



Atlanta Scores Success in African-American Convention Market

ATLANTA (July 21, 2005) – Atlanta, the big city known for its Southern hospitality, is the new powerhouse locale for African-American meetings and conventions. The growing success of annual events as well as the recent addition of several national conventions has solidified Atlanta’s reputation as the premier meeting destination for African-Americans.

African-American meetings and events in Atlanta will account for more than 320,000 visitors and a \$264.5 million economic impact on the city this summer alone. The National Baptist Convention, T.D. Jakes’ MegaFest, the National Black Arts Festival, the Bronner Brothers International Beauty Show and the 100 Black Men of Atlanta’s Atlanta Football Classic have all become annual business for the city. Gatherings for organizations such as the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives and the National Association of Black Journalists will also occur in Atlanta this year.

Most notably are a number of recently booked African-American business gatherings in Atlanta, including the National Urban League in July 2006, the National Black MBA Association in October 2006, and FraserNet, which has committed to Atlanta for 2006-2009.

“Hosting these organizations has such a positive impact on our city,” said Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau President and CEO Spurgeon Richardson. “We are thrilled with the continuation of our success in the African-American convention market and are confident that our reputation as a top destination will continue to help us grow this market segment.”

One of Atlanta’s largest shows, MegaFest, recently committed to Atlanta for 2007 with an anticipated attendance of more than 140,000 people. The four-day event is composed of three portions – “Woman, Thou Art Loosed,” “ManPower” and “MegaKidz” - each so large that prior to the 2004 creation of MegaFest, they were planned as individual conferences. The 1999 Woman, Thou Art Loosed conference set Georgia Dome records for single-day and religious gathering attendance with 85,459 people. In 2004, MegaFest attracted more than 140,000 people from 55 countries, setting a cumulative record attendance of 560,000 over the four-day period. The conference’s success in Atlanta even prompted the recent opening of a downtown office.

Atlanta’s hotels, attractions and historic sites have also made the city ideal for African-American family reunions. With the help of the ACVB, more than 150 families planned their reunions in Atlanta last year. This market segment has grown so much that the ACVB created a sales department dedicated to booking reunions. The department provides planning tools such as periodic family reunion workshops and how-to guides and works alongside planners to ensure a successful family reunion.

Visitors to the city can attend popular cultural destinations such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, Ebenezer Baptist Church, the historic Sweet Auburn District and Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Atlanta’s oldest African-American congregation. The APEX Museum gives a simulated walk through of African-American history and scholars can find multitudes of information on African-American culture and history at the Auburn Avenue Research Library.

With a population comprised of 61 percent African-Americans, Atlanta has received national recognition as the top city for African-Americans to live, work and play by *Black Enterprise* in 2004 and as the number one destination for African-Americans by the Travel Industry Association of America in both 2000 and 2004.

“Atlanta has established itself as a diverse city that is an ideal destination for African-American meetings and events,” said Kathleen Bertrand, ACVB vice president of community affairs. “Several internationally-recognized African-American leaders are from Atlanta or have established roots here, strengthening Atlanta’s position as a center for black business, education and history.”

Atlanta continues to preserve and support the components that make it an attractive destination for heritage tourism. The ACVB issues the Atlanta Heritage Guide, an annual multicultural tourism guide available in print format or online at www.atlantaheritage.com. Related collateral materials are also available to meeting attendees.

Established in 1913, the ACVB is a private, non-profit organization created exclusively to market metro Atlanta and Georgia as the premier conventions, meetings and leisure destination in the regional, national and international marketplace, and favorably impact the Atlanta economy through conventions and tourism.

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