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FALL 2019

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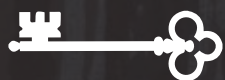
DESTINATION: LAKE GENEVA

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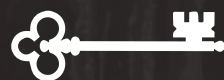
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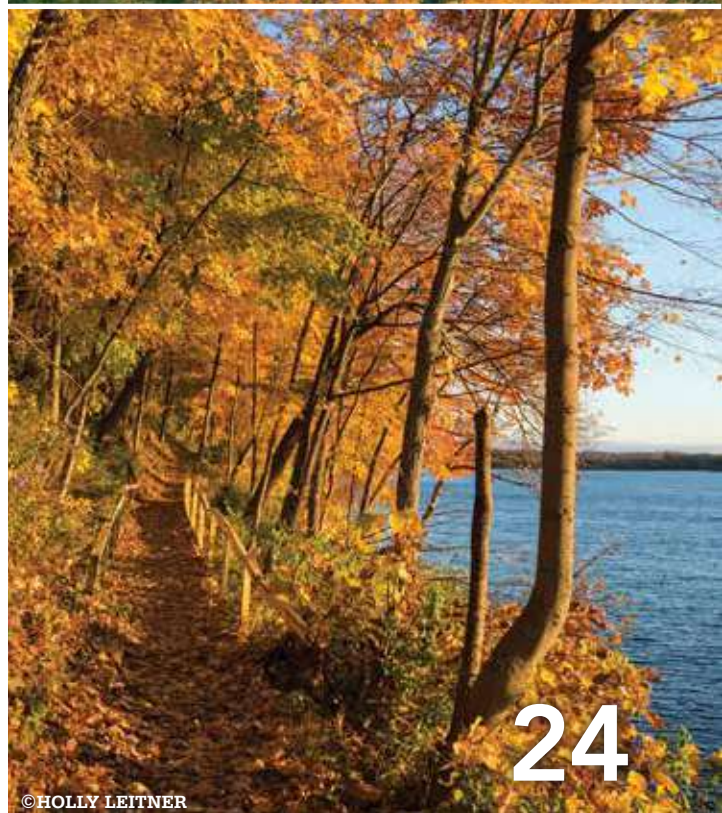
48 NINE CORPORATE GIFTS CLIENTS WILL LOVE

BE ORIGINAL AND USEFUL IN YOUR GIFT GIVING THIS YEAR WITH THESE WISCONSIN-MADE GIFTS.

By Ronnie Wendt



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EDITOR'S LETTER

Lake Geneva is one of my favorite weekend getaways. We stay at local bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) for their hospitality and charm. We shop the downtown for its unique and eclectic offerings. The cuisine pleases our foodie palates. And we never miss a walk on the Geneva Lake Shore Path. Besides being stunning, it's just fun to see the old mansions, is it not?

Our destination piece this issue examines all that Lake Geneva offers meetings and conventions of all sizes. The storied vacation retreat has plenty of meeting and lodging opportunities for a town of modest size. There are 20 hotels, resorts and mansions tucked into the picturesque destination, offering 2,300 guest rooms. The area is also home to 10 golf courses, 10 spas, one ski hill and three lakes: Geneva Lake, Delavan Lake and Como Lake.

A topic that comes up again and again is making meetings more experiential. What better way to do this than to host your event at a winery? A winery provides a unique and panoramic setting. When paired with a tour, wine tasting and hors d'oeuvres, these destinations offer an experience guests will talk about long after your event ends. "Events to Savor" shares how hosting at a winery helps planners provide events that are unique, bold and full of flavor.

As our world becomes more digital, attendees are seeking more ways to virtually connect. Livestreaming meeting presentations can be an inexpensive way to expand your reach. Learn how to make livestreaming a part of your meeting repertoire in "The ABCs of Livestreaming."

Get more details on how Paul Upchurch has impacted Milwaukee during his tenure at VISIT Milwaukee and his role in bringing the Democratic National Convention to the Brew City. Nancy Herrick produced a heartwarming and insightful profile on the leader of Milwaukee's convention and visitors bureau, who steps down at the end of the year.

The holidays will soon be upon us. Check out "Nine Corporate Gifts Clients Will Love" for some non-traditional, Wisconsin-made gift ideas that your clients will treasure forever. I know a few of them will be under our Christmas tree this year.

Enjoy the read!

Ronnie Wendt
Editor
editor@wisconsinmeetings.com

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IN THE NEWS

DRURY PLAZA

\$1.5 MILLION AVAILABLE FOR TOURISM MARKETING

The Wisconsin State Legislature's finance committee agreed to spend an additional \$1.5 million on tourism marketing as the Department of Tourism hopes to expand efforts to three new markets. Democratic Gov. Tony Evers' 2019-21 state budget would have given the Department of Tourism an additional \$5 million for marketing. However, the finance committee reduced that to \$1.5 million and delayed releasing the money because the department lacked a spending plan, although it eventually voted 12-4 to release the money. The motion requires tourism officials to report to the committee by Sept. 1, 2020, on the size of the audience reached, department website clicks and cities targeted.

