

## WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU WANT TO VACATION

### Generating Leads Through Social Media

When the timeshare industry began, most prospects were contacted by direct mail. Over the years, marketing techniques encompassed telemarketing, shows, fairs, and off-premises kiosks. The world has an annoying habit of changing, and the effectiveness of old methods usually declines. If you're like most of us, you could probably check your mailbox once a month and not miss anything important, you don't answer your phone if you don't recognize the number, and you've figured out that those "free" Disney tickets aren't really free.

When the internet became widespread in the mid-1990s, timeshare developers tried to figure out how to utilize it for marketing purposes. In the beginning, email blasts were common, as were websites with special offers. But while there was a lot of talk about using the internet, one was hard-pressed to find many tangible success stories.

Along came Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook—and Instagram—and TikTok, and many platforms that those of us over 30 know nothing

about. People who check their mail once a month look at their phones every few seconds. And every time they touch a character on their keyboard, they divulge information about themselves, the kind of information that companies selling timeshare interests love to get. Do they like to travel? Where do they like to travel? Can they afford a luxury vacation product? When you posted that picture of you and your loved ones in Key West, a timeshare marketer took notice.

A decade ago, Jason Tremblay was selling used timeshare intervals. He is now CEO and co-founder of Seychelle Media, which since 2014 has generated nearly 12 million leads, mostly for timeshare developers. The *Chronicle's* conversation with Jason was fascinating, thought-provoking, and in some ways frightening, for Jason and people like him know an awful lot about us.

Social media prospecting is much more targeted than older methods. "We used to target by income ranges and zip codes," said Allan Guilbeault, Managing Partner of LGA

Media Group. "That's changed. The sites know so much about the users—not just their demographics but their buying habits and their travel patterns."

"We ask the client to give us the parameters of their ideal prospect," said Tremblay, who works with virtually every leading timeshare developer. "Ironically, sometimes the prospect they think they want is not what they really want. For example, the FICO score might be too high and therefore the VPG (volume per guest, the most commonly used measure of sales effectiveness) from those customers turns out to be low. We set parameters, create a landing page, typically for a mini-vacation offer, and funnel the company's targeted prospects to that page."

There is a great sensitivity around credit scores, which are not public information. When the issue generated a firestorm of controversy a few years ago, Facebook changed its policies, and credit scores are no longer available directly. But people who mine social media are resourceful and can generally

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Richard D. Sargent, President, Global Exchange Vacation Corp.



Jason Tremblay, CEO and co-founder of Seychelle Media



Brian Willette, Vice President of Sales, InnSeason Resorts

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acquire some indication of creditworthiness, even if they can't get it directly from the credit bureaus.

Using social media to generate leads is a matter of acting and reacting. "You can test and experiment very cheaply," said Guilbeault. "You can try to attract new audiences with a small budget, try different landing pages and different creative content. We can test to see what customers are engaging with."

When Seychelle begins working with a client, they employ its initial parameters to generate prospects and then evaluate the results. "I don't work well with anecdotes," said Tremblay, "I want data. If our clients share their data with us, we can fine tune our parameters and get them better prospects. We don't look strictly at the numbers; we use human judgment to balance the analytics."

While Seychelle has been mining social media for nearly a decade, most companies became active much later. They say luck is the residue of design, which proved true for Vice President of Sales Brian Willette and his team at InnSeason Resorts. At the beginning of 2020, they got serious about using social media. "We realized," said Willette, "we needed an increased digital presence. We had to meet people where they are, and these days they're on-line. We'd been events-based, doing shows and fairs and tele-sales, but the costs were escalating and the results were diminishing." He worked with Allan Guilbeault and his team to develop a strategy. "We had a widget," Brian said. "We needed a customer-facing brochure." Allan had no background in the timeshare business and no preconceived notions about timeshare marketing, which enabled him to take a fresh look at the entire process.

InnSeason was forced to jump into the deep water immediately, for when the COVID pandemic hit, most of their traditional marketing channels weren't available. There were no trade shows. There were no in-house tours. "We undertook this initiative 60 days before the onset of the pandemic," Brian said, "and the timing couldn't have been better. It helped us tremendously."

