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FEATURES

24 STRONGER TOGETHER

ARVC Members Share How Strong Industry Connections Have Helped Benefit Their Parks

28 THE BENEFITS OF OFFERING RV STORAGE AND REPAIRS

How to Increase Your Profits with These Guest Conveniences

DEPARTMENTS

5 WHAT'S HAPPENING

18 MEMBER NEWS

32 BEST PRACTICES

35 MARKETPLACE

42 ARVC FOUNDATION

IN EVERY ISSUE

5 ARVC PERSPECTIVE

7 YOUR VOICE

18 AMAZING ANNIVERSARIES

35 MARKETPLACE

43 PHOTO FINISH

RV SEARCH

In each issue we hide an image of a black RV on three pages. If you find all three, you qualify for a prize. When you find them, please email marketing@arvc.org with where they appear. The RV will never be rotated or a different size. Please visit arvc.org/RVSearch for more details.

ON THE COVER

Tim and Michelle Wilcox, owners of Gateway Park Campground in Hillsdale, Mich.



What is the best thing on your family's Thanksgiving table?

"My favorite "thing" on the Thanksgiving table are the folded hands before the meal offering gratitude for the abundant blessings our family has experienced, with each person sharing their personal insight about the blessings they've received."



"The food is always great, but my favorite thing is our family's tradition. We ask everyone to write down what they are thankful for and then we pull it out the next year and reminisce."



"Corn casserole or my dad's bourbon sweet potatoes!"



"Homemade tamales!! It's tradition."



the VOICE

FALL 2020

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The Voice is published three times a year by the National Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds (ARVC). ARVC, a leader in the outdoor hospitality industry, is the only national association dedicated to representing the interests and needs of private RV parks and campgrounds in the US, Canada and Mexico. We are deeply committed to providing our nearly 3,000 members exclusive access to continuing education, networking, business and marketing tools, member-only benefits and discounts, and advocacy at the local, state and national levels.



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Get Ready to Rock...

Fall is in the air, which means it is almost time for ARVC's biggest event of the year—the 2020 Outdoor Hospitality Conference and Expo (OHCE), coming to a computer screen near you November 2-5.

That's right, this year OHCE is going virtual out of respect for everyone's health and safety as our world continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. You might be thinking, "Yeah, I've attended virtual meetings this past year and they're pretty boring," but don't believe for a minute ARVC's is going to be like all the rest.

We've been planning this event for months and while it was a very difficult decision to not see everyone in Daytona Beach as originally planned, true to fashion, the ARVC team has tackled this virtual challenge in ways you've never seen before.

To begin with, pricing has been greatly reduced to make this year's event affordable for everyone. If you've never experienced OHCE because of the cost of travel, inability to leave your campground or you just simply were not interested, this year could be your ticket to lean in and see what it's all about. Even with pricing that is so reasonable for the primary registrant, we have included an even lower rate for add-on members of your campground too, like family and employees.

Our expo has some very unique twists this year too, including a unique way for qualifying campground members to potentially obtain *free* admission to OHCE through our industry-first Hosted Buyer Program.

In an effort to offer aid to our industry partners, we've planned a rebate back to all participating state associations from registration proceeds, and a portion of every registration will also include a donation to the ARVC Foundation to aid campground disaster relief efforts.

Our keynote is famed speaker Gretchen Rubin, author of NY Times bestsellers *The Four Tendencies*, *Better Than Before* and *The Happiness Project*, to help you be resilient in both your personal and professional life.

I am keenly aware of the slow start of the camping season this year during spring and early summer many of you had due to COVID-19. The ARVC team was in your corner every step of the way, working closely with our industry partners and state associations to ensure you opened as soon as possible after some very stringent executive orders issued by state governors.

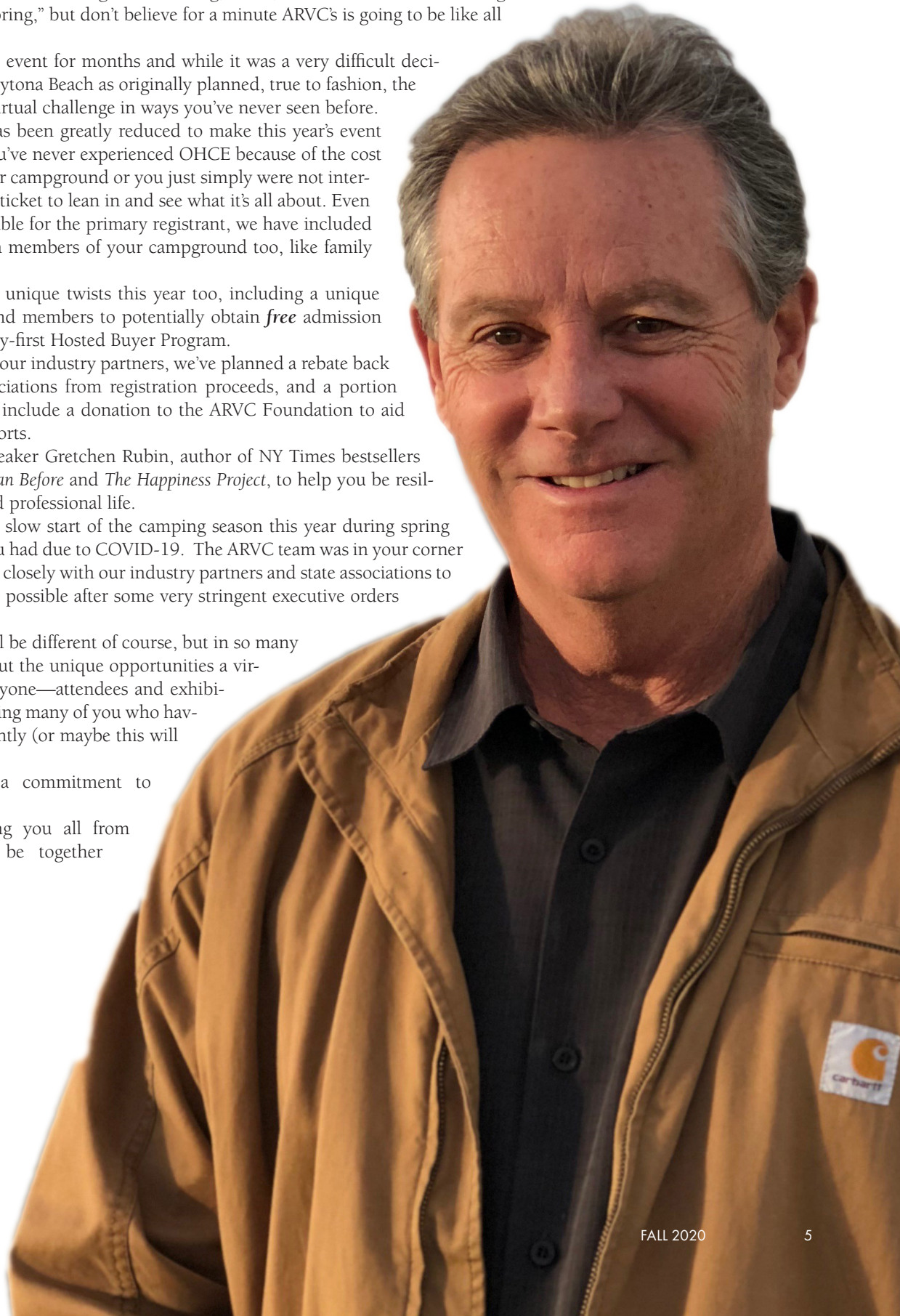
This year's conference will be different of course, but in so many good ways. We're excited about the unique opportunities a virtual conference will give everyone—attendees and exhibitors—and look forward to seeing many of you who haven't made it to an OHCE recently (or maybe this will be your first!).

So don't delay. Make a commitment to register for OHCE2020 today.

I look forward to seeing you all from a distance, knowing we'll be together again soon.

Regards,

Paul Bambei
ARVC President and CEO



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Your VOICE

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CONFIDENCE BUILDERS

I want to thank you for the GREAT job on the Prospective Owners Workshop, it was very beneficial! Our group is getting closer and closer to pulling the trigger on developing our first RV resort. ARVC has been crucial in giving us the confidence needed to start this new division.

- Devin Huffines, Huffines RV Park, Dallas, Texas

POWERFUL MEMBERSHIP

I just wasn't aware how powerful my membership was until POW (Prospective Owners Workshop).

-Erin Rees, Associate Member, Houston, Texas

GOCAMPINGAMERICA

Anvil Campground loves GoCamping America.com! A lot of our guests find us on there. Thank you!

-Chris Jump, Anvil Campground, Williamsburg, Va.

THANK YOU

I just wanted to call and thank you for all the support you all are doing for the industry. ARVC is wonderful and I really appreciate all you do.

- William Cable, OHM, Austin Lake RV Park and Cabins, Toronto, Ohio

INCREDIBLY EXCITED

We have really appreciated the overflow of support from ARVC. We are so nervous to make such a big change but are incredibly excited to have such an amazing group of individuals help us out! Dalton's RV sends many thanks!

-Jenna Frederickson, Dalton's RV Center and Jackalope Campground, Sheridan, Wyo.

SUPPLIER COUNCIL SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES

Thank you for selecting me to serve as one of instructors at ARVC's Prospective Owners Workshop (POW) to teach "How to Prepare and Finance a New RV Park and Campground." Since the June 4th event, I have communicated with several attendees who had additional questions related to financing a new or purchasing an existing RV park and campground. I am also pleased to report that I am now collaborating with some of my fellow POW instructors to assist our respective clients which is an unexpected result of participating as a POW instructor!

I am also proud of being selected to teach at the 2019 and 2020 National School in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Our company has been a Supplier Council Member for several years and we thoroughly enjoy being a contributing member of the ARVC community!

- Paul Bosley, Business Finance Depot, Mount Dora, Fla.

What is the best thing on your family's Thanksgiving table?