SENTRY INSURANCE PLANS NEW HOTEL

Sentry Insurance plans to build a 60- to 70-room boutique hotel at SentryWorld, its highly acclaimed golf course that sits across the street from the mutual insurer's headquarters in Stevens Point. Construction will begin next spring and the hotel is scheduled to open in the spring of 2021. The hotel will be built just off the championship course's 18th fairway. Sentry will pay for the entire project.

DRURY PLAZA TAKING RESERVATIONS

The 227-room Drury Plaza Hotel, housed in Milwaukee's old First Financial Centre, began taking reservations in September. The hotel chain spent over two years revamping the underutilized office building. The hotel has a pool and fitness center, a lounge and limited service restaurant, and meeting rooms ranging in size from 503 to 3,582 square feet. The hotel marks the first Wisconsin site for the Missouri-based chain.

VENUES WANTED FOR MILWAUKEE 2020 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the 2020 Democratic National Convention host committee is seeking a variety of venues — from traditional, like restaurants and nightclubs, to the more unorthodox, like spas, art galleries and boats — to be used for entertaining. The entertainment is not limited to only Milwaukee, but applies also to the greater southeastern Wisconsin region from July 9 through 16.

The committee established an online portal to get an idea of spaces suitable and prepared to host one of approximately 2,000 events accompanying the convention. Many organizations collaborate with the host committee to source these event locations. Interested venues and event spaces can access the online portal at www.milwaukee2020.com/venues.



SAINT KATE APPOINTS GENERAL MANAGER

Following its grand debut, Saint Kate – The Arts Hotel named arts and luxury hotel veteran David Bodette as general manager. Bodette, a sculptor in his free time, will oversee the daily operations of the 219-room hotel and arts experience. Prior to coming to Milwaukee, Bodette managed Ritz-Carlton properties, The Queen Mary Hotel in Long Beach, California, and The Langham hotel in Boston, Massachusetts, and helped open the ART hotel, a luxury boutique arts-centric property, in Denver.

CULVER'S NAMED STATE'S TOP FAST FOOD RESTAURANT

In some states, fast food's claim to fame might be the In-N-Out burger. In others, it might be a Chick-fil-A chicken sandwich. In Wisconsin, it is clearly the ButterBurger. Food & Wine named Culver's the best fast food option in the state. This is a fitting honor for Craig and Lea Culver who, along with Craig's parents, George and Ruth, opened the very first Culver's in Sauk City, Wisconsin.

CAMBRIA HOTEL OPENS IN DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE

Cambria Hotel debuts in Milwaukee, marking the brand's first location in the city and the third in the Badger State. The four-story, 132-room Cambria Hotel Milwaukee Downtown provides easy access to the region's top business and entertainment destinations, including the Wisconsin Center, the Harley-Davidson Museum and Fiserv Forum. The hotel offers a full-service gourmet bar and restaurant, multi-function meeting space for approximately 100 people, an indoor pool and a fitness center.

{MADISON, WI}

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WISCONSIN CENTER GETS EXPANSION NOD

The Board of the Wisconsin Center District (WCD) voted unanimously in August to expand the Wisconsin Center. The resolution raises the cap on agreements, which the president and CEO and board chairman are authorized to enter into, to \$1 million. A timeline for the project was also introduced. With the board approval of the resolution, the WCD will now focus on securing consultants and a third-party owner's representative to manage and facilitate the project.

WISCONSIN DELEGATES CHOOSE AMBASSADOR HOTEL

Wisconsin delegates have drawn the Ambassador Hotel as their headquarters during the 2020 Democratic National Convention, July 13 through 16. The restored 1928 art deco-style hotel near the Marquette University campus is just 1.8 miles from Fiserv Forum, the convention's main venue.

USA TRIATHLON TO RETURN TO MILWAUKEE

USA Triathlon has selected Milwaukee for the 2020 and 2021 Toyota USA Triathlon Age Group National Championships. The 2020 event is set for Aug. 7 through 9. The Age Group National Championships typically attract more than 5,000 athletes and 10,000 spectators. Milwaukee hosted the event from 2013 to 2015. The city is one of only two in history to have hosted for three consecutive years. The events are expected to bring nearly 15,000 visitors to the area and will have an estimated economic impact of more than \$6 million.

LEDGECREST RESERVE OPEN FOR EVENTS

Construction of the \$2 million LedgeCrest Reserve near Green Bay wrapped up in mid-August and the facility is now taking reservations. The special events facility can accommodate 400 people for dinner under vaulted ceilings. Other features include an outdoor courtyard, a patio, a finishing kitchen and other spaces. Facility rentals are available to help planners with furniture, staffing and catering.



VISIT MILWAUKEE WELCOMES CONVENTION SERVICES MANAGER

Andrew Knuth joins VISIT Milwaukee as a convention services manager. Knuth will be a part of the team coordinating varied aspects of the meeting experience, such as promoting Milwaukee to attendees, leading site visits for prospective and definite business, and providing trained volunteers for events. Knuth comes to VISIT Milwaukee from Kapco, but spent the majority of his career working for the BMO Harris Bradley Center.

