"We do bird walks. We do a water study in the creek in the heat of the summer and talk about why water is so important. In late summer we'll do wild flowers. We do another one about wild edibles, which is really cool, where I take people and show them the different plants at the park that they can find and actually eat.

"Our nighttime chorus hike is probably the best one because I think it ties best to camping," Greg says. "You're sitting at your campfire and you have that crackling sound and those singing insects in the background and they kind of just become white noise after a while. But what are they and what are they singing about? And what do they look like? We're going to go out, we're going to find these things. I'm going to show you what they look like when they're singing and it's going to blow your mind. Last year, we probably had 40 people come out for that walk. It's just so much fun.

"I even bought a big 400-watt mercury vapor light that we put up along with some big white bed sheets on a frame," he says. "That's our moth light. The moths come in and they sit on the sheet. It's just awesome."

Greg has even found an effective way to engage kids who might think nature walks are boring.

"I teach them how to use an app called iNaturalist, which is really, really cool. You can use it to take pictures of anything like plants, butterflies, birds or mammals, and iNaturalist will offer you suggestions on what you saw.

Usually within the first one or two choices, they give you the right answer. Then it gets uploaded into a database and becomes citizen science for different biodiversity projects. It's wonderful. It hooks the kids every time because they still get to use their phones."

Greg also brings in an astronomer about 10-12 times each year who has an eight-foot telescope.

"Not only does he have the entire night sky mapped in his head, he hooks this telescope up to a high-definition television so you don't even have to go up to the telescope to look.

"We also do a tree planting on Arbor Day every year and we buy different native species of trees. We talk about why it's so important to plant native rather than non-native species. I was counting the other day and I think we're up to 12 new species of trees that were otherwise not on the property, but are native to Medina County and Ohio, that now are growing there that we have planted over the years."

Greg also wants to encourage future fishermen and archers, so he offers a learn-to-fish program and uses an inflatable Hoverball system as a safe way to teach kids archery skills. This unique system enables plastic balls to float in midair so the archers-in-training can shoot at them with soft-tipped arrows.

"One of the coolest parts about it is that it's become a father/daughter thing," he says. "I'll have this same group of dads and daughters that come down and they shoot together."

Greg says these unique education efforts have had a huge impact his campground business.

"It has definitely led to a shift in the type of clientele we have. I'm attracting people who care about conservation. When we first bought the park, it was much more of a party kind of crowd, but mom, dad and I have curated a family environment from day one."

Greg also credits his wife Jamey for helping him make his conservation education program a success. "She works in conservation education for the state of Ohio and she's so good at it. She's taught me so much. She's the one who gives me the confidence to do this."

Congratulations to Greg on this well-deserved honor and for his efforts to educate kids and adults about our natural world and the importance of preserving it.



Josh Dyer (right), president of the Environmental Education Council of Ohio presents Greg Emmert of Homerville KOA with the prestigious "Outstanding Environmental Educator in the Field of Nonformal Education" award. Photo courtesy of Homerville KOA

MR. EMMERT HAS MADE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS VISITING HIS CAMPGROUND REGARDLESS OF THEIR AGES, OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE LEVELS OR BACKGROUNDS. RATHER THAN PREACH THE COUNTLESS REASONS WHY ONE SHOULD EMBRACE NATURE, HE OPENS THE DOORS TO EVERYONE, WARMLY ENCOURAGING THEM TO EXPERIENCE AND TO SHARE HIS ZEAL, PASSION AND ENTHUSIASM FOR THE NATURAL WORLD.

Environmental Education Council of Ohio

Learn More at OHCE!

Looking for ways to be more "green" and help the environment? Be sure to join us for the session **Best Practices: 10 Easy Ways to Make Your Park "Green"** on Tuesday from 1:45 pm to 2:45 pm where you will learn a variety of ways to go green including waste reduction and creating new wild life habitat.

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Volunteers from Lake Arrowhead Campground in Montello, Wis. do yardwork for local residents during the park's annual community cleanup weekend. Photo courtesy of Lake Arrowhead Campground

STEPPING UP TO GIVE BACK

The Many Ways ARVC Member-Parks Support Worthwhile Causes

If you had to come up with a list of words to describe owners of ARVC member-parks and their guests, “generous” would have to be somewhere near the top of the list. Here are just a few of the many ways you are working together with your communities to support charitable causes.

Sometimes, campground owners choose to support a cause that is especially near and dear to their hearts. Late last year, ARVC member-park **Pine Acres Family Camping Resort** in Oakham, Mass. presented a check for \$10,000 to The Jimmy Fund, a nonprofit organization that raises funds for adult and pediatric cancer care and research at Boston’s Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

The donation was made in honor of Tessa Wisnewski, a third-generation family member and long-

time employee of this family-owned campground who had been diagnosed with breast cancer and is being treated at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Campers opened their hearts and wallets to donate more than \$5,000 to the fund and Pine Acres matched the amount.

“Each year our staff nominates a local charity to give back to, whether it’s something that somebody has personal ties to or whether it’s something that we just feel is a stand up organization in our local area, and we go from there,” says **Kelley Watts**, Pine Acres’ director of guest services.

