



Extra rooms needed for millions coming to Philadelphia

By Matthew Gambino

Thousands of people have already registered for next year's World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, according to the event's organizers, so the approximately 11,000 hotel rooms in Philadelphia, Southeastern Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley, South Jersey and Delaware are going fast.

Residents in those areas who live within 120 miles of center city Philadelphia are being asked to open their homes and host some of the expected 10,000 to 15,000 visitors to the Sept. 22-25 congress from across the United States and 150 countries.

The "Host a Family" program of the congress, in partnership with the global travel company Homestay.com, aims to match available rooms and possibly vacation homes in the Poconos or Jersey shore with visitors taking part in the congress and the visit of Pope Francis to Philadelphia Sept. 26-27 that is expected to draw up to 2 million people.

"The excitement for the World Meeting of Families and Pope Francis' visit cannot be overstated," said Donna Crilley Farrell, executive director for the 2015 World Meeting of Families. "The response to the opening of registration and confirmation of the papal visit has been tremendously positive and we will need every housing option available."

Farrell called Homestay.com a "trusted brand that will provide a terrific, cost-effective housing option through the 'Host a Family' initiative."

She said residents of the Philadelphia region "often pride ourselves on the 'brotherly love and sisterly affection' that defines our region," and the home-stay program "is an excellent way to show exactly that by offering our visitors a unique and authentic living experience."

Hosts can use Homestay.com's secure system on the 2015 World Meeting of Families website to register a guest bedroom, a furnished apartment or vacation home in the region.

Whether it's empty-nest parents with rooms to spare, young professionals with extra space, or individuals or young families wishing to welcome visitors to the area, potential hosts can find program details and go through the step-by-step online

registration process on the website.

The system matches the host families with people registered for the congress who are seeking accommodations. Both parties can communicate needs and preferences by email but the addresses will remain hidden until the agreements are finalized.

Host families can also earn some money by opening their homes to the guests, although the website does not offer suggested rates.

Event organizers suggest "a modest fee" to ask a visitor to pay per room per night for their stay, "what you feel is a reasonable accommodation," said World Meeting of Families spokesperson Lizanne Pando.

For example a condo or apartment overlooking the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia, along which the Festival of Families cultural celebration and the papal Mass will be held, could command a higher fee than a room in a town 100 miles from the city, Pando suggested.

One requirement of host families, according to the website, is that they provide a light breakfast to their guests each day of their stay. Dinner or other accommodations could be agreed upon by the guests and hosts, who also can lay down the rules for living in their home.

By matching hosts with like-minded guests, the program encourages community and family values, according to Homestay.com's CEO Alan Clarke.

"We believe that 'Host a Family' can enhance and enrich the cultural experience for congress attendees while also providing a most genuine Philadelphia visit," he said.

According to Homestay.com, it created its network to solve acute accommodation shortages, mitigating price rises, and to help local communities benefit from large-scale local events such as the World Meeting of Families and papal visit.

All of which will make getting a place for visitors to lay their heads during the unprecedented scale of next year's events more important as more people from around the world register for the event and hotels become solidly booked.

NEWS BRIEF

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Bridge Foundation organizes big scholarship donation

The Bridge Educational Foundation announced Dec. 4 that as a result of its partnership with local companies, more than \$118,000 will be given to non-public school students through Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs.

The foundation made the announcement, and kicked off its Toys for Tots toy drive with the U.S. Marine Corps, at Father Judge High School in Northeast Philadelphia.

Businesses participating with Bridge in the school-choice grants to students include CSX Transportation, Enterprise Holdings, United Healthcare Community Plan, Waste Management, Aegis Security Insurance, Penn Jersey Paper and RBC Capital Markets.

State Reps. Kevin Boyle, John Taylor and Curtis Thomas attended the event at Father Judge with representatives of the donor companies and Bridge officials.

The students of the following local schools that will benefit from the donation include Archbishop Ryan High School, Christ the King School, CORA Services Early Years Preschool, Father Judge High School, Holmesburg Baptist Christian School, Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls, Maternity B.V.M. School, Mercy Vocational High School, Nazareth Academy Grade School, Nazareth Academy High School, Our Lady of Port Richmond Regional Catholic School, Politz Hebrew Academy, Quba Institute, Resurrection Regional Catholic School, St. Anselm School, St. Cecilia School, St. Christopher School, St. Dominic Elementary School, St. Frances Cabrini Regional Catholic School, St. Hubert High School, St. Katherine of Siena Catholic Grade School, St. Martha School, St. Martin of Tours School and St. Raymond of Penafort School.

Qualifying businesses can receive significant Pennsylvania tax credits for mak-

ing scholarship donations through the state's EITC and OSTC programs.

After 7 years on TV, 'La Santa Misa' helping Latinos pray at home

At a Washington, D.C., luncheon in 2007, executives with the Spanish-language television network Telemundo asked Jorge Fernandez what he thought the Latino community needed.

"We need la Santa Misa. We need the Holy Mass," he replied, citing the great need to make la Santa Misa accessible to those who are homebound or have difficult work schedules that make attending Sunday Mass impossible.

It was a lifelong dream of the Cuban-born Fernandez, who now is the executive producer for the Mass and a member with his wife of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Buckingham.

Initially broadcast in November 2007 on Telemundo, today "La Santa Misa" is broadcast weekly on the larger Univision network. It allows an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 viewers to experience the Mass celebrated in Spanish every Sunday at 6:30 a.m.

Fernandez believes the importance of having a televised Mass in Spanish is enormous because it demonstrates Catholic lay organizers in action and the capacity of the Latino community to come together to serve one another.

"La Santa Misa" requires the collaborative efforts of individual lay people, the archdiocesan Office for Hispanic Catholics and the archdiocese as whole to provide this ministry to the Latino community.

The televised Mass requires the coordination of volunteers from the many parishes with Hispanic Catholics throughout the archdiocese who serve as lectors and music ministers at each televised Mass. It showcases the talents of a community that is diverse yet unified as each offers its gifts in service to others.

It also provides parishioners from across the archdiocese with opportuni-



Redemptorist Father Thomas McCluskey (left) and Jorge Fernandez, producer of "La Santa Misa" who also helped to serve at the altar, wrap up a successful taping of the Mass for broadcast on the Univision network Tuesday, Dec. 9. (Sarah Webb)

ties to meet one another who otherwise might not have met.

Fernandez believes the Mass demonstrates "that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia really cares for the entire flock," he said. "They have been very welcoming and receptive to what we have today with all of the media channels, that we have this technology to spread the word of God and we're doing it."

Since the time the televised Spanish Mass began seven years ago, it has become a way to bring hope to a Latino community that continues to move forward.

"They said it wouldn't last, but seven years later here we are," Fernandez said.

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