

@the Grounds' Roebbelen Center reaches one-year anniversary with a focus to help the community and event organizers during pandemic

160,000-square-foot building has a big impact with smaller events to meet health and safety Covid requirements

ROSEVILLE, Calif. – @the Grounds and its Roebbelen Center are meeting the often-evolving needs of the community during the Covid-19 pandemic, handling vaccine immunization efforts for South Placer County residents to hosting successful events that follow strict health and safety requirements.

It's a big change for @the Grounds, which opened the Roebbelen Center on Feb. 13, 2020, with thousands of community leaders and the public celebrating the high-profile project. This week, the Roebbelen Center reaches its one-year anniversary in a much-different environment.

The massive building, able to accommodate as many as 12 full-length basketball courts or 24 volleyball courts, was designed to attract major sports competitions, large meetings, trade shows, concerts and other events to the region. But five weeks after the grand-opening celebration of the 160,000-square-foot building, the state-ordered lockdown went into place to prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

Today, the Roebbelen Center and @the Grounds are helping meet the most critical demands of the community, including as an ongoing Covid vaccine site that can immunize as many as 1,000 people per day at Jones Hall.

"It just reinforces how important @the Grounds is to our community," said David Attaway, Chief Executive Officer of Placer Valley Tourism and @the Grounds. "In a crisis, it has truly filled a need."

Indeed, @the Grounds has become an important piece in protecting residents from the virus. The 61-acre campus – which includes an abundance of outdoor space and the renovated Johnson and Jones halls – served as a Covid testing site in the early months of the outbreak and continues to hold occasional blood drives.

"It's been an ideal location for efforts like our vaccination clinic due to its accessibility, layout and location," said Michael Romero, Program Manager for Placer County Health and Human Services. "The staff here have been wonderful. We couldn't do this alone. Their support, planning and commitment have made for a very positive customer experience."

After large events were canceled, @the Grounds staff started looking at retail shows that are allowed and could make the most of the \$34 million Roebbelen Center, one of the largest meeting spaces in the Sacramento region – and the state. Dozens of smaller retail shows, such as

SacAnime and the Roseville Gun Show, could accommodate several hundred people at a time rather than the several thousand for sports tournaments or trade shows.

“We can safely do these events, it’s easy to make social distancing work,” Attaway said of the smaller events at the Roebbelen Center. “And organizers are happy to have a space where they can do their events.”

The retail shows are attracting people, who are aware of and following the strict safety guidelines, from social distancing to wearing face masks.

“Just with the building being so large, you can really spread out,” Great Junk Hunt co-owner J.T. Albers said of the Roebbelen Center.

Some of the company’s junk hunts have been canceled in the western states, sometimes at the last minute, because of fast-changing capacity limits for health and safety guidelines. The Roebbelen Center, about double the space of most junk hunts, has become a jewel, Albers said.

The company’s three-day event in September at the Roebbelen Center attracted about 4,000 people – known affectionately as “junkers” – looking to buy and sell vintage items, but only 750 entered at a time, well below the then-25% capacity limit under Covid requirements. @the Grounds staff assisted with planning traffic flow to ensure social distancing.

“They were just as invested to have a successful event as we were,” said Albers, whose Great Junk Hunt will return March 26-28 to the Roebbelen Center. “It was a great partnership. They were so pro-active in the planning process.”

Other organizers have held outdoor events @the Grounds, including a cornhole tournament and the recent Jurassic Empire – a drive-thru experience with 60 life-size dinosaurs that sold out. And even an arborist certification organization has leased space in recent months.

It’s much-appreciated business for organizers and @the Grounds staff, which was idled during the first few months of the lockdown. Many of the larger events, such as sports competitions and trade shows, booked for the Roebbelen Center have rescheduled rather than canceled.

Attaway says he and his team are looking forward to when the Roebbelen Center can resume with much-larger events that draw thousands of people – and generate millions of dollars every year for the businesses in the community currently struggling from the pandemic-prompted slowdown.

“I’d love to see the return of basketball and volleyball tournaments,” said Attaway, adding the Roebbelen Center held three events – a basketball and two volleyball tournaments – before the Covid lockdown in March 2020. “It was exciting to walk into the building and see how it works. But the past year has taught us many things, including how to be resilient and that we can respond to an ever-changing marketplace.”

About Placer Valley Tourism

Placer Valley Tourism is a Business Improvement District that serves South Placer County and the cities of Roseville, Rocklin and Lincoln. The BID operates to help generate incremental room

night stays in hotels within Placer Valley Tourism's geographic footprint through various conferences and youth and amateur sports events. PVT's aim is to coordinate community and sports events with the best hospitality options in the region. Placer Valley Tourism is a nonprofit and classified as a 501(c)6. For more information, please visit <https://www.placertourism.com/>.

About @the Grounds

@the Grounds, formerly the Placer County Fairgrounds and Event Center, is a multipurpose event facility on 61 acres in the heart of Roseville, California. For more than 80 years, @the Grounds has been the home of the Placer County Fair – an annual celebration of the diversity of the community – along with countless other community, family and corporate gatherings. @the Grounds hosted almost 200 events in 2019. For more information, please visit <https://www.atthegrounds.com/>.