



CVB Introduces New Director



It has been said that you can take a boy out of Texas, but you can't take Texas out of the boy. This is definitely true when speaking of Shenandoah's new Convention and Visitors Bureau Director.

Austin-native John Mayner is returning to his Texas roots after leaving in 2011 to become the Vice President, Marketing and Communications for the Little Rock (AR) Convention and Visitors Bureau. In Little Rock, he led

the 12-person marketing and communications division and served as a member of the bureau's executive team, reporting directly to the president and CEO. In this position, Mayner managed the \$1.5-\$2.5 million department budget and the development of all advertising, branding, public and media relations for the bureau and its clients.

During his tenure there, he helped lead the bureau through its major rebranding initiative, oversaw media relations efforts for several of the destination's major events, including the grand re-opening of the city's Robinson Center and tenth anniversary celebration of the opening of the Clinton Presidential Center, and hosted several major media tours which helped garner the city numerous national accolades.

In his new position with the city, Mayner will manage an almost \$1 million budget as Shenandoah CVB Director. At the current time, he will oversee one employee, a Tourism/Marketing Specialist. But the future is a moving target for him and his staff. "For several years, the Shenandoah CVB has been without a seasoned director," said City Administrator Kathie Reyer. "We have not had the benefit of an industry veteran to help us focus on how we market and promote the city. John is being tasked with just that --- looking at and developing a marketing plan that will utilize our CVB to its maximum benefit for the city, residents and business partners. We are excited that someone with his experience and expertise was looking to return home to Texas at the same time City Council was supporting changes in the CVB status quo."

Mayner brings more than 20 years of varied experience to his new job. In the mid-90s, Mayner served as the Director of Communications and Visitor Development for the Grapevine CVB where he raised the city's profile locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Those efforts helped the city dramatically increase attendance for its major events, established the city as a wine destination and helped to raise the national profile of the Texas wine industry.

For more than 10 years, Mayner was the Principal and President of Smith-Robert Inc., a full-service marketing firm in the Dallas area. As the founder of the company, he provided strategic counsel, services and support in the areas of advertising, branding, public relations to a diverse client list, including numerous travel and tourism accounts,

non-profits, professional services companies, such as American Express, Half Price Books, Cheetah Conservation Fund and the Fort Worth Zoo.

In 2008, the City of Mesquite and the Mesquite ISD created a new Marketing Manager position to help them reposition the city and district, not only with its residents, but also with many audiences and key publics outside the city. That initiative was known as Project Renewal. In that role, Mayner oversaw all advertising, branding and media relations for the city's Project Renewal initiative, the CVB and the Real.Texas.Festival. With the talents he had acquired in his own business, Mayner developed a marketing communications plan and worked very closely with numerous city departments, the school district, the CVB and local chamber to promote the progress and accomplishments that they were making. Those efforts received several local and national awards.

And then, Mayner saw an opportunity in Little Rock and he accepted his next challenge. He is especially proud of his seven-year tenure there.

"Doors opened for new opportunities and challenges in Little Rock," he continued. While in Little Rock, Mayner was asked to attend the UNESCO World Heritage Forum in Atlanta where, working with both Georgia State and the Alabama Department of Tourism, he was able to help create a Little Rock section on their U.S. Civil Rights Trails program. His work and expertise helped Little Rock gain three additional attraction sites for inclusion in the initiative.

Other programs in Little Rock that Mayner is proud of include developing a mutually beneficial partnership with the Arkansas State Parks and Tourism Department and their advertising agency to secure and share new video assets at no cost to the bureau, and then utilizing that footage and securing the rights to a hit song to create an exciting, new destination video. Additionally, he also worked with PBS Travel Host, Darley Newman, Brand USA and Travel South to significantly expand the city's reach and exposure for all it had to offer via their numerous media channels and programs.

"I had the opportunity to do so many things. We were always working to reposition the city, improve our branding and marketing efforts and share the story of Little Rock and Arkansas with new audiences. It was exciting and busy, and I had a wonderful team and colleagues. But, as more time passed, I found I missed being near my family in Texas, and I needed some time to recharge and find a new challenge," he said. "The opportunity to relocate here, closer to my family, and to have a relatively free hand to develop a new program was very appealing. Now that I am here and got onboard in time to help with the Stagg Bowl, I find myself thinking of all kinds of new possibilities — and I can't wait to see where this road leads me, the CVB and the City of Shenandoah."

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