

2019 EVENT RECAP

LPGas Growth Summit

Building Propane Partnerships

October 7-9, 2019 • Reunion Resort • Orlando, Florida

OUR PARTNERS



The Summit unfolds

From start to finish, here's how we're working to unite, grow the industry

BY BRIAN RICHESSON // EDITOR IN CHIEF // brichesson@northcoastmedia.net

Uncovering a select group of propane retailers to attend the *LP Gas* Growth Summit is nearly a six-month process.

It's a process we as an *LP Gas* staff enjoy because it affords us the opportunity to speak one on one with retail propane decision-makers about their operations. These conversations well in advance of the Growth Summit provide insight into retailers' wants and needs, whether it's a particular product or service on which they have an eye, a new market opportunity that's piqued their interest or a new path to growth.

Our one-on-one conversations with propane retailers ultimately lead to one-on-one conversations between retailers and our partners over two days of the Growth Summit, held at Reunion Resort, just outside Orlando, Florida. By this point, eligible retailers have committed to attending the Growth Summit and look forward to meeting with partners who can help them better their operations.

On the other side, the partners who have committed to the Summit are motivated to help propane retailer operations by taking the time to visit with them and understand the details of what's happening on the front lines. Often, the partners can offer a solution to the challenges that retailers face. The first step to sharing that solution is implementing a process that connects key retailer and partner representatives. That's



where the scheduled meetings play a key role. These 20-minute, one-on-one meetings are the basis of the Summit and a key mechanism for attendees to build long-lasting propane partnerships.

A new feature of the Growth Summit that we implemented this year is the location of one-on-one meetings. In the past, retailers and partners held personal conversations at partner tables in Reunion Resort ballrooms. This year, the comfort of these meetings improved greatly, as retailers now visit partner suites at the impressive Reunion Resort tower. Partners and retailers can choose the manner in which they conduct their meetings. At least one partner held meetings outside on the balcony, with palm trees dancing in the distance.

While we put a premium on the one-on-one meetings, the Growth Summit also provides attendees opportunities to meet one another on a more personal level. That's why we've implemented an opening-night cocktail reception, a golf scramble after meetings on the first full day of the event and a barbecue to punctuate the evening. During this barbecue, it's pretty common for attendees to immerse themselves in a healthy game or two of cornhole.

One of the final features of the Growth Summit each year is a group photo on the grounds of the luxurious Reunion Resort. That photo ultimately graces the cover of an ensuing edition of *LP Gas* – just one of the many perks enjoyed by attendees.

Would you like to be featured on the cover of a 2020 issue? This is your chance to commit to our next event. This is also a good time to inform retailers about another notable benefit of attending: *LP Gas* covers your lodging, meals and golf during a two-night stay at Reunion Resort.

