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Student tours is an essential market in Fairfax County, Virginia and contribute greatly to our hotel sales every year due to our proximity to Washington, DC. The most popular time of year being in the Spring when students swarm to the United States Capitol to see in person what they have

been learning in their US History class throughout the year. This student travel brings history to life, allows for personal and educational growth of the students, and also greatly contributes to the local economy. For these reasons, attaining my CSTP and being able to support student tour operators in their mission of bringing tours to the Capital Region and Fairfax County, seemed like a very valuable use of time.

Gaining knowledge on how suppliers and tour operators can be the best possible partners in sharing information was what I was expecting to gain out of my CSTP. Not only was this information made available but I gained something else that I would not have expected out of a certificate. This came in the form of volunteering for the Hospitality and Volunteer Committee for SYTA.

To make the conference run there are 292 volunteer positions that need to be filled. It is up to the Hospitality and Volunteer Committee to make sure that these positions are manned, that they have the correct instructions in their position, and that the conference continues running smoothly thanks to these volunteers help. On this committee we have tour operators, hoteliers, destination sales managers, and attraction representatives. The relationship of this committee is ongoing throughout the year by conference call to continue progress towards another great Annual Conference through brainstorming and support.

This to me has been an absolutely amazing process to watch. Each member of the committee has stepped up to the plate to claim leadership roles through volunteer positions at the conference and will be in charge of dozens of other SYTA members who have already committed their time to volunteering to help keep the Annual Conference running smoothly. This is the partnership we all need and what I am looking to emulate in relationships with all SYTA tour operators and suppliers going into the future.

Having a volunteer component to completing a certificate is not something I had seen before. I truly believe that this is the largest benefit and learning experience that I received in this journey of completing my CSTP. I have seen over the years that SYTA is a family and a support system for student tour operators and suppliers, this experience has just further confirmed this.

I am proud to be able to say that not only do I feel that I have a better understanding of the student market by completing this program but I feel closer to the SYTA community as a whole. When we all work together, we create something even better and that is certainly the case in the student market.