



Mary Kay: Being good isn't half bad

Conference attendees on best behavior at convention

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By KATIE MENZER / The Dallas Morning News

When you're a lady in pink, you're expected to walk the straight line.

No alcohol.

No jeans.

No bad manners.

No fun?

Unlike other conventions that might breed boozing and debauchery, the three-week Mary Kay gathering of cosmetically conscious conventioners is only for, well, the genteel.

After all, they're representing the company made famous by its perfectly coiffed and cultured founder.

"It's an honor-system kind of thing. It's something Mary Kay requested of us," said national sales director Cindy Williams, who hosted an iced tea-only dinner for her associates at the convention Tuesday night.

"Personally, I think it's the wisest recommendation she ever made."

For those who make their livelihoods on the ca-ching of the cash bar during conventions, Mary Kay's no-boozing policy can be sobering. Some Dallas barstools are a bit lonelier these days than during most conventions.

"I have not seen a single Mary Kay in here," said Steve Diamond, a waiter and bartender at the West End Pub, normally a big draw for tourists and conventioners.



NATHAN HUNSINGER/DMN
From left: Maureen Shipp, Andrea Reynolds and Krista Shepard don't fret over the no-alcohol, no-denim rule.

But conventioners say that being good isn't half bad.

The hours not spent in bars leave more time for an alternative pastime, one of the pink ladies' favorites – shopping.

The women drop \$91 million each year into the area's economy, with a healthy chunk distributed among area malls, said Phillip Jones, director of the Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau.

What they don't spend on vodka, they spend on Versace. Even goody-two-shoes need new shoes.

"You see them in the downtown Neiman's, the West Village and NorthPark mall," Mr. Jones said. "At the end of the day, it all equals out. They spread their money around well."

A relaxing outing between seminars to the Galleria during last year's convention netted sales director Cynthia Raley a designer suit.

"It was more money than I'd spent on a suit in my whole life," said the Sugar Land, Texas, resident. "I had to explain to my husband afterwards why it was worth it."

The company's good-behavior policy is expected to extend beyond the bars and shoe stores.

In an online memo reminiscent of the warnings issued before school field trips, Ms. Williams gently reminded her colleagues to make Mary Kay – the company's legendary figurehead who died in 2001 – proud while in Dallas.

Follow the golden rule, she wrote, even when faced with long lines, lost luggage and crowds. "Remember, it's not what happens to us, but how we respond."

The packed tables, pink feather boas, shrieks of laughter and countless hugs passed out at Ms. Williams' dinner party Tuesday seemed to indicate that the women don't mind being labeled fuddy-duddies.

Sitting at a table strewn with pastel-colored ribbons and half-empty glasses, Ms. Raley said she's attended other types of conventions – some in Las Vegas – where more traditional fun flowed in abundance. She'd pick the camaraderie of the pink ladies over risqué shows and gambling any day.

"You don't have to have all that other stuff around to have fun here," she said.

Tracey Chavez, a sales director from Tucson, said her kicks don't fit in a bottle.

"Any time they pass out diamond rings and pink Cadillacs," she said, "you're going to have fun."

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