"We gave Allan the data on our owners and told him, 'Find more people like that.' People respond to the things they've always responded to. We offer a mini-vacation package and sell the experience of a trip. We tell them up-front that it's a timeshare presentation."

Precision targeting has provided InnSeason with a more receptive prospect. "Marketing can't be satisfied to just put a tour in the door," Brian said. "They have to produce a prospect who is prepared to listen to what the salesperson has to say." The show rate for InnSeason social media tours is roughly twice that of tours generated from traditional sources. VPG is also significantly higher, which Brian attributes to more precise targeting.

Andy Gennuso, President of Great Destinations, Inc. of Irvine, California, has been generating leads from social media and internet advertising since 2018. "I hired a 24-year-old internet whiz," he said, "and put together a program offering two-day trips and gift cards." The goals of Great Destinations are slightly different from those of InnSeason, since GDI prospects consist mainly of people driving to an off-site sales center rather than mini-vacation guests attending a presentation at a resort. "We geo-target within a narrow 30- to 50-mile radius of our sales center," Andy said. "We're looking for someone logged in at an

IP address within an easy drive of our facility." Like the others, he emphasized the more precise targeting of social media marketing. "When you do a show," he said, "you tend to get a certain demographic because of the type of show. A fishing show will attract one type of attendee, a boating show another type. You get what you get. With social media, we can choose an audience that represents the best customer we can find, based on income, job type, married versus single and, for us, people that visit a lot of travel sites."

"One of the keys for us," said Andy, "is how we respond to a lead, which goes to a call center. We found that it makes people nervous if we call them immediately, so we wait awhile. It's hard because today people just don't answer their phones. We tried a landing page but it didn't work as well, so we call."

GDI has found the cost of a social media lead to be much lower (an average of about \$2.50 per lead versus \$8-9 for traditional methods), but unlike InnSeason, they've had lower show rates.

Like everyone else, GDI is constantly re-evaluating and tweaking. "We change the ads," Andy said. "We use a different hook. If we're targeting families, we use an Orlando or Catalina Island package. And we still use our traditional methods of generating leads. When the malls and shows slow down, we pick up the social media side."

Geographic concentration has disadvantages. Global Exchange Development Company, which sells a vacation club product in Texas and California, also targets an audience near its sales centers. "The results are great at first," said CEO Rick Sargent, "but they run through the universe rather quickly and the leads tend to dry up." The situation is somewhat similar to farming, where the soil becomes depleted after a period of planting. Changing the pitch is equivalent to crop rotation, and equally as difficult.

Like any relatively new undertaking, those mining social media leads are learning something new every day. For Jason Tremblay, mining leads is his business, the focus of all his energy. For Brian Willette, Andy Gennuso, and Rick Sargent, it is the raw material of their business. They all see great potential in social media, as does just about everyone in the timeshare industry. Care to take a three-day, two-night vacation in Las Vegas? Just post a nice picture of the family standing in front of The Bellagio



Andy Gennuso, President of Great Destinations



Allan Guilbeault, Managing Partner of LGA Media Group



# It's All About Us

If a tree falls in the forest and there's no one around to hear it, does it make a sound? If we close a loan and no one knows about it, did it really close? Marketing is the task of letting the world know that a tree did indeed fall in the forest, and our marketing efforts let our world know what loans we're closing, how we run our business, and what we can do for you.

Under the skilled direction of Georgi Bohrod Gordon of GBG and Associates, we issue press releases, record videos, utilize social media, and recently we produced a book to commemorate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We're not a bureaucratic behemoth; our competitive advantage is personal service. We get out and about as often as we can, and take advantage of technology to tell people we can't meet personally what we're like and how we conduct our business. We've recorded brief videos on customer service, loan underwriting, and loyalty, which

we call Colebrook Conversations. You can watch them at <https://colebrookfinancial.com/events.html> and try to determine what happened to Tom. Past issues of the *Chronicle* are at <https://colebrookfinancial.com/newsletters.html> and a digital copy of our most recent and most ambitious undertaking, a book called *Colebrook Financial, 20 years of Success*, is posted at <https://colebrookfinancial.com/20th-anniversary-book.html>. Hard copies, the old-school version with a fancy embossed cover and lots of color pictures, were sent to many of our business associates. The book tells the story of Colebrook's origin as a company called Cross County Investment Associates and its development and evolution over the past two decades. Some of our early customers are profiled and an article titled, *A Tale of Three Companies (and Two Banks)* chronicles four relationships that have spanned the entire 20 years.



