

Citizen Action

Brings Victories in the Hotel Industry

Hotel giant warns against booking sadistic events, and activists prompt removal of pay-per-view porn.

By Robert H. Knight & Martha W. Kleder

Hotel franchisees should think twice before hosting any more sadistic sex events like “Vicious Valentine 5 (VV5),” according to officials from a parent corporation that runs more than 6,000 hotels, including Howard Johnson’s, Ramada Inns, Days Inn, Fairfield Resorts, Knights Inn, Wingate Inns and several other hotel chains.

In a letter that “every brand president sent out to their franchise system,” according to Liz Ryan Sax, senior manager of media relations for Cendant Corporation’s hotels, franchisees were warned about the consequences of hosting “controversial guests or groups that national interest groups find offensive.”

The March 1 letter, which Sax provided to *Family Voice*, said, “You cannot expect to keep controversial

activities secret, especially considering the power of the Internet to

disseminate information.” The letter also noted that “one of Cendant Corporation’s hotel brands recently suffered adverse national publicity when a franchisee decided to host a meeting of sadomasochism ‘enthusiasts’ after another area hotel declined the business.”

The controversy began in February, when the Ramada O’Hare

(Rosemont, Illinois) welcomed the “VV5” sadomasochist and slave/master celebration, after the Radisson O’Hare had canceled the same event. “Beat Me in St. Louis” was held at the Howard Johnson conference center at Lambert International Airport from April 26-28. “Beat Me” sported a dungeon equipped with medieval torture devices.

Participants of “VV5” boasted of a



Kathy Valente, State Director for CWA of Illinois, led an effort that convinced a corporation of 6000 hotels to stop booking meetings for sadomasochists.

30,000-square-foot dungeon equipped with 40 torture stations. The “Dungeon Rules” suggested use of “a tarp or drop cloth” for messy blood scenes and for other bodily fluids.

Protests and Publicity

Two state chapters of Concerned Women for America—Illinois and Missouri—organized protests against the events. Kathy Valente, CWA Illinois director, worked with radio talk-show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger to publicize the problem. Although the events went on as planned, the corporations received numerous e-mails, faxes, letters and phone calls urging them not to book such events.

Valente issued a press release on February 6 that decried the “sexual torture” at “Vicious Valentine 5.” CWA-Missouri opposed a “Vicious Valentine 5” event in February at a St. Louis Ramada Inn and then led opposition to the St. Louis “Beat Me” event.

The Cendant letter warns franchisees that “activities conducted in hotel facilities outside of guest rooms must be considered public, even if the doors are closed and there is no outward display of the event’s nature or character.”

The letter also states, “Each of our brands spends millions of dollars in marketing royalties ... to promote a positive image and family-friendly environment. Just one negative event can wipe out years of painstaking and expensive efforts to establish goodwill and a positive image of the hotel and the brand in the community.”

Stopping Pay-Per-View Porn

Pay-per-view hard-core movies are no longer available at three Cincinnati, Ohio-area hotels thanks to a series of citizen “sting” operations. The Comfort Suites Hotel in Newport, Kentucky; the Travelodge, also in Newport; and the Cincinnati Marriott

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— *Cendant Corporation’s Hotel Division.*

Northeast ended the practice after receiving letters from local prosecutors.

“The snowball is rolling now,” said Phil Burress, president of Citizens for Community Values (CCV), a Cincinnati-based anti-pornography group. Supporters of CCV conducted the first citizen sting operation in July against Cincinnati Marriott Northeast.

According to Burress, the activists checked into the hotel, set up a video camera aimed at the television, ordered six movies, then left the room. The resulting video was forwarded to



Phil Burress, shown above with his wife, Vickie, is president of Citizens for Community Values (CCV). CCV supporters conducted a sting of three Cincinnati-area hotels.

Warren County Prosecutor Tim Oliver, whose office investigated the complaint and deemed the explicit content likely to be legally obscene and illegal under Ohio's obscenity laws.

In the case of the two Kentucky hotels, a simple citizen's complaint to Campbell County Prosecutor Justin Verst was all that was required to initiate a police investigation.

In all three cases, a letter from the local prosecutor's office to the hotel's management about the apparent violations of state obscenity laws was all that was necessary. All three hotels stopped offering the movies voluntarily.

Kentucky and Ohio are among 45 states with laws prohibiting the sale of obscene material. Federal laws also prohibit the interstate transportation of such material, which includes electronic transmission.

A Movement Begins

Burress hopes these three victories signal the beginning of a nationwide movement. He's urging others to take


the initiative in their own communities.

"We're asking people to call hotels and ask if they offer adult pay-per-view movies," Burress said. "If the answer is 'yes,' then the next step is to contact your local prosecutor and chief of police and ask them to investigate."

More investigations are expected, although Burress offered no specifics.

He told *Family Voice* that such efforts pay off in communities that have diligent prosecutors. The effort also helps communities determine whether or not they should encourage and support their local prosecutor in the next election.

Even without strong backing from a local prosecutor, Burress says, the effort can yield fruit because hotel chains are sensitive to public opinion.

"White-collar pornographers are the ones making money from hotel/motel pornography and the way you get them out of the pornography business is to either have the local prosecutor threaten prosecution or bring public pressure to bear with calls, letters, pickets and other consumer action," he said. 

For further details on these victories, contact Citizens for Community Values at www.ccv.org or 513-733-5775 or visit Concerned Women for America's Web site, www.cwfa.org, and follow the link to the Culture and Family Institute. There you will also find information on other issues, from the homosexual agenda to broadcast indecency, paganism and Hollywood's latest trends.

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