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## Destination-management firm handles details

By KEVIN POST  
Business Editor

When companies and other organizations visit Atlantic City, they usually want more than rooms, meals and entertainment.

Maybe they want a team-building exercise, a themed dinner or an off-site group event.

Whatever they desire, Barbara Flamenbaum's destination-management company, Atlantic City Ambassador, will plan it, arrange the services and oversee it. (Her Ventnor company is unrelated to the yellow-shirted Boardwalk Ambassadors prominently deployed this year to help visitors.)

General Electric, for example, often wants themed dinners for staff gatherings in Atlantic City.

"One year they wanted a tropical Hawaiian-themed dinner, which we did at a casino," Flamenbaum said.

### Atlantic City Ambassador

Location: 718 N. Little Rock Ave.,  
Ventnor

Owner: Barbara Flamenbaum,  
61, of Ventnor

Started: 2007

Employees: Owner-operated,  
with 25 independent contractors  
Phone: 609-822-0077

"We provided a Hawaiian show, Hawaiian music, centerpieces, decor, and had a Hawaiian girl presenting leis (flower necklaces) to everyone as they came into the room."

Or a group might want a "dine-around" program, its members splitting up to visit a variety of restaurants in the area. "So I'll have a staff of 15, with 15 vehicles, working with 15 different restaurants to handle the seat-

ing, menus, billing, every detail," she said.

Last year, financial-information firm Dun & Bradstreet wanted a classic Atlantic City supper club experience, so Atlantic City Ambassador arranged for impersonators of Rat Pack members such as Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr., period decor and a recreational casino — all in less than two weeks, Flamenbaum said.

This month, the candy maker Mars Inc. wanted a team-building exercise at Stockton Seaview Hotel & Golf Club in Galloway Township, so she customized a version of one of her more popular activities — the Boardwalk scavenger hunt — for 20 teams of more than 10 people each.

According to the Association of Destination Management Executives International, destination-manage-

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## Ventnor company puts events together quickly



Press photo by Sean M. Fitzgerald

Team members Silvia Hennaway, of Toronto, Canada, left; Shawnette Petty, of Waco, Texas; and Jim Kopsafitis, of Glen Gardner, Hunterdon County, work together on a photo scavenger hunt team-building exercise hosted by Ventnor-based Atlantic City Ambassador on June 13 at Stockton Seaview Hotel & Golf Club in Galloway Township.

## Details

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ment companies use extensive local knowledge in designing programs and overseeing logistics, services and suppliers. They also make accounting easier by consolidating the billing of all vendors.

The nonprofit association accredits destination-management-certified professionals, of which there are 142 in the United States and five in Canada and Puerto Rico.

There are just two with the designation in New Jersey; the association said, both working the Atlantic City area. In addition to Flamenbaum and her

Ventnor business, Dorothea Heck operates Destination Philly A.C. in Atlantic City.

Flamenbaum said she is also president this year of the New Jersey South chapter of the International Special Events Society.

That organization, founded in 1987, also includes providers, entertainers, hospitality professionals and others among its 3,700 members worldwide.

Flamenbaum, 61, of Ventnor, said she spent six years working on special events at the former Sands Hotel & Casino, until she and many others were laid off as the property headed for eventual closure in 2006



Flamenbaum

and demolition the following year.

After working for another destination-management firm, she decided to start Atlantic City Ambassador in 2007 — shortly before the start of the severe recession.

She said that almost caused her fledgling firm to fail.

"Thank goodness after I started I had one good event client that made 2007 a good year. All it takes is one good client," Flamenbaum said, declining to name the client.

From there she built a client list that also includes Morgan Stanley, utilities, Johnson & Johnson, and carmakers Mercedes-Benz, Honda and

Toyota. She also developed a network of independent contractors to provide the needed services and supplies.

Good relations with contractors is essential to handle the most common challenge in the business — delivering an event on short notice, she said.

Flamenbaum said that a few hours before her interview with this newspaper, she got a call requesting a golf outing and show offense for 25 people — to be held in 10 days.

"I don't mind last-minute events. They're definitely double. We have many wonderful vendors and we're very resourceful," she said.

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