For its 2019 charitable giving campaign, Pine Acres has chosen to support Veterans Inc., a nonprofit organization devoted to providing services to veterans in need and their families across New England.

Some campgrounds find opportunities to do good deeds right in their own backyard. Each spring, ARVC member-park **Lake Arrowhead Campground** in Montello, Wis. organizes a community cleanup weekend.

“We go out in the community and assist folks who need help with yard work and spring cleanup,” says **Emily Truell**, the campground’s owner. “We work with our local Aging and Disability Resource Center to get the list of individuals who need that assistance. For all of our volunteers who help rake, we give them free camping for the weekend.

“We have a community with a lot of elderly and not a lot of services,” she says. “We’ve had folks come out in tears because they’re so overwhelmed that we’re helping them.”

Truell says it's also a gratifying experience for the volunteers.

"Once they come, they always talk about how much it means to them, and how wonderful they feel being a part of it."

For the past 30 plus years, Lake Arrowhead has also hosted corn boils for its campers to raise funds for local programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters or for national charities like the American Cancer Society. One year, they held a special corn boil to raise funds for medical expenses for a seasonal camper whose daughter was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

A local food distributor donates the corn for the events.

"We actually go out to the cornfield with our truck and they dump the corn right into it," Truell says. "We boil the corn and give it out for free and then we ask folks to donate to the charity. At the same time, we have classic games going on like sack races, egg toss and fish pond. We'll often sell brats and hot dogs and all those proceeds go to the charity, too."

She says the corn boil has become so popular that they now do four of them each year.

"It's one of our most popular themes. We're raising money for charity, our campground is full and everybody's having a fantastic time. It works out really well."

In conjunction with the corn boil, Lake Arrowhead often includes a "jail and bail" fundraiser.

"We build a jail out of two-by-fours and set it up in the middle of our recreation field," Truell says. "If you want to do a \$5 donation to swear out a warrant, we will go and arrest someone. We pick them up in our security golf cart and take them back to the jail. It's super fun. We have the sheriff volunteer and a judge volunteers and the judge will set the bail accordingly. He might say, 'Oh, you're a Bears fan and we're in Wisconsin? Well, that's going to be \$25!' Oftentimes when people are arrested, they don't actually have their wallet on them. So then they're stuck in jail, and they have to fundraise by begging the crowd to give them money to get their bail."

Truell says the funds raised to bail out these would-be "criminals" are usually donated to Crime Stoppers.

She also found a way to fill what is a typically slow time—the weekend after Labor Day—by hosting a state barbeque competition called the Puckaway Pigfest. The event, which is sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbeque Society, draws top BBQ competitors from around the Midwest, and the grand champion receives an invitation to the Jack Daniels' World Championship Invitational barbeque competition.

"The competition is great," Truell says. "We really love working with the teams in the barbeque community, but it's super labor intensive. We hold it in the offseason when we're kind of short staffed anyway, so we were struggling to get the manpower we needed."

Then she had an idea.

"We approached our local fire department, the Princeton Fire Department, and said, 'We've got this event that brings in money. We need help. You need money. If you want to work with us on this and provide the manpower, you'll get all of the proceeds.'"

"It's a really good fundraiser for them. Not only do they get the proceeds from the competition itself, but they set up a vending tent where they sell food and ice cream and beverages and those sorts of things on our recreation field where the barbeque competition is going on. They've also done activities like a junior firefighters obstacle course with a donation can. We've made custom t-shirts for the events that they sell and get all the profits. It works out really well for us because we get all the people we need to make everything happen."

Jay Jamison, CEO and general manager of ARVC member-park **Pismo Coast Village RV Resort** in Pismo Beach, Calif., recently worked with Make-A-Wish® Missouri & Kansas to help grant the wish of 17-year-old



Left: Tessa Wisnewski and Kelley Watts of Pine Acres Family Camping Resort in Oakham, Mass. present a check for \$10,000 to The Jimmy Fund to help fund cancer care and research. Photo provided by Pine Acres Family Camping Resort; Center and right: Little campers enjoy a corn boil fundraiser at Lake Arrowhead Campground in Montello, Wis. Photos provided by Lake Arrow Campground.



Abbey who has cystic fibrosis. Abbey's wish was to take an RV road trip from her home in Missouri to Pismo Beach.

Pismo Coast Village RV Resort hosted Abbey and her family for four nights and Jamison arranged for them to take a private tour of Hearst Castle, which they loved. They also visited the Central Coast Aquarium, took a boat tour of Morro Bay, attended a show at The Great American Melodrama Theatre and visited Doc Burnstein's Ice Cream Lab. Abbey's favorite part of the trip was when the local police chief took her for a ride down the beach in the department's Hummer, followed by a visit to the city council meeting where she was named mayor!

Kira McGrotty, Wish Specialist I for Make-A-Wish® Missouri & Kansas, expressed the organization's gratitude to Jamison for helping make Abbey's wish a reality.

"Thank you so much for your involvement and support of this family. I received amazing feedback from Mom about Abbey's time at Pismo, and the special experiences they were able to take part of because of you and your enthusiasm for hosting them at your RV resort. Mom also expressed gratitude for your kindness in assisting them throughout their stay, and even helping when they had RV issues. I sincerely cannot thank you enough for this!"

