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From: venuestoday [venuestoday@mail.vresp.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 14, 2009 6:15 PM
To: april@venuestoday.com
Subject: VT Pulse, Jan. 14, 2009



VT PULSE

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM VENUES TODAY

January 14, 2009 • VOL. VIII, Number 2 • ISSN 1547-4143

Quote of the Week

"From the beginning, we have said to the fair that you have to have great sound, great lights, a proper stage and proper catering. These acts don't have to play your fair; even though you have the money, they don't have to play your fair."

— Dave Snowden, president of Triangle Talent, on booking major acts for state fairs. Triangle recently signed a deal to book the N.Y. State Fair.

In this Issue

THE NEWS

[Broadway Brokers Get Nervous About Potential N.Y. Ticket Taxes](#)

[Kent Arena Gets The Green Light From Fans](#)

[Triangle Talent Unseats Live Nation at N.Y. State Fair](#)

HOT TICKETS

[Diamond Scores Two Mil In Two Days](#)

THE BEAT

[Faces & Places: LeMahieu Moves To Mountain Winery; Young Gets Independence; Montana State Fair To Be County-Run](#)

[On the Menu: Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic, Jan.](#)

Greetings April,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." Venues Today is asking its readers to vote in our inaugural Box Office Stars award. You should have received a ballot this morning in your inbox. We plan to send out a reminder Thursday morning and close the polls on Friday. Make your voice heard and help honor those heroes behind the ticketing window.

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VT NEWS

TICKETS
BROADWAY BROKERS GET NERVOUS ABOUT POTENTIAL N.Y. TICKET TAXES

1, 2009
[Wrigley Field,
 Chicago](#)

[Naming Rights
 Report](#)

DEPARTMENTS
[Short Takes](#)

[HELP WANTED](#)

[CONTACT VT PULSE](#)

SHORT TAKES

>> ARAMARK CHEFS GET PRESTIGIOUS CERTIFICATION –

Aramark has announced that four of its regional executive chefs have been honored with The Culinary Institute of America's ProChef III certification. The chefs had to complete a comprehensive professional development program to receive the certification. Participating chefs were Rik Kiessling, Edward Lake, Brian Stapleton and O'Brien Tingling.
 Contact: *Dave Freireich, (215) 238-4078*

>> TICKETS.COM SIGNS SEATTLE THEATRE GROUP –

Tickets.com has signed the Seattle Theatre Group as a new client. Seattle Theatre Group is a non-profit performing arts organization that operates two venues, the Paramount Theatre and Moore Theatre and will utilize ProVenue, the newest ticketing system from Tickets.com.
 Contact: *Chaeli Walker, (714) 327-5492*



New York Assemblyman Joseph Morelle and government research analyst Chris Barnes discuss the challenges facing ticket brokers during a panel Thursday at Ticket Summit.

NEW YORK – Does the current financial environment mean greater regulation of ticket sales?

The bailout of the banking system, the Bernie Madoff scandal and the collapse of the Big Three automakers have all led to increased calls for government intervention into the free market. Could that demand spill over into the ticketing world, bringing increased regulation about how tickets are sold, or even worse – ticket taxes?

“These are incredibly frightening times and a lot of public policymakers don’t know what to do,” said New York Assemblyman Joseph Morelle. The former chair of the Assembly’s Committee on Tourism, Arts and Sports Development, Morelle helped usher in the repeal of New York’s anti-scalping law. Now he’s fighting a battle to prevent both New York state and city from implementing separate sales taxes on events that could result in an eight percent surcharge on tickets.

Morelle called the tax “regressive,” claiming it “hurts the little guy.” Besides, many argue – how do you implement a sales tax on resale tickets? Are sites like StubHub and TicketNetwork responsible for tracking sales and reporting brokers income to the federal government? Ticketmaster Associate General Counsel Joe Freeman said requiring resale marketplaces to track 50 different state tax laws would be arduous, while requiring the same sites to withhold taxes in an escrow-type account would be a bookkeeping nightmare.

“We are not in favor of the entertainment industry being taxed any more than it already is,” Freeman said.

