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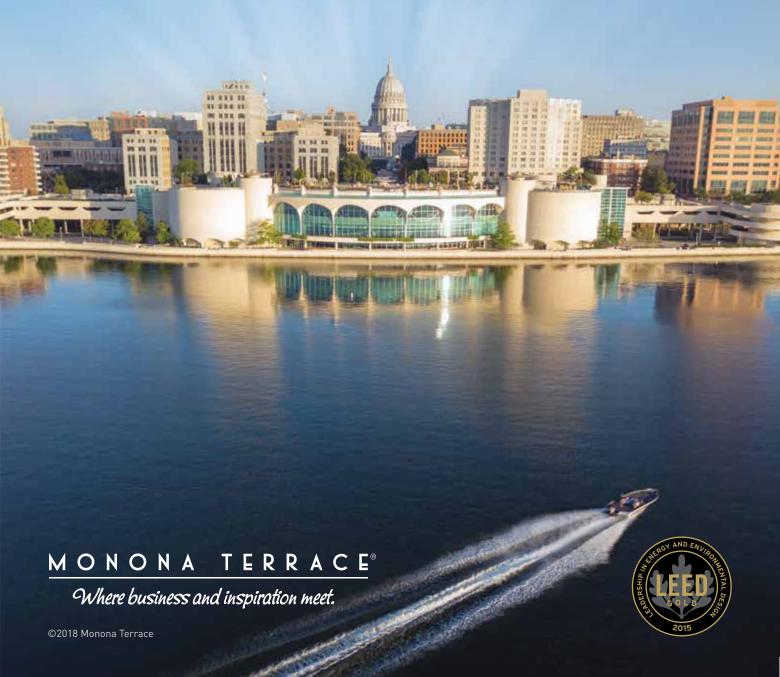
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MANITOWOC, OSHKOSH, RACINE











# **EDITOR'S LETTER**

Spring is a great time for fresh starts and new adventures.

To that end, I'd like to introduce myself—but first I'd like to salute my colleague Becky Peck, who for 15 years has steered Wisconsin Meetings to ensure it is a newsy, on-trend and informative read you don't want to

miss. Becky has been promoted to VP of publications within Nei-Turner Media Group, our parent company, to oversee and guide our many magazines and custom publications. I'd like to thank her for creating such a fine magazine in Wisconsin Meetings—and congratulate her on her career move.

Like Becky, I've been in the publishing industry a long time—interestingly, she and I worked together some 15 years ago at another Wisconsin publishing company.

I've always considered myself a magazine junkie, with my eye firmly focused on creating quality publications filled with inspiring ideas. For more than 25 years I've been packaging ideas into engaging stories that keep readers in the know—in trade, city, regional and national publications, and through strategic communications. Most recently I served for five years as editor-inchief at BRAVA Magazine, in Madison, another Nei-Turner publication. I'm excited to embrace all the opportunities that Wisconsin Meetings presents to me, and to you, as industry professionals.

Have ideas? Stories you'd like to see? Trends you'd like us to explore? I'd love to hear them. You can reach me at the email address below. Your news, press releases, ideas and insights are always welcomed.

Speaking of trends, we learn in Industry Overview, page 13, how technology, and especially meetings apps, are changing the way meetings happen, from making events run more smoothly, to improving networking and attendee safety and experiences. Ever think about using drones to improve your meeting and event? Writer Claudia Cabrera tells us that technology has hundreds of uses that will change the way meetings and events are planned and showcased. For insights and practical advice on incorporating drones into your event plan, read her story on page. 14.

Don't miss our other great coverage this issue. Learn how recent tax code changes affect the industry. Get hot tips for great golf events. Discover Green Lake as a lovely meetings and events destination. Learn about great teambuilding activities to incorporate into meetings and events you're planning. And, find out where in Wisconsin to send the team leaders for inspiring executive retreats, where they can enjoy a place apart from the office press and find space to rejuvenate as they meet to build a vision and new ideas for their organizations' futures.

Kate Bast Editor

kate@ntmediagroup.com



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### **PUBLISHER**

Barb Krause

## **EDITOR**

Kate Bast kate@ntmediagroup.com

### ART DIRECTOR

Kayla Ermer kermer@ntmediagroup.com

### ADVERTISING ACCOUNT MANAGER

Louise Andraski 608.873.8734 louisea@ntmediagroup.com

## **ACCOUNTING**

Danielle Stachowski

## ADVERTISING COORDINATOR

Julie Schiller

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# JACKSON STREET HOLDINGS STREAMLINES BOOKING PROCESS ACROSS PROPERTIES

Jackson Street Holdings has streamlined its reservations and event and meetings bookings process across its Milwaukee Hotel Collection, which includes The Westin Milwaukee, Milwaukee Marriott Downtown and SpringHill Suites by Marriott Milwaukee Downtown. The collection, managed by White Lodging, features 580 downtown rooms.

The more-efficient booking process, with one point of contact for sales and events, will ease clients' inquiries about availability, event details and more. For meeting planners, one group contract can now conveniently reserve a large group of rooms across all hotels.

"Branding these properties as one collection provides quests, meeting planners and social catering customers with a clear understanding of our three unique Marriott branded hotels offering a range of pricing and amenities to fit all needs," says Chris Anderson, senior vice president and chief revenue officer of Jackson Street Holdings.

# **MARCUS HOTELS & RESORTS ANNOUNCES TOP HONORS**

The Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee remains one of only 12 hotels in North America that have maintained AAA Four Diamond status since the Diamond Ratings were first introduced in 1976.

Other Marcus Hotels & Resorts properties that have received the AAA Four Diamond Award in 2018 include the Grand Geneva Resort & Spa in Lake Geneva, recognized for the 20th consecutive year; and the Hilton Milwaukee City Center, recognized for the seventh consecutive year.

# OSTHOFF OFFERS EMPLOYEE **EDUCATION ASSISTANCE**

The Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake is one of 10 hotel companies in the country to now offer debtfree college degrees to its employees as part of a groundbreaking pilot program from the American Hotel & Lodging Education Foundation (AHLEF), the foundation arm of the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA). The program, called AcceleratedED Pathways, created by education company Pearson, launched in March. Employees of The Osthoff Resort can now complete a free associate degree and a low-cost bachelor's degree in this firstof-its-kind program for the hospitality industry.

According to AHLA, the program was developed to address the lodging industry's labor shortage, improve recruitment and retention efforts, and build opportunities for its workforce. Osthoff general manager Lola Roeh commented, "Employees completing degrees by taking advantage of this tuition assistance benefit can look forward to earning more money over the span of their careers and be qualified for promotions."

# **HOTEL RETLAW** PLANS MAKEOVER

Fond du Lac's Hotel Retlaw is getting a \$25 million makeover. The upscale boutique hotel scheduled to open this summer is the first being developed by the newly formed Legendary Hotels, a hospitality management and development company that will specialize in distinctive boutique properties.

"We are creating a unique and breathtaking environment that will attract world-class travelers and serve as a premier social center," said Dennis Doucette, a principalpartner at Legendary Hotels along with Steve Frantz.

Plans for the renovation include a destination farm-totable restaurant, sophisticated espresso café and wine bar, a relaxation pool, new luxury spa and grand ballroom. thehotelretlaw.com

# RADISSON HOTEL LA CROSSE **COMPLETES \$1.2 MILLION BALLROOM RENOVATION**

The Radisson Hotel La Crosse, located in historic downtown La Crosse, has completed an innovative floor-to-ceiling renovation of its ballroom, a premier setting for meetings or social gatherings.

The \$1.2 million transformation of the 5,469 squarefoot event space into a contemporary, modern style incorporates natural and enhanced 2,600-color LED lighting effects features, offering planners a blank palette for customized event styling. Additional new features include a leading-edge, programmable audio visual equipment system and linenless classroom tables.

A renovation of the Wisconsin Room meeting and foyer spaces is also underway, and second-floor meeting spaces will be remodeled later this year.

# HOTELRED EXPANDS

HotelRED is adding three floors with rooms and meeting space to its current fourstory, 48-room building, located across the street from Camp Randall Stadium on the UW-Madison campus. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer.

# SAVE THE DATE: PROFESSIONAL EVENTS

# June 2-5, 2018 WEC2018 | Indianapolis

It's all new this year: Meeting Professionals International has completely redesigned its annual World Education Congress format and program. At this year's signature MPI event you can customize your own education, business and networking experiences; WEC experience coaches are available to assist with your plan. Education sessions are moving to a fluid, open-floor space and out from classrooms; themes include innovation, experiential design, leadership and social.

Topics include the future of meetings, leadership, technology, food and beverage trends, security and more. Keynote speakers include: comedian and creator of famed "Chardonnay Go" board game Dena Blizzard, of One Funny Mother Inc.; event industry trend-setter Michael Cerbo, of Cerbelli Creative; innovation and design thinking guru Duncan Wardle, of ID8 & INNOV8 LLC; worldrenowned brand innovator Dustin Garis, of social movement Lifeprofit; and motivational speaker, entrepreneur, author and social influencer Mel Robbins.

Special events during WEC2018 include an opening night party in White River State Park; President's Dinner honoring Roger Dow, president and CEO of U.S. Travel Association; the Rendezvous, a fundraising and networking event downtown; and the closing celebration at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, home to the Indy 500.

For the complete list of topics and nearly 40 session speakers, special events, details and registration: mpiweb.org. wm





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# PERSONALIZING THE **USER EXPERIENCE**

MPI RELEASES ITS QUARTERLY MEETINGS **OUTLOOK SURVEY RESULTS** 

BY BECKY PECK

eeting Professionals International has published its Meetings Outlook, 2018 Winter Edition. The latest installment of the quarterly report indicates planners are reporting an increased focus on personalizing the user experience through technology and data collection in a landscape of continued growth—and an increase in the perceived value of face-to-face meetings.

