

DCVB's Sharon Dupont Earns 'Travel Marketing Professional' Certification from Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College

Sharon Dupont, Tour & Travel Manager at DeKalb Convention & Visitors Bureau, has earned certification as a "Travel Marketing Professional" (TMP) after completing the three-year program of the Southeast Tourism Society (STS) Marketing College.

Dupont was one of 64 new TMPs recognized at the STS spring meeting in Nashville, Tenn. STS Marketing College started in 1992, and 628 people have earned TMP certification.

The STS Marketing College is a professional development program that for one week each summer turns the facilities of North Georgia College and State University in Dahlonega, Ga., into a laboratory to teach tourism marketing.

Instructors are working professionals in the travel industry such as convention and visitors bureau executives, public relations practitioners, sales and marketing consultants and research experts.

"This is not another program like ours in the country; we are the envy of travel professionals in other regions," said Bill Hardman, president and chief executive officer of STS.

Tourism ranks as the first, second or third-largest industry in the 12 STS states that stretch from Virginia to Louisiana.

Course topics include special events marketing, media relations, tourism advertising, vacation research, crisis management, heritage tourism and community/rural tourism. After the classroom work, students also must complete a project that relates to their employment.

"Our curriculum is practical. What students learn can be put to use as soon as they get back to their workplaces," Hardman said.

The newest group of TMPs raised enough to fund nine scholarships for future STS Marketing College students.