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REPORT

— O f N o r t h e r n N e v a d a —



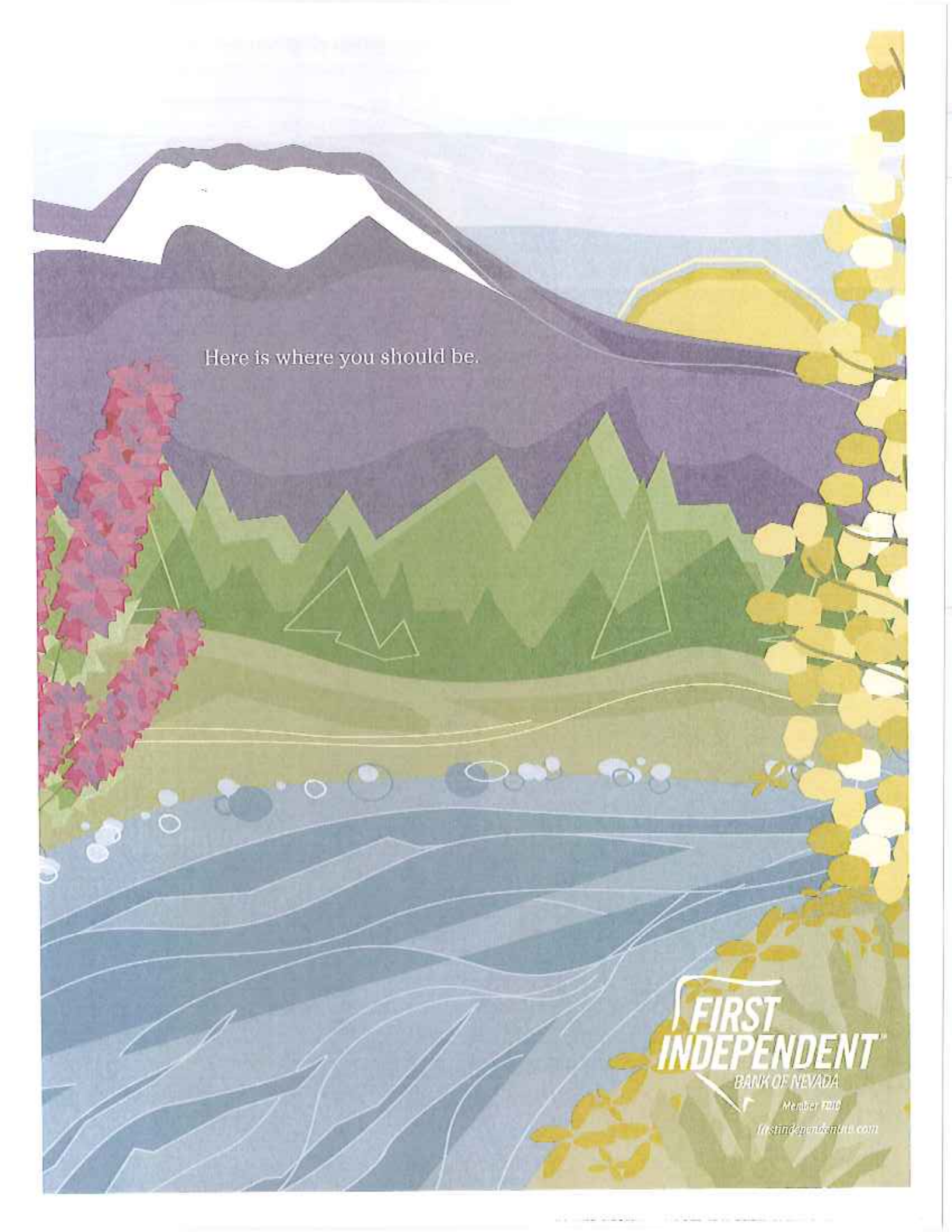
Conventionally Speaking

Ellen Oppenheim is leading RSCVA to new opportunities

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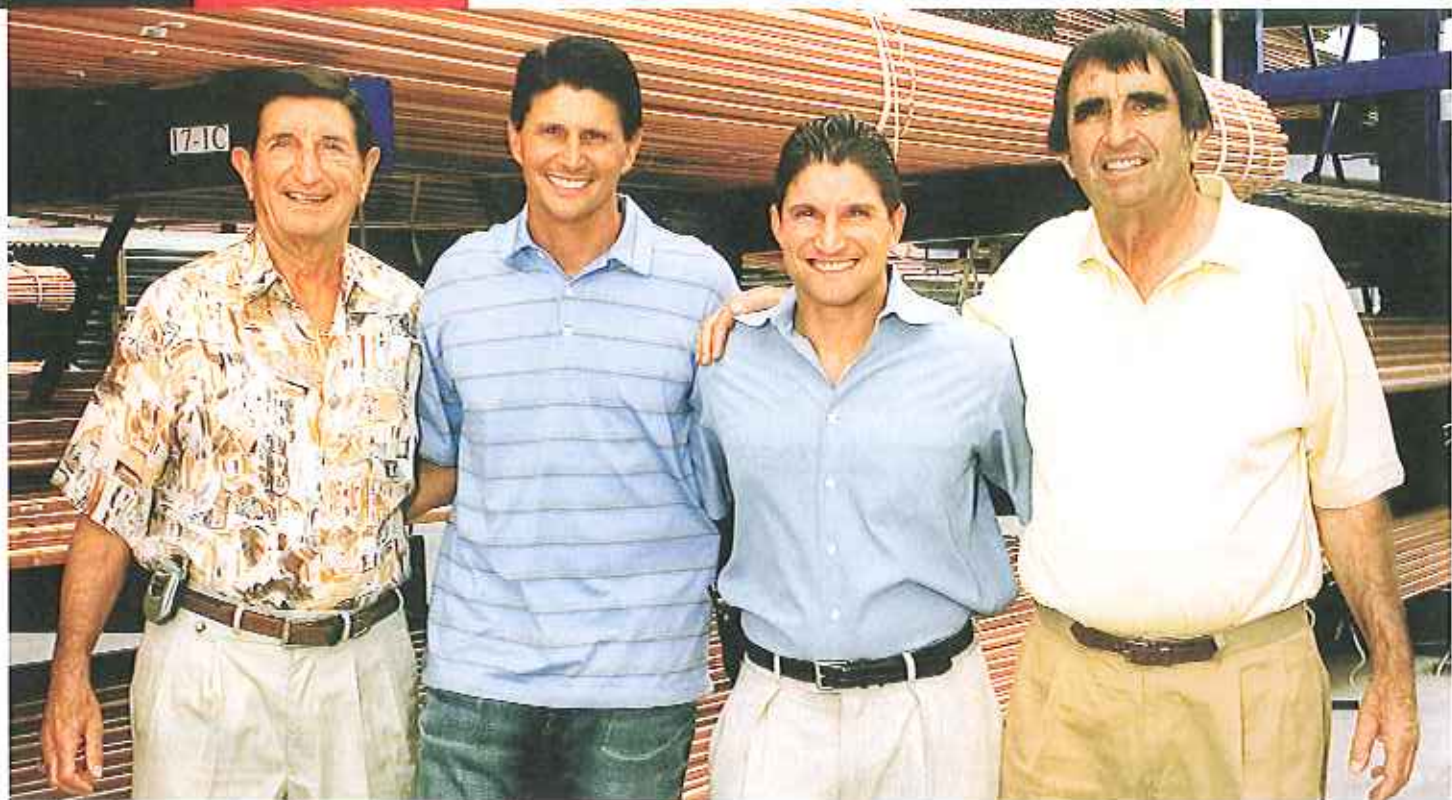


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Family circle: Two generations bring a strong focus to Western Nevada Supply. From left to right: Jack Reviglio, Ted Reviglio, Rick Reviglio and Tom Reviglio.

Max Hogue

Business-of-the-Year winners humbled by awards

By Linda Fino

Northern Nevada has its share of exceptional businesses that manage to take care of their employees, their clients and even the environment. As it has for many years, the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada recently honored two outstanding local companies by naming one the Small Business of the Year (99 or fewer employees) and the other Large Business of the Year (more than 100 employees).

Full Circle Compost is the 2006 awardee in the small business category, while Western Nevada Supply took the honors in the latter group. Although they knew their companies were in the running, both self-effacing entrepreneurs — Craig Witt, Full Circle Compost's owner, and Western Nevada Supply's Rick Reviglio — said they were stunned by the recognition.

"I was surprised when we won. I was surprised we were nominated — there are so many great companies in this region; it was an honor to be on the list with Washoe Medical Center, Dickson Realty and Granite Construction," Reviglio says, ticking off the

contenders in the large business category.

Small business nominees including Full Circle Compost were Applied Industrial Controls and Fireplace Distributors of Nevada.

"I really didn't expect to be chosen, but when I reviewed the criteria I said to myself, 'I really do fit,'" says Witt. "Compost has been a cool adventure to be involved with. You get to say you're doing good by doing well. It's really satisfying to be making products beneficial to the soil, especially Nevada soil."

"I think we were nominated because we have a tremendous customer base."

Rick Reviglio
Western Nevada Supply
EDAWN's Large Business of the Year

Witt says he and his 10 employees are farmers with two business locations — one in the Carson Valley close to the Douglas Tahoe Airport and the other at the Northern Nevada Correctional Center in Carson City, where the prison operates a dairy.