"Uncle Barry's Cheese Cake! Passed down to Alesha Reeves who makes sure we all continue to enjoy it!"

-Stella Sharts, Norwood Campground, Norwood, N.C.



"German potato salad! A family recipe passed down for generations."

-Kim Wootteon, Right Coast Creative, Selbyville, Del.



"Pumpkin Ice Cream pie. It's my mother-in-law's recipe. Mmmmm!"

-Ann Streber, Leisure Valley RV Resort, Casa Grande, Ariz.



"We put on Thanksgiving dinner for any campers here. My favorite thing on the table is all the elbows from people who are 'strangers' that become friends over that meal."

-Beth Muschinski, Frog Hollow Campground & RV Park, Grenada, Miss.



OUR 2020 OUTDOOR HOSPITALITY CONFERENCE & EXPO IS GOING TO BE VIRTUALLY AMAZING!

Our 2020 Outdoor Hospitality Conference and Expo (OHCE) is moving to a virtual format! This exciting, first-of-its-kind event will take place the first week of November, the same dates as our originally scheduled conference.

We've hit the ground running to fully leverage all of the new opportunities our state-of-the-art online platform will now make possible, including connecting campground owners and managers from around the globe! Here are answers to some questions you may have:

WILL SWITCHING TO A VIRTUAL FORMAT LOWER THE COST FOR ATTENDEES TO PARTICIPATE?

Yes! With even more access to education sessions at a reduced cost, it's like hitting the jackpot! Early bird pricing is just \$199 for the first 500 attendees, and then \$299 after that. And this year, you can bring your whole staff at just \$49 (early bird) for each additional registration! *And don't forget about the Hosted Buyer option where you could attend for FREE!*

WILL I NEED TO BE IN FRONT OF MY COMPUTER OR DEVICE THE WHOLE TIME TO GET THE FULL BENEFIT?

Not at all. Every single session will be recorded this year so you can decide which ones you want to participate in live and which you'd like to catch the recording of later!

WILL I STILL BE ABLE TO INTERACT WITH THE PRESENTERS AND OTHER ARVC MEMBERS?

YES! Our virtual platform will provide you with opportunities to connect with vendors and fellow attendees and even stay connected with your team as each member attends different sessions or meetings.

WHAT ABOUT SOME OF THE EVENTS FROM LAST YEAR LIKE THE RESERVATION SYSTEM PANEL AND THE TAKEAWAY TOURS?

Yes, we'll be offering them again! The Takeaway Tours will be virtual with Q&A and are included in your registration! The Reservation System Panel was one of our most popular sessions last year, so you can count on it being in the lineup!

I ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO THE EXPO. HOW WILL A VIRTUAL EVENT HELP ME LEARN WHAT VENDORS HAVE TO OFFER?

This year's exhibitors will be ready to answer your product questions, just as they have in years past. On your own time, you will still be able to peruse the newest products, take a look at 2020-2021 catalogs and more. During open Expo hours, exhibitors can host live demos, answer questions and even host small group and one-on-one meetings to really get down to business.

If you're a decision maker at your park, you can register to be a Hosted Buyer and get matched up to attend pre-scheduled meetings with vendors selling exactly what you're looking for.

HOW DO I BECOME A HOSTED BUYER TO GET FREE REGISTRATION?

It's easy! Simply select the "Hosted Buyer" ticket at registration. You will be asked for basic contact information, details about your campground and your role as a decision maker, to help us match you up with the best vendors.

All applications will be reviewed and you'll be notified within one week to let you know if you qualify. If you are selected as a Hosted Buyer and attend a minimum of five-ten pre-scheduled virtual vendor meetings at the OHCE2020 virtual trade show, your registration fee will be refunded.

HOW DO I REGISTER FOR OHCE2020?

That's easy! Just go to arvc.org/OHCE. You'll also find complete details about our Hosted Buyer Program and how you can earn FREE registration.





MEET OUR OHCE2020 KEYNOTE SPEAKER, NY Times Bestselling Author

GRETCHEN RUBIN

In a year that provided so many new challenges for our members, we wanted to make sure we found the ideal keynote speaker to help you navigate these changes and we succeeded! Our keynote speaker this year will be Gretchen Rubin, the author of three NY Times best-selling blockbusters, **The Four Tendencies**, **Better Than Before** and **The Happiness Project**. She also co-hosts a top-ranking, award-winning podcast, "**Happier with Gretchen Rubin**."

Rubin's keynote address will focus on resiliency and finding the positive attitude to overcome adversity. She will also interact with ARVC members before and after the conference through interviews, videos and more to create a well-rounded conversation.

"I'm really looking forward to the opportunity to talk to the ARVC community at OHCE," Rubin says. "The anxiety, disruption and uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic have been a challenge for the country and the whole world. In my talk, I'll highlight concrete steps we can take, as part of our ordinary routines, to help boost our resiliency and energy. Some simple steps—things that don't take much time, energy or money—can make a big difference."

"Our industry is one that focuses on the happiness of our guests and providing that escape to tranquility that only camping can provide," says ARVC executive director of education and events **Paula Horwitz**. "We need to make sure we are ready for the challenges that will arise and have the right attitude to create parks and employees that deliver. Gretchen is an outstanding speaker. Her years of work in this field make her the perfect person to address our membership in November and to prepare our industry for another year."





THE TOP 7 REASONS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS OHCE2020

1

INTERACTIVE EDUCATION SESSIONS.

Our education sessions will be even more exciting than ever before! With the opportunity for our speakers to prepare videos and other interactive elements, these sessions will be much more than a PowerPoint presentation.

2

NO MORE FOMO (FEAR OF MISSING OUT).

This year, EVERY SINGLE SESSION will be recorded and available for viewing by registered attendees! You don't have to worry about missing out on any of our information-packed education sessions!

3

HOSTED BUYER OPPORTUNITIES.

These virtual vendor meetings will ensure you get the one-on-one time you need to make the most well-informed business decisions for your upcoming season. PLUS, you could attend OHCE for free!

4

TAKEAWAY TOURS INCLUDED!

This year's Takeaway Tours are included in your registration fee, so you can tour some of the best ARVC member-parks from the comfort of your home or office.

5

THE ARVC FOUNDATION AUCTION.

This year, it will be happening all week long via online virtual bidding! Be sure to watch for more details!

6

MORE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR TEAM.

With our new low price points, you have the opportunity to bring employees and other key team members for just \$49* each! (*Limited time offer! Prices increase to \$59 soon!)

7

SCHOLARSHIPS!

Check out ARVCFoundation.org for details on unique scholarship opportunities to help get your entire team to OHCE for learning, growth and camaraderie!

Best of all, this year's OHCE will make it easy and convenient for you to catch up on the latest industry trends, best practices and to learn about the newest products and services for your park. You won't want to miss it! Register today at arvc.org/OHCE.



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Making Contactless Payments WORK FOR YOUR PARK

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many of the ways ARVC member-parks do business, and that includes the processing of payments. The World Health Organization (WHO) has advised against the use of cash, paper checks and touching public terminals like point-of-sale systems and ATMs since the surfaces of these items could potentially carry the virus.

Digital solutions such as mobile card readers and contactless payment processing provide much safer options for your staff and guests to use. According to Payments Source, a news and information resource for payments and financial-service professionals, businesses who have been trying to go digital may see a more rapid adoption rate if their offerings can reduce the risks of transmitting the coronavirus through human interactions.

Mobile card readers link to your mobile device and accept mag-stripe and chip cards to make it easier for guests to pay for their sites and services curbside or at their campsite. In addition, if your park already accepts chip cards through your point-of-sale terminals, you are most likely already capable of offering the option for “tap and pay” contactless payments. Just look for the symbol shown in the photo above or the word “tap” on the termi-

nal screen to verify that you can accept contactless payments.

Infintech is an ARVC Member Benefit Provider (MBP) that offers payment processing solutions that integrate with most campground software and reservation systems. The company can provide nearly 30 percent in payment processing savings, EMV credit card terminals and processing equipment that can accept contactless payments, virtual terminals and mobile processing solutions. Infintech also offers a comprehensive PCI program for data security and can facilitate gift card processing and next-day funding (some restrictions apply). Live, dedicated support is available to answer any questions campground owners or managers may have.

“Working with ARVC members for the last few years has been very rewarding,” says **Russ Rybolt**, account manager for Infintech. “I thrive on providing merchants with knowledge and best practices about card acceptance that not only provides savings, but also protects their business, staff and customers. Infintech helps merchants receive the lowest processing rates, shield themselves from chargebacks, and offers ARVC members processing equipment and gateways at our reseller costs, so they are not incurring a big expense

when an upgrade is needed. As always, Infintech is here to help merchants prepare, pivot and prosper.”

As Infintech says on its website, “Camping is an Adventure. Accepting Payments Shouldn’t Be.” For more information about Infintech’s products and services, contact Russ Rybolt at 615-881-6566 or visit [Infintechllc.com/arvc](https://infintechllc.com/arvc).

“I thrive on providing merchants with knowledge and best practices about card acceptance that not only provides savings, but also protects their business, staff and customers.”

MORE WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR GUESTS AND YOUR STAFF

As the COVID-19 virus continues to impact the way we live and run our businesses, products such as disinfecting systems, hand sanitizers and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are now more important than ever. Here is a list of ARVC Member Benefit Providers (MBPs), Supplier Council members and Partners that offer services and exclusive discounts to ARVC members.

DISINFECTING SYSTEMS

ARVC Member Benefit Provider, **PURIFYD®SYSTEMS**, offers innovative products that provide effective, three-point total coverage for RV parks and campgrounds to safely, easily and effectively eliminate, then manage, the build-up of contaminants and pathogens in the spaces occupied by guests and staff.

