Burkenroad conference attracts biggest crowd in history

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It might not be obvious from the standing-room-only crowds, but investment professionals still regard the Burkenroad Reports Investment Conference, which took place on April 15 at the downtown Sheraton, as one of the industry's best-kept secrets.



Peter Ricchiuti, center, with James Harp, left, and Todd Hornbeck of Hornbeck Offshore Services, says this year's conference attracted more retail investors than in recent years.

"It's not as visited yet by a lot of institutional investors or analysts, so you have the opportunity to get a lot of face time with the company executives," says Richard Tullis (MBA '97), senior analyst, energy exploration and production, with Capital One Southcoast. "You're not really in competition with a ton of other investors, so you have a little bit of an advantage."

For 15 years, the conference has served a showcase for the regional small- and mid-cap companies followed by Burkenroad Reports, the Freeman School's acclaimed equities research program, but unlike most investor events, the Burkenroad conference caters equally to investment professionals and retail investors, the

individuals who use information gathered at the conference to make decisions about their personal portfolios and retirement accounts. Nearly 600 people attended this year’s conference, making it the biggest in the event’s history, and conference organizer Peter Ricchiuti attributes much of that increase to renewed interest among retail investors.

“We got many more retail investors this year,” says Ricchiuti, research director of Burkenroad Reports. “The stock market has doubled in the last two years and they’ve been reluctant to get in. It seems like they’re finally ready to stick a toe in the water.”

Ricchiuti says some of companies drawing the biggest crowds this year were Cyberonics, Evolution Petroleum, Rollins and Iberia Bank, which has emerged as a major player in Florida by purchasing the assets of banks closed by the FDIC.

“The feds close them on Friday and want a vinyl banner in front on Monday and it can’t say ‘U.S. Government,’” Ricchiuti says. “I guess Iberia is just quick on their feet and knows somebody in the sign business, because they get all the good ones.”

To see photos from the conference, visit the Freeman School's Flickr page at www.flickr.com/freemanschool.