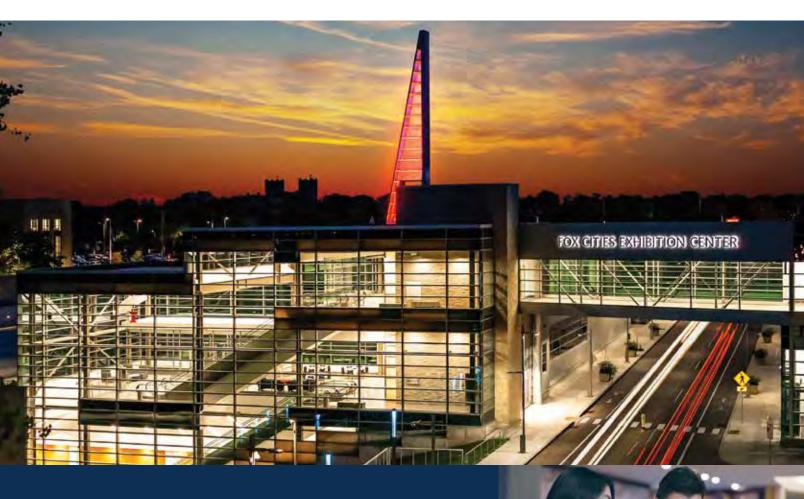


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IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 FROM THE EDITOR
- 6 DESTINATION INDEX

Fall/Winter 2023

MIDWEST MEETINGS MAGAZINE: CONTENTS

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 INDUSTRY INSIGHTS Industry news and updates from suppliers and CVBs
- 10 PLANNER PROFILE

 A Big Small World

 Kelsey Packer appreciates the vast network the meetings and events industry offers
- 11 FEATURED SPACES

 Historically Memorable Venues

 Unique spaces that require
 thoughtful consideration for
 your group
- 13 PLANNER TIPS

 Holiday Cheer

 How to minimize your risk
 when serving alcohol
- 14 TECHNOLOGY

 Digital Delivery

 Streamlining event planning with e-vites
- 16 FOOD & BEVERAGE

 Tips from a Chef

 A sit-down with Executive
 Chef Ethan Smith

SPECIAL SECTIONS

STATE SPOTLIGHT

- 59 Illinois
- 65 Indiana
- 77 Michigan
- 88 Missouri
- 91 Ohio
- 96 Wisconsin

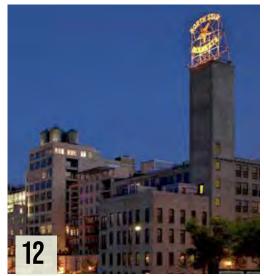


ON THE COVER: Potawatomi Casino Hotel Milwaukee, WI ©Visit Milwaukee









FEATURES

- 20 PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

 CVBs are key to planning successful events
- 30 EVALUATIONS THAT ELEVATE EVENTS

 How evaluating events can help planners pinpoint what went right and what needs to change.
- 34 REFRESH AND RECHARGE WITH A RETREAT Small, intimate gatherings are making a resurgence in the strategic development of corporate teams.
- 40 ROLL THE DICE when you host a conference at a casino
- 45 BUILDING TEAMS15 ideas to foster stronger relationships
- 50 CONSTRUCTION CRAZE

 Venues across the Midwest are upping their game with expansions and renovations to better compete for your business.
- 55 FESTIVE FUN
 12 Ways to Add Holiday Cheer to Your Organization



I'm excited to share this latest issue of Midwest Meetings with you, as we have a jam-packed issue full of fresh insights and ideas to elevate the meetings and conventions you plan.

A few of the topics you'll find, include:

• An exclusive preview of convention centers across the Midwest that are undergoing impressive renovations and expansions. We'll take you on a tour of these venues currently undergoing refreshes to showcase the state-of-the-art enhancements that await meeting planners.

- More than a dozen ideas for your next teambuilding event. Whether your crew is adventurous and willing to explore the great outdoors or they'd prefer to connect with each other in cozy environs, we have suggestions that are sure to be a hit.
- Event feedback strategy. Writer Ronnie Wendt shares effective strategies and tools for gathering valuable insights from your event attendees, plus takeaways to ensure your future events are tailored to meet and exceed expectations.

As we close out this exciting year, we're committed to providing you with the most up-to-date information, expert advice and fresh inspiration. Your dedication to creating exceptional meetings and events in the Midwest fuels our passion for delivering valuable content.

Thank you for being a part of the Midwest Meetings community. We look forward to accompanying you on this journey of discovery and growth in the meetings industry.

Enjoy!

Becky Peck Editor

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www.midwestmeetings.com Volume: 32 | Issue: 3

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Printing by LSC Communications

Midwest Meetings is a publication of Nei-Turner Media Group, Inc. Gary E. Nei, Chairman; William Turner, President.

Midwest Meetings is distributed via direct mail three times per year to Professional Meeting Planners; Corporate Executives; Social, Military, Educational, Religious and Fraternal Organizations; Corporate Travel Agents; Sales and Marketing Executives; and Association Executives by Nei-Turner Media Group, Inc., 400 Broad St., Unit D, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. Volume 32, Issue 3 is dated Oct. 20, 2023.

Nei-Turner Media Group, Inc. publishes Wisconsin Meetings, Chicago Style Weddings, At the Lake, Lakeshore Living, BRAVA and custom publications about Midwestern states.

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Where business meets natural beauty

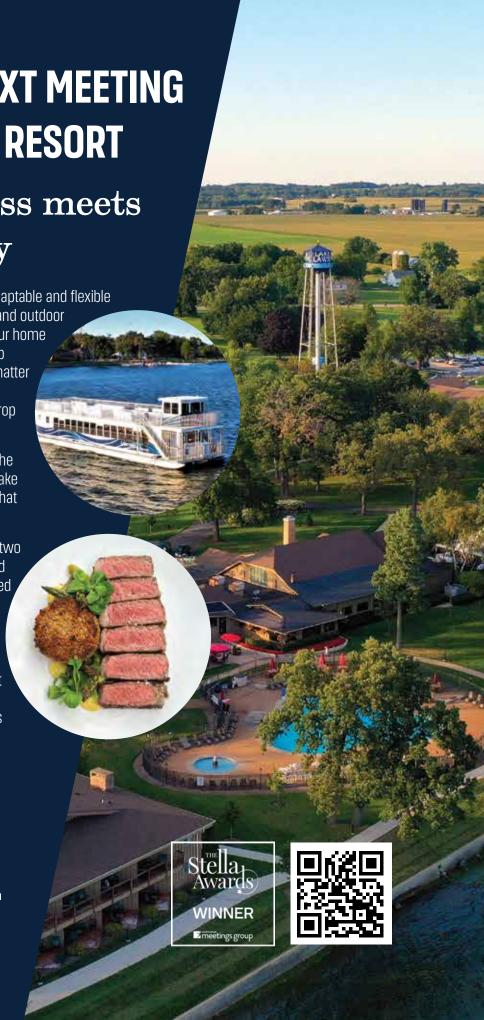
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Destination Index

II I INOIS Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa......116 Effingham Convention & Visitors Bureau......63 Experience Champagne-Urbana 64 INDIANA Dearborn County Convention & Visitors Bureau......74 Hamilton County Tourism70-71 Terre Haute Convention Center 66-67 INWA KANSAS MICHIGAN AHC Hospitality85 Discover Kalamazoo......87 Flint & Genesee Group82-83 Experience Grand Rapids86 Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau84 Southwest Michigan Tourist Council80-81 MINNESOTA Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism......25 **MISSOURI** Margaritaville Lake Resort Lake of the Ozarks.......90



NEBRASKA	
Columbus/Platte Convention & Visitors Bureau24	4
Kearney Convention & Visitors Bureau18-19	9
Lincoln Nebraska26	6
OHIO	
Dayton Arcade92-93	3
Shores & Islands98	5
Visit Greater Lima Convention & Visitors Bureau94	4
ACUITU BAYOTA	
SOUTH DAKOTA	
Visit Watertown Convention & Visitors Bureau28-29	9
MICOCNON	
WISCONSIN	
Brookfield Convention & Visitors Bureau106-107	7
Destination Lake Winnebago112	4
Experience La Crosse110	0
Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau2, 97	7
Hilton Appleton Paper Valley98-99	9
Janesville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau100-10	1
Kalahari Waterpark Resort & Convention Center104-105	5
Lake Lawn Resort	5
Monona Terrace112	2
Par // 115	3

Par 5.......113

Waukesha Pewaukee Convention and Visitor Bureau......102-103



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Industry Insights



MPI OUTLOOK REPORT RELEASED

In their quarterly report on the state of the meetings and convention industry, where Meeting Professionals International surveys industry professionals, the following findings were announced:

- With the majority of survey respondents citing their business as already back to pre-pandemic levels and 80% labeling overall business conditions as "favorable," the meeting and event landscape appears to be showing signs of normalization.
- •The percentage of respondents citing "favorable" business conditions over the next 12 months has declined for the third consecutive quarter. This is not necessarily a perilous finding, rather one that may suggest the industry is on a path to more normalized business conditions.
- Over the past year, the percentage of respondents to say they're finding it difficult to fill job vacancies has been slowly decreasing. While at first glance that trend appears to have stalled, the percentage of respondents to say they are not having difficulty filling open positions is the greatest it has been since introducing this question more than a year ago.

• A full 90% of respondents say that sustainability in their events is either very important or somewhat important, with a clear majority of planners and suppliers willing to spend at least 5% more to include sustainable options.

For more details and to read the full report, visit mpi.org.

WISCONSIN BREWERY OFFERS CUSTOM LABELS

Sprecher Brewery, headquartered in Milwaukee, Wis., is now creating custom labels for their award-winning root beer, which is fire-roasted and made with locally-sourced honey. Custom labels, which you provide the image for, can include your event logo, and get everyone fired up for some fun. A minimum of one case (24 bottles) is required. Cases can be shipped directly to you or picked up directly at their Milwaukee facility.

PROPERTY NEWS

Housed in the 95-year-old, 10-story, Renaissance Revival-style YMCA building is the **21c St. Louis**, the latest property to open in downtown St. Louis. The unique facility boasts over 14,000 square feet of museum exhibition space featuring rotating,

curated exhibitions, along with site-specific art installations commissioned in response to the site and the design of the building. There are 173 artistically appointed rooms outfitted with exclusive artworks from artists who have strong ties to Missouri. There are two dining options on site that include an upscale café, Good Press, and Idol Wolf, a tapas-style dining experience featuring the culinary traditions of Spain. Private events can be arranged throughout the exhibition space, offering a unique setting for a variety of groups.



The Pfister Hotel, an historic AAA Four Diamond hotel owned and managed by Marcus Hotels & Resorts, is undergoing an extensive, state-ofthe-art, multi-phase, \$20 million renovation. Updates will feature a full revitalization of the ballrooms and meeting spaces, followed by all-new guestrooms in its historic tower, and conclude with enhancements to the hotel's iconic lobby, lobby bar and Café at the Pfister. All phases of this renovation are expected to be completed by spring 2024. Event space can accommodate 50 to 1,500 guests. In addition, The Pfister is celebrating its 130th anniversary in 2023. "For over a century, The Pfister has been our city's enduring mainstay, holding as much of Milwaukee's history as its own," says Brandon Drusch, managing director of The Pfister Hotel. "For generations, the Pfister has been the hotel of choice for event planners and individual guests alike. And thanks to thoughtful planning, impeccable attention to detail and expert craftsmanship, we are elevating our time-honored luxury in a way that is approachable and fresh for today's guest."

wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells recently unveiled eight new treehouse cabins capable of sleeping up to 22 people. Each features a mountain modern design covering nearly 4,000 square feet with a wide variety of common spaces, including a full kitchen with large breakfast bar, living room and rec room, as well as multiple decks with outdoor seating and an attached "treehouse" room. There are also five bedrooms and six bathrooms. According to Shannon Timmerman, CMP, director





of sales for Wilderness Resort, "We've had a lot of interest in these cabins for organizational retreats and team building events. They are located right by our championship Wild Rock golf course and award-winning Sundara Spa, and just a quick shuttle ride from our zip line and other activities that are perfect for team building. They truly offer a great alternative to our conference center for a small group event."

PEOPLE NEWS

Choose Chicago

Eric Kincaid, a member of the sales team at Choose Chicago for the past two years, has been promoted to vice president of Sales. During his tenure, Kincaid has played a leading role in recruiting numerous new clients and securing the

Democratic National Convention

for August 2024. Lisa Nucci
has been hired as chief
marketing officer; and
Tara Welch has become
Choose Chicago's
first-ever chief of staff.
"Following an extensive
recruitment and interviewing
process. I am thrilled to fill these

positions and strengthen our dynamic leadership team," said Choose Chicago President and CEO Lynn Osmond. "Lisa and Tara will make outstanding

additions to our team, and Eric has proven an invaluable leader within the sales department. Each is an experienced leader who will enable the entire staff





at Choose Chicago to work more effectively toward our mission of elevating Chicago as a must-experience global destination," according to Osmond.

Visit Cincy

Senior sales manager **Kariuki Epps** has rejoined the sales team at Visit Cincy. Epps worked with Visit Cincy as the National Manager of Diversity Sales from 2014 to 2019. During that time, he successfully booked many large conventions and valuable conferences in the Cincy region. Some of those conventions include the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (2017), Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc. (2019), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (2022), and two conferences that have never been to Cincinnati with the National Newspaper Publishers Association (2019) and Moose International (2021). Epps will bring new conventions to Cincinnati, as well as enhance the region's reputation as a top national meeting destination, using his experience in the religious, fraternal and ethnic meetings segments.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Meetings & Incentives Worldwide (M&IW) has been named to MeetingsNet's CMI 25 list for the 16th consecutive year. The annual report recognizes the largest full-service meeting and incentive-travel management companies focused on the U.S. corporate market. "It is an honor to be named to the 2023 CMI 25 list," said Tina Madden, CEO, M&IW. "The recognition is especially gratifying as we wrap up our Journey to World Class, a two-year initiative focused on continuous improvement and service

excellence both internally and for our customers. I am glad to see that journey has paid off and am tremendously proud of our team for continuing to elevate and spread MGIW's reputation."



The Marriott Lincolnshire Resort in Chicago has secured four Stella Awards in various categories. The Stella Awards, presented by the Northstar Meetings Group, honor hotels, convention centers. conference centers, airlines, cruise lines, DMOs/ CVBs and DMCs that consistently deliver quality service and innovation to meeting and event professionals. Awards included: Best Hotel/ Resort - Silver: Best Hotel/Resort Event Space - Silver; Best Food & Beverage - Silver; and Best Onsite Support Staff - Bronze. Thirty minutes from downtown Chicago, Marriott Lincolnshire Resort offers 390 exquisite guestrooms and suites, 64,000 square feet of meeting space, two restaurants, an M-Club, and a full-service Starbucks and premier spa. In addition, you'll find abundant recreation and entertainment within the resort, including a Ralph-Fazio PGA golf course, tennis center, indoor and outdoor pools, and the highly acclaimed Marriott Theatre. \mathcal{M}

A Big Small World

Kelsey Packer appreciates the vast network the meetings and events industry offers

BY AMANDA N. WEGNER

elsey Packer loves that the meetings and events industry is such a "big, small world."

"I love the vast network you gain in the industry; it is such a big, small world where everyone knows everyone and wants the same thing," says Packer, CMP, an event planner with Farm Credit Services of America/Frontier Farm Credit.

In the events industry for more than 10 years, Packer, based in Omaha, Neb., is "a department of one" at Farm Credit Services of America/Frontier Farm Credit.

"I coordinate all the larger-scale meetings and events for our company, both internal and external/customer-facing," she says. "This includes conferences, board meetings, corporate retreats, networking events and employee activities. I am very lucky to work with many cross-functional project teams on these various projects that serve our teammates and customers."

Packer moved into this position after several years on the profession's hotel operations

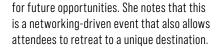
and hospitality side. After graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, she took the first job she was offered as a front desk agent for an Omaha hotel. "This taught me so much about the hospitality, travel and events industry," she says.

That role also started her on a string of hotel operations roles, including banquet director, executive meeting manager and group sales manager. When the pandemic hit and she was furloughed from hotels, Packer found a newly created event planner position at FCSAmerica and made the switch to the planner side of the industry.

A past president of the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Heartland Chapter, Packer notes that she "owes a lot" to her involvement with the local chapter, MPI Heartland, for helping her land the role at FCSAmerica.

"We persevered through the pandemic and banded together to make the most out of our memberships, creating a solid network of friends and professional partnerships that I leverage each day."

While Packer has been fortunate to plan and experience many different events, one of her favorites to date is the company's Capital Markets Retreat, where the objective is to bring together 100 people who complete high-stakes business deals throughout the year and help strengthen those relationships



"I helped set up the meetings and receptions, but the coolest part was setting up a chalet at a professional golf tournament for them to network and spectate. This was a personal bucket list item for me to attend a PGA Tour event, and it was a huge success!" says Packer. "All 100 people raved about the seamless experience from transportation to food to access to the grounds, and we clearly executed the networking objective. That is definitely a career highlight thus far."

She adds of events in general: "I love the adrenaline of the event itself and watching all your hard work come to fruition. There is nothing like watching attendees engaging and benefitting directly from the months of planning you put into an event."

Moving forward, rising costs for technology or food and beverage will continue to be a challenge for planners, so finding ways to creatively stay within budget will be crucial.

Packer also believes in the importance of continuing to invest in the in-person experience. "If you still offer virtual or hybrid meeting options, that is great," she says. "But I believe that the past and future of events will always be the in-person audience and their engagement."

To succeed in the industry, Packer believes that being understanding, flexible and accommodating, no matter your role, are the keys to success. "Approaching any scenario or problem with an open mind, communicating your wants and needs clearly to your partners, and working with others to develop creative solutions will serve you well in the long run!"

She also notes the importance of constant learning: "Always looking for ways to improve your skill set, knowledge base and qualifications will elevate you and give you a competitive advantage." Then, use that knowledge to support others and grow your network by serving as a resource for others with the knowledge you gain. Seek advice and support from others in similar roles and expand your network.

"You can never fully be an expert in one thing, so create strong relationships that you can leverage and help both parties thrive," says Packer. M



Historically Memorable Venues

Unique spaces that require thoughtful consideration for your group

BY MAURA KELLER

tunning architectural elements. Unique historical pasts. Awe-inspiring details. These are some of the attributes that historic venues offer meeting and event attendees. Memorable rather than commercial, these gems offer a bevy of unique accommodations and amenities. Adept at serving groups as small as 10 and as large as 1,000 underneath glistening chandeliers and amidst carved granite columns, these full-service venues dot the Midwest landscape and leave a lasting impression on attendees.

"When hosting a meeting or event in any destination, we as event professionals should strive to share the destination's culture and history with our participants," says Heather Herrig, CMP, president and chief event strategist at ELD Events. "While modern options can certainly offer plenty of culture, tapping into a destination's past by showcasing historic venues is extremely special. These venues are incredibly unique, and there's no substitute."

