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A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM VENUES TODAY

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Quote of the Week

"If he had given us a more clear indication of the event he was having, he knew he would not have been able to rent the facility."

— Indiana State Fair Spokesman Andy Klotz on a promoter who allegedly misled officials about a dance party at the fairgrounds which ended with a deadly shooting.

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Greetings,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." We're back from the Holidays. Check your inbox every Wednesday this month for VT Pulse and the News Behind the Headlines.



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SHORT TAKES

>> COBO GETS MOTOWN THEMED EATERY – In time for the 2011 North America International Auto Show, the SMG-managed Cobo Center in Detroit is launching a music themed concession outlet, Eatsville USA, located on the concourse. While enjoying the sounds of classic Motown music, Eatsville patrons can order food from local brands like the Detroit Beer Company and Lockhart BBQ. Concessionaire Centerplate will serve as the hospitality partner on the deal.
Contact: Mary Kilda, (313) 877-8701

>> GEORGIA DOME USES QR CODES IN BOWL ACTIVATION – The

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VT NEWS

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

SHOOTING PROMPTS PROMOTER REVIEW AT INDY STATE FAIRGROUNDS

The midway at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis.



Indiana State Fair officials will go over their procedures for booking off-season events after a man was shot and killed at an event billed as a talent show that was actually an underage dance party.

“One of the action steps we are going to do is go back through our emergency response plan and dive into it and assess ourselves - how well we did, how well we performed and what tweaks we need to make in that plan and implementation of the plan,” said Cindy Hoye, executive director of the Indianapolis-based event.

Shawn Dewayne Campbell, 20, of Indianapolis, was shot and killed shortly

Georgia Dome, Atlanta, launched its first Quick Response (QR) Code technology initiative to enhance the fan experience during Friday night's Chick-fil-A Bowl Game. This initiative enabled fans to access venue services by taking a photo of QR graphics, much like bar code technology. Fans who "scanned in" had the opportunity to view restaurant and concessions offerings, review transportation options, visit other important locations, and virtually tour the different levels of the facility via auto-link to YouTube.

Contact: Jennifer LeMaster, (404) 223-8697

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Shawn Dewanye Campbell, 20, of Indianapolis, was shot and killed shortly after midnight Dec. 21 after the conclusion of the party, which was held in the Farm Bureau Building on the grounds of the Indiana State Fair, according to a statement issued by the Indiana State Police. About 200 people were present at the time of the shooting. A second victim was shot twice in the shoulder and treated and released at a local hospital. No arrests in the shooting have been made.

Andy Klotz, spokesman for the Indiana State Fair, said officials were approached by a promoter named Corey Parchman, who said he wanted to book a venue for a talent show aimed at high school students.

"He was a first-time promoter," Klotz said. "We never worked with him before, so we had him submit the necessary paperwork and insurance he needed to have and he booked the building."

Fair officials also helped Parchman hire security for the three-hour event. Klotz has heard that there were four to eight security officers at the event, but did not know for sure. Parchman did not return a call seeking comment.

After the event was booked, Klotz said, a fair security officer received an e-mail from a member of the Indianapolis Metro Police Department who sometimes works at the fair, warning about how two performers fair officials never had heard of - Young Truth and Mark Battles - had been associated with a previous shooting in West Lafayette, Ind., about 60 miles northwest of the fairgrounds.

When fair officials asked Parchman, he said he did not know who the two entertainers were.

The "Ice Cold Xmas Jam" took place Dec. 21 and attracted about 200 people, mainly teenagers and a lot of minors, Klotz said, and it ended up being more of a party than a talent show.

Fairgrounds officials have a rule against booking under-21 dance parties, which Klotz believes was enacted in the early 2000s in response to raves becoming a popular form of entertainment during which trouble sometimes ensued.

"If he had given us a more clear indication of the event he was having, he knew he would not have been able to rent the facility," Klotz said.

The investigation by the Indiana State Police - because the fair is a state agency - has involved interviewing about 200 people, said 1st Sgt. Dave Bursten, the department's public information officer. He declined to reveal whether or not the possibility of gang activity was part of the Dec. 21 incident, as some community leaders have alleged.

