

DESTINATION: **COLUMBIA, S.C.**

The South Carolina State House in Columbia. (Photo by Columbia Metro Convention Visitors Bureau)

# CAPITAL CITY, COLLEGE TOWN

Centrally-located with easy access, Columbia draws diverse events

by **R.V. BAUGUS**

**T**hey come from north, south, east and west, which is only fitting when you consider that the state capital city of Columbia sits squarely in the center of South Carolina. And while location is everything, it's not everything.

In addition to serving as the state capital, Columbia is also home of the University of South Carolina, both huge magnets for the Southern city.

"We are centrally located and easy to get to, but obviously it takes more than location. We have some gorgeous venues, some great

rivers, the zoo, adventure and lots of night life going on," said South Carolina State Fairgrounds Assistant General Manager Nancy Smith in her best CVB pitch. "We're really growing, plus we have a little thing called football that's played around here from time to time."

The football reference, of course, is to USC's Gamecocks, which in fact had a homecoming game on the last Saturday during the 2014 fair's Oct. 8-19 run.

The South Carolina State Fair (not to be confused with the Columbia Fair) has run

since 1869, in its current location since 1904, and this year celebrates its 145th birthday with a theme of Finding Your Happy: The Pink Fair, celebrating survivors of breast cancer.

"This was an opportunity for us to sow some seeds of hope and happiness as we try to bring awareness to breast cancer," Smith said.

Pink was the theme color and was prevalent throughout the grounds, including a resource tent manned by the fair's hospital partners and a Walk For Life held during the fair. Guests who wore their pink Walk For

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# VRG PLACES COLUMBIA, S.C.

## CAPITOL CITY STADIUM

P.O. Box 1328, 29201  
Location: 301 S. Assembly St.  
[803] 254-3474  
Fax: [803] 254-4482  
info@blowfishbaseball.com  
www.blowfishbaseball.com

**CAPACITY:** Stadium - 10,000 seats

**CONTACTS: Booking:** Bill Shanahan, (251) 654-4003, bill@blowfishbaseball.com; **Ops.:** Kelly Evans, (803) 606-1163, kelly@blowfishbaseball.com

**SERVICES: Concessions:** In-house; **Ticketing:** Etix; **Housekeeping:** In-house

**MANAGEMENT Co.:** HWS Baseball

**EVENT DAYS:** 100

## CAROLINA COLISEUM

701 Assembly St., 29201  
[803] 777-5113

Fax: [803] 777-5114  
wadecal@mailbox.sc.edu  
coliseum.sc.edu/main.asp

**CAPACITY:** Arena - 12,400 seats

**CONTACTS: Acct. Mgr.:** Julie Carter, (803) 777-3190, juliec@mailbox.sc.edu; **Mktg. Dir.:** Chip Wade; **BO Mgr.:** Barbara Pelfrey, (803) 777-5112, barbarap@mailbox.sc.edu; **Dir.:** Sidney Kenyon, skenyon@mailbox.sc.edu

**SERVICES: Concessions:** Centerplate; **Security:** In-house; **Ticketing:** Capitol Tickets; Promotes/Co-promotes; **Housekeeping:** In-house

**OWNER/MANAGEMENT:** Univ. of South Carolina

**YEAR OPENED:** 1968

**EVENT DAYS:** 100

## COLONIAL LIFE ARENA

801 Lincoln Street, 29208  
[803] 576-9200

Fax: [803] 576-9299  
clacustomerservice@sc.edu  
www.coloniallifearena.com

**CAPACITY:** Arena - 18,000 seats; Suites: 41

**CONTACTS: GM:** Lexie Boone, boonelm2@mailbox.sc.edu; **Dir. of Fin.:** Chris Asouzu, casouzu@global-spectrum.com; **Mktg. Mgr.:** Abey Foster, (803) 576-9072, afoster@mailbox.sc.edu; **Asst. GM:** Jason Blumenfeld, jblumen@mailbox.sc.edu

**SERVICES: Concessions:** Centerplate; **Ticketing:** New Era Tickets; Promotes/Co-promotes

**OWNER:** Univ. of South Carolina/Athletics

**MANAGEMENT Co.:** Global Spectrum

**YEAR OPENED:** 2002

**EVENT DAYS:** 100

## COLUMBIA METROPOLITAN CONV. CENTER

1101 Lincoln St., 29201  
[803] 545-0181

Fax: [803] 545-0013  
sales@columbiaconventioncenter.com  
www.columbiaconventioncenter.com

**CAPACITY:** Convention Center - 142,500 sq. ft.; Ballroom - 17,135 sq. ft.; Congaree Room - 2,135 sq. ft.; Richland Room - 5,540 sq. ft.; Lexington Room - 4,045 sq. ft.; Carolina Room - 1,930 sq. ft.; Exhibit Hall - 24,700 sq. ft.