Regina Johnson, who co-manages ARVC member-park **Butterfield RV Resort & Observatory** in Benson, Ariz. with her husband, **Woody Johnson**, has often experienced just how generous guests can be.

"Every year, we pick a charity," she says. "In the past six years, we tried to have one human charity and one animal charity, because most people are also pretty big on animals."

In the past, they've supported charities such as donkey rescues, Hoofbeats with Heart and the

Wounded Warrior Project.

"We also have an orphanage here in Benson," she says. "We've contributed to the orphanage probably three to four times in the last six years. But the last two years, we've solely done The Salvation Army. We also have blood drives here every year."

To raise funds for its chosen charity, the campground holds an event each year that's a combination of a live auction, silent auction and raffle. They also do something that is very simple yet very effective—they put a collection bowl out at every potluck, every breakfast and every event. These collections generate \$4,000 to \$5,000 in donations throughout the year.

"The response has been fantastic," Regina says. "They really do give from their hearts at every single event."

ARVC member-parks **Rincon Country RV Resort East and West** in Tucson, Ariz. partner with their guests to support several charitable causes.

"We work with the food bank throughout the year," says **Danny O'Leary**, park manager and marketing director for Rincon Country RV Resort East. "We regularly have a collection area where people can

donate non-perishable items. We are working more with the Community Food Bank this season by taking park-operated shuttles out there for a guided tour of their facility and gardens and for volunteer opportunities.

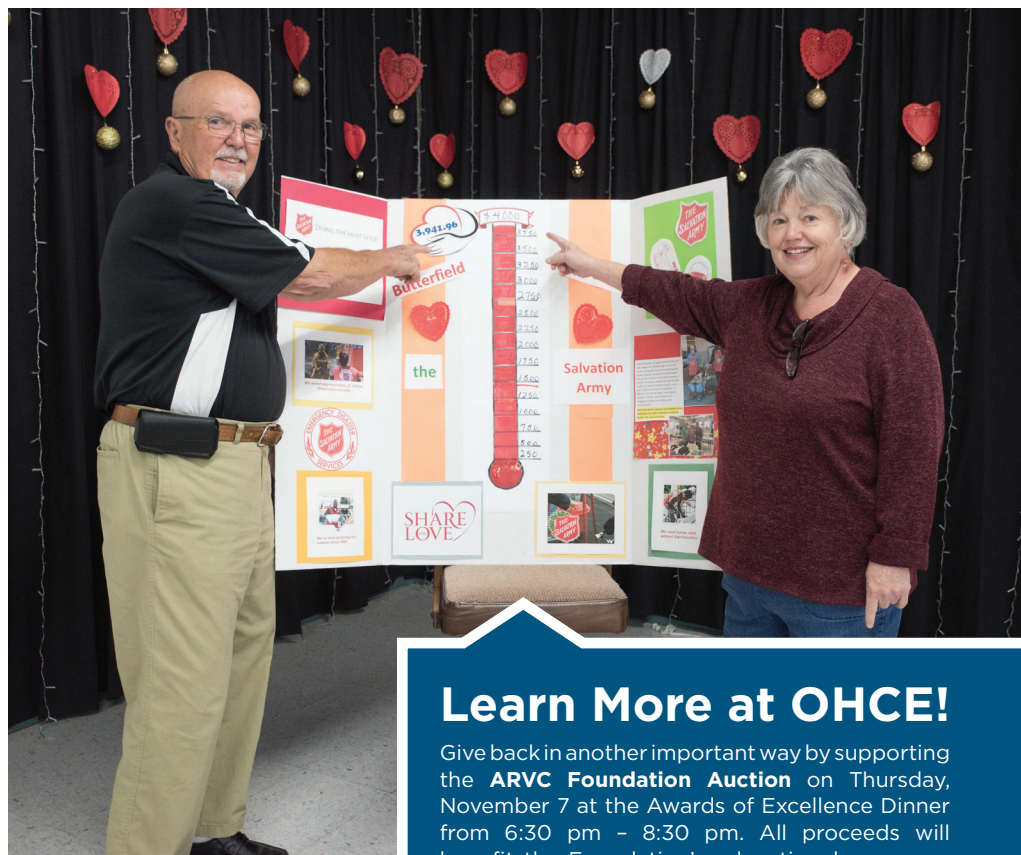
"We also hold a food bank dance where people bring items to donate to get entry to the dance. All items are then donated to the food bank and any monetary donations are matched.

"Every Christmas, we also work with Toys for Tots," O'Leary says. "Before Christmas, residents donate a variety of toys for all ages and then the South Tucson Fire Department picks them up and helps distribute them to those in need.

"We are also proud of our residents who have created a club that helps Habitat for Humanity build houses. To date, several houses have been built."

O'Leary shared his sentiments on the importance of giving back.

"Building and making our community better is at the heart of our business, and always a reminder of what our industry stands for, hospitality."



Larry and Cathy Reiss of Butterfield RV Resort & Observatory in Benson, Ariz., share the results of their fundraising efforts for The Salvation Army.