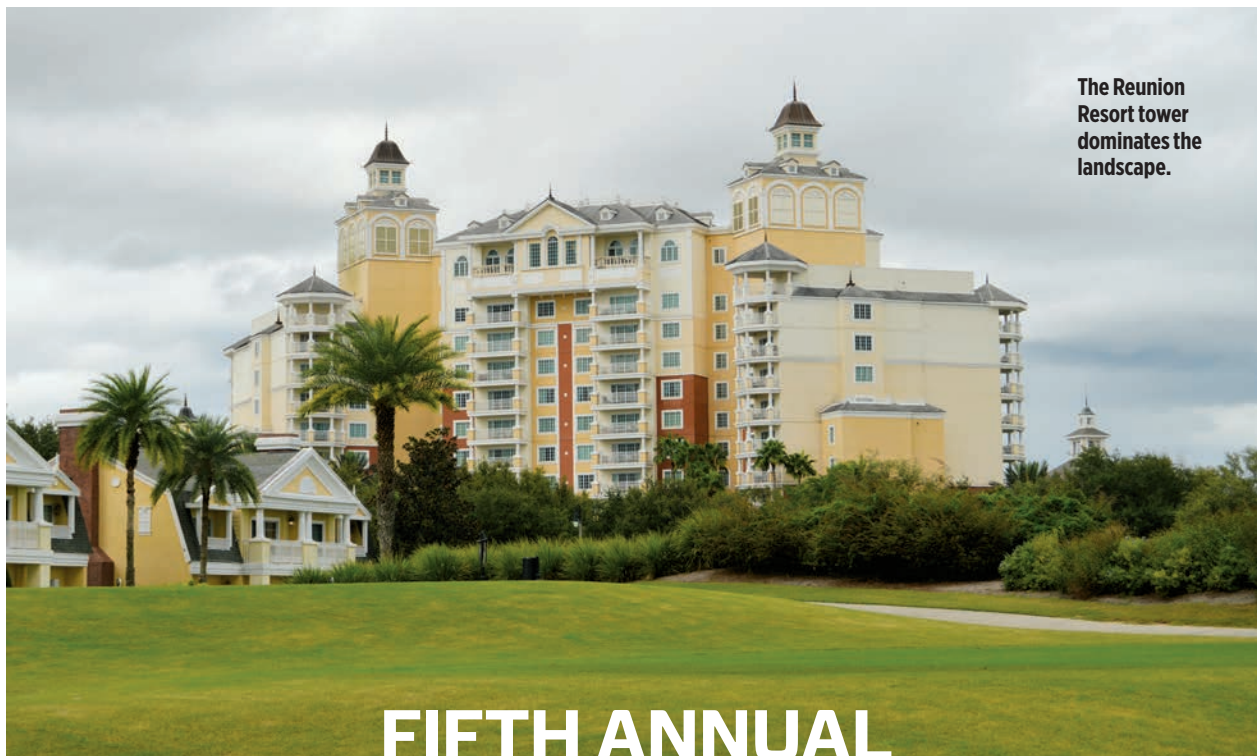
If you're a propane retailer interested in attending our 2020 Growth Summit, contact me at brichesson@northcoastmedia.net or 216-706-3748. If you're an industry supplier of products or services and are interested in becoming a partner, please contact *LP Gas* Publisher Brian Kanaba at bkanaba@northcoastmedia.net or 216-706-3745.

Bringing retailers and partners together and witnessing firsthand that invaluable connection – one that benefits individual businesses and ultimately the industry as a whole – scores high on our rewards meter.

We can't wait for 2020. **LPG**



A new feature of the *LP Gas* Growth Summit this year: One-on-one meetings were held in partner suites of the Reunion Resort tower.



The Reunion Resort tower dominates the landscape.

FIFTH ANNUAL *LP Gas* Growth Summit builds propane partnerships

More than 70 retailers, partners gather at Florida's Reunion Resort

More than 70 attendees from about 40 companies engaged in an assortment of propane industry networking opportunities at this year's *LP Gas* Growth Summit, held at Reunion Resort, outside Orlando, Florida.

The unique networking event, in its fifth year, brought together retail propane decision-makers and propane industry partners for two days of one-on-one business meetings, educational opportunities and other networking and recreational events. The magazine aims to help propane retailers improve their business operations, grow gallons across markets and build lasting partnerships.

"It has been a great experience. I've had the opportunity to exchange ideas with professionals that can help me grow my business in a way that I could have never imagined," says Damian Lopez, general manager of Sigma Gas.



The *LP Gas* Growth Summit opens with boardroom presentations, in which partners provide quick-hitting overviews of their offerings to propane retailers.

Retail propane companies from across the United States, as well as from the Cayman Islands and the Dominican Republic, attended the Growth Summit. They met with 16 partners: ADD

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RETAILER QUOTES

“ [It’s] fantastic. Anytime you get a bunch of really good people in the industry together, and everybody’s talking about making things better and growing, it’s a no-brainer.”

DONNY GALT, co-owner, Inter-Island Propane

“ I’m very impressed with it and I’ve learned so much. The companies and the information they have given has been amazing. The one-on-ones are very informative and in a sea of data out here ... it’s great to refine that down and sit down with them and let them give you their customized plan for your business.”