He laughs and says his family farm in the past consisted of a herd of 375 cows. "Now that we're composting," he says, "our livestock consists of beneficial microbes." Armed with a degree in agriculture obtained from the University of Nevada in 1985, he said he "put the finishing touches on ruining our farm," when he returned to the land with his degree and a

chemical answer to every bug.

"We increased the amount of fertilizer and herbicides we were using. We killed the insects that were beneficial along with the bad insects and also eliminated the natural diversity so we could have a pure alfalfa crop." Witt explains that the herbicides eliminated the soil's useful microbes, allowing more yield but at the same time producing a crop with less nutritive value to his animals. Additionally, the herd's milk volume increased at the expense of its quality.

"I've become extremely aware of microbes. I saw that the way my grandfather farmed worked (sans chemical intervention); with chemicals we got more yield but less quality in our rotation crops. That same connection exists between people and their food. We need to pay attention to Mother Nature."

While he's gratified to be recognized for doing something he loves, Witt says the significance of the award stems from the fact that his small company provides a satisfying experience for his clients.

Composting local materials previously headed to the land fill — milled wood, dead and dying trees, branches, grass clippings and prunings — is important to Witt. "Everything man has done or made goes back to the soil. I'm so appreciative of everybody who recycles

each pay period." While turnover is in the 30 percent range, Forester is proud that of the 70 core employees, 50 still are on the job.

One way of increasing employee morale and retaining a loyal worker base is the company's plan to build housing, up to 189 units. "We're still debating whether this will be multi-family or single-family homes," Forester says. The incentive for workers could include a special financing deal, or a rebate for long-term employment, Forester says, adding the plan is still taking shape.

Forester expects most of the expansion to proceed with few hitches. "We're going to fast track the theaters," he says talking about the partnership with Galaxy Theaters for a 40,000-square-foot, 10-screen theater with a digital projector. Opening is set for next July. Fast track is the order of the day for the hotel, which will open in October 2007. While Carson Gaming will oversee the construction, owners will hire a national vendor to run the show. With a hotel chain on board, customers nationwide will be able to hook into a reservations database. The hotel will require 60 to 80 employees.

Outside of the future job opportunities, the greatest economic impact to the area economy will be in the planning and construction phases. A general contractor for the project will be announced soon.

Owners are funding expansion by refinancing the existing debt, says Forester, without adding more details. "Let's just say this: a lot more lenders are interested in helping us with the venture this round than last time," he discloses, talking about the property's successful track record.

Casino Fandango's beginnings started with a group of local investors creating the business plan. "Then [Las Vegas developer] Gary Goett came into the mix. He liked the numbers ... the fact that there were less gaming devices per capita [in Carson City]," Forester recalls.



Blackjack is a popular table game at the casino.

Minority owners include Larry Woolf and Peter Wilday. The latter, whose credits include the current expansion of the Peppermill hotel-casino, also designed Casino Fandango.

Forester also is proud of being a positive business partner with the rest of the community. To that end, he serves as president of the Carson City Gaming Association and says the group is trying to find some common ground, especially in the area of forming a coalition to obtain more affordable health care from providers. Members are exploring "other

partnerships that will make our operations more profitable," Forester says.

Likewise, Casino Fandango is supportive of other local business. Forester said top vendors include Southern Wine and Spirits, Sysco and IGT.

Speaking of the future, Forester predicts, "There will be a great synergy down here with the casino, restaurants, movies and a little bit of retail.

"It should be a lot of fun."

Not to mention profitable. ■

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with us. Everything is about money, but in reality, you should do what you want. We're profitable in an industry where profit is not that common."

Passion for the job, a palpable vibrancy about the reason for doing that job and a dazzling sense of dedication are qualities shared by both Witt and Reviglio. Now, as vice president and general manager of the family business, Western Nevada Supply, a firm known in the trades as the largest single location plumbing supply distributor of its kind on the West Coast, Reviglio revisits daily the lessons he learned from company founders: his father Jack, Bill Higgins and his uncle Tom Reviglio.

"This award is a tribute to Bill Higgins' vision plus years of hard work and dedication from my father and my uncle," says the 40-year-old Reviglio, who has his eye squarely on the future.

"I think there are some great opportunities with the steady growth in this community. Our goal is to retain our employees and the customer base we have today along with figuring out ways to enhance our level of customer service. Things might be okay now, but if you don't improve, you'll be behind. People say I should stop and smell the roses; I say when you bend down to smell the roses, somebody steps on your head and you eat dirt."

And it is this philosophy and a dedication to both employees and customers that permeates the soul of the company now celebrating 42 years of business.

