

Adam's Mark

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25 break-ins in the parking lot. Drug use was rampant in the rooms, with some maids refusing to fight their way through marijuana smoke. Two employees were threatened at gunpoint, and sheriff's deputies took five guns from the rooms. Several rooms were damaged, the stairwells were sullied with trash and urine, and a naked woman was left unconscious on the front drive.

Because of that experience, the hotel beefed up its security in 1999 as never before.

However, lawyers for the state Attorney General's Office were skeptical about the hotel's reaction. They hired two security consultants, one of whom said the hotel "truly went overboard," apparently because the participants were black. Another consultant studied crime records and found arrest rates for Black College Reunion "low in comparison to other special events." In 1998, for example, arrests for one three-day period during Bike Week totaled 627, while 272 were reported at Black College Reunion.

According to records of the case, the hotel instituted some of the same security measures for Bike Week and Spring Break, but nothing approaching the collection of precautions used during the 1999 Black College Reunion.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs and the state said the hotel reacted differently to predominantly white events such as Bike Week, which, they contend, are every bit as raucous. They noted that two bikers roared through the Adam's Mark lobby on their motorcycles in 1997. The next year, they said, the Bike Week crowd was entertained in the lobby by a man calling himself "the madman of raunch and roll."

They pointed to weapons police have found on Bike Week patrons: walking canes equipped with blades, gas caps that turn into daggers, handlebars that shoot shotgun shells.

The message is pretty clear," said John P. Relman, a lawyer for the five black plaintiffs. "You're welcome if you're there for a white event. You're not particularly welcome, and you're barely tolerated, if

you're there for Black College Reunion."

The hotel argues it is unfair to compare Black College Reunion with any other event in Daytona because it is uniquely shoe-horned into a single week-end of cruising and partying by some 100,000 people, all of them young.

Kummer said he ran into one young woman at the 2000 Black College Reunion, who told him: "You guys don't understand ... these kids are down here to show off their cars and their bodies."

The Adam's Mark hired two consultants, both of whom said the hotel's security measures were in line with industry standards and were not based on race. Had the hotel not acted as it did, one consultant said, Black College Reunion 1999 "could have collapsed into extreme dysfunction and disorder."

The hotel chain declined to make Kummer available for an interview, saying the company wanted to move on after the settlement.

A week after the settlement, a Kentucky company said it had agreed to buy six Adam's Mark hotels from HBE Corp. of St. Louis, including the hotel in Clearwater Beach. Columbia Sussex Corp. of Fort Mitchell, Ky., plans to rename the six it bought.

HBE Corp. is keeping the remaining 18 Adam's Mark hotels in the chain, including the Daytona Beach property.

Relman said the settlement accomplished almost everything the plaintiffs wanted. Although the hotel maintains it did not discriminate, it has apologized and agreed to pay about \$2 million in reimbursements, scholarships and legal fees.

"If we had gotten a \$2 million decision at trial, we would have considered it a total victory," Relman said.

For the state, the case came down to consumer fraud, and debunking "this fundamental notion that a crowd of black people is a bad thing," said Senior Assistant Attorney General John Newton. "My answer is forget the race," he said. "Look at what the hotel told people they would get. Look at what they were charging people. Then think how you would feel."

Networking group strives to make a difference

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Sit in on just one meeting of the Triad Business Network and you soon will be laying out the blue print for a future business endeavor. You may not even be a business owner or have ever given any thought to starting your own company. Before you sigh and skip to peruse another article because you are thinking this is another shady "get rich quick" scheme, read on. These people are not just about business, they are business; most important, they are successful business owners.

Triad Business Network, International is a business-to-business referral-based networking organization that aims to bridge the gap between small business corporate structures and the community. In laymen's terms, it's networking for the modern business man and woman no longer interested in what TBN calls "net-sitting" or "net-eating." We have all heard of other supposed networking opportunities where lunch and socializing are the only outcomes. TBN offers those things and more, including the actual exchange of contacts.

Here's your proof: The network held last week's meeting at A Family Affair Catering on Cloverdale Avenue. Not only does the network plan to hold several more meetings at that location, but it has referred other clients to the catering operation. A Family Affair Catering's owner, Honey Humphrey, referred several brides-to-be to WC Publishing, a network member, for the printing of wedding invitations. As Humphrey put it, "That's what it is all about: referring. And it works wonderful for everyone."

Introduced to the Triad almost one year ago, TBN has already established chapters in Georgia, Maryland, the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos. This group is serious. It now has the bragging rights to calling itself a bona fide business network because it is represented globally. Something in the group's business equation is working because attendance at any of its meetings is made up of business folks from all industries and walks of life: a family catering business owner, a loan officer, a newspaperman, an auto dealer, an insurance salesman.

The brainchild behind this network is founder and CEO Tanya Wiley, who is living



Photo by COURTNEY GAILLARD
Left to right: Triad Business Network's Gregory Prince, Jack Wesley, Tanya Wiley, John Rasye, Chrissy Baker, Darryl Little and Martin Willis - Team Leadership members

proof of the benefits of participating in TBN with a business or two under her belt. Wiley is also the CEO of WC Publishing, a local printing and publishing house. TBN members will tell you the recipe is simple because it's about relationships that allow and lead to networking.

"Our mission is to build an organization of people who identify with each other as business owners assist with generating real business for the organization," said Wiley, who has molded the network to benefit and bring about more business for all TBN members.

TBN members vow to do business first with each other, then with other chapter members/organizations. Those promises coupled with the TBN philosophy of "Givers Get" and ongoing contributions to the communities in which all TBN members live and the passing of referrals make it possible for the network to operate and create a trend of never-ending business opportunities for all.

Wiley strives on making it a point to turn away no business, standing true to the belief that "the key to running a successful business lies in the type of business you attract."

Jack C. Wesley Jr., president and CEO of Millennium Technology, joined TBN because of the personal and professional possibilities he envisioned could happen if affiliated with such an organization. Wesley enjoys and appreciates the family-like relationships established between TBN members when networking and exchanging business strategies.

"I was looking for a business organization to be involved in with the same type of principles like mine so that I could share knowledge and wealth," Wesley said. "It's

really like a family, in that we all have talents to help each other and count on one another. It's a great opportunity to build a personal working relationship with someone."

Martin Willis is an account executive with The Assurance Group Inc., a company that sells medical insurance to businesses. He too saw the benefits of participating in a proactive business network by joining the network four months ago.

"I saw (TBN) as a way to get engraved in the fabric of this community," said Willis, who is originally from the Midwest. Willis credits Tanya Wiley for his interest in TBN because she "walks the walk and talks the talk."

Triad Business Network is about business but it also has managed to incorporate some pleasure into its agenda with annual holiday breakfasts and dinners, retreats and cruises for its global network of members to enjoy.

Aside from the endless networking possibilities, Triad Business Network provides a host of other services such as financial performance assessment and improvement, joint venture analysis, macro- and micro-economic forecasting, product conceptualization and development, and the list goes on.

Even amid economic hardships, the network remains positive and sees above and beyond the financial challenges that many business are having. Wiley said, "With many small businesses scrambling to weather the so-called recession, the networking business is thriving."

The network plans to continue in a path of success that will be evident to its current local members and to the rest of the world. Sixty chapters are to be established worldwide within the next 36 months.

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