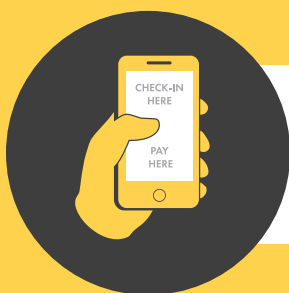


HAND SANITIZER

ARVC's newest Member Benefit Provider **Ranger Ready** offers an 80% ethanol alcohol-based fine mist hand spray utilizing the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-recommended formula for optimum protection from germs and bacteria that cause viruses, for use when hand washing is not available.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) AND OTHER PRODUCTS

The **Staples Advantage** program offers ARVC member discounts as well as free delivery with no minimum order. **Office Depot/Office Max** is offering curbside pickup at many locations as well as an ARVC member digital discount card for in-store purchases.



CONTACTLESS PAYMENT AND CHECK-IN OPTIONS

Many of our member benefit providers and supplier council members, including **NewBook International, Inc.**, **Campspot** and **RMS North America** also offer contactless payment and check-in options to help keep you and your guests safe during the booking and check-in process.

For more information about your exclusive ARVC member benefits, including contact information for each supplier, please visit the Medical/First Aid Services and Supplies, Office Supplies and Sanitation/Maintenance/Supplies sections in the ARVC Marketplace that begins on page 35.

If you need help accessing your member information to take advantage of these discounts, please give us a call at 303-681-0401 or email us at membership@arvc.org.





Jessica Turner, Executive Director, ORR

ARVC Joins Forces with INDUSTRY COALITION TO ADDRESS KEY ECONOMIC ISSUES

*The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) Benefits ARVC Members
by Leveraging the Advocacy Power of 32 Outdoor Recreation Organizations*

Just in case you need further proof that there's strength in numbers, look no further than the **Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR)**. It's a coalition of 32 outdoor recreation trade associations and organizations, including ARVC, that have banded together to promote the growth of the outdoor recreation economy. They've got your back as a campground owner because they're willing to take on tough issues and work with legislators to address them.

ARVC staff members play very active roles in ORR. **Paul Bambei**, ARVC president and CEO, serves on the board of directors. **David Basler**, vice president of membership and marketing, is one of the co-chairs of ORR's Communications Committee and **Jeff Sims CPO, OHC**, senior director of state relations and program advocacy, serves on its Government Affairs Committee.

ORR's membership includes a diverse cross section of organizations representing the outdoor recreation industry such as the American Sport-fishing Association, Association of Marina Industries, American Trails, Outdoor Industry Association, RV Dealers Association, RV Industry Association and many others.

"We were really brought together by the economic reports that show we're a large, powerful sector," says **Jessica Turner**, executive director of ORR, "but only when you put the motorcycling, campground, skiing and other industry segments together. We're made up of thousands of small businesses across the country, so the executives of all these trade associations came together and said we can be more powerful together in terms of advocacy, policy and messaging."

The outdoor recreation economy creates more than 5.2 million jobs per year and amounts to 2.2 percent of the United States' gross domestic product (GDP), which makes it larger than agriculture, mining, utilities and broadcast telecommunications.

"ORR was really a development of recognizing that we're such a big industry, bigger than most, but we weren't breaking through the national dialogue," Turner says. "The campground industry alone may not be able to move major national policy and neither could the hiking industry alone, but together, when we combine the things that we care about that we all agree on, we can affect change and we can break through

this very loud national dialogue that's constantly changing and moving in different directions.

"Recreation is not just a 'nice to have,' it's really a 'need to have,'" Turner says. "The idea behind ORR is let's find the common denominator for all of these groups that care about the outdoors and getting people outside and active and healthy and work on those things. Maybe on the side, each group is still working on their trailhead issue or their disagreement with whatever recreation entity, but at ORR we keep it at a really high level so that we're growing this recreation pie to be bigger with more access to infrastructure and funding."

One example of ORR's concerted efforts was the industry's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The first couple of weeks we did a ton of outreach, checking in with trade associations, checking in with businesses," Turner says. "We asked them 'what are you hearing, what's working, what's not working?' and we came up with categories of workplaces where businesses were struggling across the board, and where we felt like our voice could make a difference."

ARVC worked directly with ORR on efforts to expand the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) as part of the CARES Act—which directly helped a vast number of campgrounds across the country.

“During the early spring months when CARES was being drafted, our team was aware of several ARVC members who were feeling the seasonal nature of their business was a voice that was not being heard,” Bambei says.

“We talked with these folks on a very personal level to get actual anecdotal stories and evidence of their hardship, and also invited conversation from some of our corporate **Business Forum** partners, to provide input that insured CARES would provide the impact funding that would really help. We purposely sought stories from campground owners of all sizes and from various parts of the country.”

“Some trade association needs are very niche and we weren't seeing similar needs across the industry,” Turner says, “but in the case of seasonal PPP and getting money faster to businesses, we were just hearing it from pretty much everyone. So we realized that those were really key places to weigh in on and that we needed hard examples of why it wasn't working and examples of how it could work better.”

Next, ORR contacted members of Congress.

“I got on the phone with representatives, and said, ‘Do you know that this isn't working for businesses in your district?’ They were shocked,” Turner says. “Everyone passes legislation like the CARES Act thinking this is the greatest thing since sliced bread, and it's not their fault. They moved so quickly because they had to, but of course, you're going to miss some things. They developed that bill overnight, it felt like.”

“We were actually able to reach out to the administration and Treasury and the Small Business Administration (SBA), and say, here are some of the challenges and then we got some senators and congressmen to back us up. And so the SBA got right back to us with an interim rule where they actually made some of the changes we asked for. And wasn't going to get us com-

plete satisfaction of where we needed to be, so we did end up running legislation, the CARES Act II, that ultimately passed and got us in a better place. It really was working the administrative side and the congressional side in tandem that helped us achieve this.”

She also credits the business owners in the industry who provided concrete examples of what wasn't working.

“Certainly, the campground industry was a huge leader in providing direct examples of why this didn't work. I think on the small business side, there is not a member of Congress who doesn't care about those needs.

So, it wasn't like we were asking them to support something controversial. We were just saying, ‘You did a great job with the information in the time you had to pass the CARES Act, but you've got to go back and make this work for all businesses because we're struggling now.’ It was great to bring them actual examples of what was happening.

“The campground industry was great at the storytelling because it's so seasonal,” Turner says. “I mean, why would you open a campground in March if you're not slated to open till June just to get PPP money in your pocket? You're spending more money than you're really going to get from the program and then you're going to open in June and have no money to support your staff.”

“Through ORR, our input was delivered not only to the Small Business Administration that would ultimately be responsible for executing CARES, but also to the Treasury Department and key Congressional sponsors of the bill that we knew would be supportive of our cause,” Bambei says. “In the end, I feel our partnership with ORR was both powerful and productive toward the positive outcome that was achieved.”

ORR was also instrumental in advocating for the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, which was recently passed by Congress in a rare show of bipartisan support.

“It will provide \$13 billion for outdoor infrastructure for our parks, our waterways, our roads and bridges, any-

“**Together, when we combine the things that we care about that we all agree on, we can affect change.**”

thing on public lands that helps people recreate,” Turner says. “It's been in the works for a long time. It's a huge ORR effort and its huge for people who are visiting the outdoors, who want to have a good experience. It's also creating new green spaces, new projects for recreation. We've done a lot to move this bill. It's a huge win for the industry.”

“For literally millions of small businesses located in gateway communities near national parks and forests, including private RV parks and campgrounds, the passage of this historic legislation will increase opportunities for people to recreate outdoors and support all businesses that make up the outdoor recreation industry,” Bambei says.

“The Great American Outdoors Act is historic legislation and ARVC would like to thank those who have shown support not only for our nation's most beautiful outdoor spaces but the businesses that rely on those destinations for a large part of their success.”

Turner acknowledged the important roles ARVC staff members play in furthering ORR's initiatives.

“Paul Bambei is very active and up-to-speed on legislation,” she says. “We probably work more closely on a daily basis with ARVC than some of our other members. They actually send a lot of ideas to me on things we can pitch, letters to send or op eds we can place. They just have a really engaged team who has a great understanding of their membership needs and know how to use ORR and our network the right way. That's what we're here for.”

JEFF SIMS: Advocating for the Legislative and Regulatory Best Interests of Our Industry

If you're a longtime ARVC member, you've likely experienced firsthand the passion **Jeff Sims, CPO, OHC** has for our industry. As ARVC's senior director of state relations and program advocacy, he reviews every piece of state and federal regulation or legislation that comes across his desk—often more than 10,000 each year—and analyzes them for their potential impact on ARVC members.

After vetting his findings, Jeff publishes them in the ARVC State Legislative & Regulatory Report on the ARVC website, access to which is a member-only benefit, indicating whether each item is fast or slow-moving and its likelihood of moving on through the legislative process. To access the report, log into your ARVC profile and visit arvc.org/legislation. The goal of the report is to provide campground owners and state executives with actionable intelligence on issues that may impact them.

You would think that's enough to keep Sims busy, but he also assists ARVC members on a wide range of other issues, including but not limited to:

- Helping new and prospective park owners identify who their Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs) are, how to determine if the land they're considering is properly zoned for the park they have in mind and how to find out what type of business license they will need.
- Instructing owners how to leverage NFPA 1194®, the National Standard for Recreational Vehicle Parks and Campgrounds, to their advantage when working with AHJs.
- Offering guidance to campground owners to help them ensure they are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Advising campground owners on the laws regarding service animals.
- Monitoring consumer product safety recalls on products used by campgrounds.

Sims also works with ARVC's coalition partners on national initiatives such as the recent efforts to have RV parks and campgrounds designated as essential businesses.