ALLISON PERRY, director of operations, Mobile Bottle Gas

“ This is my first time ever attending, and I’m glad I came. I’ve never attended a summit similar to anything like this. I think the one-on-one meetings are very helpful because you get to have that one-on-one interaction.”

ALROY JAMES, Nations Gas Technologies

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Systems, Anova, Bergquist, Blue Cow Software, Cargas Systems, Energy Tree, Gray, Gray & Gray, Hiab USA, Industrial-Irrigation, IPS, Otodata, Propane Management Systems, Signature Truck Systems, Tank Utility, Tiger Payment Solutions and VFG Leasing & Finance.

The first day’s events included boardroom presentations, in which partners provided quick-hitting overviews of what they offer to the propane industry, and an evening pool-side welcome reception. One-on-one meetings between propane retailers and vendor partners took place over the two mornings of the Growth Summit. The group also enjoyed a golf scramble on Reunion Resort’s Watson Course, followed by a barbecue dinner.

“The one-on-one meetings are terrific. I met a lot of people that I think can become customers of ours. We’ve done a good job learning about their businesses, and that’s going to help us progress our product even more,” says Warren Van Wyck, general manager of Propane Management Systems.

This year’s featured speaker was Mike Sloan, the managing

2019 LP GAS GROWTH SUMMIT ATTENDEES

This year’s LP Gas Growth Summit welcomed more than 20 retail propane companies from all parts of the United States, as well as from the Cayman Islands and the Dominican Republic. They met with 16 vendor partner companies. In all, more than 70 attendees from about 40 companies engaged in an assortment of propane industry networking opportunities at Reunion Resort, outside Orlando, Florida.



Jeff Axsom
Director of Propane Operations
Premier
Seymour, Indiana



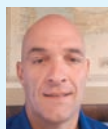
Tom Cole
Owner
Cole Oil and Propane
Lomira, Wisconsin



Robert Dietrick
President
All Service Propane
Franklin, Tennessee



Scott Black
President & CEO
Valley Farmers Supply
Worden, Montana



John Corallo
General Manager, Home Gas Ltd.
George Town, Grand Cayman,
Cayman Islands



Ian Downey
Service Technician
Boyle Energy
Havertown, Pennsylvania



Anthony Buck
Vice President
Lakes Gas
Forest Lake, Minnesota



Jim Davis
COO
ThompsonGas
Frederick, Maryland



Donny Galt
Co-Owner
Inter-Island Propane
Friday Harbor, Washington



Derek Chappell Jr.
Director - Delivery Operations
SMO Energy
La Plata, Maryland



Alex DeCarli
Manager
DeCarli’s Propane/Petaluma Butane
Petaluma, California



Ryan Gunderson
President
Superior Fuel Co.
Duluth, Minnesota

director for ICF's Natural Gas and Liquids Advisory Services Group. Sloan has been providing market analytics and regulatory support for the propane industry since 2004, and he has 35 years of experience consulting in the energy field.

Sloan presented ICF data indicating a decline in demand for propane over the past 15 years, but he emphasized that aggressive market development could reverse that trajectory.

"I can envision a growth path that adds a billion or 2 billion gallons of propane to the market over the next 10 years or so," said Sloan.

Attendees also participated in morning roundtables on key topics such as autogas, customer issues and supply concerns.

"With another extremely successful *LP Gas* Growth Summit in the books, we continue to be very proud to produce an industry-exclusive event that successfully pairs propane retailers and our partners to help grow gallons and improve propane operations," says Brian Kanaba, publisher of *LP Gas*.

"We look forward to our 2020 Growth Summit so we can continue our efforts to make our industry the best it can be," Kanaba says. **LPG**

RETAILER/PARTNER QUOTES

“It has been a great experience. I’ve had the opportunity to exchange ideas with professionals that can help me grow my business in a way that I could have never imagined.”

