

Explorers Lounge at the Royal Sonesta
Harbor Court Hotel in Baltimore, MD

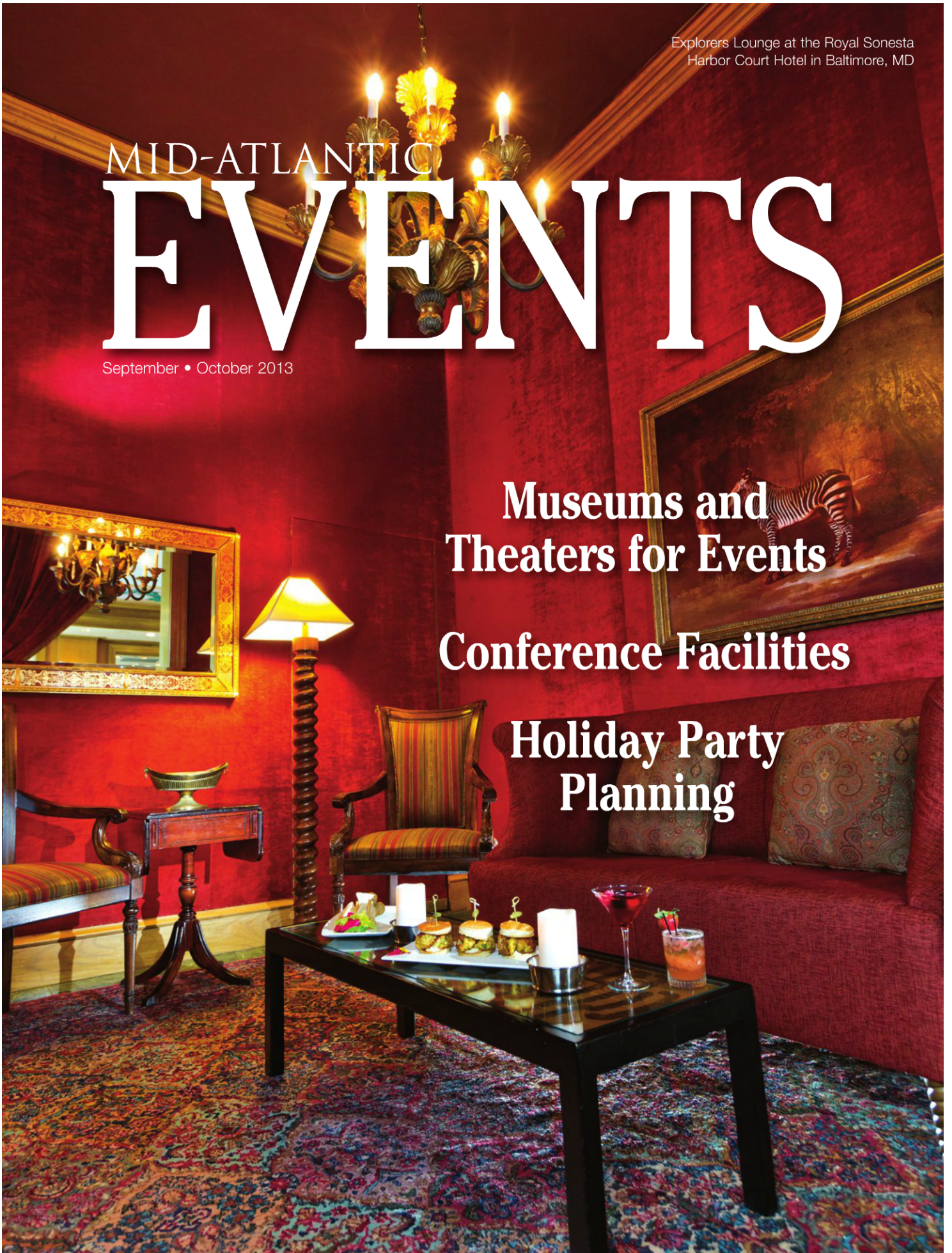
MID-ATLANTIC EVENTS

September • October 2013

**Museums and
Theaters for Events**

Conference Facilities

**Holiday Party
Planning**



UpClose

with Events

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Managing Director

Courtyard Newark at the University of Delaware and Faculty Member in the Hospitality Programs at the University of Delaware and Widener University



I was fortunate to take an early retirement from DuPont after 31 years of service, with about half my time spent in leadership positions at the Hotel du Pont and the DuPont Country Club. During those years, I also used my industry knowledge to be a part time faculty member in the hospitality management programs at Widener University and the University of Delaware.

