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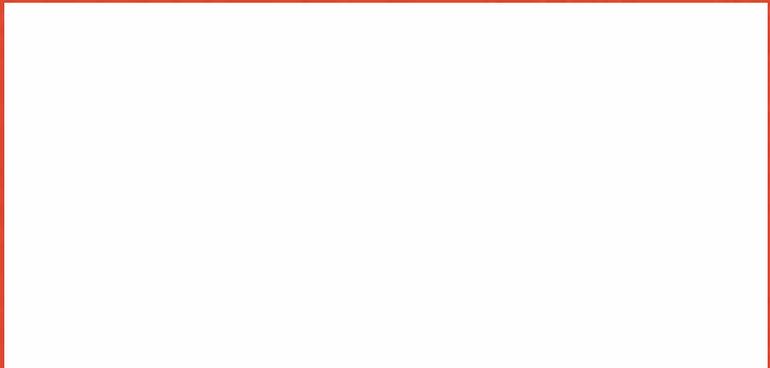


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On the cover

It is an exciting time to be in the hospitality industry. After much thought and discussion, the Washington Restaurant Association and Washington Lodging Association are moving ahead on their merger. This issue of Washington Restaurant Magazine gives you the details.



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Branding Washington's new "post-merger" hospitality association

By Lex Nepomuceno, Executive Editor



ASSOCIATION



How do you take two separate organizations that individually carry almost 100 years of history and create a new identity? That is the challenge facing the Washington Restaurant Association (WRA) and the Washington Lodging Association (WLA) for the next year. Fortunately, there is a solid plan and a commitment by both organizations to create a unified brand that reflects the combined strength of the new association and reinforces hospitality's position as the largest employer in the state.

A joint task force on branding has been created with two representatives from restaurants and two representatives from lodging. I will be chairing the task force, and will be assisted by Marianne Scholl, the WLA's director of communications and marketing, who is now also on the WRA's Communications team. There will be monthly meetings to oversee the Request for Proposal (RFP) selection process and the eventual vendor deliverables. The first task force meeting will occur before the end of July.

What is the timeline for launching the new brand?

- RFP distribution: First week of August 2015
- Proposals due: Sept. 15, 2015
- Vendor presentation(s) to Task Force: Last week of September 2015
- Company selection: On or before the end of October 2015
- Project start: On or before mid-November 2015
- Branding plan completion: On or before mid-March 2016

After the completed branding plan has been reviewed by the task force and approved by the Board of Directors, implementation of the new identity will begin. **The goal will be to launch the new brand by the end of summer 2016.**

Some of the big questions we intend to answer through this process include: What should the name of the merged association be? What is the best way to leverage the strengths of the WRA and WLA and ensure they are properly reflected in the new brand? What about the new logo? This process includes selecting color schemes, fonts and other elements related to rolling out a new identity.

Communications assets such as website, magazine, email addresses, email newsletters and other resources will all be worked on during the implementation phase of the branding.

No doubt this will be an enormous undertaking by the combined organization. The timeline is aggressive and the goals are ambitious. However, the commitment and enthusiasm by staff and volunteers has been unprecedented. The collective desire to follow through on the new association's mission, "To enhance the success of our members," is evident in the quantity and quality of time dedicated by both associations during every step of the merger process.

Initial discussions between the WRA and WLA began in 2012. Summer 2016 will represent a culmination of a multi-year due diligence process, countless volunteer and staff hours, and thousands of pieces of communications. The result will hopefully be a new brand that will represent a stronger voice and greater value for Washington's vast hospitality industry. ■



WRA/WLA merger update

The WRA and WLA are joining forces to deliver even greater value to their members and to increase their capacity to act quickly to meet political and regulatory challenges at both the state and local levels.

The two organizations signed a memorandum of understanding on April 7 that is serving as a blueprint for combining forces. The executive committees of the two Boards recently approved transition plans for communications, membership and business development in preparation for combining operations by Oct. 1, 2015.

Under the approved plans for member services, the WRA and WLA membership teams start working together in July, and area coordinators who already work with WRA members will begin reaching out to WLA members in August. The unified hospitality association will have 10 area coordinators based around the state working with restaurant and hotel members. The WRA's current area coordinators have close ties to the communities and businesses where they work, and they are well positioned to engage members in the new association.

The WRA and WLA communications teams joined forces, in May, to expand members' access to information and resources. A branding process for the new association will kick off this summer, and the new name and logo for the unified hospitality association will be unveiled in the summer of 2016. The WRA and WLA logos and websites will continue to be used until the launch of the new brand.

The WRA Business Development Department will work with WLA allied members to deliver an expanded array of services to members. It will also oversee signature events currently produced by the two associations, including the WLA's Annual Convention & Trade Show and the WRA's Northwest Food Services Show. ■

Legislation would simplify ACA reporting

A bipartisan bill, in the U.S. House of Representatives, would simplify and streamline the Affordable Care Act's reporting rules – a top priority for the restaurant industry. The legislation, introduced by Reps. Mike Thompson, D-Calif., and Diane Black, R-Tenn., is HR 2712 or the Commonsense Reporting and Verification Act of 2015. If approved, the measure would provide workable options for employers to administer and offer health coverage to their employees

through the creation of a voluntary prospective reporting system and streamlining the reporting process for businesses. ■



FDA offers final rule on trans fat

The FDA is removing partially hydrogenated oils, the main contributor of artificial trans fat in the food supply, from its list of "Generally Recognized as Safe" ingredients.

The FDA announced the decision June 16, after two years of discussion, saying artificial trans fat is linked to an increased risk of heart disease. Companies, including restaurants, have three years to comply.

As a result of the FDA's announcement, restaurant and foodservice operators and food manufacturers will no longer be permitted to sell items that are made directly with PHOs or that incorporate an ingredient containing PHOs unless they have the FDA's prior approval.

Affected businesses have until June 18, 2018, to cease serving or producing foods that include artificial trans fat. ■

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A letter from WRA and WLA's presidents and CEOs

A new association for a new era

The Washington Restaurant Association and the Washington Lodging Association have served the hospitality industry since the 1920s. Over time the differences between the needs of our members and how we serve them have faded. There is now much more that unites than divides us. In fact, increasing challenges to our businesses and our industries made it imperative that we work together to rethink our future.

Critical policy issues have been shifting away from the state capitol to city halls and the ballot box as unions mobilize with other political forces to introduce extreme labor laws at the local level. New issues are arising at an ever faster pace and gaining the attention of policy makers in months not years. Our quickly evolving industry and workforce require rapid research and new information systems, and today's communication needs demand greater investment in ever-changing technology.

Just like your business, associations must adapt or become irrelevant. We can't simply stick to the old way of doing things: We must meet all of these challenges, and we need to find ways to get more resources on the ground in local communities and to make major investments in new technology.

That's why the Boards of Directors and professional leadership at WRA and WLA have made the decision to join forces in a new unified hospitality association. After a careful due diligence process with considerable input from the industry, past presidents and our members, we are proud to be uniting in a single, stronger organization.

We are not alone in seeking to have a greater voice for the hospitality industry and to be even more efficient and effective in serving our members. More than 50 percent of the states have combined restaurant and lodging associations, and they have provided us with valuable roadmaps on how to best strengthen our industry and enhance the success of our combined membership.