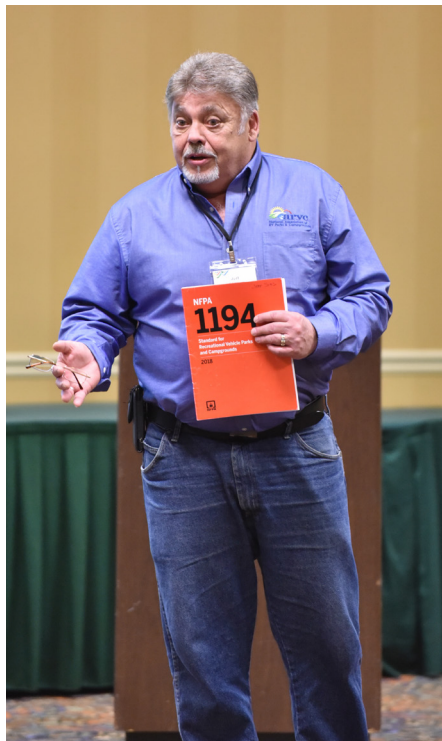
"I'm in a unique position having been a park owner for 40 years, a former state president, a former state executive and a director and former chair of ARVC, so my professional career has been totally wrapped around this industry," he says. "I never say, 'I've seen it all,' because every day I get surprised."

If you have a question relating to legislative or regulatory issues impacting your campground, you can reach Sims at 303-681-0401 x110 or at jeff.sims@arvc.org.

"I may not have all the answers," he says, "but I know who does."



Jeff Sims, CPO, OHC, ARVC's senior director of state relations and program advocacy



Right: Jeff Sims teaches a class on the NFPA 1194® national standard at the National School of RV Park and Campground Management. Far right-top: Jeff Sims meets with Deb Carter at the National School of RV Park and Campground Management. Bottom: Jeff Sims with David L. Berg, CPO (L) and Wade Elliott (R) in Washington DC.

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AMAZING ANNIVERSARIES

Celebrating ARVC member-parks that marked a major milestone this year.

In 1970, when Dick Roberts retired after spending 30 years at Bethlehem Steel, he and his wife Bernice decided they wanted to own a campground. A lot of blood, sweat and tears went into achieving their dream as they, their son Paul and Bernice's dad Edwin took an old, abandoned dairy farm built in 1863 and converted it into a campground. They opened **Triple R** in 1970 with 21 sites and kept expanding until they reached 155 sites in 1990 when they sold the campground to the Evans family.

Don and Lorrie Evans and their family continued making improvements, including an expansion in 2000, which included a facelift to the barn and the addition of modern bathrooms, a new store and laundry facility and exterior siding. More than 100 additional sites were added, bringing the total to 214, along with new pools, a second bath house, a basketball court and new roads, and the entire park was upgraded to include full hook-ups with cable TV. The Evans family also opened an RV dealership and did RV service and maintenance. As the campground evolved into a camping

resort, Lorrie and Don left their previous jobs to focus on the business.

When the Evans' dream of having their kids take over the park's operations didn't materialize, Don and Lorrie sold the park to the Tinelli family in 2013. The couple chose the Tinellis based on their business plan, even turning down a higher offer because they didn't want their park to be flipped—they wanted to see it grow and remain family run.

John and Jennifer Tinelli left their corporate lives and relocated to the park with their sons **Wyatt and John**, and for the first time in 20 years of camping, found themselves on the opposite side of the registration desk. John was a former firefighter and mechanical designer for a professional audio manufacturing company and Jennifer had been a senior contract negotiator for a large military contractor, so they immediately ap-

The post-and-beam barn at Triple R dates back the late 1800s and houses the park's main office, camp store and a dance hall with acoustics so phenomenal, many musicians ask to record there. Photo credits: Triple R Camping Resort.



TRIPLE R CAMPING RESORT
Franklinville, N.Y.

50
YEARS

plied their expertise to automate the back end of the business. Also, since they are a military family—their oldest son **Mitchell** is in the Navy—their oldest son began to cater to military families and launched the first-ever first responder weekends and discounts.

The Tinellis have now taken Triple R to yet another level by adding numerous recreational amenities such as gem mining, laser tag and a jump pad. They've also remodeled the barn (again), added handicap-accessible facilities, upgraded their utilities and added food service and tent sites. They are now completing a two-year expansion that includes a new hot tub oasis with Tiki tables, waterfalls, illuminated palm trees, additional patio seating, cabanas, a huge water play structure and a splash pad.

The Tinellis are gratified to see multiple generations of campers return to the park each year to enjoy all of the new amenities and activities that have been added. Although the recent pandemic made it necessary to cancel many of the 50th anniversary festivities the family had planned, they are determined to continue with their expansion plans and to keep improving and moving forward.

"Here's to another 50 years," John says.



Phase one of Triple R's two-phase water play expansion included a new hot tub oasis with Tiki tables, waterfalls, illuminated palm trees and additional patio seating.



50
YEARS

YOGI BEAR'S JELLYSTONE PARK™
CAMP-RESORT
Wisconsin Dells, Wis.



Left: David Gasser-Founder and Ralph Stibbs, Head Engineer at Ground Breaking Celebration May 1, 1971. Above: The park was filled to capacity on its opening day on July 4, 1971.

David and Elinore Gasser were already very successful entrepreneurs when they decided to get into the campground business in 1970. They owned asphalt paving operations in three states, an architectural firm, a farm with 300 head of cattle and several rental businesses. Plus, they owned a lot of land, so it's not like they needed something else to do. But when the owners of **Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Camp-Resorts** approached the Gassers about buying land for their third location, Elinore decided they should build and operate the park themselves, even though they had never camped a day in their lives.

It was because she was seeing a breakdown of the family structure and knew that families would benefit by having a relaxing place to spend time together. So they built the park and hired managers to run it until their son, **Brent Gasser**, graduated from college and took over the park's management, eventually purchasing the campground himself.

The park now has the distinction

of being the only Yogi Bear Jellystone franchise that has been owned and operated by the same family for 50 years. During that time, the campground has earned more than 100 industry awards and has innovated many features now found nationwide in the franchise, including Red Carpet Camp Suites and cabin styles such as Yogi Bear Bungalows, Boo Boo Chalets and Cindy Bear Cabins.

Management of the park is definitely a family affair. Brent's wife **Cate** manages the food and beverage operations and landscaping. Their daughter **Katrina** is the operations manager and their son **Brennan** is a facility supervisor. Their younger daughter **Natalie** handles management duties and their younger son **Chris** takes on special projects.

In addition to RV sites and tent sites, the park offers vacation home and cabin rentals, a glamping yurt, rent-a-tent campsites and retro family lodges. A water play area with 25 interactive water features is included with guests' stays and families have a

wide choice of themed activities and special events.

Over the years, the park has employed over 1,000 international exchange students from 50 countries.

"These students have gotten so much benefit from being here in America learning what we do," Brent says. "And we have learned so much about other countries from the students that have come here."

The park celebrated its 50th anniversary with a big event in late June. "We had a beautiful parking lot party with a very nice presentation," Brent says. "My daughter gave a very heartwarming speech about my family and all we do and we had cake with champagne and a street party with dancing, music, lights, fog and lasers."

As he looks toward the future of his park, Brent also reflects upon its past.

"We certainly hope through the memories we've created over that past 50 years, families have had many more opportunities to de-stress and reconnect than if we had not been here."



Left: Yogi Bear enjoying a daily autograph session at the water playground. Right: The Gasser family - Brennan, Katrina, Cate, Brent, Natalie and Christopher celebrating the park's 50th anniversary.



25
YEARS

SEAHAVEN MARINE RV PARK

Sneads Ferry, N.C.

Left: A breathtaking sunrise over the marina greets guests at Seahaven Marine RV Park. Above: The park's owners, Kal Karmous and Irina Yashkova.

As Irina Yashkova and her husband, Kal Karmous, owners of ARVC member-park **Seahaven Marine RV Park** in Sneads Ferry, N.C., look back upon their exciting 25-year journey, they take great pride in their park's rich history that involves many different cultures—and, of course, fishing!

in Sneads Ferry. It turned out to be the very land where Kal loved spending time with Mr. Sanderson, listening to his stories and life wisdom. Moustafa called Kal and suggested that he buy the property. He did, and together they created an RV park and marina for people just as passionate about boating and fishing as they were.

to develop the business. They immediately joined ARVC and the **Carlinas Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (CARVC)** and have enjoyed all the learning opportunities and the great network of amazing RV park owners and managers.

Irina and Kal's journey began with a love for the ocean and sharing family time. When Kal was growing up, he and his parents Moustafa and Wadida and sister Gigi would regularly come to the Topsail Island area to relax and escape their busy city lives. During that time, Kal loved to chat and hang out with Gene Sanderson, a U.S. Navy veteran who was an extremely hard worker and a smart man who ran a boat and marine equipment shop.

The boat basin off the New River that is now home to Seahaven's marina, was created by Mr. Sanderson using a bulldozer and dynamite. Thanks to his efforts, anglers can now travel just 2.4 nautical miles from the park's private boat ramp straight to the Atlantic to fish for blue fin tuna and other species.

Kal and Irina speak five languages between them and have visited over 60 countries. By offering a beautiful, serene oasis where they treat each visitor as their personal guest, they have built a loyal following of visitors from around the world, including U.S. Marines and their families. Kal and Irina view their amazing Seahaven community as a mini-United Nations with rich traditions and cultures, one that is united by a love for fishing, boating and the outdoors.

When Kal graduated from college, he started an exciting career in the oil and gas industry that led him to work and live in more than 27 countries. Then in 1995, Moustafa heard that a waterfront property was for sale

For many years, Kal served as the park's investor and advisor while Moustafa and his wife Lavae ran daily operations. Then in 2016, Moustafa announced he was ready to retire and enjoy a worry-free life on Topsail Island where he can literally fish straight from his balcony. Kal and Irina took over the daily operations of the park and con-

As Irina says, "Our 25 years of success is a great milestone and the journey continues!"

Left: Kal with his father Moustafa who ran the park's operations with his wife Lavae until his retirement in 2016. Below: Guests enjoying a relaxing stay at Seahaven RV Marine Park.



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Meet DEB CARTER



The resort's private beach is set along the Elk River and includes two private boat ramps and piers, a swimming pool, playground, pavilion and pet walking area.

Buttonwood Beach RV Resort, Earleville, Md. 537 RV sites (mega-park category)

How would you describe your campground?

