

Women in CARWASH



9th BI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By Gretchen Matthews

Another Opportunity to Grow and Connect – The 9th Women in Carwash Conference

Attendees from nearly 40 companies came to the Ocean B Resort in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, from across the U.S. and Canada to engage for two and a half days in meaningful discussions and workshops that enriched their minds, hearts, and spirits.

On January 15, Sonny's hosted Women in Carwash for a first-time onsite visit to its CarWash College in Tamarac. The large group met Sonny's instructors, toured the tunnel, and saw the state-of-the art equipment labs and learning environments. Sonny's teaches 1,000 students annually in maintenance, repair, and management.

Participants returned to the Ocean B Resort for opening night cocktails and dinner, followed by the keynote. In her address, "The Power of My Perception," Katie Balash, president and CEO of Vaughan Industries, Inc. shared that many years of experience have taught her when to invest time and energy in professional endeavors, and when to step back. She encouraged each woman to recognize and honor her own talents and power.

On day two, some attendees met for the first of two morning yoga sessions led by Amy Boudreau, aka The Yoga Cop, a Toronto police officer who conducts trainings throughout North America on health and wellness techniques to lessen stress in the workplace. Later, Boudreau also hosted

the "Carwash Safety" workshop with tips for crime prevention and self-protection. Her focus, combined with Balash's remarks on perspective, dovetailed nicely to create an emerging theme for the conference over the next two days: Self-care.

Connie Lee-Bennett, a life coach with Meraki Training Academy, picked up the unplanned theme. She centered her remarks in the first general session around the concept of vulnerability, and asked participants to consider the limiting beliefs they carry that are holding them back. In the second general session, Lisa Romaniuk, a psychologist in private practice, spoke on "Why You Should Make You and Your Wellness a First Priority." She shared personal experiences of having overextended herself for what seemed like good reasons, only to become very ill. Now fully recuperated, she emphasizes the need for personal care. She taught attendees to rate their own health in six core areas: Stress management, physical wellness, mental and emotional wellness, spiritual wellness, relationship wellness, and priorities.

Small-group workshops also kept participants fully engaged. Diane Stafford of UpTalent Solutions returned to Women in Carwash to teach Predictive and Emotional Intelligence, methods of using workforce data to optimize efficiency by uncovering the unique strengths of each team member. Julie Graff of DRB also returned to share insights on beating the social media algorithms. Jessica Lodispoto a partner in both Car Wash King and Car Wash Kingdom taught attendees how to read and understand financial statements and spreadsheets. Herb Alston of Canyon Pacific Financial Services provided an overview



of what's needed to purchase a carwash. Kelsey Roberts of Welcome Mat spoke on creating community engagement through strategic marketing strategies and communication technologies. Martina Hopkins from PayChex leads a team of more than 100 human resources professionals; her seminar focused on the ever-important topic – handling sexual harassment. Another human resources speaker, Mary Adams from the Employee Relations Group, covered hiring. And finally, I taught a workshop on special-interest techniques for business writing.

As is now tradition, participants dressed in their 70s and 80s gear and enjoyed a dance party on the second night of the conference. Conversation flowed freely; it seemed that just 24 hours into the event, there were no strangers in the room. Or, as Penny Clarke from Mister Auto Wash said,

"I'M THE ONLY WOMAN IN MY ORGANIZATION AND ALTHOUGH I CAME ALONE, I [DIDN'T] FEEL ALONE. EVERYONE IS SO WELCOMING, AND THE WORKSHOPS ARE FABULOUS."

Others shared similar praise:

"YOU FEEL SUPPORT AND LOVE AND EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GO TO THE NEXT LEVEL."

Ciara Gonzalez, Big Dan's Car Wash

"IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY BEEN, HERE'S WHAT I HAVE TO SAY YOU SHOULD ALREADY BE HERE! IT'S A FABULOUS EVENT WHERE YOU CAN CONNECT WITH OTHER LIKE-MINDED WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY AND IT REALLY FEELS EMPOWERING TO BE SURROUNDED BY THESE WOMEN, AND IT'S FABULOUS!"

Carly Klein, El Car Wash

"I'M LEAVING THE WOMEN IN CARWASH CONFERENCE WITH MORE KNOWLEDGE, CONTACTS, CONNECTIONS, CONFIDENCE, AND THE DESIRE TO GROW MORE IN THE CARWASH INDUSTRY."

Amy Olson, WashCard

The conference finale was lunch and an executive panel moderated by Katie Balash and featuring four industry leaders with different backgrounds and experiences:

Megan Davis, maintenance director for three Ultra Clean sites; Kelly Maria, vice president of operations for Mark VII Equipment; Kati Pierce, president and chief revenue officer of Sonny's; and Hannah Skaanland, CEO of Elephant Car Wash. Their insights and stories motivated the group to keep striving to meet the goals they'd set for themselves.

As attendees gathered up their suitcases and headed for the airport, they snapped

pics and bid fond farewells "until next time!" – the 10th conference at the Hilton Salt Lake City Centre, June 16-18. At Women in Carwash, there are no goodbyes, just more opportunities for growth and connection. **C**

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