Georgi Bohrod Gordon, RRP/ Principal, GBG & Associates

We don't want to be that tree that falls unheard in the forest, so check out our website and see who we are and what we do. It's not really *all* about us. It can be about you, too. All you need to do is call us.



## Mark to Market: Mark Raunikar Answers FAQs



### What is a Milestone Inspection and How Might it Impact Florida Timeshare Associations?

In response to the collapse in 2021 of Champlain Towers South, a 12-story condominium located in Surfside, Florida, all condominium association buildings three (3) stories or taller in the state of Florida are now required to have a "Milestone Inspection", a structural review performed by a Florida licensed architect or engineer. All applicable buildings must have this inspection completed upon reaching the ages indicated below:

Within 3 miles of the coastline	25 years of age
More than 3 miles from the coastline	30 years of age
Buildings past their milestone year	by December 31, 2024

After the initial inspection, each building is required to have subsequent inspections every 10 years thereafter.

There are many timeshare associations established in the 1980's and early 1990's that are past their milestone year, and therefore will be required to have an inspection completed during the next 18 months. These are legacy resorts whose associations may not have the financial ability to absorb the cost of the inspections and the resultant needed initial repairs, or fund the additional reserves that the inspections may require for future repairs. Depending on the financial status of the association, a loan to the association might be an attractive alternative to special assessments. Colebrook has extensive experience in HOA lending and has helped many associations in need of capital improvements related to the modernization of its units and amenities, shortfalls in insurance coverage for disaster repairs, and other circumstances for which an association does not typically reserve.

In instances where legacy resort associations are struggling financially, milestone inspections may represent a tipping point, where the association cannot absorb the financial impact of the milestone inspection, and alternative uses for the real estate need to be considered. Over the last three years Colebrook has developed a niche business in providing financing to industry professionals who specialize in the re-purposing of timeshare resorts into whole unit condominiums, apartments, or vacation rental properties.

The advent of milestone inspections will present a financial challenge to some of the Florida legacy timeshare resorts. Colebrook's products and services could provide a solution for associations impacted by the new regulations.



## What's a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Race Like This?

What would possess an intelligent, educated, professional woman to willingly punish her body and push herself to the limits of endurance for the chance to earn a medal on a ribbon? To learn the answer, the *Chronicle* tracked down Cathy Leyden, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer of InnSeason Resorts (<https://www.innseason.com/>) and for several years an avid participant in an activity known as Spartan Races.

Cathy, a California native, graduated from San Diego State University with a degree in psychology and no firm plans. "All that psychology degree did was make me a better restaurant manager," she laughed. Cathy had bartended and waitressed her way through college, and after graduation she stayed in the business and became a manager.

We find our way to our life's destination in strange ways; Cathy's journey began when she moved from California to Massachusetts in 1999 to be with an airline pilot she was dating. The relationship didn't take wing, but Cathy fell in love with the East Coast and Massachusetts. She earned her MBA degree from Suffolk University and passed the CPA exam. After a short stint in Las Vegas, Cathy returned to Cape Cod and saw an ad for an Accounts Payable Clerk at InnSeason Resorts. Scott MacGregor, who was then InnSeason's CFO, liked Cathy but realized she was very overqualified for the accounts payable position. He created a new job—Budget and Business Analyst—and offered it to her. Once Cathy got her foot in the door, she rose successively from Budget and Business Analyst to VP of Finance, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Operating Officer.

Now that we've established Cathy's credentials as a sound, rational thinker, let's explain Spartan Races. There are different competitive levels, with events of ascending difficulty that involve not just covering relatively long distances but overcoming natural and man-made obstacles and performing arduous tasks, such as carrying heavy objects while climbing mountains. The Spartan Race website (<https://www.spartan.com/>) describes an event as one that will "reveal your true unbreakable potential one epic obstacle at a time." A representative post states: "2023 Winter Death Race: Only 3 souls standing after 50 Grueling Hours." Sounds like fun.