Learn More at OHCE!

Give back in another important way by supporting the **ARVC Foundation Auction** on Thursday, November 7 at the Awards of Excellence Dinner from 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm. All proceeds will benefit the Foundation's educational programs and scholarships and help provide emergency assistance to parks and campgrounds impacted by natural disasters.



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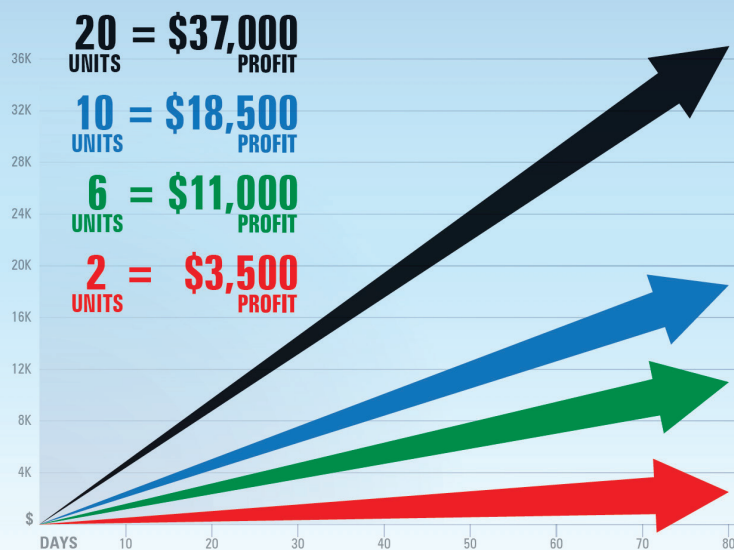
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Local units of the Wally Byam Caravan Club International, Inc. organize about 900 rallies each year for RV enthusiasts who are dedicated to "Living the Airstream Dream." Photo provided by WBCCI



RALLY 'ROUND THE CAMPGROUND

How Hosting Groups of RV Enthusiasts Can Be Good for Your Business

If there's one thing many RVers love even more than camping, it's camping with a group of like-minded RV enthusiasts, which is why RV rallies are growing in popularity.

"Every year, we're seeing the number of people wanting to attend our rallies increase," says Lori Plummer, corporate manager for the Wally Byam Caravan Club International, Inc. (WBCCI), an organization made up of more than 13,000 RV owners who are dedicated to "Living the Airstream Dream."

WBCCI, headquartered in Jackson Center, Ohio, has local units throughout the United States and Canada that organize about 900 rallies each year.

"Our rallies range between six trailers, which is very uncommon anymore, anywhere up to a couple hundred," Plummer says.

One recent WBCCI event was the ninth annual Pets & Paws Rally which was hosted by the Cape Cod and New England Airstream Clubs in April at ARVC member-park

Coastal Acres Campground in Provincetown, Mass. The event is designed to honor everyone's past and present pets. More than 25 Airstream owners participated.

"The last couple of years, we've been in a position where we were able to have them come in before we open to the public for the season," says Coastal Acres' campground manager **Anna Kuzia**. "But this year, it also brought us a lot of people who just came down to check out the trailers because this was the first time that they opened up all the campers to the public. We had over 110 people come through on a rainy, cold day to look at Airstreams. It's a small town and it became the talk of the town. It was fantastic. Everybody enjoyed it. The dogs were all happy, the guests were all happy. I just loved it."

Pets & Paws is just one of many themes featured at WBCCI rallies. RJ Dominic, president of the organization's Cape Cod unit described a few others.

"We do a Columbus Day Canadian Thanksgiving rally. They also do one called New York City Base Camp, where

they camp out outside of New York City and then they all go into the city for the entire rally.”

Tye Mott, WBCCI’s international third vice president and one of the rally’s hosts, described another way his organization gets involved.

“When we go into an area, we actually do something for the community, so this year, we cleaned up the dog park for them. We had lots of volunteers who came in and we got their dog park ready for the season. We always try to leave the place better than we find it.”

Kuzia offered a few suggestions for campground owners who are considering hosting their first rally.

“Make your rate affordable as a group rate. I think that’s important. And be consistent in your service. It’s a win-win situation, because they’re going to have a great experience with you and they’re going to have a great experience amongst themselves. And they’re going to tell their friends about it, which will drive business, because who doesn’t want to camp with their friends?”

ARVC member-park **Butterfield RV Resort & Observatory** in Benson, Ariz., which is co-managed by **Regina Johnson** and her husband **Woody Johnson**, hosts about 10-15 RV rallies each year for a variety of different RV groups. Regina says most of them bring between 15 and 24 rigs.

Butterfield helps streamline the process for rally planners by posting its offerings on its website. The Wagon Master gets a complimentary site, including one day before and one day after the event. Rally attendees receive a special rally rate they can also extend to one day before and one day after the event. The group can arrange to have a special show in the park’s observatory (weather permitting) and reserve its banquet hall for their activities. The park also provides complimentary coffee to each rally group every morning in its clubhouse.

Regina says rallies give participants a chance to experience the park and, if they like it, they’ll come back and camp without the rally, so these gatherings can ultimately help boost business from individual campers, too.

