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Colorado Entrepreneur Marks 25-Year Milestone

Fort Carty set standard in destination marketing and event management in Rocky Mountains

Vail, Colorado . . . Destination Services Corporation (DSC), an award-winning destination management firm that provides high-impact event planning services to Fortune 500 Corporate and Incentive Groups and national associations, is celebrating its 25th anniversary in business. When Kathy Fort Carty purchased the Vail based company, Colorado was perceived as a remote, winter ski destination with difficult access, and little draw beyond the mountain. Fort Carty saw this as an opportunity, and forged innovative partnerships with the CVB, local hotels, unique venues and the premier local businesses, showcasing the Vail Valley and the Front Range as viable, unique destinations for corporate groups. Today, DSC represents every major Colorado destination, as well as resort areas in Utah and Nevada. The company has offices in Colorado Springs, Denver, Vail/Beaver Creek, Aspen and Lake Tahoe.

DSC built a strong reputation for working with groups and opened offices in response to requests from hotels that rely on a strong DMC partnership such as THE BRO^ADMOOR in Colorado Springs, an office that is run by Kathy's sister Susan Fort since 1996. Fort Carty's industry expertise was also sought-out by reputation to serve an 18-month contract in 2010-2011 as President of North America for Allied/PRA Destination Management, an international event planning firm, helping them establish a stronger foothold on this continent, while giving DSC's destinations exposure to a worldwide client base.

"Kathy Fort Carty is considered a pioneer and an innovator in the DMC industry," says Steve Bartolin, President of THE BRO^ADMOOR, "Her collaborative spirit and leadership put Colorado on the radar and has created greatly enhanced awareness of THE BRO^ADMOOR as a premier destination for corporate group meetings and conferences. Destination Services has been our on-site, recommended DMC for 16 years now. Kathy exemplifies the spirit of true partnership."

A founding member of *Destination Colorado*, a nonprofit organization focused on attracting group meetings and incentive programs to the state, Fort Carty has taken a leading role in marketing Colorado. She and her team collaborate with local Convention and Visitors Bureaus and hotels to



offer inbound familiarization (FAM) trips, bringing potential customers to the Rocky Mountains for a firsthand “Colorado” experience. Since 1986, the firm has designed, marketed, and executed over 500 of these FAM trips, and invested nearly \$1 million their own marketing dollars to promote the state to the meetings & events industry.

“DSC is always on-board when we ask them to get involved with client FAM trips,” says Robert Purdy, General Manager, Park Hyatt Beaver Creek, “and their execution is flawless. Kathy hires the right people, provides the best in customer service, and brings unmatched creativity to programs for our guests.”

“Whether groups come to strategize or motivate, golf or ski, team-build or reward staff, when we bring people to Colorado, it is a win-win for DSC and the community” say Fort Carty.

Fort Carty’s ability to deliver profitable, year-round demand for services helped fuel the growth and success of local business owners throughout the state. With more than \$100 million in revenues since 1986, approximately \$70 million is pass-through income that supports their local supplier network including activity companies, unique venues, restaurants, florists, party rentals, entertainment and transportation.

“We rely on each other,” says Lisa Reeder of Timberline Tours in the Vail Valley, “DSC brings the business in and we offer their guests a memorable experience.”

As her business has succeeded, DSC has built a reputation as a great place to work. The firm has been counted among “Colorado’s Top 25 Woman Owned Businesses” multiple times, and appeared on the “Top Colorado Small Business” list since 2006. In 2010, the Small Business Commerce Association recognized DSC as a “Best Business.”

In a quarter century, Fort Carty has employed up to 75-plus full time employees statewide, giving them a flexible work environment where they can grow their careers and build life-long skills in hospitality while living in a beautiful destination. DSC has also developed a loyal base of dedicated contract workers who “retired” in Colorado and work as needed to support DSC’s client events.

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“It’s a great retirement job,” says Bill McCarthy, “I have been providing Meet & Greet services as a DSC contractor at the Eagle Airport for 13 years and I absolutely love it.”

“Perseverance and flexibility are two core values at DSC,” says Fort Carty, “As a service-based travel business, we have weathered downturns in the economy, and post AIG public scrutiny of corporate incentive trips. We have relied on our experience and creativity to persist through these challenges. At times, this has required fine-tuning our sales and operations to do more with less. Other times we have tweaked our product offerings and services to be less extravagant and more conservative in the eyes of corporate shareholders and executives. We bring the same spirit of “do whatever it takes” to each event we produce for our clients.”

Speaking about her relationship with clients Fort Carty says, “A good DMC is an extension of the client’s meeting planning and marketing department. We have intimate knowledge of our destinations, local suppliers, and hotel partners, and we provide creative ideas, turnkey solutions and programs. Nearly 40% of our business is comprised of repeat customers.”

Fort Carty has shared her business acumen and hospitality experience while serving on numerous local, state and industry boards, including the Vail Valley Convention Visitors Bureau, the Association of Destination Management Executives and the Colorado Chapter of Young Entrepreneurs Organization (EO). She also served as the Chair of the Hospitality Advisory Council for the Financial and Insurance Conference Planners Association (FICP). Kathy was 2008 finalist for “Colorado’s Outstanding Women in Business.”

DSC and Fort Carty have provided their event planning skills, fund raising savvy and network of partners to create signature events for nonprofits and charities. Among these are the Alpine Children’s Charity dedicated to the Diabetes Research Foundation, Vail Undressed to support the Vail Valley Charitable Fund, Christmas Unlimited, The Boys and Girls Club of Colorado, Battle Mountain High School, St. Claire of Assisi and Stone Creek Charter School.

For more information about DSC and Kathy Fort Carty, please see www.dsc-co.com.

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