If we were in your shoes, there is a lot we'd want to know about the new association, not the least of which is how this merger will benefit your business. Here is what our Boards of Directors aspire to achieve:

- An association with an even stronger, more united political front to protect and enhance the hospitality business climate.
- An association with more efficient operations that delivers even greater value to members.
- An association with even greater buying power to provide stronger member education and to offer an even greater array of benefits and money-saving programs.
- An organization with expanded leadership capabilities and a wider range of viewpoints that will create more opportunities for innovation and expand our ability to be the primary source of information for the hospitality industry.

As you'll learn in this magazine, which for the WLA members is arriving at your businesses for the first time, your new hospitality association is set to deliver on this promise, whether it is with a larger team of area coordinators, a stronger government affairs team and a more secure RETRO program.

Earlier this year, both Boards approved a memorandum of understanding to make this a reality, and we are working to combine operations, on October 1, under Anthony Anton's leadership. The new hospitality association, with its new name and brand, will launch in 2016. If you have a comment or question, or would like to get involved, please e-mail us. We really would love to hear from you.



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Governance after the merger: stronger together

By Paul Schlien, *Managing Editor*



Like any wise couple contemplating a wedding date, the Washington Restaurant Association and the Washington Lodging Association are not rushing into marriage. Indeed, the union between these two key players in the hospitality industry has been carefully thought out in great detail since discussions on working more closely together began in 2012. A good example of the careful planning that went into this combining of forces can be seen in the new, united organization's proposed governance structure.

The new organization's combined leadership capabilities and viewpoints will create more opportunities for innovation, as well as expand its ability to effectively represent the hospitality industry.

"We need to be stronger together," said WRA president and CEO Anthony Anton. "We can spend more money on member value and less on administration. I am most excited about our ability to strengthen our industry through our industry connections to each other, our community and relationships and your association."

The details

"A great deal of time was spent making sure that we all have good representation on the Board, geographically and across our industries," said Matt Van Der Peet, WLA Board chair. "Whoever will be part of the Board will be individuals who are fully engaged. It will be a Board that well represents all entities within the new association."

When combined operations begin on October 1, the governing Board will be made up of WLA and WRA's current Board members and officers. In July 2016, a new 30-member board will take office. For the first two years, there will be dual chairs, vice chairs, treasurers and immediate past chairs, one from the WLA, one from the WRA. In 2017, the full Board will have 26 seats with the chair, vice chair, secretary/treasurer and immediate past chair as officers. The Executive Committee will be made up of these voting officers, the president/CEO plus the chairs of the Education Foundation and the Member Services Corporation.

Nine Board members will be elected based on the number of employees in their restaurant or hotel; three allied members; six at-large members, including the chairs of the RETRO Committee and the Education Foundation; and four additional Board members - one each from the Seattle Restaurant Alliance and the WRA's Spokane Chapter and one

each from the Seattle and Spokane lodging associations. With the exception of officers, Board members will be limited to two terms of three years. Officers will have one-year terms and be eligible for reelection to a second one-year term.

The Board Development Committee, which will have equal representation from the two associations, will nominate candidates for the new Board, who will be elected by a two-thirds majority of the Board.

"We're really looking at this as an opportunity to have all the best minds in the same room," said Phil Costello, WRA Board chair. "The Board is going to be made up of the right people, no matter where they're from."

Best and brightest

"Having a unified board will provide much stronger representation for the hospitality industry," said Stan Bowman, president and CEO of the Washington Lodging Association. "The greatest strength is the balance between sectors of the hospitality industry. We will seek the most talented members to represent us on the board."

Prospective Board members will be chosen from those who distinguish themselves on committees.

"The leadership of our organizations asked 'How do we get the best and brightest on our Board to provide the vision needed to lead hospitality to great heights?'" said Anton. "This means getting away from outdated structures that dictate percentage of makeup, and focusing on developing the great leaders of our community."

According to Bowman, one of the great strengths of the new organization will be the opportunities to get involved and connect.

"WRA has great experience with committees, and the new association will similarly tap into the talents and skills of members who want to serve the industry," Bowman said.

"We recognize that people still need to know the association speaks for them," said Anton. "To do this, we've guaranteed chapter leadership slots on the Board as well as a minimum of two executive committee members from each industry on the seven person executive committee and alternating chairs. I think this is a great blend of the needs of a great Board." ■

Government Affairs report

By Stephanie Davenport, Contributing Editor



The Washington Restaurant Association and the Washington Lodging Association have both been around since the 1920s. After all this time, our differences have all but been erased, and our similarities bind us together. One of the parallel issues that all members of the hospitality industry are facing is changing labor laws. You would have to look far and wide to find a person that isn't aware of the wage debates currently raging across America.

Members of both the WRA and the WLA were impacted by the Seattle City Minimum Wage Ordinance that went into effect on April 1. In order to help our members succeed, the two associations commissioned a legal guide that explains to members how they can comply with the new laws. The guide is currently available on both association websites. People can also receive email updates each Friday for the next month regarding important and timely wage information. Members can also request sections of the guide by emailing StephanieD@warestaurant.org.

The Seattle Restaurant Alliance and Seattle Hotel Association have joined together to form The Hospitality Political Action Committee (PAC). This PAC exists in order to represent member concerns in Seattle local elections. The PAC's mission is to position Seattle's hospitality industry as meaningful participants in government legislative efforts. The goal is to educate, endorse, and support candidates for Seattle elected positions who come from Seattle's diverse hospitality sector. Thus far, the PAC has been a great success and is giving voice to the needs of restaurants and hotels across the city. If members would like more information about the PAC, they can email MorganH@warestaurant.org.

In the meantime, Seattle is far from the only place impacted by wage changes, and our associations are working diligently to ensure that hospitality has a seat at the table when deliberations on this issue and other labor topics are being held around the state.

In Tacoma, the unified associations are fighting for our members in relation to new standards for paid leave and minimum wage that are being discussed on the local level. Our team has worked closely with the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce to make sure the voices of the business community, as well as our members, were heard during the resulting debates. As a direct result of the association's efforts, the subsequent ordinance, crafted to address paid leave, took into account many of the needs for hospitality businesses.

You can see the full ordinance here: <http://wra.cc/0715i>

Meanwhile, in Tacoma, a new proposal arrived from the \$15 Now activist group that seeks to raise the minimum wage in Tacoma to \$15 - virtually overnight. Teams from both the WRA

and WLA are currently working hand-in-hand with the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, along with business leaders, to find a solution that is right for both workers and the businesses that employ them. Hospitality representatives are currently part of a stakeholder group, commissioned by the mayor of Tacoma, to develop an alternative to \$15 Now's initiative. While the results have not yet been finalized, we are optimistic that the final ordinance will take into account the needs of restaurants and hotels while, at the same time, giving them time to adapt their business models while continuing to ensure that their staff can count reliably on regular wage increases.

Members can keep up-to-date regarding the outcomes of our work in Tacoma by subscribing to the Washington Restaurant Weekly, an informative newsletter on hospitality issues, by emailing news@warestaurant.org.

