

Judges Share “Aha” Moments

TIAK was honored to have three very well-qualified marketing experts judge this year’s marketing award entries. The decisions are never easy, so we’ve asked them to share some of their “aha” moments and insights from 2019.

Judge #1: Laura Lynch, Owner/Chief Creative Strategist, Lynchpin Ideas LLC

Never underestimate the creativity of local tourism organizations! It doesn’t take a slick campaign — or the large amount of money to produce one — to effectively execute a good idea. I saw so many organizations who put thoughtful consideration, and a fair amount of ingenuity, into developing a good idea and solid execution that delivered real results...within a modest budget.

Well-stated goals matter. The entrants who scored well did so in large part because they clearly thought through the goals of their effort from the get-go and articulated as much. We in the business of advertising and communications know setting defined goals is essential to the success of ANY initiative, be it launching a campaign or telling people about a new amenity in their community. And finally, Number

As a whole, Kansas Tourism is killing it. I witnessed good ideas, thoughtful initiatives, authentic messaging, interesting content and other “I want to check that out!” moments unique to your communities.

Judge #2: Jake Huyett, Senior Strategist, jhP

I’ve been on judging panels for advertising awards submissions a number of times in my career, but the TIAK awards were different for me. I have had the privilege of working with and getting to know the members who submitted the entries. I understand the hard work and passion they put into their efforts. It was a pleasure to review the great body of work created to promote the communities in our state.

Judge #3: Katie Olsen, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, KSU A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Judging for the Travel Industry Association of Kansas is a breath of fresh industry air every year. It is invigorating to see what communities across Kansas are doing to educate and promote their areas to potential visitors. My passion is strategy, and we saw a lot of important creative decisions being made based off of relevant research and progressive goals. Showing the importance of strategy behind everything—from visitor guides to billboards to online consumer engagement opportunities—proves that TIAK members across the state are putting resources and efforts into growing revenue in our great state. It was a pleasure participating in the 2019 TIAK Marketing Awards, and I’m looking forward to seeing the continued strategic growth next year.

Retiring CVB Director Looks Back on Career

After 13 years with the Dodge City Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Jan Stevens is retiring.

Stevens began her career with the city as the Director of the CVB, after serving as the District Manager for the Kansas Lottery in the southwest region of Kansas for more than a decade. “At that time, my daughter had graduated from High School and had moved to Manhattan, and this position had opened up, and I thought to myself- I think I’d be good at that!”

Stevens stated she’d grown up in Dodge, and always had a love of the community. “Being a part of all the changes in the community has been extremely rewarding. When I came to work for the CVB the Casino was just being debated, there was no Events Center or Expo, the swimming pool was still near the Civic Center, and no thought of a Distillery or Brewery, but the visions for greatness was definitely there.”

Being part of propelling Dodge City into a first-class tourism destination has been one of her greatest joys. “The CVB offices were nestled in the Visitors Center on Wyatt Earp, with five staff members in a building that was really made for only two. We had the Trolley operations going in the summer, and had the building open year-round, but not near the activity we see there today.”

At that time the budget was somewhere around 400 thousand and storage for brochures, and other items were in the garage at the old city hall building (that is now where the Distillery’s kilns are located). Today, a vibrant tourism community exists, a community that has more than you can possibly do in one week. Events are happening on a daily basis, conference are multiplied by 10 than what they used to be, and the Casino, Events Center, Expo Center, Water Park, Distillery and Brewery really did happen!

“There were some fantastic things in place already, and the team at the CVB promoted, supported, embellished, modified, refashioned and reinvented programs to fit the needs of the growing community’s tourism offerings. Programs set in place by previous directors made her job a bit easier. Nancy Trauer was a master at historical facts, and she had historical markers and the trolley tour already in place, she was also the person who had the Visitors Center built, and it has been a great asset to the community. Andy Stanton had some great talents in design, and he created the early website and started some of the early creative pieces that were used in the beginning. All of that was good foundations for what we are continuing to do today.” Stevens said, “I still touch base with both of them from time to time.”

Today, there is a strong staff working together, connecting with the community, across the state, and globally to form partnerships to make Dodge City the best place to be, and letting travelers know all the exciting things about us. She cites the community and her staff for the successes and said that they were the ones who made her job easy. “My job was to showcase what the community had to offer; I think the CVB did that well. We all worked together to make sure Dodge City was recognized across the nation and to the international traveler as well. There are some very capable people in place to carry on what the vision of the community is,” says Stevens, “and to continue to tell the story of the legend of Dodge City, and the fun and excitement we have to offer today. I’m leaving the department in good hands.”

As far as the future of tourism and plans for the CVB, Stevens says that The CVB will be completing the marketing study by the end of October and will hopefully have the next phase of the project completed by the end of the year. “I’m excited to see this come to fruition and look forward to seeing the changes that will be put in place for 2020, it’s been something we’ve been working on for quite some time, and it’s been an exciting project for me to be involved in.”

“I feel like I’ve done what I set out to do, I’ve met some great people and made some life- long friends. I’m still going to be involved in the community and have some on-going involvement on the state level. We’re in a good place, and it’s time for me to spend a little more time with my family and will see if there is something else out there that I can’t resist being connected with.”

As Stevens leaves her position, she leaves a long list of associations and personal accomplishments. She has earned her Certified Public Management Certificate, and Kansas Destination Specialist Designation, has served as President of the Travel Association of Kansas and Wild West Country, and as an executive board member of the Governors’ Council on Travel and Tourism. She has been a recipient of the Dodge City Chamber of Commerce’s Bronco Buster Award, the Kansas Sampler Difference Making Leadership – ‘We Kan’ Award and serves as a Board of Director member of Dodge City Chamber of Commerce, Festivals of Dodge City, Kansas Cowboy Hall of Fame, Humanities Kansas, and many other statewide and community organizations, events and committees.