**CONTACTS: Vice Pres./GM:** Mack Stone, (800) 545-0010, mstone@columbiaconventioncenter.com; **Ops. Dir.:** Chip Murrell, (803) 545-0026, cmurrell@columbiaconventioncenter.com; **Event Mgr.:** Ashleigh Pair Connor, (803) 545-0001, aconnor@columbiaconventioncenter.com; **VP Mktg./Sales:** Kelly Barbrey, (803) 545-0018, kbarbrey@columbiaauthority.com

**SERVICES: Concessions:** Ovations Food Services; **Security:** In-house; Promotes/Co-promotes

**OWNER:** City

**YEAR OPENED:** 2004

## SOUTH CAROLINA STATE FAIRGROUNDS

P.O. Box 393, 29201  
Location: 1200 Rosewood Dr.  
[803] 799-3387

Fax: [803] 799-1760  
geninfo@scstatefair.org  
www.scstatefair.org

**CAPACITY:** Grandstand - 5,000 seats; Exhibit Area - Cantey Bldg. - 40,000 sq. ft.; Ellison Bldg. - 16,072 sq. ft.; Hampton Bldg. - 25,000 sq. ft.; Moore Bldg. - 19,000 sq. ft.; Ruff Bldg. - 15,000 sq. ft.

**CONTACTS: Dir. Ops./Concs.:** Timothy Wilson, timw@scstatefair.org; **GM:** Gary Goodman, garyg@scstatefair.org; **Asst. GM:** Nancy Smith, nancys@scstatefair.org

**SERVICES: Ticketing:** Etix; Promotes

**OWNER:** State Agricultural & Mechanical Society of South Carolina

**YEAR OPENED:** 1904

## THE TOWNSHIP AUDITORIUM

P.O. Box 1088, 29201  
Location: 1703 Taylor St.  
[803] 576-2350

Fax: [803] 576-2359  
hollomana@rcgov.us  
www.thetownship.org

**CAPACITY:** Multipurpose Arena - 3,099 seats

**CONTACTS: Event Mgr.:** Andrew Horne, (803) 576-2351, hornea@rcgov.us; **Exec. Dir.:** Aundrai Holloman, (803) 576-2353; **Dir. Bus. Ops.:** Danae English, (803) 576-2354, englishd@rcgov.us; **Box Office Mgr.:** Zane Abernathy, (803) 576-2356, abernathyz@rcgov.us; **Mktg. Mgr.:** Tresha Clark, (803) 576-2355, clarktr@rcgov.us

**SERVICES: Concessions:** Ovations; **Ticketing:** Ticketmaster; Promotes/Co-promotes;

**Housekeeping:** In-house

**OWNER:** Richland County

**YEAR OPENED:** 1930

**EVENT DAYS:** 100

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Life T-shirts gained free admission the last two days of the fair. The fair wrapped with its second highest attendance ever — 473,359.

The fair's theme is but one example that reveals Columbia as a city with a big heart. As vice president and general manager of the 10-year-old Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, Mack Stone understands the importance of not only getting people to experience the warmth of Columbia for the first time, but to keep them coming back.

"Being both a capital city and a university town, we are fortunate to have a spectrum of incredibly expansive and diverse offerings, including a vibrant downtown bursting with a variety of restaurants, bars, shopping opportunities and art galleries," Stone said.

## EXPANDING REACH

Three major interstates transect the region and provide easy access to the Columbia Metropolitan Airport. The 142,500-square-foot convention center opened its doors Sept. 21, 2004 and can comfortably and safely fit 4,710 guests theatre-style in its 15 fully customizable meeting rooms, including a 17,135-sq.-ft. ballroom and a 24,700-sq.-ft., column-free exhibit hall. Situated in the heart of the Congaree Vista, the convention center is within walking distance of 45 bars and restaurants, making it easy for convention attendees to get out and explore the area.

Stone said that the venue booked mostly local events its first couple of years as it secured its footing in the community. The first large event, the National Hydrogen Association 2009 National Conference, was booked through the University of South Carolina and attracted international attendees. Now, 40 to 60 percent of the business held is local with a definite progression from local, regional and statewide events to national and international.

## MULTIVENUE EVENTS

Columbia is also a city where there is strong collaboration among the public assembly venues. Like any place, venues compete for destination dollars, but understand the end goal is always to bring people to the city to sample all Columbia has to offer and increase the city's economic impact.

"We collaborate with several local venues for large or multiday events that either require the use of more than one location or wish to provide a change of scenery for the guests," Stone said.