The debate does not end in Tacoma, however. Another city in flux is Spokane. In April, the Spokane City Council initiated the development of a paid sick leave ordinance by forming a task force of stakeholders to provide ideas and recommendations. At that time, the council appeared ready to proceed with an ordinance with little input from business. In the meantime, a member of the WRA team was appointed to the task force. When offering recommendations, the WRA focused on:

- Identifying flexible options for meeting paid sick leave requirements,
- Minimizing disruptions to current industry practices, and
- Not creating new layers of enforcement and causes of action against business.

It seemed that members of the task force viewed the association's ideas constructively.

Currently, the city is reviewing all stakeholder input and will be re-drafting the ordinance before formal introduction to the City Council. The adoption process is slated to be complete by August 2015. For more information on the Spokane paid leave ordinance and other local hot-topics you can contact BruceB@warestaurant.org.

While we are preparing for these same issues to crop-up in Olympia and other urban areas, there hasn't been movement on these issues in those locations - yet. Your associations are working to ensure that a prepared team is in place to handle these issues as they arrive. Our goal is to always have a team in place that is prepared to fight for the interests of a robust and healthy hospitality ecosystem in Washington. With all these emerging topics at the local level, it is more relevant than ever for WRA and WLA to join our resources to represent a unified hospitality industry in the face of a dynamic and rapidly changing legislative terrain. ■

Area coordinators: your connection to member benefits

By David Faro, Contributing Editor



The new unified hospitality association will draw on the WRA's successful area coordinator system which means you'll have a close connection to the organization wherever you live in the state.

A unique model of engagement

When the Washington Restaurant Association developed the concept of area coordinators in 1996, the idea was borne from the need to connect. Since then, area coordination has become one of the key concepts that defines the WRA's operations and sets its organizational model apart from many other associations.

"Part of the original plan was to engage restaurateurs directly, connect them with legislators and catalyze the beginning of a grassroots advocacy program," said Anthony Anton, president and CEO of the WRA.

The WRA learned from its members that they wanted a relationship with the association that went beyond information and news reports. They wanted someone they could call, someone they knew, someone who would get the ball rolling for them in whatever direction their current needs dictated. Members needed someone to guide them through the noise, someone with a clear understanding of the industry and a menu of solutions for the ills a restaurant might encounter.

What members needed was a first response team, a restaurant 911.

"At its core," said Anton, "the heart of the area coordinator program is to enact better community connection and stronger political influence within the hospitality sector."

When asked if the creation of area coordinators had worked as he hoped it would, Anton replied, "In my mind, it's a wild success, but there has been a definitive learning curve. From the get go, the program has achieved what we set out to do, and along the way, we have refined the system and calibrated it based on feedback from members and area coordinators. After each iteration, we come that much closer to 'spectacular.'"

In fact, members who enjoy close ties to their area coordinator list that relationship as one of the great benefits of being a member of the WRA.

Initially, the association assumed that the best candidates for the position would be people with a background in sales. The WRA also hoped that area coordinators would aid retention initiatives.

"We thought experience selling memberships would be a critical skill for the position," said Anton. "What we learned was that the most crucial ingredient for an area coordinator to meet with success was a deep commitment to hospitality, in general, combined with a caretaker attitude. We wanted people that involved their hearts and passions. Initially, figuring out just who exactly was the right person to be an area coordinator was our toughest challenge. Now, however, we have a clear understanding of the type of professional who fits best in the AC role. Essentially, we want our members to feel like they have another strong and dedicated member on their team."

More members, more support

The WRA area coordinators have given a personal touch to WRA for almost two decades, and this model will be expanded in the new combined hospitality association and extended to WLA members.

As part of the transition, the WLA and WRA membership teams are merging, in July, and area coordinators will begin





reaching out to WLA members in August to introduce themselves and the area coordinator system. The plan is for 10 area coordinators, each locally based to support members throughout the state with close, personal ties to the association. And as the membership of the new association grows, so will the area coordinator team.

Cathy Fox, the area coordinator for South King County, looks forward to working with more hoteliers.

She came to the WRA with a strong background in hospitality, an academic education in political economy and personal experience running a small business. She is passionate about analyzing profit and loss scenarios in micro-economic climates. Most of all, she likes talking to business owners and operators, finding out what makes them tick, how they interface with the public and what their growth plans look like for the future.

“I am fascinated by how our members anchor communities,” Fox said. “As an area coordinator, I get to see the good work that they do beyond their walls every day.”

Area coordinators are trained to take note and pay attention to the details of your unique organization, from your operational and economic challenges to the values at the foundation of your business. From her perspective, the two most important ingredients a successful AC can bring to the table are tenacity and good listening skills.

“Good listening allows me to really find out what is on a member’s radar as an important issue,” said Fox. “Tenacity helps me be a powerful advocate for my members, but it also connects me to a community that is traditionally very hard to connect with. Business owners have limited bandwidth, and being tenacious about solutions to help them in their operations helps me help my members.”

Donna Tikker, the WRA area coordinator for the Spokane area, also takes her role seriously.

“I have a motherly attitude,” Tikker said. “I want to help people succeed, and that desire comes right out of my heart. ACs are interested in members. They ask questions and they have a deep curiosity, and they have a tool kit to move an operator toward success.”

One of the ways Fox, Tikker and the entire AC team will help members is to connect them with all of the benefits and programs available through the association. Whether it is credit card processing, health insurance or music licensing, to name just a few of the items on the menu of cost-saving programs available to members, ACs have solutions that help members save time and money.

The desire to strengthen grassroots action within communities across the state was a key factor in the creation of the WRA area coordinator lineup, and ACs will play a critical role in engaging members in government affairs in the new association. They reach out when calls to action are critical to the industry’s success in Olympia, and they strengthen relationships between members and lawmakers by encouraging participation in the annual legislative Hill Climb.

WRA area coordinators are also a decisive means for association members to share their point of view and issues of concern, whether it is something that only affects their business or affects the industry as a whole. They are a great conduit, and although members have multiple channels through which they can contact the association, a real meeting with a real person is a great way to share information and find effective solutions.

All members—new or old, WRA or WLA, hotels, restaurants or allied vendors—are encouraged to connect with their area coordinators. Take their calls when they reach out to you or give them a call and invite them for a cup of coffee. Start a conversation. Tell them and us what is important to you on a daily basis. What keeps you up at night? Your area coordinators want to know. They are ready to listen. ■

For more information on membership in the new association, Area Coordinators contact Jennifer Hurley, the WRA’s Membership Administrator by emailing jenniferh@warestaurant.org or by calling 360.956.7279.

Member Spotlight: Restaurants and hotels look forward to merger

By Andy Cook, Contributing Editor

Three hots and a cot. Room and board. Food and shelter. On the micro level, these are the most basic of human needs; one without the other is stressfully incomplete. On the macro business level, it's a symbiotic powerhouse. We spoke with members of both the WLA and the WRA about their memberships; while their personal/professional trajectories are as diverse as the expressions of the industries they represent, they are lock in step in their reasons for supporting a unified association: governmental representation, business friendly programs and networking.

DEBBIE WARDROP, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE RESORT AT PORT LUDLOW SPENT MUCH OF HER CAREER AS AN INDUSTRY LEADER IN ARIZONA. SHE WAS DIRECTOR OF CONVENTION SERVICES AT SOME OF THE STATE'S TOP RESORTS AND SPAS, AS WELL AS THE NFL'S DIRECTOR OF EVENTS AND CEO OF THE ARIZONA SUPER BOWL HOST COMMITTEE.