We offer a very unique concept in campground living. All of our sites are sold on a long-term, 99-year renewable lease basis. While we do not offer any type of transient camping, some of our owners make their RVs and sites available for short-term rental.

Did you always plan on having a career in the campground business?

No! While many of my friends were born into the campground world, I was going to attend Duke and become a doctor. That is, until I met my future husband, who was working at **Buttonwood Beach RV Resort**. I started working at Buttonwood when I was 18 years young and am still here. Except for my volunteer work, I don't have much of a resume 45 years later!

You've been very active in our industry. How did you start getting involved?

I really didn't participate in industry events or associations until 1995 when our County Commissioners decided to levy a \$500 "fee" per campsite (537 sites in our case) in addition to the licenses and property taxes we already paid (roughly \$90,000 per year). Our corporation went to court with our commissioners. After three years, we ended up in the highest court in Maryland for the final appeal and we won! It wasn't just a win for us but for all other campgrounds in our county, and, of course, eventually in our state.

How have you continued your industry involvement?

All of the organizations we paid dues to, including the **Maryland Association of Campgrounds (MAC)** and ARVC, came to our aid during the court case by writing letters, testifying and offering moral support. When we won the case, I promised myself that I would give three years back to each organization, to not just say thank you, but to educate myself and then to help educate our local, state and national legislators.

What was your reaction to being presented the Stan Martin Award, ARVC's highest honor?

It was a total surprise. I had not planned on attending the conference until my dear friend **David L. Berg, CPO** of **Red Apple Campground** in **Kennebunkport, Maine** asked me to be there for him. Then **Paul Bambei** asked me to be there to present a special award to David. That night was like a dream to be with so many of my peers of all ages, meeting new campground owners for the first time, and being surrounded by people who understand our industry, who know more than I'll ever know.

What advice do you have for young women entering our industry?

Before you do anything, learn how to give back. The more I give, the more I receive, again and again. I personally have found very little discrimination in our industry. Be yourself. Be honest. Don't apologize for being a woman—ever. It's a blessing, trust me.

We're proud to showcase our members. Watch for additional "We Are ARVC" profiles in future issues of The Voice.



Presented to
Deb Carter

The National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds is pleased to recognize Deb Carter, owner of Butternut Beech RV Resort in Eastferry, Maryland, as the 2019 recipient of the Stan Martin Memorial Award. Our Association's highest honor, this award is presented for her strong support and dedication to the improvement and growth of ARVC and the outdoor hospitality industry.

Deb has served as the Maryland Association of Campgrounds's Executive Director for more than a decade, in addition to representing partnering state executives across the U.S. on the ARVC Board of Directors. She has also served on numerous state and local boards and appointments by the Governor as an experienced industry representative, having become an expert in her field by operating her own 500+ site campground for many years. Her involvement is a key ARVC representative on the "Hill" in Washington DC during the important battle to properly define Park Model Recreational Vehicles (PMRVs) resulting in a decisive win for our industry, saving her fellow ARVC members millions of dollars.

Aside from all of her accomplishments, Deb is perhaps best known for her ability to meet people smile. Her quick wit, ability to humbly connect with both the written and spoken word and willingness to help anyone in need will add to her lasting mark on our industry. Through her dedication, Deb has made a long-lasting impact on us all, for which we are deeply grateful.



**Stan Martin
Memorial Award**

In memory of an esteemed colleague and industry leader who set the standard for volunteerism and who passed away much too soon in 1992.

The National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds
November 7, 2019
Al Johnson ARVC Chairman Knoxville, Tennessee Paul Bambei ARVC President/CEO

STRONGER *Together*

The Power of Having Strong Industry Connections

As a campground owner, it's inevitable that from time to time, you'll run into a challenge you're not sure how to handle. But chances are, you can find a colleague who has faced that same challenge, figured it out and is willing to share their solutions. This friendly and open exchange of ideas is just one more example of why this is called the outdoor hospitality industry.

Very often, those solutions are even as close as right down the road.

In 2006, **Cindy Dunekacke**, who now owns ARVC member-park **Mt. Princeton RV Park & Cabins** in Buena Vista, Colo. with her husband **Jeff Dunekacke**, was vacationing at another ARVC member-park in Buena Vista, **Arrowhead Point Campground & Cabins**, which is owned by **Joe and Cathy Harbick**.

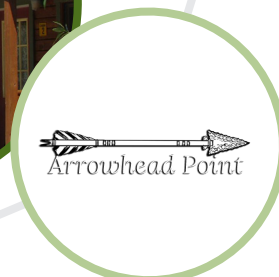
"I told Cathy we were thinking about buying an RV park and she said, 'Come in and talk to me on your free time,'" Dunekacke says. "I can tell you all about an RV park.' And so I did and we formed a little bit of a friendship in the five-day period that we stayed there. At the time, we knew that Mt. Princeton was for sale, but our farm in Nebraska hadn't sold so we didn't really look at it and went back home. Sure enough, a few weeks later, everything that we had had up for sale for two-and-a-half years sold."

The Dunekackes wanted their RV park to be in the Rocky Mountains, so they looked at parks throughout Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho before coming back and purchasing Mt. Princeton.

"When we moved here in February 2007, I called Cathy and said, 'I don't know if you remember me, but when I visited, you talked to me about owning a park.' I told her that Jeff and I bought Mt. Princeton and we went out for coffee. We got to talking and she said, 'You know, the first year is crazy and chaotic. If you ever have a question about anything, call me anytime.' And I did."

One of the things Cathy taught Cindy was the importance of having a set check-in time to prevent people from arriving at 8 a.m. to avoid paying the site fee for the night before. Cathy explained that having a defined check-in time also gives current guests time to move out and the park staff time to do any necessary cleaning. So Cindy immediately put check-in and check-out times in place.

"The first year is really tough," Dunekacke says, "but Cathy helped me set policies that we could adapt to make them fit our park nicely. One thing I didn't know is that my RV sites would book up farther in advance than my cabins. I was always worried that I wasn't advertising my cabins right, but then they'd start





filling up. It's nice when you have somebody that has a little more experience that can say, 'Don't freak out about that.'"

Mt. Princeton attracts more monthly guests while Arrowhead Point has more nightly rentals, and the two parks refer business to each other to help campers avoid the frustration of calling multiple campgrounds to find a place to stay. The parks are located just four-and-a-half miles from each other.

Even though they are now both seasoned campground owners with 14 and 16 years of experience under their belts respectively, Dunekacke says she and Cathy still get together for coffee every other week or so to share the issues they have running their parks—the good, the bad and the ugly.

"If nothing else, we'll just text back and forth," she says. "It's just nice sometimes to have somebody to talk to. I deal with things that she wouldn't even think about and vice versa."

Dunekacke and Harbick have now expanded their support network by inviting a new campground owner, **Meghan Barker**, to join them for coffee. She owns ARVC member-park **Chalk Creek Campground & RV Park** in Nathrop, Colo. with her husband **Jeremy Barker**.

A WELCOME VISITOR

In February 2018, **Mary Traugott** purchased **Riverbend on the Frio** in Concan, Texas. The park is run by her son **Wesley Traugott** and daughter-in-law **Robin Traugott**. Robin says it wasn't long before **Melissa Cummings**, who owns nearby ARVC member-park **Camp Riverview** with her husband **Mike Cummings**, dropped in for a visit.

"She came by probably in the early part of May 2018," Traugott says. "With us being new, we never met anybody else out here and had zero idea of what we were doing. She just popped over and wanted to introduce herself and pretty much wish me the best of luck. She wanted to give me words of encouragement to let me know that 'It's going to be crazy. It's going to be very difficult, but you will make it through the year.'"

"They had owned their park maybe four or five years when I met her, and she just let me know that it's not a walk in the park to run a campground and satisfy every single one of your customers and tell people on the river who are not

your guests to get off your property. You're going to get in arguments and disagreements with everybody. She told me 'It's okay. It's all supposed to happen because it makes you better.' It was very, very comforting.

"I think I even called her a couple of times that year just because I had questions," Traugott says. "She talks to another gentleman that owns the park close by her, who was there to help her when she got Camp Riverview, and so she said that she wanted to pay it forward."

Traugott refers campers to Camp Riverview when she doesn't have sites available.

"I don't mind helping her out as much as I can," she says. "I will always refer somebody to all the parks out here if I don't have space."

Traugott also messaged Cummings several times during the pandemic to learn how she was handling various cleaning issues.

"She would just let me know her ideas and the cleaners that she's researched. She would even give me cleaning people who are looking for extra work—those she would refer or people she would definitely never refer," Traugott says.

"Melissa is the one that got me signed up with ARVC. She said it's really, really worth it. You need to try it, so I signed up. We're using the propane discount. It's amazing. It has really helped us out."

Traugott also enlisted ARVC's help for ideas on how to redesign the entrance to her park. **Jaqueline (Jaq) Gloria**, ARVC's manager of member development, set up a Zoom video call for Robin and Wesley with **Joe Moore, CPO, OHP** of **Moore's Campground Consulting** in Mineola, Texas.



Barb Krumm of Ocean Lakes Family Campground with Adam Smith, OHP, of Camp Clearwater at the 2018 Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo.



“He gave me some ideas on what we could possibly do to make it a little bit better,” Traugott says. “I also contacted Jaq about golf cart rentals and things like that. We haven’t moved forward with that, but she gave me the information and this offseason, we will definitely look more into it.”

REACHING OUT FOR HELP

Barb Krumm, CPO, OHC, director of marketing and public relations for **Ocean Lakes Family Campground** in Myrtle Beach, S.C. has been with the park since 1998, so she has experienced the value of building strong industry relationships many times over.

“I think it’s very wise to be involved with all the different associations—your local association if you have one, your state association, your national association—ARVC. I just think that’s smart business. I think it can keep you from reinventing the wheel and help you avoid some pitfalls.”

Krumm says they once had a **Carolinas Association of Campground Owners & RV Parks (CARVC)** member from North Carolina who reached out to them for advice.