MIDWEST EXPRESS RETURNS

Midwest Express is relaunching its Elite Airways aircraft at General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee. Its initial flight destinations are Cincinnati, Ohio; Omaha, Nebraska; and Grand Rapids, Michigan. The company is also bringing back the legendary Midwest Express chocolate chip cookie. Midwest Express is currently

establishing its flight booking system and filling key staff positions. "Providing nonstop flights to key business destinations fills an important niche and we couldn't be happier to welcome Midwest Express back home," said Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele. "We are all excited that travelers can now access these important Midwestern markets nonstop from our hometown airport of MKE."

GROUP EYES ALLIANT ENERGY CENTER MAKEOVER PLANS

Strang Inc., the architecture and engineering firm that designed the plans for the original Alliant Energy Center in Madison, recently presented its Phase 1 pre-design plans to the Alliant Energy Center redevelopment committee, according to WMTV. The center is currently in the planning phase to expand its facilities.

The company also collected data about the desires and demands of various stakeholders, such as clients, event planners, staff, suppliers and more. Some recommendations include more of an open-concept floor plan, cohesion, green space and functionality. wmtv.com

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VENUE SPOTLIGHT

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KALAHARI RESORTS & CONVENTIONS
EXPANDS ITS CONVENTION CENTER,
MAKING IT THE LARGEST IN THE STATE.

BY RONNIE WENDT

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions opened its \$35 million expansion in Wisconsin Dells with a big splash. It celebrated the return of the THAT Conference in the new space, from Aug. 5 to 8. About 1,700 attendees converged on the new building for the family-friendly tech event where more than 200 workshops and sessions took place.

"It is conferences like the THAT Conference that are among the reasons the new center was built," says Tifani Jones, corporate director of sales for Kalahari Resorts & Conventions. "Groups like the THAT Conference were going to outgrow us. We also needed to expand to attract new business."

Currently, the center hosts approximately 1,900 events annually, but Jones anticipates the number will escalate as word about the new space gets out. She reports, "There is a lot of interest in our expansion and we are doing a lot of tours."

The center had its first big win when it landed the Wisconsin EMS Association's annual EMS Conference & Expo, which takes place Nov. 13 to 17. The conference draws 2,000 attendees and over 150 exhibitors. It moved to the Kalahari after 33 years at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee.

"They could not have come here without the addition," Jones says. "To have a conference of that size come in so quickly was reassuring."

The addition, begun in 2017, more than doubled the size of the existing convention center from 100,000 square feet to 212,000 square feet, making it the largest in the state. In comparison, the second largest, the Wisconsin Center, offers 265,565 square feet of meeting space.

The project created 10 new meeting rooms, a new ballroom and new exhibit space. It also fashioned lockable registration booths and client office spaces off the ballroom.

The new meeting rooms boost the center's total number of meeting spaces to 45. There are three ballrooms now, with the new one being the largest at 52,000 square feet. This ballroom seats 4,200 people comfortably at round tables, while a theater setup accommodates up to 5,600 attendees. It also can break down into as many as 10 separate rooms.

"The new space provides a lot of flexibility," says Jones. "It used to be if we had a large-scale conference going on, there was no space for mid-size meetings. Now we can have more than one event going on at the same time and we expect that to happen often."

Interior decorator Natasha Lucke reports the Kalahari sought to fashion a space where creativity could flow. The lounge areas on either side of the main entrance and the speaker lounges fit the bill. These are multi-functional zones that can be used for coffee breaks, lunches and receptions.

"We have mini coffee shops, plenty of power and multiple types of seating arrangements," she says.


Lucke notes the facility's spacious outdoor patios also work well for breakouts and cocktail receptions.

Each carpeted space offers modern audiovisual and communications technology, including complimentary wireless internet, state-of-the-art sound and varied lighting.

Jones adds the company designed the expansion with the family in mind. There are two new and spacious family restrooms, adding 58 bathrooms stalls and accommodations for nursing mothers. Being family-friendly is important, she adds.

"Clients report they see a 20% increase in attendance when their events and the venue are family-friendly. Our resort offers something for the entire family. There is Tom Foolerys Adventure Park, the water parks, a variety of dining areas and the spas," she says.

Crews also built another parking lot adjacent to the expansion, adding 2,357 complimentary parking stalls.

A core value of the family-owned resort and convention center is being genuine. "We strive to be genuine in the services we provide," Jones says. "We will increase staffing as our volume grows, especially in the culinary and banquet areas, to maintain that value as we grow." 



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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE ART OF THE WEEKEND

TAKE A BREAK AND MAKE IT COUNT.

BY MOLLY ROSE TEUKE

"Without the weekend, where would the week be?"
— Anthony T. Hincks

Ah ... the weekend at last! It was a chaotic week and you're thrilled to anticipate two glorious days with absolutely nothing on the agenda. What better way to rejuvenate and get ready for Monday's rat race?

If this is your view of weekends, you're not alone. A great many of us feel our weekends should be unplanned time for spontaneous recreation, perhaps with a little household duty scheduled in, but only as needed.

