



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gastonia Tourism Authority hires sales contractor to generate weekend tourism business for hotels

The Gastonia Tourism Development Authority (GTDA), which focuses on developing tourism for the City, has hired a contract sales person to focus on generating weekend hotel business. Bill Owen, former general manager of the Gastonia Conference Center, was tapped to fill the role.

"The City's hotels do solid business during the week," said Nicole Bolt, a GTDA board member and director of sales for the Hampton Inn, "but weekend business is not nearly as strong unless there are special events going on that draw visitors here."

Owen said that will be his main focus: attracting groups that will stay over in the City for weekend events. While one of the largest markets for weekend hotel stays is families participating in youth sports tournaments, Owen said there's also business to be generated from other events such as, family and high school reunions, fraternal and church-related conferences, and even bus tours stopping for the night headed to other destinations.

"These types of events are going on all around us in other cities and counties," Owen said, "we just have to find out which ones we can attract because we have similar facilities and attractions and great hotels with attractive rates."

Owen said he's already working with a lacrosse tournament organizer who will be hosting a tournament here in June to coordinate hotel rooms, meeting space and restaurant and attractions packages.

Owen said he will also be working with tour group professionals in other cities to make Gastonia one of the most attractive places for tour buses to stop on the weekend as they head to other destinations. "Being right on I-85 and U.S. 321, routes that lead to some of the region's most desirable tourist destinations, Charlotte, Atlanta, the North Carolina mountains, gives us an opportunity to be a favorite overnight stay location," he said.

The City and GTDA will also soon be launching a special section of the City's website to promote tourism to the City. "We'll be spotlighting what we have to offer on the website, especially this new service we're offering to help groups coordinate their weekend events here, as well as our hotels, all of our sports and meeting facilities, and nearby attractions that our guests will be able to take advantage of," Owen said.

Before Owen was general manager of the Gastonia Conference Center, he was general manager for several Atlanta-area hotels and also two other convention centers. The GTDA will pay Owen from funds the Authority administers generated from the hotel occupancy tax levied on hotel room stays in the City.

If you are interested in having Owen help coordinate a weekend event you or your organization is planning, you can reach him at 704-854-6695, 704-914-2414 or bill@cityofgastonia.com.

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