

STS Member Spotlight:

Name: Sandra Killen Burroughs

Occupation (Title and Company): Executive Director of the Alabama Music Hall of Fame

City/State: Tuscumbia, Alabama

You were part of the 2012 STS Marketing College class. Seven years later, what do you still find yourself applying, from the classroom, to your work?

Marketing College was an extension and combination of my years in college and my career in tourism. The first year I was “sent” to Marketing College, I was skeptical thinking, “I have a degree in Marketing and Management and I already have all this knowledge, so why I am going to this Marketing College thing?” After I completed my first week of Marketing College, I cried the day we all left to go home. The number of friendships made are staggering and the knowledge gained was incredible because everyone there speaks the same language. There are 50-75 people in a classroom who all share the same career and after you have spent so much time with these new friends, you have 50-75 new partners to work with to help you advertise your destination. You feed off each other’s ideas and suggestions and the fact that so many situations are discussed we gained insight as to what others could see more clearly from the outside looking in at each situation. So, I would say the friendships and networking ability is the thing I use the most. When I talk to someone from the Class of 2012, I immediately feel excitement and a special bond that will forever be unique.

Another tool that I still use, may seem like a small-scale item but it is very effective, is having a binder, for each board member from my attraction, that is provided at every board meeting. Inside this binder contains the By-Laws and Rules as well as last meeting’s minutes and this meeting’s agenda. It’s an easy reference if anyone has questions. Plus, it looks much better on the board room table than just papers or a clipboard.



In your new role, one of the first things you did was renew the Hall of Fame's membership to STS. What inspired you to make this a priority and how does STS serve you?

Coming from a regional organization like Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, I know the importance of the power of numbers. The more involved you are regionally, the more chances your destination or attraction can gain exposure. Of course, the Alabama Music Hall of Fame has been involved with Alabama Mountain Lakes and STS for years but I feel that re-investing in a proven successful culture can only do more for our museum. When you are in the field of tourism, you are also in the field of sales. In sales, people do business with people they know and people they like. Being involved with STS will put the Alabama Music Hall of Fame into the minds of more people and once they see our amazing music museum, they are gonna love us!!!!

When we visit the Alabama Music Hall of Fame, what would we be most surprised to discover?

Well, the first thing people always say when visiting is "Wow I didn't know that he/she was from Alabama" and we have plenty of those surprises. We have juke box in the museum with 1,000's of songs that were written, produced, performed or played by Alabama artists. The list is so long and I spend lots of time flipping through those pages with excitement and wanting to hear this song and that song and then going back to my office and downloading those songs on Itunes.

The biggest find in the museum tends to be the (musical group) Alabama Tour Bus. Everyone walks through and visualizes Randy Owen and the boys traveling all over the US in this bus and asking, "How did they sleep in those bunks?" This usually brings them to wonder what buses of the stars today look like. Maybe one day we will have another bus to tour.

Have you always worked within Tourism? What is the path that got you to your current role?

My first job in tourism was actually at the Florence Conference Center (Florence, Alabama) which is now the Marriott Shoals Hotel, Spa and Conference Center. We were a stand-alone conference center hidden behind a hill off the beaten path. My job was sales and marketing and my budget was almost non-existent and this was way before internet. To say we were creative is an understatement. We managed to keep things afloat for 8 long years before a hotel was announced. After RSA built with Marriott Shoals, the rest is history. After that I worked in hotels, gaining experience with Hilton, Marriott and IHG Brand of hotels.

Then I ventured into event planning, before landing the dream of a lifetime with Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association. I was extremely fortunate to work there for over 10 years before accepting this position now with the Alabama Music Hall of Fame. To leave AMLA was one of the toughest decisions I have ever made in my life. The people at AMLA, and the membership of AMLA, have been home to me a long time and it was hard to imagine not remaining a part of this talented and loving family.

I have 2 favorite quotes. The first I heard once from Mr. Steve Harvey that says “Your faith has got to be bigger than your fear!” Those words stuck with me for a long time but then I heard another quote that says, “A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not why ships are built!!” It was those quotes that kept repeating in my head just before I applied for this new position.

Outside of the HOF, what other roles do you have that keep you busy?

Well, yes, I would say that I keep pretty busy and that is just fine with me. I am the Mayor of Lexington, Alabama, a small town just North of Florence Alabama just south of the Alabama/Tennessee state line. Population is 750 right now but we are working to grow more people, more businesses and more industry.

My husband and I enjoy traveling in our RV with our dog Max. We have a son who lives in Lexington, who teaches and coaches football and basketball. Of course, I don't think we need to miss *any* of his games. Our oldest son and daughter-in-law live in the Birmingham area and have blessed us with 3 of the most handsome and precious grandsons ever. Our daughter is in the field of nursing and lives in Little Rock Arkansas. And, we have one niece and two nephews that we try hard to spoil before sending them back home to their parents. I love my family and I love Lexington, Alabama.



Do you have a favorite vacation spot within the Southeast?

We have a summer lake house on the Tennessee River only about 12 miles from our home. We spend most of our summer there with family popping in and out when they can come for a visit. The time we spend on the river is so relaxing. Of course we take a trip to Gulf Shores or Orange Beach every year at some point with the entire family all crammed into one huge condo, which is always fun. But the most exciting trips for my husband and I are in our RV. We love our Alabama State Parks with Joe Wheeler State Park being our favorite campground. Last year we visited Gadsden, Alabama during “The World’s Longest Yard Sale” and stayed at River Country Campground. It was fantastic and we plan to go back again this year and take some friends with us and stay even longer.

Roll Tide or War Eagle?

ROLL TIDE BABY!!!!!!