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U.S. Open will bring a bounty of big business to Pierce County

Corporate hospitality packages offering tents, suites, rooms and tables range from \$6,000 to \$235,000 for 2015 golf tournament at University Place's Chambers Bay

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Danny Sink, director of the 2015 U.S. Open, visits the planned location of the corporate hospitality village, last week on Chambers Bay.

PETER HALEY — Staff photographer [Buy Photo](#)

Where golf and business meet, money flows.

As business warms to the realization of a U.S. Open golf tournament in Pierce County 16 months from now, money jumps.

Already the 5,000-strong stable of volunteer applications is full, and a waiting list has been established.

Already Mimi Griffin of the event marketing firm MSG Productions has sold several “corporate hospitality”

packages offering tents, suites, rooms and tables — at a cost of between \$6,000 and \$235,000 — where multinational, national and local businesses will entertain guests at next year's gathering in University Place.

Some packages remain, including four at the top-price Platinum level, each offering a private tent, 100 daily Open tickets, parking for 40 VIP guests, food and beverages, branding opportunities and a view from the 18th hole.

"It's such a pleasure selling in this area," Griffin said last week. "When we sell in New York, if they're not interested they'll just hang up. Here, they are the nicest people. If they say no, they'll give us referrals to people who might be interested."

ONLY OPTION

"If you want to be on-site, this is the only way — to go through the USGA," said Danny Sink, director of the tournament.

Other promoters, Griffin said, are marketing corporate hospitality packages for the event. The hospitality they will present, however, will not occur at Chambers Bay, site of the actual Open.

"A lot of companies, they fall for the sales pitch and they buy something that will not be on-site," she said. "There are several companies that have bought from these off-site companies. There's nothing illegal about what they're doing, but it might not be clear that what they're purchasing is not at Chambers Bay."

"This is something that will sell out. We don't want a local company to be left out," said Sink.

Of the volunteers, he said, "It's unprecedented that we reached that number of applications in 36 hours. We have 5,000, and 2,000 on the wait list that will close soon."

PACKAGES

Of 15 Platinum packages, four remain for sale at \$235,000. At the Gold level, three remain. The one-day Puget Sound Suite package has been sold out for the Friday of the tournament.

Packages are available for the full run of the Open or on a day-by-day basis. Along with tables, chairs, TV monitors, food and beverages and a chance to play golf at Chambers Bay — that's at the highest levels — buyers can expect a chance to network with clients, reward top employees and especially expose their brands to a wider world.

Griffin would not disclose the names of companies that have already purchased space, but she did note that major USGA sponsors include American Express, Chevron, Rolex, IBM and Lexus.

"We started selling last spring," she said. "We're less than a year into the sale process, and we are trending very well."

The market, she says, is something of a mystery.

"It's not one we know well," she said. "We have been surprised. We want to make sure that any companies of any size can participate."

"This is going to sell out," said Sink. "This is an opportunity for a local company — this is going to be the biggest event that has ever come to Pierce County."

"We feel like our smaller options are going to be the sweet spot," Griffin said. "In New York, tents were the most popular. Here, we have new options, such as the Puget Sound Suites."

That's where \$118,000 buys the full tournament, while \$21,300 will get you a suite for Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, and \$33,300 buys Thursday, Saturday or Sunday.

Sorry. Friday is already fully booked at the latter level.

LOCAL PROMOTERS

“This is going to be three times as big as the Super Bowl in terms of visitors,” said Shelly Schlumpf, president and CEO at the Puyallup Sumner Chamber of Commerce.

“Businesses can hook up at the event. They’ll visit hotels and restaurants. The other piece — when you go into those tents, you’ll be meeting with other businesses. Some of those businesses from outside of the area might think about relocating here. You have to look beyond the event. That’s where the real impact will come.”

“It goes back to exposure,” said Bennish Brown, president and CEO at the Tacoma Regional Convention & Visitor Bureau. “It will be like turning the faucet open for exposure to the Pierce County area, the South Sound.”

Like Sink and Griffin, Brown agreed about the opportunities that will be offered to businesses that use the Open to promote themselves.

“I think there’s an opportunity for business at all levels,” he said. “For corporate relocations, those leaders are going to be here. It will be a good opportunity for us to show a place where people can live, work and play.”

After the tournament, he said, the work will continue at the bureau and at other economic development engines in the area.

“Our job will be to get the people to come back,” he said.

ANYONE CAN PLAY

“Our job is to sell,” said Griffin. “Whether it’s a \$30,000 or a \$250,000 package, they all get the same attention. We tell people that this is an opportunity to establish relationships. If I’m going to spend tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars, I want a chance to spend time with guests. This gives you an entire day. You can have a private facility or a table in a communal facility.”

She said her primary target for sales is the financial sector, where some 25 percent of packages will be sold. Insurance and business services come next, at upward of 15 percent each. Law firms trail with 10 percent of all package sales.

“We’ve had used car dealers, even a movie theater chain,” she said.

Anyone interested in more information can contact Griffin through the MSG Promotions website, msgpromotions.com.

She noted that the typical ratio of corporate hospitality buyers locally based runs at 60 percent versus 40 percent national and international buyers. Twenty years ago, the ratio settled in at 85 percent local, with 15 percent national and international.

“Now you’re getting a lot of national companies who see clients from around the world. I expect more national business here,” she said.

But she emphasizes that room remains for the participation of local businesses.

Not bashful to amplify and not shy to extol, she said, “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

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