"I was looking for something to interest and motivate me," Cathy said. "I took up boxing, which was OK. I have bad knees, so



InnSeason CFO/COO, Cathy Leyden, braves fire, water and barbed wire in the Spartan Race.

marathon running was out." There had to be something else out there. Cathy had a friend in Killington, Vermont, birthplace of the Spartan Race, who asked her if she'd be interested in trying the variation called "The Beast," at that time the most difficult of all Spartan Races. "She said, 'You're in great shape. You should try it.' I figured why not start with the hardest."

In September 2012, Cathy Leyden, accountant, business executive, MBA, and mother, traveled to Killington to take on The Beast. The race covered 16 miles, encompassing three trips up and down the mountain while overcoming 30 obstacles. "I wasn't sure if I'd be able to finish," she said. "It was the hardest thing I'd ever done. But I made it. It took seven hours, but I finished. I stuck with my partner the whole time and we talked and kept encouraging each other. We did it together."

Once she started, Cathy kept going, running a number of races until a heart condition put an end to her Spartan career. She was ranked in the top ten women in the world for her age group, peaking at #6 in 2015. Her daughter has competed with her, including a memorable run at Fenway Park. "She's proud of me," Cathy said, "and tells me I'm an inspiration to her, in my career as well as my racing. She tells her friends about what I do. They probably think I'm crazy."

Cathy convinced Scott MacGregor, her former boss, to join her in a race in Las Vegas, which both finished. "I was nearly delirious at the end," Scott said, "but Cathy looked great.

She was almost glowing." "He *must* have been delirious if he thought I looked great," Cathy replied. "I was covered with *mud*."

Spartan Races are competitive, and the contestants are ranked, but it is more a matter of each individual competing against their own limits. "Everyone wants to win," Cathy said, "but no one is shoving each other aside to do it. There's an amazing camaraderie. We're always encouraging each other and if someone is sitting on the side, people always check on them and give them water or snacks." Over such a long period of competition, nourishment is critical. "When I race," she said, "I use protein bars and a high energy liquid, plus mustard packs for cramps."

The business world is competitive, but (hopefully) not in a physical manner. Spartan Races provide a different kind of competition, one that's allowed Cathy to test her limits and push herself almost to the point of exhaustion. "I'm very competitive," she said. "When I start something, I'm all in." Does anyone doubt it?



**Postscript:** After overcoming fire, ice, pestilence, and plague in the world of Spartan Races, Cathy was laid low by a flight of stairs. While recently carrying a laundry basket down the stairs at home, she slipped, fell, and severely broke her ankle. "At one point," she said, "my foot was no longer attached to my leg." She's been repaired, placed in a cast, and is recovering slowly, while pondering the irony of it all.

They say misery loves company, and Colebrook has its own Spartan Racer, Steve Stublarec, husband of Colebrook accountant Maria Stublarec. Steve is pictured here after a recent race at Palmerton, Pennsylvania.



# She Came to Stay

## Kimberly Tramontana of Breckenridge Grand Vacations

One day more than 20 years ago, Kimberly Tramontana left her native New Jersey to visit a friend in Breckenridge, Colorado. It must have been a good vacation because she's still there. "Technically," Kimberly said, "I guess I'm still on vacation. I met some great people and fell in love with the small ski town atmosphere of Breckenridge."

Kimberly spent about a year working for a resort in Keystone, and then, in 2002, applied for the Director of Reservations & Front Desk position at Breckenridge Grand Vacations. She'd had very little experience at that point, and although she was one of two finalists for the position, her competition had a lengthy resume and an impressive background with large hospitality companies. Kimberly didn't get the job, but the company was impressed by her enthusiasm and quick mind and asked if she'd like to get her foot in the door by taking a position at the front desk.

Kimberly took the job and soon after she put her foot in the door, it opened. The Director with the big resume left within six months, and Kimberly became the new Reservations Manager. At that point, BGV was growing rapidly, and it was becoming more difficult to operate under the existing structure. Kimberly and her supervisor at the time decided that the company needed an all-encompassing Owner Relations Department. With her supervisor's support, Kimberly wrote a proposal advocating the creation of the new department.