DAMIAN LOPEZ, general manager, *Sigma Gas*

“I enjoy the Growth Summit, especially this year for me. I connected with some people that I hadn’t seen in a while. It gave me the opportunity to meet with some current vendors at a common location. I met some new people and also got more information on some things going on in the industry in greater detail than I would have had I not been here.”

JIM DAVIS, COO, *ThompsonGas*

“We enjoyed it a lot. The one-on-ones are great to have. You don’t get that anywhere else.”

MATT BROCK, tank monitor specialist, *Bergquist*



Robert Hall
CEO
Como Oil Co. of Florida
Vero Beach, Florida



Damian Lopez
General Manager
Sigma Gas
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic



Mary Sargeant-Buck
Owner
Lakes Gas
Forest Lake, Minnesota



Russ Head
Director of Sales
Energy Distribution Partners
Cape Coral, Florida



Manish Mehta
Owner
Magineso
Flower Mound, Texas



John Schatz
Manager, Energy Operations
Southern States Energy
Richmond, Virginia



Alroy James
Operations Manager
Nations Gas Technologies
Navajo, New Mexico



Allison Perry
Director of Operations
Mobile Bottle Gas
Greer, South Carolina



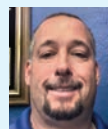
Brad Sullivan
Energy Director
Valley Farmers Supply
Worden, Montana



Ed Johnson
Director of Operations
Boyle Energy
Havertown, Pennsylvania



Colin Reid
COO, Home Gas Ltd.
George Town, Grand Cayman,
Cayman Islands



James Tessier
General Manager
Thermotane Propane
Sanford, Florida



Shelly Kruse
Executive Director,
Strategic Relationships
Growmark, Urbandale, Iowa



Aaron Rosetta
General Manager
Nations Gas Technologies
Navajo, New Mexico



Josh Vanover
Manager
Miles LP Gas
Owensboro, Kentucky



Jimmie Lawson
Co-Owner
Inter-Island Propane
Friday Harbor, Washington



Mike Santiago
Director of Operations
Blue Flame Propane
Newfield, New Jersey



Stacey Whitegoat
Propane Manager
Nations Gas Technologies
Navajo, New Mexico

Fortune favors the bold

ICF analyst urges aggressive action to grow retail propane gallons

BY ELLEN KRIZ // MANAGING EDITOR // ekriz@northcoastmedia.net

Mike Sloan, the managing director for ICF's Natural Gas and Liquids Advisory Services Group, conveyed a critical message to attendees of the 2019 LP Gas Growth Summit: LPG market conditions are in flux – propane retailers must adapt, or get left behind.

The propane industry has faced many obstacles that have led to declining sales in the U.S. retail market during the past 15 years. Changes in a range of areas – from supply to energy policy – also present opportunities, he emphasized.

► SUPPLY REVOLUTION

Major increases in supply availability haven't benefited retailers substantially, or in ways they might expect, argued Sloan.

"The propane supply revolution is over," he claimed. "Supply won."

For one, domestic demand can't keep up with production. While abundant supply lowers prices and theoretically gives propane an edge against its competitors, it's too early to call whether low prices will alter market fundamentals in the long term.

Sloan asked for feedback from his audience about the extent to which lower prices are contributing to an uptick in retail sales over the past two years: Will gains continue as long as supply remains high and prices remain low?



While the propane industry faces many obstacles, Mike Sloan of ICF says, changes in the industry also present opportunities.

Jim Davis of ThompsonGas said he attributes propane sales growth to a stronger economy and concomitant increases in building construction and home renovations. Retailer attendees were silent on whether price advantages have led to increased sales.

If retailers expect high propane production to ease supply shortages during periods of high demand, Sloan warns that logistical hurdles remain as problematic as ever.

"Just because there's infinite supply doesn't mean it'll be where you want it when you need it," said Sloan.

Part of the reason is that large producers, processors and shippers have shifted their focus from the U.S. retail market to large, easy-to-serve export markets.