Sales tax issues for tickets are nothing new. Texas and Hawaii levy special “fees” on anyone reselling tickets, while the city of Chicago has a special amusement tax it charges on the sale and resale of tickets. City officials there recently sued StubHub for \$186,000 in back taxes.

The New York tax has angered many in the Broadway community and created concern that an eight percent tax would further slow sales in a lagging consumer economy. Morelle said 13 Broadway shows had closed in January, while others are slashing prices to stay competitive.

“The emphasis is on revenue and everyone is looking to find new things to tax,” Freeman said.

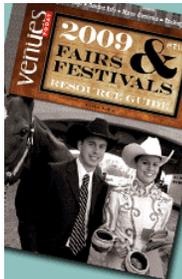
Nearly all the speakers on the panel encouraged brokers and box office employees to get involved with their local and state governments.

“If you don’t get involved, policy will be made without you,” said Dustin Brightman, a lobbyist for eBay. “It’s important to head to your state capitols and represent yourself. Get involved and let your civic leaders know that they should call you when these types of issues

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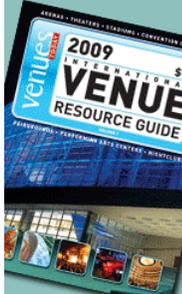
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April Armbrust
Director of Marketing &

arise.”

Government research analyst Chris Barnes said winning the support of America’s legislators is often about appealing to their sense of fairness and most citizens “think resale violates people central tenement of fairness.”

“There are many negative symbols attached to resale. From the shady ticket scalper standing on the street corner to the crying Hannah Montana fan who couldn’t buy a concert ticket, this industry is filled with negative symbols,” he said. “I often encourage brokers to overcome these symbols by being a new symbol — the symbol of the ordinary business guy. That helps lessen the reaction to negative publicity. That’s because the standard reaction to a lack of reaction is often an overreaction. And when politicians overreact, it is often businesses who pay the price.” — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Joseph Morelle, (585) 467-0410; Joe Freeman, (310) 360-2344; Dustin Brightman, (202) 551-0084; Chris Barnes, (860) 919-3659



OPENINGS

KENT ARENA GETS THE GREEN LIGHT FROM FANS

Green lights from the rafters and stands has become the first hockey tradition at the new ShoWare Center in Kent, Wash.



The Seattle market just got more competitive with the opening of the SMG-managed ShoWare Center in nearby Kent, Wash.

Located just 17 miles from Seattle, the new 6,100-seat arena is home to the Seattle Thunderbirds of the Western Hockey League. The team sold out its Jan. 3 home game against the Everett (Wash.) Silvertips and Jan. 4 afternoon bout

against the Kamloop (British Columbia) Blazers. The Thunderbirds won both games and posted some impressive per caps numbers — \$10.15 for the first game and \$8.20 for the second event.

The Thunderbirds will play 23 of their final 32 regular season games at the \$82 million arena, owned by the city of Kent. City officials held an unofficial opening of the facility on Jan. 2, welcoming 10,000 guests to the building and hosting a laser and fireworks show, as well as a jazz performance by Darren Motamedy. The opening also included a special appearance by Buckets Blakes of the Harlem Globetrotters, who is set to return to the arena on Feb. 18.

SMG’s Tim Higgins is the GM for the facility. He said visitors were given green ShoWare Center key lights during the opening celebration and many brought them back for the Saturday game, establishing the building’s first fan tradition of illuminating green lights during player introductions.

The building is named after ticketing start-up ShoWare,

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Entertainment Centre Manager

Tulsa (OK) County Fairgrounds (Expo Square)
Chief Executive Officer

Citi Performing Arts Center, Boston
Facilities Manager

based in Fresno, Calif. The \$3.2 million, 10-year deal allows the arena to do free print-at-home ticketing for its patrons along with other technological features that will be rolled out over time.

“They view this as getting into the industry and proving that they are a player,” said Higgins.

The new facility is also the first arena in the country to achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver status. Higgins said improvements to the arena’s transportation options played a key role in securing that status.

“We have special parking for hybrid vehicles and carpools of four passengers. We’re in close proximity to commuter rail,” he said. “In terms of building construction the facility uses energy efficient lighting and our HVAC uses up to 36 percent less energy compared to national standards. Ninety-percent of our construction debris was recycled and more than 50 percent of the wood used in the building came from sustainably managed forests.”

