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Contacts: Nancy Hamilton, Lee Rose, Katie Meckley (239) 338-3500

Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau announces new deputy director, tourism sales manager

LEE COUNTY, FL – The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB), representing The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in southwest Florida, welcomes two new members to its staff: Woodrow (Woody) Peek, Jr., deputy director, and Candice Cocco, tourism sales manager.

The deputy director is responsible for overseeing the sales, marketing, and communications functions of the VCB and assisting the executive director in other bureau operations. Besides planning, directing, and coordinating the VCB's activities and programs, Peek will also assist in developing the bureau's budget, supervise the daily efforts of the advertising contract, and develop multi-level campaigns.

In addition, he will manage sales, marketing, and communications staff efforts domestically and internationally, develop long-term strategic alliances both within the local community and globally, and work with the Lee County Port Authority to build demand for new and expanded air service. The position also entails overseeing the development of the VCB's creative work, including printed material, print and electronic ads, social media, and website development.

Peek is a senior-level marketing executive with 25 years of success in the travel and tourism industries. Most recently, he held the position of vice president tourism sales, marketing and membership development at the Palm Springs Desert Communities Convention and Visitors Authority. Among his duties, coordinating sales, marketing, and promotional efforts targeted at the leisure, incentive, and convention markets. In 1998, Peek created his own marketing firm, specializing in brand development and strategic planning for such clients as Munich International Airport, Bavaria Tourism Marketing, Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks, Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Gaylord Entertainment, Inc.

From 1986 to 1994, he was director, tourism marketing for the Tampa/Hillsborough Convention & Visitors Association. His many notable contributions to the association included initiatives to increase the local economic impact of tourism from \$47 million to \$108 million a year. This seasoned professional further polished his experience in the position of general sales manager at Opryland USA in Nashville, TN.

Peek is a graduate of Belmont University in Nashville, holding a bachelor of business administration in marketing degree.

The VCB's new tourism sales manager, Candice Cocco, will promote Lee County by focusing on generating business in the group market, including motorcoach tour operators and special markets, such as social, military, religious, and fraternal. Furthermore, she will advance individual travel to the leisure market by assisting with the development of travel packages and itineraries with accommodations, attractions, special events and festivals.

Cocco's responsibilities will also entail attending various domestic trade shows to meet with major producers/sellers of leisure travel business, in order to continually cultivate group travel for the benefit of the destination and its tourism industry partners. Another critical aspect of the position will be the development and the compilation of sales leads and marketing opportunities as a result of trade show participation and other activities for distribution to hospitality partners. Cocco will follow up with clients to evaluate conversion of leads and the effectiveness of trade shows and sales calls.

She brings to the VCB more than 20 years of wide-ranging managerial sales experience with the association, motorcoach, family reunion, and wedding markets. Cocco has a proven track record in negotiating with a variety of meeting planners and hoteliers, producing successful results.

Her strong sales background has benefited organizations such as the Marriott Hotel Corporation in New Jersey and New York, along with Baymont Inn & Suites and AmeriSuites Cingular Hotel, both in Georgia. Most recently, Cocco served as senior group sales manager for the Alpharetta Convention and Visitors Bureau in Alpharetta, Georgia, located in the Northern suburbs of Atlanta.

She earned a bachelor of science degree in resort and hotel management from East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania.