# Key findings include the following:

- Despite slightly more people expressing pessimism about meetings and events one year after the U.S. presidential election, the overall statistical finding of respondents' professional outlook as it relates to President Donald Trump is slightly positive due to a high percentage of "firmly optimistic" (10.2 percent) responses. Only 3.9 percent of respondents identified a "firmly pessimistic" outlook.
- 62 percent of respondents predict favorable business conditions, with a 2.1 percent growth expected over the next year.
- 7 percent of respondents cite "most safe and secure" as the most important factor in destination or venue selection.
- Attendance at live and virtual events is expected to grow by 2.2 percent and 2.6 percent, respectivelyrevealing growth for live events over last quarter.

When asked which technologies are taking precedence, respondents overwhelmingly cited apps, mentioned by nearly 28 percent. "The use of meeting apps is changing how meetings happen," wrote one planner. In one case, a planner reported seeing more use of ConsensusOnline for AR and facial recognition technology. Another anonymous planner pointed to "mass adoption of VR in the consumer space" and "expectations for this in the meeting environment to increase."

According to the survey various apps are being used to reduce paper usage, improve communications, facilitate networking, speed registration and improve attendee safety. Other technologies considered important were automated registration (17.4 percent) and social media marketing and communications, AR/ VR and data collection and mining (all cited by 9.3 percent). "We are also looking at how technology can be used throughout the event to connect with other participants without replacing the human connection piece of the event," wrote a planner who requested anonymity.

Many respondents seem ready to try new technologies as the prices come down. In the survey, meeting professionals said they are looking forward to the advent of affordable and easy-to-use beacon (iBeacon) technology and/or RFID to collect data about attendee preferences and behaviors,

The survey also questioned planners on which factors are most important when selecting a destination or venue for larger meetings.

- 44.7 percent responded "most safe and secure"
- 26.1 percent said the location must be domestic
- 24.1 percent noted accessibility as key
- 19.1 percent said they work off an approved list of venues and destinations

With safety and security now the No. 1 trend in Meetings Outlook for the first time some meeting professionals are looking to personalization technology to keep attendees safe. Solutions already being used include RFID badge security applications. Using apps to ensure that attendees are safe getting to and from events is also a growing trend noted by planners.

To view the full report, visit mpiweb.org/meetingsoutlook. Meetings Outlook is developed in partnership with MGM Resorts International and supported in partnership with the IMEX Group. WM



Becky Peck is the former editor of Wisconsin Meetings magazine.



# ELEVATE YOUR EVENTS—WITH

BY CLAUDIA CABRERA

hey aren't just for the military anymore: Drones, also known as unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), are popping up everywhere and have become the new talk of the town as they are used for hundreds of business purposes, including the meeting and event industry.

I recently had the pleasure of interviewing Chris Johnson, Ph.D., co-founder and president of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Advocacy Network and director of the University of Wisconsin—Madison Aviation Research Laboratory. Johnson is a commercial pilot for both manned and unmanned aircraft, and he is a certified flight instructor with a Ph.D. in engineering from UW. There, he built UW's Center of Excellence for aeronautical research. He also founded PilotTrainingSystem.com, an online educational resource for both manned and unmanned aircraft pilots that has been used to build drone programs for large entities such as UW, American Family Insurance, and Wisconsin Aviation where he serves as chief drone pilot. So many hats managing things that fly!

Johnson shares insights into how he personally has used drones at events and how these aircrafts will change the way the rest of us plan and showcase our events.

# First and foremost, how and why did you get into drones?

I am an engineer, a pilot and an entrepreneur, so the technology fits within everything I know. My research

was funded by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) throughout grad school at Illinois and UW to make flying safer. That work evolved into an FAA Center of Excellence that I direct at UW while the drone market began to explode, putting highly capable robots into the hands of naïve users and simultaneously creating a significant risk to the National Airspace System. I'm passionate about my research and development that makes flying safer, and I don't want to hit a drone in my Cessna; however, the businessman in me wants to ensure that responsible operators are able to enjoy the economic benefits of drone technology to help their businesses.

As a pilot, scientist and engineer, I understand aeronautical systems, remote sensing, artificial intelligence and big data that has delivered drone technology into the mainstream, and as a business owner, I understand the return on investment that drones can deliver in various business verticals. Naturally, I started helping large entities understand the technology and bringing them into their businesses to improve the customer experience and, ultimately, the bottom line.

# You have used drones at events before. Can you explain how they help meeting planners pre-, during and post-event?

Some of the more memorable events I've captured via drone include the Hardhats for Hearts event, a fundraiser organized by the construction industry for the American Heart Association. That event took place inside of an airplane hanger at the Dane County airport, so we made sure that everyone was aware of the drone being used. I also did the Andy North & Friends Fundraiser for the UW Carbon Cancer Center as well as the UW Alumni Park Grand Opening.

Drones offer an aerial perspective both indoor and outdoor that manned aircraft can't even provide. and event planners who use them not only showcase their beautiful works of art from the air, but they also establish themselves as forward thinkers who embrace leading-edge technology to provide a better service for their clients.

Services that use the help of drones include: during a site inspection, to make sure that the space at a larger scale will work for your next big event; during a meeting, to capture the event from all different angles; and post-event to make sure that no equipment is left behind on the grounds.

# How do you think drones change the way we showcase our meetings?

Drones are not just for showcasing. Certainly, the aerial perspective is beautiful, but drone footage is quickly becoming standard in TV shows, commercials, movies and news stories.







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The same is already happening in the event-planning industry, but drones can be used for end-to-end planning to scout site locations, create high-resolution maps and 3D models to aid communication and artistic vision, and capture aerial overviews during set-up and tear-down for quality assurance.

Drones can also live-stream footage for network access and, in my experience, patrons feel important, like they are part of something bigger, when they see drones flying around at a special event. It really takes the event to the next level.

# Where do you see the drone usage in the meeting and event industry five years from now?

As drones become more common in event planning, I believe that event planners will start to use drones in ways that architects and construction managers are using them, for creating 3D models to aid in planning and for marketing previous works of art.

Similar to the way in which Google satellites have produced Google Earth to provide a level of intelligence that we now take for granted, drones are modeling the world from above but in much higher resolution. Using photogrammetric processing that turns 2D imagery into 3D models, event planners of tomorrow will have a portfolio of 3D models to show their clients in marketing their talents and creating artistic vision for their next big

# What would you tell meeting planners that are hesitant about embracing drone technology?

Drones are here to stay, and they bring a lot of value in a business sense. Unfortunately, drones are so new that for every responsible user, you can find at least one naïve user who doesn't know that laws exist and another who intentionally flies recklessly and illegally. Airline unions opposed drones for this simple fact alone: They don't want to suck a drone into a jet

However, it would be a disservice to allow a few bad actors to allow knee-jerk legislation to reign and hinder economic progress. That is why we need to shed light on the good that drones are bringing

to the world, which is tough knowing that drones come from a military background.

To mitigate concerns of "big brother," drone pilots must be ethical as well as safe. It's not that difficult, actually. We all have cameras in our pockets, and one can be way stealthier about invading another's privacy with their cell phone than they can with a flying weed-whacker.

Talking about responsibility, there are some federal aviation regulations with the usage of drones. What are some of the responsibilities that meeting planners should be aware of that are associated with commercial drone use?

Any event planner that seeks to use drone footage for planning and/or showcasing should hire a commercially licensed drone pilot or become licensed themselves.

Please note that you'll want a reputable pilot, one who has significant experience because the licensing requirements are not very stringent.

Most people interested in drone footage start by hiring a commercial operator to get the footage they need so they can explore the return on investment. Often times, contracted drone services is sufficient, but sometimes business owners invest in building an internal drone program, but they learn quickly that there is more to it than buying a drone, registering, insuring it and passing an exam. Managing risk and professional reputation goes much deeper.

Want to know more about employing drones for your next event? Contact Johnson via LinkedIn or at cmjohnson@ wisc.edu. Visit his training site at PilotTrainingSystem.com. WM



Claudia Cabrera is the current MPI Wisconsin Chapter president and the corporate sales manager for the Marriott Madison West Hotel. She has been in the hospitality industry for over 10 years and has served on the MPI-

Wisconsin Board of Directors for five years.



# **ATTENTION!**

PAYING ATTENTION YIELDS RESULTS

BY MOLLY ROSE TEUKE

roductivity is the name we give our attempts to figure out the best uses of our energy, intellect and time as we try to seize the most meaningful rewards with the least wasted effort. It's a process of learning how to succeed with less stress and struggle." -Charles Duhigg, author of "Smarter, Faster, Better: The Transformative Power of REAL Productivity"

Productivity has become the holy grail of the modern workplace, and productivity tips are a dime a dozen. Most of them are centered around "time management," yet managing time is seldom, if ever, the issue. Managing attention and energy is a much more effective way to increase our productivity. In this column, we'll look at how to manage our attention, based on the wisdom of science. (We'll tackle energy in an upcoming column.)

The prefrontal cortex (PFC) is critical to what neuroscientists call "executive function" understanding, remembering, planning, decisionmaking, self-control and other skills we usually take for granted. It's where we pay conscious attention. Yet the PFC is only 4 to 5 percent of our total brain mass. It's the newest in evolutionary terms, and the latest to develop as we grow to adulthood, which means it's easily bullied by other, more primitive parts of the brain. Given its limitations, it makes sense to deploy its resources wisely in how we direct our attention.