"We are going through our due diligence of processing the evidence we find and speaking with people who were there and letting the investigation take us where it will go," he said.

Klotz said fair officials believe they did their best to look into a warning that did not seem to apply to the event that had been booked at the grounds.

"We will take a second look, but quite frankly, this is a black eye to first-time show producers," Klotz said. "We've never had anything like this happen in our 150-year history. And it does make us want to go back and take a closer look at how we go about booking events and what else we may need to require, particularly for someone we haven't been in business

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with before.”

The fairgrounds books about 300 events a year, Klotz said, and on any given week, has seven or eight events going on. Round-the-clock security officers patrol the grounds and some events, like the Ice Cold Xmas Jam, also hire additional security.

The incident had not seemed to deter any other events from taking place at the fairgrounds so far, Klotz added.

Jim Tucker, president and CEO of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions, said dealing with booked-in events can be a tough situation for fair officials.

A popular topic at IAFE meetings is how events are described by promoters and how venue managers can verify the information, Tucker said. “At the same time, sometimes you have to take their word for it. People come in and say they are going to rent for a certain kind of event, and you expect them to do that.”

An assistant attorney is assigned to the state fairgrounds and works there at least one day a week, Hoye said. Whether or not any action will be taken against Parchman for apparently misrepresenting the event will be up to the Ohio Attorney General’s office, Hoye said.

In the meantime, the security plan for the fairgrounds will continue to be “tweaked,” she added.

“Our customer safety and employee safety is always number one in what we do and will continue to be so,” she said. “We will need to work with a plan to make sure there is that public trust and confidence in the fairgrounds.” - Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this article: Cindy Hoye and Andy Klotz, (317) 927-7500; Dave Bursten, (317) 502-6220; Jim Tucker, (417) 862-5771.



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CONCESSIONS

PENGUINS LOSE WINTER CLASSIC BUT WIN THE BATTLE OF THE BITES

Lining up for competing bites during the Signature Sandwich Face-off at the NHL Winter Classic at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh on New Year's Day. The Penguins beat the Capitals in the contest by about 200 sandwiches.



The 2011 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic on New Year's Day was not only the most viewed National Hockey League regular season game in 36 years, but Heinz Field in Pittsburgh was sold out and added 1,400 temporary seats in the south end zone to accommodate the increased capacity, which capped off at 68,111.

Spectator Plaza was open to fans on New Year's Day as well as New Year's Eve for the Winter Classic Alumni Game, the fan festival and family skate. The addition of this space allowed concessionaire Aramark to bring in additional points of sale - they had 460 points of sale at the Winter Classic versus their normal 430 for Steelers National Football League games.

"The (rainy) weather didn't affect the foodservice at all. I think it actually helped us in a lot of ways. It gave people time to rest up and regroup, and then come down and spend some time with us," said George Meehan, Aramark general manager at Heinz Field. Hot dogs were the most popular item, priced at \$4.75, followed by French fries at \$4.75, a soft pretzel at \$3.50 and a 16 oz. domestic beer at \$7.

For this year's game, Aramark introduced the Signature Sandwich Face-Off. Aramark allowed fans to taste different sandwiches at Penguins and Capitals games leading up to the Winter Classic. They could vote onsite or online. The results left the Kielbasa Grinder representing the Penguins' Consol Energy Center in Pittsburgh, and The Fury representing the Capitals' Verizon Center in Washington. The Kielbasa Grinder, thin-sliced local kielbasa, sauerkraut, Swiss cheese and Thousand Island dressing on an Italian roll, outsold The Fury, chipotle-rubbed pulled pork, roasted poblano

peppers and onions, topped with Monterey Jack cheese and a bacon adobo sauce on an artisan roll, by about 200 sandwiches. Both were served on platters priced at \$8. Between New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, Aramark sold about 1,100 of the signature sandwiches. The sandwiches were sold in a climate-controlled tent in Spectator Plaza, which was connected to a beer garden, as well as on the main concourse.

Other popular items included hot dogs, pretzels, nachos and pizza. Specialty items included Primanti Brothers sandwiches, Quaker Steak and Lube chicken wings, and Papa Duke's gyros.