Q. After more than 30 years in Arizona, what was it that brought you here to Washington state?

A. Becoming an Arizona resident made Washington state – particularly the Olympic Peninsula – really stand out as the special place it is. I fell in love with it. In 2006, I decided to create my dream job located out of the Olympic Peninsula as a consultant.

Q. How did you become the General Manager of the Resort at Port Ludlow?

A. I was originally brought in as a consultant. We all got on so well, when I was offered the position, it really appealed to me. We have a beautiful boutique inn; with such a variety of services, I felt I had a lot to offer, and it's two miles from home.

Q. What drove you to pursue WLA membership and later board membership?

A. Primarily, it was the networking opportunities, but the resources and programs available for a smaller operation are tremendous, such as getting (and staying) compliant with the American Disabilities Act or simply having affordable access to proper beds and sheets – you can't just go to a store and buy twin beds that together constitute a king-sized bed.

I also appreciate WLA's annual convention; it's thoughtfully organized and really well executed. The keynote speakers, the networking opportunities and access to new information and trends are invaluable.

Q. What benefit for hoteliers do you see coming from the merger?

A. As a larger hospitality association, we're positioned to be more effective for our mutual benefit on topics like tourism and emerging legislation. I'd like to see developed an employment resource for seasonal workers.

AMY IGLOI CREED, OWNER OF AMY'S ON THE BAY IN PORT ORCHARD, HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE WASHINGTON RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION FOR YEARS. AMY'S ENTRANCE INTO RESTAURANT OWNERSHIP BEGAN WITH PARTNERING WITH A SKILLED CHEF.

Q. Why did you join the WRA?

A. I liked the selection of program resources. I recognized that as a business owner on my own, I didn't have the same resources as larger chains or franchises do. Membership gave me access to those resources. I have a menu of programs I've incorporated into my business; in fact, I've just signed on for two more.

Q. As an active board member, you're especially aware of the inner workings of the WRA. What is your impression of the merger?

A. What's most comforting is the merger committee's due diligence. The WRA's administration team has always done a terrific job, and this is no different. I also think that those from the WLA are contributing the same level of professionalism as our two associations map out the potential benefits and issues of a merger.

Q. What do you perceive as the benefits and issues?

A. Together, our suite of programs will be stronger, more robust. Our collective buying power will benefit us on new programs that will better serve our needs or the needs of the future. As for what issues the merger





may present, we don't know what we don't know. I think the merger committee has done a great job of mapping out what those might be, and I'm confident it will make the best choices for all our members.

TOM WOLF, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE HYATT REGENCY BELLEVUE, HAS ENJOYED 30 YEARS IN THE LODGING INDUSTRY. WHILE PURSUING AN EDUCATION AS AN ACCOUNTANT, IT WAS A SUMMER INTERNSHIP WITH HYATT THAT SHOWED HIM HE HAD A TALENT AND INTEREST IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY.

Q. You're not only an active member, but you're also a committed board member. What were your primary reasons for joining the WLA?

A. Simply put, I see this as a responsibility to the industry. The connections that can be made in such a well-organized and diverse collection of my peers comes with unexpected, yet tangible benefits I couldn't find out on my own. My involvement, and that of my peers at the WLA, gives us a platform of advocacy and a forum to help shape the issues that face our industry.

Q. As a board member, you've been privy to the merging process. Can you tell us about your impressions so far, and what are some of the main concerns entering into such an arrangement?

A. I feel the merger process has been going very well. We've gone into this process concerned about being "consumed" by the WRA. But I feel that concern is shared by both sides, and I feel like this is going to be a very positive step that will benefit our needs quite well.

Q. How do you envision our merger being of value to the Washington Lodging Association's needs?

A. I see the opportunities to be numerous. We'll be stronger together, a common, united voice on the issues our industries share. We'll have a larger "footprint," and that will increase our influence. Also, we'll be more closely connected to the restaurant industry, and that will help grow our networks.

CHAD MACKAY, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OF SEATTLE-BASED EL GAUCHO, IS A NATIVE RESTAURATEUR; HE GREW UP IN THE FAMILY RESTAURANT BUSINESS OF FLYING FISH, AND NOW SITS AT THE HEAD OF THE EL GAUCHO TABLE AND ON THE WRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS. EL GAUCHO ALSO HAS A BOUTIQUE INN (THE INN AT EL GAUCHO) WITH A "RETRO-SWANK" 1950S-DECOR LODGING ESTABLISHMENT IN SEATTLE THAT OFFERS THE SAME HIGH LEVEL OF HOSPITALITY.

Q. What value do you perceive from your association membership?

A. Political advocacy is important to me as a restaurateur; by championing the needs of the larger industry, the association helps establishments of all sizes, large and small. We've done really good work on labor and liquor legislation, especially.

Q. Do you also utilize any of the programs or resources available from the WRA?

A. Yes. We have the resources to internalize much of our restaurant operational resources, but there are a number of programs I use through the WRA, such as RETRO and the ServSafe suite of training for staff and management.

Q. What had been your impression of the merging process so far?

A. I think the process has gone very well; there's been a thorough push and pull from each entity, but all the principle players have put aside personal agendas and focused on the needs of the members and the industry.

Q. Any projections about the final merged association?

A. Both associations are terrific on their own, but I think that we'll be even better together. On the WRA side, we already represent many facets of our industry, and I feel the plans in place are well-structured to include some new facets with our lodging professionals. ■

