



CCL Online Alum Finding Success at Local Travel Agency

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Godfrey, Ill. – In the age of the Internet and do-it-yourself travel sites, travel agents are still giving clients vacation deals as well as piece of mind – and Corporate and Community Learning at Lewis and Clark is arming those agents with the tools they need to do their job well.

When the all-online program began in Spring 2010, CCL offered it in partnership with Heartland Community College. Today, thanks to the program's success, Lewis and Clark is offering it directly, said CCL Assistant Director Katie Haas.

“The instructor and the courses themselves will be identical to what we were offering before, but technical support and enrollment assistance will be done in house to better serve our local students,” Haas said.

At least one student has already put her training toward a new, successful career. Dona Rauzi, 55, of Gillespie works out of her home for Damar Travel and Cruise, which has a local office in Alton. But because she works from her home, she is often able to work on her own hours (or her clients'), and earns a commission for the trips she books.

“I've been steadily working and I've finally gotten my business built up. I've already done almost double the business this year as I did all last year. I get a lot of people through word of mouth on Facebook,” Rauzi said.

Rauzi earned her Travel and Tourism certificate from the Heartland/Lewis and Clark program in early 2011. She also has course experience in Honeymoons and Destination Weddings, certification from the Travel Institute in Honeymoon and Destination

Weddings as a specialist, certification from the College of Disney Knowledge, and is a certified Sandals specialist.

“I just think it’s important to keep taking classes. There is so much in the industry that we need to learn as travel professionals,” she said. “You can book trips online, but with a travel agent, you’re able to talk one on one with a professional who has knowledge of these destinations.”

Rauzi just got back from visiting a Sandals resort in St. Lucia this month. In September, she was in Jamaica, and in March she was in Mexico. On these business trips, she is able to inspect various resorts to be able to recommend them to clients from firsthand experience. Her personal specialty is the Caribbean, she says.

Rauzi’s job is to take care of the details so clients don’t have to, and she works with anyone from local clients to those in the military and as far away as Kuwait.

“It’s the personal touches I add to their trips,” she said.

Although booking through a travel agency may incur some fees for booking airline tickets, or for creating highly personalized travel itineraries, travel agents like Rauzi provide care and personal interaction clients won’t find elsewhere – and because of that, business is booming.

“When it comes to putting together a trip, tour or cruise for clients, travel agents get commissions from hotels, cruise lines and tour guides; they don’t get paid by their clients,” said instructor Nancy Roop. “People using travel agents may also get room upgrades at no cost, \$50 or \$100 credits at hotels and on cruises and other goodies individual buyers usually don’t get.”

Rauzi worked for years as a teacher’s aide in the Gillespie school district but left in 2010 to care for her granddaughter, who has Cystic Fibrosis. She started taking classes knowing that she needed a flexible career to work around her schedule. She now enjoys those benefits as well as the travel benefits that come with a job in travel and tourism.

“We are very proud of the real world success our students are experiencing in the travel industry. We knew the program had the potential to change lives, even in a down economy, and Dona’s story is proof that with a little hard work, and a strong program, success is possible,” Haas said.

To learn more about Lewis and Clark’s Travel and Tourism online program and start your own new career, contact CCL at (618) 468-5777. Fall classes will begin on August 27.

If you're interested in booking a trip, contact Rauzi at (217) 556-3056 or search Damar Travel and Cruise-Dona Rauzi on Facebook.