In the suites, Aramark offered three packages focusing on local Pittsburgh flavors and the festive holiday. Suite items included beef and German potato salad served with horseradish cream and potato rolls, pierogies with caramelized onions and butter, chilled beef tenderloins, Quaker Steak and Lube chicken wings in five flavors, and a local favorite, kielbasa and franks. Desserts included tiramisu, chocolate truffles, and chocolate hazelnut crunch.

About 1,000 employees helped with the effort and the Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) collected aluminum cans, glass containers, and plastic bottles and cups in the Heinz Field parking lots in an effort to increase recycling efforts in tailgating areas, and as an extension of the 'NHL Green' initiative. Aramark also participated in the Rock and Wrap It Up program.

"We did it for two of our three NFL games in December, and rolled right into it for the Winter Classic," said Meehan. "We donated in the neighborhood of 300 to 400 pounds of food. We wrapped it up, saved it, and had it picked up within 48 hours for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank."

Meehan likened preparation for the event to that of the Super Bowl. "This is as close as we might host in Pittsburgh, and one of the largest events that the city has ever seen. We geared up more, knowing that we were going to have people in the building earlier. We not only had a great walk-up, but we had two-19 minute intermissions that we were able to capture the fans in," said Meehan.

The Aramark team and Heinz Field had been preparing for the large event for months beforehand, but since the venue hosted three NFL games in December, final preparations were only able to be made after the Steelers game on Dec. 23, giving them just seven full days.

The event team knew rain was inevitable after following weather charts for months. Meehan explained that Aramark planned for the worst-case scenarios - for fans to be allowed into the stadium at 1 p.m. and for the game to be delayed for hours, and even delayed until the next day.

"We contacted the local food purveyors and other vendors to be ready to go and have drivers on call if that was to happen. It's in Mother Nature's hands, so the things we can control we did, but the things we couldn't, we had to prepare for." The 1 p.m. game was delayed until 8 p.m. with the Capitals winning 3 to 1. — Linda Domingo

Interviewed for this story: George Meehan, (412) 697-7180



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BOOKINGS

TASTE OF CHICAGO CONSIDERS PRIVATIZATION WITH NEW CONCERT/CONCESSIONS CONSORTIUM

A trifecta of local and national promoters have made the sole bid to privatize and operate the Taste of Chicago, a long-time free event run by the city every July near Lake Michigan.

AEG Live and Chicago-based Jam Productions have teamed up with the Illinois Restaurant Association to create Celebrate Chicago, an LLC with plans to charge a \$20 admission fee to the once-free event, with \$10 being rebated to customers in the form of food and drink vouchers, according to documents released by the city. The bid also calls for up to \$65 ticket prices for big name concerts. According to a report from City Hall, Chicago public coffers lost \$7 million hosting the Taste of Chicago and six other Lake Michigan events over the past three years.

The bid would also include promotion for the Chicago Blues and Jazz Festivals, which would include a \$10 admission fee. Admission to Viva Chicago, Celtic, Gospel and Country fests would remain free.

But will Chicago residents pay for something that had previously been given gratis? Jennifer Turner, GM for the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, said ticket sales have been down across the board for her facility and the trend in the market is giveaways and discounts, not new fees.

“We’re the home of Groupon and everyone is looking for a deal these days,” she said. “We’ve had to keep all of our tickets reasonable and decreased prices on some of their offerings and concentrated on making more tickets affordable.”

The Illinois Restaurant Association, helmed by Sheila O’Grady, former Mayor Richard M Daley chief of staff, has run the food component of the event for years. Hundreds of local restaurants sell small samples from their menu. Jam had produced the musical component of the event throughout the 1990s until the Mayor’s Office of Special Events took over in 2001, according to records. Since then, the talent level for the event has declined with many stages going empty for much of the food event.

The city had hoped to get a number of competing bids for the deal, but Celebrate Chicago was the lone bidder. That surprised Turner, who expected Austin, Texas-based C3 Entertainment to make a bid for the event – C3 puts on the annual Lollapalooza concert in Grant Park, along with Austin City Limits and a number of smaller shows in both cities. And though the Austin company’s 10-year deal to keep Lollapalooza in Grant Park specifies that no other promoter can stage an event “similar” to Lollapalooza in that venue, it also specifically exempts the city’s own festivals, according to city reports.

