



*"It's important to know who to go to for an answer or a solution. It's also important to never forget to think outside the box." ~ The Cottages Credo #2*

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## The CottageCorner | May 2019



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### A Word from Our CEO...



Welcome to Spring! The weather is beautiful and the water is gorgeous! Now is the perfect time for us to push hard with marketing for the upcoming Fall, so you may notice that we will be updating many of our listings (to include drone videos) since our water has turned that crystal azure blue that we have all fallen in love with over the years! If you are interested in discussing photo or video updates to your specific home (or if you'd like to know where you fall in our marketing schedule) please feel free to [reach out to us!](#)

We recently had the honor and privilege of attending a very rare event held by HomeAway called a Rise and Shine Breakfast Summit, hosted by John Kim, President of HomeAway. Only 10 property management groups throughout all of southwest Florida were handpicked and invited to attend this summit and we were one of them. It was an enlightening meeting to say the least and it was amazing to sit right beside Mr. Kim, the mastermind behind HomeAway in a round table discussion setting.

As you are all aware, 3rd party sites are very important to our marketing strategies, and having the opportunity to *get into the inner circle* of one of the largest OTA (online travel agency) conglomerates certainly provided us an additional boost of awareness with the high level executives. In that meeting, we were able to take part in big changes coming to HomeAway. First of all, you should know that HomeAway is rebranding entirely to VRBO by 2020. That's right. No more "HomeAway." From here on out, you will begin seeing their website changes, logos, and more reverting back to the old VRBO brand (pronounced "ver-boh"). With that also comes a change to the algorithms and analytics that will inevitably affect our listings. But the good news is that now that we are part of their inner circle, we have exclusive access to beta testing options as well as one-on-one contact and mentoring with a new team of executives that are specifically focused on our portfolio of homes and how we can improve our listings. It's a great position to be in and one we are working hard to hone.

We will continue our learning and involvement by also attending HomeAway's [RezFest 2019](#) which is set for September 2019 in Las Vegas, NV. Some of the CottageCrew will be attending the seminars to develop our skills, learn about the upcoming changes regarding algorithms and analytics and how they will affect our portfolio's positioning. We will also use this time to meet again with the executives and dive deeper into the current projects and changes they have set for us. We are excited to say the least and we hope you are too. It never hurts to have friends in high places!

I think you will truly enjoy this newsletter as it is jam-packed with my team's newest updates, all of which are extremely informative. We are bringing our A-game from here on out. These newsletters should make you feel like we are leaders in our industry. Because, we simply are. Until next month....

*Spencer Flanagan*  
The CottageCrew CEO



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## A Word from Operations...

We are making our owners statements easier to read and digest! I think we have all experienced the same frustrations when attempting to research work order numbers in our system. *"What number was it again? The lodgix system is so slow! I have to hunt and peck all of these individually in order to get a macro perspective of what is happening at my property!"*

We have listened to all of you and have experienced these same issues when conducting research on our own properties on the portfolio. We are developing all of the ideas below and we plan on having everything in place by the end of the month!

- We have improved the speed and performance of the documents section in lodgix! There is a huge difference in this system now as opposed to how it used to be. Previously, it would take forever to load documents (it felt like we were using Windows 98!) but no longer will you be waiting for what seems like minutes for your folders and documents to load.



- We are currently developing and then adding a unique chart of accounts (specific to vacation rentals) to all of our work orders. Starting from the beginning when the work order is initialized, our operations staff will be categorizing a WO based on a list of sub-categories. (i.e. Appliances, A/C, Inventory - QC, Exterior Maintenance, etc.)
- You will then see these accounts labeled in both the invoice and subsequently next to the WO number on your owners statement. For example, "Owner Responsibilities: A/C - Wo 42456" This will allow for you and for us to identify reoccurring expenses or areas where an abnormal amount of resources are being devoted. From there, we will have the power to *better* study and research what is happening and then implement solutions to reduce your expenses and increase your bottom line! This is just the first step in this process as we will continue to enhance and develop this idea as we move along!
- You will also see a special contribution in this newsletter, from our revenue analyst, Barry Privette. He has been instrumental in having lodgix increase their speed and he has also redesigned our owners statements in relation to expenses accrued. Amazing work by him!