Nonsense, says time management expert Laura Vanderkam, author of *"What the Most Successful People Do on the Weekend: A Short Guide to Making the Most of Your Days Off."* Vanderkam is not a fan of the "do nothing" weekend and quotes writer Anatole France for support: "Man is so made that he can only find relaxation from one kind of labor by taking up another."

GO WITH THE FLOW

If only I had money to go shopping and have dinner and cocktails out, I could have a perfect weekend. Perhaps. But acclaimed psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi would probably disagree. He spent much of his life trying to understand the roots of

happiness and what contributes to a life (or weekend) worth living. A key conclusion from his research is that an increase in material resources does not bring about a commensurate increase in happiness. Our happiness increases, he says, when we're in what he calls "flow."

He developed the now popular concept of flow, a state we sometimes enter when we're highly focused. Once you achieve flow, he says, "... time disappears, you forget yourself, you feel part of something larger. And once the conditions are present, what you are doing becomes worth doing for its own sake." This, Csikszentmihalyi says, is where we humans are happiest. Not doing nothing — and certainly not vegging out in front of the TV — but having the experience of doing something for which we have the right degree of skill and yet still experience a sense of challenge. "Unfortunately, a lot of people's experience is in apathy," he says. "The largest single contributor to that experience is watching television."

Csikszentmihalyi looked at flow as part of a larger picture of our everyday lives. Let's step back into the weekend. Vanderkam has seen hundreds of time logs and interviewed countless successful people about what they do on their time off. "Successful people know that weekends deserve even more care than you bestow on your working days," she says.

AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT

Doing absolutely nothing might sound good. But the reality is that, unless we plan our weekends, we expend needless emotional and mental energy trying to make our time off feel meaningful, and trying, unsuccessfully, to experience flow. That means our weekends not only don't give us much satisfaction, but they also undermine our ability to hit Monday rejuvenated and refreshed. Most successful people, Vanderkam says, greet the weekend having thought of what they intend to do with their time off and what outcome they desire.

Yet many of us don't plan, and soon the weekend sags into hours of channel surfing, social media browsing, and countless other mundane and not very satisfying activities. Or worse, the weekend disintegrates into frustrating, anxiety-producing snits when you can't carry out plans you thought up at the last minute. Think what would happen if you spent 36 hours of your work week unplanned. You'd get the same kind of results from unplanned weekends — dismal.

HAVE A PLAN

Vanderkam isn't suggesting you make work of your weekends, though she's not opposed to scheduling

projects. She just thinks you can benefit from planning — making sure you have the proper tools and supplies on hand. A Saturday repainting your bedroom could bring you a sense of flow, but not when you spend the entire morning shopping for paint and don't have time to finish the job. Or say you like to cook and entertain. It's disappointing when you call on Friday afternoon and everyone you know already has plans. Invite guests early, choose your recipes ahead of time and shop for essential ingredients before the weekend.

The same principle applies even if you're a die-hard spontaneity junkie. At least make a list of things you think you might like to do — Vanderkam suggests making a bucket list of activities close to home — and take action to set yourself up for success. If your weekend preference is curling up with a good book, stop at the library or bookstore during the week to gather likely titles. If you like to hike or bike, research new trails, stop at the drugstore for insect repellent and sunscreen, and put air in your bike tires or retrieve your hiking boots from the back of the closet. If you like mingling in crowds, print out your community's calendar of events.

IT'S UP TO YOU

Vanderkam isn't suggesting you book every minute of your weekend or that every minute you book should be filled with activity. A Saturday afternoon nap can be a perfectly fine thing to plan for your weekend. It's the intention that counts. If a nap is something that makes you feel like you've done something

with your weekend, great. If you nap because you can't think of what else to do with your afternoon, that's not so satisfying. For me, spending Saturday morning on a sewing project, or Sunday afternoon baking pies or cakes is more satisfying — and feels more like flow — than finding myself at the mall because I couldn't think of anything better to do.

She also recommends we carry our weekend planning into Sunday night. Instead of edging almost imperceptibly into the workweek 12 or 15 hours before Monday morning, as many of us do, plan something fun that keeps your mind anchored in the weekend. Play cards with friends, take the kids for ice cream, FaceTime a distant sibling. Activities that become tradition are especially helpful at the end of the weekend because they make Sunday night recreation so easy.

The result of planning your time off is that you come off the flow of your weekend activities primed for the flow of a productive and satisfying workweek. You can greet Monday with an energized mind, satisfied heart and centered spirit. [WM](#)



Molly Rose Teuke has an enduring curiosity about what makes our brains tick. She offers a program at Nicolet College called Getting Your Brain on Your Side that delivers brain-based leadership training for the NeuroLeadership Institute, a global leader in the performance arena. She also hosts a weekly classical music program on WXPB-FM. You can reach her at mollyrose@mollyrosecaching.com.



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TECHNOLOGY

THE ABCS OF LIVESTREAMING

EXPAND YOUR REACH BY LIVESTREAMING YOUR MEETING OR EVENT.

