



ILLUSTRIOUS COLLECTION OF THOUGHT LEADERS TO INSPIRE MEMBERS AT 2014 USTOA ANNUAL CONFERENCE & MARKETPLACE

NEW YORK – October 24, 2014 – Terry Dale, president & CEO of the [United States Tour Operators Association](#) (USTOA), announced today a dynamic lineup of inspirational and thought-provoking speakers for the association’s Annual Conference & Marketplace, taking place December 5–7, 2014 at the Boca Raton Resort & Club. Featuring a diverse mix of well-respected experts from both in and outside of the tourism industry, it is the first time USTOA has mobilized a lecture roster of this caliber.

Annie Griffiths, one of the first women photographers to work for *National Geographic* and founder and executive director of Ripple Effect Images, will deliver the keynote speech at the Opening Session on December 5. Distinguished lecturers in a variety of fields will do a series of “USTOA Talks” at the General Session on December 6.

“Today’s traveler craves deep cultural immersion and throughout 2014, USTOA has focused its marketing efforts on showcasing how its members deliver these types of live-like-a-local experiences,” said Dale. “After documenting more than 100 countries through the lens of a camera, Annie Griffith will bring a remarkable global perspective to the topic at this year’s conference.”

In addition to *National Geographic*, Annie Griffiths has contributed to dozens of magazine and book projects. Deeply committed to capturing people and places in need around the world, she founded Ripple Effect Images, a collective of photojournalists who are documenting aid programs that empower poor women and girls, especially as they deal with the harsh realities of climate change. She has awards from the National Press Photographers Association, the Associated Press, the National Organization for Women, the University of Minnesota, and the White House News Photographers Association.

“And new this year, our engaging TED–style USTOA Talks will provide new depth to the conference, covering topics spanning from politics and business to sports and education, and the relevance of each to our members,” added Dale. “I’m a firm believer that we can learn both professionally and personally from individuals outside of the tourism industry, and that’s what USTOA seeks to accomplish with this high–level line–up.”

Speakers for the series of USTOA Talks include Jessica Yellin, who previously served as CNN’s chief White House correspondent; Steven Michael Mesler, an Olympic Gold medalist for bobsled and president and CEO of Classroom Champions; Will Seccombe, president and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA; Robin Chase, founder and former CEO of Zipcar, Buzzcar and GoLoco; and Peter Ricchiuti, a professor at Tulane University’s A.B. Freeman School of Business. The talks will be hosted by Anita Mendiratta, founder and managing director of Cachet Consulting.

Jessica Yellin is a political journalist with an award–winning career. As CNN’s chief White House correspondent, she covered Capitol Hill, domestic politics and the White House. She has interviewed President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and First Lady Michelle Obama, among other notable politicians.

A three–time American Olympian in four–man bobsled, Steven Michael Mesler and his team won gold for the first time in 62 years for the U.S. at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games. In 2009, Steve and his sister, Dr. Leigh Mesler Parise, founded the international organization Classroom Champions, which connects top performing athletes with students in high–need schools to motivate kids to recognize their potential, set goals and dream big.

Will Seccombe leads the state of Florida’s destination marketing organization in partnership with the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors and the statewide tourism industry. Florida, ranked second by volume of domestic sales for USTOA members, welcomed 94.3 million visitors in 2013. Last fiscal year, Will and his team raised more than \$108.6 million in private sector matching funds to expand VISIT FLORIDA’s marketing dollars. He is vice–chair of Brand USA’s Marketing Advisory Council.

As founder and former CEO of Zipcar, the world's leading car-sharing network, GoLoco, an online ridesharing community, and Buzzcar, a service that brings together car owners and drivers in a car-sharing marketplace in France, Robin Chase transformed the transportation industry. Today she helps individuals, companies and government understand where to look for innovation and how to enable it. In 2009, Robin was honored by TIME magazine as one of the year's 100 Most Influential People.

Peter Ricchiuti teaches courses on the financial markets at Tulane University's A.B. Freeman School of Business and has twice been named the school's top professor. He started his career with the investment firm of Kidder Peabody and later became the assistant treasurer for the state of Louisiana. In 1993, Peter founded Tulane's highly acclaimed BURKENROAD REPORTS stock research program.

The USTOA Annual Conference & Marketplace provides a forum for USTOA Associate members to meet with top executives of USTOA's Tour Operator (active) members on a one-to-one, buy-and-sell basis. The conference is open to delegates from active member and associate member companies of USTOA. Companies must be a current member of USTOA with annual dues paid for 2014 in order to attend. This year's conference is expected to draw more than 700 active and associate members.

For questions and more information on USTOA's annual conference, visit www.ustoa.com, email conference@ustoa.com or call 212.599.6599 ext 24.

About USTOA:

Representing more than \$11 billion in revenue, the member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow six million travelers annually unparalleled access, insider knowledge, peace-of-mind, value and freedom to enjoy destinations and experiences across the entire globe. Each member company has met the travel industry's highest standards, including participation in the USTOA's Travelers Assistance Program, which protects consumer payments up to \$1 million if the company goes out of business.

As a voice for the tour operator industry for more than 40 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents. For more information about USTOA, visit ustoa.com, call 212.599.6599 or email information@ustoa.com.

Contact:

Gina Sisco/Liz Carty

Redpoint Marketing PR., Inc.

212-229-0119

Sisco@redpointpr.com

Carty@redpointpr.com

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