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## A Word from Administration...



I often speak on organization of new processes and the structure of our systems. I am elated to continue that trend while encapsulating our operations, marketing, and sales departments. It has been my agenda to actively participate and practice learned skills from each of our departments. This has given me the edge to become knowledgeable in all roles and have the unique ability to adapt to any situation where my help may be needed.

We will be working along side our Revenue Analyst, Operations, Sales, and Marketing teams to streamline the way you receive information and the way our guests discover us. We already have several adjustments to enhance your Lodgix experience and shrink the timeline of when your uploads are available. Our Sales and Marketing teams have connected and have uncovered an untapped demographic for target marketing which ultimately increases awareness for your homes. Our operations team is rethinking the way in which your invoices and uploads are systematized which will tremendously refine your end of year statements.

Lastly, we are working towards an advertising campaign that will increase brand awareness with our community and visitors alike. I have been able to forge a deeper relationship with our local Chamber of Commerce in Siesta Key and Sarasota which has already proven successful as we have received three walk-in referrals in the last two weeks! In case you were wondering...this referral number was previously ZERO! I am confident that these slight enhancements to our methods will be notably impressive.

So you must be asking yourself...Sara...why all the changes. My response is simple. You trusted us to manage your home and it is our due diligence to make certain we continue to strive for a better way to serve you and your guests each day.

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## A Word from Marketing...

The Marketing Team has been working very hard this past quarter to obtain the status of HomeAway's newly created program called "Premier Partner" for as many of our properties as we can. What does it mean to be a HomeAway Premier Partner, you may ask? Well if you are interested in reading about it, please [follow this link](#). We have been strategically targeting improvements for each property based on the criteria of HomeAway. This includes obtaining more reviews, more bookings, and higher review averages. I am very excited to announce that we have 9 new additions to this program. With these new additions, we now have a total of 16 properties that hold the Premier Partner Status on HomeAway!



Below you will find the properties that have the Premier Partner badge (properties with a \* next to it are the new additions after the most recent assessment):

- Casa De Mariposa\*
- Casa Ohana\*
- Casa Tegula
- Crescent Cottage\*
- Coral Reef Casita
- Latitude Adjustment
- Luna Nueva\*
- Peacock Villa\*
- Sandy Seahorse Cottage
- Sea Grape Cottage
- Seaside Cottage\*
- Sea Shell Casita
- Siesta Dream House
- Topsail Cottage\*
- Villa Champagne\*
- Villa Las Flores\*

In order to obtain a Premier Partner badge from HomeAway, listings must meet the following criteria (assessed quarterly – based on activity over the past 365 days):

- Have 5 or more bookings
- Have 3 or more reviews
- Have a review average of 4.5 or above
- Have an acceptance rate of 85% or above
- Have a cancellation rate of 10% or less

#### **What benefits come with Premier Partner Status?**

- Priority customer support
- Premier Partner badging on HomeAway websites for your qualifying properties (this includes a search filter on HomeAway for qualifying properties)
- Exclusive access to become a beta tester for new tools and features (this helps us to know how well we are comparing to other competitors in the area)
- Free marketing opportunities through HomeAway, including the chance to be featured in emails and videos that reach millions of travelers (We will hopefully have the ability to add matterports to HomeAway soon)
- And last but definitely not least, it provides access to inquirers' contact details (phone numbers)

We are very excited to see how many more properties will be added each quarter. Stay tuned for next quarter's results (August 2019)!

One final note: As you know, we've been doing The CottageCorner going on ten months now, so I wanted to take a moment and ask each one of you: as an owner, what would you like to see (or see more of) in your monthly newsletter? As we are always trying to perfect the guest experience, the same goes for our owners. With that being said, please do not hesitate to contact directly with what you would like added to the newsletter. Until next time, #CottageON!





## A Word from Reservations...



We are in full swing over here at The Cottages on the Key getting ready for our summer season. In preparation for this season, we have studied and analyzed previous years using all of our historical data. We take a true holistic approach to our targeted ads in order to encompass all of our rental options: We focus on which guests like specific types of vacation rentals, what demographic they fall into, and where they are specifically coming from. This gives us the ability to make sure there are touch points for all of our guests at all of our properties.