Some companies might view a business plan submitted by a relatively young manager as presumptuous and impertinent. But Breckenridge Grand Vacations encourages its employees and leaders to think about what they do, come up with ideas and, unlike many companies who say they encourage new ideas, the owners of BGV really mean it. They met with Kimberly, listened to what she had to say, and went through her proposal with the proverbial "fine-tooth comb." They liked it and decided to move forward. "And," they added, "we want you to manage it."

Kimberly ran the Owner Relations Department for ten years before becoming General Manager of the Grand Lodge on Peak 7 property, which was only partially opened at that time. During the opening weekend of one of the Lodge phases, Kimberly got a

phone call from one of the BGV partners. "It was 4:00 on a Friday afternoon," she recalled, "and the owners said they wanted to meet with me. I couldn't imagine what I'd done wrong. My supervisor had left the company and with the next phase of construction just opening, things were pretty hectic."

It turned out she'd done nothing wrong. "We conducted a national search for our next Vice President of Operations," said partner Rob Millisor, "and haven't found the person we want. You're not qualified, so you'll need a lot of growth and development, but we think there's no one better for the job." It was a wonderful compliment and expression of confidence. Who wouldn't be excited at the prospect?

However, Kimberly turned the job down, saying that she believed it was impossible to succeed in the position the way it was structured. That wasn't the answer Rob expected. But to the surprise of no one who knew him, Rob remained calm. He didn't ask her to leave. He didn't call her ungrateful or foolish. He asked her to give him a proposal encompassing her vision of what the position should be.

"They gave me the opportunity," Kimberly recalled recently, "to shape the role into something I could believe in. I knew they would listen because they're really good at listening." They did listen, and Kimberly accepted the revamped position, the one she currently occupies.

Kimberly is very active in ARDA and won a 2004 Gold Ardy and a 2005 Silver Ardy. In 2011, she received the ACE Women on Their Way award. She also serves on several local and industry Boards of Directors and is active in several charitable activities in the Breckenridge community.

The story of Kimberly Tramontana is a heart-warming tale of how a mixture of intelligence, initiative, and a little moxie can take someone from the front desk to an Executive-level career. But her story is more than that; it's testimony to the leadership philosophy of the owners of Breckenridge Grand Vacations. In the beginning, there



Kimberly Tramontana has made an impact on Breckenridge Grand Vacations Owner Relations for two decades.

were three BGV partners: Mike Dudick and brothers Mike and Rob Millisor. After Rob's tragic passing several years ago, the two Mikes have run the company in concert with Chief Operating Officer Nick Doran.

Smaller companies tend to be good at fostering a sense of employee togetherness, but many can't maintain it as they grow and become more bureaucratic. The close-knit culture of the small company that began in the 1980's still thrives in the entity that now encompasses three large resorts, with a fourth in the planning stage. A commitment to a healthy employee culture takes owners who react to someone turning down a seemingly terrific opportunity with curiosity rather than impatience. It takes owners who understand that the long-term value of talented, dedicated employees is more important than short-term cost savings.

BGV has been a Colebrook customer since 2009 and we've gotten to know the organization, its principals, and its employees very well over the past 14 years. What we've discovered is that everyone we encounter is competent, responsive, and *really* nice. We work with the same people year after year; there's very little turnover. "Our culture," said Kimberly, "is our greatest recruitment tool

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## 2023 Ernst and Young Survey Reports Timeshare Industry Rebound to Record Sales of \$10.5 Billion



The 2023 State of the Vacation Timeshare Industry, conducted by Ernst and Young under the auspices of the ARDA International Foundation, is hot off the presses, and the news is positive. Sales rebounded to the pre-pandemic high of \$10.5 billion (a 30% increase from 2021), the average sales price increased by 37% over the past two years, and rental income reached an all-time high. Fee-for-service arrangements played a greater role in 2022; the \$1.8 billion in sales represented a 64% increase from the previous year.