She also noted one challenge of hosting rally groups is finding a way to make sure the other guests don’t feel left out, whether it’s because the group is taking up too many pull-through sites or other special accommodations are being made for them.

“During the full season, if you have a rally group that wants to come in and have dinner at the same time, maybe when we’re having our Christmas dinner, they’ll want to sit together, so we’ll reserve a table for all of them. But then the other guests in the park feel like the rally group is getting treated a little better than they are,” she says.

“These rally members are normal RV guests. They’re just traveling with friends. Getting that point across is a big deal because we love the rally guests and we want all of our guests to get along.”

Themed rallies focusing on vintage trailers are also a big draw. ARVC member-park **Pismo Coast Village RV Resort** in Pismo Beach, Calif. hosts the granddaddy of

them all—the Pismo Vintage Trailer Rally—the largest vintage trailer rally in the country. The resort has been home to the rally, which is held the third weekend in May, for 12 years.

“It was a group of three people that started the rally here,” says **Jay Jamison**, CEO and general manager for the park. “The first time they had about 100 trailers and then it grew to 200. Now we’ve had to pretty much cap it right around 300 and we get a waiting list of a few hundred each year.”

The vintage trailers featured in the rally have been lovingly restored and date back to anywhere from the 1930s to the 1970s. Many of the owners even tow their trailers with vintage vehicles painted in matching colors. The owners also decorate their trailers inside and out to reflect a theme that they’ve chosen like fishing or camping.

On Saturday of the weekend event, there’s an open house so the public can come in and see the vintage trailers and speak with the owners. Jamison estimates that they had somewhere between 3,000 and 3,500 people come in from the outside to walk through the rally this year.

IT’S A WIN-WIN SITUATION, BECAUSE THEY’RE GOING TO HAVE A GREAT EXPERIENCE WITH YOU AND THEY’RE GOING TO HAVE A GREAT EXPERIENCE AMONGST THEMSELVES. AND THEY’RE GOING TO TELL THEIR FRIENDS ABOUT IT, WHICH WILL DRIVE BUSINESS, BECAUSE WHO DOESN’T WANT TO CAMP WITH THEIR FRIENDS?

Since the rally brings in so many additional people, the park prepares in advance for the added traffic. Its onsite restaurant more than triples the size of its staff and the general store gears up for the additional business which naturally results in increased revenue.

A swap meet is also held during the rally. Many of the owners set up tables in front of their trailers and sell vintage goods or items related to restoring vintage trailers.

“One of our rules is we don’t allow people to post signs or sell things from their campsite,” Jamison says. “But on this particular weekend, that rule is not enforced because we don’t want to limit the participants from being fully engaged in their event. They take over three-quarters of the resort, so we just kind of go with the weekend’s theme, and that makes it a lot of fun.”

The rally, which runs from Thursday to Sunday, is packed with other fun events, including a bowling tournament, Trailer Crawl, pancake breakfast, potluck and a bicycle ride around the resort in pajamas.

Jamison offers a discounted rate on RV sites for rally

participants, even though he says his park could have been filled with regular guests anyway.

"It does leave some money on the table from that standpoint," he says, "but we look at what it does for the community. It's fun for our staff and it's fun for our other guests to be here for it. It's also the only time during the year when the general public comes in and walks through, so it's good PR for us."

He says the park prints and distributes a booklet that contains the activity schedule for the rally and serves as a keepsake of the event. They also sponsor a People's Choice Award where visitors can vote for their favorite units. The park provides plaques to the winners in seven different categories.

Jamison noted that a rally doesn't have to be huge to be successful.

"There's one south of us about an hour's drive in Buellton at (ARVC member-park) **Flying Flags RV Resort & Campground**. That's one we hear people talk about being really popular. It's not as big as ours, but they all have their own little personalities. And that's what makes them work. You don't have to do a rally on a big grand scale. We started out on a smaller scale, and it just grew."

This is the 10th year that Flying Flags will host the Vintage Trailer Bash, a four-day gathering of owners of more than 230 pre-1980 vintage trailers of all makes and models. According to the event's Facebook page, this year's

rally will also include a Trailer Prom where attendees are encouraged to dress in prom attire from their era.

"Essentially what happens is that the entire resort is contracted out to the group," says **Lydia Thomas**, assistant general manager for Flying Flags. "They do all of the site assignments. We literally just hand over the park."

Thomas says her staff escorts the campers to their sites and that her park handles the rally's catered events and live music. The event's organizers manage the waiting list, which can run as long as 50 or more campers.

"It's really our busiest weekend of the year," Thomas says. "We're at capacity and one day of the weekend they do an open house that's open to the community. It's a really fun family event. Personally, it's my favorite event of the year."

Plummer has a suggestion for park owners who want to explore the possibility of hosting an RV rally at their park.

"I would absolutely encourage them to reach out to us here at our club's headquarters by visiting



Top right: Airstream enthusiasts share their passion for these iconic silver trailers at one of hundreds of WBCCI rallies held across the country. Photo provided by WBCCI; Bottom left: Jay Jamison, CEO and general manager of Pismo Coast Village RV Resort, presents an award for "Favorite Vintage Trailer/Tow Vehicle Combo" as part of the People's Choice awards at the Pismo Vintage Trailer Rally. Photo provided by Pismo Coast Village RV Resort.; Below, Right: Participants at the Pismo Vintage Trailer Rally get into the spirit by decorating their trailers for the event's open house. Photo provided by Pismo Coast Village RV Resort.