“The new park operator told us, ‘We were sitting there with this park, shaking our heads, thinking certainly we must not be the first people that have run into this situation before.’”

“What I learned coming into this industry is something that the founding families in the Myrtle Beach area had done 30-35 years ago—work together for the industry,” Krumm says. “Myrtle Beach is a very competitive market. Not all of our campgrounds started as huge mega parks, but they certainly grew fairly rapidly into very large campgrounds and as a destination. But the founding families had amazing wisdom to work together to establish the destination and to attract campers rather than fighting each other.”

“I often tell people at RV shows or when marketing, when you come to Myrtle Beach, you’re really not going to go wrong. You’re going to find a campground that fits you best. We hope it’s us.”

“The Myrtle Beach Family Campground Owners Association has been here long before I’ve been in this industry,” Krumm says. “I think anybody new in the industry can learn from that. It was how they work together locally, and that even goes for your chambers and your Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) and that kind of thing. Campgrounds are different from hotels, but as a destination, you’re wise in hospitality to have a network.”

“Our biggest competitor sits right next door to us. We all know each other, all the parks. We all have each other on our cell phones. We do talk shop—‘Are you seeing this trend? Are you having problems with this? Hey, we’re looking for this truck. You’re selling this truck. Can we buy it?’ There’s a lot of recycling of ideas, of equipment, of teammates and staff.”

“We benchmark one another, we watch one another,” Krumm says. “What is their policy? What is their rate? We all do it. But then we support one another. I think it’s what makes this industry very special. I’ve had employees that



Members of the Carolinas Association of Campground Owners & RV Parks (CARVC) enjoy a dinner out together. Photo credit: CARVC





come from other industries and their minds are blown at how open we are. They'll say, 'What do you mean, they're building a park and you're going to let them come in and tour your park?'

It's just one of the countless examples of how campground owners are willing to support each other. In fact, like Dunekacke found, you never know where a chance encounter with a colleague will lead you. She reflected back on that lucky day in 2006 when she and Jeff arrived at Arrowhead Point Campground and met Cathy Harbick.

"We had no idea when we pulled in there that we were going to form a bond that would last for more than a decade. Now I pretty much have her on speed dial on both my office phone and my cell phone. And I'll find any excuse to go up and drink a Dirty Hippie coffee drink at her barista bar.

"One thing we found when we were in our pop-up camper vacationing when our children were young, was there was always the mentality that the person next to you in the RV site is your new friend. I've found that a lot with RV park owners, too. We're all trying to help each other."



Left: CeCe and Brad McGalliard of Pine Ridge Campground in Roebuck, S.C. attend a CARVC game night. Below: A group of CARVC members participate in a Takeaway Tour. Photo credit: CARVC



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It stands to reason that the more convenient you can make the camping experience for your guests, the easier it will be to earn their loyalty—and, in turn, increase your profits. Two ways you can do that is by offering them a safe, secure place to store their RVs and by making it easy for them to get needed repairs.

Some established RV parks add RV storage capabilities to complement their existing amenities, but for ARVC member-park **42 on 32 RV Park** in Blanco, Texas, it happened the other way around. Its sister company, Double L Storage, is located adjacent to the campground.

“We actually started the storage business first,” says **Sybil Jones**, manager of Double L Storage. “We opened in 2015. And we started with just one set of 16 40-foot covered RV storage spaces and those got full. So, the owner decided to open a mini storage with climate control because we don’t have that in this area in Blanco County. We opened that in 2017 and extended the 40-foot RV spaces by 15 more spots, so we had 30 covered storage spaces, and it was full within three months. By that time, which was last year, work was already in progress on the RV park, so at the same time, we built an area for 50-foot RV storage, and that’s full. Now we’re starting to offer 45-foot covered RV storage and that’s just taken off.”

Double L’s current RV storage rates range from \$40 per month for open storage to \$120 per month for covered storage with electric service. Jones explained how having access to RV storage makes camping more convenient for guests.

“We have people from Houston. That area is so inundated with people, they find it more feasible and cost effective to bring their RV here to the Hill Country where they’re coming to camp, so they just store it here.”

She says the RV storage and RV park businesses go hand in hand. In fact, when 42 on 32 opened last year, several of its first customers were RV owners who were already using the storage facility. Guests who have reservations at 42 on 32 can even call ahead and ask that their RV be taken out of storage and placed on their site so they’re ready to start camping as soon as they arrive.

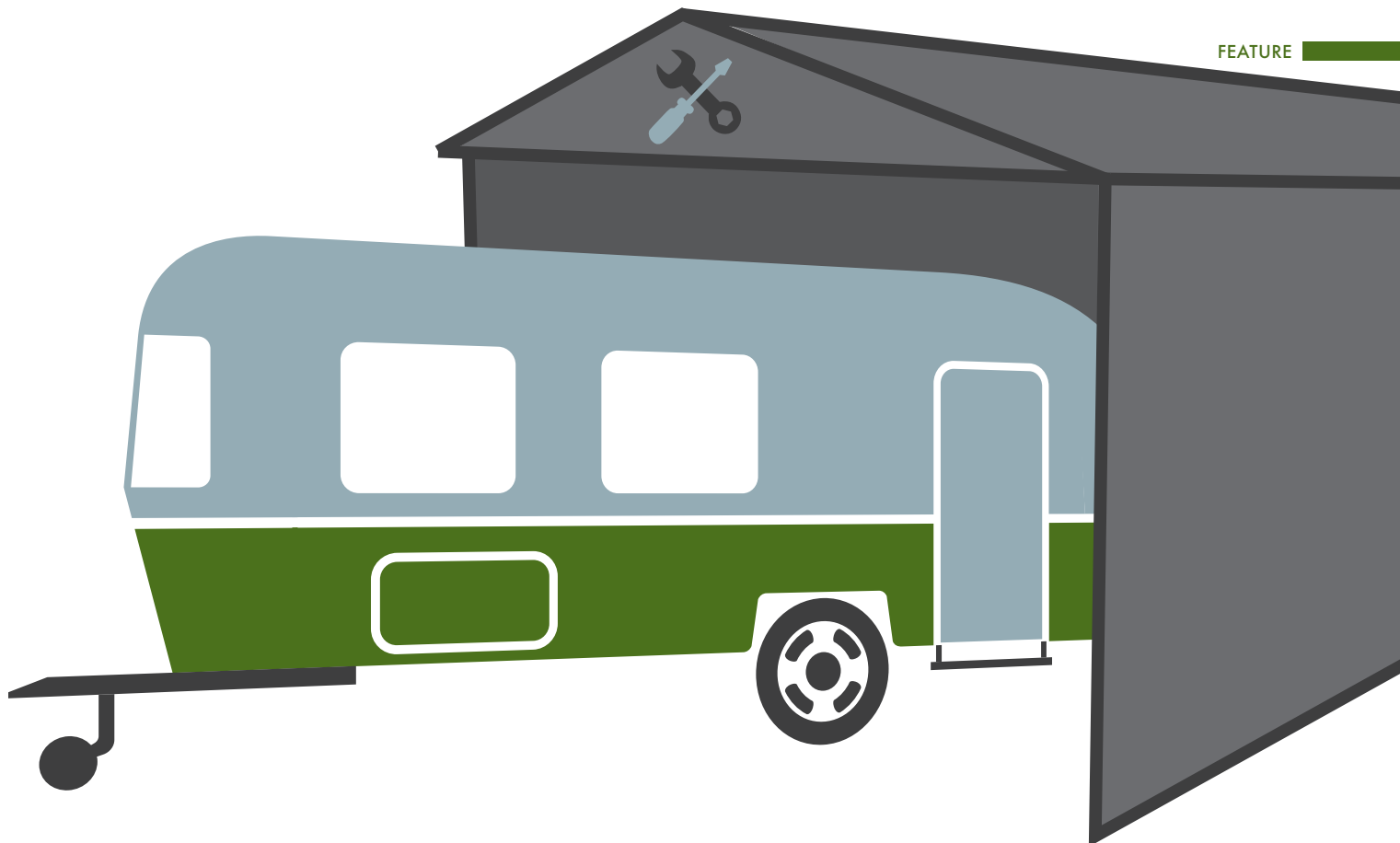
Jones says the owner of both businesses, **Wayne “Dirt” Dworaczyk**, who also owns Dirt Works, a grading and excavation company, is very meticulous about his storage facility.

“We have nice level granite gravel driveways and parking pads. Our open-air parking has about 20 spots. Guests like the ease of being able to back in and out and how level and clean and neat everything is. The maintenance crew comes through every morning and every afternoon and picks up all the trash. It’s also gated and secure, so that’s another benefit.”

Jones says they also attract RV storage customers from Austin and San Antonio, as well as from three nearby subdivisions that don’t allow residents to park their RVs on their property. Some of their guests rent RV storage on a seasonal basis, while others appreciate the convenience so much that they’re willing to pay for a whole year to secure their spot so they’ll have access to it whenever they need it. There is also a waiting list for RV storage spaces from time to time.

For RV repairs, they have built relationships with three different repair facilities in the area that they can refer guests to so they can have their repairs done right at the campground.

Kelly Jones, OHE is vice president of operations for **The Jenkins Organization**, a real estate firm specializing in the self-storage and RV park industries. In the past 18



months the company has acquired three RV parks for its new brand, **Great Escapes RV Resorts**, and is in the process of building several more in Texas.

She says a couple of their current parks offer open RV storage and that some of the new parks they're building will offer regular storage units for those who book longer stays, such as "winter Texans."

"Campers appreciate the fact that they don't have to tow their unit back and forth to their favorite place if they're camping," she says. "They can just show up and grab their trailer, so it saves them fuel and it saves time packing and unpacking that camper, so that's a benefit there. And then for the winter Texan market, a lot of them are full time RVers, so having a secure location where they can store some of their stuff from when they downsized their homes is quite beneficial."