The respondents were weighted toward larger developers. While about 49% of total resorts reported, more than 90% of companies with 10 or more resorts responded to the survey. Since most smaller resorts are not in active sales, it can be assumed that the vast majority of sales taking place in the industry are accounted for.

The number of timeshare resorts has remained unchanged for several years. No new resorts were reported in 2022 and none are planned for the next 12 months. In 2022, 132 new units were built by the respondents in existing resorts, and 208 are planned for the next 12 months. Sales are generated from existing and re-cycled inventory, which invariably costs less than newly-constructed product. Although there is not a lot of new product coming

out of the ground, many units have been completely renovated and are of equal quality to new construction.


There are currently 1,541 resorts, with 24% of the total (367 resorts) located in Florida. Thirty-eight percent of the reporting resorts were mixed use properties, encompassing hotel units, fractional sales, or whole unit sales.

Forty-five percent of the resorts are in active sales. Thirty-two percent of all properties opened prior to 1985, and most of those do not have a sales presence. Of resorts that are not in active sales, an average of 33% of the inventory is owned by the HOA, compared to 3% in resorts that have a sales operation.

While the average sales price increased 37% in two years, maintenance fee increases were much less. The average fee increased 5.3% to \$1,170 per weekly interval in 2022, less than the 6.5% rate of inflation. The total increase over the past five years has been just 17%, despite labor shortages and persistent inflation. Older and smaller resorts tend to have lower maintenance fees. Resorts not in active sales, which average 50 units, have average fees of \$820, while those in active sales have an average of 159 units and an average maintenance fee of \$1,270.

Rental activity has become an increasingly important component of the time-

share business model over the past several years. Rental income was \$2.7 billion in 2022, a 21% increase from 2021 and more than the previous high of \$2.5 billion achieved in 2019. The average rental was \$235 per night and 22% of resorts reported occupancy of more than 90%. In the spirit of "if you can't beat them, join them," many resorts use services like Airbnb and similar sites to rent inventory. Rental income constituted a higher percentage of revenue for legacy resorts, which had more HOA-owned inventory.

How does all this affect Colebrook? First, the industry has bounced back from COVID, which is good for anyone financing receivables. We've seen a similar trend in our volume, which has come back to pre-pandemic levels. The second conclusion is that there appears to be a ripe market for Colebrook's repurpose financing. About a third of all timeshare resorts were placed in service prior to 1985, and the average legacy resort owns about a third of its inventory. Rental income has allowed most of these resorts to cover operating expenses, but some are facing a decision point, and as the percentage of HOA-owned inventory increases, they may need to consider an alternative use. To paraphrase an old Ronald Reagan saying, "We're from Middletown and we're here to help." 

## Congratulations!



Left: Tom and Anna Petrisko celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on July 11th with a vacation in France and Greece with their children Isabella, Mary, Sam and Georgia.

Center: The Raunikar family celebrates the wedding of their son Jason and Amanda Rodriguez at Walpole, New Hampshire in October 2022. Left to right are Brendan, Jane, Jay and Amanda, Mark, and Annie..

Right: On June 26, Michael Ryczek (son of Colebrook principal Bill Ryczek) and Elizabeth Rovito were married in a quiet ceremony in their hometown of Dedham, Massachusetts.



# We're Back

## Colebrook Holds Lender Education Seminar

After a three-year, COVID-induced hiatus, Colebrook conducted a Lender Education Seminar May 23, 2023 at the Inn at Middletown. An eager group of bankers soaked up talks on the state of the timeshare industry, re-purposing of legacy resorts, Colebrook's accounting and cash management functions, and the feature presentation by Kevin Jones and Roxanne Passarella, co-CEOs of Club Boardwalk Resorts in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Also in attendance were Club Boardwalk board members and seasoned industry veterans Bert Blicher and Jim Casey.

The Club Boardwalk executives, whose company owns and operates Flagship Resort, Atlantic Palace Resort, and La Sammana, took the attendees behind the scenes and explained how timeshare tours are generated, compared the quality of tours from various sources, and discussed the challenges associated with resort operations. They also spoke extensively of the company's re-branding program, highlighted by the introduction of Club Boardwalk, which enables owners to use any of the company's three properties.