From there we create reports which help determine which regions have the highest conversion rates. We do this for each specific vacation rental profile on our portfolio which helps us with our conversion rate across the board.

The information gathered is extremely important. It allows our marketing department to know where to target and where to really push our ads. To illustrate this, I have used two examples below where we use both Facebook and Google to target the consumer.

- Facebook Micro-targeting: We select specific audiences based on historical data we have accumulated over many years and then target specific users based on details like location, and even interests as specific as the museums they would like to visit while they are here.
- We are also involved in the purchasing of specific ad words on google that will help illuminate our vacation rentals to users. For example: Air traffic at the local Sarasota airport (SRQ) is up by 40% in April from a year ago according to The Sarasota Herald Tribune. A major contributor to this is the addition of non-stop flights by both Frontier and Allegiant of 23 new routes and 18 new destinations. There are now eight airlines providing nonstop service. How does this effect marketing? Through google, our ads will pop up when potential guests search for direct flights from these very specific destinations. We use our historic data based on our years of doing this to help support and formulate this approach.

We are extremely excited to get these ads out there as a supplement to all of our other marketing efforts which include: direct booking, return guests, word of mouth, the Chamber of Commerce, Visit Sarasota, ground signs, live chat on our website, and the multitude of third party sites which we advertise from!

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## A Word from Revenue...

If you haven't met or come into contact with me yet, let me introduce myself. My name is Barry, and I am our Revenue Analyst! This position's emphasis can be formed from a large spectrum of company data. However, a specific topic I would like to discuss with you is about distribution statements, and how you receive this information.

- First, we wait until the beginning of the following month to begin owner statements so that we can capture all bookings for each month. This is important because a significant amount of reservations can be last minute bookings, and to start them sooner would indicate that you could miss potential revenue. No one wants to lose money.
- Secondly, we initialize, create, and finalize these statements for all of our owners. Believe it or not, there are nearly 40 of you all together, so you can understand that this takes time and focus to create these correctly. This is paid out by the 10th of each month as it has always been.
- Thirdly, we are implementing a small change in order to organize our system so that it works **for** you, not against you. As the owner statements are made now, it is important to match your expenses (typically found on the second sheet of your Owner Statement) with physical invoices found in your expenses folder so that “WO 123456 - Materials/Labor” with a charge of \$25 means more than just your hard earned money going “somewhere.” We pride ourselves with being transparent with owners and guests alike, and being able to provide this information to you so that it is easily accessible and understandable is important. This is a long tedious process, but will make “the hunt” for your expenses much easier.
- Instead of clicking through each and every month in your expense folders, I will personally go into each statement, expense by expense, and match these so you can truly understand where your hard earned money is going. This takes time, and many of you have had missing or misplaced invoices and trying to scavenge through large folders is frustrating. I am implementing a new time frame for you to see this information. By the 15th of each month, you will be able to view Owner Statements and now EASILY identify your expenses in each folder. This means when you receive your May 2019 Owner Statement, you can find all expenses from this report in the Owner Expenses - 2019 - MAY folder.
- Finally, after all of this is organized in our system, I transfer this information from our system into your Lodgix folders for you to view, assess, and have for your records. This will be done every month by the 15th, as stated earlier.



This process is the most efficient way for us to help each of you fully understand and be in control of the information you need.

If you have any questions, feel free to [contact me](#) and I will be glad to assist you in any way I can.

Until next time, #CottageON!