# **CONSCIOUS DECISIONS**

In his 2015 book, "Two Awesome Hours: Sciencebased Strategies to Harness Your Best Time and Get Your Most Important Work Done," psychologist and researcher Josh Davis suggests we stop operating on autopilot. How often do you finish one task and move on to the next thing on your desk without pausing to consider whether it's the best use of your time and attention?

Davis calls these moments "decision points;" we all have many of them throughout each day. Without attending to those moments, we move through the day in a singularly nonstrategic fashion. Only when we stop to make a thoughtful choice about our next task can we maximize our personal productivity.

Because our brain's ability to pay attention is limited, when we squander it on less mission-critical tasks, we have less capacity for important tasks that will make a difference in how productive we feel at that end of the day. Making a conscious decision about where we direct our attention can eliminate the "where-did-myday-go" frustration we too often feel at 5 o'clock.

Of course, setting priorities is also a function of our prefrontal cortex (since it's about planning and decision-making), which means it also uses up valuable resources. Setting priorities the night before is effective because it means you're not using the next morning's resources and, assuming you haven't spent your evening taxing your brain with work, your cognitive skills have had a chance to rebound enough to make those decisions.

### ONE THING AT A TIME

Another important piece of managing attention is keeping it focused on a single task. Our culture applauds "multi-tasking," but our brains are biologically incapable of multi-tasking—they're not designed to process more than one cognitive task at a time. We can do something called background tasking, which is doing two things at once when one of them can be done effectively in the background. We can drive a car or make a pot of coffee (background tasks, because we've hard-wired how to do them) while also completing a more cognitively challenging task—grasping the point of a podcast or carrying on a conversation about strategic planning.

When we "multi-task," we're actually doing what scientists call task-switching. We switch our attention from one task to another. For most of us, it takes just a fraction of a second for that switch to occur, but over the course of a day, those fractions of a second add up. According to Dr. John Medina in "Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home and School," when we interrupt ourselves as we carry out a task, we take 50 percent longer to accomplish it, and we make 50 percent more errors.

Here's an exercise to demonstrate the cost of taskmulti-tasking:

Step 1: Write out the numbers 1 through 26, then, underneath them, write out the alphabet A through Z, so you have a letter under each number. Time yourself.

Step 2: Turn the paper over and (without looking at what you just did), interlace (alternate numbers and letters) the counting and alphabet. (1, write A under it; 2, write B under it; 3, C under it, etc.). Time that and compare.

Medina describes just what happens in our brains when we switch from task to task. Simply put, multiple brain functions have to shift patterns to shut down and start up. It not only takes more time than single-tasking, it creates a heavy cognitive load that tires out our brains more quickly, making us less effective at any task we subsequently undertake. Not a recipe for increased productivity.

## **TIDYING UP**

In "Two Awesome Hours," Davis highlights another aspect of managing our attention: the factors in our environment that invite distraction. Our brains are not designed to focus on a single stimulus, and that makes concentration difficult under the best of circumstances. When we add the clutter of a messy desk, or the temptations of multiple electronic devices and screens flashing at us, we significantly reduce our ability to focus and get anything done.

There's a connection here to self-control, an important component of paying attention. In "Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength," social psychologist Roy Baumeister describes research indicating that willpower and self-control suffer in any messy environment. When the clutter on your desk involves things demanding your attention—a note to return a phone call, a written reminder of future tasks—you suffer a double whammy.

The same can be said of clutter in our minds. Thanks to Russian psychologist Bluma Zeigarnik, we know that our brains pay more attention to unfinished business than to a completed task that we can check off our list. The Zeigarnik effect kicks in whenever we switch tasks: An unfinished task takes up valuable space in our limited working memory, leaving fewer cognitive resources for the new task. The result: Neither gets the benefit of our full cognitive power. Managing how and where we devote our attention helps clear the working memory of extraneous thoughts, leaving us more muscle power for the task at hand. One way we can do that is to start and complete one task before moving on to another.

## 24 HOURS

We all get 24 hours in a day. The same number as DaVinci and Einstein and every great thinker that ever lived. No matter how we manage them, we still get just 24 hours/1,440 minutes/86,400 seconds. It's how thoughtfully we focus our attention on what we want to accomplish in those hours and minutes and seconds that distinguishes productive from unproductive. WM



Molly Rose Teuke has an enduring curiosity about what makes our brains tick. She delivers a program for Nicolet College called Get Your Brain On Your Side, and delivers brainbased leadership training for the

NeuroLeadership Institute, a global leader in the performance arena. She also hosts a weekly classical music program and a monthly audioblog called BrainWaves on WXPR-FM. You can reach her at mollyrose@mollyrosecoaching.com.





# SUMMER SPLASH

WISCONSIN'S BEST BREWS, WINES & SPIRITS

BY KRISTINE HANSEN

ooking for drinks with a local edge to serve at summer meetings, picnics and outdoor events? Bolstered by Milwaukee's emerging craft-beer scene as well as new spirits stemming from around the state, the good news is that you have plenty of options. Not to be forgotten are crisp, white wines produced from Wisconsin wineries, proof that Wisconsin's claim to beverages goes well beyond beer.

That said, you can't go wrong by serving a selection of curated craft beers from the Dairy State. Go beyond the expected—in other words, brands that are not Leinenkugel's or Miller—and turn toward newer craft beers. In the Milwaukee area alone, 15 or so craft breweries have opened within the last two years. While some are very micro, not distributing outside of the tasting room, others are widely available.

A perennial favorite is Lakefront Brewery, one of Milwaukee's first boutique-size craft breweries (it opened in 1987). Instead of opting for a Lakefront beer that everyone knows—such as Riverwest Stein or its IPA—turn to the brewery's "Happy Glamper Leisure Ale," featuring lemon and tropical-fruit accents that are perfect for summer. Along those lines, many people have tried—and enjoy—New Glarus Brewing Company's "Spotted Cow." But few know the brewery's fruit-laced beers, such as Raspberry Tart, Wisconsin Belgian Red (infused with Door County cherries) and Serendipity.

A few new breweries to try out of Milwaukee, that are

distributing, include City Lights Brewing Co., packaging the beers into cans, including its Amber Ale. Door County Brewing Co.'s new tap room in Baileys Harbor (the brewery debuted in 2012) has been a huge hit in terms of tourism but the beers are also gaining recognition. "Little Sister" is a Witbier-style beer designed for summer drinking. Its orange-peel and spice notes pair wonderfully with barbecued and picnic food, including salads.

As for Wisconsin wines, a highly rated white wine vintage after vintage is Wollersheim Winery's Prairie Fumé. Don't be fooled by the screw-top or that it's from Wisconsin: This one drinks like a drier version of Sauvignon Blanc, though the grapes are Seyval Blanc and grown in New York. Also, winemaker Philippe Coquard was born in France and grew up in a winemaking family in Beaujolais, France. This wine has been in production since 1989 and a continual award-winner at wine competitions.

Wineries are now all over the state and have come a long way since the late 1980s. Door County continues to be where the majority are, including Door Peninsula Winery, Door 44 Winery, Harbor Ridge Winery, Stone's Throw Winery and Simon Creek Winery. While many will not be familiar to wine drinkers, as they don't feature commonly known grapes like Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon (instead they are either fruit-based or feature hardy winter grapes native to the North), this can be positioned as a means for trying something new to drink out of Wisconsin.

Craft cocktails continue to be all the rage. No matter if this is a gathering for younger employees or older executives, you'd be remiss not to place attention on the spirits and cocktails. Consider creating a signature cocktail for your event that weaves in a Wisconsin-made spirit. Many of these distilleries are small batch and do not distribute outside of Wisconsin—a great way to welcome out-of-state people to your meeting or event with a unique product.

Great Lakes Distillery debuted in Milwaukee in 2004 and today crafts a variety of gins, whiskeys, vodkas, liqueurs and even absinthe. A favorite cocktail is its Bloody Mary, featuring Rehorst Vodka. Yahara Bay Distillers in Madison, like Great Lakes Distillery, is an "older" distillery in the state (founder Nick Quint launched the spirts in 2007). Whiskey, brandy, vodka, rum, gin and liqueur are folded into the product line, with selections such as Kirschwasser Cherry Brandy and Seraphine Chai Tea Vodka.

So go ahead, try something new from Wisconsin. Your quests will say cheers! wm



Kristine Hansen is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee.





# TALKING TAXES

# ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE TAX CUTS AND JOBS ACT ON THE MEETINGS AND EVENTS WORLD

On Dec. 22, 2017, the United States Congress passed the most significant overhaul of the tax code in 30 years. This sweeping legislation will impact nearly every household and every business in some way, both negatively and positively. Here, we take a quick look at some of the primary changes and how they might affect those who plan, hold and attend meetings and events.

# TAX RATE CUT

The core of the plan is a massive and permanent cut to the corporate tax rates, lowering the top rate from 35 percent to a flat rate of 21 percent, says Bill Kangas, a CPA at Business & Tax Accountants, a certified public accounting firm located in Greenfield, Wisconsin. In his role, he's been working with small business owners in public accounting for more than 15 years.

Kangas says this change is one of the "big buzzers," but he points out the largest impact is going to be for C-corporations, which is any business that is taxed separately from its owners. A venue, such as a large convention center, might be taxed at the new rate—if it is a C-corporation. However, most planners will be unaffected by this change because they fall under what is known as a pass-through entity, which is a business that is not taxed at the corporate level.

"They might be a single-member LLC, they might be a partnership, or they might be what we deem an S-corporation, and in those cases, going to a flat 21 percent tax rate is pretty much a moot point," Kangas says.