Roxanne talked at length about the Atlantic City market and her extensive involvement in the local community. She is upbeat about the city's future, citing examples of new proj-

ects, such as a \$100 million indoor waterpark and the re-opening and expansion of several casinos. She also spoke of the labor shortage that plagues virtually every company in the hospitality industry.

While many people complained about the labor shortage, Roxanne took action. When the properties reopened after the pandemic, she pitched in and spent weekends at Flagship, the largest resort, changing sheets and pillowcases and cleaning units. She recruited her children and her 70-year-old mother as emergency housekeepers. Her efforts had a ripple effect, for when managers saw the CEO changing sheets, they weren't about to say it was beneath their dignity to do the same. Under questioning, however, board members Blicher and Casey admitted that they had not made any beds.

For the banking executives, who are most familiar with hypothecation receivable lending, it was an opportunity to see how those receivables are originated. They left with the conclusion most people have after learning how timeshare resorts operate. It's a very complex business with a lot of moving parts and one best left to the experts.

Bill Ryczek kicked off the session by presenting statistics and trends for the timeshare industry, courtesy of the American Resort

Development Association International Foundation. The most indelible impression from the presentation was the rapidity with which the industry bounced back after the pandemic. People were so tired of being confined and so eager to travel that as soon as they were sprung, they were sitting masked behind plexiglass partitions signing up to buy timeshare intervals. Kevin Jones said that while he hoped we'd never see another such event in our lifetimes, the pandemic gave him and his team time to revamp marketing methods and techniques without the pressure of day-to-day operations.

As it has been since the beginning of the U.S. timeshare industry, Florida remains the center of timeshare activity, with 30% of all resorts. Connecticut, with only one resort, stands near the bottom of the list.

Bill also spoke of the demographics of timeshare owners, who are younger than commonly believed, with an average age of 39. The evolving nature of timeshare offerings, with increasing flexibility and often with limited terms, has attracted younger buyers who don't want long-term commitments and pre-determined use patterns.

Financing the re-purposing of legacy timeshare resorts is Colebrook's newest product line. Mark Raunikar told the attendees (i) why

certain resorts should be re-purposed (or re-imagined); (ii) how the process works, and; (iii) how Colebrook provides financing. We have virtually no competition in this area, and it was evident from their reactions that we will not face competition from any of the bankers in attendance. They seemed quite content to have Colebrook take the early risk and get the loan to them once the burrs have been sanded off.

Melinda Miramant, Colebrook's Chief Financial Officer, explained to the attendees how money flows from our sources to our customers and back, with the bankers taking particular interest in how the

money got back to them.

Kevin arrived in Middletown early on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and, since he'd never visited the area, we gave him a brief tour of the Connecticut River Valley. We're accustomed to being toured around resort areas (like Atlantic City) and were happy to return the favor. We took Kevin to lunch at the venerable Griswold Inn in Essex, founded in 1776 and staking a claim as one of the oldest continuous operating

inns in the United States, and took a detour to the historic Goodspeed Opera House. There's a lot to see in Connecticut, and we might have added that while we don't have as many casinos as Atlantic City, ours are *really* big. We've got a beautiful shoreline that stretches for more than 300 miles. And our state university won the men's NCAA basketball title. With so many attractions, maybe Connecticut needs another timeshare resort.

After hearing Kevin and Roxanne explain how resorts succeed, perhaps some of our bankers will get the entrepreneurial itch and put some shovels in the ground. And if you need hypothecation financing, you know who to call.



*Kimberly Tramontana, continued from page 5*

and the key to employee retention. Employee referrals are our number one source of new hires, and engaged employees tend to stay. We're recognized as a top workplace on both a national and state level."

As the company expanded, Kimberly's role became more challenging and demand-

ing. "I had a lot on my plate," she said. "It was time for another reorganization within our resort operations division to create a new level of leadership, which would ensure that our resort-based employees receive the support needed to be successful. I'm proud to say we were able to fill all the new positions internally,

thanks to cultivating a strong bench."

That long-ago vacation changed a few lives. If Kimberly's friend had lived in Las Vegas rather than Breckenridge, where would she be today? They call it serendipity.