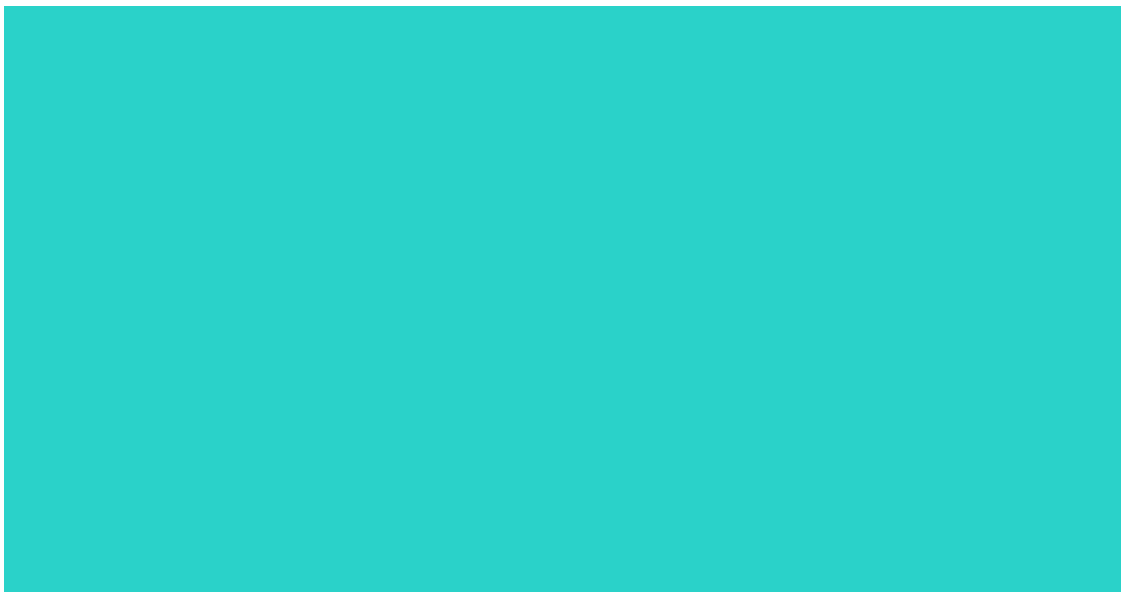
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NEW PROPERTY SNEAK PEAK!  
"THE SANDPIPER COTTAGE"



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## CottageCalendar | Upcoming Events







- 05.17:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 05.18:** *Downtown Sarasota Craft Festival* - **10AM to 5PM** - 1 Central Ave, Sarasota
- 05.19:** *Downtown Sarasota Craft Festival* - **10AM to 5PM** - 1 Central Ave, Sarasota
- 05.20:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 05.21:** *Brunch & Bubbly* - **10AM to 12PM** - The Cottages on the Key, Inc.
- 05.22:** *Craft Beer Yoga* - **6:30PM to 7:30PM** - JDub's Brewing Company
- 05.23:** *Comedy Open Mic Night* - **6:30PM to 9:00PM** - JDub's Brewing Company
- 05.24:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 05.25:** *SRQ Margarita Festival 2019* - **2PM to 10PM** - Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall
- 05.26:** *Memorial Day Pub Crawl* - **9PM to 2AM** - Siesta Key Village
- 05.27:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 05.28:** *Brunch & Bubbly* - **10AM to 12PM** - The Cottages on the Key, Inc.
- 05.29:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 06.02:** *Siesta Key Drum Circle* - **1 Hour before Sunset** - Siesta Key Beach
- 06.03:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 06.04:** *Brunch & Bubbly* - **10AM to 12PM** - The Cottages on the Key, Inc.
- 06.05:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 06.07:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 06.09:** *Siesta Key Drum Circle* - **1 Hour before Sunset** - Siesta Key Beach
- 06.10:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 06.11:** *Brunch & Bubbly* - **10AM to 12PM** - The Cottages on the Key, Inc.
- 06.12:** *Yoga on Siesta Beach* - **9AM to 10:30AM** - Siesta Key Beach
- 06.14:** *Full Moon Walking Ghost Tour* - **8:30PM & 9:30PM** - Historic Spanish Point
- 06.16:** *Siesta Key Farmer's Market* - **9AM to 1PM** - Siesta Key Village



**Thank you to Kathy Ellingson for these wonderful photos!**

(Owner of [La Casa Verde](#) and [Crescent Cottage](#))

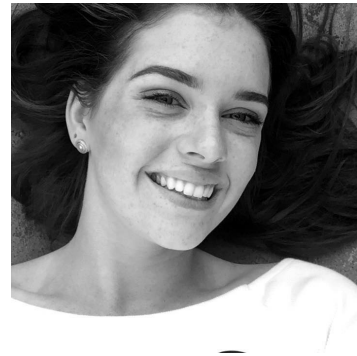
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## CottageCrew Introductions: Barry & Fallon!