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## SOURCE: 2014/2015 VENUES TODAY INTERNATIONAL VENUE RESOURCE GUIDE and VENUES TODAY DATABASE

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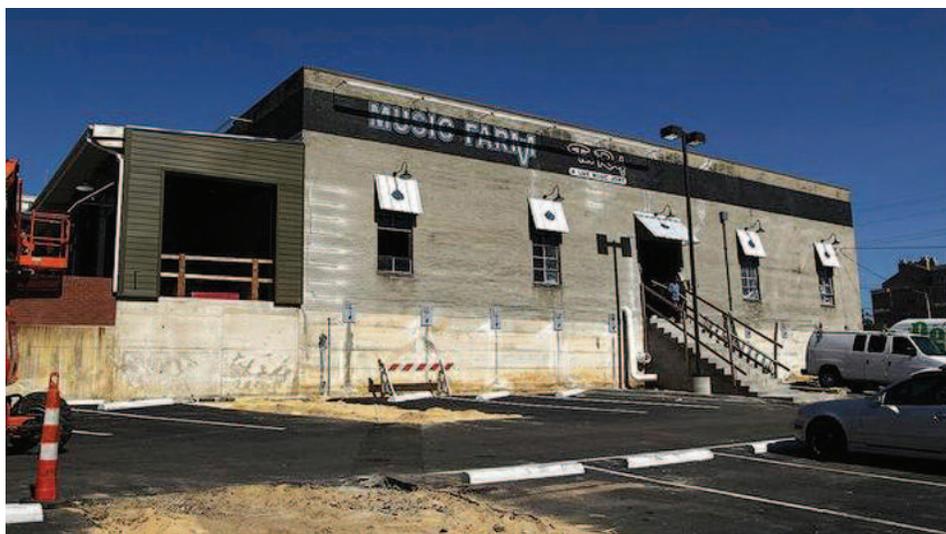


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# OFF TO THE FARM

The Music Farm brand expands into Columbia

by JESSICA BOUDEVIN



Construction for Music Farm Columbia took about five months. (Photo by Music Farm Productions)

It was a market that needed a venue. With more than 30,000 students on campus at nearby University of South Carolina, the area was in need of a space that could bring in quality and affordable entertainment. Music Farm Productions filled that niche with the opening of the 1,200-capacity Music Farm Columbia, Sept. 21.

“Having this size venue in Columbia is a new thing in the market, but agents and artists are always trying to play here because it’s a college market,” said Music Farm Productions’ Marshall Lowe. “Having the venue and now being open, it’s been great to hear the artists’ responses.”

“They want to come back and are spreading the word to other artists and agents, so calls are starting to pick up and come in,” he added.

After opening with a performance by

Marc Broussard, the facility hosted the Road to College DJ Championships with Ookay, Oct. 4; The Revivalists, Oct. 8; Corey Smith, Oct. 10; Sister Hazel, Oct. 16; and Big Gigantic, Oct. 30. Music Farm Columbia is slated to host about 100-150 shows each year, with about 90 percent consisting of nationally-touring acts.

“Because this is the first venue of its kind in Columbia, we’re still exploring all types of shows to get a better gauge of what works best,” said Steve Greene, Sr. Talent Buyer & Festival Programming at AC Entertainment, which began a partnership with Music Farm Charleston and Music Farm Columbia in August. The company has been working with Music Farm Charleston since 2008.

AC Entertainment will be programming the new venue similarly to other clubs the company buys for, “while always making sure that we are bringing up-and-coming artists as well

as those that have already made their way into our hearts.”

Music Farm Productions partnered with Tin Roof, an attached restaurant and bar that hosts regional and local bands, to create Music Farm Columbia, with the two buildings actually connected. Gutting the space and starting from scratch to build the new facility required an overall investment of more than \$1 million and about five months.

“Obviously it’s a long-term investment — and it wasn’t cheap,” said Music Farm Productions’ Trae Judy. “We had to build staging, lighting, all new electrical, plumbing, a sprinkler system, and new fencing outside, and redo the parking lots, plus the box offices and patio, as well as reconfigure the load-in area.”

The company worked with ACS Productions Sound and Lighting on a production, sound and lighting package, which about 80 percent of bands that have played at the venue use.

Music Farm has taken advantage of the ability to integrate ticketing with marketing provided by Ticketfly, which they have been using at the Charleston venue for more than a year and now use in Columbia. With the opening of a new venue, it was important to not only maintain Music Farm’s brand, but also to evolve in a way that would appeal to multiple markets.

The company had used the same website for more than six years, so it got together with its partner, Ticketfly, to design a fresh look and feel for the brand which was then infused into every customer touchpoint, beginning with a new website.

Through Ticketfly, Music Farm obtained demographic information to automate email

marketing and tailored social media campaigns for fans based on interest.