The request for proposals, which ended Dec. 27, did not set a timeline for the process of evaluating the responding bids. If it succeeds in winning the fests, Celebrate Chicago already is months behind in booking and lining up corporate sponsorships, and the Mayor’s Office of Special Events hasn’t booked any of the headliners for any of the festivals either. If Mayor Daley chooses to accept the bid, the final agreement must be approved by the City Council and the Chicago Park District Board. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Jennifer Turner, (312) 922-2110

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. 8.

EAGLES HIT THE \$5 MIL MARK IN BRISBANE

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<p>1) Cirque du Soleil “Quidam” Gross Sales: \$4,274,811; Venue: Bell Centre, Montreal; Attendance: 47,603; Ticket Range: \$120.19-\$45.07; Promoter: Cirque du Soleil, evenko; Dates: Dec. 18-30, 2010; No. of Shows: 19</p> <p>2) Roger Waters Gross Sales: \$3,402,620; Venue:</p>	<p>1) Eagles Gross Sales: \$5,177,009; Venue: Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre; Attendance: 22,107; Ticket Range: \$661.98-\$101.22; Promoter: Frontier Touring Company; Dates: Dec. 13-14, 2010; No. of Shows: 2</p> <p>2) Cirque du Soleil “Dralion” Gross Sales: \$814,389;</p>	<p>1) Cirque du Soleil “Quidam” Gross Sales: \$1,302,901; Venue: K-Rock Centre, Kingston, Ontario; Attendance: 18,407; Ticket Range: \$97.25-\$34.38; Promoter: Cirque du Soleil; Dates: Dec. 11-14, 2010; No. of Shows: 6</p> <p>2) George Lopez Gross Sales: \$905,034; Venue: Nokia Theatre L.A. Live; Attendance:</p>	<p>1) Mary Poppins Gross Sales: \$2,211,930; Venue: Civic Center of Greater Des Moines (Iowa); Attendance: 38,326; Ticket Range: \$126.50-\$16.50; Promoter: In-house; Dates: Nov. 26-Dec. 12, 2010; No. of Shows: 21</p> <p>2) Atlanta Ballet’s “Nutcracker” Gross Sales: \$1,885,405; Venue: Fox Theatre, Atlanta; Attendance:</p>

