

Panel: Special event success depends on community support

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Figure out what works for your area, get community buy-in and the people will come.

That was the message during the Special Events – The Lifeblood of Rural Tourism workshop last week at the annual Rural Roundup event put on by the Nevada Commission on Tourism at the Hyatt in Incline.

Curtis Fong, who is the master behind the two annual cycling events around Lake Tahoe, and Bernadette Anthony and Michele Yegge Evans with Mesquite Gaming spoke about what needs to take place for an event to become successful.



The annual Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe wine tasting is successful because locals believe in it.
Photo/LTN file

And success was defined in different ways. It's possible the

event is not a big money-maker, but the people coming to town are dropping cash so it's successful in a broader scope. Turning a profit is not likely to happen the first three years, they said.

Anthony stressed how events can be developed from a variety of ideas – tapping into a hobby (like what they did with their Bunco event), embracing history, the natural environment, national or state holidays, cultural events, or sports.

Events can include animals – from cow chip tossing to bird watching; foot events – from historical walking tours to pub crawls; motor events – tractor pulls to personal watercraft.

Fong said it's important to define the goals of the event. With outdoor events, he said to consider the geography – mountains, sky, water, wind, open space – all play a role in what type of activities can take place.

Creating a sense of value for the consumer was driven home by Fong.

“Package everything. Everything is perception in terms of marketing,” Fong said.

When he puts on the annual America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride people know the fee isn't just to ride 72 miles – it includes a shirt, lunch on the course, post-party and more.

Anthony added the event must benefit the entire area. “Then everyone will get involved,” she said.