# CHANGES TO SECTION 179 EXPENSING

Kangas reports the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act bill also impacted Sec. 179 expensing by increasing the maximum amount a taxpayer may expense in the year of purchase up to \$1 million while also increasing the phaseout threshold to \$2.5 million. These amounts will be indexed for inflation after 2018. Previously, the maximum amount was capped at \$500,000.

In addition, the tax change also expanded the definition of Sec. 179 property to include depreciable tangible personal property used to furnish lodging or in connection



with furnishing lodging, and expanded the definition of qualified real property eligible for expensing to include any of the following improvements to nonresidential real property: roofs; heating, ventilation and air-conditioning units; fire protection and alarm systems; and security systems. This again may have an impact on the taxation of businesses operating large event venues, but likely will not impact planners and other vendors running small event-related businesses.

Now, when businesses purchase equipment under the new tax code, they can write it off in the first year. "With the old law, they could only expense up to \$500,000 of that equipment purchase in the first year. That number will increase to \$1 million in 2018," he says.

Kangas reports businesses will have to weigh the profitability of the business in a given year against their forecast for the year ahead to see if a full write off makes sense. "If you have a business that is profitable, you're going to want to write off the full value of the equipment that they bought in the year of purchase to help reduce the profits of that business," he says.

## SECTION 199A

The Section 199A deduction, also known as the Qualified Business Income Deduction, also changed in the new tax code and represents what could amount to a significant tax break for small business owners. This is a deduction from a business income to arrive at a taxable business income amount. Kangas says with this change there is the "potential for 20 percent of that to be excluded from taxes." Therefore, if a business shows a profit of \$100,000, under this rule, they may be able to pay taxes on just \$80,000.

However, this new provision is complicated, according to Kangas. It contains information on exclusions, phase-outs and other uncertainties so every pass-through business may not get the full benefit of this deduction. For instance, it is not applicable to businesses that provide services (doctors, lawyers, accountants, etc.), unless their taxable income is less than \$157,000 (individual) or \$315,000 (married). There are a host of calculations that figure into this deduction, and Kangas recommends consulting with an accountant regarding this change and how it will impact your business.

# **BUSINESS MEAL DEDUCTIONS**

When it comes to meals, there has been a mass of changes from the old rules to the new.

For instance, while holiday parties remain 100 percent deductible and meals for employees who are traveling are still set at 50 percent deductible, there have been some changes that are not so cut and dried. Buying food for employees being asked to work late is now 50 percent deductible instead of 100 percent, and inhouse cafeterias once were 100 percent deductible, but they now are only 50 percent deductible.

Says Kangas, "There has been a great deal of scrutiny since the new tax law came out as far as interpreting what the IRS deems deductible or nondeductible as it relates to meals and things like that." He expects the IRS to release specific definitions and guidelines as it pertains to this change in the months to come.

"As it relates to travel, if an employee must visit a customer or attend an event out of town, all their travel expenses, including their airfare, hotel, taxi, rental car, etc. will be 100 percent deductible, while their meals will be 50 percent deductible, just like under the old law," he says. "However, what has changed is if that employee takes out a customer and flips for dinner; under the new definitions, that dinner is deemed 'entertainment' and thus is nondeductible."

This is under intense scrutiny right now, says Kangas, who points out under the old code that if two business colleagues went out to lunch to discuss business, these meals were 50 percent deductible.

"There has been a difference of opinion in this area, some people believe that if you are discussing business this should be 50 percent deductible," he says. "Some people believe you can still write this off as a 50 percent deduction, while others are saying it's no longer deductible."

At meetings and events, where a company sponsored a breakfast, for example, it remains unclear whether that sponsorship could be written off as a business expense. If this change is interpreted in black-and-white terms, it may not be. But Kangas expects the IRS to release guidelines that clarify murky situations such as the one above.

# **ENTERTAINMENT WRITEOFFS**

Forget floor seats to a Lakers game or frontrow tickets to "O" by Cirque du Soleil on another company's dime. Under the new tax law, businesses can no longer deduct these entertainment expenses.

Under the old tax code, 50 percent of entertainment expenses were deductible. That is no longer the case, Kangas reports.

"This piece of the law is black and white," he says. "If you take a prospect out to the ballgame or for a round of golf, under the new law this is a nondeductible expense."

The good news is sending an employee to an event, seminar or conference will remain 100-percent deductible. However, if that employee then takes a potential client out for a night on the town, those expenses will not be.

"The days of, 'Oh, we have a free day, let me spring for a round of golf' may be over," he says.

When a meeting or event includes a golf tournament and charges participants \$100 per player to participate, participants can no longer write off this expense—and it's important for meeting and event planners to take note of that. "That will fall into the category of entertainment," says Kangas.

# GOOD RECORDKEEPING

One thing that hasn't changed is the importance of good recordkeeping, says Kangas. Businesses should keep all documentation pertaining to their expenses for travel, meals and entertainment, should anything be called into question in the future.

"The IRS requires you to have documentation to support your items of income or deductions," he says. "If an employee attends a week-long seminar, they will need to maintain all of that documentation to support the deductions they take. This includes receipts for meals, the hotel, the airfare, the taxi or rental car and the cost of the conference itself."

When it comes to managing tax concerns in any year, be wary, be wise—and check with your trusty accountant. WM



Ronnie Garrett is a freelance writer based in Wisconsin. She has been writing about meetings and events since 2009.

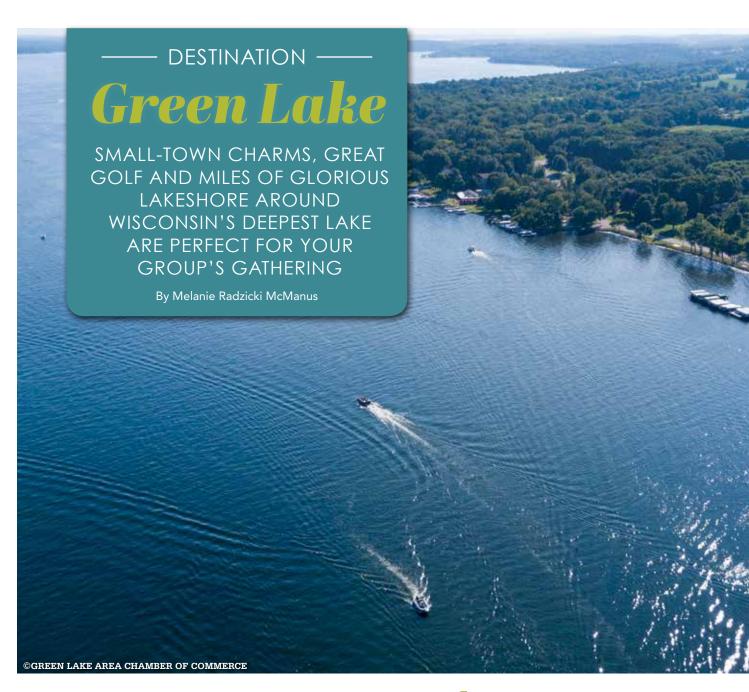


The Edgewater offers so much more than a meeting. The award-winning property boasts 202 guest rooms and over 40,000 square feet of meeting space. Plus, boat outings, lakeside dining, a full-service spa, live music, sunset seating and more. All located right on the water in the heart of Madison. This is the place to get down to business.

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When Scott Jaquish first went to Heidel House Resort & Spa a few years ago, he was blown away by the venue. Although he was there to attend a Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association (WPRA) workshop, Jaquish knew the resort also would be perfect for the annual WPRA Leadership Academy, an intimate gathering of 25 to 38 leaders in the parks, recreation and forestry fields.

What was so special about the atmosphere? "You're not in the middle of a waterpark," he says. Instead, the aura is serene and relaxing, perfect for an educational gathering that's also focused on inspiring and motivating managers. Jaquish recommended moving the annual Leadership Academy there three years ago, and once the group moved no one ever looked back.

"We've always had an extremely positive experience, from excellent meals to the warm, inviting meeting spaces," Jacquish says. "The staff is great to work with and never disappoints. Heidel House has been a great success for us."







# Small Town, Big Amenities

Heidel House Resort & Spa is located in Green Lake, population 1,000. So is the Green Lake Conference Center, another major meeting venue. The two facilities, along with numerous area offerings, combine to make an attractive meeting destination.

Alyssa Paulsen, marketing and project coordinator with the Green Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, says there are 100,000 square feet of meeting space and 900 hotel rooms in the region, all of which are within 20 minutes of the lake. There are also four well-regarded golf facilities: Tuscumbia Golf Course and the Golf Courses of Lawsonia, both in

town, Mascoutin Golf Club in Berlin and White Lake Country Club in Montello. In addition, the neighboring towns of Princeton and Ripon both have shopping pedigrees. Princeton is known for its antiques, while Ripon is famed for its specialty shops and boutiques, many housed in historic buildings.

And then there's the lake. Green Lake's namesake body of water is long and narrow, shaped a bit like Lake Michigan lying on its side. The lake boasts 27 miles of shoreline and a 236-foot depth, which makes it the deepest inland lake in Wisconsin. It's an object of beauty that also offers recreational options galore.

But perhaps even more important than the water is the fact that Green Lake exudes a warm, small-town feel. "There's a much more relaxed atmosphere here than in a big city," says Paulsen. "This atmosphere helps clear the mind and sets groups up for being better able to accomplish whatever it is they're trying to accomplish."

# Heidel House Resort & Spa

Heidel House Resort & Spa is snugged against Green Lake's northeastern shore in the south side of town. Its moniker is a bit of a misnomer, as the 20-acre resort consists of a variety of buildings. The property's original manor and several out-buildings were constructed in 1890 as a private







residence; its transition into a hospitality operation began in 1945, when Herb and Lucille Heidel purchased the estate. By the 1970s, Heidel House was one of the state's hottest destination resorts, and its growth continued over the next few decades with the addition of a conference center, lodge, spa and fine-dining establishment.