You may have seen/heard of Barry before, as he started out as a handyman during the summer before going back to college. He has recently graduated (congrats Barry!) and will be with us full time as our Revenue Analyst. We are thrilled to have you back!

Please welcome the newest member of The CottageCrew, Fallon! Fallon is the new Administrative Assistant and has already learned so much in her short time here. We are delighted to have you as part of The CottageCrew family!



## Featured Reviews

### Casita Sun Star - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Lovely!!!!

### Latitude Adjustment - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Awesome vacation!! House was wonderful. Had everything we needed and kudos to cleaning staff as it was well maintained! Couldn't have asked for a better location for both the beach and Siesta Village. Highly recommend and we will stay here again when we visit.

### Casa Tegula - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Four different families got together and had a great time. The beach was amazing, our bike rides peaceful, we played in the pool, we visited shops in siesta key. The house had everything we needed. The cottages at the keys

### Topsail Cottage - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Had a fantastic time and this property is worthy of a 5 Star rating. First, the place is huge, everything from all living and dining areas to the closets and bathrooms are very large. Has every amenity from seeing the bicycles when you first drive in the garage to having



personnel were so helpful and accommodating too.

your own pool with its own cabana. (2 bathrooms, kitchen with dining table) The best part for us, my wife uses a walker and the elevator could get her to all 3 levels with no problems. The staff was spot on, checking in to make sure all was good. Of course the wonderful cupcakes sitting in the fridge made our arrival extra special. Entrance to beach is only a few houses away, no need to drive anywhere. If we come back to town, for sure we would stay there again. I cannot think of one negative I could even say.

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#### **Casa Stolidia - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★**

Amazing, beautiful! Everything was perfect, a 2 min walk to the beach, stores near by, quiet area, clean and just perfect. We highly recommend The Cottages. Thank you

#### **CocoBayou Cottage - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★**

Great place to stay! We had 2 families with little ones and the accommodations were perfect for us! The home was split into two living spaces w shared commodities which was perfect for us! They had everything you could think of: beach chairs, kayaks, grills, a nice secluded pool, and everything was walking distance (beach, restaurants, stores, etc). They even had cupcakes for the family when we showed up in the fridge which were delicious AND one of the managing staff even stopped by and gave us a bottle of wine to make sure we had everything we needed! 5 stars all day! Will definitely be back :)

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#### **Casa Junonia - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★**

There were 10 of us staying in Casa Junonia for a week - ages 4 months to 71 years. We had a wonderful time. The location was perfect - a short walk to the beach and not too far from some of the restaurants and shops on Siesta Key. The house was well equipped (towels, linens, kitchen utensils, cleaning supplies, beach gear, etc.) and we loved the pool! Thanks!!

#### **Villa Cascada - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★**

We wanted to thank the people that work hard together to make Villa Cascada the most welcoming place we have stayed. When we arrive the house was spotless, the cupcakes are always a treat for the kids and grown ups too. Thank you so much for the warm welcoming and for all the support provided during our stay. Whenever we are back in the area we will definitely be back to Villa Cascada.

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#### **La Casa Verde - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★**

Literally a 60 second walking distance to the village but secluded. Excellent place with great service from the management company. Had one issue with the outside grill leaking and they sent someone over right away then

#### **Seaside Cottage - ★ ★ ★ ★ ★**

We had a wonderful stay. The owners were very responsive to any questions we had, and the property had everything we needed. The bicycles and beach gear were perfect, and the pool was clean and fun even though it was on the small side. Bedrooms were all

followed up to make sure we were happy.

comfortable with great choice of pillows. The kitchen was fully equipped and had all the utensils we needed. Thank you for making our stay and vacation a memorable one.

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**Until next time, #CottageON!**



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Our mailing address is:  
5011 Ocean Blvd. Suite 703  
Siesta Key, Florida 34242

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