While he acknowledges that Seattle is a very competitive market with busy buildings in nearby Everett and Tacoma, along with the reemergence of the KeyArena, Higgins said his arena is designed to fill a niche and will aggressively pursue mid-sized indoor shows.

Chris Tomlin is scheduled to play on March 8, Monster X-Games on April 23-24 and the Lipizzaner Stallions on May 24-25. Feld Entertainment brings the circus to the building for the first week of September. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Tim Higgins, (205) 856-6705

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

TRIANGLE TALENT UNSEATS LIVE NATION AT THE N.Y. STATE FAIR

With final paperwork making its way through state government, Triangle Talent has begun scouting acts for the 2009 New York State Fair, Aug. 27-Sept. 7, having won the state bid to produce the 17,000-seat Mohegan Sun Grandstand over 2008 promoter Live Nation.

The deal this year is along traditional state fair guidelines and far removed from the last-minute, 2008 agreement which saw Live Nation paid a per-ticket fee that netted the promoter \$650,000, agreed Dan O’Hara, manager of the fair for the past two years. Triangle Talent bid on a flat fee basis, comparable to the fees it pays other state fairs, said Dave Snowden, president, Triangle Talent. Neither would reveal that fee until the contract is finalized, but Snowden said it is “a great deal less” than Live Nation was paid in 2008.

O’Hara said the fair’s talent budget for the grandstand is \$2.5 million and an additional \$750,000 is spent on the free stage, Chevy Court. The talent producer contract was bid through the state’s Agriculture and Markets Department, which generated the RFP’s and selected the winning candidate, he said.

Last year, due to the timing, O’Hara did not bid the contract and worked with Live Nation exclusively to get the show on the road following the retirement of the fair’s longtime booker Joe LaGuardia. (VT Pulse, Sept. 10, 2008). The collaboration was highly successful, with the fair selling 90,000 grandstand tickets, compared to 66,000 the year prior.

“If I could get two fairs to pay me \$750,000, that’s all I would do,” Snowden said. “That’s what promoters don’t understand. This is state government; these are state bids.” Snowden said the state actually sent out an initial RFP for a promoter, to which he did not respond, followed by the RFP for a producer, to which he did.

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THE FULL LISTINGS](#)

Snowden doesn't see Live Nation's interest in the New York State Fair as indicative of major concert promoters expanding into the fair market. They always have looked at fairs, Snowden said. In fact, when Live Nation was owned by Clear Channel, they looked at possibly buying Triangle Talent. "We gave them some information. I don't think they were as enthused once they saw the money we are making is not the money they are making."

The grandstand production arena is pretty closely held by an experienced group of fair buyers and Snowden added that he isn't aggressive about going after someone else's business, because the margins are not so great. "Fran (Romeo), Jimmy (Jay), Suzanne (Wilson), George (Moffett), Bob (Romeo) and I are unusual animals," Snowden said, listing major fair producers he admires. "We're doing volume. We're not making that much per fair. I won't go after someone else's business if they are doing a good job. There are people in this business I admire."

O'Hara added that the contract with Triangle has two years of options which would likely be exercised if all goes well as expected. The fair's interest is in diversity, something for everyone, in keeping with the New York Governor David Paterson's urging that New Yorkers vacation close to home, he added. "This fair is a wonderful opportunity to have a day vacation without having to spend a lot of money," O'Hara said, saying he's upbeat about the prospects for the 2009 fair.

Reacting to published reports that some Live Nation personnel have suggested Snowden can't book the class of talent they could for the New York State Fair, Snowden said he bought \$14 million worth of talent for fairs in 2008. And some acts, including George Strait and Hank Williams Jr., only agreed to play fairs ever because he was behind producing the event. He currently produces talent for 16 state fairs, including Kentucky, Ohio, Iowa, Tulsa, Florida, Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Maryland. "From the beginning, we have said to the fair that you have to have great sound, great lights, a proper stage and proper catering. These acts don't have to play your fair; even though you have the money, they don't have to play your fair."