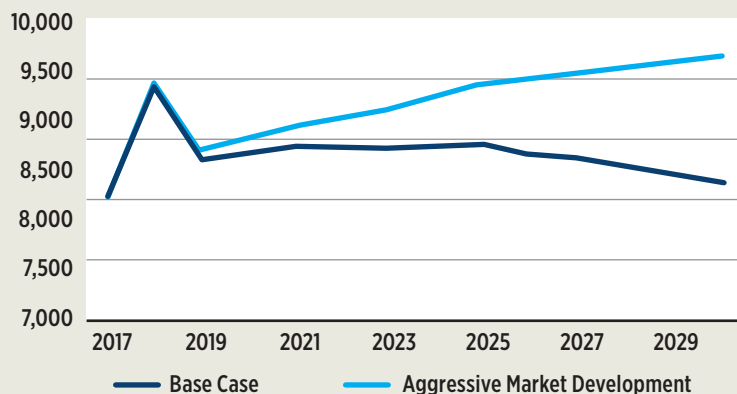
Large, geographically integrated retailers stand to benefit most from increased production as they can take advantage of a more diverse range of supply sources than smaller companies, Sloan noted. Increased margins for larger companies will lead to additional industry consolidation.

► RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As long as current market trends move forward, Sloan explained, losses in the retail market will continue.

COMPARISON OF POTENTIAL DEMAND TRAJECTORY FOR THE RETAIL PROPANE SECTOR

millions of gallons



Source: ICF

Aggressive market development can reverse the trajectory that's resulting from threats to the propane industry, ICF says.

Increased energy efficiency, competition with electricity and the expansion of natural gas lines are among the most notable challenges contributing to gallon losses, according to ICF research. “Decarbonization through electrification” policies pose the most significant threat over the next 10 years, said Sloan.

But he also pointed out that aggressive market development could reverse that trajectory.

“I can envision a growth path that adds a billion or 2 billion gallons of propane to the market over the next 10 years or so,” said Sloan.

Even decarbonization policies open opportunities for growth. Propane has a role in a lower carbon economy as an auto fuel. ICF projects propane used in internal combustion engines will grow at a healthy 5.6 percent rate from 2020-30, although growth in autogas has not been as strong as the firm

PARTNER QUOTES

“The LP Gas Growth Summit has been great. This one-on-one individual setting in which we can have these intimate conversations with marketers has been really valuable.”

RAJAH NAGARAJAH, senior business development manager, Tank Utility

“I like the Summit. It’s a good format. It’s easy to follow and it puts you directly in contact with the big hitters of the industry. We’ve gained a lot of good relationships and a lot of future business from the Summit. We will return here next year.”

SCOTT MOOK, account representative, Energy Tree

“The one-on-one meetings are terrific. I met a lot of people that I think can become customers of ours. We’ve done a good job learning about their businesses, and that’s going to help us progress our product even more.”

WARREN VAN WYCK, general manager, Propane Management Systems

Retailers and partners gather for breakfast at Reunion Resort’s Eleven restaurant and to gain new perspectives from a Growth Summit speaker.

initially expected, explained Sloan.

Other growth opportunities include fuel oil conversions in the Northeast, agricultural heating and new burner tips for existing customers, according to ICF research.

While engine fuel and agricultural markets are lower margin, nimble small- and mid-sized companies can still achieve significant growth, said Sloan. **LP**



PARTNER QUOTES



“It’s been a fantastic event to meet current customers and also a lot of new prospects and have conversations in a very relaxed setting. It’s been a very good change of pace from the normal frenzied booth setup to an intimate one-on-one, sitting-on-a-couch, suite setup.”

AARON GRESS, vice president of business development, Tank Utility



“The Growth Summit has been fantastic. We love the format. It gives us a chance to meet for a good amount of time and learn more about our retailers and what their issues are and how to solve those issues.”

DAVID DODD, southern U.S. sales, Otodata



“This is our third year sponsoring and attending the LP Gas Growth Summit. It’s a great place to interact with growing companies in the industry at a great location.”