Airstreamclub.org and we'll connect them with our local clubs that are in their area. We are always looking for sites for our rallies."

Once a park hosts a successful rally, it can lead to repeat business year after year. Just ask Jay Jamison.

"About 90 percent of the people that were here have already booked for next year, so we know it's going to be a success," he says. "It's just fun to see the passion of these folks and the camaraderie is really incredible."

Top right: Owners are proud to display their lovingly restored vintage trailers, which date back to the years between 1930 and 1979, at the Pismo Vintage Trailer Rally; Bottom right: Many participants who attend the Pismo Vintage Trailer Rally tow their trailers with vintage vehicles painted to match. Photos provided by Pismo Coast Village RV Resort.

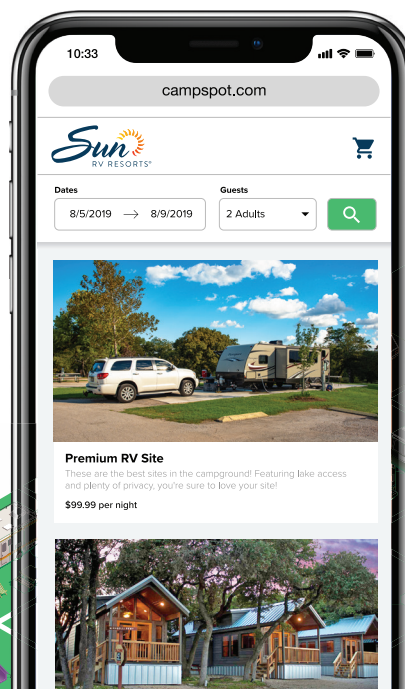


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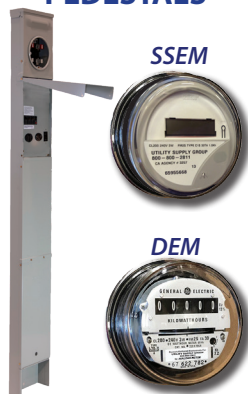
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RECOVERING FROM A NATURAL DISASTER

Grants from the ARVC Foundation's Disaster Relief Fund Assist Parks in Cleanup Efforts

For years, **Janet Keen**, who co-owns ARVC member-park **Keen Lake Camping & Cottage Resort** in Waymart, Pa. with her sisters **Jennifer Wertz**, **Jim Ann Petroski** and **Jane Kopa**, worked to raise money for the ARVC Foundation's Disaster Relief Fund every time she attended an ARVC conference. But, as she says, "I never imagined in a million years I would be someone who might need it."

Unfortunately, that need arose in May 2018 when a category F1 tornado devastated her park.

"The amount of damage was tremendous," she says. "Just in tree loss alone, it was like 5,000 trees. There were trailers crushed and buildings destroyed. The day it happened, everybody just looked around and thought, 'Where do you start?'"

One resource the Keen sisters turned to was the ARVC Foundation Disaster Relief Fund. The fund was established in 2005 to assist ARVC member-parks affected by Hurricane Katrina. Now the fund has grown to help any ARVC member-park that has suffered a natural disaster that disrupts their business, whether it's a wildfire, tornado, hurricane or other major weather event. Grants are provided to help meet immediate needs while insurance settlements or other funding methods are secured. To date, more than 30 ARVC member-parks have received assistance through the fund.

Parks impacted by a natural disaster can apply to the Fund for a grant of up to \$1,000 for personal use, up to \$3,000 for business use and up to \$1,000 for providing

shelter, food, clothing and other necessities for victims of the natural disaster, including park staff. Parks may apply for all three grants.

The Keen sisters' grant from the Disaster Relief Fund helped put their park on the road to recovery.

"The money we received was instrumental in reopening camping areas so we could have a revenue stream," Keen says. In a thank you note she wrote, "Bless you, ARVC Foundation, for being there when we truly needed you."

She also shared a story about how her fellow campground owners from the Pennsylvania Campground Owners Association's Region V rallied around her park when the tornado struck.

"They literally dropped what they were doing at their own parks and came up here and worked for two days," she says. "They cancelled their annual meeting to come up here. They came with chain saws and rakes and shovels. They were on tops of roofs. They were fixing fences. You name it. They were there. I'm so blessed to be part of that community."

In September 2018, a very unwelcome guest—Hurricane Florence—visited ARVC member-park **Holiday Trav-L-Park Resort** in Emerald Isle, N.C. The storm dropped more than 30 inches of rain on the area, forcing the park to close for 33 days.

"I've been here my entire life and that was the worst storm, rain wise, that we've ever had," says **Taylor Watts**,

Photos above: Holiday Trav-L-Park Resort in Emerald Isle, N.C. (shown at right in an earlier photo) was forced to close for 33 days when Hurricane Florence dropped more than 30 inches of rain on the area in September 2018. Photos provided by Holiday Trav-L-Park Resort.