Creating a unified hospitality association: a timeline



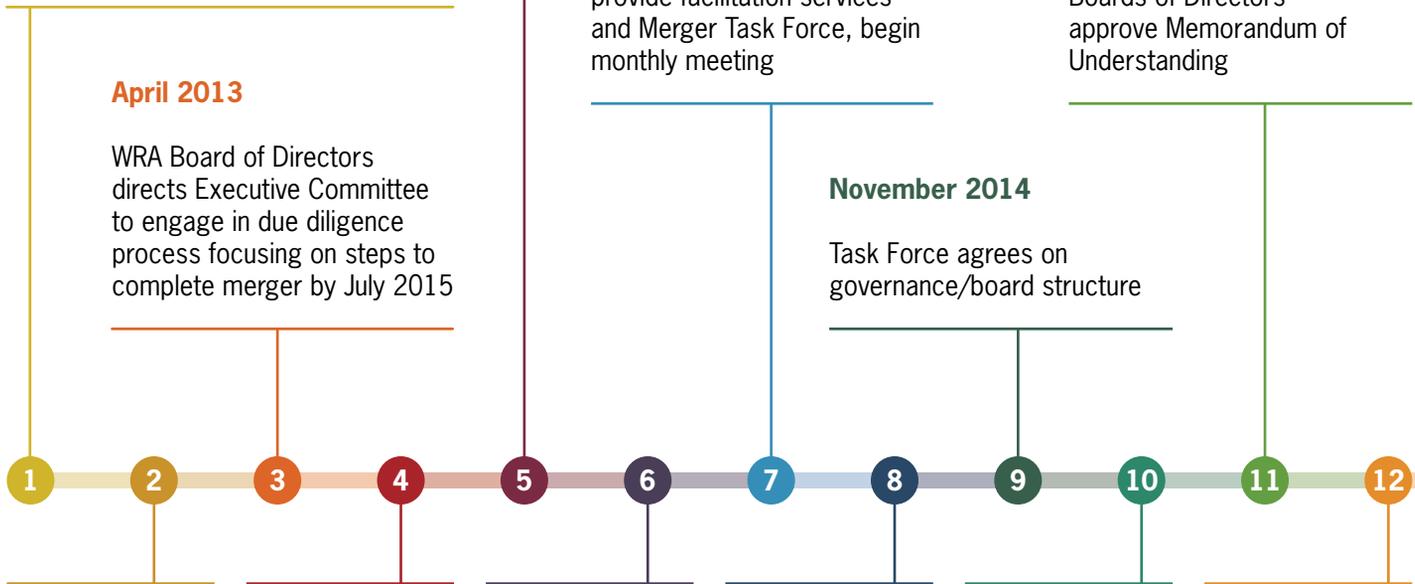
January 2013

Joint WRA and WLA Task Force begins exploration of options for a more collaborative relationship. Work includes:

- Survey of 25 combined restaurant and lodging associations on pros and cons of merging
- Interviews with CEOs of merged associations
- Discussions with past chairs of WRA and WLA
- In-person surveys of legislative leaders and lobbyists
- Review of financial and legal hurdles

July 2013

WLA and WRA shift focus to protecting industry interests on minimum wage in SeaTac and Seattle. Partnership and trust between two associations and industry sectors grows



April 2013

WRA Board of Directors directs Executive Committee to engage in due diligence process focusing on steps to complete merger by July 2015

April 2014

The Alford Group, hired to provide facilitation services and Merger Task Force, begin monthly meeting

January 2015

Boards of Directors approve Memorandum of Understanding

November 2014

Task Force agrees on governance/board structure

April 2013

WLA-WRA Task Force makes recommendation to merge two organizations

June 2013

WLA Board of Directors endorses Task Force's recommendation to merge

September 2013

First joint WRA/WLA executive committee meeting

July 2014

"To enhance the success of our members" is identified as mission of new association

November 2014

Joint WRA/WLA Executive Committee endorses Anthony Anton as head of new association

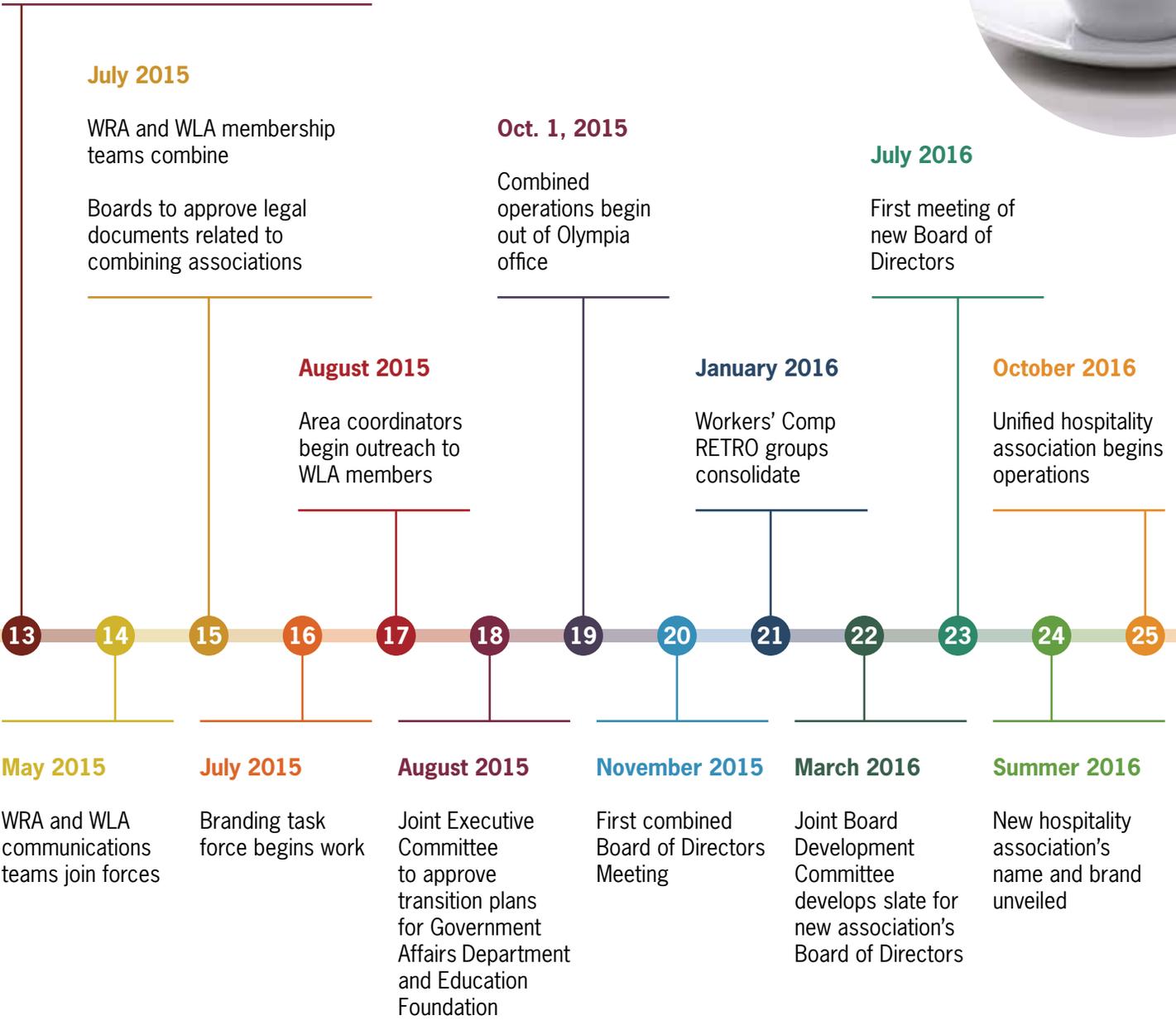
Spring 2015

Task Force's Retro and Financial Due Diligence committees complete work and green light next steps



Spring 2015

Joint Executive Committees approve transition plans for Leadership, Communication, Membership and Business Development departments



What to expect from RETRO unification

By David Faro, Contributing Editor

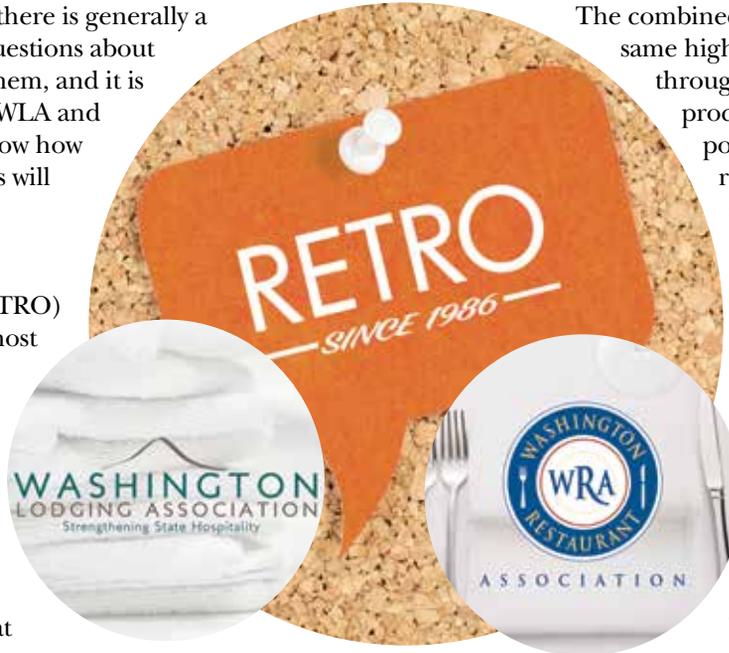
When big things happen, there is generally a lot of buzz. People have questions about how changes will impact them, and it is reasonable to expect that WLA and WRA members want to know how changes in the associations will affect RETRO programs.