"Here's the bottom line. Live Nation did a great job in the grandstand last year, fantastic, because they know grandstand entertainment," Snowden said. "They did a horrible job on the free stage called Chevy Court, because they don't understand the fair audience. That is what we do and there are only a few of us who do that." Triangle operates with a fulltime staff of 12.

Asked if he was surprised he won the New York State Fair contract, Snowden said, "No, because we book some of the biggest acts in the country just like they do. There's nothing sacred about it and we understand the business. We are by far the largest producer of major state fairs in the country. There is no one remotely close now."

Following charges Triangle couldn't book quality grandstand shows, Snowden added: "I've had phone calls from other major promoters saying they [Live Nation] are pompous a-----s and we will help you any way we can. There are two great promoters in our country, Live Nation and AEG Live. I will never be a promoter as long as those guys are in business; they're better than I am. But I'm better than they are at producing fairs." – Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Dave Snowden, (502) 267-5466; Dan O'Hara, (315) 487-7711 x1200

HOTTickets

HOT TICKETS is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to VT PULSE. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating capacity category, which took place since Dec. 23, 2008.

DIAMOND SCORES 2 MIL IN 2 DAYS

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<p>1) Neil Diamond Gross Sales: \$1,283,100; Venue: MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas; Attendance: 11,359; Ticket Range: \$183.75-\$52.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, In-house; Dates: Jan. 2; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>1) Neil Diamond Gross Sales: \$922,985; Venue: Citizens Business Bank Arena, Ontario, Calif.; Attendance: 9,272; Ticket Range: \$129-\$59.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: Jan. 4; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>1) Dancing With The Stars Gross Sales: \$280,359; Venue: Orleans Arena, Las Vegas; Attendance: 3,132; Ticket Range: \$225-\$52.50; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Dec. 29, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>1) The Disco Biscuits Gross Sales: \$441,693; Venue: Nokia Theatre Times Square, New York; Attendance: 9,500; Ticket Range: \$69-\$32; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Dec. 26-28, 30-31 2008; No. of Shows: 5</p>
<p>2) AC/DC Gross Sales: \$1,268,752; Venue: Philips Arena, Atlanta; Attendance: 16,090; Ticket Range: \$93.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 26, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>2) Trans-Siberian Orchestra Gross Sales: \$665,280; Venue: Ervin J. Nutter Center, Dayton, Ohio; Attendance: 15,040; Ticket Range: \$56.50-\$22.75; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Jan. 4; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>2) WWE Raw Live Gross Sales: \$273,312; Venue: Sovereign Bank Arena, Trenton, N.J.; Attendance: 8,252; Ticket Range: \$61-\$21; Promoter: Global Spectrum; Dates: Dec. 27, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>2) Hairspray Gross Sales: \$369,908; Venue: Fox Theatre, Detroit; Attendance: 9,277; Ticket Range: \$75-\$25; Promoter: Magic Arts & Entertainment, NewSpace Olympia Entertainment; Dates: Jan. 9-11; No. of Shows: 5</p>
<p>3) Radio City Christmas Spectacular Gross Sales: \$1,195,520; Venue: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas; Attendance: 22,832; Ticket Range: \$72-\$25; Promoter: MSG Entertainment; Dates: Dec. 30-31, 2008; No. of Shows: 4</p>	<p>3) The Harlem Globetrotters Gross Sales: \$117,585; Venue: Ervin J. Nutter Center, Dayton, Ohio; Attendance: 4,294; Ticket Range: \$105-\$12; Promoter: Harlem Globetrotters; Dates: Dec. 31, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) The Kooks Gross Sales: \$253,469; Venue: Hordern Pavillion, Sydney, Australia; Attendance: 5,321; Ticket Range: \$52.26; Promoter: Chugg Entertainment; Dates: Jan. 5; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) Cedric "The Entertainer" Gross Sales: \$350,660; Venue: The Venue at Horseshoe Casino, Hammond, N.J.; Attendance: 4,444; Ticket Range: \$110-\$60; Promoter: AEG Live, In-house; Dates: Dec. 31, 2008; No. of Shows: 2</p>
<p>4) 2008 Championship of Comedy Starring Steve Harvey & Katt Williams Gross Sales: \$1,125,485; Venue: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit; Attendance: 12,020; Ticket Range: \$250-\$65; Promoter: Olympia Entertainment, Sweetheart Productions; Dates: Dec. 31, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) The Harlem Globetrotters Gross Sales: \$112,910; Venue: i wireless Center, Moline, Ill.; Attendance: 5,456; Ticket Range: \$80-\$17; Promoter: Harlem Globetrotters; Dates: Jan. 11; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) Professional Bull Riders Gross Sales: \$100,149; Venue: Pensacola (Fla.) Civic Center; Attendance: 5,856; Ticket Range: \$40-\$10; Promoter: Feld Motor Sports; Dates: Jan. 9-10; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>4) Barenaked Ladies Gross Sales: \$308,355; Venue: Fox Theatre, Detroit; Attendance: 4,585; Ticket Range: \$125-\$55; Promoter: Live Nation, Olympia Entertainment; Dates: Dec. 31, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>
<p>5) Lil Wayne Gross Sales: \$834,852; Venue: Verizon Center,</p>	<p>5) Summadayze Gross Sales: \$54,110; Venue: Vector Arena, Auckland, New Zealand; Attendance: 1,633; Ticket Range: \$52.58-\$24.59; Promoter: Future</p>	<p>5) Menopause The Musical Gross Sales: \$66,878; Venue: The Lakeland (Fla.) Center; Attendance: 1,637; Ticket Range: \$50-\$40; Promoter: The Jeanie C. Linders Fund; Dates: Jan. 9; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>5) My Morning Jacket Gross Sales: \$243,601; Venue:</p>