The company helps save time and increase ticket sales by bringing tools for both marketing and analytics together with ticketing. Once you enter event information in once, it publishes everywhere, including a venue's website, e-blasts, social media channels, and Ticketfly's network of affiliates.

"A lot of the power of what we do comes from automation and optimization," said Ticketfly CEO and Co-founder Andrew Dreskin.

Venues are also able to extract and use data, such as which email subject lines drive the highest open rates, and the effectiveness of display advertising vs. search-targeted advertising.

"Because it's so much easier to automatically push content about our events to Facebook, Twitter, and other social channels, our marketing team focuses more time on designing content and creative contests," said Judy, who added that the company also uses Ticketfly's analytics tool, Fanbase, to reward top fans.

Dreskin said that the company also provides guidance when it comes to leveraging social media to engage the community.

"Music Farm has done a great job at cultivating conversations with fans through an authentic voice and creative contests that build excitement around upcoming events," he said.

Judy also focuses on building community the old-fashioned way, setting up meetings with city managers, city police, and local businesses "early, instead of waiting until something might go wrong," he said, adding that the key to success is treating the music business like any other business that would open in town.

"With every market we try to become part of the community, not just be those crazy rocker guys that wear the Chuck Taylors," added Judy. 

Interviewed for this story: **Andrew Dreskin**, (415) 798-2395; **Steve Greene**, (865) 523-2665; **Trae Judy**, (864) 706-8723; **Marshall Lowe**, (803) 629-9603

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The Miss South Carolina Pageant broadcasts from Township Auditorium, but CMCC is the venue of choice for the pageant's annual gala. The Lexington Tennis Complex uses the convention center for an off-site reception during the USTA Junior Team Sectionals.

#### NEW GROWTH

Colonial Life Arena, managed by Global Spectrum, opened in November and, as the crown jewel of the University of South Carolina, has a seating capacity of nearly 18,000 for basketball and up to 19,000 for other events. The arena features 41 suites, four Entertainment Suites and the Frank McGuire Club, a full-service hospitality room.

"Since our opening in 2002, the arena alone has generated \$4 million in admissions and business license taxes that has been directly reinvested into the local community," said GM Lexie Boone.

Boone said that the music scene is exploding, and attributes that to a changing culture and with credit to some of Columbia's local and national promoters who have played a major role.

Challenges in the venue's daily operations include educating people in the industry on the change in culture in Columbia.

"We're here living it, seeing it, breathing it," he said. "But we have to get the word out to those that, in some cases, are thousands of miles away that are routing these tours, and let them know what's happening. The only way to prove it is to take advantage of every opportunity to book shows and then sell tickets."

While acknowledging it is not quite as quotable, Boone called on a line from *Field of Dreams*.

"In the movie, Ray heard a voice telling him, 'If you build it, they will come,'" he said. "But we're not playing baseball in cornfields. If you build it, book it, market it, then sell tickets and service your customers, they will come, and hopefully keep coming back." 

Interviewed for this story: **Lexie Boone**, (803) 576-9050; **Nancy Smith**, (803) 799-3387; **Mack Stone**, (800) 264-4884

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE AT SEVT

The 2014 Sport, Entertainment and Venues Tomorrow conference will kick off Nov. 19 in Columbia, S.C. The day will culminate in a reception at the new Music Farm Columbia, one of many great networking opportunities.

Program highlights are numerous, but it is worth noting performing arts centers interests are well represented.

"With the hiring of Dr. Armen Shaomian a couple of years ago, the performing arts-related coursework in the University of South Carolina's Department of Sport & Entertainment Management has grown significantly," noted Frank Roach, USC professor and co-organizer of SEVT, which is presented by USC and *Venues Today*.

At this year's conference, three panels will include performing arts professionals along with those from other segments of the industry:

"What's Next in Ticket Technology" will be moderated by Maureen Shallcross from Greenville, S.C.'s Peace Center

"How to Get More From Donors in Sports and Performing Arts" will feature Fox Theatre's Adina Erwin and Robin Hallyburton from the South Carolina Philharmonic and will be moderated by Dr. Shaomian.

"Ticket Pricing: How It's Done" will include South Carolina Philharmonic Executive Director, Rhonda Hunsinger.

Additionally, *Venues Today's* "Generation Next" and "Women of Influence" recipients will share their knowledge, and key executives such as Lifetime Achievement Recipient Kenneth Feld and Pioneer Award Recipient Jane Kleinberger will speak. There is even an academic session on "Corporate Sponsorship in a Non-profit Environment."

Lastly, the inspiring keynote address on High Impact Leadership will be delivered by professional speaker and former President of Kiwanis International, Rob Parker, now CEO of Zac Brown's Southern Ground.

Registration and additional information are available at [www.SEVT.org](http://www.SEVT.org).