Worker's Compensation Retrospective Ratings (RETRO) programs are one of the most powerful tools industries have at their disposal to encourage workplace safety. Simply put, if your organization works safe, you save money. Merging two associations with independent RETRO groups, however, is not that simple.

RETRO programs can be tricky beasts. The economic ecosystems that surround a RETRO program are complex. Not just from a rules and regulations standpoint. RETRO funds can be managed in a number of ways, and performance balances on a meticulous understanding of the numbers and leverage points. So, when two merging entities also marry up their RETRO programs, the best idea is to do it transparently, facilitated through lots of discussions between trusted members and risk managers, aiming constantly toward better program results.

That's why the WLA's RETRO Steering Committee and WRA's Executive Committee have worked closely together in a careful due diligence process to develop the best roadmap for combining the two programs. The plan is for the WLA's RETRO Program, also known as the WLA Workers' Safety & Savings Program and the smaller of the two groups, to join WRA's larger group for the 2016 plan year.

The WRA is already the state's largest association RETRO group, in terms of the number of member locations served, and it has an approximate \$53 million pool in paid premiums. It will grow even larger with the addition of WLA members, and the larger pool provides increased insulation from market fluctuations for all RETRO participants. All program participants will experience increased stability through the program's increased size.



The combined RETRO group will provide the same high level of support and guidance through the claims management process to help secure the lowest possible rates and maximize refunds. The RETRO team will continue to carry on the tradition of advocating for participants, and with a full-time staff of experts available, solutions to workers' compensation issues will be just a phone call away.

The combined RETRO groups' refund processes and investment strategies will be overseen by a committee of financial experts with the counsel of trusted resources. Most importantly, though, members of the new association can continue to expect RETRO to thrive and

serve the best interests of restaurants and hotels across the state.

The new association will also promote workplace safety to all members through a number of multimedia-driven campaigns. If you are not already a fan of the WRA Facebook page, visit it at www.facebook.com/warestaurants and like us. You'll find helpful workers' comp and RETRO information in your daily news feed. It's also important to flip through each issue of the new association's magazine, as you are doing right now. Each month, the magazine aims to bring helpful information to members regarding workers' compensation as well as best practices when faced with an injured employee and HR solutions to keep your costs low and get injured employees back to work faster. Each month, RETRO participants will also receive an e-newsletter dedicated to keeping them informed about current RETRO events and information.

In short, the combined RETRO program is committed to providing you with a full menu of tools to help you follow best practice and understand and comply safety regulations. Most importantly, it will help you save money and secure refunds. ■

For more information on RETRO participation, call Jenny Walker, WRA RETRO Coordinator, at 800.225.7166, ext. 120 or visit warestaurant.org/retro.



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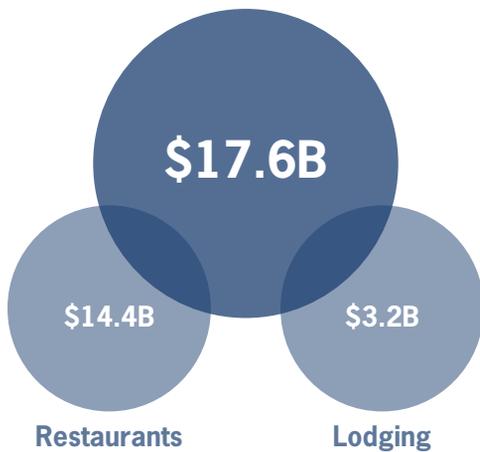


Restaurants + lodging = a stronger hospitality presence

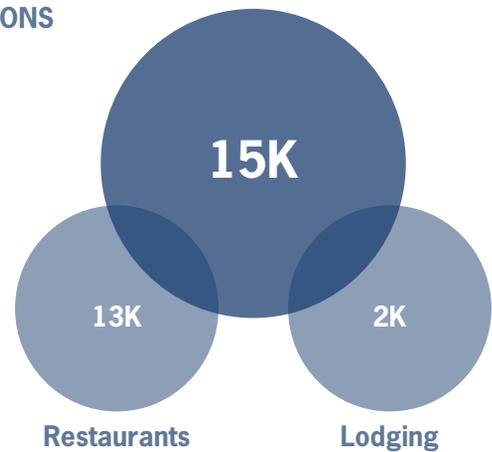
By Sheryl Jackson, Research Editor

With the merger of the WRA and WLA, our hospitality presence will be even stronger. Combined, the association will represent over \$17 billion in industry sales, more than 15,000 locations and 254,000 directly employed with \$4.5 billion in payroll.

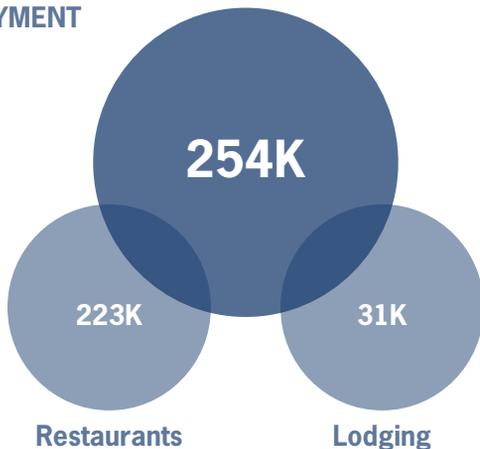
SALES



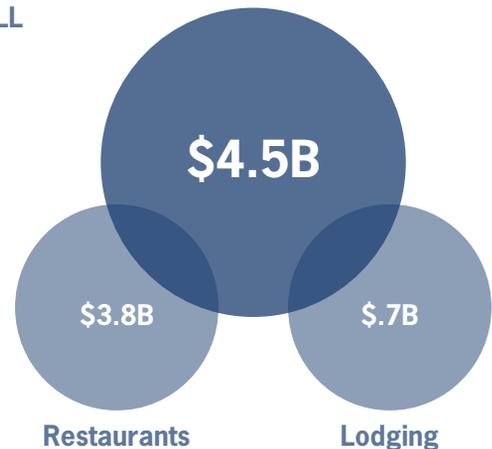
LOCATIONS



EMPLOYMENT



PAYROLL



Sources:

Restaurant data was pulled using NAIC code 722 and Lodging NAIC 721.