BY GREG GERBER

Attending a live conference can be exceptionally rewarding thanks to the energy surrounding the event and networking that takes place.

However, not everyone can take time to attend all the conferences they want to enjoy. That's why many meeting planners are opting to livestream some, if not all, conference sessions.

"People aren't looking for an excuse not to attend a live event," says Tom Graybill, vice president of sales for Tri-Marq Communications, an event and video production company that produces corporate events throughout the United States and overseas. "Generally, they really want to attend, but a scheduling or staffing problem prevents them from going.

"Web streaming does not cannibalize attendance," he adds. "Research proves the opposite. Events being web streamed are encouraging live attendance because viewers know they aren't getting the full benefit of being there in person."

SELLING ACCESS

Natalie Hinckley, the CEO of Hinckley Productions, ventured into livestreaming 12 years ago with standard definition video. Today her firm offers brand storytelling with commercials, interviews and other corporate applications.

"Some conferences sell access to the livestream after the fact as part of a package or standalone content," she explains. "Done right, it can be a moneymaker for an organization or a break-even proposition to give something to people you want to attend next year."

To determine if livestreaming could be a moneymaking endeavor, ask if the audience would pay to watch it live. If the answer is no, companies should still record the content and sell access later when it is convenient to view, says Graybill.

"Firms can monetize snippets or individual sessions for months after the event ends," he adds.

STRONG CONNECTIONS

When recording a live meeting, the last thing planners want is unpredictability. That means they likely cannot livestream a conference using a venue's Wi-Fi connection, says Hinckley.

Livestreaming needs uninterrupted internet access to upload video data and that requires a dedicated, wired Ethernet connection.

There are two important numbers to consider when evaluating a venue's livestreaming ability. They are download speed, which measures how quickly content can be taken off the internet, and upload speed, which determines how quickly it can be pushed to the web.

Hinckley says the minimum speed for uploading a livestream is 3.5 megabits per second (Mbps). However, she often requests 5 or even 10 Mbps just to be safe.

"Pay for more bandwidth. You'll never regret having too much," says Graybill. "When a livestream connection freezes, it always seems to stop on the most unflattering image of the speaker."

Graybill reports the only time he would consider Wi-Fi is if a flight delay or other emergency prevented a major speaker from delivering a presentation live.

"We could set up a Skype connection to enable them to deliver a presentation wherever they may be," says Graybill. "It's not ideal, but it allows the event to continue."

He suggests planners set up two different internet connections: one for guests to check email and do light web surfing—no video downloads—and another account for event staff and the production company to use.

Signal security is also something to consider. Planners don't want some fun-loving students nearby hacking into a conference signal, he says.



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UPLOADING TO THE NET

Hinckley recommends using a paid platform like Brightcove or Livestream for uploading video to the internet because they often distribute the signal to multiple servers worldwide. That way, if one server develops a problem during a presentation, the signal automatically shifts to another in the blink of an eye.

Some planners opt to use free streaming services like YouTube, Facebook Live and Twitch. The problem is that it's often impossible to get tech support when a signal stops working, says Hinckley.

Free platforms also started interrupting livestreams to inject commercial messages, which could be embarrassing.

"If you're offering paid access, you need to ensure the livestream signal is handled by a paid provider," says Hinckley.

Additionally, after the fact, Facebook Live videos may be difficult to find. The site wants people viewing live to interact with chat messages and emotion icons, or emoticons, that flash across the screen.

YouTube is very sensitive to any copywritten music played before or during a presentation. If its bots find copywritten music, the video may play during a livestream, but YouTube may remove the content later, says Graybill.

"The bots listen to every video and can also flag content as being inappropriate for a variety of reasons," he explains.

PROFESSIONAL WORK

By working with a professional firm, meeting planners can be confident the right equipment is being used to capture video, encode it into a data stream and upload it to the internet with multiple redundancies to ensure a reliable connection, Hinckley says.

A professional crew can also incorporate PowerPoint into the livestream and set up chat portals so remote people can ask questions or participate in a discussion.

The cost depends upon the type of services required. It could cost \$1,000 to record a single presentation or up to \$4,000 to video all events for an entire day, says Hinckley.

With multi-day events, the cost is lower because the labor to set up and take down equipment is spread out over time, she adds.

Professional crews bring multiple cameras, set up professional lighting and sound, and upload the livestream. They can also provide digital files afterward, and even set up a portal to access video files during or after the conference, says Hinckley.

PRESENTATION

When livestreaming, planners should ensure they get a good shot and the stage is properly lit. This makes certain a speaker stands out, rather than fades into the background, says Graybill. They also want strong audio signals.

"There is a huge difference in quality to capture room audio, with everyone coughing and shifting chairs, and capturing audio from a wired microphone," he says. "It comes down to what type of image you want to portray."

While typical stage lighting may be OK for humans to discern what is going on



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“Done right, [livestreaming] can be a moneymaker for an organization or a break-even proposition to give something to people you want to attend next year.”

– Natalie Hinckley,
CEO, Hinckley
Productions

after their eyes adjust, video cameras are vastly different. Typical stage lighting appears muddy and unappealing on video, concludes Graybill.