When I elected to retire in 2004, the University of Delaware and Shaner Hotels group were looking for an industry leader that would run an upscale Marriott Courtyard Hotel and also teach in a unique program that engaged hospitality students in the actual operation of a real hotel. Viewing this as a unique opportunity, I accepted the position and have been here since 2004. As a graduate of the College of Business and Economics of the University of Delaware, I was proud to “come home.”

Being a Marriott Courtyard hotel is the perfect product for our Newark area business customers, as they love our new decor and service concept, "Courtyard Refreshing Business." Our other huge market segment relates to our owner, the University of Delaware. We serve prospective students and their families, visiting faculty, distinguished guests of the university, sports teams, sports recruits, new hires, and we have a "Very Important Family" recognition program that has over 4,500 active family members.

Our hotel partners closely with the University of Delaware Clayton Hall Conference Center to accommodate large conferences for the many colleges and institutes of the university, and well as many conferences and meetings from the regional corporate market.

It has always been my belief that our industry is better served when we all work together to develop business. I take active in leadership roles at the Greater Wilmington Convention and Visitors Bureau (GWCVB) as a board member and marketing committee chair; at the Delaware Hotel and Lodging Association as a board member and former chair; at the Delaware Tourism Alliance as chairman; at the Downtown Newark Delaware Partnership as a board member; at the Destination Newark Hotel Partnership as a founder and leader; and at the Delaware Sports Commission as a member of the board.

Delaware also is well served by the great cooperation amongst the Delaware Tourism Office, the GWCVB, Kent County Tourism, and Southern Delaware Tourism, as they all work together to market the many special attributes of our state. Jack Markell, the Governor of Delaware, is an amazing advocate for tourism in the state, too, and often is a visible supporter. In Newark, we are blessed with who I believe is the best mayor in the world, Mayor Vance Funk, a true leader in bringing and welcoming visitors to our community.

Our suppliers, especially the print and online publications that we use, are valuable in spreading the message about our service and facilities offerings. *Mid-Atlantic Events Magazine*, *Delaware Today*, *Main Line Today* and *Delaware Business Bulletin* are excellent partners.

In that vein, these are exciting times for our hotel, as we have just completed our best business year in history, and our guests are very complimentary about our recently renovated lobby and new services, such as our Bistro with Starbucks, and our full service bar. We also are in the planning stages for complete renovation of our guest rooms in the late fall of 2013. Guests have been pleased with our recent upgrades, too, like HD flat screen TVs, increased bandwidth of our free WiFi for guest rooms and lobby spaces, and extended use of our meeting room space.

Our active engagement of our University of Delaware Hotel Restaurant and Institutional Management students into our day-to-day business has been well received by our guests and staff, as well.

Doing this provides the students with opportunities for "real world" experience in an operating hotel.

Such experience is important, as the foundation of our industry has always been guest service, and that will never change! Guests cherish that warm welcome, smiles from our staff, immediate response to all requests, and fantastic food and accommodations. That brings them back, and encourages them share their experiences with family, friends and colleagues.

A noticeable change in recent years in my opinion, however, has been the use of technology in all aspects of travel. Think about "pre-Internet" travel and compare that to where we are today with www sites, in-room Wifi, online reservations, social media, mobile applications, smartphones, tablet PCs, video, meeting room diagrams, webcams and digital photography. All of these have contributed to making travel more accessible and a much richer experience.

Our industry also has become friendly to travelers with disabilities, as they are welcomed to our hotels in properly equipped rooms and public spaces, and staff are trained to provide seamless services to all.

I am excited to come to work every day to serve our guests. Our unique team of hotel associates and students from the University Hospitality program are always ready to provide the highest level of guest service. Though the industry remains in "recovery mode," it still presents exceptional opportunities for careers among employees both with and without college degrees.

I started out as a busboy while in college at the University of Delaware, working at the Hotel du Pont in the Green Room, and later in my career, I was fortunate to be the General Manager of the Hotel du Pont and DuPont Country Club. I see great opportunities for young people in our hotels, restaurants, conference centers, casinos and country clubs.

My hope is that I can inspire young people to give a hard look at hospitality careers. This is fun work, but also very hard work. We work while others play, and often for longer and non-standard hours; but in the end, most people in the industry love the work and the excitement that we experience everyday.

In my years, I have met four Presidents of the United States, many other government leaders, leaders of industry, entertainers, distinguished scholars and famous athletes. While I cherish those moments, I equally cherish experiences with the thousands of regular guests who have come through the doors of our hotel. We always greet them warmly and help them relax from their travels. We want them to smile as they leave because they had a great experience with us, and we look forward to welcoming them back to our hotel over and over again!