

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

44,518 APPOINTMENTS: NOW THAT'S SOME FACE TIME

ATLANTA, September 1, 2016—Connect Marketplace hosted more than 3,200 meeting professionals in Grapevine, Texas, in a reverse-style trade show dedicated to the corporate, association, expo, specialty and sports meetings and events industry. Planners and suppliers met in one-on-one appointments, 44,518 in total. Of those appointments, 82 percent were mutual matches based on requests and criteria to match buyers and sellers. "At Connect we strive to bring quality business to both our planners and suppliers. By prequalifying all of our planners in attendance and using a portal system for appointment requests, we create meetings that are beneficial to all parties and lead to immediate and future business. It's a win-win for everyone," says Connect President Chris Collinson.

Attendees gathered for general sessions in the spacious ballroom at Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center for Connect's lineup of keynote speakers that included NBA legend Shaquille O'Neal, actor Rob Lowe, branding expert Karen McCullough and the mystery guest who had everyone on their feet, America's 43rd president, George W. Bush.

The event included two community service projects sponsored by Hyatt Hotels & Resorts and Meet Wisconsin and Sports Wisconsin. For the first activity, planners, Hyatt and Wisconsin representatives came together to package 10,152 meals in one hour to feed people in need, benefiting Stop Hunger Now. During downtime in between Marketplace appointments, attendees participated in another CSR activity to benefit GRACE, Grapevine's transitional housing program. Eight hundred baby shower gifts (items included baby lotion, diapers, formula, bibs and pacifiers) were packaged and wrapped for homeless mothers with newborn babies.

Connect offers multiple networking opportunities for planners and suppliers to mix and mingle in a relaxed setting. The opening reception, sponsored by Grapevine CVB, took place in the Gaylord Atrium and showcased a "Taste of North Texas" with a variety of local favorites for guests. New Orleans, the host city of Connect 2017, sponsored closing cocktails at the Glass Cactus Nightclub featuring New Orleans-inspired desserts and libations. New this year was the Connect for a Cause after-party sponsored by Travel Portland. Proceeds from the event benefited the It Gets Better Project, an organization whose mission is to communicate to LGBTQ youth around the world that "it gets better." Connect Marketplace 2017 will take place in New Orleans Aug. 21-23. Registration will open soon. Learn more at connectmarketplace.com.

ABOUT CONNECT

Connect is a leader in the meetings, travel and tourism industry. Specializing in destination marketing, the company produces digital programs, online and mobile solutions, meetings business and travel magazines, trade shows and consumer events, travel guides for newspapers and leisure magazines, and destination information, which is distributed through broadcast and custom programs. More information about the company's brands and services is available at connectmeetings.com.

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