

Insider

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Cedar Falls, Waverly and Waterloo Editions

By Kim Burger

As you know, the nurturing of a warm and welcoming environment in our community is of vital importance to the Visitor Bureaus. That's why we often times bring in speakers to provide hospitality training sessions, generally during May, which is Tourism Month; and why we offer customer service training for frontline employees who interact with visitors on an ongoing basis.

We were recently extremely pleased to learn that a number of departments within the University of Northern Iowa have banded together to make improvement of the services they deliver to their customers (students and their families, staff and faculty, visitors to campus, alumni, community members, etc.) a focus for the coming year. A committee was formed and discussions yielded three clearly definable desired outcomes: 1) introduction of the concepts of customer service, 2) measurement of the project's impact illustrated by pre- and post- testing through surveys, and 3) creation of an ongoing resource base for customer service training through the university's Human Resources Department. This project has aptly been titled, *Service Speaks in the Cedar Valley: Caring for Our Customers, Clients, and Guests*.

After a good deal of thought and research, the committee made arrangements to bring two nationally known experts in the field, Nancy Friedman and Holly Stiel, to campus to present training sessions in January and March. As excitement for the project grew, members of the committee began to think of the additional impact their project could have if it were expanded to the community at large.

Details were shared with and quickly understood by the Cedar Valley Chamber of Commerce, Hawkeye Community College, University Book and Supply, and the Waterloo and Cedar Falls Visitors Bureaus, and we all immediately signed on to become partners. The Bureau's had also, with assistance from the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association, made arrangements to bring Mr. Rob Bell, another well-known provider of customer service training to the Cedar Valley on Thursday, May 8th, as a part of our Tourism Month celebration. What a great opportunity to work together to make doing business in and visiting the Cedar Valley a positive and memorable experience.

Nancy Friedman is the first of our experts to make her appearance and it's just around the corner, so we invite you to act quickly. Ms. Friedman will on campus Wednesday and Thursday, January 16th and 17th. She will teach us to be an Island of Excellence in an Ocean of Mediocrity. Ms. Friedman comes to us with exceptional credentials, having appeared on programs with Colin Powell, General Norman Schwartzkopf, Ken Blanchard and many others. She has also appeared on the Today Show, Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, CNN, Fox News and the The Oprah Show. During the 16th and 17th, four identical one-hour presentations will be offered – Wednesday at 9:30am and 3pm at Maucker Union Ballroom and Thursday at 1pm in the Commons Ballroom and 7pm in

the Great Hall of the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. Sessions are free, and open to all who are interested, however tickets are required. We encourage you to act quickly and call 273-6899 to secure your tickets.

Another great feature of this project is a weekly email with tips for improvement of customer service. This service is also free and can be easily subscribed to by contacting Matt Sieren at 273-6899 or theatred@uni.edu. Service Speaks is a wonderful project and we strongly encourage you to take full advantage of it.