For Bonnie Boyd, CMP, DMCP, president and CEO of BBC Events, focusing on the specific historic "background" of a venue can lend interest and education as well. Here is where creativity can enhance the experience by focusing on the unique/unusual profile of the venue.

"Architectural and historical character of the venue is obvious, but what about the use(s) of the venue over time, and its evolution and its changing reputation? And creative focus on who and what happened on the site can be featured — from menu and musical selections to interactive and educational activities," Boyd says. "The sustainable aspect of the historic venue also can play an important role: by supporting the heritage and maintenance of the historic venue the planner can enhance the corporate sponsor's commitment to historic sustainability as well as lend a sense of shared 'esprit de corps' and giving by the guests/participants."

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Of course, hosting events at historic venues can also bring challenges. As Herrig points out, as many were built before the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law, first and foremost, planners must be very careful that the venues are accessible to all. In addition, planners need to ask the right questions to ensure that the venue can support the logistics required by the event.



"Are there ample restrooms? Can our caterers adequately serve our guests? Do we need to address any safety concerns (e.g., steep stairways or dark passages)?" Herrig says.

Above all, when selecting historic venues, planners must ask themselves if hosting at a historic venue aligns with the group's culture and supports the event's overall goals.

"If the group will not necessarily appreciate this nod to the past, then our investment is best placed elsewhere," Herrig says. "We always want to put ourselves in a position to help our guests and participants experience new things, but if it's going to fall flat, we should consider other options. And if you're not sure, don't be afraid to ask decision makers directly, or better yet, a sampling of your participants. Don't assume either way."

MILL CITY MUSEUM MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

Imagine hosting an event in the ruins of an old flour mill a few yards from the Mississippi River. The Mill City Museum is a 120-year-old historic gem on the edge of downtown Minneapolis that provides the ideal backdrop for meetings and events of all sizes. Towering rusted steel, weathered brick and classic wood elements combine with historic relics from the mill's past to create an innovative and modern feel to this picturesque space.

Considered a National Historic Landmark, the Mill City Museum boasts an expansive outdoor courtyard, as well as several other meeting and event spaces to offering one-of-a-kind experiences for up to 1,000 attendees.

NAZARETH HALL Grand Rapids. Ohio

Grand Rapids, Ohio, is home to Nazareth Hall, a former classic Catholic boarding school set amidst 37 acres of green space. Built nearly 100 years ago, Nazareth Hall was permanently closed in 1982 before being completely renovated and retrofitted as the ideal event center in 1991. Since







that time, this venue has become a beacon for meeting and event planners looking for a classic architectural gem that will leave attendees eager to visit again.

Featuring grand ballrooms, meetings spaces and classrooms aplenty, Nazareth Hall has played host to numerous gatherings throughout its history as an event center and has proven to be an ideal location for conferences, corporate retreats, business meetings and corporate parties.

HOTEL JULIEN Dubuque. Iowa

Built in 1839, the Hotel Julien, which has undergone a series of name changes throughout its long history, was a welcome respite for visitors traveling on the mighty Mississippi River, including such dignitaries as Abraham Lincoln, Al Capone, "Buffalo Bill" Cody and Mark Twain. Today,

the Hotel Julien is an elegant, historic space that combines modern amenities with historic flair, thanks in part to a \$33 million renovation. Located on the historic Main Street in Dubuque, lowa, the Hotel Julien features over 14,000 square feet of meeting and event space. The hotel's Grand Ballroom offers an idyllic setting for corporate gatherings thanks to the towering crystal chandeliers, enormous windows and architectural elements of yesteryear.

OLIVER BUILDING KANSAS CITY, MO.

The Oliver Building has donned more than a few hats during its storied past. From housing an automobile manufacturer to agricultural organizations to aviation production, the century-old building has reinvented itself into a much-sought-after event space in the heart of Kansas City, Mo.

It was in 2015 that the Oliver Building began undergoing a dramatic restoration, after years of neglect and abandonment. Due to the significant decline of the building, the restoration required several years to bring it back to its original glory. Today, the venue is the ideal backdrop for conferences, meetings, galas and other events. With three floors and over 30,000 square feet of event space, the building can host up to 900 guests. For smaller gatherings, companies can enjoy multiple breakout spaces and an outdoor patio area for meetings in more natural surroundings. M

Maura Keller is a freelance writer based in the Twin Cities who regularly writes for a number of trade publications in the meetings and conventions space.

12 Midwest Meetings | Fall/Winter 2023

Holiday Cheer

How to minimize your risk when serving alcohol

BY KRISTEN DARKOW



ith holiday events expected to ramp up this season to the highest level since pre-pandemic, it's time to revisit the issue of alcohol. While ultimately, responsibility for alcohol liability typically rests on the shoulders of the venue who often carries the liquor license, as the sponsor of the event, your company is relying on you to protect them, all while encouraging a festive atmosphere where attendees can enjoy themselves. The last thing the company wants is to have sponsored an event where a guest leaves and is involved in an accident or displays questionable, if not, criminal behavior.

Here are five strategies to minimize your risk and place emphasis on the priority, which is celebrating the season.

1. Hire Professionals

Professional bartenders with bartender licenses are trained to handle these things. Not only can they craft the perfect cocktail, but they can also help plan for how to handle underage guests, keep an eye on how many drinks someone has had, limit the number of drinks per guest and even (tactfully) cut someone off if needed. So, if your venue doesn't already provide a bar and professional bartenders (most licensed venues do), find a catering company or business that specializes in providing licensed bartenders for events.

2. Create a Detailed Plan

When an event is planned from beginning to end and everything is thought of, there is little room for mishap or potential hiccups. Aside from hiring bartenders or an alcohol service, consider things like the location of the venue, the start time and end time of the event, the amount of food available, and reliable transportation to and from the venue.

3. Encourage Safety

When you are creating your plan, there are ways that you can encourage guests to be safe and responsible. Consider holding the event at or near a hotel so guests don't have to travel. Create a signature mocktail menu for easy, alcohol-free alternatives. Remind employees of the company culture or handbook policies regarding alcohol consumption at company-sponsored events, prior to the event. Make sure water

is accessible at the bar or in coolers around the event space. Provide a variety of snacks or a latenight meal. Offer shuttle services or vouchers for a ride service.

4. Discourage Excessive Drinking

When it comes to having an open bar or a cash bar, consider a somewhere-in-between alternative. Provide each guest with a set number of drink tickets (for example, two) upon arrival. They get two complimentary drinks and have to make an intentional decision to purchase additional drinks. This route may not always be a good fit, but it is a way to potentially limit the number of drinks consumed by each guest, or at least make them think twice before consuming more.

5. Don't Make Alcohol the Focus

When planning for the evening, make sure to build in time and plan for games, entertainment, speeches, dancing or team-building activities. If there are other things for guests to keep busy with aside from drinking, chances are they'll be working on their drink longer or have fewer opportunities to make another trio to the bar.

Holiday parties are a wonderful occasion for coworkers to get together outside of the office, let loose a little bit, and celebrate a job well done throughout the year. Alcohol can be a fun addition to any holiday celebration, as long as its logistics are carefully considered and it is consumed responsibly.

Kristen Darkow is a freelance writer based in Madison. Wis.

Digital Delivery

Streamlining event planning with e-vites

BY AMANDA WEGNER



hile electronic invitations, or e-vites, will never replace the special care, attention and appreciation of a physical invitation, they can help streamline the event planning and invitation process. If you're not already using an e-vite platform to send event invitations, we've rounded up some of the perks of using and investing in such a tool. We also offer suggestions on a few tools to investigate for your own meeting and event invitation needs.

WHY E-VITES MAKE SENSE

While they are less personal than a physical invitation, e-vites, also called digital invites, are becoming the go-to option for many planners as they offer some distinct benefits.

- **1.** *Time, money and effort savings*: Digital invitations are more environmentally conscious as they eliminate the need for paper, printing and shipping. In addition, because they require just a few clicks to create and send to a vast audience, e-vite platforms save planners considerable time and resources, allowing them to focus on other critical aspects of event planning.
- **2.** Beautiful, custom invitations: While raised lettering and gold foil aren't options with a digital invite, e-vite platforms offer a range of design templates and customization options. This allows planners to tailor invitations to match the theme and style of the event, creating a cohesive and professional impression. These templates can carry over into transactional messages for the event to continue the visual thread.
- **3.** Real-time RSVP tracking and automation: With an e-vite platform, planners can instantly see who has accepted, declined or hasn't responded, enabling better management of guest lists, event registration and seating arrangements.

Couple this real-time tracking with automation capabilities to create efficiencies in the invitation process. Some e-vite platforms can automatically send reminders to guests who haven't responded or confirmed their attendance, ensuring a higher turnout rate. Some can also be programmed to automate responses, such as a thank-you email, value-added content, link to the event app and more.

This built-in tracking capability provides meeting and event planners valuable insights through platform analytics and reporting features. This data can help assess the success of an event and inform future planning decisions, such as marketing spend, event offerings and more.

4. Multi-channel communication: E-vite platforms support various communication channels, including email, text and social media. This enables planners to reach their audience where they are most active and makes social sharing easier; when someone registers for an event, these tools make it quick and convenient to share with a friend or colleague, which can help drive additional registrations.

OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

Most event marketing platforms, such as Cvent, Aventri, Splash and others, include an e-vite option within their platform or as an add-on. If you don't already have a full-fledged event management tool, here are four options to consider.

Evite, evite.com

Evite is well-known as one of the first e-vite platforms. The company's Evite Pro, a premium subscription, includes ad-free invitations, RSVP tracking, larger list size (up to 2,500) and more customizations. Evite is best for events where you only need to know whether or not someone is attending.

Cost: \$0 to \$250

Eventbrite, eventbrite.com

Eventbrite is a comprehensive platform that handles invitations, ticketing, registration and event promotion. With a suite of plans (Flex, Pro and Premium) and customization options, it's a good platform for larger events and conferences.

Cost: Varies. Monthly cost based on plan level and number of tickets. Premium is the suggested option for large or complex events.

Paperless Post, paperlesspost.com Paperless Post's focus is creating beautifully designed digital invitations and cards. The company's Paperless Post Plus option unlocks customization and guest management tools. Cost: This tool utilizes "coins:" users load their account with coins, and various features. cost a certain number of coins. The cost for 1,000 coins is \$115, and it costs 200 coins to enable the Paperless Post Plus option.

Ticketleap, ticketleap.com Ticketleap was designed to accommodate smaller events and planners needing a flexible e-vite solution without long-term contracts.

Cost: Free to use, but fees are tied to paid events: planners can choose to absorb the fee or pass it on to the buyer.

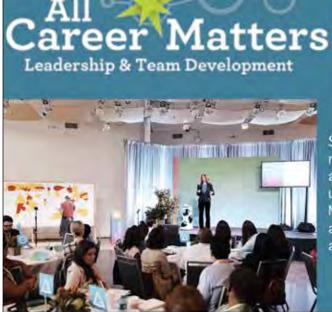
These are just a few of the many options available for digital invitations. Remember to evaluate these platforms based on your specific event needs, such as cost, tracking capability and level of customization available, before choosing the one that best suits your planning needs. M

Amanada Wegner is a freelance writer based in Madison, Wis.



SEVEN TIPS FOR E-VITE SUCCESS

- **1.** Craft a clear and engaging message with essential event details like date, time, location and purpose. Make it compelling to generate excitement.
- **2.** Personalize e-vites as much as possible. Use the recipient's name. If the tool offers the ability to include variable data, find ways to incorporate other data points into the email as this increases connection to the invitee.
- **3.** Ensure the RSVP process is straightforward, with a clear call-to-action button or link for RSVPs.
- **4.** Ensure that your e-vites are mobile-friendly. Test your e-vite, especially forms, on mobile devices.
- **5.** Send timely reminders (use automation if available) to those who haven't responded. A gentle nudge can increase the response rate, but don't go overboard.
- **6.** Include social sharing options to generate word-ofmouth promotion.
- **7.** Send a thank-you to those who have RSVP'd and set up a campaign to push out updates and relevant content before the event to help maintain interest and commitment to attendance.



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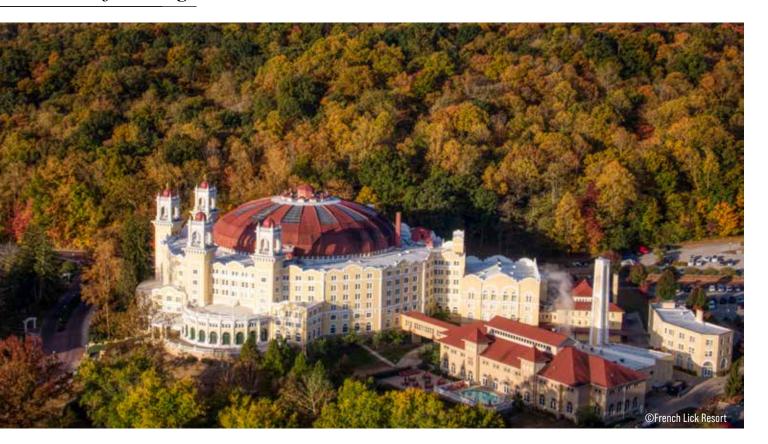
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Tips from a Chef

A sit-down with Executive Chef Ethan Smith

ood and beverage, like many other elements of your event, can be a great way to connect with your guests and leave a lasting impression. However, like many other parts of the planning process, price increases, longer lead times and changing preferences can make it a challenging part of the process. Midwest Meetings was able to sit down with Ethan Smith, executive chef at West Baden Springs Hotel, part of the French Lick Resort property in West Baden, Ind., to learn more about what planners can do to create better relationships with their catering managers, save budget and stay on top of industry trends.

[MM] With the high costs of food/beverage, what are some ways planners can stretch their budgets for their events?

[ES] Breaks and receptions are both very controllable, and a lot of people just don't think about that process. For coffee breaks, you can designate specific amounts of product — start with two gallons of coffee, increase only if needed. That way they control the quantities instead of the venue, because the venue will just continually replenish unless they're directed otherwise.

If you're doing a welcome reception or a reception of any kind, you could schedule it for non-meal periods such as 5 to 6 p.m. or 8 to 9 p.m., versus that 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. timeframe, because people are going to expect to eat heavily over the dinner hour. You can cut back on your F&B needs if you're just adjusting your time frame.

[MM] Are there any trends within the industry that you are seeing, in terms of types of food requested/popular, serving style, etc.?

[ES] Food changes, times change, people change, tastes change, so we're continually evolving with it. Right now, bison is so popular that I can't get a bison filet mignon at all, across the entire country. Something we're also seeing is that guests want their food to look like it came out of a magazine.

Food is similar to fashion, because things that were popular 20 years ago are trending again. There's numerous classic dishes that people do, whether it's a Beef Wellington or Coquilles Saint-Jacque. There are dishes that I'd forgotten about and then you check out someone else's menus or look in magazines, and "Hey, I remember doing salmon pinwheels, I remember doing cucumber rolls." Baked Alaska, very popular in the 60s and 70s ... you're starting to see a trend of that coming back.

Still, there are the staples that people know and that's what they expect, and that's what we deliver. A lot of our groups, it's the same menu every year. It's like a tradition: "Hey we're going to West Baden, they had an awesome stuffed chicken, we loved it, I can't wait till we go back, we're going to have that

6 Midwest Meetings | Winter 2020

chicken again." They want to recreate that memory and the experience of being here before, and they look forward to those things every year.

[MM] How can food be used to impress guests?

[ES] At our hotel, from the time a guest steps into the atrium and sees the huge dome overhead, there's that "wow" factor. That's the No. 1 reason why people come here. It makes it difficult to match that or top that from a culinary standpoint since the wow factor is already here when they walk in the building. It sets that standard very high. There's always the ability to up the wow factor, whether it's the serving vessel — I've served French onion soup in a colossal onion bowl for 800 people. Not very many venues would do that. It's a lot of work, a lot of labor, but we definitely try to impress our guests.

Another way we have elevated that wow factor is our new Table One experience. It's a true chef's table in a private dining room located just off the kitchen. For each group, we customize a five-course menu — it's like reading a story to the guests, with every chapter being a different plate of food. You don't know exactly what's on the menu until each plate is served — so the main course could be anything from rack of lamb, to a sea bass with yellow pepper coulis and a jicama microgreen salad. It goes beyond a fancy dinner to a full-fledged dining experience. If you're looking for a way to impress a group of executives or celebrate a special occasion, this is it.

[MM] Any tips for planners as they begin to work with a F&B team?

[ES] For planners, it's good to be familiar with the menus and come in with an idea of what your agenda is and what your goals are for the meeting. That helps start the communication and conversation about how things should flow. For example, we get smaller groups that want to eat lunch at Ballard's in the Atrium, but they only have 45 minutes for lunch and that won't be enough time. A working lunch buffet might be a better option in that case.

There are groups that come in and will want Coquilles Saint-Jacque or something that could easily be pulled off for a smaller amount of people, but their group has 800 people. When you do a lot of volume, quality can sometimes suffer. Clients might



ask for certain things and we always try to say yes and deliver what they want, but I want to make sure that it's going to work and be a good experience for the whole group. It's definitely a give-and-take of finding that right balance.

[MM] How can a F&B manager bring value to an event planner?

[ES] An experienced manager can guide planners on how to select food and beverage and how to control their quantities. And if you're needing something budget-wise, they can definitely work with the chef and kitchen, and

direct you into, "Hey, this is a better value, or we could substitute this for this and bring your cost down, if we're in a pinch."

Ethan Smith began his culinary journey at French Lick Resort hotels in 1998, as a college student when he would drive back and forth on weekends to work at the former Jack's Steakhouse at French Lick Springs Hotel. After college, he spent time in the Indianapolis area, at Westin and Marriott hotels, as well as private country clubs. Eventually he returned to French Lick Resort and then a promotion took him to sister property West Baden Springs Hotel, where he now serves as executive chef.







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Partners in Progress

CVBs are key to planning successful events

BY MAURA KELLER

Convention and visitor
bureaus (CVBs) have long
been the "go to" resource for
meetings and event planners
who work across all industries.
They have provided a wealth
of support and much-needed
"insider info" for planners to
utilize to ensure their meeting
or event is a success.

For Tim Lamont, CEO and meeting planner at Lamont Associates, a site selection and meeting resource firm, working with CVBs benefits the local hotel, restaurant and off-site venue community, as well as his company's clients and associates.

Recently Lamont Associates worked with Visit Milwaukee, and from Lamont's experience, the CVB's focus included educating clients about the destination, answering logistical questions and providing services for larger conferences coming to the city. "CVBs ask a lot of questions about

the group so they can understand the customer's event process in order to help refer the customer to the right resources. Hotels are the experts on their facility and CVBs complement that with knowledge of the community and relationships, then bring everything together to submit a robust proposal," Lamont says.

CVBS OFFER SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Leslie Johnson, vice president of sales at Visit Milwaukee, says working with a CVB is the most efficient way for meeting planners to learn about a destination and the vast amount of amenities



the area has to help them plan and execute a memorable meeting.

