

Welcome from our New (Again) Board Chair



Hi HCI Members!

I am so pleased to be elected to be Chair of our Board of Advisors for a second time. Each year has its own rewards and this coming year appears to be a very exciting one. First of all, the Board of Advisors is a very active group and has 5 new banker board members this year. We are about to go into our first Board meeting (June 4-7 in Essex, VT) and we are all poring over the Board packet preparing to tackle a very full agenda. It will be a pleasure to recap the 2016 conference at Honey Creek Resort just two months ago in Moravia, IA. It was our largest attendance in several years and has received exceptional high evaluation scores for the educational content, the hotel facilities, and clearly exceeded most member's expectations. The business

sessions during the Travel Expo were one of the key highlights for me, as Amy Evans and I have been planning our group travel on a five-year calendar and we were able to decide on so many important destinations and dates. I am really filling that Bucket List of our members and myself!

Then comes all of the planning for the rest of the year with a heavy focus on the Annual Peer Group conference at the Essex Culinary Resort and Spa in Essex, VT next year - March 13-17, 2017. Can you imagine how much fun it will be to experience the classic Winter Wonderland in the mountains of Vermont? A real life Currier and Ives painting for us all to experience! As usual, we will be heavily focused on the educational programming for the year, as we determine what are the greatest concerns of our bank club directors and what HCI can do to help solve their challenges. This year, we will also be brainstorming and building our first Partner Educational programming for our partners looking to maximize their time during the conference.

I want to welcome all members to feel free to contact me at any time. If you need to learn more about how HCI can help you or if you just want to talk to a fellow club director about travel plans or club management, I am very happy to visit with our members. I would especially welcome any ideas for new educational topics you would like to see covered this year.

I look forward to representing all of our members this year and working with a very fine Board of Advisors and HCI Staff.

Happy Trails!

Valerie Kelsey, CBCD



Sceptre Journeys became a Heritage Clubs Preferred Tour Operator just six months ago, and they are already proving that they can deliver for HCI members. **Cheryl Gatto** was planning for her Peer Group St. Patrick's day lunch sponsorship and was determined to provide a true Irish experience. She was relentless in her pursuit of finding Irish entertainment in rural Iowa 90 miles from the nearest metropolis, and she left no stone unturned in her search. Her dedication and determination paid off, and we were treated to a delightful show from young Irish dancers and singers while enjoying a traditional Irish meal. Cheryl works just as hard to deliver for her clients who desire a unique international vacation.

Sceptre Journeys specializes in creating small group itineraries that offer immersive experiences. They customize packages to accommodate the wishes of the travelers. They can create a small group motor coach trip to any of the following countries: England, Wales, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain and Portugal. Cheryl explains that bookings to Iceland, Ireland, Scotland and Italy are particularly strong right now because, she says, "most people are interested in countries that they perceive as safe."



She is working with HCI club directors Amy Evans, CBCD and Val Kelsey, CBCD from D.L. Evans Bank in Idaho, planning trips to Iceland in February and August of 2017. She understands that "avoiding college football season in certain markets is a big deal!" And Idaho, the home of Boise State University football, is no exception. She is pleased to provide an expertly-crafted, air-inclusive custom group vacation around any schedule. Having recently been to Iceland, which is the trendy new



vacation hot-spot, Cheryl advises that it is a "very experiential destination - you can't just look at it from the motor coach." She likes to explain Iceland as "National Geographic Channel meets the Travel Channel" because you have to get outside to fully enjoy it.

Cheryl enjoyed meeting many of the HCI members at the 2016 Peer Group conference, which she says was "an absolutely wonderful experience." She noted the "camaraderie was evident amongst the travel professionals that you don't see very often." She got the sense that "the bank club directors really understand the needs of their clients." Cheryl would love to help you translate those needs into a fantastic experience for your members. Keep in mind that they also create custom golf packages for small groups and have a dedicated golf department. Contact Maria Orense (morense@gcs-ltd.com) in the Group Department at 800-813-5297, or call Cheryl (cgatto@sceptrevacations.com) directly at 516-456-4707.

Member Spotlight: Diane Susong, CBCD



If Diane Susong is with a customer when you call, you will be treated to an upbeat promotional message about upcoming trip and event opportunities with the Senior Class Club on her voice mail. She likes to keep a fun message for her members in case they can't reach her immediately. This trick is just one example of the many things that Diane has learned in her 19 years as a club director. Seven years into her employment with Home State Bank, Kitty Nash recruited her to join the team as a club director. Over the next sixteen years Diane served as her assistant managing club events, booking and leading trips and caring for her members. During that time, she continued to learn and develop ideas of her own. Three years ago, Kitty retired and Diane became the Executive Director of the club. She also works in the marketing department, serves as the mortgage department administrator and plans the bank's special events.

Diane learned an important life lesson from one of her members while on a trip to Russia in 2007 that she still remembers today. One lady on the trip was not as mobile as the others and was not able to keep up with the rest of the group. Diane felt lost the entire time that she was there because she stayed back with this member to provide assistance while everyone else was far ahead of them. While some could become bitter about the situation, Diane took it as a learning experience. "What this taught me was that I needed to slow down in my life and be in the moment," she says. She considers this special experience "an important life lesson" for her.

While Diane loves getting to know her customers, what she enjoys more is watching the club members get to know one another. Retirees don't have jobs where they get to meet new people so she thinks it's terrific that she is able to create opportunities for friendships to form. "They meet on a trip and then become great friends." This is tremendously rewarding.

One of her upcoming trips is a visit to New Orleans combined with a Caribbean Cruise that she is planning with Rick Pharr of CTN Travels. Rick is also taking care of her 4th Annual Mystery Trip that is scheduled for November. Rick is handling all the details for her. All she has to worry about is being in town for the birth of her first grandchild who also happens to be "scheduled" for November! Congratulations, Diane. That event is even more reason to "slow down and be in the moment."



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