Washington; Entertainment;
Attendance: Dates: Jan. 10;
10,541; Ticket No. of Shows: 1
Range: \$85.75-
\$45.75; Promoter:
Live Nation;
Dates: Dec. 30,
2008; No. of
Shows: 1

Chicago Theatre;
Attendance:
6,862; Ticket
Range: \$35.50;
Promoter: Jam
Productions;
Dates: Dec. 27-
28, 2008; No. of
Shows: 2

Compiled by Rob Ocampo and Nicole Sorenson. To submit reports, e-mail
HotTickets@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

THE BEAT

FACES & PLACES

LEMAHIEU MOVES TO MOUNTAIN WINERY; YOUNG GETS INDEPENDENCE; MONTANA STATE FAIR TO BE COUNTY-RUN

Joan LeMahieu



After four years as president of the Parade Company in Detroit, **Joan A. LeMahieu** is returning to California as general manager of The **Mountain Winery** in Saratoga for **Global Spectrum**.

LeMahieu started in the business in Visalia, Calif., as general manager of a convention center, two performing arts centers and a hotel for that city. She opened **Monona Terrace**, Madison, Wis., another convention center; then worked for two years as a consultant, which led to becoming manager of **Ford Field** for the **Detroit Lions**.

Her new job is her first with a private management company, but the property itself is a mix of all her expertise, including tourism, conventions and special events and concerts. The **Mountain Winery** is part of a 600-acre working vineyard

which is a designated historic landmark.

The search for a new president for the Parade Company has already begun.

Global Entertainment Corp. has hired **Mike Young** as general manager of the \$52 million, 5,800-seat **Independence (Mo.) Events Center**, which opens in November.

Young had been with **Kemper Arena**, **Hale Arena** and the **American Royal** exhibition facility in Kansas City. He also served as director of event services for the **Overland Park Convention Center** and has experience as a client services manager for **Ticketmaster** and event manager for the **Kansas City Convention Center** and **Municipal Arena**.

Global Entertainment's **Cathey Moses** said Young can be reached by e-mail, starting next week, at myoung@globalentertainment2000.com.

Cascade County officials have decided to end its management contract with **SMG** in mid-February, a year short of the renewal date, to save money. **SMG** currently runs **Montana ExpoPark** in Great Falls, which includes the **Montana State Fair**, for the county.

Fourteen **SMG** employees met the county's deadline to apply for their jobs under government employ today (Jan. 14). **Bill Ogg**, manager for **SMG**, said they will know more in late- to mid-February.

The county hired **SMG** in 2002. Prior to that, the city of Great Falls ran the fairgrounds.