Patty Claney, OHC, who owns ARVC member-park **Big Creek RV Park** in Annapolis, Mo. with her husband **Craig Claney**, offers what she calls a modified version of RV storage called "Store 'N Stay."

"We have RV storage, and then when you come stay with us, we will pull your unit out and set it on your site for you at no extra charge, so it's there waiting for you when you come in. It's included in your storage fee."

"With this service, they find they use their camper a lot more," she says, "especially if the wife doesn't like to tow the camper, she can always come down and have a girls' weekend because it will already be sitting on the site."

Claney also says that if a guest wants to use their RV to travel somewhere else, she'll pull it out of storage and set it on a site for them to pick up.

Big Creek's RV storage is located in an open field on a

gravel pad. Right now, they can accommodate 25-30 RVs, but they could technically accommodate an infinite number because they have more land available. Current rates are \$30 per month.

Claney says open RV storage is affordable for both parties and it's secure at Big Creek because guests have to go through the park in order to get there.

"We came up with it when we opened the park in 2009 and it's worked out really well," she says.

CAMPERS APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT THEY DON'T HAVE TO TOW THEIR UNIT BACK AND FORTH TO THEIR FAVORITE PLACE.

Claney also partnered with a local RV dealership to offer her guests the convenience of onsite repairs.

"They could call the dealer and if he had a technician available, they would come down and do the repairs on site. We also did winterization because with the storage, we could pull them all out and set them on sites and he would winterize them all at one time and waive the service fee for coming down."

“We also did some interesting things that small parks might find lucrative. Before I found out about ARVC and was able to have access to some of the partnering companies like **Wilcor**, I would get some of the more commonly used RV parts from our dealer and sell them out of our camp store which allowed the dealer to sell more parts.”

The dealer was willing to sell the parts on consignment, so Patty didn't have to invest in inventory upfront. She just paid for them as she sold them, earning a 15 percent commission on each sale.

When Big Creek first opened, the dealer even partnered with them to provide onsite rentals.

“When we built the park, we couldn't afford to build cabins, so I had this crazy idea that since we opened in the recession, why not partner with the dealer and if he's got a unit on his lot that's not selling, he could bring it down here and we could split the rent. He said, 'That's a great idea!' So we ended up with three onsite rentals that he put down here.

“They were used units that weren't selling, but they were in great shape. He would have more people looking at them, because I put a 'for sale' sign on the front. And if somebody decided they wanted it, they could call him and it worked out great.

“We've done all kinds of crazy stuff,” she says. “He would bring new units down on busy weekends like Memorial Day and show them at our park so that people could walk through. What's the worst thing that can happen? That he brings an RV down on a holiday and nobody walks through it?”

“There's no question I won't ask,” she says. “There's nothing I won't try. Never be afraid to think outside the box or to ask questions because that dealer will be very happy to partner with you nine times out of ten.”

The Claneys' partnership with the RV dealership turned out to be so successful that they decided to buy the business.

“His son didn't want it, so he approached us since we'd had such a good relationship over the years. Now we've been able to expand the types of things we offer.”

She says, for example, if enough guests need service on their RVs at the same time, their technician will waive his \$125 service fee for each of them and they will only have to pay for the cost of their actual repairs.

Claney says her guests' response to making RV parts and service available onsite has been very favorable because Big Creek is located in a very rural area.

“For them to go find a part, they would have to take a 45-minute drive up to the dealership,” she says.

While offering onsite repair services can be as simple as building relationships with local RV repair shops and dealers, expanding into RV storage requires more elaborate considerations. Sybil Jones of Double L Storage has a few tips for park owners who are considering adding their own RV storage facility.

“Make sure you get really good drainage and make sure your pads are level,” she says. “For our covered RV units, the owner designed a three-wall system where the walls are about three-quarters of the way down all around on the three sides to allow for air flow. That has worked out really well, especially in the Texas heat and summers. That air flow is important and keeps it nice and cool.”

Kelly Jones of The Jenkins Organization says, “My advice would be to talk to your insurance carrier and make sure that the storage side of your business will be covered as well.”

She also offered a suggestion for pricing.

“People who are using **Campspot** (reservation software) and include storage as a site type could offer dynamic pricing so the fuller their storage gets, the more the price goes up.”

Sybil Jones offered additional considerations to help with the decision-making process.

“As long as your property taxes are low and it's feasible for you to offer RV storage, I say do it because it has just taken off. It's an incredible service that we provide and people just really like it.”



Top: RV storage at Double L Storage, located adjacent to 42 on 32 RV Park in Blanco, Texas, is gated and secure. Center: Double L's covered storage can accommodate a variety of different-sized rigs. Greg Johnson of Big Meadow Family Campground in Townsend, Tenn. pulls a guest's trailer into place to prepare for their arrival.

Photo credits - top two - Double L Storage, bottom: Big Meadow Family Campground

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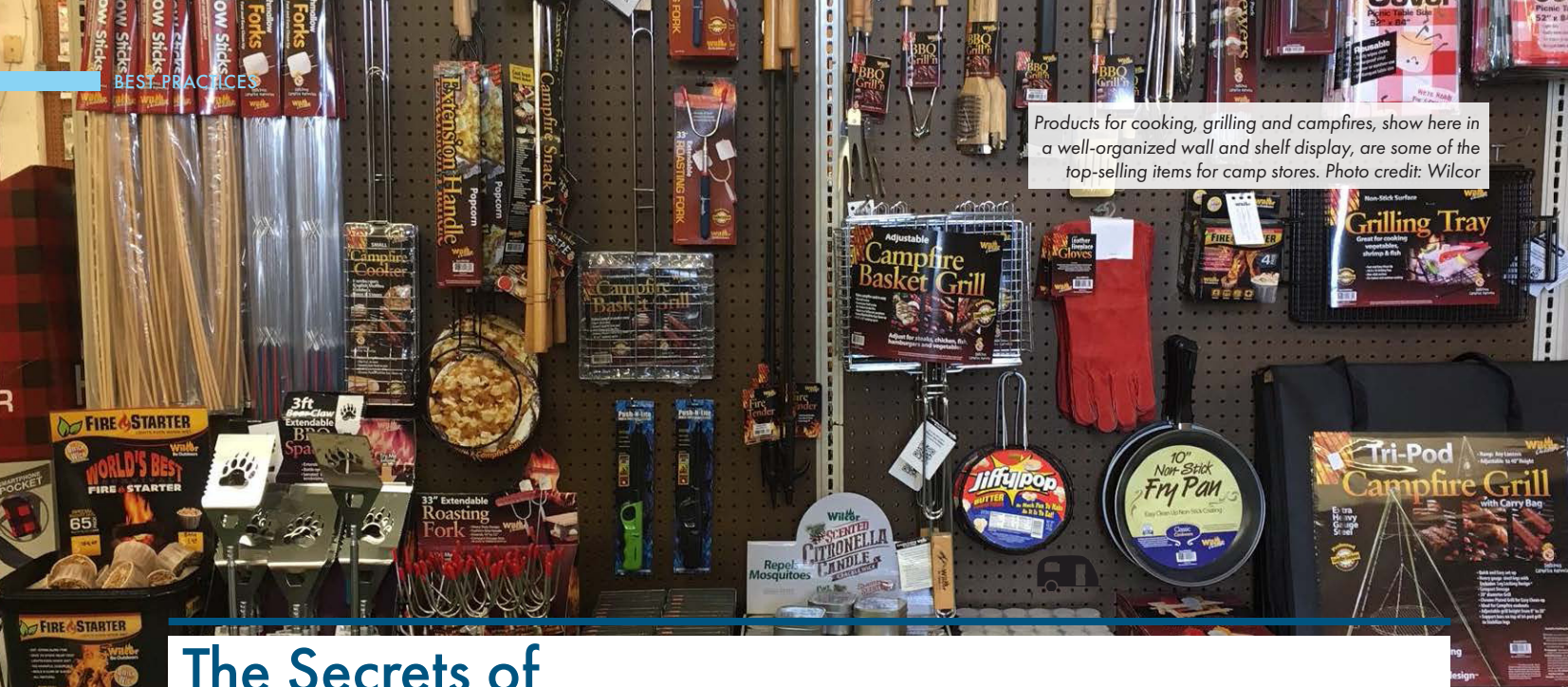
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The Secrets of SUCCESSFUL CAMP STORES

Choosing the Right Merchandise and Layout are Key

Camp stores are a win-win situation. They give campers an easy way to pick up items they need (or forgot to bring) while generating welcome revenue for the campground. But if you think you need a big store to make big profits, just ask **Michelle Wilcox**, who owns ARVC member-park **Gateway Park Campground** in Hillsdale, Mich. with her husband **Tim Wilcox**.

The Wilcoxes' campground is on the smaller side (100 sites), so their camp store is, too. It measures about 12 by 24 feet. When they took over the campground from Tim's parents in 2007, Michelle set a goal to clear \$20,000 from the store. She reached that goal five years ago and has now surpassed it. That accomplishment is even more impressive when you consider that 75 percent of the Wilcox's guests are seasonal campers.

"We are blessed our seasonals shop at our store, which is very rare," Michelle says. "Most parks will tell you that the seasonals do not buy anything. I don't know why, but we are the exception. For one, we keep our prices reasonable. I do a lot of bargain shopping and try to make sure that it's affordable for people. What's the point if they're not going to come in and buy because your prices are too high?"

The Wilcoxes buy a lot of their merchandise through ARVC Supplier Council Member **Wilcor**.

"We have a little bit of everything from toys to candy to ice cream," Michelle says. "We also have a lot of what we call GPC (Gateway Park Campground) merchandise. Our GPC t-shirts, hats, cups, mugs and sweatshirts are super popular."

The Wilcoxes introduce a new color for their t-shirts and sweatshirts each year, but keep their logo the same, which features their mascot, a cartoon beaver roasting a marshmallow over a campfire.

"Our seasonals buy them every year," she says. "They want the newest color. I don't know why they do, but we're not going to question it!"