"If a planner can share with a CVB the most important things for their attendees, the CVB can provide a holistic view of meeting spaces, restaurants, hotels and attractions to meet their needs as well as those needs of their attendees," Johnson says. "When looking at a destination for the first time, or even if you've been there before, your first point of contact should always be the CVB. They can provide insight of what's new in their city, what other events may be taking place during your

meeting that may impact your attendees, but most importantly, we have the resources to send your lead out directly to our hotel community to cut down substantially on the amount of time you wait to hear back from hotels on availability and pricing."

Generally, before Lamont sources a city for larger conventions where multiple hotels are required or convention center space is needed, he calls the area CVB contact to talk through the plan. "Once the plan is in place and everyone is in agreement, we execute based on the timelines and process we agreed

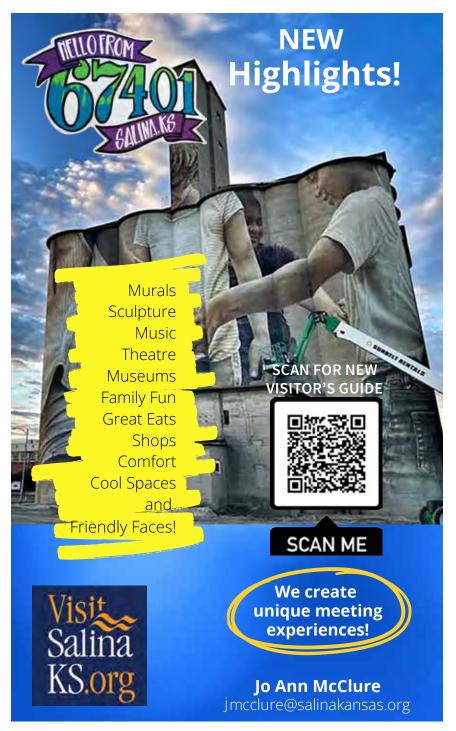
to. Without everyone on the same page, we could be wasting time for the client and not deliver the results in a timely manner," Lamont says.

Timeliness is key within the meetings industry and the team at Visit Milwaukee has seen a shift of meeting planners using CVBs more consistently with staffing shortages in the hospitality industry.

"Meetings have shifted to more shortterm bookings, and we will assist in helping to obtain needed resources," Johnson says. "We can also provide

CVBs ask a lot of questions about the group so they can understand the customer's event process in order to help refer the customer to the right resources. Hotels are the experts on their facility and CVBs complement that with knowledge of the community and relationships, then bring everything together... ??

- Tim Lamont, Lamont Associates



information for needs that may not have been a requirement in the past, including medical resources or care, and connections to technology companies for holding hybrid meetings."

For Lori Sobota, director of professional learning and a meeting planner for Reading Recovery Council of North America, tapping into CVBs' local knowledge and connections is essential.

"They can recommend hidden gems, advise on transportation options and suggest unique off-site venues," Sobota says. "Experience Columbus, for example, has been a crucial partner, offering local expertise, resource connections and marketing support that have enhanced the quality and success of our events. They have been instrumental in helping us access a network of local resources and partners, which has significantly streamlined the planning process. They often provide introductions to reliable vendors, helping us secure competitive rates and ensuring a seamless execution of our events."

According to Angie Richards, vice president of sales for Experience Rochester and Mayo Civic Center, in the days before the pandemic, CVBs were the trusted source for event planners, helping them with site and services selection.

"When the pandemic arrived, CVBs had to innovate, adapting to the rise of hybrid meetings, virtual events, and the need for health and safety measures. They transformed, helping planners navigate virtual platforms and ensuring a safe experience," Richards says. "CVBs have shifted from traditional services to chameleons, always ready to adapt to the latest trends. Now,

Continued on page 25

10 Questions to Ask a CVB

Can you offer any financial incentives for bringing my group to your city (sometimes available in larger markets for large groups with great economic impact)?

Do you have a list of preferred, vetted, local suppliers?

Can you share contact info of other planners who have held events in your city that I can contact?

What services do you offer that can save us money?

Can you provide any signage or promotions to welcome our attendees when they arrive in your city?

What characteristics do successful events in this market share?

Do you have any relationships with venues that we can leverage?

Can you supply materials promoting the city that I can use to attract attendees to the event?

Are there any issues with the destination that I should prepare for (other events happening at the same time, construction impacting transportation, staffing issues at local businesses/properties)?

Q A

What unique experiences can we offer our attendees?









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Continued from page 22

CVBs assist in planning in-person or hybrid events, offering insights into the technology, health and safety protocols, and creative ways to delight attendees both in-person and online."

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

Angela Hammond, vice president, sales operations, Experience Columbus, says a successful relationship between a CVB and meeting planner is built on collaboration, local expertise and a shared commitment to creating a memorable experience for attendees.

"By leveraging the resources and insights offered, planners can not only make their events more successful, but also leave a positive and lasting impact on the destination and its community," Hammond says.

When a planner reaches out to a CVB in advance, it can result in a seamless process of securing venues, connecting with partners who can support the needs of your meeting, as well as ensuring your team is supported by the events services teams that CVBs offer.

"Visit Milwaukee's involvement in the beginning to source leads, assist in booking room nights and the selection of event spaces is a one-stop-shop for meeting planners," explains Johnson. "The connections and information the CVB provides can make or break an event. Once a group has been confirmed, our event services team can help with logistics, transportation, road closures, permits and signage. As a CVB, the relationships and resources to execute meetings are often an expertise that can take time to establish."

CVBs have shifted from traditional services to chameleons, always ready to adapt to the latest trends. Now, CVBs assist in planning in-person or hybrid events, offering insights into the technology, health and safety protocols, and creative ways to delight attendees both in-person and online. 22

- Angie Richards, Experience Rochester







FIVE-STAR TEATMENT

Lincoln is on the menu for your next meeting or get together. Show your guests the meaning of "getaway" and let the fun begin. Sobota recommends fellow meeting planners be open to new ideas and suggestions from the CVB.

"Their local knowledge may lead to opportunities you hadn't considered. Also involve the CVB from the beginning of the planning process, so they can influence critical decisions, such as choosing the right venue and date," Sobota says. "And make the most of the services the CVB offers — their insights can be invaluable."

CVBS ARE LEADING THE WAY

If the pandemic taught us anything, Hammond says that we must look at everything we do differently, challenge the status quo and assess if systems and outreach are leading to disparity or inequities. At Experience Columbus, this translates into intentionally keeping inclusivity top-ofmind. And it also means embracing technology to enhance the meeting and event planning process.

"The evolution of CVBs hinges on staying current with industry trends and embracing artificial intelligence for efficiency and improved meeting planner experiences," Hammond says. "Embracing AI isn't just about staying competitive, it's about revolutionizing the way CVBs serve their clients, ensuring smoother event planning, increased attendee satisfaction and, ultimately, a more prosperous future for the industry."

Richards believes that in the future, CVBs will be known for crafting hyper-personalized experiences that make attendees feel like VIP guests. From tailored event itineraries to curated local adventures, it's all about making every guest's experience exceptional. CVBs will continue to focus on sustainability and green initiatives, such as zero-waste events to farm-totable dining experiences.

"In addition, CVBs will embrace tech wizardry. Picture CVBs as seamlessly integrating cutting-edge technology into events," Richards says. "Think AI-powered concierge services that anticipate every attendee's need."

Maura Keller is a freelance writer based in the Twin Cities who writes for a variety of industry publications serving the meetings and convention industry. IS YOUR DESTINATION READY TO WELCOME EVENTS?



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Evaluations that Elevate Events

How evaluating events can help planners pinpoint what went right and what needs to change.

BY RONNIE WENDT

The event was executed flawlessly, leaving the planners and stakeholders with a sense of accomplishment. But planners are not organizing events for themselves. They are planning them for attendees and the organizations they serve.

Beth Schnabel, director of Strategic Events for Community Financial Credit Union in Plymouth, Mich., says it's an easy mistake to make. "Planners," she says, "are so close to everything that it's hard to look through an objective lens. We need to recognize the importance of attendee feedback because we cannot be everywhere at once."

According to her, the way feedback is evaluated is just as important as col-

lecting it in the first place. Establishing measurable goals for each event is crucial, and evaluating its success before, during and after the event is a must, she says.

Measuring the success of an event requires evaluating what went right and pinpointing areas that need improvement. A comprehensive analysis can include everything from attendee surveys and social media metrics to staff debriefings, she says.

30 Midwest Meetings | Fall/Winter 2023

WHY ARE EVENT EVALUATIONS IMPORTANT?

Event evaluations are vital because they set the tone for future events, adds Brittany Nelson, Meeting & Events manager for the American Optometric Association. In this role, Nelson and her team oversee nearly 400 events, evaluating each carefully to continually improve.

The organization's annual Optometry Meeting hosts over 5,000 attendees. Nelson places great importance on event evaluations for this meeting. "We scrutinize all feedback against measurable goals to determine how we move forward for the next one," she says. "We closely collaborate with many of our internal departments including our education, industry relations, and communications/marketing teams to achieve a common agenda of success."

She emphasizes that attendee feedback is a valuable tool for identifying successes and opportunities for growth, enabling these teams to improve future events. The evaluations capture attendance data and provide insights into how attendees perceived the event.

"We look at total attendance," she says.
"We naturally have a goal to increase attendance. But we also want feedback that checks on event quality. It's nice to measure quantity, but quality is vitally important. Without quality, many people may attend but not return next year."

Schnabel also says she values attendee feedback. "I'm hyper-sensitive to survey responses," she says. "I always want to be sure we're creating an event where everyone who attends feels a sense of belonging and that the event is very accessible to everyone. If there was an obstacle that prevented someone from participating, I want to know about it."

Although event evaluations hold significance, Schnabel advises against taking comments to heart and viewing them as a personal affront. "You cannot see the comments as a personal attack on you, but rather look at the information from the perspective of 'How can I learn and grow from them?"

SET GOALS

Event evaluations cannot take place



without setting measurable goals upfront, adds Schnabel.

Schnabel credits the Event Design Collective through Meeting Professional International (MPI) for solidifying the importance of asking the right questions of all stakeholders before planning begins. "You need to ask the right questions of the leadership team to make sure you clearly understand the goals and objectives for the event," she explains.

She recommends questions like: What are we trying to change? What are we trying to accomplish? What outcomes would make this a successful event? "There always needs to be a purpose, that call to action," she says.

Schnabel suggests using responses to these questions to measure success and identify areas for improvement. "You can take these goals and look for ways to improve. Later, you can go back to your leadership team and say, 'Here was the event goal, and here is how we met it.' There are many layers to success, and you need to measure all of them. But the main question always has to be, 'What was our objective, and did we meet it?'"

WHEN TO EVALUATE

There are different times to evaluate an event — not just when it ends. Event evaluations can occur during the pre-event phase, during the event and after it ends, Nelson says.

The pre-event phase involves budgeting and planning details — such as venues, speakers and ticket prices. The evaluations may consider the previous budget and adherence to it, and audience preferences for meeting type and communication methods.

During the event, evaluations include noting what works and what doesn't. This also involves monitoring social media during the event.

Post-event evaluations occur after the event concludes. This is the point when planners can assess the event in its entirety via post-event surveys, budget comparisons, ROIs and attendance numbers.

Schnabel explains the magnitude and scope of an event determines the timing of evaluations. For larger-scale, signature events, she recommends pre-event, midevent and post-event evaluations. "This ensures the team is aligned on what we are looking to accomplish," she says. "I really like to get anecdotal feedback from attendees during the event, then lean towards online post-event surveys for the rest."

For smaller events, she engages in preand post-event evaluations. "It's always good to hit pause and ask, 'Are we doing it this way because this is the way it's always been done?" she says, "Or are we doing it this way because it helps us achieve the goals and objectives of the event?"



The American Optometric Association evaluates most events after the fact, Nelson says. Evaluations of individual speakers might happen during the event, but attendee-wide surveys occur afterward. "We give attendees time to reflect and answer based on their experiences," Nelson says. "Then we apply that information to future events."

The American Optometric Association live tweets during large events with selected hashtags. "This lets us see how people are feeling and their overall engagement and feedback," she says. "We work with our communications/marketing team to evaluate these things."

Community Financial Credit Union also considers social media responses. The marketing team focuses on social media analytics, while Schnabel takes anecdotal responses into account. "I like to see attendees eagerly sharing their experiences and saying they cannot wait to come back next year. They are creating buzz around the event and a little fear of missing out for those who were not there," she says.

GATHERING INFO

Qualitative feedback is based on the opin-

ions and accounts of attendees regarding the event. Schnabel and Nelson both say they gather this information online, choosing digital data collection over paper-based methods.

Listening is what will bring your event to the next level.

—Beth Schnabel, Community Financial Credit Union

In a previous position with a different organization, Schnabel partnered with EventMobi to survey attendees through an event app. "Attendees just click on a link in the app to respond," Schnabel says. "I like to keep the survey as simple as possible. So, unless a speaker requested a specific question, I stick to asking things

like, 'What worked? What didn't?' and provide space for additional comments. If the surveys get too granular, you will lose people and not get the feedback you are hoping for."

Schnabel also has attendees rank their experiences on a scale of one to 10. Attendees who assign something a one through six are always asked for an explanation. "You always want to get a little more information about that low score," she says.

Nelson sends out an email to attendees following the event to ask about housing, registration, the keynote speaker, exhibit hall, general and closing sessions, and educational opportunities. "We also want to ask them what influenced their decision to attend in the first place," she says.

Leaving space in the survey for open-ended responses yields usable testimonials, according to Schnabel. "I always ask for their permission to share their responses within the survey itself," Schnabel says.

She adds it's best to send the survey immediately after the event ends, as

32 Midwest Meetings | Fall/Winter 2023

I like to keep the survey as simple as possible. So, unless a speaker requested a specific question, I stick to asking things like, 'What worked? What didn't?' and provide space for additional comments. If the surveys get too granular, you will lose people and not get the feedback you are hoping for. ??

-Beth Schnabel, Community Financial Credit Union

response rates decrease the further away from the event. "That way it's fresh in their minds," she says. "I always put a time in the survey too, saying, 'It will take you less than a minute to finish this survey.' I think it's really helpful for people to understand the survey will not take 15 minutes of their time."

Community Financial Credit Union has also used a QR code to gather attendee responses. However, where some events will splash that QR code everywhere during the event, Schnabel prefers to push it out through the app as the event ends.

"When you have the survey open throughout the event, you get a lot of those people who pop on to share one bad experience. Then the results do not look at the event as a whole," she explains. "I would prefer attendees rate their entire experience rather than just one part of it."

REMEMBER TO TRACK ATTENDANCE

An event needs attendees, so it's vital to track attendance. As simple as it seems, Schnabel says some planners may overlook this critical step.

"We target registration numbers and our attendance ratios to make sure we are hitting our numbers," she says. "It's really important when looking at the overall picture to understand how many people committed their time to spend with us. It is a huge measure of success."

Nelson says the American Optometric Association always analyzes total attendance but considers it in tandem with survey responses and other data. "Our events have doctors, student doctors, practice staff, paraoptometrics, including our staff here at AOA comprised of our board members, executive team and interdepartmental staff members, so we like to see the percentage of each that are weighing in."

Attendance info helps the association customize future events. For example, if their numbers show that doctors send staff with purchasing power instead of attending themselves, they might consider including education for both doctors and staff the next year.

WRAP UP WITH A TEAM DEBRIEFING

A team debriefing is a critical part of event evaluation. Planners want to discuss numbers and data at the meeting, and ask the planning and event team for their perspectives.

Nelson conducts several debriefings a few weeks after the event when things are still fresh in everyone's minds; one for each department, which includes the students sector, education sector, industry relations and the executive team. Everyone on staff participates in the next debriefing. "This helps us understand what worked well for the entire team and what didn't and examines how we can

work together better in the future," she says.

The teams review all responses and apply what they learn to future events. Nelson says, "The team looks at what we spent, participation and overall feedback. For example, our wellness classes. How many people actually visited these classes and participated? What was their feedback? How much did we spend on it? Do we feel it was an overall positive for those who participated? Was attendance lower than expected for these classes? Maybe we didn't market them well enough or maybe we need to reevaluate if we want to do it next year and if we do, do we need to change our strategy?"

Schnabel cautions that successful debriefings focus on: "What were our "did wells" and where are our "do betters?" Reframe your thoughts from 'that was a failure' to 'that was a growth opportunity and we added a new tool in our toolkit."

Successful events don't just happen, they both agree. Planners must lean on their team, understand their attendees and really listen to both. "Listening is what will bring your event to the next level," Nelson concludes.

Ronnie Wendt is a freelance writer based in Minocqua, Wis., that writes for a variety of publications throughout the Midwest.



Planning and orchestrating an executive retreat is part art and part science, as meeting planners need to balance the unique needs of stressed-out, time-crunched executives, while also providing effective spaces for them to get down to business, and at the same time, recharge, relax and refocus.

For decades, companies have recognized the importance of executive retreats and the ways in which they foster collaboration, innovation and team spirit. But as the global pandemic altered many companies' ways of doing business, it also impacted how today's executive retreats are being planned and executed.

Kimberly Roberts, CMP, CSEP, a senior meeting planner at the American Bar Association, says that in the wake of the global pandemic, businesses worldwide were forced to pivot and adapt to a new reality.

"As the world has significantly reopened, one trend is becoming increasingly clear: the resurgence of corporate retreats. These vital gatherings, previously put on hold due to health and safety concerns, are making a triumphant return to the business landscape," Roberts says. "However, they are not the same retreats we once knew."

Indeed, executive retreats are not simply reverting to their pre-pandemic form; the retreats are evolving. In terms of experiences, Roberts says the focus has shifted from passive presentations to interactive workshops and immersive activities that engage team members.

"Accommodations have also evolved, with companies choosing a blend of comfort and functionality," Roberts says. "The days of generic hotel ballrooms have



changed to unique venues that inspire creativity and collaboration. And agendas, once loaded with long speeches, have transformed into well-rounded schedules that create a balance between work and leisure. In this new era, the value of leisure time, outdoor activities and relaxation is as important as structured business sessions."

Executive retreat experiences that foster camaraderie and teamwork are also now central to retreat agendas. As Roberts explains, companies are investing in team-building exercises, outdoor challenges, group service projects and other group activities that encourage collaboration, problem-solving and trust-building among colleagues.

"These activities not only strengthen the bond between team members but also contribute to a positive corporate culture," Roberts says.

Heather Pilcher, CMP, CSEP, CEO at Blue Spark Event Design, has many Midwest-based clients. As such, the executive retreats she plans typically reflect executives' preference to visit the East Coast, West Coast and southern areas in the U.S. and the Caribbean.

"Our clients look for settings that are appropriate for their brand first, and then for the purpose of the meeting. If they're a sophisticated, powerful brand, we end up in larger cities that have unique and appealing exclusive locations for their

retreats," Pilcher says. "Having a great space to open up a dialogue about tough decisions or feedback can facilitate some powerful change. Executive retreats have always leaned towards remote locations as well, where distractions are at a minimum and business bonding and planning are the focus."

