

25 years of Success

The International Drive Resort Area Chamber of Commerce celebrates 25 years of helping the community.

By Kevin Fritz

It is hard to imagine that 25 years ago the same high-speed rail discussion still going on today in the City Beautiful was the catalyst that banded together business interests on International Drive in south Orlando. The rail was set to bypass their district. The project was defeated and the presence of a new kid in town, dubbed the Florida Center Chamber of Commerce, would become a force to be reckoned with to this day.

Now called the International Drive Resort Area Chamber of Commerce, it may not make headlines often or be a household name, but its members are celebrating its silver anniversary with pride and gratitude for their collective success and its work for the community. The year-long celebration of its first 25 years in business will culminate in November with a special holiday luncheon.

“We have been acknowledged for the work we have done over the past 25 years, but we are really about getting things done,” says Chamber President and CEO **Maria Triscari**.

Jan Addison, CFE, deputy general manager of the Orange County Convention Center, has been a member since she started working for the International Drive centerpiece 22 years ago. “The chamber has the heartbeat of the I-Drive area,” says Addison, a board member and past chamber chair.

Triscari, who was hired by business leaders to help establish the chamber in 1988, is one of a handful of men and women — including hotel magnate Harris Rosen — who have been with the organization since its inception. “Back then,” she says, “there wasn’t even an exit for International Drive on Interstate 4.”

As much as things have changed, Triscari still flies solo as the chamber’s only staff person, noting she relies on a group of “enthusiastic and energized volunteers” to make the organization’s wheels turn. That’s a tall order for a group that represents an estimated 32,000 employees at 100 hotels, 200 restaurants, 400 retailers, attractions and theme parks all of which host many of the 55 million people annually visiting Orlando. Its Tourism Orlando Leadership Program has graduated more than 600 business men and women, representing the roots of those who had the foresight to create a tourist destination from scratch decades ago.

Kim Pranievicz, senior vice president of marketing for Fifth Third Bank and 2013 chamber chair, says in her 10 years with the organization she has witnessed the superb manner in which it serves its businesses and the relationships that are forged.

“The I-Drive Chamber provides not only business opportunities, but friendships that are life-long,” she says. **L**

For more information about the International Drive Resort Area Chamber of Commerce, visit our website at CentralFloridaLifestyle.com.

