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'Geocaching' pitched as idea to bring more tourists to area

Several ideas to attract additional visitors to the Indian Wells Valley were discussed during a meeting of the Ridgecrest Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau Board of Directors, held Monday morning. In fact board member Jim Davis, of the Carriage Inn, brought up several points of discussion, including capi...



By Jessica Shillings

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Ridgecrest, Calif.

Several ideas to attract additional visitors to the Indian Wells Valley were discussed during a meeting of the Ridgecrest Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau Board of Directors, held Monday morning.

In fact board member Jim Davis, of the Carriage Inn, brought up several points of discussion, including capitalizing on a new niche hobby known as "Geocaching," a "high-tech treasure hunting game throughout the world..." in which players find "caches" or hidden containers by following instructions given to them via GPS. The game currently has over 5 million players world wide.

Davis said he became aware of the game recently when his own staff began to talk about taking their families on searches for caches, thousands of which are located in the area. This game gave him an idea Davis said, why not set up a weekend Geocaching event in town and bring many of the players to Ridgecrest?

Davis said he imagined that the game, which could include prizes donated by local businesses, could be incorporated into the Wild Flower Festival set for spring 2011. This would attract even more visitors to the festival Davis said, meaning many would be staying in local hotels, eating at local restaurants and shopping in local stores.

Other members of the board agreed that an event of this kind might make Ridgecrest one of the first communities to embrace Geocaching in this way.

Davis made another suggestion after council member Chip Holloway, a member of RCAVB board, commended the local film commission office for the revenue it brings in every year from filming projects. Why not explore setting up some kind of client appreciation day Davis asked, or some other event that shows off what Ridgecrest can offer potential filming clients. Davis said that he once spent \$6,000 to organize a similar event when he managed a hotel in Palm Springs. That event netted him over \$50,000 in business Davis added.

Davis' comments came in response to Holloway. The council member said he'd been approached by an official from Barstow at a recent League of California Cities event. According to Holloway the Barstow official reiterated that he was "sick" of hearing about how successful the local office is, especially since Barstow itself is attempting to create an effective filming office too. The local office is successful both because of the unique locations in the area Holloway said, but also of the service they are provided by the Ridgecrest Area Film Commission, composed of Director

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Doug Lueck and Administrative Assistant Virginia Sanders.

Lueck too gave a report, stating that he'd had several conversations with different professionals recently about a branding and advertising campaign for Ridgecrest. What has become obvious to him is that branding the community will be a long process, Lueck said, and something that it is important to "get right the first time."

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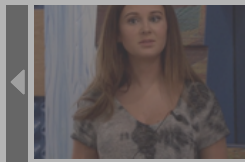
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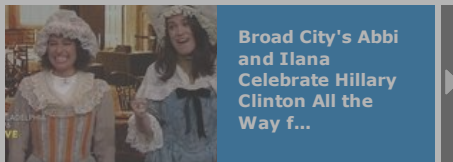
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