Today the resort offers 18,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting space and 177 hotel guest rooms, says Donna Smith, senior sales manager. There are also two houses on the property with 10 and four bedrooms apiece. Smith says the resort typically hosts groups between 50 and 150, although it can accommodate up to 300.

Heidel House's meeting space is spread throughout several rooms, including the Dartford Ballroom, with a 340-person capacity; Daycholah, which features a stage; and several smaller rooms suitable for breakouts or gatherings of boards of directors. During warmer weather, the resort sets up a carriage tent outside that holds 200 and is perfect for dining events.

"All of our rooms [and the tent] overlook Green Lake, which is really unique," Smith says.

Groups looking for team-building activities, or simply entertainment options for attendees, have plenty of options. The lake, obviously, is key. In warm weather, up to 60 guests can hop aboard the yacht Escapade, which offers themed cruises. The resort also facilitates watercraft rentals. In the winter, ice skating, cross-country skiing, sledding and ice fishing are popular activities. And a charter fishing expedition is available year-round.

"Green Lake is very well-known for lake trout, and they're huge," says Smith. "We'll have groups where some people have never had a fishing license before. They'll get their stamp, go on the charter and catch their first fish, which is quite exciting."

Duffers appreciate that Heidel House works closely with Tuscumbia Golf Course, which sits just across the street. The 18-hole, par 71 course is Wisconsin's oldest (created in 1896) and is also considered one of the state's best-manicured.

When the snow begins to fall, the resort's Evensong Spa becomes quite popular. "A lot of wellness groups come here," Smith says, noting its indoor labyrinth—one of the largest



in the state—is especially popular. In addition to offering treatments and the labyrinth, Evensong can be used for yoga classes and creative events such as wine-pairing.

# Green Lake Conference Center

Green Lake Conference Center sits about five miles west of Heidel House. It's a vast, 900-acre property, part of which hugs the midsection of Green Lake's northern shore. The center has 60,000 square feet of flexible meeting space spread among 50 rooms, including a conference hall that seats 1,000. Lodging space, which totals 330 rooms, comes via hotel rooms, homes, dormitories and campgrounds.

The conference center was created in 1944 by the American Baptists. So the campus includes amenities such as chapels and prayer towers. But that doesn't mean it's strictly for religious groups. The facility hosts organizations of every kind, including nonprofit, corporate, government and educational groups. Jason Kauffeld, director of group relationships, says Green Lake Conference Center is most adept at serving groups of 200 to 400. But it has hosted conferences much larger than that. "Our largest group is the Wisconsin Mathematics Council," he says. "They've got 1,800 people and have been coming for 50 years."

What's the draw of this facility? One is privacy. "Usually at a conference, you're spread over many floors of one hotel, or in many different spots," says Kauffeld. "But here we have different sized hotels, houses and dorms, so I can put you where you have the entire space to yourselves." The wide variety of lodging also means a wide variety of price points, from a few bucks a night per person if your group is camping to more than \$100 per attendee for a hotel suite.

Another draw for the conference center is its numerous recreational opportunities. The famed Golf Courses of Lawsonia are part of the property; the two 18-hole courses are consistently ranked among the best in the nation. There are also 12 miles of trails, pickleball courts, soccer and football fields,

and a disc golf course, to name just a few additional options. And the lake? The center is home to 2.5 miles of its shoreline, plus a swimming beach.

"It's almost limitless what you can do here," says Kauffeld.

Amenities aside, the property's sheer size is a bonus for groups looking for a lot of green space for their activities, such as dog show planners.

Green space along Green Lake. At its very essence, those two features may be the destination's main appeal. wm



Melanie Radzicki McManus often writes about Wisconsin from her home in Sun Prairie, Wis. In 2015, she received a Lowell Thomas Grand Award as Travel Writer of the Year, honorable mention. Lowell

Thomas Awards are considered the most prestigious travel writing awards in North America.

# TEAM By Clair Urbain TACTICS By Clair Urbain

# BUILD WORK CREWS INTO MORE COHESIVE TEAMS. INSPIRING WISCONSIN VENUES AND EVENTS CAN HELP.

Long-gone are the days of team-building activities such as the faith fall, where trusting employees dropped into the waiting hands of supportive fellow workers, or where speakers behind podiums espouse the value of team efforts.

Throughout Wisconsin, venues and companies that specialize in developing team-building events for corporations have turned training efforts up a notch (or two) to help work teams operate more effectively, break down barriers and develop skill sets that promise to have positive impacts to the bottom line and inter-work relationships.

Today, work teams can build their work-together skills in a wide variety of places and situations. From adventure outings to escape rooms where team members solve clues to beat the clock to give-back activities to help charities, the list of opportunities is nearly endless.

That's especially true in Wisconsin where teambuilding exercises can be incorporated into the city, team interests and even the seasons, says David Goldstein, self-proclaimed creator of opportunities (COO) of Teambonding, a national event company that has produced several events in Wisconsin. "Today's team-building events can be adapted to the office and employee culture. In Wisconsin, there are plenty of activities that take place every season in the state that can be adapted into team-building events."

A search across the Badger State reveals some very diverse possibilities that range from the mild to wild. Most of Wisconsin's famed resorts offer teambuilding activities—think golf excursions, cooking classes, creative challenges and beyond. Many resorts collaborate with area attractions to provide memorable team-building experiences in unique settings, indoors or out. There also several event planners that specialize in developing custom teambuilding events that best match your corporate objectives, ranging from nurturing management skills to just having fun together.



01

# THINK OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION

Does the group have a common interest or passion? Conversely, would the group be interested in doing an activity that is totally outside their wheelhouse of experiences? Building upon, or conversely, expanding upon the group's past experiences can make team-building events more impactful and memorable.

LEVERAGE
WISCONSIN'S SEASONS
Some consider Wisconsin's

Some consider Wisconsin's winter a liability, but it can be used to create a truly memorable event. Winter pursuits, such as snowboarding, sledding, skiing or snow castle-building can make for fun outings. Spring, summer and fall open to golfing, water activities, camping, hiking and spectator sports possibilities. Look at the options available (see "Resources" sidebar) for ideas and with a little creativity, any venue or opportunity can be turned into a fun and effective team-building exercise.

# SEARCH FOR SCAVENGER HUNTS

Games can be a great ice breaker and team builder. For example, The Go Game (thegogame.com) has developed a wide variety of games that are cell phone scavenger hunts on steroids, its promoters report. These games can be out-of-the box standard events that teach team tactics, or can be customized to the group. For example, by combining technology to tap into players' exploration and creativity, teams work to complete a scavenger hunt that takes place in real-world surroundings, building camaraderie as the game progresses. Similarly, several resorts and other events planners can develop hand-in-glove training on the skills companies want to cultivate with very unique, fun and memorable events.

GIVE-BACK EVENTS
Whether your company or participants supports local, regional or national charities, you can create events that accomplish team-building training while helping a particular charity. For example, Habitat for Humanity building events exist in several Wisconsin communities, and Build-A-Bike, a nationally based team-building event, offers specialty training to build both team skills and one or more bicycles that can be given to charities.

Myriad give-back program opportunities are available, and each can nurture group cooperation and problem-solving skills with the added philanthropic benefit of helping others. Give-backs also present great public relations opportunities to showcase a company's engagement in its community.



05
INTENSE TRAINING

# INTENSE TRAINING/ PARTICIPATION EVENTS

Several venues offer skills-building workshops that develop capacities through adventure or events that push participants' (extreme) comfort zones. Zip lining, aerial ropes courses, tower climbing, rock wall climbing, orienteering and geocaching can build team spirit and problem-solving skills. Group or even individual tastes for adventure can drive the selected intensity levels, emphasizing safety first.

ESCAPE ROOMS
This trending group activity is a natural team-builder. Several themed escape rooms exist in cities throughout Wisconsin—and the nation—where small teams enter a themed series of rooms that require solving clues to "escape." The usual time allotment for travelling through the series of rooms is about an hour. While not a locked facility, the rooms present a unique and challenging environment to build analytical skills, creativity and camaraderie. Many offer several social options before and after the escape room adventure, ranging from dinner and refreshments to photo opportunities.





GAMES AND GAME SHOWS Developing or using a game environment can subtly develop team skills. Teams pit their knowledge, talent or experience against other teams, creating a fun, competitive atmosphere in a game show environment that reinforces real-life team concepts to participants and helps fellow employees better interact with others.

Most game show coordinators supply the props, emcee and structure for the game; they can also incorporate work-related questions or challenges into the competition. Some game shows are built on the premise of a kidnapped boss and teams must "rescue" him or her. Some game shows also plant actors in the game to make it even more interesting.

Simpler (and likely less expensive) events can pit participants in hilarious competitions think swinging a tennis ball in a nylon stocking pulled over players' heads to knock over water bottles—to break the ice with co-workers, suppliers and even customers.



INTERESTING TOURS Wisconsin is chock-full of popular and historic points of interest offering group tours that can be easily adapted into team-building events. Whether it is a boat or trollev ride on a Wisconsin lake or a museum, winery or brewery tour, these events can be educational and fun. Many can be incorporated into a fact-finding hunt that can instill cooperation and teamwork.

AGGRESSIVE/HIGH **ADVENTURE GAMES** Depending on your audience, laser-tag, paintball or range shooting may have more appeal and impact. Hunting, fishing, cycling or boating adventures abound in Wisconsin and with a little creativity, can be transformed into a team-building exercise. Team-building planners emphasize that safety is paramount in their events, however, may require participants to sign release forms to minimize liability in case there is an issue.