"We sell a lot of Dippin' Dots and slushies. The Dippin' Dots sell like mad, it's unreal. I think I could charge \$10 a pack and they would still sell. We also sell quite a few color-changing refillable cups with our logo on them. They can refill them for \$1 and then they don't waste cups, and the lids and the straws are reusable."

Wilcox also pays close attention to what guests come in looking for.

"If I don't have it, then I get it. I make sure I at least have one in stock so that in the future if someone else needs that item, I'm prepared. One time, somebody came and asked for safety pins. So now I have a pack of safety pins. I have sewing kits. I have eyeglass repair kits. I also stock all of the obvious things like swimming diapers, diaper kits and laundry soap. I try to carry everything that you would forget."

Since the Wilcoxes' campground is located on an 88-acre lake, they also carry a lot of fishing supplies like lures, bobbers and live bait.

"We don't sell a ton of camping supplies, per se," she says. "It's more like roasting sticks that people forgot to pack. We sell a lot of firewood and quick wick starters and your usual marshmallows, graham crackers and chocolate bars. We've tried doing things like chairs and some bigger items, but we found that they didn't sell well for us. But anything we put our logo on, goes."

The campground also sells a lot of coffee on weekend mornings, so they installed a coffee machine this year that offers additional choices like espresso, cappuccino and hot chocolate. They also sell flavored instant drink mixes from a Michigan company called Fireside Coffee Co.

“Their most popular one for us is their salted caramel hot chocolate,” she says. “We sell a lot of that flavor.”

Michelle shared another secret to her camp store’s success.

“We let all of our campers charge to their accounts. If people are at the pool and want to come in and get popcorn or nachos or their kids want a snack, we’ll just put it on their account. Everyone has a card on file, so they can stop in and pay their tab, or if they forget, we’ll just charge their card. We do great business with that and we’ve never had an issue with it.

“A lot of our seasonals will allow their kids to charge items to their account. Our staff knows which kids can and can’t charge, and when they’re overcharging. They’ll say, ‘No, Lucy, you cannot have four slushies and an ice cream and three pieces of candy.’

“I’ve had many seasonals where it is nothing for their kids or grandkids to charge an additional \$300 in candy, ice cream and toys, and they are okay with it,” Wilcox says. “It’s all pre-approved.”

She says some guests put a limit on what their kids can spend and that information is entered into the campground’s **CampLife** reservations system.

“We also do a lot of gift cards. When people come in on Friday night to check in, they’ll purchase a \$20 gift card for each kid or a \$10 gift card and then the kids can come in and pay with their own gift card. If there are multiple kids, we just write their name on the card so they don’t get them confused. And let me tell you, if there’s one found on the playground, they’re running up to find out if there’s money on it!”

Wilcox says they rely on advice from their vendors on ways to improve store operations.

“Our Wilcor rep, **Matt Stacy**, usually comes to us twice a year. He’ll look at the layout and make recommendations. A lot of my layout is guided by him.”

She also benefits from her vendors’ expertise and knowledge of the marketplace, such as her Dippin’ Dots vendor who is able to tell her which flavors sell best in her area.

Wilcox says that if an item isn’t selling, it can sometimes help to move it to another location in the store to give it more visibility, but that pretty much anything placed on the counter near the register will sell.

Zach Sivers, sales representative for Wilcor, which is headquartered in Frankfort, N.Y., worked in retail for about 15 years before he got into the wholesale business.

“When I’m approaching a campground, I like to do a little bit of research on the amenities within the campground and some of the activities that are available surrounding it,” he says. “If you have a pool, and it’s big enough, inflatables can be a great option. If it’s smaller, maybe swim goggles are more of the kind of thing you’re looking for because you don’t want these big inflatables taking up space in

“I do a lot of bargain shopping and try to make sure that it’s affordable for people. What’s the point if they’re not going to come in and buy because your prices are too high?”

the pool. If you have a large field, you might want to look at items like footballs, frisbees and different outdoor games like corn hole.

“A lot of people stumble trying to figure out how to select the products,” he says. “But once you’ve gotten an idea of the grouping of items that would complement your amenities, and what the essentials are that you need to have, then you can dive into the catalogs for your vendors. Generally speaking, most vendors do similar things. We have an A, B and C scale of top-selling items. If they’re “A” items, they’re the best-selling items in that category. The other categories indicate which products are better sellers or average sellers.

“Some of them are labeled ‘Buyers Choice,’ and those are the standouts across the board, the bestselling and the most reordered.”

Sivers says the rankings can make it easier for merchandise buyers to answer questions such as, “If there are five different devices to roast a marshmallow with, which one should I buy?”

He also explained why buyers should not limit themselves to just purchasing “A” items.

“A lot of times, you’ll see items that maybe have a B or C ranking, but it’s something specific to an area. For example, we sell bear boxes. In upstate New York or Florida, a bear box tends not to be an important thing, but when you’re out west near Yellowstone, that product could be an item for you.

He suggests building a base of top-selling items, then expanding the product selection by adding items that are uniquely suited to your area.

In terms of store layout, Sivers recommends putting essentials like tarps and RV products in the center or back of the store because people will search them out when they need them. That will leave the high-visibility, high traffic areas by the front door and registration desk for impulse



An employee at Gateway Park Campground in Hillsdale, Mich. prepares an order of nachos in the park's camp store. Photo credit: Gateway Park Campground

items like candy and merchandise with your campground's logo. He also recommends putting refrigerated items such as soda and beer toward the back of the store, so people have to walk by your other merchandise to get to them.

He also suggests tracing the paths that people most commonly take through the store to identify areas where they overlap, because these are also good areas to place impulse items such as souvenirs.

Sivers also described a retail strategy he refers to as SWAT, which stands for "So What's Available Today?"

"It's essentially just making sure that if you have a stockroom full of product, that you have those products represented on the floor, as well, because they won't sell in the storage room."

Sivers understands that operating a camp store is just one of many responsibilities campground owners have.

"The first thing that I learned about campground owners is, for the most part, nobody got into the campground industry to own a retail store. You're running a little city, so the last thing you're thinking about is 'How do I operate the corner store in my city?' But it's really all about making the people that are staying at your campground as comfortable as possible and enhancing whatever experiences they have by offering items that would complement those experiences."

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See pg 40

See pg 40

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See pg 36

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 See pg 39	 See pg 37	 See pg 37	 See pg 39	 See pg 38	 See pg 37	 See pg 39	 See pg 39	
 See pg 36	 See pg 40	 See pg 36	 See pg 36	 See pg 37	 See pg 38	 See pg 37	 See pg 39	
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ADVERTISING INDEX

Business Finance Depot	21	Pacific Yurts	6	The National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds	11, 41
DOGIPOT	6	ResNexus	11	Utility Supply Group	17
GoCampingAmerica.com	44	RJ Thomas Mfg Co./Pilot Rock	34	Zoeller Company/ Clarus Environmental	17
Just In Time Communicatons	31	Sound Marketing Inc.			
Leavitt Recreation & Hospitality Insurance	27	/It's All About Satellites	2		



ARVC Foundation ADJUSTING TO YOUR NEEDS

New Scholarships Will Enable More Employees and Team Members to Participate in OHCE2020

For the ARVC Foundation, November is one of the greatest times of year. Not because of the turkey and ham that will soon grace nearly everyone's tables, but because it is the one time of the year where members of the ARVC Foundation are able to see and interact with the many individuals that have benefitted from receiving Foundation Scholarships throughout the years.

"It is an absolute joy and honor to see the growth of so many owners and managers that have received an ARVC Foundation Scholarship over the years," says **Cyndy Zbierski**, ARVC Foundation Chair. "Seeing and hearing, firsthand, the impact of attending ARVC educational offerings renews our energy and desire to keep finding ways to give back to the industry and 2020 is no different. With the impact of COVID-19 across our industry, this year we knew we had to find a way to

pivot our efforts and find ways to offer more to those looking for support in attending the 2020 Outdoor Hospitality Conference and Expo (OHCE)."

While there is no doubt OHCE2020 will look and feel different this year, due to the new virtual format, the ARVC Foundation realizes that the significantly lower price point offers the opportunity for so many in employee/team member roles to take part in the conference that may not have been able to in the past. With that, the ARVC Foundation is working to structure scholarships that serve both the owners/managers as well as the employees.

"There are so many opportunities for professional growth and learning at OHCE," says **Paula Horwitz**, executive director of the ARVC Foundation, "and, in years past, owners and managers had to make sometimes hard de-

isions about what sessions to attend. This year, however, the ARVC Foundation wanted to be sure to continue to support the owners and managers and maybe even lessen the burden more than financially! By offering scholarships to employee/team members, the ARVC Foundation will make it possible for owners to work with their team to spread out across the learning sessions, visit with more exhibitors and come back together at the end of each day with ideas that will continue to push their businesses forward."

The ARVC Foundation is looking forward to supporting more than 20 people to attend OHCE this year through both full attendee-priced scholarships as well as scholarships for those that would fall into the "add-on" or employee categories. Visit **ARVCFoundation.org** to learn more and apply for scholarships.



REGISTER FOR OHCE2020 AND DONATE!

From the COVID-19 pandemic to natural disasters, the impact on RV parks and campgrounds across the country in 2020 has been great. Here's a chance to help fellow park owners! To help those in need, ARVC will donate a portion of each full-price registration to the virtual 2020 Outdoor Hospitality Conference and Expo (OHCE) you purchase to the ARVC Foundation.

Finding Tranquility

In a year that has brought more than its fair share of challenges, we are all reminded—more than ever—how our campgrounds offer their guests a much-needed oasis of peace and tranquility. In this photo, the warm glow of a cabin set under a starry sky is reflected in one of four ponds at ARVC member-park **Country Bend Campground** in Litchfield, Ill. If you look closely to the left, you'll see the lights of a line of campers stretching into the distance. No wonder their owners were attracted to this serene setting.

*Country Bend Campground, Litchfield, Ill.
Photo Credit: Michael Crow*



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