Special care is also needed to incorporate PowerPoint slides into presentations.

“An inexperienced web streamer will just zoom out the camera to see the speaker and content on the screen,” he says. “Then screen content is too small to read and bright light from the screen puts the speaker in a shadow.”

It may take careful consideration of many different elements to achieve a successful livestream, but when done correctly, a livestream could be the ideal way to expand the reach of your meeting or event. [WM](#)



Greg Gerber is an author, speaker and the owner of Faithfire Media, reporting on faith-based topics from Phoenix. He is also the former owner of RV Daily Report.



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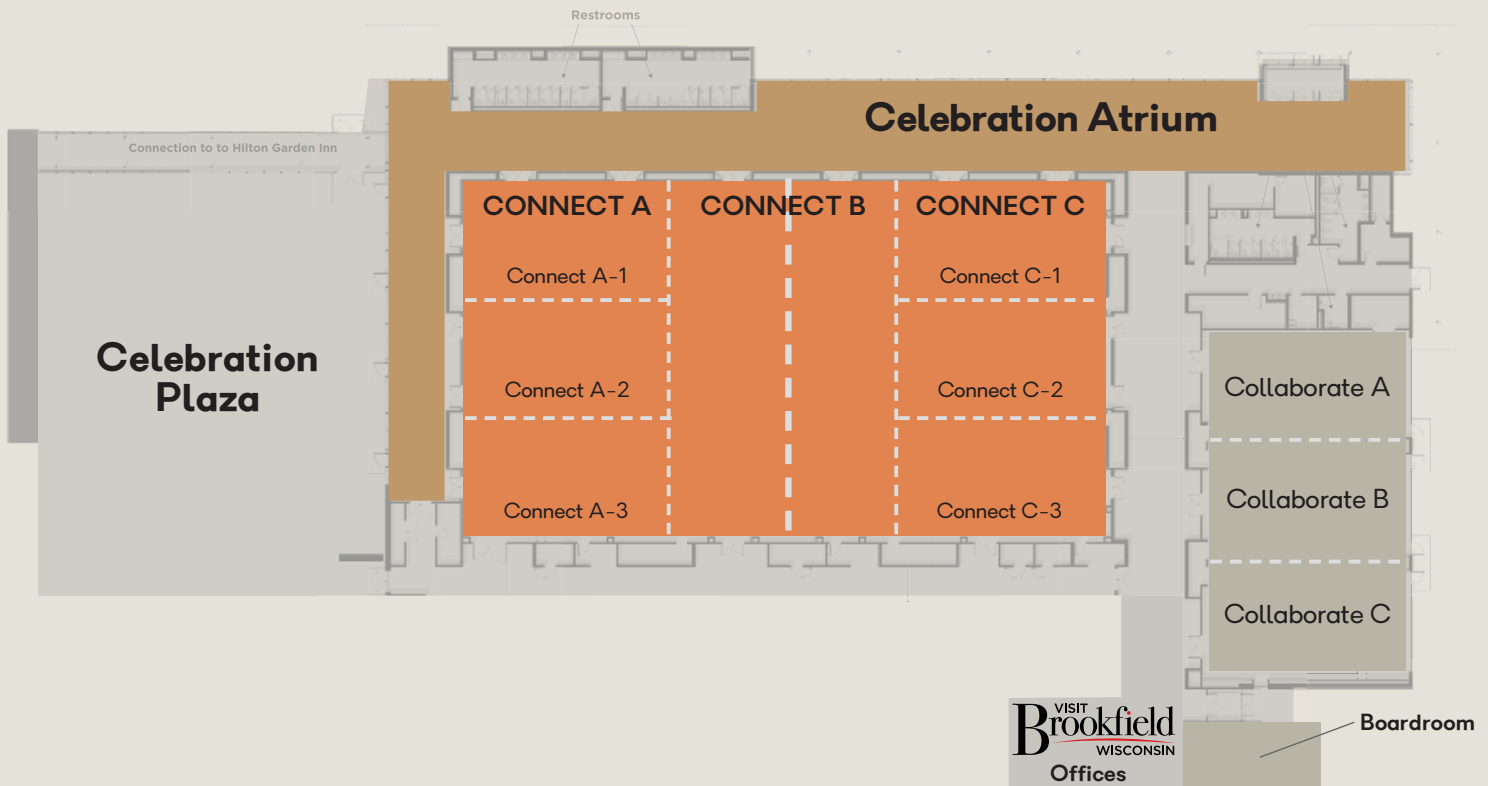


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Connect C-2	2,000
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COLLABORATE BALLROOM	6,000
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Events to Savor

FOR AN OCCASION THAT'S UNIQUE, BOLD AND FULL OF FLAVOR, SET THE SCENE AT A WISCONSIN WINERY.

By Shelby Deering



When Mark Olivieri, customer experience and key opinion leader manager at American Orthodontics, hosts upwards of 65 international visitors and wants to plan a distinctive event in the Sheboygan area, he turns to an unexpected location: The Blind Horse Restaurant & Winery in Kohler.