For executive retreats, the list of attendees is now further curated for maximum impact as bonding and sharing during retreats are extremely important. As Pilcher explains, leaning into the culture of the business and connecting with others who may not be in your direct line of daily business can be beneficial for keeping a team on track for success. That being said, incorporating team building



and bonding experiences also is a great way to connect colleagues.

"If the retreat includes higher-level executives, more professional-level bonding and less child-like teambuilding is appropriate," Pilcher says. "One of our clients requested a teambuilding activity focused on a revamp of business culture, including updated messaging and a new brand for the future. Through teambuilding activities, ideas and best practices were exchanged and each executive felt like they were part of the future plan for a permanent business culture evolution."

And when it comes to pinpointing the ideal venue or locale for an executive retreat, the space should provide places where people can take time to think and reflect, so you many want to avoid downtown or airport hotels and look for something in a more natural setting. And don't underestimate the importance of the type of dining options available — either onsite or offsite — as that is where a lot of connections among executives are made and ideas are shared.

ON THE HORIZON

Looking ahead, Roberts believes the future of executive retreats is promising. She stresses that while the virtual landscape will continue to play a role in certain contexts, there is an undeniable appetite for in-person interactions. As technology advances, hybrid retreats that seamlessly blend remote and on-site participation may become more common.

"The emphasis on holistic experiences that combine work and leisure will probably intensify," Roberts says. "Nature-inspired venues that cater to both relaxation and productivity will gain even more traction. Ultimately, the success of executive retreats will depend on their ability to adapt to the ever-changing needs of businesses and their teams."

Executive retreats also will continue to be a staple for focused and purposeful business goal setting, professional bonding, rolling out and adopting changes in management, and more. As Pilcher points out, an executive retreat is a meeting tool that will be utilized for years to come.

"We predict these retreats will become more selective on who attends and that companies will continue to look for unique and exclusive experiences that are not available where their attendees are based," Pilcher says.

Indeed, Roberts believes the resurgence of corporate retreats showcases the enduring value of in-person connections.

"These events have evolved from traditional conferences to transformative experiences that foster collaboration, innovation and team solidarity," Roberts says. "As the business world embraces change, executive retreats are positioned to play an important role in shaping the future of work." "M

Amenities Aplenty

Executives are no longer satisfied with a one-size-fits-all approach to retreat locations. Kimberly Roberts says some companies still seek high-end amenities and luxurious accommodations to pamper their teams, enhancing the overall experience for executives. For others, there's a growing trend toward natural settings, with beautiful landscapes providing a serene backdrop for brainstorming and team building.

Tiffany Gravelle, CMP, owner and event planner at Hello Tiffany, has also seen a trend toward companies choosing more natural settings with sustainable practices. "This goes hand-in-hand with the settings, and is a larger focus to strengthen teams in an evolving workspace. Overall companies are very mindful of making attendance valuable and worthwhile," Gravelle says.

"Retreats also have evolved by offering more down time for attendees, rather than packing schedules and sessions, and having more focus on mental and physical health topics through accommodations, meal choices, activities and speakers."

Other specific executive retreat amenities that attendees are interested in include:

- o Inspiring keynote speeches
- o Interactive workshops
- o "Mindfulness" or meditation moments
- o Physical workouts, including yoga, Pilates and hiking
- o Connected exercise opportunities including golf, pickleball, archery, ax throwing
- o Teambuilding activities
- o Moments for networking and reflections
- o Serene environs that include gardens, nature

While executive retreats no longer feature packed itineraries that leave attendees exhausted, today's retreats are typically two or three days in length, which may not offer the time required for executives to work some and play some. That's why it's important for meeting planners to offer a "menu" of activities from which executives can choose.

Gravelle believes that the meeting and event industry will continue to see more mindful choices in everything from location selection to activities, meals and programming. "Sustainability and environment are important," Gravelle says. "Retreats will be a valuable perk to employees and that time will be utilized to energize and bond."



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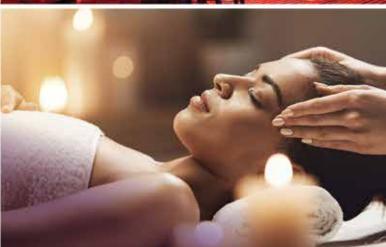


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"Obviously, having an event here at a casino/gaming property is unique because of the fun activities we have to offer after your meetings," says Dave Abangan, group sales manager for Ho-Chunk Gaming Wisconsin Dells. Casino staff can work with meeting organizers and planners to execute the meeting setup, audiovisual technology, food service and other needs.

The round-the-clock entertainment value of casino gaming is, of course, a big draw, giving "the meeting planner peace of mind that there's something to do right at the property around their meeting agenda," says Timothy Adams, director of sales & catering at Four Winds Casino in New Buffalo, Mich.

Casino staff also can incorporate specific gaming activities into a visiting group's schedule. "For instance, we'll have groups do slot or poker tournaments," Adams says. "We'll have times where the pit bosses can give them tutorials, so groups can go out there maybe during their cocktail hour or reception and learn how to bet on craps and how the game is played."

But gaming is only the beginning of the entertainment options. "The other nice part of being in a casino is all the food and beverage options that we have right on-property," Adams says. "A lot of groups want different things available for their attendees, and most casinos have a full array of different food styles and price-point restaurant options."



Guests also can take advantage of on-site scheduled entertainment like musical groups. Four Winds has staff to help set up DJs, live bands, comedians, magicians and other entertainment for visiting groups, Adams says.

Hosting an event at a casino is basically "a blank canvas for anyone to meet with our staff to create whatever sort of environment they want to create here," Abangan says.

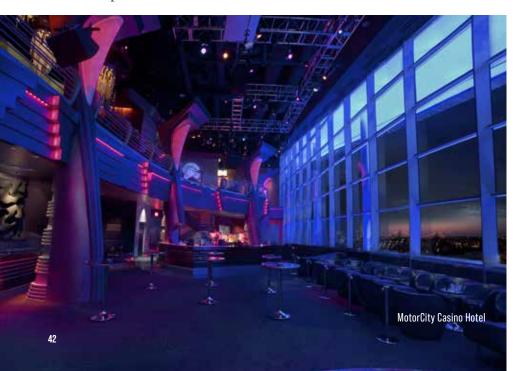
The Ho-Chunk casino recently held special events in Wisconsin Dells, including pool tournaments, with 60 to 70 pool tables brought in and set up in the convention space, and cornhole tournaments. The casino also has exterior space available. "Our parking lot is a pretty huge area where people can create any sort of outdoor events," Abangan says.

This past summer, the Ho-Chunk casino hosted a fundraising event with a car show featuring hundreds of vehicles as well as vendors and food trucks. It also hosted a show featuring three-wheeled motorcycles (known as "slingshots").

Casinos also can help groups set up tee times at golf courses and work with tour operators to get guests to wineries and breweries, for example. "We can arrange those for groups and get a discount for them and those services come and pick them up right here," Adams says. "So that's a nice little plus."

Additionally, the communities that host casinos are sometimes packed with even more attractions.

"The Dells itself has its own reputation as far as a destination for tourism and travel," Abangan says. The southern Wisconsin community offers multiple amuse-







ment parks, museums, interactive venues like Robot World, wineries, microbreweries and river tours of the area's unique sandstone formations. Nearby, Baraboo offers Circus World museum and Devil's Lake State Park. "If that isn't enough to entice somebody to have their meeting here, we're also centrally located." Situated equidistant from Minneapolis, Chicago and northern Wisconsin, the casino provides a convenient meeting point. Likewise, the Four Winds casino has an ideal location "out in the middle of nowhere, in the middle of everywhere," Adams says. With the Chicago area as one

of Four Winds' major markets, the casino is two states away but is just an hour's drive or so. "With the change of time, I tell people, 'It takes an hour to get there, but you're back in no time."

HO-CHUNK GAMING - WISCONSIN DELLS

This casino-convention center in south-central Wisconsin has more than 30,000 square feet of space to accommodate trade shows and other events, with upstairs and downstairs ballrooms that can comfortably accommodate between 300 and 1,000 people. The facility also has board rooms for small meetings. Ho-

Chunk is in the process of upgrading all its audiovisual equipment, with completion planned for summer 2024. The Ho-Chunk Nation has five other gaming properties in Wisconsin, and visitors can use their player's club rewards card at all locations. The Ho-Chunk Nation also has received state and federal approval to build a new casino-convention center in Beloit, Wis., on a 32-acre site along interstates 39/90, and the new facility may include an indoor waterpark. A completion date for the property hasn't yet been finalized.

FOUR WINDS CASINOS

A 2012 expansion at Four Winds' facility in New Buffalo, which is along Lake Michigan at the southwestern tip of Michigan, boosted hotel capacity from 165 rooms to 415 and added a Hard Rock Café that has now transitioned to casino ownership. It also opened the 18,000-square-foot Silver Creek Event Center, which is divided into six sections and offers meeting and banquet space to groups from 20 to 800 or more, as well as headliner entertainment that can seat 1,700 people. Four Winds' South Bend facility, which opened in 2018, also has expanded with more table games, new restaurants, and a 23-story hotel tower that opened in March 2023. The second-floor level has 24,000 square feet of event space including an





8,800-square foot ballroom and 11 other conference rooms. Four Winds also recently opened a full resort-style spa with 10 treatment rooms at this location.

POTAWATOMI CASINO HOTEL

Potawatomi Casino Hotel in Milwaukee can accommodate conferences, trade shows, galas, events and meetings from intimate gatherings to 3,000 guests. Working with teams including a catering manager, the casino hotel can plan menus and events. In addition to 2,500-plus slots, bingo, live and electronic gaming tables, it also hosts several restaurants including Asian fare, a steakhouse, American food café and the Rock & Brews Restaurant launched by

KISS band members Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons. There are also bars, a coffee shop and marketplace with upscale fast food offerings. The property just completed a \$100 million renovation project that expanded its food, gaming and entertainment offerings.

ELITE CASINOS

With five resort locations in Iowa, southern Illinois and central Nebraska, Elite Casinos offers plenty of location and activity options for meeting and event planners. Riverside Casino & Golf Resort near Iowa City, for example, offers a world-class golf venue and Vegas-style casino. The Grand Falls Casino & Golf Resort is situated just outside Sioux Falls,

S.D., and features a spa and 12,000 square feet of meeting space with breakout rooms and smaller meeting spaces. The casino will bring certain casino games including punch boards and slot tournaments to your meeting.

PRAIRIE BAND CASINO & RESORT

This Potawatomi Nation resort in Mayetta, Kan., features 1,200 slot games, 25 table games, a Bingo Hall, a spa, and seven restaurant, coffee and bar venues. Its event spaces include the 12,000-squarefoot, 1,100-seat Great Lakes Ballroom, which can be divided into smaller meeting spaces. The resort also features an RV park with shuttle service to the resort. Just a short walk across the street, visitors will find the Firekeeper Golf Course, named the best course in Kansas by Golfweek magazine.

RIVER CITY CASINO & HOTEL

River City in St. Louis features more than 10,000 square feet of flexible conference space, including an Event Center with a 23-foot LCD screen and stage. The venue features 200 four-star guestrooms, five restaurants and culinary experts that will design a menu for your event. The casino also offers staff planners to help you with your event, and when your attendees are done with meetings, they can enjoy 90,000-square-feet of gaming options, including slots and tables and a Baccarat room.

MOTORCITY CASINO HOTEL

In addition to table games and more than 2,500 slots, MotorCity Casino in Detroit has over three dozen event spaces ranging from small board rooms for groups of 10 to a nearly 18,000-square-foot ballroom. The casino's 13,000-square-foot D.Tour Urban Spa Experience features 10 treatment rooms as well as steam rooms, saunas, thermal whirlpools and rain showers. The casino resort also hosts a fitness center as well as shuttles to Tigers, Lions, Pistons and Red Wings games and concerts.

Nikki Kallio is a writer and editor who has worked as a journalist for daily newspapers and magazines in Wisconsin, Maine and California. She also is the author of an acclaimed short fiction collection, Finding the Bones, published this year by Cornerstone Press.

44 Midwest Meetings | Fall/Winter 2023



Teams

15 ideas to foster stronger relationships

BY CLAIRE HANNUM

n employee who feels included in their workplace is 50% less likely to leave their job—and additional research indicates that more than half of employees have reported staying at a company because they felt like they were participating in a team. Engaging in quality, memorable and fun teambuilding activities is essential for helping your employees feel represented and supported in their work.



Try some of the activities below to keep your team strong, supportive and communicative. Some are tried-and-true events and some are new to the scene, but all have the ingredients it takes to foster an essential sense of connection between employees that lasts far beyond the event itself.

DANCE CLASSES

In a supportive group, dance classes are an excellent way to encourage vulnerability, self-expression and playfulness. Dancing is a natural mood booster that's even better when shared. A great venue for this is DivaDance, a nationwide company with a popular Chicago location. DiveDance specializes in offering stress-free, inclusive lessons for adults — and those are the exact traits you'll want to look for in a teambuilding dance class.

COOKING CLASSES

Anyone who's watched a cooking show — or simply tried to coordinate their family in the kitchen on Thanksgiving morning — knows that cooking as a group involves extreme teamwork. Aligning dishes or recipe components to be ready at the

same time and coordinating multiple prep steps, is a (delicious) feat of true organization and cooperation. And did we mention that there is additional bonding for the group when they get to enjoy the finished product!

AERIAL ADVENTURES Ziplines and ropes courses get your heart pumping, but if you have solid coworkers by your side, they also show you just how much your teammates have your back. One way to make the activity extra memorable is to hold it off-site near a tourist attraction, so attendees can enjoy the best of both worlds and a vacation-like morale boost. For example, Rushmore Tramway Adventures, which offers an aerial course, ziplining and outdoor rides, is located just two miles from Mount Rushmore. "Our adventure park offers an ideal setting for groups to come together, face challenges and grow as a team," says Lexi Clemmons, assistant general manager of the park. "What participants can expect to take away from the experience is not just improved teamwork but also a sense of accomplishment, shared laughter and unforgettable moments

that will strengthen their connections long after they leave our park."

WHEELCHAIR BUILDING Combine teambuilding and your company's corporate social responsibility goals by working together to build a wheelchair. Coworkers can tap into each of their unique skills to put the wheelchair together, then can debrief with a reflection on the importance of teamwork. Most wheelchair building programs will then donate the wheelchair to someone in need. For example, TeamBonding's popular Wheels in Motion program in Indianapolis benefits disabled veterans and others who are unable to afford the wheelchairs they need.

VOLUNTEERING AT A FOOD BANK
Invite your team to feed local families in need by organizing donations ahead of their food bank shift. Then, when they arrive for their shift, they can help with stocking and handing out much-needed food goods to members of their community.





ART TOURS AND VOLUNTEERING

Gather your group for a tour of a local exhibit or invite them to give back to their local creative community. Some organizations offer both: Art-Works, a nonprofit in Cincinnati, offers corporate group tours of the 300-plus murals its artists have painted throughout the city. In addition, ArtWorks offers the opportunity to volunteer on project clean up by preparing city walls to become canvases for future murals.

VOLUNTEERING WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY Habitat for Humanity is a longtime go-to for corporate volunteering, and there's a reason for that: it's a prime opportunity to grow while helping others. By building a home for a family in need, your team is making a major difference in the life of someone in their community. At the same time, they're breaking barriers together, sharing vulnerable moments and busting past the limits of the org chart to remind themselves that they're a group of equals working toward a shared goal.

Challenge your team to an epic scavenger hunt in your city. Many can be customized to your company's own goals, values, and even inside jokes. For example, cityHUNT, a national company that offers hunts in Akron, Ann Arbor, Chicago and more, creates hunts that are tailored to both your city and your team. The Go Game, another nationwide program, can even provide an on-site host to make the hunt extra lively.

Vineyards on your local wine trail likely offer a series of wine-related games to help teams bond between sips. Another delightful option is a wine hike, which provides a low-key opportunity to discuss company values or have conversations around teamwork.



Make Teambuilding Effective

Choosing the activity itself is just step one. Here's how to make sure teambuilding events make a lasting impact.

- Create a safe space where everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves openly.
 Do this by fostering a sense of inclusion and trust, and ensuring that everyone understands the full rules of the activity.
- Build opportunities for team members to get to know each other better as individuals before diving into the activity itself. Ice breakers, the "two truths and a lie" game or assigning team members to introduce one of their coworkers to the group all make excellent openers.
- Make a point to emphasize that team members may have different communication styles, and go out of your way to help bridge that gap so they can connect, feel more supported by one another and work together more effectively.
- Hold a discussion when you're back in the office about how the activity felt and make sure to continue expressing those same values long after the event has ended.





BUILDING A BICYCLE

Bike-building challenges are an excellent opportunity for developing camaraderie and sharpening critical thinking while serving the greater good. Build-A-Bike, a now legendary organization, creates bicycles that can be hand-built by teams and donated to kids who otherwise can't afford them. To ensure the experience is high-energy and includes important teambuilding lessons, Build-A-Bike can include team activities or even fun-fueled classroom training as part of the experience.

VIRTUAL GAME SHOWS

Remote teams can test their knowledge, skills and sense of humor with a virtual game show over video chat. The companies behind the games frequently provide personable hosts who can infuse comedy and fun into the experience.

Hiking
Hiking is both stress-reducing and
endurance-driven, which is a great
combination for team bonding. Along
the way, offer conversation starters
that invite the team to ponder their goals, values and connection to their coworkers.

MEDITATION

Corporate mindfulness programs have exploded in the last decade, and for good reason! Increasing evidence has shown that mindfulness can help employees focus better at work. It's also an avenue to encourage stress management during busy events seasons and healthy communication among coworkers.

With Kidbilly Music, you can create your own company song and record your own music video. This nationwide program pairs your team with an experienced songwriter who can help bring ideas to life, then creates an eye-popping video starring your employees. No musical skills required!

YOGA CLASS
For a team that's prone to highstress situations, a group yoga class
offers a release valve. Unwind with
the help of a pro yoga instructor,
and afterwards, spend time in a group discussion around
what feelings and goals came up for participants during the
class. M

Claire Hannum is a writer specializing in travel, events, career and wellness. She has written for publications like SELF, CNN, Newsweek, The Group Travel Leader, Small Market Meetings, The Huffington Post and more.



Construction Craze

Venues across the Midwest are upping their game with expansions and renovations to better compete for your business.

BY PAULA HENDRICKSON

Backhoes and construction cranes may be the best evidence that the meetings and convention industry is rebounding following the pandemic shutdown. While some convention centers took

advantage of the slowdown to build, renovate and expand facilities, others have recently announced expansion plans or are currently under construction. Whether doubling the square footage like Milwaukee's Baird Center (formerly the Wisconsin Center), or reconfiguring existing space to maximize its potential like the Dayton Convention Center, each undertaking has the same thing in mind: delivering high-end features, flexible spaces and the amenities their guests not only need, but want. Some

projects were started to solve a current need — additional hotel space or to accommodate larger conventions — while others wanted to prepare for the future by incorporating sustainability and new technology into their plans.

