

5 Questions with Sue Kunisky

New VP of Operations for Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau



Q: What are you most looking forward to in your new role as vice president of operations for the Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau (HHRVB)?

I have been looking forward to working with the talented team at HHRVB to tell this region's story to the world. We are so fortunate to represent a travel destination with great character and unique characters framed by beautiful landscapes, a rich history, and diverse cultures. Throughout my life I've always been drawn to the creative process. As only the second person in the VP position since it was created in 2014, I jumped at that rare opportunity to join an established team of professionals in a role that I can make my own. It's all very exciting.

Q: How do you think your past industry experience has prepared you for this role?

I spent the past 28 years working for a destination resort company that prides itself on delivering a world-class experience for their guests and clientele. During my career at the Hershey Entertainment and Resorts Company I was exposed to the inner depths of this business from sales to destination marketing and event production. I know that I will be drawing from all of those experiences as I work with the bureau's sales and marketing teams on our quest to lead economic growth for the region through destination marketing and tourism development.

Q: What goals do you have in mind for HHRVB for this year and farther down the line?

I first must commend the bureau president Mary Smith on her ability to assemble this team of talented individuals with such a deep and diverse background in their individual disciplines. Since she resurrected the organization from obscurity just 9 years ago the bureau has grown to include a full complement of sales, marketing, and communications professionals. With that said, I am initially looking forward to nurturing an environment that promotes open dialogue and supports the free flow of ideas among these talented folks. The ideal culture to me is one that promotes creative problem solving, rewards good ideas and hard work, and empowers everyone on the team at every level to own a piece of our bureau's successes, and failures for that matter. We are all stakeholders in the results we are able to produce for our clients, our business partners, and our community. In the long-term I want our messaging to reach farther and to have a greater impact than ever before. Increased funding for our efforts and the continued support from our business partners and local leadership will of course all be instrumental in us realizing those goals.

Q: How did you get into the hospitality industry?

After college I set my course armed only with my degree in communications from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania and my natural penchant for fun and adventure. With fate in my favor, I landed in the Hershey area and got a job as a reservations agent at The Hotel Hershey. After a short time in that role, my path led me on a journey through the fast-paced worlds of Sales, Marketing and Events at Hersheypark. I quickly realized that I had found my "happy place" in tourism. Today the path that has served me so well continues to twist and turn in wonderful ways. Ultimately it has led me to a career in tourism that constantly challenges me while rewarding me with great opportunities.

Q: What do you enjoy most about the Hershey Harrisburg Region?

The Hershey Harrisburg Region has been my home for more than 30 years and I have experienced first-hand its many offerings while raising an active family. I love our family-friendly festivals and our world class amusement park, of course. But this region refuses to be stale or stagnate. It's constantly evolving whether it's the recent explosion of family-owned wineries and craft breweries in the past two years or the ever-changing variety of unique dining. I'm proud of this place I call home and I love that my job is showing and telling the world why.

ABOUT THE HERSHEY HARRISBURG REGIONAL VISITORS BUREAU (HHRVB)

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HHRVB is the official non-profit partnership-based Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) serving Pennsylvania's Dauphin and Perry counties. This Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) accredited organization is committed to actively marketing the region locally, domestically, and internationally to leisure and business travelers; meeting & convention planners; sporting event producers; and group tour leaders. For more information go to VisitHersheyHarrisburg.org, or call 877-727-8573.