"The unique setting of a winery, along with having a multi-course, paired wine dinner, provides my guests with something they wouldn't expect," Olivieri shares.

©WOLLERSHEIM WINERY



©BLIND HORSE RESTAURANT & WINERY



©ELMARO VINEYARD



©COTTAGE WINERY



©WOLLERSHEIM WINERY

Amid wine barrels, hanging lights, music and beautiful table settings, Olivieri says The Blind Horse always does an excellent job with transforming a room intended for wine production into an elegant setting for an event.

Although it might seem like a far cry from the event spaces and convention halls you may be accustomed to, Olivieri explains that planning a winery event isn't all that different from traditional locales.

"There aren't many differences when compared to a normal banquet location," Olivieri says. "It's one of the things I like most about The Blind Horse. It offers a different event style, but has many of the similar aspects that you would rely on when planning an event."

When planners set an event at a winery, the reasons behind that decision can be numerous.

Cameron Delaney, co-owner and tasting room manager of Trempealeau's Elmaro Vineyard, believes that a winery event is a tranquil, one-of-a-kind experience.

Reflecting on his winery, he says, "Hosting an event at a vineyard is a fantastic way to make your event stand out. Fantastic views of the vineyard and river valley let your attendees feel

transported to a relaxing location where they can just enjoy."

As the owner of Cottage Winery & Vineyard in Menomonie, Teresa Jorgensen observes the social benefits of holding a winery event.

She says, "Many planners choose our winery because they want to have a wine social after their event. Guests enjoy the quaint atmosphere for mingling. This brings a fun and new experience to the same old business meetings."

Events manager Cindy Ballweg says that Wollersheim Winery & Distillery's events in Prairie du Sac are the whole package: "We are unique with having both a winery and distillery on the property, so it's nice when planners can incorporate enough time for guests to visit both, and sample our wine and spirits."

Sandy Leske, the marketing director at The Blind Horse Restaurant & Winery, with its rustic, stylish surroundings, says that a winery may appeal to planners because little to no additional décor is needed.

"Honestly, our space is already beautiful, so very few clients have brought in décor," she says.

Whatever your motivation, here are some things to keep in mind as you plan an unforgettable event at a winery.

Sips & Snacks

A winery event isn't complete without a selection of libations, of course. And food to go along with them.

Some wineries, such as Elmaro Vineyard, provide tasting packages. "Elmaro offers wine-tasting packages that include seven wine and light food pairings," Delaney says. "For full meals, guests are welcome to use any licensed caterer of their choosing."

Other wineries have their very own restaurant on site that can prepare a menu for an event. Wollersheim Winery, for instance, is planning to open a bistro this fall. "We'll work closely with our chef and client to offer specialty food items that will complement our wine and our client's taste buds," Ballweg says.

The Blind Horse's restaurant is geared toward those who desire a full culinary experience with a focus on food inspired by California's Napa Valley at their event. Leske says, "Sometimes the client just wants appetizers, and of course, we have plenty of those to offer. As for our wine and food pairing dinners, our chef prepares that menu a week or two prior to the event using the most in-season fruits and vegetables."

There are wineries that require planners to arrange for food. Jorgensen says, "At Cottage Winery, larger events are required to hire their own licensed caterer. Smaller events can choose to

hire a professional or bring in their own prepared food. This allows them to fit the food to their needs."

Even if you aren't a wine aficionado, you may be pleased to know that, if you plan an event at a winery, an expert can always be available with recommendations, down to how many red and white wines you should plan on for the event.

"With a wide variety of wines offered, Elmaro is happy to suggest wines to pair with any occasion," Delaney says. "For a mixed approach, we commonly suggest serving one white, one red and one sweet wine to please all palates."

Adding Ambiance

When it comes to décor, creating atmosphere at a winery event is a breeze. Since wineries already have charming aesthetics in place, many planners don't feel the need to bring in additional décor.

Jorgensen says, "Because our venue is naturally gorgeous at Cottage Winery with country vista views, planners say they don't have to plan much for décor. Centerpieces and some signage are about all I see them do. This makes the workload easier."

Many wineries assist planners with tables, chairs and other event must-haves.

"Elmaro's event team works with organizers on the ideal setup for each

"GUESTS ENJOY THE QUANT ATMOSPHERE FOR MINGLING. THIS BRINGS A FUN AND NEW EXPERIENCE TO THE SAME OLD BUSINESS MEETINGS."

– Teresa Jorgensen, owner, Cottage Winery & Vineyard

event. Our staff will set up the tables, chairs and linens for each event, and also take care of the cleanup," Delaney says.

A Flavorful Event

In addition to the food, wine and setup, there are a couple more considerations you need to wrap into a winery event.

Since attendees may be enjoying wine, transportation should be arranged. "Some groups rent shuttles so guests can enjoy wine tastings without worrying about driving," Delaney says.

You may also need to keep in mind that wineries are designed for downsized gatherings as opposed to sizeable convention spaces.

"While we have a large property at The Blind Horse, each of our spaces can only accommodate so many guests," Leske says. "We do not have a grand ballroom that can accommodate hundreds of people."