Ogg said plans for the 2009 fair July 28-Aug. 3 are going well. Acts seem to be anxious to confirm earlier than ever, **Ogg** noted. Fair talent is booked by **Fran Romeo**. **Thomas Carnival** provides the midway.

Under SMG, the PRCA Rodeo came on strong, Ogg added. And some major upcoming concerts have been booked, including Larry the Cable Guy and Jeff Dunham, thanks to SMG's pull. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Joan LeMahieu, (248) 229-9239; Cathey Moses, (602) 826-2038; Bill Ogg, (406) 727-8900

ON THE MENU

BRIDGESTONE NHL WINTER CLASSIC, JAN. 1, 2009 WRIGLEY FIELD, CHICAGO

Chicago Dog from Wrigley Field

Concessionaire: Levy Restaurants

Attendance: 40,818

Menu:

Hot dog - \$4.50
Italian beef dog - \$5.50
Bratwurst - \$5.50
Pretzel - \$3
Hot cocoa - \$3



For the first-ever hockey game at Wrigley Field, Levy Restaurants departed from its traditional

baseball menu and developed what they deemed a "Mitten-friendly" menu meant to keep fans warm. "We had to create foods that were not only able to hold heat but were easy to eat," said Wrigley Field Executive Chef David Burns. The Levy team looked to add to the menu and enhance existing comfort foods, such as chili, and chose to take out obvious misfits in a cold weather setting such as ice cream.

On the main concourse, concession stands sold corn dogs, chili breakfast burritos, calzones, bratwurst, Italian sausage, and personal pizzas. Sheffield Grill, also located on the main concourse, had comfort foods such as a chili bar and a meatloaf sandwich, both created by Chef Burns.

Since both Chicago and Detroit fans were expected to show their support at the Classic, Levy Restaurants offered both Chicago Dogs and Detroit Coney Dogs in a competition in which they kept tally of which hot dog was more popular at the event. The Chicago Dog ultimately prevailed over the Detroit Dog.

Specialty items: Separate menus were created specifically for the suites, which included lighter snacks like popcorn, a salsa sampler and cheese and fruit platter, as well as entrée items such as braised beef short ribs in red wine, roasted mushrooms and sauteed onions; shrimp and crab platter; and a sirloin chili bar with sour cream, bacon, onions, cheddar cheese and crackers for toppings. Desserts included six-layer carrot cake and Chicago-style cheesecake.

Commemorative items: Hot chocolate was served throughout the ballpark with a 16 oz. souvenir cup.

Staffing: In all, there were 850 employees staffing the event.

Preparation: Levy Restaurants began planning and preparation for the Winter Classic during the summer. Besides creating a new menu for the colder weather, Levy had to plan for the preparation and storage of cold weather menu items. "A special thing about Levy Restaurants is that we have so many venues, and we were able to borrow equipment. We used a lot of extra equipment for all the hot cocoa," said Burns.

Also, because of cold temperatures, Levy Restaurants for the first time in its 23-year partnership with Wrigley Field, served all beverages, including beer, in plastic bottles.

Final thoughts: The most popular item at the event was the hot dogs. Levy Restaurants sold approximately 45,000 hot dogs and 1,000 gallons of hot chocolate at the Winter Classic.

Challenges for the staff included handling the logistics of all additional catering locations. Besides the main concourse and suites, Levy had to accommodate for various other locations including six to seven media areas, the outdoor Spectator Plaza, and an area for the marching band. Despite it being the first time Wrigley

Field has ever hosted a hockey game, Burns felt that the event and concession sales went well.

"I think we planned [the event] very well from the get-go in July. We had plenty of staff, plenty of support from other Levy areas. We had numerous meetings and brought our executive chefs in," said Burns. "I think we have a great relationship with the NHL and, by understanding what they wanted, I think we ultimately exceeded their expectations." – Linda Domingo

Interviewed: David Burns, contacted through Kelly Harfoot, (312) 829-8326 x250

NAMING RIGHTS REPORT

Rochester (N.Y.) Rhinos Stadium

Date Announced: Dec. 11

Tenant/Ownership: Rochester Rhinos of the United Soccer League/City of Rochester

Comments: PAETEC Holding Corp. has opted not to renew its naming rights deal with Adirondack Sports Club, owner of the Rochester Rhinos soccer team.