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For more information on the Elkhart Lake area and other fine resorts, visit **elkhartlake.com** or call 877.355.4278.





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Culinary Team Building





# COOKING/SPECIAL INTEREST EVENTS

Culinary-related events can have broad group appeal and can be used to instill cooperative principles and team skills in participants. Cooking demonstrations can take a competitive twist by having attendees go head to head to create the best salsa, for example. Tasting events may even be turned into a competition where, after tasting several items, participants must identify the kind or type of food or drink. Combining flavors, approaches to cooking and implementing interesting cooking methods can open up participants' thought in how they approach their work challenges.

# PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The first step in setting up a team-building event is working with meeting organizers to find out the group's interest and level of adventure and what skills they'd like to develop. From there, identify a budget and work with the meeting site planner to develop some options. If outside help or expertise is required, costs will increase, but likely so will the quality and memorability of the experience.

# Go team! wm



Clair Urbain is a freelance writer based in Fort Atkinson, Wis.

# **TEAM BUILDING RESOURCES**

Here's a list of some of the great resources available in Wisconsin to help build your team experience.

### **RESORT RESOURCES**

Wilderness Resorts, Wisconsin Dells: wildernessresort.com, (608) 253-9729.

Grand Geneva Resort and Spa, Lake Geneva: grandgeneva.com, (262) 248-8811 ext. 3782

The Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake: osthoffmeetings.com, (866) 310-8115

Kohler Learning Center, Kohler: (920) 457-4441 x 77017

# **ADVENTURES**

Adventure Games Inc.: adventuregamesinc.com/wisconsinteam-building, (760) 444-0515

Adventure Associates: adventureassoc.com, (800) 987-5582

# **TEAM-BUILDING PLANNERS**

citvHUNT.com: hunt@cityhunt.org, (877) HUNT-FUN

Teambonding: teambonding.com, (888) 398-8326

The Go Game: thegogame.com, (415) 734-9330

The Leader's Institute: leadersinstitute.com, (414) 395-8378

Milwaukee Team Building: (414) 433-0403

Watson Adventures: watsonadventures.com, (877) 946-4868

# **ESCAPE ROOMS**

Catch 22 Escape Rooms, Brookfield: catch22escape.com, (262) 902-2267

Escape MKE, Milwaukee: escapemke.com, (414) 391-7183

Escape City 13, Oak Creek: Escapecity13.com, (414) 405-9642 Escape This, Madison: escapethis.com, (608) 217-8181

Breakout Games, Brookfield: Breakoutgames.com, (262) 806-0360

Save Milwaukee, Milwaukee: Savemke.com, (414) 628-5103

Team Escape 262, Menomonee Falls: teamescape262.com, (262) 415-5520

### **HIGH ADVENTURE**

CMP Tactical Lazer Tag-Milwaukee: cmptactical.com, (414) 483-2222

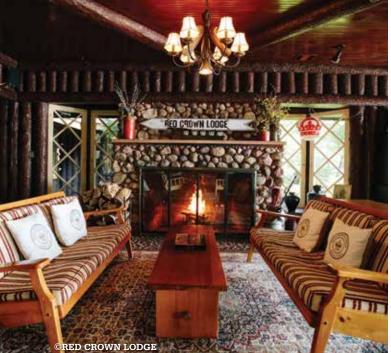
Aerial Adventures, Lake Geneva: Aerialadventureslg.com, (262) 325-8299

Venture Up, ventureup.com, (888) 368-4102

# **DEMONSTRATION AND FOOD CLASSES**

Milwaukee Public Market, Milwaukee: (414) 336-1111







An executive retreat is a gathering of a company's top decision makers working together to move forward toward a common goal: success.

The best retreats are effective for all the right reasons, allowing participants to refocus, recharge, relax and recommit. The worst? Well, no one wants to waste an executive's time.

Those who plan retreats know that the setting plays an essential role in their success. Here in Wisconsin, there are distinctive venues in every part of the state that can help get the job done.

# Morthern Wisconsin Red Crown Lodge, Woodruff redcrownlodge.com

Nearly a century ago, the CEO of Standard Oil thought his executives would be happier and more productive if they could get away from it all. So they escaped to the Red Crown Lodge on the shores of Trout Lake in Wisconsin's North Woods to play and learn. Thus, according to the lodge's lore, the corporate retreat was born.

Now other companies can enjoy what Standard Oil execs experienced all those decades ago. Red Crown Lodge still allows just one retreat at a time on its property, and those guests get the sole attention of the very attentive staff, says Sheryl Tharman, resident manager.

Facilities: The property has 50 spacious

rooms with private baths and four lodges, each with fieldstone fireplaces and panoramic views of Trout Lake and the nearby islands. The rooms do not have TVs, adding to the rustic and relaxing ambience, but Wi-Fi is available through the property.

Meeting spaces range from a board room for groups of up to 25 to a lecture hall that seats 85. Break-out areas are scattered around the property.

Meals are made from scratch and served in the Tamarack log lodge that dates to the early 1900s. North Woods cuisine features pan-friend walleye, encrusted beef tenderloin and ripple berry pie, served family style.

Activities: Recreational and team-building activities include kayaking, paddleboarding, sand volleyball, a putting green, guided canoe trips, guided fishing excursions, pontoon cruises and a links-style golf course adjacent to the resort.

What sets it apart: "We pride ourselves on hospitality centered on one group at a time. Every retreat is unique. It starts when you are greeted by Maddie, our friendly black Lab, and continues as you make the most of your time together in our stunning setting," says Tharman.

Eastern Wisconsin InitiativeOne Retreat Center,

Washington Island initiative-one.com

At the tip of Wisconsin's Door Peninsula is Washington Island, accessible only via ferry

or private boat. It's Wisconsin's eastern-most location, surrounded by the sometimes calming, sometimes churning waters of Lake Michigan.

"We say we are located above the tension line," says Tracy Johnson, chief operating officer and co-owner of InitiativeOne, a leadership institute based in Green Bay, Wisconsin, that offers executive retreats for up to 16 participants at its Washington Island lodge.

"The travel to the island itself helps reset the mind and the mood," she says. "Those who participate leave the office behind and are ready to embark on real progress."

InitiativeOne conducts the training and facilitates the meetings.

Facilities: The 5,600-square-foot lodge accommodates 16 comfortably. It has five bedrooms and four bathrooms, one of which is a bunk room that sleeps 10 people in 10 beds.

Multiple meeting spaces are geared toward large groups or smaller break-out spaces, including a retreat room, a great room with a double-sided fireplace, outdoor decks, a screened porch with rockers and numerous nooks and seating areas for one-on-one conversation.

Meals are prepared on-site, usually by chefs, although guests can do the cooking themselves as a team-building exercise.

Activities: Sit, swim or sunbathe off the pier or go paddleboarding or kayaking. The scenic road that leads to the lodge is perfect for running or biking. The property also has walking



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paths, sitting areas and perennial gardens.

What sets it apart: "Because of our tranquil island setting and the expertise of our team members, the experience at our lodge is customized and special," Johnson says. "We have 20-plus years of experience working with leaders and executives and can address major challenges that might be holding a team or organization back."

# Pentral []])isconsin

# The Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake www.osthoff.com

Within an easy drive from Milwaukee, Madison, the Fox Cities, Green Bay, Beloit or Kenosha, the Osthoff is a AAA Four Diamond resort with 38,000 square feet of state-of-the-art meeting space. It can accommodate groups from as small as 10 to as many as 1,500.

It also boasts 500 feet of frontage on Elkhart Lake and a charming downtown within walking distance, adding to the appeal.

"It's close to major population areas, but just far enough away that your people won't want to go home overnight but rather stay to relax and recharge," says Tracie Toth, associate director of group sales for the Osthoff.

Facilities: The majority of lodging choices are one-, two- and three-bedroom condostyle suites with king beds, jetted tubs and walk-in showers. Some have fireplaces and private balconies. There also are more than 40 king rooms.

A total of 20 meeting facilities can serve almost any size group, but Toth recommends the Crystal Lake Room for executive retreats since it is away from the hubbub and features patios and plenty of natural light.

Resort restaurants fulfill a range of tastes, from Lola's on the Lake with its seasonally fresh produce grown on-site, panoramic views and impressive wine list, to Otto's American cuisine in a casual setting, to the intimate Elk Room, with an inviting fireplace and lounge seating. The Lake Deck with its three-tier bar is open from Labor Day to Memorial Day.

Activities: Almost every lake sport imaginable is offered, including hydro-bikes, paddleboards and pedal pontoons. The Osthoff has its own cooking school, which is popular for team building. So, too, are activities at the nearby Road America race track, such as professional carting and geocaching. Osthoff guests can





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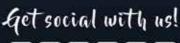






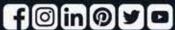


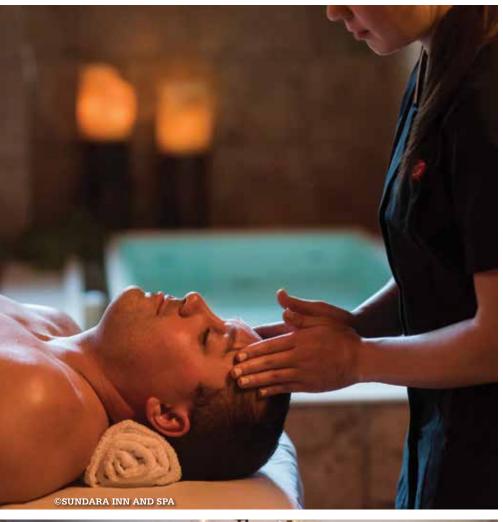














golf nearby, cruise on Elkhart Lake or enjoy a bonfire on the beach.