Department of Revenue, Business Reviews

Employment Security Department, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Key events keep our industry strong and connected

By Marianne Scholl, Contributing Editor

The WRA and WLA have a rich history of producing marquee events to help their members succeed, and the new association is committed to continuing this tradition.



Karen Mullen Photography

Washington Lodging Convention & Trade Show

The Washington Lodging Association's annual Convention & Trade Show is the state's premier event for lodging owners and operators. It has been held at venues across the state, and this fall, the convention returns to the Puget Sound region. It takes place Nov. 15-17 at the lovely Hyatt Regency Bellevue, and focuses on perfecting the art and craft of hospitality. As it does every year, it will deliver a packed educational program and ample opportunities for connecting with colleagues. New for 2015 is the Sunday night kick off with a tailgate party and big screen viewing of the Seahawks-Cardinals game. The convention also features the state's leading trade show of lodging-related products and services and a Stars of the Industry Awards dinner that celebrates the employees and programs that make the industry shine. Visit walodging.org/convention for details.

Northwest Foodservice Show

Each year the Northwest Foodservice Show connects restaurant and industry professionals with foodservice vendors, allowing them to sample new products and learn how to improve operations. Produced in partnership with the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association,



the location of the show rotates between Oregon and Washington, and in 2016, it returns to Seattle. The show, taking place March 20-21, 2016, at the Washington State Convention Center, will feature 400-plus vendor booths from every segment of the industry, demonstrations by outstanding Northwest chefs, informative educational seminars and tasting pavilions. Thousands of restaurant operators attend to keep up with the newest sources, the hottest trends and the most effective products and services for lower costs and increasing margins. Visit nwfoodserviceshow.com for details.



Hill Climb and Taste Our Best

Early in each legislative session, the annual Hill Climb has brought WRA members together with lawmakers for one-on-one conversations about what it takes to successfully run a restaurant business in Washington state. The next Hill Climb, on Jan. 25, 2016, will expand to include hoteliers and will educate legislators on challenges facing both restaurant and lodging operations. The Government Affairs team will again do all the groundwork, making appointments for members with their representatives in Olympia. The GA team will also provide easy-to-follow talking points on key issues facing the industry. The day ends with the Taste Our Best legislative reception and socializing over the finest in Washington food, wine and beer. In this relaxed setting, restaurant and lodging members will strengthen their ties with lawmakers and continue the conversation about what the state's elected officials can do to support the success of Washington's hospitality industry. Look for more details later this year. ■



Programs provide tangible value for our members

By Paul Schlien, Managing Editor

The WRA currently has an impressive array of programs that provide tangible value to our members. This will be just as true after the WRA's merger with the WLA as it is now. In fact, once operations are combined those companies who hold dual memberships in WLA and WRA will enjoy savings. The merger will also build more value for vendor/allied members of both groups.

"We have a really broad cross section of programs to help them with their businesses on multiple fronts," said Victoria Olson, programs coordinator for the WRA. "We have people who are trusted in the industry. We have multiple programs in development. If there's a need for a program, in a specific area, that drives us."

The WRA links members with programs that will serve their needs while saving them money. Essentially, we put on our manager's hat and look at each program, on an individual basis, to determine if it's serving members or vendors.

Best practices are supported through our programs. It's no exaggeration to state that the WRA's programs are the acme of what's available for restaurants in products and services. And because we have discounts for large buying blocks, we are able to pass those savings on to you.

Savings, top level services

Among the many savings for members are discounts in such areas as credit card processing, commercial insurance, employee background checks, unemployment cost control, payroll processing, gift card marketing, check management, group health care, email marketing solutions and music licensing.

The new association will provide many benefits to members by creating efficiencies of scale for existing WRA and WLA programs, including RETRO. There will be expanded opportunities for member services through educational programs and the Educational Foundation, including ServSafe Alcohol, ServSafe Manager, ServSafe Allergy, Allergy Safe Certification, various workplace safety offerings and ProStart.

"We have programs that can pay for your membership – programs like the one we offer through Office Depot, where you get 30 to 40 percent in true savings, can save you real money, provide value and offset membership investment," said Ken Wells, the WRA's director of business development. "There are other great values, too. For example, you can get customer feedback through Venuelabs inexpensively. It's about cost savings and providing services to our members."

"We've taken some of the guess work out of the way for our members," said Olson. "We've already vetted products often through member panels. Whatever your needs, we will probably be able to provide solutions."

If you have operational issues, call us and find out if we can help you. Your association should be your first stop. We have a hub of wise buyers and allied members that represent potential solutions for your business.

"We have a great allied base," said Olson. "Connect with our allied members. You want to do business with people who want to do business with you." ■



Washington Lodging Association
Annual Convention & Trade Show
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Connect with your peers and build stronger connections within the industry during the many opportunities to socialize. The attendee list is a who's who of Washington lodging and your name should be on it.



One-stop Shopping

As the Pacific Northwest's leading showcase of lodging products and services, the trade show offers a chance to get to know reputable vendors who cater specifically to the needs of Washington hoteliers.



Stars of the Industry Awards

Now in its 17th year, the Stars Awards celebrate the professionals who make your property, and our industry, proud. All nominees receive honorable mentions, and winners are recognized at the awards dinner.

This year we return to the Puget Sound region with a dynamic program designed to help you hone your skills and perfect the art of hospitality. Make plans now to be a part of Washington's premier lodging event November 15-17 at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue. **REGISTER NOW AND SAVE \$50!**

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206-306-1001

The Education Foundation and the WLA

By Lyle Hildahl, WRA Education Foundation Director



What an exciting time for the hospitality industry! The WRA and the WLA are joining forces to serve the hospitality sector.

I remember my first experience when the WLA and the WRA Education Foundation (WRAEF) joined forces years ago for the ProStart and Lodging Management Professions competition in Seattle. It was at the Art Institute in Seattle, and I was one of the culinary judges. The two organizations worked together to serve the hospitality industry's future workforce.

The WRAEF is currently working on programs that serve the lodging sector as if we had already combined. We developed a workplace safety training program through a grant with L&I that includes chapters specific to lodging, housekeeping and grounds and maintenance. On another grant project with L&I on Return to Work, we applied for a grant modification to include the hotel sector on an industry guide specific to hospitality.

As a combined association, I see many opportunities for the EF to secure grants that serve the industry, the public and our members. Public safety is always at the top of our minds, and soon we will be able to reach a much larger



audience as a combined association.

One of the WLA's key interests is the human trafficking epidemic. I look forward to working together on addressing this important problem.

The EF also hopes to soon launch a training program that serves individuals currently on public assistance. The program provides classroom training with on the job experience to provide skills for a sustainable living wage and career in the hospitality industry. We will have the opportunity now to reach out to the lodging sector and expand opportunities for the projects participants.

The WLA has excellent training programs that we can utilize to expand on training and education for our members and the industry. Years ago I used one of the WLA programs in hospitality management to supplement the curriculum at Skagit Valley College.