Let's look at some of the Midwest's current projects — and a couple that were recently completed.

HUNTINGTON CONVENTION CENTER, CLEVELAND, OHIO

How better to mark a 10th anniversary than with a \$49 million expansion? Cleveland's Huntington Convention Center is doing just that; the ambitious project is slated to open next summer.

"The proposed space expansion and enhancements will provide greater options and flexibility for event planners," says Destination Cleveland President and CEO David Gilbert.

In addition to the first floor's 20,000-square-foot Atrium Ballroom, plans for the multi-level facility include break-out areas and versatile combination spaces that can accommodate groups large or small. An 11,200-square-foot rooftop terrace is on the second level, while the fourth floor boasts a 12,350-square-foot loft overlooking the atrium.

"The expansion allows us to pursue event opportunities whose space needs we previously could not accommodate. As I watch the construction it's amazing that all the new space will have natural lighting," adds director of sales and marketing Travis Poppell.

"This investment indicates that Cleveland is serious about growing its tourism industry and enhancing the community's popularity and reputation as an exceptional host of meetings and conventions," Gilbert says.

INDIANA CONVENTION CENTER, INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

While ongoing improvements like installing LED lighting, digital signage, and key card entry to exhibition halls and meeting rooms benefit the environment and customers alike, the Indiana Convention Center's massive expansion — estimated









cost \$200 million — will also bring more convention business to town.

Concern that a shortage of hotel rooms could drive large conventions to other cities prompted the 183,000-square-foot expansion.

"We have begun construction toward a new 800-room convention hotel and convention space, including a 50,000-squarefoot ballroom that will be connected via skywalk to our existing facility," says Monica Whitfield Brase, public information and marketing manager for Indiana Convention Center & Lucas Oil Stadium. The ballroom will be Indiana's largest. "The addition of 800 new hotel rooms will allow us to host two citywide conventions at the same time, and host four- and five-star conventions. We're also pretty enthusiastic about the all-glass exterior hotel, which will be the tallest in the state of Indiana and a spectacular addition to the downtown Indy skyline."

The massive project is expected to be completed in 2026.

BAIRD CENTER, MILWAUKEE, WIS.

Formerly known as the Wisconsin Center, the Baird Center is doubling its size to 1.3 million square feet. That includes 300,000 square feet of contiguous exhibition space, 52 meeting rooms and a 32,000-square foot rooftop ballroom with spectacular views of Milwaukee. Public spaces boast high-end, street-level, grab-and-go vending powered by Amazon technology, while The Cove will offer a smaller, private, office-like setting for one to four people.

"I'm excited about the fact that all people are going to feel welcome," says Marty Brooks, president and CEO of the Wisconsin Center District, which oversees the venue. "We've made sure the building will have all-gender restrooms, sensory rooms and mother's rooms to help facilitate that welcoming atmosphere. I am also really excited about the [two-story waterfall], the collaborative staircase, the Baird Ballroom and Baird Skyview Terrace, and all of the sustainable technology."

Constructed with recycled steel, repurposed wood and low-e, bird-friendly glass,

Baird Center — complete with solar roof and storm water management system — will make Milwaukee a greener city when it opens in May 2024.

AMERICA'S CENTER CONVENTION COMPLEX, ST. LOUIS. MO.

Ground was broken on the AC Next Gen Project in May 2020, and the \$240 million expansion is steaming along. The roof was completed earlier this spring, and this summer the newly-built, 72,000-squarefoot exhibit hall was officially connected to the existing structure.

The combined space will allow multiple conventions to be held at the same time, but it's the modernization and state-of-the-art amenities — coupled with billions of dollars of investments reinvigorating downtown St. Louis — that will give the complex a competitive edge with major venues across the country.

Other enhancements include a facelift to the Washington Avenue entrance, a hybrid meeting broadcast stage, outdoor meeting space, a garden to supply fresh

52 Midwest Meetings | Fall/Winter 2023

produce to the on-site kitchens and twice as many loading docks than before construction began.

When the initial phase is completed in 2024, the complex will hold a GBAC STAR Facility accreditation. Pending funding, phase two will reportedly include an unobstructed 61,000-squarefoot grand ballroom with a 32-foot-high ceiling, a 14,000-square-foot kitchen and an amphitheater.

HUNTINGTON PLACE, DETROIT, MICH.

Already the largest LEED-certified facility in Michigan, it appears that Huntington Place — the longtime home of the North American International Auto Show — is poised for expansion.

In January 2023, the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority Board approved an agreement with the Sterling Group (which is also building a residential tower on the former site of the Joe Louis Arena, which was demolished in 2020) to add a large second upscale hotel to the convention center.

Plans are still underway and have yet to be officially announced, but published reports suggest the expansion may include a 30,000-square-foot ballroom, additional parking and greenspace, as well as improved access to the loading dock, while also allowing for Second Avenue to be extended to the Detroit River.

DAYTON CONVENTION CENTER, DAYTON. OHIO

The Dayton Convention Center has remained fully operational throughout an on-going \$40 million renovation, which began in August 2022 and should be completed by the first quarter of 2025.

"We won't be adding additional square footage to the footprint of the building, but what's being done inside the building is pretty exciting," says a sales manager for the center. "The exhibit space itself is 68,000 square feet and will be broken into three parts two exhibit halls and an 18,000-squarefoot, state-of-the-art ballroom."

Rolling Out the Welcome Mat

f you can't wait a year or more to experience a newly renovated or expanded facility, these properties have recently undergone updates and are now ready and willing to welcome your

VANDYK MORTGAGE CONVENTION CENTER. MUSKEGON, MICH.

Newly built in 2021, the Vandyk Mortgage Convention Center has 37,700 square feet of total meeting space, nearly 20,000 square feet of convention center space, plus additional meeting space at the adjacent Delta Hotel & Walker's Restaurant and the neighboring Shoreline Inn & Lakehouse Restaurant.

> "VanDyk Mortgage Convention Center offers all brand-new, state-of-the-art, in-house audio and visual capabilities in all of our meeting spaces," says Katie DeWeerd, director of sales, Parkland Properties. "We ensured that we had an abundance of outlets and data ports throughout our facilities, so that we can cater to any event. We also offer complimentary parking and WiFi."

Located in the popular Western Avenue entertainment district, the center's 26-foot curtain window wall offers stunning views of Muskegon Lake and downtown Muskegon from the main convention space and from pre-function spaces. "Collectively, these windows and our skylights will provide natural light and a fresh and airy feel for our visitors, which is unique in a convention center," DeWeerd adds.

TERRE HAUTE CONVENTION CENTER, TERRE HAUTE, IND.

Since opening its doors in April 2022, the newly-built Terre Haute Convention Center has been drawing events to downtown Terre Haute. In its first year alone, the center hosted nearly 200 events and roughly 20,000 guests.

The 43,000-square-foot, full-service center managed by Oak View Group's OVG360 division - has 22,000 square feet of flexible space, a 12,500-square-foot grand ballroom and 14 meeting rooms. Accessibility is a priority, from ADA-compliant elevators, presentation staging, and signage to having 17 ADA-compliant parking spaces.

It will soon be home to the Larry Bird Museum - filled with memorabilia from the legendary basketball player's career – which is slated to open in 2024. And a proposed additional hotel near the convention center could attract









A new outdoor terrace will overlook a city block's worth of green space; other changes will bring the older facility into the 21st century with new escalators, LED lighting, an upgraded HVAC system, modernized meeting rooms and digital signage.

"I'm excited about the terrace and the green space, but I'm most excited for the ballroom, which will be the largest in town. It will be up-to-date and stateof-the-art so we can land those big and beautiful banquets that want a little bit more oomph from their venue."

DUKE ENERGY CONVENTION CENTER, CINCINNATI, OHIO

Although still in the planning process, it seems the venerable downtown convention center — which opened as the Cincinnati Convention-Exposition

Center in 1967 with 95,000 square feet of exhibit space — will soon undergo a major renovation.

The center has expanded over the years, and currently boasts 200,000 square feet of contiguous space. Published reports suggest a \$200M renovation to modernize the facility will begin in 2024, with an eye toward adding state-of-the-art functionality while increasing the flexibility and versatility of the overall space.

One downside is that construction — anticipated to take 18 months — would require the temporary closure of the convention center.

Along with an exterior upgrade, mechanical systems will be updated for improved energy efficiency, and the exhibit hall may be expanded. Areas near the center could also benefit with an 800-room hotel, plus a new park and outdoor convention space.

Paula Hendrickson is an Illinois-based writer whose byline has appeared in numerous national and regional trade and consumer publications. She's a regular contributor to Emmy, Variety, Pet Product News, Cablefax and Northwest Quarterly.

Midwest Meetings | Fall/Winter 2023

Restive Ruin

12 ways to add holiday cheer to your organization

BY CLAIRE HANNUM

and families feeling safer to gather, this holiday season is shaping up to be the biggest in years. For your company, that means rising to meet the occasion by ensuring your holiday party is one for the books. But a fun party doesn't have to be stressful or complicated; it's all about helping the team laugh, connect and make memories. Whether you hold an in-office gathering, an off-site adventure or a formal ballroom party, each type of event is the perfect opportunity to create an event they'll love. Here are some ideas to try.



DECORATING

● Invite your team to relive their childhood with a cookie decorating activity. Offer your team pre-baked sugar cookies and invite them to deck them out however they please. Provide an array of different shapes, icing colors, sprinkles and more so they can lean into their artistic vision. The holidays bring out strong opinions about the "right" way to decorate cookies (ahem, usually the way each person's mom decorated them) so encourage a bit of friendly competition over the best method.

COOKIE

WREATH DECORATING CONTEST

Provide your team with bare wreaths and an assortment of ribbons, ornaments, tinsel and other baubles. Encourage them to decorate, then have each participant vote to choose the best wreath of the bunch. Have your team take their wreaths home or make arrangements with a local charity for them to donate their creation to someone who needs extra cheer.



Ugly sweater contests have become a seasonal staple in recent years, and for good reason: they're just too much fun! Ask guests to arrive in their ugliest holiday sweater — the gaudier the better. Whether it's a creepy embroidered Santa face, a cringy print or even real ornaments and blinking lights stitched to the sweater, encourage your team to go big. Then have them compete for who has the most garish of the bunch. Hand out prizes or even mini trophies to the best of the best.

THEMED POTLUCK Take your potluck to the next level - and make it feel more like an adventure than a chore — with themes. Assign each department or team to a different type of food, and encourage them to work together on coordinating their dishes to that theme. Topics could be broken down by stage of the meal — appetizers, mains, side dishes and desserts - or could be regional cuisine from different parts of the world. Another option is to assign each team cuisine associated with a different holiday. For example, one department could bring Kwanzaa recipes, another could bring Hanukkah treats and another could bring Danish Christmas staples. If your team is cooking shy, you could even provide a catering budget and task them with choosing the local restaurant and dishes that best match the theme.

PHOTO BOOTHS

Whether they're at a wedding reception, birthday celebration or holiday party, everyone loves a good photo booth. Stock it with festive seasonal props like hats, signs, and Santa beards, and



many guests won't be able to resist stopping by for a snapshot. The best part? They'll have prints to take home as mementos of the celebration.

BUILDING GINGERBREAD HOUSES

Break out the gumdrops, candy, and frosting for an adventure in gingerbread craftsmanship. Encourage participants to think outside the box as they put together their tiny architectural creations, and offer a tour of the gingerbread "neighborhood" so participants can see their coworkers' designs.

Escape rooms come ready-made with all the ingredients needed to bring a group together: unique settings, teamwork, and a whole lot of fun. Employees will work together in a totally different way than at the office, and they'll leave the experience feeling more connected than ever.







ADOPT-A-FAMILY

Work with a local charity to "adopt" a family — or several — facing financial hardship this holiday season. Work together as a department before the party to choose gifts based on the family's holiday wish list, and then dedicate a portion of the party to a festive gift-wrapping session for the family.

ORNAMENT DECORATING

For a memory guests can keep forever, offer ornament decorating. Start with classic round ornaments that can be adorned with embellishments, wooden designs that can be painted or clear hollow ornaments that can be filled with decorative treasures. Then offer up festive baubles and paint that can be used to make each creation

unique. Groups may even want to finish the activity with an ornament exchange so they can celebrate one another's creations.

SCAVENGER HUNT
Send your team on an epic adventure with a custom scavenger hunt across your city — or even within the walls of your office. You can even incorporate company inside jokes or slogans to make the experience extra personalized. Do the whole hunt as a group or create small teams for some competitive energy!

MUSIC
Bring music to the party in whatever form best suits
your team's personality. For the most traditional, carolers add an air of magic

and presence to any holiday celebration. When they walk into a room, people can't help but stop what they're doing and listen. If your team is more of the high-energy type, you can mix things up by hiring a DJ who can deliver seasonal jams with top hits as employees hit the dance floor. They can even emcee party games and shout-outs to bring extra laughs and memories.



LOCAL FOOD CRAWL



Get to know your city's local flavors with a food crawl through town. Stop by local gems, holein-the-wall favorites and lesser-known eateries that even locals might not recognize. If your city hosts any holiday markets, this would also be the perfect time to visit for some bites and bonding. You can create the crawl with a tour guide or DIY it, and can customize your adventure around your team's favorite food theme. Whether it's street eats, pastries, pizza or a whole new cuisine they've never tried before, nothing brings people together quite like food. M

STATE SPOTLIGHT



With its picturesque cityscapes to its awe-inspiring landscapes, from the expansive plains of Nebraska to the valleys and rivers of Minnesota, the Midwest offers ample locales for unique meeting options. Teeming with historic sites, quaint towns and mighty metropolis experiences, the Midwest appeals to many planners because of its unique venues, distinct Midwest charm and natural beauty. And thanks to the cultural offerings throughout cities such as Springfield, Grand Rapids, Terre Haute and Milwaukee, the Midwest truly has something for everyone.

Illinois	59
Indiana	65
Michigan	77
Missouri	88
Ohio	91
Wisconsin	96







The Land of Lincoln lacks little for the meetings market. Illinois has the charm of historic Mississippi River towns, and the grit and glitz of Chicago, gentle, rural landscapes and soaring urban skyscrapers introduced to the world in the Windy City.

Chicago Architecture Center offers a range of walking, bus and boat tours, as well as the CAC Galleries, featuring both miniature and large models of the city's skyscrapers for a fascinating setting for private functions. Many of those impressive buildings welcome meetings and events, including the recently transformed Old Post Office, which opened in 1921 and was at one time the largest postal facility in the U.S.

Historic Navy Pier's most impressive venue is the 18,000-square-foot 1916 Aon Grand Ballroom on the Lake Michigan waterfront. Dinner in Shedd's Main Aquarium, a reception at the Museum of Science and Industry and breathtaking views from high above the city at 360 Chicago and Willis Tower are just a sampling of the possibilities for memorable events in Chicago.

The state's rich agricultural heritage is evidenced by Agri Tours Illinois, designed for professional and technical agricultural groups. The John Deere museum and related visitor sites are a draw in Moline, as are Mississippi River cruises aboard the four-decker paddlewheel boat Celebration Belle. In Peoria, a meeting at the Caterpillar Visitors Center & Museum can kick off with a virtual ride in the bed of a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -story Cat 797F mining truck.

Springfield, the state capital, was home to Abraham Lincoln for 17 years, until he left for Washington, D.C. A visit to his home, a National Historic Site, complements a meeting or function at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. Events may include a special theater program or presidential living history performance.



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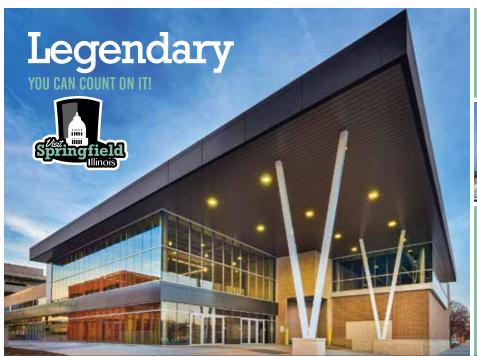
ALWAYS LEGENDARY SPRINGFIELD

Always Legendary Springfield, located on iconic, historic Route 66, the history-filled capital of Illinois! Your attendees are in for an experience that's one for the history books. With charming and walkable streets, plenty of Abraham Lincoln legend and lore and exciting special events, this is a destination that will help you fully maximize your convention attendance and have them asking for more.

Imagine Abraham Lincoln himself stopping by your convention or special event to welcome your group to his hometown, and provide photo opportunities for your guests to enjoy. Groups meeting in Springfield find world-class sites that explore the life and legend of Abraham Lincoln including:

- The award-winning Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and event venue
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Springfield is ready and able to assist planners with a successful, stressfree experience that will leave their attendees thanking them for years to come!





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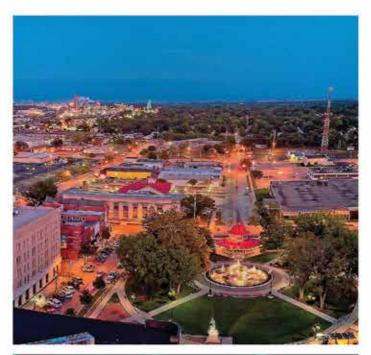
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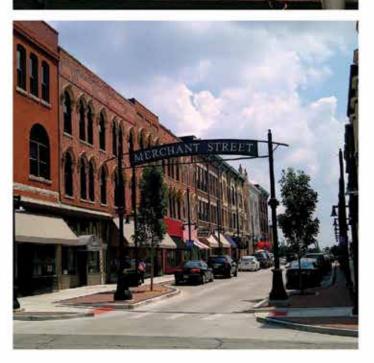
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DISCOVER DECATUR

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The CVB staff understands that hosting a meeting takes a lot of work and planning. We offer the convenience of being your liaison between the many choices of sites and services available in the Decatur/Forsyth area. From the beginning stages, we will work with you, based on your requirements and budget, in obtaining bids and selecting the venues and services best-suited for your group.

- Planning Assistance
- Hotel Accommodations
- Registration Assistants
- Printed Materials

The Decatur Area Convention & Visitors Bureau has years of experience matching the needs of planners to the full spectrum of meeting sites, banquet spaces, catering services and hospitality providers in our area. Whether you're expecting 15 or 1,500, Decatur/Forsyth offers many options from which to choose.



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Effingham Convention & Visitors Bureau

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If space is what you're craving, check out the sprawling conference rooms at the Thelma Keller Convention Center. With its convenient connection to the Holiday Inn and its in-house restaurant, TK Grille, this space is ideal for meetings and conventions.

If your appetite for collaboration is as strong as it is for haute cuisine, we encourage you to plan a post-meeting evening out at our farm to table restaurant, Firefly Grill, where happy hour abounds, and the menu is as fresh as the atmosphere is inspiring.

For more information about our meeting spaces, both conventional and otherwise, visit www.visiteffinghamil.com or call 1-800-772-0750 to speak with a representative or request a guide.