ARVC FOUNDATION

the park's manager of operations. "The first thing we were trying to do was to get open as soon as possible."

Part of that process included researching what financial resources were available, such as FEMA loans. Then Watts learned about the ARVC Foundation's Disaster Relief Fund.

"We were looking for something just to give us a little bit of breathing room with some of the damage," he says, expressing his frustration that their insurance settlement for the hurricane totaled only \$245.54. "Getting the grant (from the Disaster Relief Fund) was super quick and we were so very thankful."

Watts says as a result of this positive experience, his park is now committed to supporting the ARVC Foundation's disaster relief efforts.

"I can assure you, it will be an annual thing of ours to donate to the Fund," he says.

Now that Keen has experienced firsthand the powerful impact a natural disaster can have on a park, she says she is hypersensitive to other campgrounds feeling this pain. That's why her park also now contributes to the Fund, which she describes as "an amazing resource."

"Paying it forward is so important," she says. "I encourage people who come to the conference to get involved in supporting the Disaster Relief Fund. If you can donate something to the auction, donate. If you can't donate, buy. There's always something you can do. That is the heart and soul of our community—paying it forward and being there for one another."



When Hurricane Florence caused extensive flooding at its campground, Holiday Trav-L-Park was able to quickly secure a grant from the ARVC Foundation's Disaster Relief Fund to help them begin the recovery process. Photos provided by Holiday Trav-L-Park Resort.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A DISASTER RELIEF GRANT FROM THE ARVC FOUNDATION

If your park has been impacted by a wildfire, flood, tornado, hurricane or other natural disaster, go to **ARVCFoundation.org/content/disaster-relief** to download a Disaster Relief Application Form. Submit your completed application to **Paula Horwitz** at **paula.horwitz@arvc.org** to be considered for a financial grant to assist in your park's recovery while you determine next steps with your team and insurance provider.

NOT IN NEED, BUT WANT TO HELP?

As Janet Keen and Taylor Watts can tell you, a natural disaster can strike at any time without warning. When one of these tragic events occurs, the ARVC Foundation, through its Disaster Relief Fund, is ready to assist the ARVC member-parks that have been impacted.

The Fund is made possible through the generosity of donors. If you would like to support this important initiative that offers much needed support for your fellow park owners, here are three ways you can help:

HELP ALL YEAR: Make a one-time or recurring contribution by visiting **arvc.org/donate**. Contributions to the ARVC Foundation Disaster Relief Fund are tax deductible.

HELP AT OHCE:

- Donate one or more items to the ARVC Foundation Auction which will take place on Thursday, November 7 at OHCE. You can donate an item by contacting **Paula Horwitz** at **paula.horwitz@arvc.org**. Donations are tax deductible.
- Support the ARVC Foundation Auction by bidding on—and winning—great items for yourself or your park!
- Just walk! Join the week-long step competition with a \$50 donation when you register for OHCE 2019! You'll receive a pedometer to count your steps and a prize will be awarded at the end of the week for the donor with the most steps!

Your colleagues at ARVC member-parks who are impacted by a natural disaster in the future will be grateful for your support. If you have questions about the ARVC Foundation Disaster Relief Fund, contact **Paula Horwitz** at **paula.horwitz@arvc.org**.

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Left to right: Members of the ARVC delegation attending RVs Move America Week in Washington D.C.: David L Berg (Maine), Kim Huskey (Va.), Jim Button (Wis.), Heather Blankenship (Tenn.), Paul Bambei (Colo.), Wade Elliott (Wash.), Eileen Vaughan (Pa.), Steve Cross (Ohio), Jeff Sims (Mo.) and David Basler (Colo.)

ARVC DELEGATION TRAVELS TO WASHINGTON D.C. TO ADVOCATE FOR CAMPGROUNDS

Joining Forces with Industry Partners, 10 ARVC Members Met with 34 Legislators during RVs Move America Week

A 10-member delegation from ARVC recently traveled to Washington D.C. to participate in RVs Move America Week, an initiative hosted by our industry partner, the RV Industry Association (RVIA). During this highly productive event, the ARVC delegation met with 34 legislators from 12 states to communicate the value of RV parks and campgrounds and the RV industry and to advocate for key legislation.

ARVC members who joined the delegation included **David L. Berg**, CPO, Red Apple Campground, Maine; **Heather Blankenship**, OHM, Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park at Pigeon Forge/Gatlinburg, Tenn.; **Jim Button**, OHE, Evergreen Campsites and Resort, Wisc.; **Steve Cross**, CPO, OHC, Cross Creek Camping Resort, Ohio; **Wade Elliott**, Utility Supply Group, Wash.; **Kim Huskey**, Cherrystone Family Campground, Va. and **Eileen Vaughan**, OHM, Mountain Vista Campground, Pa.

ARVC staff in attendance included President and CEO **Paul Bambei**; **David Basler**, vice president of membership and marketing and **Jeff Sims**, senior director of state relations and program advocacy.

To kick off the week, RVIA announced new data showing the RV industry has a \$114 billion impact on the nation's economy—including \$26 billion from RV parks and campgrounds.

