



***Community Giving for Community Gathering...
An inspiring name to be sure, the efforts on this
Day of Giving brought a much needed spirit to a
once solid team within Marriott Corporation.***



IMEX 07 - COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY AWARD

Marriott International's Global Incentives and Gift Card marketing team is in the business of selling individual incentives as a motivational tool (business-to-business.) Additionally, the team is tasked with selling Gift Cards on the retail side of the industry (business-to-consumer.)

1. What was the overall business objective of the programme?

Team building. It was a difficult year for this team. Their leader (David Riddell, Vice President) fell seriously ill after battling cancer for 5 years. He died August 1, 2006.

The emotional toll the year had on this group was huge. Dealing with his illness, his struggle to survive and his subsequent passing led the team through a range of emotions – everyone at different stages at different times. They were facing the pressure of running the business without leadership. This team needed to stick together to achieve their robust goals without anyone steering the ship. Through the stress of it all, they were bonded in grief, but had become somewhat dysfunctional as a team and a “family.” What was needed was a solid team building experience to bring them to the core of why they were brought together in the first place.

Their past team building events were interesting and fun, but perhaps not as much of a “bonding or meaningful experience” as they had hoped for now. In their busy agenda, they had only ½ day to complete whatever the planned event turned out to be. More importantly, the program had to be suited for both men and women and built with cultural sensitivity as the attendees came from Hong Kong, the UK and North America.

2. How did the element of social responsibility tie in?

The project is explained in detail below, but social responsibility was the element that caught Marriott’s attention. Although we combined it with team-building, it remained first and foremost in their minds.

3. How and why was the charity chosen for the programme?

Integrity Incentives presented unique ideas – all tying in the rural community surrounding the Ritz-Carlton Lodge – Reynolds Plantation, located about two hours east of Atlanta, GA. Since Marriott International is a community conscious, philanthropic company, the idea of giving back to the community they were visiting was a perfect fit. Lucy Eisele from Integrity Incentives scoured the area in East Central Georgia, searching for a community that might need a helping hand. Keeping in mind we weren’t looking for “charity cases”, but rather something or somewhere where a difference could be made. Drawing the people in and including them throughout is key when descending upon a community the way a meeting or incentive program can. In the end, Integrity Incentives presented three options that would:

- a) Create a unique team-building experience
- b) Incorporate pride, local culture and character into the program
- c) Leave their host community in a better way than



when they arrived

The viable and much needed areas were:

- 1) The local cemetery
 - This cemetery dates back to pre-civil war, and included a heavily wooded area that was reserved "only for the black folk" in Buckhead, GA. The run down gazebo needed lots of work, and the gravestones and markers were heavily worn and/or dilapidated.
- 2) The original town hall, circa 1910
- 3) The Community Park
 - A playground and overall gathering place for all surrounding communities to celebrate and connect through music, southern tradition and good old Bar-B-Q.

Peggy Whitman from Marriott then did a site inspection to view all options, and chose the playground/park as one that would benefit the most people.

4) How was this a good match for the corporate sponsor?

Again, because Marriott believes so strongly in philanthropic activities, finding a local community to contribute to, outside of, but still close to the affluent Ritz-Carlton was not only a good match, but a perfect match! Plus, achieving their initial objective of a different way to bring co-workers together, the day of giving was exactly what they were looking for. Since David Riddell had brought them all together to serve as a team in life, it was an ideal fit to choose the park which brings the community together for a purpose. With the project now decided, it needed to have a name. Because community get-togethers were the major use for the park, the project was aptly named *Community Giving for Community Gathering*. The evening prior to the Community Giving day and the entire day of, this theme resonated through special cards, room gifts, T-shirts, history and culture.

5) How was this a good match for the destination/venue?