The telecommunications firm had originally paid a \$12.8 million over 22 years, but construction delays reduced the deal to \$2.1 million over 12 years. The venue opened in 2006. One year into the deal, the Rhinos previous owners were forced to give up the team after defaulting on loans, and the agreement was voided. In January 2008, PAETEC's CEO Arunas Chesonis signed a one-year agreement with Adirondack Sports Club, which expired Dec. 31.

The \$32 million, 12,500-seat venue will be called Rochester Rhinos Stadium until another buyer can be found.

"We have numerous proposals with local and national companies," said Christine Ward, director of sales for the Rhinos. They are brokering the deal locally. Despite the struggling economy, she said there are thriving local companies. "We haven't been completely lost in the dark," she said.

The venue includes temporary luxury boxes and a picnic area, and multiple signage opportunities and has a planned, but unscheduled, Phase II design to add 20 permanent luxury boxes, a permanent press box and team store. Phase III would boost seating capacity to 20,000.

"We may do a complete package for sole naming rights, or split it up into smaller packages," Ward said.

Contact: Christine Ward, (585) 454-3000

Coca-Cola Field, Buffalo, N.Y.

Date Announced: Dec.17

Buyer: Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Buffalo

Terms: 10 years, financial terms not disclosed

Tenant/Ownership: Buffalo Bisons, Triple-A affiliate of the New York Mets/Rich Baseball Operations

Comments: Coca-Cola was the first soft drink served in this ballpark when it opened in 1998, and the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Buffalo has been the exclusive soft drink provider since 2004. That strong relationship evolved into a naming rights deal, according to Brad Bisbing, the Bisons' director of public relations.

"We have strong feelings for what Coke represents as a family-owned company and what the Buffalo Bisons are as a family-friendly company," Bisbing said. "We are always promoting each other, since we mirror each others' ideals."

Coca-Cola will take over the massive signs - previously held by the former naming rights sponsor Dunn Tire - on both sides of the team's centerfield scoreboard. Bisbing expected the signage changeover to begin in a few weeks.

The naming rights deal also includes all signs in and around the ballpark and continued exclusive pouring rights for soft drinks. The Heron's Landing Party Deck and Labatt Blue Zone on the first base line will not change names.

Bisbing also expected the two companies would continue their cross-promotional marketing campaigns. Since 2005, specially marked Bisons Coca-Cola Classic cans have been produced, each redeemable for a free April home game for the current season. The cans are recycled, with the money going to charity.

Coca-Cola is the fourth naming rights deal for the retro-style park, designed by HOK Sport, who went on to design Oriole Park at Camden Yards. Previous sponsors included Pilot Air Freight, North AmeriCare, and Dunn Tire.

Contact: Brad Bisbing, (716) 846-2100

ONEOK Field, Tulsa, Okla.

Date Announced: Jan. 12

Buyer: ONEOK and ONEOK Foundation

Terms: \$5 million over 20 years

Tenant/Ownership: Tulsa Drillers, Double-A affiliate of the Colorado Rockies/Tulsa Stadium Trust

Comments: ONEOK, a diversified energy company based in Tulsa, and the largest publicly traded company in Oklahoma, signed on as a donor of the under-construction Tulsa Stadium – future home of the Tulsa Drillers, the Double-A affiliate of the Colorado Rockies – and have received naming rights as part of the perks, said Megan Washbourne, manager of corporate communications for ONEOK.

There will be other perks, Washbourne said, including signage opportunities and use of a suite.

The venue, to be called ONEOK Field, is slated to open before the 2010 baseball season. It is part of a \$60 million downtown revitalization project that includes mixed-use redevelopment. It is being funded by \$30 million in private donations, \$25 million in fees to be generated over the next 30 years, and \$5 million from the team's lease.

Washbourne said a vibrant downtown is key to ONEOK's ability to attract and retain employees. Last year, they acquired ONEOK Plaza, their downtown office building, which is also located in the historic Greenwood District.

Contact: Megan Washbourne, (918) 588-7572

—Liz Boardman