Indiana's capital city revs up meetings with a variety of venues that add the wow factor for attendees, and send planners on a victory lap. At Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the program can include a "kiss the bricks" track tour or thrilling ride with Indy Racing Experience. Functions at the museum, located inside the 2.5-mile oval, are held among vintage race cars and memorabilia.

Most of Indy's meeting, convention and exhibition spaces, hotels and attractions are conveniently located in the walkable downtown. Also located downtown, White River State Park's multiple event sites include the Indiana State Museum and Eiteljorg Museum, the only Midwest museum dedicated to Native American and the American West art, culture and history. Groups can dine with the dolphins at the Indianapolis Zoo, or meet in the NCAA Hall of Champions and museum. At the world's largest children's museum, events may involve dinosaurs, carousel rides or a funand-fitness workout at the outdoor sports complex.

Beyond Indy, Conner Prairie outdoor living history museum in Fishers offers indoor event space and picnic options, including the 1859 Balloon Voyage tethered balloon lift. Minnetrista, once the Muncie home of the mason jar Ball family, is a 40-acre campus with museum, historic home and gardens. The Bob Ross Experience features the recreated studio where the artist's public television show, "The Joy of Painting," was filmed.

In Fort Wayne, where three rivers converge, Promenade Park's outdoor and sheltered facilities are available for functions. Indiana's second city has a thriving arts scene, and venues at its museum of art and arts campus. Classic vehicles are the backdrop for events at the Studebaker National Museum in South Bend and Art Deco Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum in Auburn.

The French Lick Springs and West Baden Springs hotels, both more than a century old, offer opulent settings for groups who enjoy the resort's "miracle waters," golf, spa and casino.



Centrally located in the Midwest, the brand-new Terre Haute Convention Center can accommodate conferences, trade shows, meetings, weddings, and more. Our professional event managers are ready to assist you every step of the way, making Terre Haute the perfect destination.

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Experienced team of event professionals

Planning an event can be complicated, but with our experienced team of event professionals by your side, the process becomes seamless and stress-free. From the initial concept to the final execution, our dedicated event planners will guide you through every step, ensuring your event is a success.

Conveniently location in downtown Terre Haute, the Terre Haute Convention Center is within walking distance to museums, restaurants, nightlife, and more. The Terre Haute Convention Center is connected to a hotel. There is an attached parking garage that provides easy access for both organizers and attendees. Free complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi is available throughout our venue, ensuring that you can stay connected and productive throughout your event.

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GOING BEYOND CONVENTION, BEYOND EXPECTATION

Here's why you'll love meeting in downtown Fort Wayne, Indiana

Downtown Fort Wayne, Indiana, is frequently an unexpectedly happy surprise for most visitors. With its burgeoning creative arts scene, expanding business base, and emerging culinary and wellness vibe, this welcoming city is earning broad recognition as one of the most desirable destinations in the U.S. There's an energy here that blends work and play, old and new, fun and function into a singular good-memory experience. And here's what event planners need to know:

Conventions & meetings are easier by design

Grand Wayne Convention Center (GWCC) is an award-winning event venue with all the features and solutions to simplify an event planner's job without sacrificing quality or consistency. By design, GWCC provides "built-in" physical essentials:

- 225,000 sq. ft. of sleek, versatile, creative spaces with intuitive floor plans
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- · Advanced in-house AV technology
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- In-house catering for up to 3,100 guests
- Three adjacent hotels with garage parking and skywalk connectivity

But beyond the amazing architectural design is

the acclaimed GWCC service that most planners notice:

- Complimentary in-house sales and event managers
- In-house professional AV technicians
- In-house, fully staffed F&B service
- Free on-site security, ushers, and guest experiences

More dining and more doing

Perhaps the most pleasant surprise is what guests discover within downtown Fort Wayne's walkable blocks. More than 60 restaurants, pubs, and coffee houses; delightful boutique shopping and entertainment options; lighted pedestrian walkways and parks; and an amazing outdoor gallery of public art beckoning visitors to explore. Live music, pop-ups, and festivals fill the calendar; and foodies are welcome at every table; and just beyond guests are invited to relax along the lazy riverfront or enjoy any of many on-the-water experiences at Promenade or Headwaters parks.

Fort Wayne, for sure

The very essence of "Hoosier Hospitality" lives in the heart of Fort Wayne; and for comparison, event planners often save up to 15% over comparable cities and venues. All of this could explain why GWCC boasts an 80% rebooking rate, and why Fort Wayne, Indiana, is listed among the top cities to visit (better.net). For a virtual introduction to this amazing experience, visit grandwayne.com.



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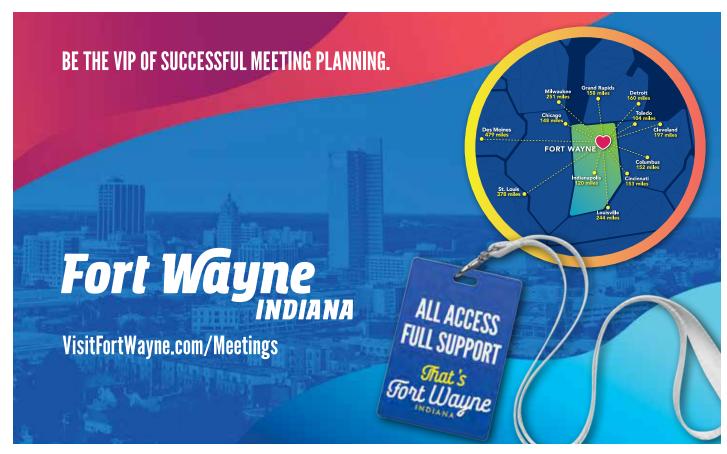
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- The Grand Wayne Convention Center, which offers more than 225,000 sq. ft. of versatile space and three attached hotels. Located in downtown Fort Wayne, the Grand Wayne is part of a convenient, walkable convention package.
- The Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, one of the region's most popular venues for exhibitions, sports events, concerts, and meetings
 offering more than 1,000,000 sq. ft. of space under one roof.

Attendee entertainment abounds at the Botanical Conservatory and Embassy Theatre - both attached to the Grand Wayne Convention Center. Just steps away, attendees will discover TinCaps Baseball, Promenade Park at the Riverfront, the second largest Genealogy Center in the country, and dozens of high-end, affordable dining options which add to Fort Wayne's complete convention package.







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We're Southeast Indiana's Dearborn County – the Perfect Place to Meet! Located along the Ohio River Scenic Byway, we're home to historic small towns and fun attractions that attract thousands of visitors each year - including Hollywood Casino and Perfect North Slopes. We're also known for our wide variety of festivals and events, plus customizable tours and trip experiences of all types.

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In recent back-to-back announcements, Time magazine declared Detroit one of 50 "World's Greatest Places," and Mackinac Island was named the "Best Island in the Continental U.S." by Travel & Leisure. From the Motor City to car-free Mackinac Island, Michigan's two peninsulas offer one-of-a-kind settings to suit, whether it's bucolic wine country, a scenic resort town or a bustling urban beat.

In downtown Detroit, three-plus-mile RiverWalk is dotted with gardens, plazas and parks, and is a departure point for public and charter boat Detroit River cruises, and bike rentals for guided tours on two wheels. Grand Rapids has earned the title "Beer City USA" for its more than 40 craft breweries in the area; several have event spaces and offer tours. With more than 140 wineries across the state it's easy to arrange a sampling at private tasting parties.

Uniquely Michigan picks for functions and outings include a welkom to Holland by Dutch-costumed greeters and Klompen Dancers; the incomparable Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation and Greenfield Village in Dearborn; Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids; Lansing's R.E. Olds Transportation Museum; The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library in Ann Arbor and the Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids; MotorCities heritage tours; and on Mackinac Island, the world's longest porch at Grand Hotel and the soundstage at Mission Point Resort, where the movie Somewhere in Time was filmed.

Need a team-building exercise? Head to Marquette and the Lake Superior shore for a mountain biking or hiking challenge, have a hands-on doughy pretzel rolling experience in Frankenmuth, host a golf outing at a course designed by the biggest names in the game, or charter boats for a fishing competition on one of the four inland seas that shape the Great Lakes State. M



Small enough to be charming, yet large enough to house America In Bloom's "Coolest Downtown," Holland's city center serves up three luxury hotels and an eclectic mix of meeting spaces - all within a walkable four-block radius.

Planners can choose from the Tulyp Hotel with its floor-to-ceiling windows, the Haworth with its blend of Italian design and local history, and the Courtyard with its wrought iron balconies overlooking 8th Street. Or combine all three for a larger event.

Each houses a variety of intriguing meeting spaces right on site. At the top of the Tuylp, Piek Events offers a rooftop patio and stunning views of Holland's scenic downtown, Lake Macatawa, and a hundreds-year-old windmill. On the campus of Hope College, the Haworth Hotel has 13 meeting spaces, each an inviting gathering place that can accommodate various set-ups and styles. For a smaller group, the 477-square-foot Courtyard Boardroom features an oval high-top table for 15 along with tasty catering.

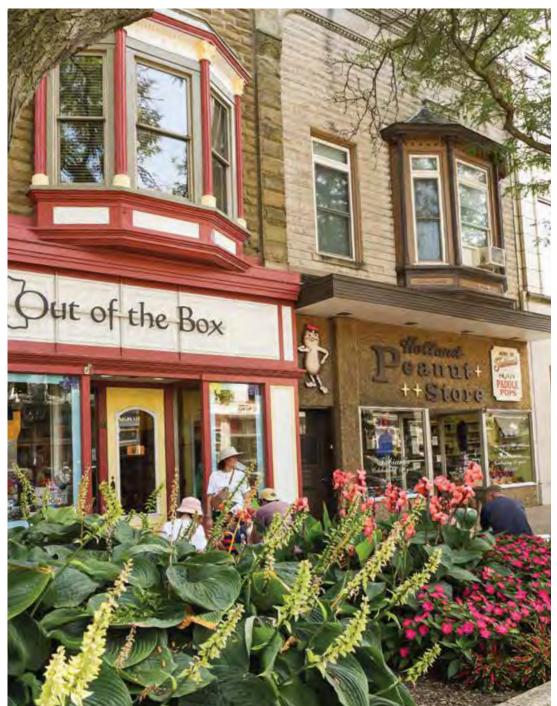
Beyond the hotels themselves, downtown Holland hosts an additional 15 venues all within an easy walk. Meeting attendees can stroll along the waterfront to the Celebration Pavilion at

Windmill Island Gardens. On 8th Street, the historic Holland Arts Council anchors one end of downtown, and the 55,000 square foot state-of-the-art Holland Civic Center Place the other. Plus, with over 100 bistros, boutiques, and breweries, downtown has many smaller venues in such interesting locales as the Cellar at Butch's, the muraled 205 Coffee Bar, and Warehouse 6 inside Cento Anni's woodworking shop.

The skilled staff at the Holland Area Convention + Visitors Bureau knows this amazing downtown inside and out. Let us help craft an extraordinary meeting experience and assist in marketing our small town's big amenities. We can work with you to secure lodging, entertainment, and transportation between venues if desired. We're also happy to provide welcome packets and spouse itineraries. Have your team contact the Holland Area CVB team today to begin tailoring a seamless, enjoyable event your attendees will always remember.



78 E. 8th Street Holland, MI 49423 616.394.0000 holland.org









Let us help you plan your next meeting!

- Great Gathering Places
- Unique Dutch Attractions
- 70,000 Sq. Ft. of Meeting Space
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MORE THAN GOALS Spark











Southwest MICHIGAN

Southwestern Michigan Tourist Council

2300 Pipestone Rd. Benton Harbor, MI 49022 269.925.6301 swmichigan.org/meetings

EXCEED EXPECTATIONS IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

Whether you are planning a business meeting, training or small convention — exceed your group's expectations in Southwest Michigan. Along our gorgeous Lake Michigan shoreline and throughout our scenic countryside, you will find meeting spaces, team-building experiences and guest activities that will inspire people to come and then leave wanting to return.

Galvanize goals as daylight streams into your meeting space. With so much beauty around us, it is natural for our meeting spaces to showcase it. Our venues are ideal for C- and D-level retreats, brainstorming sessions, focus groups and board meetings. Choose from very private spaces on secluded grounds to in-town rooms with large windows, beer gardens, and, in winter, vineyard igloos.

There are also mid-size and large spaces in our hotels, charming museums, botanical gardens, theaters and auditoriums. Wherever you meet, local catering and restaurant chefs will infuse flavors from locally raised and harvested foods into your meal choices.

Solidify teams and delight guests throughout

fall and winter. One of the top reasons to meet in Southwest Michigan is the abundance of ways you can strengthen bonds and deepen trust during the non-summer months. Kayak beneath a canopy of red and amber leaves. Hike dunes and forest trails. Reel in trophy fish on a chartered excursion, or sink putts on championship golf courses. Snowshoe through the vineyards, or downhill ski on lighted hills.

Guests can join you or go off on their own to shop in quaint downtowns, take cooking, art or glass-making classes, watch a regional theater or music performance and visit local farms. For sure, meet up for a tasting tour of our nationally renowned wineries, breweries, cideries and distilleries.

Let us help you find lodgings and the best rates. As a vacation destination, we specialize in hospitality. Use our complimentary bid service for 10 or more rooms. We will get multiple quotes from our member hotels so you can zero in on the amenities and rates you want. Or, use our Book a Room service to do your own comparisons. Together, we will make this the easiest meeting you have ever planned.







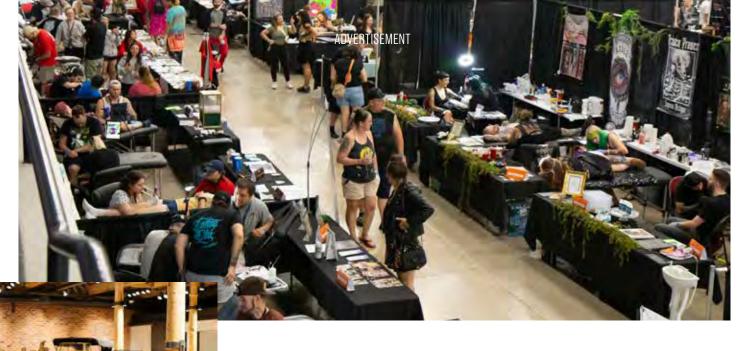


When you want to make your meeting a little bit more, look to Flint & Genesee. From traditional conference spaces to historic landmarks, world-class galleries to the great outdoors, you'll be amazed at the experience you can create. Our team and community are ready to welcome you and your guests. Make the most of your time together when you meet in Flint & Genesee.

ExploreFlintandGenesee.org

EXPLORE FLINT & GENESEE









Explore Flint & Genesee

519 S. Saginaw St., Ste., 200 Flint, MI 48502 810.600.1404 info@flintandgenesee.org exploreflintandgenesee.org

EXPLORE FLINT & GENESEE

Discover what makes Flint and Genesee County a fantastic Michigan destination for your meeting

Flint & Genesee, Michigan, is equipped with over 130,000 square feet of gathering space from unique to traditional and everything in between. Centrally located in the heart of Michigan, Flint & Genesee is easily accessible via US-23, I-75, and I-69, making travel from locally, regionally, and even internationally, a breeze. It is also home to Flint Bishop International Airport – the third largest airport in Michigan – with direct flights to destinations around the country.

There are plenty of places to gather various groups and the team at Explore Flint & Genesee has experience working with planners from many different markets including sports, associations, corporate, military, fraternal, educational, faith-based, medical, and government. Explore Flint & Genesee's experienced sales managers provide support and expertise to save planner time and money.

Not just a place to meet, it's also home to historic attractions, world-class art and cultural venues, a vibrant food scene, and unique experiences to elevate any meeting or convention. Unique offerings include:

- Sloan Museum of Discovery, recently renovated museum that features the area's history, unique exhibitions, a discovery zone, and plenty of space for meetings
- Flint Public Library which recently opened after multimillion renovations and offers beautiful event and meeting options

- Flint Institute of Arts, Michigan's second-largest art museum and one of the largest museumconnected community art schools in the US
- Crossroads Village and Huckleberry Railroad with historic buildings and shops, including Michigan's oldest operating gristmill
- The Capitol Theatre, a fully restored historic venue listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Flint Farmers' Market, a year-round market with over 50 vendors that also offers meeting spaces, a rooftop terrace and atrium for corporate and private events

The area has hosted tattoo conventions, economic development and placemaking conferences, softball clinics, theater festivals, association meetings and conventions, educational conferences, and golf competitions – just to name a few. On top of that, Explore Flint & Genesee has worked with a variety of organizations including the Michigan Museum Association, the Veterans of Foreign War, talent attraction consulting group RoleCall, the Mass Transportation Authority, and the Kennedy Center.

Flint & Genesee offers competitively priced hotels, conference and banquet facilities, various sports facilities, and professional service providers to fully execute any event—plus more than 300 Certified Tourism Ambassadors ready to make a positive impression on your guests.





500 E. Michigan Ave., Suite 180 Lansing, MI 48912 800.648.6630 lansing.org

CHOOSE LANSING MICHIGAN

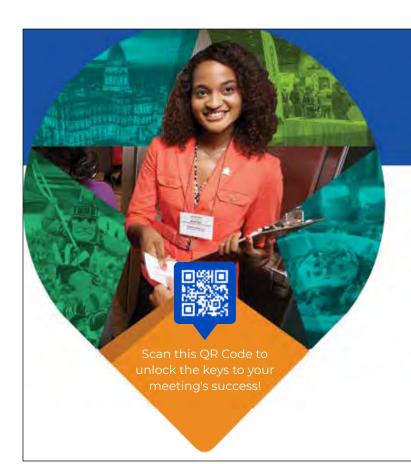
From the amenities you need to all the extras attendees demand, plan on something greater when you choose Lansing, Michigan.

We know it's challenging being a professional meeting planner. Expectations are high. You need to find the best choice of venues, dates, engaging and relevant speakers, a convenient location and all the other items on your long and comprehensive checklist - all while keeping things within your budget. The Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau can help to ensure that you put on a successful and memorable meeting or conference.

Greater Lansing has an array of venues to choose from whether you're looking for large arenas and convention halls or small intimate settings. Find affordable accommodations with over 5,100 hotel rooms and venues conveniently located near attractions and restaurants which can act as a separate unique meeting space. Our walkable downtowns of Lansing and East Lansing make it easy for attendees to find lunch, dinner or a coffee shop. And access to expert presenters and panelists is easy with Michigan State University scholars nearby.

Last and certainly not the least, our expert team of Certified Meeting Professionals will support you with complimentary services and ensure you have everything you need for a memorable event.

The choice is easy. We'll help you shine, make your job easier and help you host your best event yet. Choose Greater Lansing and plan on something Greater.