<p>Honda Center, Anaheim, Calif.; Attendance: 26,810; Ticket Range: \$254-\$59; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 13-14, 2010; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>Venue: DCU Center, Worcester, Mass.; Attendance: 12,779; Ticket Range: \$99-\$35; Promoter: Cirque du Soleil; Dates: Dec. 16-19, 2010; No. of Shows: 7</p>	<p>17,370; Ticket Range: \$79.50-\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: Dec. 26-30, 2010; No. of Shows: 6</p>	<p>37,428; Ticket Range: \$88-\$20; Promoter: Atlanta Ballet; Dates: Nov. 27-Dec. 26, 2010; No. of Shows: 24</p>
<p>3) Roger Waters Gross Sales: \$3,106,707; Venue: HP Pavilion at San Jose, Calif.; Attendance: 23,209; Ticket Range: \$250-\$55.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 6-8, 2010; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>3) Gorillaz Gross Sales: \$691,759; Venue: Brisbane Entertainment Centre; (Australia) Attendance: 5,907; Ticket Range: \$293.15-\$99.27; Promoter: Chugg Entertainment; Dates: Dec. 19, 2010; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) 95.5 KLOS Mark & Brian Christmas Show Gross Sales: \$345,400; Venue: Nokia Theatre L.A. Live; Attendance: 6,882; Ticket Range: \$69.55-\$49.55; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: Dec. 16, 2010; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) Young Frankenstein Gross Sales: \$689,923; Venue: Durham (N.C.) Performing Arts Center; Attendance: 15,065; Ticket Range: \$65-\$12; Promoter: Nederlander, PFM; Dates: Dec. 7-12, 2010; No. of Shows: 8</p>
<p>4) Roger Waters Gross Sales: \$2,194,338; Venue: Tacoma (Wash.) Dome; Attendance: 19,785; Ticket Range: \$199-\$55; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 11, 2010; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) Justin Bieber Gross Sales: \$577,074; Venue: Bi-Lo Center, Greenville, S.C.; Attendance: 11,769; Ticket Range: \$56-\$36; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Dec. 16, 2010; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) Stevie Wonder's House Full of Toys Gross Sales: \$308,955; Venue: Nokia Theatre L.A. Live; Attendance: 5,315; Ticket Range: \$149.50-\$55; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: Dec. 18, 2010; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) CATS Gross Sales: \$408,446; Venue: Broward Center For The Perf. Arts, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Attendance: 8,163; Ticket Range: \$62-\$24; Promoter: Broadway Across America, In-house; Dates: Dec. 17-19, 2010; No. of Shows: 5</p>
<p>5) Andrea Bocelli Gross Sales: \$2,174,282; Venue: Staples Center, Los Angeles; Attendance: 13,111; Ticket Range: \$375-\$75; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 10, 2010; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>5) Gorillaz Gross Sales: \$500,415; Venue: Vector Arena, Auckland, New Zealand; Attendance: 6,611; Ticket Range: \$227.48-\$69.06; Promoter: Chugg Entertainment; Dates: Dec. 21, 2010; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>5) The Judds Gross Sales: \$300,020; Venue: Nokia Theatre L.A. Live; Attendance: 4,006; Ticket Range: \$149.50-\$34.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: Dec. 15, 2010; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>5) 9 To 5: The Musical Gross Sales: \$354,447; Venue: Wharton Center For Performing Arts, East Lansing, Mich.; Attendance: 6,341; Ticket Range: \$67.50-\$32.50; Promoter: In-house; Dates: Dec. 15-19, 2010; No. of Shows: 7</p>

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

THE BEAT

DEALS

LONG CENTER GOES WITH PACIOLAN; GRINBERG LAUNCHES NEW VENTURE; IAVM BEGINS QUEST FOR NEW LEADERSHIP

The Long Center for the Performing Arts in Austin, Texas, has signed a five-year deal for ticketing with Paciolan – the latest in a string of new contracts for the Irvine, Calif.-based technology company.

Opened in 2008, The Long Center is the home to Austin Symphony Orchestra, Austin Lyric Opera and Ballet Austin. Tony Jilek, director of Ticketing Operations at The Long Center, said he used the Paciolan ticketing system during his days in Houston at the Theatre Under the Stars.

“It’s extremely robust,” he said. “We’re currently using several different systems and none of them talk to one another. Fund development uses a system, ticketing uses a system and email marketing has its

own system. Now we've got an integrated marketing solution."

The Long Center is currently on the Front Gate Solutions ticketing system and plans to complete the switch to Paciolan after the conclusion of its current season, around September or October.

Jilek said he's also considering launching a regional ticketing company for the Austin area. The multidisciplinary campus has two performance spaces - the 2,400-seat Dell Hall and a configurable black box theater for developing acts.

After 33 years working with HNTB, architect Don Grinberg has announced plans to form his own independent architecture, planning and consulting practice with offices in Boston and San Francisco.

Grinberg said the move frees him up to work with multiple firms on different types of projects.

"I expect to work abroad more than I have in the past. I think our domestic public assembly market is still in recovery mode," he said.

The Harvard grad has several deals in the works, although a formal announcement might be days away. Grinberg spent his last 18 years at HNTB leading the national convention center practice and his past projects include Direct Energy Centre in Toronto, Saratoga Springs (N.Y.) City Center, Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence and Phase II of the San Diego Convention Center.

The International Association of Venue Managers has begun its search for a new president and CEO to replace Dexter King, who will retire from his post on Sept. 4 after 10 years of service.

A search task force has been created to fill the role, comprised of five IAVM past presidents - Larry Perkins from the RBC Center in Raleigh, N.C., Robyn Williams from the Portland (Ore.) Center for the Performing Arts; David Ross from the Show Me Center in Cape Girardeau, Mo.; John Christison from the Washington State Convention & Trade Center in Seattle and consultant Ray Ward. Also helping with the search are Meredith Imes from the United Spirit Arena in Lubbock, Texas; Victor Landry from the Crown Center in Fayetteville, N.C.; and Brian Mahoney, senior national account manager, Freeman.