DENNIS DISABATINO, vice president, Cargas



“I think the Summit has been a great event. It’s a great format to sit down and visit with each retailer and learn more about them. It’s overall a very positive event to build relationships and partnerships.”

JAY CANADA, vice president of sales and engineering, Industrial-Irrigation

Growth Summit agenda

BOARDROOM PRESENTATIONS

The boardroom presentations, the first event on the *LP Gas Growth Summit* agenda, allow vendor partners to provide short overviews of what they offer to the propane industry. With propane decision-makers sitting attentively in a Reunion Resort ballroom, each partner receives eight to 10 minutes to share a quick-hitting message with the group. Partners have the opportunity to address attendees with or without a PowerPoint presentation. Some choose to make basic personal or company introductions, while others touch on their product or service offerings. Partners can show videos, and some have drawn attention during this first meeting with notable handouts. The boardroom presentations are a way for partners to share information with propane retailers ahead of their one-on-one meetings, which take place over the ensuing two days. Retailers become familiar with the partners from the outset, helping to advance discussions during the one-on-ones.

NETWORKING AND EDUCATION

While the one-on-one meetings get much of the attention at the *LP Gas Growth Summit*, retailers and partners get to know each other even more through recreational and networking events. This includes an opening night welcome reception poolside with an open bar and a sit-down buffet dinner. An 18-hole golf scramble after meetings the following day gives partners and retailers some outdoor fun on one of Reunion Resort's three championship golf courses. Golfers played the Watson Course this year. Following golf, the group convenes under an outdoor pavilion for a barbecue dinner. Here, attendees also enjoy music and games (cornhole is always a popular attraction). This is also where *LP Gas* takes a group photo for the magazine cover. The group also gathers for a buffet breakfast each morning, providing another chance to learn more about what's trending in the propane industry – from one another and a featured speaker. Mike Sloan of energy industry consultancy ICF addressed attendees on the first morning (see page 54), while attendees had an opportunity to talk about specific industry topics during breakfast roundtables on the second morning.

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

One-on-one meetings between vendor partners and propane retailers are the basis for the *LP Gas Growth Summit*. It's a tried-and-true opportunity for retailers to explain the wants and needs of their operations and also to form partnerships that will ultimately benefit their businesses. In some cases, retailers want to explore growth opportunities in a new seg-



Retail propane decision-makers and vendor partners hold one-on-one business meetings at the *LP Gas Growth Summit*.

ment of the propane industry or they want to learn about ways to improve the efficiencies of their operations. Each meeting lasts for about 20 minutes and takes place in the comfortable setting of Reunion Resort's tower suites. This meeting spot is particularly convenient for partners because it's the same suite in which they stay during the *LP Gas Growth Summit*. Partners can choose to hold their meetings however they'd like within their respective suites, even offering beverages and snacks for the visiting retailers. That might mean giving the suite a particular look and feel with company promotions and materials, sharing information on computer monitors or actually demonstrating the product or service in the suite. Some partners and retailers have even held their meetings outside on the balcony. The option for partners to showcase larger equipment on the grounds outside is also available.

EQUIPMENT

While one-on-one meetings between propane retailers and vendor partners take place in the comfortable confines of Reunion Resort tower suites, partners have the option of displaying larger equipment on the grounds outside. This year, Hiab equipment – a service truck crane and a Moffett truck-mounted forklift holding a Suburban Propane tank – dominated the resort's parking lot.



Hiab displays equipment outdoors at Reunion Resort.

Hiab manufactures a Moffett forklift designed for the LPG industry. The company says the forklift offers all-round visibility, making the operator completely aware of his surroundings while handling containers. The forklift eliminates manual handling and can deliver more products in less time with fewer vehicles, the company adds. Hiab also displayed its XS 066 model crane. It says the crane is designed for installation on medium-sized trucks, as the low tare weight maximizes transport economy. **LPG**