Finally, most important of all is the advantage we will have in working with state agencies and the legislature. Washington's hospitality sector provides 254,000 jobs and generates \$17.6 billion in revenue. With the WRAEF joining forces with the WLA, we can be the voice to initiate government support for the hospitality industry. We will tell the story of the amazing work our industry does with public safety, teen employment, education and training and job creation. We are the industry of opportunity. ■

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INDUSTRY CALENDAR

July/August

Training

- July 29 ServSafe® Manager, Hoquiam
- Aug. 4 ServSafe® Manager, Seattle
- Aug. 11 ServSafe® Manager, Kent
- Aug. 13 ServSafe® Manager, Olympia
- Aug. 17 ServSafe® Manager, Everett
- Aug. 24 ServSafe® Manager, Vancouver

Meetings

- July 21 Finance Committee
- July 27 EF Summer Board Meeting
- July 28 WRA Summer Board Meeting
- July 29 MSC Board Meeting
- Aug. 5 RETRO Invest/RETRO Trust Meeting

Events

- Aug. 27 State of the Industry



The poster features a background of binary code (0s and 1s). On the left, there is a vertical graphic with icons for a person, a laptop, a bar chart, and a calculator, connected by lines. The text on the poster reads: **STATE OF THE INDUSTRY** and **AUGUST 27, 2015**. At the bottom, it says **REGISTER AT:** <http://wra.cc/soif2015>.

NEW RESTAURANTS

- Berts Tavern, Bothell
- Best Western RiverTree Inn, Clarkston
- Clearwater Steakhouse, East Wenatchee
- Cliffhanger, Lynnwood
- Collective on tap LLC, the, Woodinville
- Crafted, Eastsound
- Daman's Bar & Grill, Redmond
- Domino's, Bothell
- Domino's, Edmonds
- Domino's, Lynnwood
- Domino's, Seattle
- Domino's, Shoreline
- Domino's, Wenatchee
- Emerald City Pizza LLC (Pizza Hut), Mukilteo
- Finaghty's Irish Pub & Restaurant, Snoqualmie
- Harts Mesa Restaurant, Olympia
- Huarachito's Cocina Mexicana, Seattle
- Juanita Pub, Kirkland
- Kauai Family Restaurant, Seattle
- Liquid Lime, Kirkland
- Mioposto, Seattle
- Monica's Waterfront Bakery & Café, Olalla
- Paseo, Seattle
- Peel & Press, Seattle
- Pub 44, Lynnwood
- Sideline Sports Bar, Bellevue
- Stocktons Restaurant & Spirits, Maple Valley
- Wingman Birdz & Brewz, Walla Walla

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The Washington Restaurant Association Education Foundation is proud to offer ServSafe Advanced Food Safety, a nationally accredited program that satisfies requirements for advanced food safety training nationwide.

Marketplace

EMPLOYEE BACKGROUND CHECK

According to ACRA.net, the WRA employee background check partner, one-third of job applicants lie on their applications and another five percent falsify their social security number. In today's economically challenging times, employers are more likely to see a rise in embezzlement and other potentially harmful behaviors. In fact, a reported \$4 billion is lost annually to embezzlement and a violent employee incident costs employers on average an incredible \$250,000. These sobering statistics make any small business owner cringe. However, employers can protect themselves with a mere \$19 investment in an employee background check. Visit warestaurant.org for more information.

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Increase your profits by reducing your card processing expenses. Heartland Payment Systems will help you do just that by eliminating outsourcing and middlemen- delivering cost savings and streamlined processes to your restaurant. WRA member pricing: Fair pricing for WRA members. Contact HPS online or contact Harry Wagoner for a personalized quote today. Email: Harry.wagoner@e-hps.com | Phone: 405.818.0914

See the full suite of WRA and NRA products offered through Heartland Payment Systems here: <http://www.heartlandpaymentsystems.com/Products-Services/Payment-Processing>

MEDICAL AND DENTAL COVERAGE

The Washington Restaurant Association designed a health care plan just for WRA members. The Hospitality Industry Health Insurance Trust (H.I.H.I.T.) enables business owners in the hospitality industry to provide affordable healthcare benefits statewide. Contact Amber Hahn at 877.892.9203 for a FREE quote.

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Never settle for success

By Rick Braa, CHAE

Q: We've experienced two amazing years of growth. As we've gotten busier, I've seen a shift in behavior toward complacency, which is worrisome. Too many times I've seen successful businesses slip and disappear either off the scene or close all together. How do I keep this from happening to us?

A: One of the most successful businesses in America has a culture where great is not good enough. It takes time to celebrate success then quickly moves on to how to improve. The team understands how to constantly strive to be the best and create an insurmountable lead where it can never be caught. In this example, sales doubled over a three year span from what was already a world class sales level. Yet, if one walks around the business or attends any management team meeting, there is no sense of complacency, but rather a sense of urgency to improve. Success can be steered in two directions – toward complacency or toward improvement. Choose the latter and consider the following to stay sharp.

Set an expectation of constant improvement—Managing a high performing team is a joy and challenge. Be fair, stretch and involve the team. Fairness keeps the culture quiet and balanced. Ensure that it's clearly understood that everyone counts and everybody is somebody so everyone feels involved, informed and respected. A culture of inclusion will stretch your talent to be the best. Great employees love to be stretched and are grateful to those providing the tools that allow them to do so. Focus on strengths of high performers and challenge them to take it up a notch to the next level, sometimes even setting the bar in the industry. Involve them by providing a sense of purpose and belonging so everyone knows they are contributing to something bigger than themselves. Hold volunteer days or events to serve the community outside the four walls to reinforce community support and involvement. Employees love to see their company making a difference in the world.

Instill a culture of planning, execution, and accountability for hitting goals—Set goals and institute key performance measures in each department both at the management and individual levels. Focus management team meetings on performance and coaching. Keep goals in front of the team and use them as a basis of discussion in each meeting. Meet frequently with individuals and invest time in each person, coach. Develop while showing appreciation for the effort an individual is exuding. Individuals belong to a team, but they come to work and go home by themselves; give them

something challenging and positive to ponder.

Share details of finances and share the money—The financial picture can be unclear to teams if numbers are not being shared. What the team sees is a busy business, and what they may believe is that the owners are taking a disproportionate share of the success. Having a clear bonus plan and reward system sets a culture of openness around finances and willingness to share. As a result, financial performance tends to soar higher while profitability improves beyond current levels.

Keep the crew grounded—Never believe your own hype. The company is only successful because the guest is returning and new guests are finding their way to the establishment. Point the crew toward the guest, not themselves. Deepen the level of service and execution while continuing to strive for excellence in everything being done. Continue the work of driving repeat visits and converting new guests to regulars. Surround your team with external professionals with deep industry experience that can take them to the next level. External professionals focused in one area offer perspective from many different vantage points and success stories. Introducing high performers to others who are better and more experienced than themselves gives them hope and keeps them striving for continual improvement.

Success is wonderful and dangerous. Living on yesterday is a recipe ripe for decline. We've all seen businesses that have had their day in the sun where the present is overshadowed by memories of years past. To steer your business in the direction of long lasting success, keep your team involved and rooted in the reality of steep competition, driving performance and looking forward. An energized team unwilling to rest on its achievements will continually drive success. ■

For more information on improving profitability and driving performance, contact AMP Services at rbraa@ampservices.com. Rick Braa is the co-founder of AMP Services, an accounting and consulting firm specializing in helping companies grow profitability.

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