"Every year this week is a fantastic show of unity in our industry," Bambei says. "This year, our delegation of campground owners and ARVC staff had important conversations with key legislators from a dozen states and worked together with RV manufacturers and dealers to share our industry's impressive impact on the U.S. economy."

Topics the ARVC delegation discussed with legislators included infrastructure improvements that would allow

RVers and campers to safely traverse the nation's roads and bridges on their way to their next adventure.

While in D.C., Bambei addressed an audience of more than 150 members of Congress, congressional staff and members of the RV industry, during which he said, "The RV park and campground industry is growing faster than ever. Right now, the private campground industry in this country is experiencing the most ground-up growth we've seen in 20 years. We expect to see significant growth to continue in the coming year, if the current economic conditions remain.

"It is important Congress considers the bipartisan pieces of legislation we are here advocating for this week. It's of vital importance to all of us. Without safe roads and bridges, attractive open spaces and clean water, Americans can't get to our nation's RV parks and campgrounds and can't enjoy the beauty of America."

The delegation also addressed the indirect costs caused by China and Mexico tariffs and the effects on the entire industry, specifically increases seen in various metal-based products necessary in the construction and expansion of RV parks and campgrounds. Elliott's main metallic pedestal provider, for example, has already issued two price increases in the last six months, citing rising steel costs due to the tariffs.

Elliott weighed in on the importance of meeting with key government officials.

"Each year ARVC participates in RVs Move America Week we increase the visibility of RV parks to our elected representatives and their staffs," Elliott says. "I see a big change in the acceptance of the concerns and views of ARVC members in recent years. This is a very positive outcome for ARVC members."

The delegation also worked to increase awareness and support for the RV Caucus—a group of legislators who actively support the RV industry as a whole.

"The RV Caucus is an easy way for legislators to show their support for the RV industry and for our industry to clearly and concisely communicate with these legislators when important topics arise," Sims says. "ARVC's goal is to work with our industry partners to successfully invite as many legislators to this important group as possible."

Huskey, who is new to the RV park and campground industry and a first-time attendee at RVs Move America Week, says Jeff Sims and the ARVC staff did a great job of preparing ARVC

representatives to advocate for our industry with their respective members of Congress.

"I've been doing government work for 10 years, and I've done several walks on The Hill with other associations across the country," she says. "This was the first time that the staff of the association met with the delegation prior to meeting with members of Congress. We were thoroughly briefed on the issues. We were thoroughly briefed on the members of Congress that we were going to meet with. We met nightly during the whole week on The Hill to discuss how the meetings had gone. Jeff knows his stuff. It was just extremely well organized, well thought out, well planned and well executed."

Blankenship, who is a member of ARVC's Young Professionals group, was also a first-time attendee at RVs Move America Week.

"It was an honor to represent ARVC and the young professionals of the camping industry in D.C.," she says.



Jeff Sims, ARVC's senior director of state relations and program advocacy, prepares the ARVC delegation for meetings with legislators to advocate for the outdoor hospitality industry.



David Berg, CPO, meets with a representative from the office of Senator Susan Collins of Maine.

“Educating members of Congress on issues related to the RV industry is important for the health of our businesses. It’s crucial they understand how big of an impact we have on the economy and each individual district. Seeing first-hand how much ARVC does for independently-owned parks at such a high level was eye opening.”



Button says he is very proud and humbled to have been chosen by ARVC to represent Wisconsin at RVs Move America Week.

“ARVC and the RVIA work very closely to ensure that our best interests are at hand,” he says. “This is another great example of why it is important to be involved with your state association and your national association.”

Prior to RVs Move America Week, ARVC sent a series of emails to members with a call to action encouraging them to apply to attend. This resulted in 15 applications being received—a record number.

“As interest in joining the ARVC delegation continues to grow each year, we are exploring ways to include even more members—especially from partnering states—in future years,” Sims says.

Bambei summed up the outcome of the week’s activities.

“The ARVC delegation represented the campground sector of the RV industry extremely well. Our voice was definitely heard on Capitol Hill and I felt we gained considerable respect among our peers, as well.”

Left: Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) meets with Heather Blankenship, OHM, owner of Yogi Bear’s Jellystone Park at Pigeon Forge/Gatlinburg and the co-chair of the ARVC Young Professionals Committee; Below: ARVC President and CEO Paul Bambei leads a meeting with the staff of Senator Cory Gardner of Colo.



Learn More at OHCE!

Having a strong working relationship with your local government officials can have a huge impact on your park. Stop by our session on **Getting Involved in Local Government and Why You Should** on Wednesday, November 6 from 10:45 am – 11:45 am and our Cracker Barrel session on **Working with Your Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs)** on Wednesday from 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm.



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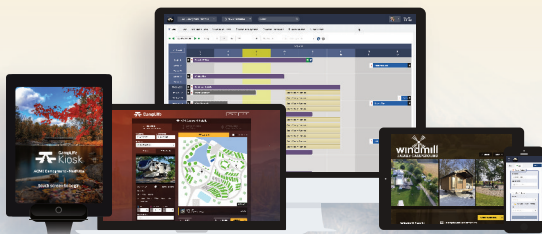
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