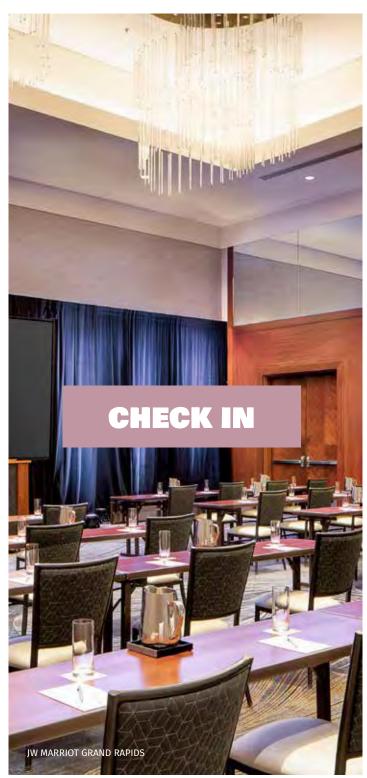
MEETING TO REMEMBER?

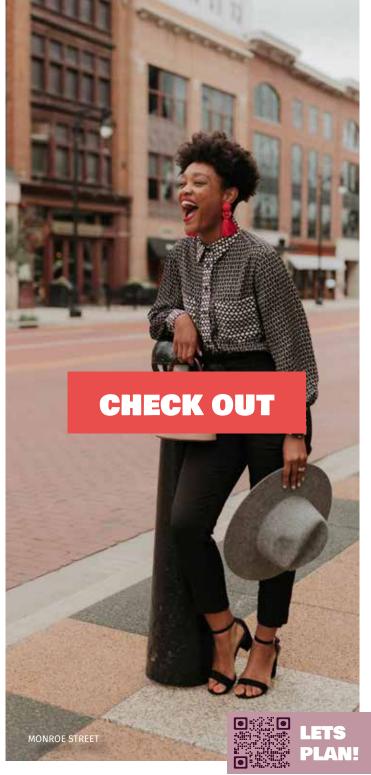
LANSING'S MY CHOICE

The expert team of Certified Meeting Professionals at Choose Lansing™ will ensure you have everything you need for a memorable event. They will help you shine, make your job easier and host your best event yet. The choice is easy. Choose Lansing and plan on something Greater.



⊕ ⊕ ⊕ □ Lansing.org

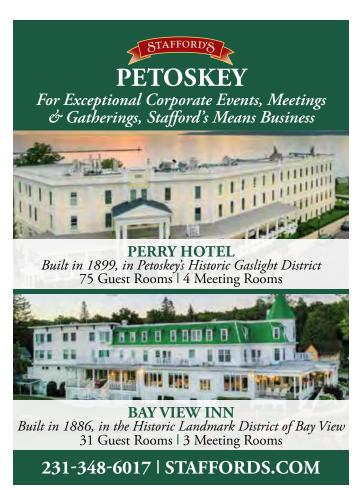




MEETING DESTINATION — CHECK.

Check in to one of our uniquely spirited hotels — with each one offering a different vibe, style, flavor, focus, and capability to fit your meeting needs, wants, and gotta-have-its. Check out the surrounding area and you'll be amazed by the sheer number of opportunities to get your groove on, whatever it is; museums, music, art, theater, the symphony, a proper cocktail, fine-dining, or fun dining. Your meeting destination mystery, solved. Scan the QR code, Let's plan!



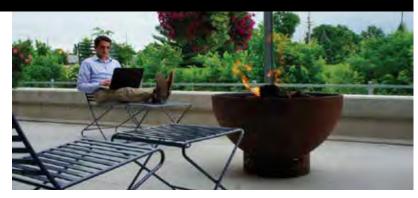






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Viviana Vidal, Business Development Manager Government and Association Groups vvidal@discoverkalamazoo.com

Ashley Peruchietti, Meeting Services Manager aperuchietti@discoverkalamazoo.com





©Visit Missouri

It's the birthplace of Mark Twain, Harry S. Truman, toasted ravioli and Route 66. From St. Louis and the Mighty Mississippi on the eastern state line to Kansas City and the Missouri River on the west — with lakes, rivers, caverns, mountains and a whole lot of barbecue in between — the Show-Me State offers plenty.

In St. Louis, an evening at the Museum at the Gateway Arch with a private Tram Ride to the top of the iconic structure is unforgettable. The home of Anheuser-Busch offers Clydesdale meetups, brewery tours and biergartens. Opt for the opulent 1894 Union Station, historic Forest Park's Saint Louis Zoo or the Trolley Room, an 1892 streetcar facility. Only in St. Louis, gather amid surreal art installations at the City Museum, music memorabilia at the National Blues Museum or planes, trains and automobiles at the National Museum of Transportation.

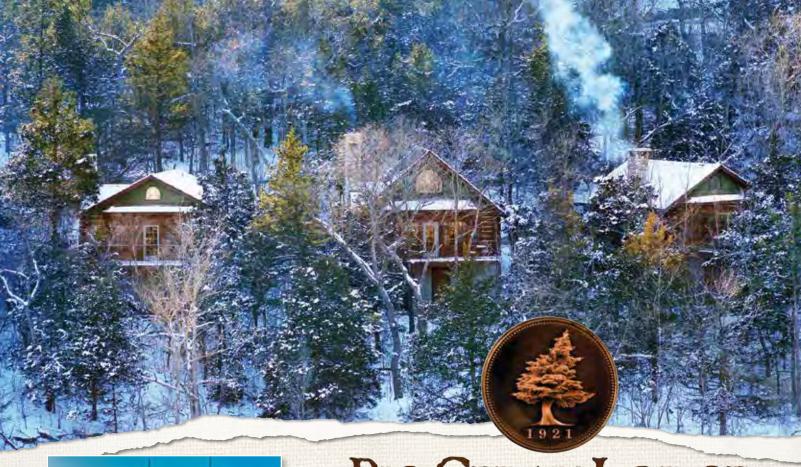
Kansas City's Union Station features the elegant Grand Plaza and the former men's lounge of the 1914 railway hub. One-of-a-kind settings include the College Basketball Experience, the American Jazz Museum's Blue Room music club and the Arabia Steamboat Museum, with its 28-foot paddlewheel. Team building happens in shuffleboard competitions at Boulevard Brewing Company's Rec Deck and mini-golf at Art Course, where each of the nine holes represents a work in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

Groups retreat to Lake of the Ozarks and experience the massive reservoir aboard a chartered Celebration Cruise or Calypso pirate ship. Springfield is the home of Bass Pro Shops and its event-friendly Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium. The company's Big Cedar Lodge near Branson offers a myriad of meeting sites and outdoor activities.

Branson's variety of venues is endless, indoors and out. Book Dolly Parton's Stampede dinner show or meet while cruising Table Rock Lake on Showboat Branson Belle. At the Titanic museum, gatherings are shipshape.

Book tee times for your group at courses throughout the state, including one of Big Cedar Lodge's six courses designed by such pros as Tiger Woods, Tom Watson, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player and Ben Crenshaw.

And definitely leave time to enjoy the fabulous barbecue cuisine. Whether it's brisket, a slab of ribs — Kansas City style or St. Louis style, you'll have to decide for yourself — chicken or pulled pork, the slow cooked delicacy is a must for your group. Finish it off with the state's official dessert — the ice cream cone! *M*







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MidwestMeetings.com

The Buckeye State's major cities — Cleveland, Cincinnati and Columbus — put the "OH!" in an Ohio meeting or event with a surprising array of unique venues that can be rented in whole or in part to suit groups of all sizes.

In Cleveland, standouts are the mecca for music fans, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, and the Great Lakes Science Center, with its NASA Glenn Visitor Center. You can charter a cruise for dinner along the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie shoreline, or lock in a special event at VAULT, a 1906 bank vault beneath the Cleveland Trust Rotunda.

Cincinnati's National Underground Railroad Freedom Center is a moving and memorable venue, while the American Sign Museum's century of commercial signage makes a fun setting. Moerlein Lager House, a brewery and restaurant on the Ohio River, taps into the Queen City's beer heritage.

Mixing science with socializing, interactive exhibits are available during functions at COSI, the Center of Science and Industry in Columbus. The capital city is also home to the National Veterans Memorial and Museum, the only institution that honors all vets throughout U.S. military history. At Shadowbox Live, performances by resident artists enliven a meeting and meal.

More only-in-Ohio locales include the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force and the Armstrong Air & Space Museum in Dayton, and Canton's Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Unusual team-building in Cleveland means Play: CLE, an indoor adventure park with climbing wall, ropes course and mazes. Small groups can become pinball wizards on new and vintage pinball machines at the Superelectric Pinball Parlor. In Cincinnati, teams face off in competition with bows and foam-tipped arrows at Archery Arena, while in the Columbus area, groups go on a photo safari throughout the world-renowned zoo, or a zipline safari at The Wilds, a 10,000-acre wild animal sanctuary.

Venture outside of the city centers and you'll find a beautiful landscape of welcoming, smaller communities that offer unique and friendly accommodations for groups. Places like Akron, Lima and Wooster offer a quieter pace, where guests will find easily accessible venues, and areas to spread out and enjoy the beautiful scenery. One of the most impressive trails to explore is the Ohio to Erie Trail covering 326 miles of the state, connecting the Ohio River in the southwest corner of the state with Lake Erie in the northwest corridor. Or take your group up to 100 feet underground with a tour at the Ohio Caverns, where guests will see a colorful display of stalactites and other natural wonders first discovered in the late 19th century. M



THE TANK

GALAS conventions

GALAS Conventions

Geremonies Mixers

fundraisers

MAX CAPACITY:

THE ROTUNDA - 1000 (STANDING) 615 (SEATED)

> THE TANK - 350 (STANDING) 168 (SEATED)

SQ. FOOTAGE:

THE ROTUNDA - 19,650 SQ. FT

THE TANK - 11,500 SQ. FT

THEROTUNDA

Showcase your event in one of the most iconic venues in Dayton: the beautifully restored Dayton Arcade. This is the perfect space for team building events, business presentations, social gatherings, and performances. The Rotunda offers the perfect setting for medium to large events with a wide variety of seating configurations and the option for professional custom lighting.





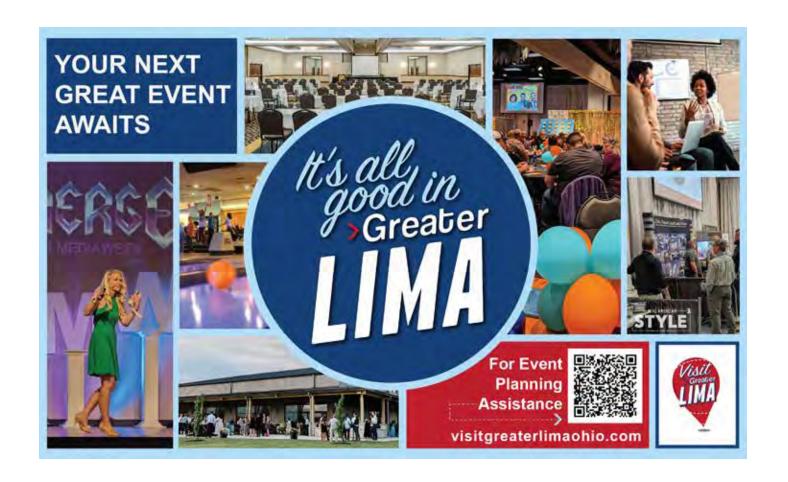




THE TANK

Envision your team building event, business presentation, social gathering, performance or networking event in The Tank Inspired by CenterPoint Energy, located on the South Arcade's lower level adjacent to art galleries and artist work spaces. The focal point of The Tank is a theater-in-the-round perfect for presentations, performances or cocktail-style events featuring decorative lighting and AV capabilities. The Tank features two Green Rooms, a Pre-Event Space and The Galleria. This unique space also features a glass enclosed subway-style entrance highlighted by a display of graffiti murals created by local artists.

MAKE YOUR EVENT INQUIRY AT: CULTUREWORKS ORG | 937.222.2787 X 105













Once known for its beer, cheese and the Packers, Wisconsin is still all that — and more. The craft brew and culinary scenes are booming and there are plenty of alternatives to football, although the tours of Lambeau Field, and meetings and social events at the legendary Green Bay stadium remain in demand.

In Milwaukee, gather in the historic caves where Frederick J. Miller stored his brew more than 150 years ago, or plan a local food-centric event at the Milwaukee Public Market. Explore the diverse exhibits during your event at the Milwaukee Public Museum, or meet at the Harley-Davidson Museum, which explores the history and culture of the iconic bikes. The Lake Michigan waterfront and dramatic architecture of the Milwaukee Art Museum and Discovery World Science & Technology Center make stunning settings for business or social events. For an elegant and sophisticated venue, choose The George and Madcap Lounge in the recently renovated National Block Building.

Meet at the Rooftop Sculpture Garden of the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, or plan a safari at the Henry Vilas Zoo. Sample the German- and American-style brews at the Capital Brewery Bier Garten. Book a tasting event at the National Mustard Museum or plan a group paddle on one of Madison's surrounding lakes.

For a truly Wisconsin experience, get a taste of "America's Dairyland" at a barn dance and hayride at Homestead Meadows Farm, or learn about Houdini at the History Museum at the Castle in Appleton, hometown of the famous illusionist. Add some fun to your function at Circus World Museum in Baraboo, winter home of Ringling Brothers Circus, or head to Wisconsin Dells, "The Waterpark Capital of the World." At Destination Kohler, teams can compete or just enjoy indoor and outdoor activities, including luxurious spa services and top-notch golf.



HOST A WINTER EVENT IN THE FOX CITIES

Securing better rates is just one of the advantages



Winter in Wisconsin is amazing. Yes, you heard us right! From holiday events and festivals to fireside drinks and hearty meals, the chill in the air doesn't freeze the fun here in the Fox Cities. In addition to being a great time for leisure travel, winter can also be an ideal time to host your next event in the Fox Cities. Fist time considering it? Here are a few reasons to get the wheels turning:

- 1. No matter the weather, there's plenty of fantastic group activities available in the Fox Cities to keep your attendees engaged. For those who want a breath of fresh air, take a group to Bubolz Nature Preserve for crosscountry skiing or to The Plaza at Gateway Park for ice skating. Both facilities have equipment rentals and plenty of space for happy hour or hors d'oeuvres. If your event is at the Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort Hotel, reserve some time on their all-season platform tennis court and watch the competitive spirit heat up. Speaking of competition, Appleton Axe can provide hours of entertainment all under one roof with 12 throwing lanes, shuffleboard, indoor yard games, an escape room, and a fully stocked bar.
- 2. Hosting an event in the winter can provide

- economical benefits to planners with a constrained budget. Room blocks can typically be acquired at more favorable rates and venues may be willing to negotiate as business slows during the off-season. As you begin to research and plan, reach out to our group sales experts here at the Fox Cities CVB and we're happy to provide recommendations for other cost-saving options. You'll have our support every step of the way in addition to a robust list of free services offered to visiting groups.
- 3. The holiday season is a time for giving and there are many non-profit organizations in the Fox Cities that could use an extra hand. Whether it's serving a meal at a shelter or packing food bags at Feeding America, volunteer opportunities provide a memorable team building experience while leaving a lasting impact on your host community. If you're interested in coordinating a volunteering activity, the Fox Cities CVB can help match you with a cause that best aligns with your values.

If we've successfully convinced you that a winter event in the Fox Cities is worth another thought, contact us today to start the conversation. We can't wait to welcome you!



Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau

213 S. Nicolet Rd. Appleton, WI 54914 920.734.3358 foxcities.org







BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY HERE

The Hilton Appleton Paper Valley is a newly remodeled hotel located in the heart of vibrant downtown Appleton with 40+ restaurants, Performing Arts Center and Lawrence University at your doorstep. The hotel offers 388 guest rooms and is connected to the Fox Cities Exhibition Center.

Meeting Spaces

Hilton Appleton Paper Valley has 38,000 square feet of newly remodeled event space, perfect for conferences, meeting, and social events. Choose from 27 unique and flexible options that can accommodate 5-1,000 people.

Fox Cities Exhibition Center

Event space that is designed to host conventions, trade shows, banquets, meetings, and entertainment. Includes 38,000+ square feet of flexible indoor space and a 17,000 square foot outdoor plaza with a skywalk that directly connects to Hilton Appleton Paper Valley.

333 W College Ave Appleton, WI 54911

(920) 733-8000

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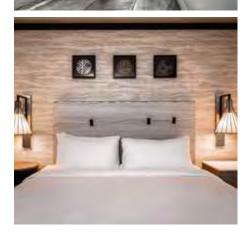
Scan to take a virtual trip







LET'S MAKE MEMORIES TOGETHER



Newly remodeled pet-friendly hotel located in the heart of vibrant downtown Appleton with 40+ nearby restaurants, the Performing Arts Center and Lawrence University at your doorstep. The hotel offers 388 guest rooms and is connected to the Fox Cities Exhibition Center.

The Fox Cities Exhibition Center is designed to host conventions, trade shows, banquets, meetings and entertainment. It includes 38,000+ square feet of flexible indoor space and a 17,000-square-foot outdoor plaza with a skywalk that directly connects to Hilton Appleton Paper Valley.

The Hilton Appleton Paper Valley has 38,000 square feet of newly remodeled event space, perfect for conferences, meetings and social events. Choose from 27 unique and flexible options that can accommodate 5 to 1,000 people.

The hotel includes five on-site restaurants that welcome in-house and local customers. Harvest Kitchen and Pantry offers a variety of upscale American-style dishes and a unique soup and salad bar. Clubhouse Kitchen and Bar offers a fun and sports-like atmosphere, includes a new golf simulator and a distinctive menu that will blow you away. Vince Lombardi's Steakhouse is an award-winning fine dinning establishment that offers an unforgettable experience with over 400 pieces of Vince Lombardi's memorabilia, extraordinary menu items, and an extensive wine list. Blaze Bourbon and Whiskey Bar is a rustic firefighter-themed bar, famous for their smoked cocktails and featuring an outdoor patio leading to the courtyard. Starbucks is a new addition to the hotel and brings a delightful array of coffee and refreshments to enhance your stay. We ensure you will experience hospitality like no other at the Hilton Appleton Paper Valley, from our amazing and friendly staff to a variety of restaurant options to choose from, and a catering menu that individually fits your every need. With our purpose-driven culture we are recognized for making your memories worth the tell. Let us be a part of your journey!



Hilton Appleton Paper Valley

333 West College Ave
Appleton, WI 54915
920.733.8000
Appletonpapervalley.hilton.com





JANESVILLE AREA CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

Bring your meeting home to Janesville



When you meet in Janesville, Wisconsin's Great Outside, you'll find an ideally located meeting destination with a combination of venue options, amenities, and friendly service. From traditional settings to unique options filled with character and inspiration you will find our selection of venue choices will give your event distinction while providing great value.

Janesville offers many venues ranging from a conference center to a former carriage house, church, or botanical garden, and the selection is expanding in an exciting way, with plans underway for a new convention center. This much anticipated project will re-purpose a former retail space in a local mall into three distinct venues with spaces for large events. The new spaces include a 20,000-square-foot convention center, a dedicated ice rink, and an area with ice part of the year that can be used for other sports or conferences the rest of the time. The convention center will be located just off I-39/90, with free parking and easy access to nearby dining, entertainment, and hotels.