The Osthoff property also includes the award-winning Aspira Spa, with 20,000 square feet, 22 treatment rooms, a private yoga room, a meditation sanctuary, spa café and library.

What sets it apart: "It's a combination of so many things. The location is picturesque and the lake provides so many recreational possibilities," says Toth. "We have fourdiamond accommodations, versatile meeting spaces and a world-class spa.

"The Osthoff is just an easy choice. You can arrive, park your car and forget about it. Anything you could possibly need is right here."

## Western Wisconsin Sundara Inn and Spa, Wisconsin Dells sundaraspa.com

"Sundara" is Sanskrit for "beauty," and this nationally ranked destination spa is a tranquil, adults-only escape that emphasizes beauty—inside and out. Common areas are electronics-free, and some spaces in this oasis of calm are designated as "quiet conversation" or even "silent" areas.

It's a 180-degree turn from the raucous water-park part of the Dells, instead providing a sanctuary from stress in its 26acre pine forest.

Sundara is undergoing a \$13 million expansion that will add more than 32,000 square feet to the footprint, including more meeting and retreat facilities, according to Alyssa Mullin, guest services manager. The expansion is expected to be completed this summer.

"An executive retreat is a time away from the hustle of the everyday office and corporate world," she says. "Here it also can focus on the executives' well-being and offer a more relaxed environment for free-flowing ideas and agendas."

Facilities: Lodging includes 26 suites and two villas, with king feather beds, gas fireplaces and spa baths.

Currently meetings can be held in a board room or the Sundara Villa. The expansion adds several new meeting areas, including a 1,750-square-foot space for up to 40 participants, as well as smaller locations such as a wine boardroom and Woodland Reflection room





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The Nava (Sanskrit for "fresh") restaurant is expected to open in May and will offer seasonal menu choices with locally sourced ingredients whenever possible.

Activities: When the expansion is complete, Sundara will offer yoga, meditation, hiking, an infinity-edge pool, saline pool, purifying bath ritual, fitness studio, hammock retreat and meditation trail. River cruises on the nearby Wisconsin River and team cooking in the demonstration kitchen on site also will be offered.

What sets it apart: "Sundara focuses on overall wellness, encouraging relaxation and reconnection, which is a welcomed and needed experience for overworked and overstressed executives today," says Mullin.

### Southern $O(\Lambda)$ isconsin The Geneva Inn, Lake Geneva genevainn.com

Midway between Milwaukee and Chicago and just north of the state line is Lake Geneva, a resort community that exists because of Geneva Lake. The area is dotted with mansions built by industrialists, perhaps

best viewed along the 20-mile-plus walking path that circles the 7.5-mile-long lake. At the north end of the path is the Geneva Inn, with its stunning views of the water.

Facilities: The boutique-style inn has a total 37 rooms, including 17 suites and king rooms with lake views.

Meeting spaces with built-in audio visual hookups include the Port Room, which accommodates as many as 60 participants, and the Starboard Room, which holds as many as 50. The light-filled Clary Room, which overlooks the lake, is a more intimate space for a maximum of 20 people. In warm weather, the lakeside patio is suitable for cocktails and appetizers.

The award-winning restaurant offers a full menu, classic decor and memorable views of the lake. From May until October guests also may dine on the patio.

Activities: The Geneva Inn's private piers serve as the launch point for kayaking and boating. The staff can arrange for midday, dinner or sunset cruises on the lake, starting from the piers. The entrance to Bigfoot State Park, with swimming, kayaking, canoeing

and hiking, is just a few steps from the inn. In addition, arrangements can be made for ziplining, cooking classes and golf. Downtown shopping also is a popular draw, as are nearby spas.

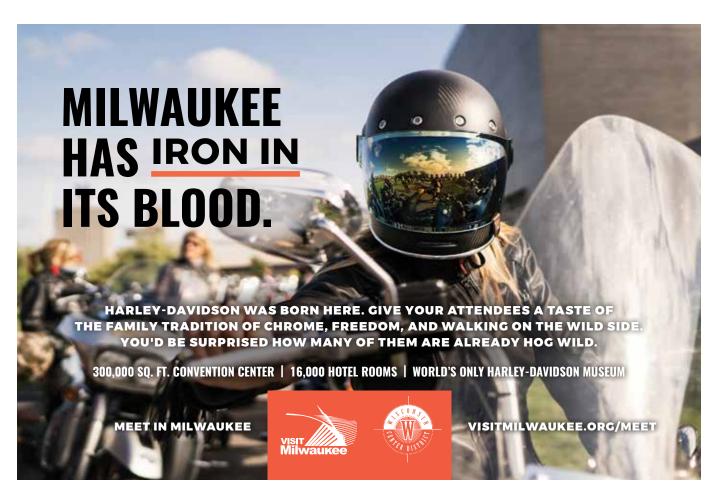
What sets it apart: "I like to talk with people planning the event and get background information about the group so that I can convey their needs to our staff and plan for their arrival," says Daneen Soliday, director of sales for the Geneva Inn. "We are attentive and have high expectations so that we can make the experience stand apart. We recognize that the executives are here to get work done, of course, but also to relax and have a good time. We help make that happen." WM

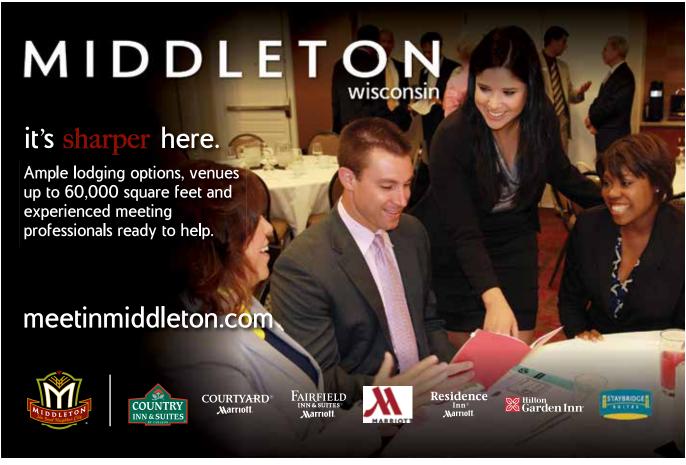


Nancy A. Herrick is the former Travel Editor for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel who is now a freelance writer and editor in Milwaukee.









## SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION









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### YOUR GUIDE TO GREAT MEETING AND EVENT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE BADGER STATE

Wisconsin has the best of all worlds, from the cosmopolitan atmosphere of its big cities to the welcoming charms of its small towns. Whether you're in search of a site to host a large-scale convention or a smaller, more intimate team building meeting, Wisconsin offers a variety of affordable and conveniently located facilities to suit your organization's needs. Add to that a wealth of convention and visitor bureaus staffed with professionals eager to share the best of their communities with your group, and there's no question that Wisconsin is the ideal place for your next meeting or convention

As a meeting planner, you know that every detail counts. Wisconsin's CVBs understand this and make every effort to ensure that none are overlooked. They aim to be your resource throughout the planning process, from assisting with RFPs, setting up walk-throughs, recommending local vendors and planning group outings, to providing the kind of number crunching that guarantees you get the deals to keep you within budget while still ensuring that your event will be memorable.

In this issue we focus on the great meeting and convention destinations of Manitowoc, Oshkosh and Racine. The community profiles include an overview of what makes their locations, facilities. accommodations and services unique. Some area activities and entertainment options are also highlighted to give you a sense of the offerings that can make the after-meeting hours as productive and enjoyable as the actual work sessions. The profiles list some of the specifics — number of hotel rooms, largest meeting facility, nearest airport, phone numbers, websites and more — that give you an idea of whether or not these communities are the right fit for your group and, if so, includes the contact information to get you started planning your event.

When you begin searching for a site for your next meeting or convention, look no further than Wisconsin, where your options are endless and your event's success is every CVB's top priority.

## **DESTINATION SHOWCASE** MANITOWOC

eet on the coast, just a snot construction of Milwaukee or south of Green Bay on I-43. The eet on the coast, just a short drive either north Manitowoc Area Visitor & Convention Bureau offers a full line of convention services including welcome bags, name badges, registration help, entertainment and tour assistance and more.

Only in Manitowoc can your meeting delegates go below deck on a WWII Submarine at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, take a selfie with Bernice the Cow at Cedar Crest Ice Cream, see where a piece of the Sputnik crashed outside of the Rahr West Art Museum, and welcome a calf into the world at the Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center (opening Summer 2018).