"We maintain an open door policy but it's difficult to keep that culture within our many branches," Reviglio says, referring to Western Nevada's outlets scattered throughout Nevada

and California. "We don't have an ivory tower; our offices are right in the middle of the sales floor in front of the customers. We don't have a gatekeeper and people are amazed by this philosophy. You can get to any of us; we're all on the same level."

Ask Dennis Bush, a 26-year veteran of the Western Nevada Supply brand of doing business. "I started sweeping floors at 16 and moved up through the ranks and now I run the plumbing division with close to 20 employees. You couldn't work in a

better environment; they give back to the community, to the customers and to the employees."

If employees grease the company wheels, clients are the engine providing the power necessary for the long haul. "When we make a decision we always start with the customer — the customer makes the decision," Reviglio says. "I think we were nominated for the award because we have a tremendous customer base with tremendous customer loyalty." ■



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Sparks
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Earthy: Craig Witt has a close connection to his product line.

Richard Sowers

Reno and region will derive economic benefit from League of Cities convention



Hosts with the most: Reno Mayor Robert Cashell (far right) will play a high profile role at the upcoming event. Helping Cashell with the hosting duties will be (from left) council members Pierre Hascheff, Dwight Dortch and Dave Aiazzi. ReTrac, shown here, will be on the attendees' tour.

By Steve Sinovic

"A real coup for Northern Nevada" is how one elected official describes the Congress of Cities and Exposition that will be held in Reno later this year. Indeed, the economic impact of the event — which brings more than 7,500 elected officials and their guests from all over the United States — is estimated at \$11.5 million to the regional economy.

That number is courtesy of the Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority. RSCVA estimates the projected revenue as follows: \$1.3 million in lodging; \$7 million in gaming; and \$3 million in "other" categories such as money spent in restaurants, bars, shopping centers, ski resorts, outings to Carson City, Virginia City and Lake Tahoe.

"It's a real coup," said Reno Mayor Bob Cashell, who hosted a recent gathering of the National League of Cities Program Committee. The group — which included members of last year's host city Charlotte, N.C. — was here to discuss program content, entertainment and logistics. "From a business standpoint, it couldn't come at a better time," Cashell says, referring to the traditional dead time that occurs between Thanksgiving and New Year's. "They eat. They'll be shopping for the holidays. They'll gamble. City officials can appreciate the need for convention revenue [to a community], so the attendees should be opening their

wallets while they're here," Cashell predicts.

The Silver Legacy and Circus Circus are the host hotels.

The cost of running the event — without a dime of taxpayer money — is estimated to be in the \$1 million range, according to Duke Reedy, of the Bauserman Group, who is in charge of fundraising. So far, a major sponsor in the form of Taser International has come through with \$250,000 to help defray the costs of staging the event. Overall, fundraising is about 50 percent complete.

Reedy said corporate sponsorship like Taser's makes many things possible, such as transportation of attendees. "We'll be running buses every 15 minutes to various sites," Reedy says. Other significant event costs are the rental fee for the Convention Center, welcoming signs at the airport, banners on downtown lampposts, hospitality bags for the attendees, recruiting and training volunteers, and paying the public relations firm. An estimated 350 to 400 volunteers will be needed for the event. For a first-class event, "You have to conduct orientations and provide uniforms," Reedy notes.

While Bob Cashell is the perfect host for the upcoming event, another elected official was singing the praises of the region, thanks to his strategic membership with the National League of Cities. Sparks City Councilor Ron Schmitt serves on the national group's program

committee and was able to pitch Northern Nevada to his brethren.

Before the selection takes place, the potential host city has to make its case to the League of Cities, said Janice Pauline, director of conferences for the National League of Cities. Once a mutual interest is expressed, the League sends out a team to do a technical assessment. One of the most pressing concerns: are there enough rooms to accommodate the event?

"Once we feel that's feasible, we invite the mayor to present to our board of directors," says Pauline, adding that the League tries to keep the list of bidding cities small and select. "We try not to make it a competitive process," she says.

Indeed, the Biggest Little City in the World is the smallest U.S. city to host the event in the League's 84-year history.

The event also is a sales opportunity. An exhibit hall typically contains 350 to 400 booths of vendors wanting to pitch their services and products to mayors and city councils. Participation by vendors "helps us to keep registration fees low," Pauline says. ■

ABOUT THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

The National League of Cities is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal governments throughout the U.S. Formed in 1924, its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. The League serves as a resource to and an advocate for more than 18,000 cities, villages and towns it represents. They range from Beavercreek, Texas, population 900, to the Big Apple, New York City, N.Y. More than 1,600 municipalities of all sizes pay dues to NLC and actively participate as leaders and voting members.

The Congress of Cities and Exposition serves as NLC's "annual convention" and offers a broad range of learning opportunities combined with conducting organizational business. This conference is unique in that it partners with the hosting city to develop education programs which allow the city to display its accomplishments.

Source: National League of Cities