

TDA Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

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Joe G. Tedder, CFC, Tax Collector
Polk County, Florida



The Tax Collector's Tourist Development Academy:

The Academy is an education arm of the Polk County Tax Collector's Office. The Academy consists of tri-annual series of informational programs focusing on current regulatory and compliance issues that most affect visitor accommodation rental businesses.

TDA Mission:

To advise, educate and inform providers of accommodations in Polk County

Polk County Tax Collector's Office

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Spring Seminar Sells Out!

The Tax Collector's Office hosted its' first annual TDA Spring Seminar on Tuesday, March 14, 2006, held at Regal Palms Resort in Davenport, Florida. This event, like the Fall Forum, held in September of 2005, is one of the Tax Office's Tourist Development Academy year-around educational events and is specifically designed to benefit the short-term rental, vacation home and property management industry doing business in Polk County.

The Seminar's theme, *The Four Corners of the Globe*, featured local business leaders, consultants and representatives from state and local regulatory agencies, with a focus on the international growth in the Four Corners area and its impact.

Polk County Tax Collector Joe Tedder was the master of ceremonies at the all-day event and presented his new program, The Tax Collector's Seal of Compliance. This recognition program provides for an exclusive designation for accommodation providers and management companies in good standing with the Tax Collector's Office (See article on back page). This program was enthusiastically received by the audience.

During the morning session, presenters from state regulatory and local county agencies provided up-to-date information on compliance responsibilities and need-to-know resource information for the management companies of short-term rental homes. During the afternoon break-out sessions, seminar participants took the opportunity to speak individually with presenters and address their individual concerns. In addition, all attendees received workbooks which provided reference materials for each agency and presenter throughout the day.

For more information, as well as a listing of the presenters and individual contact information, visit www.PolkTaxes.com.



Special Investigator On Board!

Increasing Compliance & Enforcement Efforts

Since last fall, the Tax Collector's Office has been aggressively pursuing the delinquent tourist tax role offenders. Readers of our last bulletin (issued Nov. 2005) will recall the Tax Collector's Office recently filed a criminal complaint with the State Attorney's Office regarding the non-payment of tourist development taxes.

To better address these types of significant and/or chronic non-compliance issues, the Tax Collector's Office has hired Don Pell to fill the newly created position of **Special Investigator**. Pell has an extensive background in criminal investigations, having 32 years in law enforcement with the past 26 years as an investigator with the 10th Judicial District specializing in white collar and public corruption investigation.

In addition to hiring a Special Investigator our Delinquency & Enforcement Department already has a dedicated paralegal on staff to track criminal and civil court cases, and a team of regular Field Deputies to pursue routine tax compliance and enforcement issues. Moreover, auxiliary Field Deputies are now being trained to augment regular Field Deputy operations.

"We expect to work cooperatively with this group. We consider them [Seal Of Compliance Holders] to be the elite management firms doing business in Polk County."

Joe G. Tedder

*Gordon Kettle,
Economic
Development
Consultant with
the Central
Florida
Development
Council*



was the featured keynote speaker at the Spring Seminar. Kettle and Jim DeGennaro, Director of Business Development with CDFC, emphasized the changing demographics of Polk County, from an agribusiness core to a diverse economic base and tourist destination. For more on their presentation, go to www.polktaxes.com.

Upcoming Deadlines:

- Property Tax Certificate Sale Registration Opens May 1, 2006
- May 31, 2006 Property Tax Certificate Sale Begins
- May 31, 2006 deadline for Seal of Compliance Application for 2006.
- August 1, 2006 Annual Occupational Taxes due.
- October 1, 2006 Annual Occupational Licenses become delinquent.

Seal of Compliance Unveiled

At last month's seminar, the introduction of the Tax Collector's Seal of Compliance program was, by all accounts, met with interest and those eager to participate.

Joe Tedder, Tax Collector for Polk County, unveiled the program in a mid-morning presentation to a packed house of property managers, many of whom filled out and submitted the application by day's end.

Those seeking to become involved in the voluntary program actually have until the end of May to apply for the 2006 year charter recognition, though acceptance into the program is based on compliance and performance over the past 12 months, according to program guidelines.

Tedder stressed that the Seal Of Compliance was borne out of feedback from the industry and a desire to reward those companies demonstrating good management practices and quality compliance as it relates to their tax remittance obligations and interaction with the Polk County Tax Collector's Office.

"We expect to work cooperatively with this group. We consider them to be the

elite management firms doing business in Polk County", Tedder stated. "The short-term rental industry makes up over 50 percent of the Polk tourism tax money," he said. "As lodging providers, your business plays an important role in Central Florida's economic engine. Working with you, we recognize the contributions of the short-term rental industry to Polk County's growth."

Benefits to the program will include an official letter of recognition, listing on the Tax Collector's Office website, the use of the Tax Collector's Seal of Compliance for qualifying members, and 'SOC' tents available by management companies for rental units, just to name a few.

The deadline for the 2006 designation is May 31, 2006, but anyone interested in the designation must first qualify to apply. 2006 Seal of Compliance holders will be announced on June 30, 2006 with annual recognition in January of every year.

Anyone interested in applying for the designation can find guidelines and an application form on the Tax Collector's Office website:

www.PolkTaxes.com

Summer Mixer planned for July 25, 2006

Event qualifies for SOC requirement

Summer is right around the corner and that means opportunity for those who were unable to attend the recent Spring Seminar.

The Tax Collector announces plans to host a Summer Mixer Make-up on Thursday, July 25, 2006 at the Regal Palms Resort at Highlands Reserve.

The format for the event is a social gathering with county officials and

other state and local regulatory representatives. Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be provided. There will be no structured presentations, but rather an opportunity to meet and speak informally with special guests.

A Spring Seminar DVD and reference CD will be provided to participants. Those interested in attending should check the website www.PolkTaxes.com for announcements and registration information. Space is limited.

Tax Collector's Message

Remember... Our office takes the issue of delinquent tourist development taxes very seriously. Everyone is required to collect and remit taxes monthly. My staff is actively involved in bringing every account current. **If you know of anyone who is either not registered with an Occupational License or is failing to comply with state and local statutes, please contact our office.**

1-866-OUR-TURN (1-866-687-8876)