

Ambassadors Program to get more funding

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The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau is beefing up its Ambassadors Program with an investment of over \$700,000.

Founded around 18 years ago, the Ambassadors Program is comprised of professionals in and outside of Puerto Rico who serve as ambassadors for the island to help attract groups and conventions.

"There is always someone who knows someone who can help us attract conventions," said Ana María Viscasillas, president of the Puerto Rico Convention Bureau. "Ambassadors provide the essential contacts and leads that give Puerto Rico an advantage in the competitive world of convention site selection."

The Ambassadors Program has been a productive sales team for the PRCB representing up to 20 percent of total sales production.

The National Guard Association of the United States, which recently held its annual convention at the Convention Center, was achieved thanks to a member of the Ambassador Program. This convention generates \$10 million for the local economy. The upcoming United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce convention from Sept. 19-22,

which will generate approximately \$2.5 million and 4,037 room nights, was also possible thanks to an ambassador to the program, Luis Torres Llompart.

"In the world of professional associations, in order to ask the convention to come to Puerto Rico, there has to be a member who asks for it and that is what this program is about," said Viscasillas.

Chemist Graham Castillo, member of the Chemists Association, who has been a member of the Ambassadors Program since it started, has helped bring over 30 events to the island, both small and large. Thanks to the PRCB's presentation on Puerto Rico as a conventions destination, as recently as last month, Castillo managed to get the International Industry of Pure & Applied Chemistry to hold its convention here in August 2011. This convention will generate approximately \$1.6 million and 4,300 room nights.

With the newly revamped Ambassadors Program, the PRCB will not only help with the presentation but provide financial support.

"Our focus is to give ambassadors much more aid and support," said Viscasillas.

The program will focus on three elements: generating awareness of the impact of the program for the economy, recruiting poten-



PHOTO COURTESY TO THE STAR

From left are Carlos Diago, PRCB board member; Graham Castillo, ambassador for the PRCB; Ana Maria Viscasillas and Luis Torres Llompart, the ambassador who is responsible for the Hispanic Chamber convention coming here next week.

tial Ambassadors and recognizing their efforts.

The PRCB has invested almost \$300,000 in a comprehensive advertising campaign that will run in national and regional newspapers, magazines, radio and industry Web sites. Ambassadors will have a new Web site so they can access information, network and post feedback. They will also do a public relations campaign in New York, Miami, Chicago and Washington, D.C. to recruit new ambassadors. There will also be a scouting commit-

tee, comprised of executives, to help in the recruitment efforts.

"Their efforts can have a real impact on the economy-- for example, a convention of 500 people for four days can generate up to \$1.2 million in revenues," Viscasillas said.

There are currently 135 members in the Ambassadors Program and the goal is to reach 250 during this fiscal year. The PRCB believes these ambassadors can help them generate their goal of 250 conventions per year.