The community of Buckhead, GA (the *real* Buckhead, and not the prosperous neighborhood in Atlanta) is a somewhat forgotten town. Not only financially, but in the shadow of its closest neighbor, Madison, GA. [Madison is a charming town where most homes and businesses are on the National Historic Register.] With very limited funds, and a population of just over 200, Buckhead struggled with the upkeep of the park. The proposed project design included painting, staining, landscaping, replacing broken fixtures like sinks, lights, ceiling fans and building picnic tables, park benches, firewood storage and overall sprucing up the BBQ pit and prep area.

6. How did the programme involve the attendees, hosts and or guests?

The programme involved more than just the attendees,



hosts and guests! It brought the entire town together, and as a critical component of a successful incentive, it provided local culture and tradition to the attendees.

Going back to the initial site and search for ideas, a strange and somehow coincidental series of happenings took place. On the first visit to Georgia, Lucy Eisele stumbled upon a fellow by the name of Eugene Swain. A humble man, Eugene is a native of Buckhead, a local artist and gospel singer. He is employed by the Morgan County Parks & Recreation Board. At that particular time, Eugene's artwork was being featured at the African American Museum of Art in Madison, GA. The president of the Madison Chamber of Commerce introduced Lucy to Eugene, and later that day, Eugene shared samples of his amazing paintings – all depicting his childhood memories of life in Buckhead and the deep south. She knew right then that Eugene had to be part of this important project. He turned out to be an integral piece of bringing this idea and program full circle.

Once the Mayor and City Council of Buckhead were contacted and subsequently gave their approval to proceed, other key folk were brought in to complete the experience. Gail Wade, a lifelong resident of Buckhead, and Mayor *pro tem*, worked with us every step of the way. She even offered to open her home to Marriott, a historic rock house built as a tavern in 1896. We planned to serve southern desserts there, following the project.

Gail also introduced us to another local fixture – Ms. Oma Lee Cooper, owner and caterer of Aunt Oma's Kitchen (a local gathering spot and diner.) After meeting with Oma, we created an old-fashioned, authentic menu of southern barbeque, which would be served on-site at the park when the project was completed. (see menu insert.)

We discussed and agreed upon Eugene being in some part of the program, however in what way was still to be determined. We planned to have his gospel quartet, The Fresh-Aires greet and entertain the attendees at the park. Scheduling conflicts with other singers got in the way, so we brought in a local DJ/personality named Desmond to act as emcee and keep the day going smoothly. [Each participant was asked ahead of time for a play-list of their favorite songs.] Desmond made sure to recognize them and their requests as he made announcements and team updates throughout the day.

On a subsequent planning visit just two months before operation, we met with the city council to discuss their participation, and how we would like to include them on each team. We also invited Eugene Swain to join the meeting to discuss his role. Once there, we learned Eugene was virtually unknown to the fellow neighbors of Buckhead! When the meeting was underway, we asked permission to have Eugene paint a permanent mural

Aunt Oma's Buffet Lunch

Southern Style Lunch

*Honey - Baked Ham
Southern Fried Chicken
Sweet Potato Souffle
Vidalia Onion Salad
Creamy Cole Slaw
Baked Macaroni & Cheese
Black-eyed Peas
Biscuits & Corn Muffins
Pecan Tassies
Peanut Butter Cake
Iced Tea & Lemonade*

featuring the historic town of Buckhead, to be placed at the entrance of the park. Eugene had no idea we were asking this, so of course was quite surprised.

We also wanted to honor and recognize David Riddell – for the sake of the team, and for the town of Buckhead who has heard so much about this terrific man. We discussed planting a tree or having something created, so needed to work on that once we returned back home.

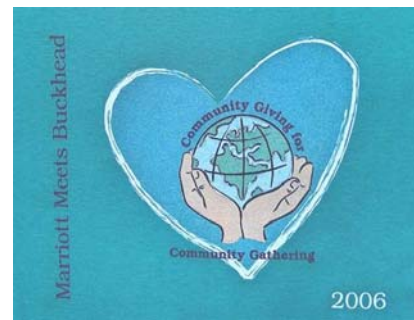
From all of this, we knew we were truly bringing together a community when everyone in the room lit up and all began to share ideas at once. The Crowning Glory of our project looked like reality. David Riddell's legacy of bringing people together would live on.