## QUICK\_INFO

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Contact: Megan Bruckschen Phone: 920-686-3077

Address: 4221 Calumet Avenue, Manitowoc, WI 54220

E-mail: mbruckschen@manitowoc.info

Website: www.manitowoc.info

#### **COMMUNITY INFORMATION:**

Population: 80,000

Number of hotel rooms: 1,000

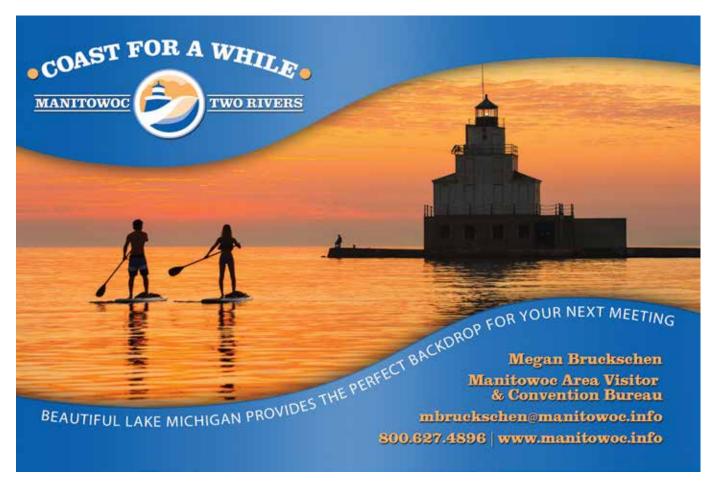
Largest room block: 200

Largest meeting facility: 20,000 sq. feet Largest exhibit facility: 36,000 sq. feet

Airport: Austin Straubel International, Green Bay

#### **DISTANCE FROM:**

Madison: 139 miles Milwaukee: 81 miles Green Bay: 42 miles Stevens Point: 110 miles



## **DESTINATION SHOWCASE** OSHKOSH CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

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#### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Contact: Cathy Cluff, Director of Sales

Phone: 920-303-9200

Address: 100 North Main Street, Suite #112, Oshkosh, WI 54901

cathy@visitoshkosh.com E-mail:

Website: visitoshkosh.com/event-planners/

#### **COMMUNITY INFORMATION:**

Population: 67,000

Number of hotel rooms: 1,000

Largest meeting facility: 24,000 sq. ft. Largest exhibit facility: 40,000 sq. ft.

Airport: Appleton International Airport (20 miles)

#### **DISTANCE FROM:**

Madison: 86 miles Milwaukee: 87 miles Chicago: 176 miles Minneapolis: 274 miles



## **DESTINATION SHOWCASE** REAL RACINE

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#### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Contact: Eileen Arnold Phone: 262-884-6407

Address: 14015 Washington Ave., Sturtevant, WI 53177 E-mail: eileen@realracine.com Web site: www.aboutracine.com

#### COMMUNITY INFORMATION:

Population: 130,000

Number of hotel rooms: 1,300 Largest room block: 100

Largest meeting facility: 10,000 sq. ft. Largest exhibit facility: 17,000 sq. ft.

Airport: General Mitchell International, Milwaukee

#### **DISTANCE FROM:**

Madison: 100 miles Milwaukee: 25 miles Minneapolis: 356 miles Chicago: 68 miles



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# All al By Betty W. Stark

Tips and trends for great corporate golf outings and fundraising events



Golf's impact on the art of doing business has always been substantial, lending a little sport to the idea of working it out on the green.

"Golf is still an honorable sport, where you can learn a lot about a client or a colleague by spending time on the course," says Dave Hallenbeck, director of golf at the Grand Geneva Resort in Lake Geneva.

Playing a few rounds or even adding a full-blown tournament to the business conference mix can help business groups offset the intensity of meetings with successes—and fun—on the course. Actually, it's par for the course, part of a growing trend to also include entertainment and fundraising components to the corporate docket.

Roger Caldwell knows about those trends. Owner of Great Golf Events near Kansas City, Missouri, and a golf tournament consultant, Caldwell has been in business for 20 years.

"In today's world, it's 80 percent charity-focused play, 20 percent pure corporate golf outing. The recipient of the fundraising is typically [an organization or nonprofit] that the corporation already supports, or it's the president's favorite cause. That makes it easier to get hole sponsorships. The key is picking a good cause.

"And on a practical note, the corporation doesn't have to invest as much in the event when fundraising is part of the mix because sponsorships pay. It's a win-win."

Caldwell's company offers a single vendor solution to planning a golf outing, from establishing a registration database to website development and online registration, logo design, social feed, check-in software that sets up payment method and eliminates the need to "take out your wallet to buy a beer during play." Live and silent auctions, hole-in-one insurance, event video entertainment, budgets and financials, enhanced fundraising—all services and more are available.

Caldwell also schedules on-course talent to interact with golfers. Entertainment, Caldwell emphasizes, is the most important trend because it serves two purposes: It adds another dimension to the typical scramble, best ball or alternate shot format by giving golfers the opportunity to wager against shots, and adds another opportunity to raise money for a featured charity.

And it's worth thinking big about your talent, to go big with your fundraising.

"You want to add a golf professional to the mix? Tiger Woods is a Beat the Pro possibility, along with other notables," says Caldwell. Or, he suggests, bring in trick-shot talent. "That adds fun, and opportunity to boost fundraising."

Caldwell himself can play the trick-shot entertainer role, but says the best at that particular game is former Long Ball Champion golfer Dan Boever, also known as "The Beav." Caldwell calls him the "best of the best."

"He's a three-ring circus of fun," says Caldwell. "Boever's improbable trick shots offer an on-course diversion and encourage players to wager either for or against the probability that he'll make the shot."

Caldwell offers another important tip: Be strategic—and knowledgeable—in your event planning. "Don't create a tournament committee populated by nongolfers. They must understand the game. If you're organizing a charity golf event, don't nickel-anddime players on every hole. Plan one big on-course event like a trick shot expert, a Beat the Pro event, and challenge players to increase their bets. It helps the cause and it adds to the fun."







Geneva National Resort and Club offers 54 holes of golf on three courses designed by Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and Lee Trevino. It was voted by readers of Wisconsin Meetings as "Best Golf Resort 2018" and touted by Golf Digest Magazine as a "Best Course to Play." Head Pro Member Bryan Brotchie and his team coordinate many golf events at this award-winner, including some that take over all three courses and many others for its own members.

One very successful member-proposed annual fundraiser Brotchie and Geneva National hosts is for the Special Operations Warrior Foundation (SOWF), an event he salutes for its successful and creative event format.

As an organization, the SOWF ensures financial and mentoring assistance including two- and four-year degrees for the children of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps Special Operations service members who gave their lives in the line of duty.

What spurred Geneva National members' interest in the organization? It's deeply connected to some members' lives; some have children currently serving in Special Operations. Says Brotchie, "They've planned a golf tournament every year since 2015. A Special Ops dad—his son's a Green Beret—has been on our board for many years and he and family are actively involved in the planning.

"For three years, they raised SOWF funds through a letter-writing campaign. Then they decided to hold the tournament and it has been increasingly successful every year."

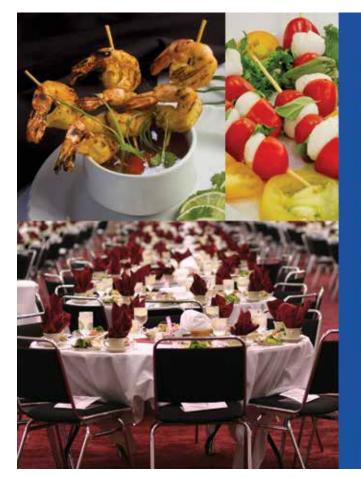
Brotchie points to the many aspects that contribute to the event's success.

The SOWF tournament format is not traditional. "They take a different approach to how the tournament operates as well as what goes on after play ends," says Brotchie.

"They don't do a shotgun start—it slows down play. They set actual tee-times between 8 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. It allows more players to participate. Not all players will be available for an early morning start, and some prefer to play in the afternoon. Typically they have 120 to 130 golfers for the event. The personal tee times allow all to play at a time that works for them," Brotchie says.

"The concept works at Geneva National because members and their friends—it's





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### Planning Resources

In addition to resources available from tournament consultants like Roger Caldwell's Great Golf Events and from onsite staff at many golf courses, check out popular golf publications like the Golf Digest Planner and search the PGA website for how-to tips that will help bring organization and a boost of originality to the process of planning your outing.

a great time to bring out guests, by the way—are generally local. This concept might not work as well at a destination resort where everyone is staying at a hotel. In that case they'd likely all want to start at one time. As a corporate event, individual tee-times could work, though it's not traditional," Brotchie says.

Fundraising infuses the entire event. "For the SOWF event, fundraising goes on all day—followed by dinner at night. The group incorporates a slight amount of entertainment, though not on the golf course, and it's specific to the goals of the sponsoring organization."

The event continues on into the evening with touches that hold special meaning for the organization and attendees. "After play has ended, they'll bring in someone to sing a few patriot songs like 'God Bless America.' They'll also invite speakers to tell the group about their personal experiences with the foundation," says Brotchie.

"It's far more effective than a video," he explains. "Beneficiaries of support from SOWF share their personal stories—how they became involved with the foundation, how they were mentored during difficult times, how they attended college prep sessions and earned degrees.

"They talk about how [they] were awarded scholarships and had their college fees paid for-grants, not loans. It's very effective and moving. And as a fundraiser, it's more successful every year.

Zooming out from the specifics of this event to talk about general golf event planning, Brotchie says that, in terms of amping up action with add-ons during golf outings and tournaments, they all

have value, but, he cautions, they also slow down play.

"Sponsored tents on the course are a great way to promote area businesses, and the typical beverage carts—four on the course per outing—are popular, too. But if you figure 15 minutes per cart, that's an additional hour. That has to be factored into overall planning," he says.

Brotchie also offers sage advice on important initial steps to any sponsored fundraiser: Selecting the right charitable organization for your company or members to support. Be sure your company is aligned with its mission or a cause that resonates, much like the Special Operations Warrior Foundation did for Geneval National membership, which features members with children currently serving in Special Operations. Also check out the charitable organization's overall fundraising performance, especially the percentage it spends on the cause, versus administration or other things; Charity Navigator, a searchable online database of evaluated charities, can help you uncover that information.

Once you've done the legwork to ensure alignments, build an informed planning committee, plan creative and powerful fundraising opportunities and craft memorable fun-maybe even annuallyyour event's sure to be an ace. WM



Betty W. Stark is a freelance writer based in central Wisconsin.



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