The task force plans to hire a consultant to help with the initiative and hopes to create a short list of candidates by April and a final candidate will be introduced to membership at the annual VenueConnect meeting in July. - Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Tony Jilek, (512) 457-5160; Don Grinberg, (617) 513-5259; John Siehl, (937) 823-3969

NAMING RIGHTS REPORT



Bethpage Ballpark, Central Islip, N.Y.

Date Announced: Dec. 21

Buyer: Bethpage Federal Credit Union

Owner/Tenant: Suffolk County/Long Island Ducks

Terms: 5 years at \$950,000 annually, with a 5-year option at \$1.15 million annually

Brokered: Locally

Comments: Longtime sponsor Bethpage Federal Credit Union has purchased naming rights for the

former Citibank Park, the home of the Long Island Ducks, members of the Atlantic League of

Professional Baseball.

It is the stadium's fourth name in 10 years, beginning life as EAB Park, changing to Citibank Park in its second year, and then, last year, to Suffolk County Sports Park.

"Bethpage has been an active member of the Long Island community since it was approved for its first and largest Federal community charter in the United States in 2003," said Audrey Cohen, spokeswoman for the credit union.

"Bethpage believes its core values are very much consistent with the Long Island Ducks organization, which continues to keep prices down, to ensure that families can enjoy a day at the ballpark."

In addition, the credit union plans to add 10 new branches in Suffolk County in 2011, Cohen said.

The credit union is Long Island's largest, with more than 180,000 members, 22 branches and 60 shared service centers in Suffolk and Nassau Counties.

The ballpark will bear Bethpage's name and logo on a 40-foot sign and at all entrance gates, Cohen said. It will also appear on all directional signs leading into the stadium parking lot, on 47 signs on parkways and access roads, all game tickets, interior signs, team pocket schedules and other collateral.

The credit union and the team also plan to create cross-promotional events and contests that reach out to the community through the credit union's 22 branch locations, and through its Heart of Bethpage program, which supports local nonprofits. Bethpage will continue sponsoring the Ducks' Sunday Kids Run the Bases and Autograph program, the sign on top of one of the dugouts and, added this year, the Long Island Ducks Kids Club.

Contact: Audrey Cohen (631) 427-1713

StarTex Power Field, Sugar Land, Texas

Date Announced: Dec. 15

Buyer: StarTex Power

Owner/Tenant: City of Sugar Land/Sugar Land Skeeters

Terms: 10 years, financials not released

Brokered: Locally

Comments: StarTex Power, a Houston-based retail electricity provider, has purchased a 10-year naming rights deal for the soon-to-be-built baseball stadium in Sugar Land, on the outskirts of Houston. The \$30 million, 7,500-seat stadium, to be called StarTex Power Field, will be home to a new minor league baseball team, the Sugar Land Skeeters, and will host other sporting events, concerts, and group outings.

The deal includes signage - which is still being worked out - use of luxury areas and tickets.

"Part of StarTex Power's corporate culture is to do a lot for its employees," said Marcie Zlotnik, co-founder.

"When we sponsored the parade at the State Fair, we offered all of our customers a discount, but we gave our oldest 100 customers free tickets. If you were an early adopter with a start-up company, you helped us grow, and we want to award those customers and long-term employees."

Construction on the stadium will begin in April 2011, with plans to open it in April 2012. The venue will include 21 suites, upper level club seating, a year-round entertainment space, a picnic deck, and playground facilities.

Zlotnik said StarTex currently serves 175,000 customers, of which 70,000 are in Sugar Land and Fort Bend County, or adjacent counties.

“My husband [co-founder Bob Zlotnik] and family are all baseball junkies,” Zlotnik said. “He read about the new team and sought them out.”

Both companies have strong family values, Zlotnik said, and similar business philosophies, so the potential deal was attractive. StarTex Power won the naming rights as part of a competitive bidding process.

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– Liz Boardman