7. How was the idea communicated?

With the ideas approved by both Marriott and Buckhead, a verbal announcement was made to the attendees while at a sales meeting. This was followed up with an informational piece sent via e-mail. It was reiterated in the final agenda as well. The room gift on the evening before the project day, included a note along with a logoed T-shirt printed with "Community Giving for Community Gathering". The note also included suggested appropriate attire for the project – old tennis shoes, sweatshirts and jeans that could get dirty, stained or ruined. NOTE: Because this was a team-building event, actual teams were not revealed until the morning of the project, so as to not encourage any strategizing. As the morning rose, so did the wind and rain. Lucy Eisele met with the attendees at the Ritz-Carlton prior to departure to Buckhead, where they were given team assignments and duties. In the spirit of fun, the teams were named according to their projects –The Rock & Rollers; The Preppies; The Wacky Yard Crew; and The Indestructibles. We shared a brief overview of the day and the importance of their participation. She explained that no matter how carefully events, meetings or projects are planned, the one thing that can never be controlled is the weather. They were facing a down-pour and high winds to work on an outside project. Asked if they were still game, the team answered with a resounding "yes!" Another fun item shared was that the next day, Saturday, October 28 was *National Make a Difference Day* – an American tradition, held the fourth Saturday of every October. This day inspires 3,000,000 people to help 20,000,000, with one simple mission: "Put your cares on hold for one day to care for someone else." That's what we were about to do.

8 & 9. What was the positive effect on the beneficiaries? How did it make a difference in the lives of the beneficiaries?

When we began the search, decided on a venue and logistically put everything in place, the town started to experience their own sense of team-building. The community opened its eyes to the importance of working



together and with your neighbor; the pride one feels of community giving for community gathering; maintaining a safe, fun and viable venue for their children and community to grow; and appreciating the uniqueness of the old south – its culture, traditions and how their new friends appreciated that.

At some point in the planning stages, we approached Gail Wade about whether or not they would like a flag made in honor of Buckhead, and if so, what would they like to have depicted on it? She explained the story between Buckhead, GA and Buckhead Atlanta. Evidently the ritzy neighborhood of Buckhead Atlanta feels they should be annexed from Atlanta, and in doing so, they would need to take the zip code (30625) from Buckhead, GA – *The Real Buckhead*, as the locals like to say. We kept it a secret, but made a 4'x6' flag, with a Buck's head and the colors from their water tower, with the saying "The Real Buckhead – 30625" across the bottom of it. They were so giddy with excitement. It was as if we actually proclaimed that Buckhead Atlanta would never knock on their door again!



10. How did it make a difference in the lives of the participants?

The weather had been beautiful all week, and on the morning of our event, we woke to torrential rains and high winds. In preparing for the day, clear plastic ponchos were purchased ahead of time – just in case. We knew we couldn't cancel the event, so we took it as just another challenge overall. Luckily, our backup was the Fire Station, adjacent to the park area, so we moved the buffet and lunch tables inside, the mural painting, the DJ and The Indestructibles team, (they'd be working on benches and picnic tables.) We made hot chocolate to greet the team, opened up the overhead doors on the station, and let the music blast out. The unexpected challenges and battling the elements to reach their goal truly brought everyone together even more so. In addition, the participants took away several life changing benefits from the experience:



- 1) The pride of giving back and doing whatever you can to make a difference.
- 2) New acquaintances and friendships.
- 3) How easy it is to be generous of your time, and how much your time and efforts are appreciated by those less fortunate.
- 4) The experience of what life is like outside their daily routine, especially if you don't live in the United States.
- 5) Working together as a team, with one goal in mind in spite of all obstacles.
- 6) It changed some teammate's perception of others. The entire group stuck together to finish the project even though the weather presented a major challenge.