Janesville is less than an hour from Madison or Milwaukee and less than two hours from Chicago. Its direct interstate access to I-39/90

makes Janesville accessible from anywhere in the Midwest, and top-notch ground transportation services make travel trouble-free for national meetings as well. Around the community, you'll find ample free parking.

We take pride in providing you and your attendees with the best experience possible. Expect Midwestern hospitality, easy travel, low accommodation costs and free parking. From assistance locating the ideal venue or overnight accommodations to welcome packets and nametags for your guests, the Janesville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is here to assist you. We are a full service CVB and we're happy to help you with all the details. Our services are provided at no cost.

Ask about our "Get Money Back" promotion - meeting planners could qualify for cash. Meeting planners who hold a meeting in Janesville, Wisconsin's Great Outside between November 1, 2023 and April 30, 2024 or November 1, 2024 and April 30, 2025 could qualify for a rebate of \$250.

Contact Lori Johnson, Director of Sales at (800) 487-2757 or meetings@janesvillecvb.



Janesville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

220 S. Main St., Ste. 11 Janesville, WI 53545 608.757.3171 janesvillecvb.com



PLANNING TOGETHER.

Come see what makes Waukesha Pewaukee the place where people meet. With ample space and venues to welcome you, exciting activities and a convenient location, you can count on us to be your planning partner.

LET'S GET PLANNING! visitwaukesha.org/meet-more



ENGAGE YOUR GROUP IN FUN ACTIVITIES & SAVINGS IN WAUKESHA PEWAUKEE





Waukesha Pewaukee Convention & Visitors Bureau

N14 W23755 Stone Ridge Dr., Ste. 225 Waukesha, WI 53188 262.542.0330 visitwaukesha.org/meet-more Located between Milwaukee and Madison (off I-94) within southeast Wisconsin's Lake Country, Waukesha & Pewaukee are welcoming communities where cities meet and people do, too!

Waukesha Pewaukee offers groups more than 100,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, 1,300+ guest rooms, complimentary group games (Putting Greens, Bags and Connect Four) to use indoors or out during breaks at partner hotels and more than 20 area group entertainment options. Choose from group activities like: creating art or culinary delights, rock climbing, go karting, laser tag, axe throwing, brewery and wine flights and tastings; historic site tours, golf and more.

When planning your next event, consider the great outdoors at The Ingleside Hotel. At The Ingleside Pavilion, groups will enjoy a more private meeting space, surrounded by Village Park, a 2.5-acre versatile space with a walking trail and an open-air band shell. A great location for picnics, receptions, and other social gatherings. The Frank Lloyd Wright inspired Holiday Inn will be under renovation in the months ahead, with a fresh new look by the end of 2024. Providing the same great service, you

have come to know, the Marriott Milwaukee West is now offering updated menus, both banquet and at BLVD Kitchen and a freshened exterior in the coming new year.

Downtown Waukesha has several new openings planned in 2024: The Cobblestone Hotel, with 60 sleeping rooms and a steakhouse restaurant. North Pillar Brewing Company will be opening in the former historic Weber Brewing Company building and will incorporate food trucks into their operations. And calling all Beatles fans, Let It Be, a recreation of The Cavern Club in Liverpool where the Beatles first performed on stage, will be opening serving Wisconsin craft beer along with a pub menu and live music.

Now through the end of 2023, book a group or meeting valued at \$5,000 or more and choose from a variety of tiered perks including: one complimentary room per 25 actualized, three complimentary suite upgrades, complimentary hotel screen packages, discounted AV rates, and complimentary event space. Contact Monica at (262) 542-0330 or monica@visitwaukesha.org for details.

Learn more at visitwaukesha.org/meet-more



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ADVENTURE AWAITS

The Kalahari Difference

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions, with locations in Sandusky, OH, and Wisconsin Dells, WI, offers a unique all-under-one roof experience for your next meeting. With state-of-the-art, fully customizable meeting spaces and a dedicated team providing first-class service, Kalahari makes planning your event simple. Both resorts offer over 212,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space featuring three ballrooms, multiple meeting rooms and hospitality suites, as well as a full-service business center, complimentary Wi-Fi and onsite parking. Kalahari has everything you need, and the amenities your guests want, to ensure

Accommodations

a successful event.

Home to America's Largest Indoor Waterparks, Kalahari Resorts & Conventions makes your meeting or event a destination the whole family can enjoy. Waterpark passes are included for all registered guests and with one-, two-, and three-bedroom entertainment suites, Kalahari has accommodations to fit any size group.

Entertainment, Dining and Spa

With our world-class entertainment and amusement options and signature dining experiences, your guests will never have to leave the resort. Both sites feature an over 125,000-sq.-ft. indoor waterpark, with

thrilling waterslides, a lazy river, swim-up bars, a kids' area, private cabanas and more. Pair it with our large game room/adventure park – escape rooms, blacklight mini-golf, laser tag and hundreds of arcade games – you'll find entertainment options for the whole family.

When it comes to dining, our talented culinary team is ready to curate a tailored group dining experience to delight your guests. Plus, your guests will be steps away from our world-class on-site dining options, including signature restaurants, grab-and-go quick bites and handmade coffee and bakery.

If relaxation and pampering is the goal, guests can get away from it all at the full-service Spa Kalahari. They can delight in a luxurious massage, nail and hair care services, body treatments or detoxification in the Halotherapy Himalayan salt room.

Airport & Transportation

Located near major Midwest cities including Chicago, Madison, Milwaukee, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Columbus, Kalahari Resorts & Conventions is the perfect destination for your next event; easily accessible for your guests, but far enough away to completely immerse themselves in a unique and unforgettable convention experience.

Host Your Next Event in Brookfield







Fast Facts:

- 40,000+ total sq ft of flexible meeting and event space
- 18,000 sq ft. Connect Ballroom
- 6,000 sq ft Collaborate Ballroom
- 8,000 sq ft Celebration Atrium
- 9,000 sq ft Celebration Plaza
- On-site catering & beverage service
- Complimentary surface parking
- Over 1,800 hotel rooms in the City of Brookfield
- Ideal location- convenient access from I-94

From small meetings to galas, the Brookfield Conference Center provides the perfect backdrop for any corporate or social function. Featuring modular ballrooms, elegant pre and post function space, and an experienced staff to make sure every event is a success.

Signature Food and Beverage





Flexible Function Space







BROOKFIELD



Visit Brookfield

325 S. Moorland Rd., Ste. 100 Brookfield, WI 53005 262.789.0220 visitbrookfield.com

BROOKFIELD CONFERENCE CENTER

A Plan Comes Together

The City of Brookfield and Visit Brookfield partnered to open the Brookfield Conference Center in the summer of 2020. North Central Group, a highly respected hotel property management company is our proud collaborator, building and operating The Hilton Garden Inn as well as managing and operating the new conference center.

Form Meets Function

The Brookfield Conference Center was designed with flexibility in mind. Over 40,000 square feet of meeting/function space allows for a multitude of configurations for the business or social event planner. Our facility offers 4 distinct gathering spaces:

- The Connect Ballroom with 18,000 square feet of space and 11 different layout options is the centerpiece of the Brookfield Conference Center.
- The Collaborate Ballroom offers 6,000 square feet and 3 space configurations.
 Banks of custom-designed channel-glass enhance natural light.
- The glass-encased Celebration Atrium is a 9,000-square-foot space for pre- or post-function gatherings, breaks and more.

 The Celebration Plaza offers 9,000 square feet of outdoor meeting space.
 Beautiful landscaping, Edison lighting and comfortable seating make this an inviting outdoor location for smaller gatherings.

No Details Overlooked

The Brookfield Conference Center has an in-house Executive Chef, and full-service food and beverage catering. An attached 168-room Hilton Garden Inn provides convenient accommodations for Conference Center guests. Ample, free, surface parking rounds out the amenities at our facility.

We invite you to schedule a tour of the Brookfield Conference Center before booking your next event. Conveniently located at I-94 and Moorland Road, just minutes from downtown Milwaukee. Contact us at 262-789-0220.





BAIRD CENTER

It's no secret that in Milwaukee conventions are anything but conventional—but in 2024, the Baird Center will raise the bar even higher. The expanded center will offer more staff, more space, greater accessibility, unmatched functionality, and signature style. Be among the first to host your event here.

Discover it all at visitmilwaukee.org/meet.



ADVERTISEMENT

MILWAUKEE'S BAIRD CENTER



BUILDING MORE IN 2024

The Baird Center—conveniently located in the heart of downtown Milwaukee—delivers on a \$456 million expansion project in spring 2024. With its completion, the convention center will usher in a renewed era of accessibility and innovation.

A perennial favorite among meeting planners, the center will more than double in size. Attendees can expect to see 300,000 contiguous square feet of exhibition space, 24 new meeting rooms (for a total of 52), a new rooftop ballroom with outdoor terraces and sweeping city views, a solar roof, all-gender bathrooms, six new loading docks, and more.

As well as incorporating new, cutting-edge amenities and initiatives, this project is calculated to support over 2,300 jobs throughout Wisconsin. Expanded operations at the center are expected to bring in an additional 100,000 unique visitors annually.

"From meeting planners to support staff to ballrooms and kitchens, every aspect of the center is growing to meet the unique needs of our visitors," said Wisconsin Center District

President and CEO Marty Brooks. "It's no secret that Milwaukee is known for its worldclass facilities and venues. But in 2024, the Baird Center will raise the bar even higher."

The expanded campus will offer more staff, more space, greater accessibility, and unmatched functionality and style in order to elevate the experience of all guests.



TURNING TO THE FUTURE

With years of planning and preparation for the expansion project, the city of Milwaukee is primed to host events of national acclaim.

"These renovations have been in the works for over two decades," said President and CEO of VISIT Milwaukee Peggy Williams-Smith. "We've planned for a project of this magnitude since the day the center first opened."

Word of the expansion garnered nationwide attention, with the Republican National Committee (RNC) confirming the Baird Center as the host venue for the 2024 convention.

"Large-scale events are everyday business for the Baird Center, Miller High Life Theatre, and UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena, but having the newly expanded Baird Center featured on the world's stage during the 2024 RNC is an opportunity that cannot be underestimated," Brooks said.

With this announcement, Milwaukee becomes the first city to win back-to-back Democratic and Republican national conventions since 1972—this is due in large part to the cutting-edge innovations at the Baird Center, as well as the world-renowned amenities and attractions of Milwaukee as a whole.

"I can't wait to show the world what we all already know: Milwaukee is a sensational city with world-class hospitality, and we are ready to give guests and attendees an amazing experience," Brooks said.





Elevate your next rendezvous in the La Crosse Region! Just name your niche – The La Crosse Region offers memorable experiences as unique as each attendee. Inspire your group in grand arenas, luxurious ballrooms, and charming meeting spaces. Entertain along the Mississippi River with diverse attractions, historic downtowns, colorful cuisine, live music, and first-class hospitality.

Centrally located on I-90 between Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin, the La Crosse Region is an easily accessible destination and the perfect site for regional meetings. Found in the Driftless Region, the captivating scenery is a claim to fame, but the savory flavors and culture abound! Your event should be memorable... Meet between the bluffs.

ExploreLaCrosse.com/Meetings

Ben Morgan, Director of Group Sales: (608) 782-2220 | Morgan@ExploreLaCrosse.com Erik Sjolander, Director of Convention Sales:

(608) 782-2298 | Sjolander@ExploreLaCrosse.com







Visit Middleton

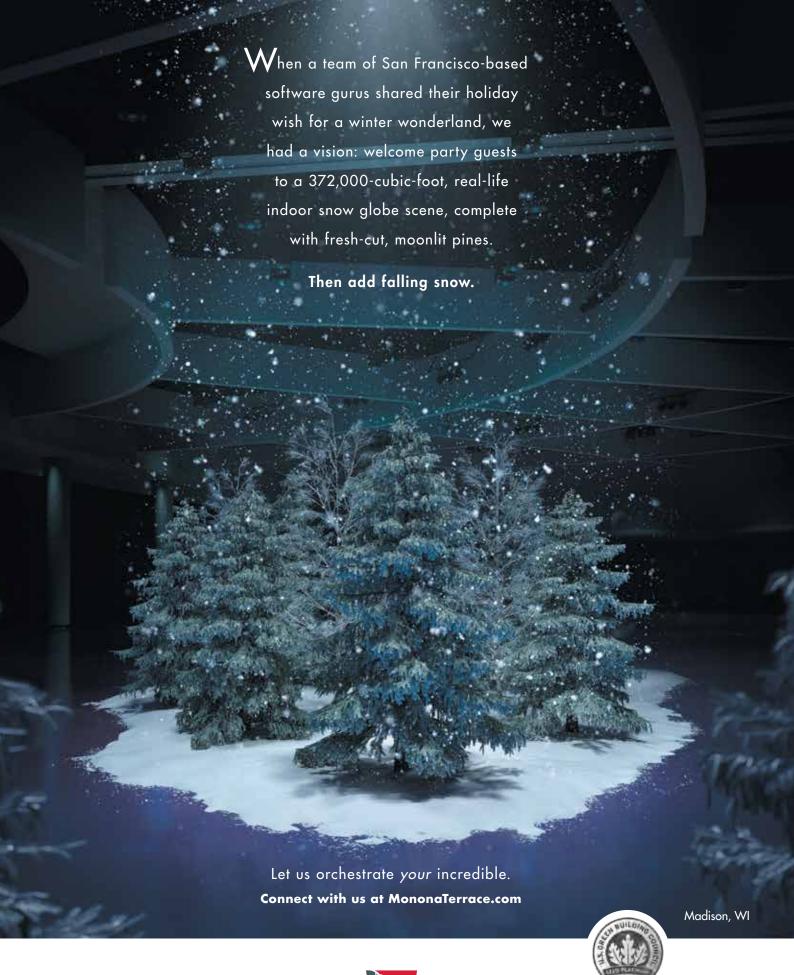
1811 Parmenter St. Middleton, WI 53562 800.688.5694 meetinmiddleton.com

MEET IN MIDDLETON

Plan the perfect meeting

Middleton, Wisconsin, with a mix of historic charm and new development, is the perfect meeting place for everything from board meetings to conventions. Home to the county's largest convention center hotel, as well as eight additional well-established hotel properties, Middleton can host most any group. The city also boasts more than 70 restaurants and cafes, two shopping districts, a beautiful golf course, on-the-lake boat rentals, gorgeous trails and conservancy land, and easy access to downtown Madison. Enjoy what you can only find in Middleton — the National Mustard Museum for quirky and delicious gifts; Capital Brewery & Bier Garten for award-winning beer and casual fun; stunning views and easy trails at Pheasant Branch Conservancy; and so much more. Visit Middleton also offers a grant program to promote conferences and conventions at Middleton hotel properties. Let us help you plan your next meeting right here and find out why it's the middle things that make us special.







PAR 4 RESORT

201 FOXFIRE DRIVE | WAUPACA, WI 54981 715-942-0500 | EMAIL SALES@PAR4RESORT.COM

Full-service restaurant, on-site lodging, event venues, inhouse catering and an 18-hole golf course make Par 4 Resort the perfect place for your next gathering. With over 11,000 sq. ft. of combined total venue space & 70 hotel rooms, we have what you need for your next corporate, family or group gathering. Located near many outdoor trails and water activities, we have something for everyone at Par 4 Resort in Waupaca, WI.









PAR 5 RESORT

250 W CHURCH STREET | MISHICOT, WI 54228 920-755-4000 | EMAIL SALES@PAR5ESORT.COM | WWW.PAR5RESORT.COM

Par 5 Resort is your full-service resort with multiple space options for your gathering needs as well as a full catering menu, on-site bistro, 2 golf courses and 95 hotel rooms. We are located just 30 minutes from Green Bay and 90 minutes from Milwaukee.

Featuring 15,000 sq. ft. of combined venue space allowing for multiple meeting room configurations including breakout rooms. Let Par 5 Resort be your next gathering destination.

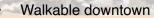












- Traditional and unique meeting venues
- Over 900 sleeping rooms
- · One-of-a-kind family owned restaurants
- · Where you'll be embraced as one of our own
- Hand-crafted hometown experiences
- Team building opportunities everyone will enjoy
- Community wide partnerships that make planning simple
- One hour from four international airports
- And of course dog friendly trails and hotels



Darcie Holte Director of Sales dholte@fdl.com 920-923-3010



CHECK OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN FOND DU LAC!





AIM PLIFY YOUR AGENDA

Take your meeting to the next level at MotorCity Casino Hotel. Whether you need a ballroom or a boardroom, or something in between, our 67,500 sq. feet of fully flexible meeting and event space has you covered. Make a show-stopping impression from the stage in Sound Board. Or choose the more intimate spaces of Amnesia and Iridescence with their soaring views 16 stories above the city. Add cutting-edge technology, world-class catering, award-winning staff, fine and casual dining, a hotel and spa, and the hottest gaming action in town and you have a meeting that attendees will actually look forward to. Call 313-237-1589 and put your plans into motion at MotorCityCasino.com







Stella Awards 2022 WINNER

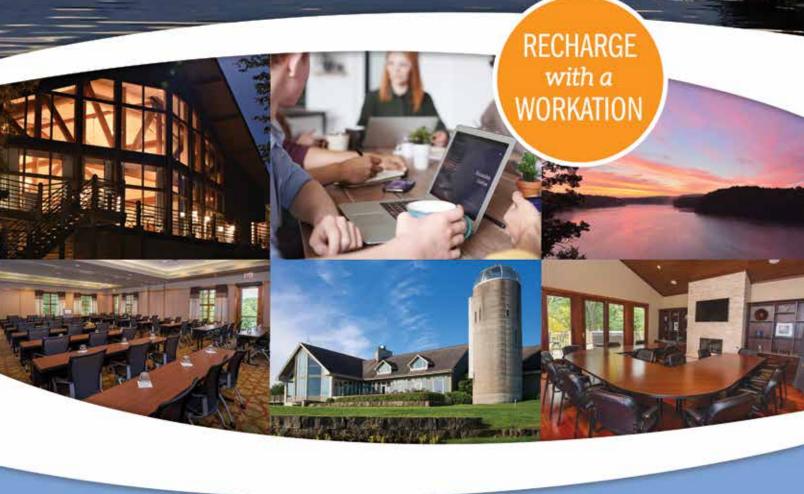
Matar City



If you bet more than you can afford to lose, you've got a problem. Call 1-800-270-7117 for free, confidential help.

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MEETINGS HAPPEN IN CREATIVE SPACES



Nestled among 6,800 acres of rolling hills west of Chicago in The Galena Territory, Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa combines the great outdoors with unrivaled amenities to deliver a perfect meeting venue.

FEATURING:

- 15,000 square feet of newly renovated flexible event space
- · State of the art technology and complete catering services
- Conference homes with private facilities and meeting rooms for corporate retreats
- Team building activities, rental homes, and multiple dining venues



PROUD 2023 STELLA AWARDS WINNER!