The rain fell throughout the day, and we weren't able to place in the ground the memorial marker we had made in

David Riddell's name. Instead, following lunch inside the fire station, we presented to the City -- the flag, the completed mural and the plaque. We were assured that everything would be placed as we wished.

During lunch with the town folks, everyone shared what they just experienced, as well as shared stories about their lives, their work and where they live. It was very interesting to watch and listen to. We weren't able to make it to Gail Wade's charming home, due to the rain and mud.

At the end of the day, upon returning to the Ritz-Carlton, the participants found a special, gift commemorating their day. Eugene's individual 5x7 artwork, along with a specially created card, were included, that told a brief story about Eugene.



AWARD CRITERIA

1. How did your Programme integrate into the local community? – i.e., selection of initiative in relation to the sponsoring corporation, organization, host and sponsor, or specifically in relation to the programme destination or venue, or both.

See Answers # 3 and # 6 from Application Questions.

2. Did your programme include creative ideas? – i.e., design of the programme to incorporate appropriate venues, activities, gifts, etc. to benefit the chosen cause.

- Commissioning Eugene Swain to paint the town mural, and work alongside Marriott
- Involving City Council and town
- Including well-known Oma Lee
- Eugene's room gifts (individualized 5x7 paintings and card)
- Presentation and flying of the hand-sewn Flag of Buckhead
- Placing a memorial marker in the park in honor of David Riddell

3. Did your programme have any long term sustainability objectives? – i.e., assurance of a lasting and/or ongoing effect on the beneficiaries or community.

See Answers # 8 and 10 of Application Questions.

4. Was there one person or a specific idea that made all the difference to the programme? "The Power of One" – i.e., give an example of how one idea or person has made a difference within this programme. Explain how this idea/person has impacted on a community, country or world – e.g., An idea for room gift, table gift, menu choices or involvement of local people in the project.

Eugene Swain! By bringing Eugene into the project and

literally painting his mural right alongside the working participants, he gave everyone a sense of spirit. He represented the community overall, in his humble and demure way, but also helped incorporate the true incentive experience by lending his talent of painting. In addition, by commissioning him to produce individual and unique 5x7 portraits for each participant, we were able to tell a brief story about him with the card and painting that evening. This gave each participant something they couldn't get on their own – and they absolutely loved it.

And finally, as mentioned earlier, we feel Eugene Swain has made the community more aware of their diversity, talent and corps de sprit.

EVALUATION COMMENTS:

The evaluations came in strong. "This was one of the best things we have ever done." "It felt good to help others." "We loved the opportunity of working with the community." David would be proud." "What a bonding experience."

And it was all of that and more. Given the chance to give of ourselves, so that a community we would never have had the opportunity to know, can gather a little more comfortably now and for generations to come.

Inside of Card included with Eugene's Portrait:

October 27, 2006

We hope you enjoyed spending your day with the local Georgians, learning about how they live, as well as spending worthwhile time with your fellow colleagues – learning more about what makes each of us tick as well, so to speak.

One Georgian that has made an impact on many folks, both local and around the world is Eugene Swain. Eugene spent his day with us today, helping to better his own community of the real Buckhead. Because Eugene is quite humble – we worked with him, convincing hem that his artwork is something we'd like to share with all of you, so that a small part of this day could stay with you as you get back into your routine.

You see, Eugene sees things different than most, colors in the sky, shades around a landscape and the positive in everything and everyone. He looks at life with creative imagination, and his paintings are all based on his memories of the South.

Eugene recalls a time in the first grade, his teacher would have coloring contests, and he would usually win. "Once we were asked to draw an American flag. Well I didn't want to win because I knew the other children would tease me. So, rather than draw a rectangle and color in the stars and stripes, I made my flag to wave...thinking that I would be different and couldn't possibly win the contest. Guess what? I won the prize. The teacher patted me on the back for using more imagination."

Here's to Life, Imagination, and Positive Thinking.

Enjoy.