What they lack in spaciousness, wineries make up for in small, intimate gatherings that feel cozy for your guests. Jorgensen says, "It's pleasant to socialize in a quaint space. It's so nice for guests to arrive at something other than your typical event space." **WM**

Food & Wine Pairings

Wisconsin Meetings asked our wine experts to share their favorite food and wine pairings at their venues. Get ready to have your mouth water.

Cameron Delaney of Elmaro Vineyard: "Elmaro's light, crisp and refreshing La Crescent white wine is a perfect pairing with a green salad and a lemon chermoula dressing."

Teresa Jorgensen of Cottage Winery & Vineyard: "My favorite wine pairing is our Evening Blush, which has a rosé that is semi-sweet with a soft cranberry note, and our cranberry and cheddar cheese cracker basket. The cranberry flavors pair nicely and the cheese cuts the sweetness of the wine."

Sandy Leske of The Blind Horse Restaurant & Winery: "I recommend our double gold medal Vintner's Blend with our filet. It's perfect!"

Cindy Ballweg of Wollersheim Winery & Distillery: "Our charcuterie and cheese board will be a great choice for many guests to enjoy. A nice pairing would be our Dry Riesling, Dry Rosé or our estate-grown dry red Domaine du Sac."



Shelby Deering is a Madison, Wisconsin-based lifestyle writer contributing to national and regional publications such as Country Living, Good Housekeeping and Experience Wisconsin.

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— DESTINATION —

Lake Geneva

LAKE GENEVA, A STORIED
VACATION SPOT, IS ALSO A
PRIME PLACE TO HOLD A
MEETING OR CONVENTION.

By Melanie Radzicki McManus

GENEVA LAKE / ©HOLLY LEITNER

*"We know of
people who have
moved here
because of their
good experience
at a conference."*

—Stephanie Klett, president and
CEO, VISIT Lake Geneva

Small knots of tourists lazily wander around the city's picturesque downtown. Some methodically duck into the eclectic boutiques lining the streets, while others are more interested in scoring a steaming latte or frosty ice cream cone. An orderly queue of people stretches out from the *Walworth*, one of the tour boats in the Lake Geneva Cruise Line fleet, while a small group of people begin circling sapphire Geneva Lake on foot to check out the Gilded Age mansions ringing the shore.

It's just another pleasant day in Lake Geneva, a southeastern Wisconsin city with a long history as a resort town, especially for the nearby Chicago crowd. Today, folks from Wisconsin, Illinois and beyond flock here every summer, continuing the tradition. Yet, while the city of 8,000 will likely remain a storied vacation spot for years to come, it's also a prime place to hold a meeting or convention.

Facilities Abound

Thanks to the city's resort-town roots, Lake Geneva has plenty of meeting and lodging space, especially for a town of its modest size. Twenty hotels, resorts



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and mansions are tucked into the scenic area, with some 2,300 guest rooms among them. The area is also home to 10 golf courses, 10 spas, one ski hill and three lakes: Geneva Lake, Delavan Lake and Como Lake.

Susan Smolarek, group sales manager at VISIT Lake Geneva, says one of the city's biggest assets when it comes to the meetings and convention market is its unique venues. "We offer more than square-box hotel rooms," she says.

A prime example is the Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, the area's largest resort and conference facility. Brad Lyles, director

of sales, says the Grand Geneva has 746 guest rooms, including 225 condominiums at Timber Ridge Lodge & Waterpark. It also boasts more than 62,000 square feet of meeting space, including its newly renovated Forum Convention Center, which contains 13,770 pillarless square feet of space and seats up to 1,800. The facility also contains four ballrooms, boardrooms, breakout spaces, a ski chalet, an outdoor pavilion and two 18-hole golf courses.

But perhaps its biggest attraction is its setting. The Grand Geneva sits on 1,300 acres of wooded countryside, and showcases this lovely environment in many of its meeting spaces, restaurants and

lodging. The bucolic parcel of land also contains 5 miles of mountain bike trails and numerous hiking paths, among other offerings, making it easy for guests to get a nature fix.

"Guests are often impressed by the large amount of outdoor space we have," says Lyles. "And one group recently held an activity on our plane runway. There's always something new to discover."

The Ridge sits 7 miles southwest of the Grand Geneva, a few paces from the shores of Lake Como, just outside the city. Rebranded and renovated a few years ago, the former Geneva Ridge Resort is now a



©THE RIDGE

sleek, modern facility with 146 guest rooms and 10,000 square feet of flexible event space via four venues. The meeting spaces can hold up to 500, and all boast natural light and easy access to the outdoors.

"We really encourage people to get outside," says Barbara Karabas, marketing manager at The Ridge. "You're not meant to be in meeting rooms." Thus, the facility also has an outdoor bar area, putting green and fire pit.

Karabas says meeting planners like the fact that they may buy out the hotel and take over the entire property, a rare offering. "We're one of the smaller resorts in the area, but a lot of customers appreciate our small size," she says. "If you're a 40- or 50-person group, you're a big deal to us."



©THE ABBEY RESORT

Another 6 miles to the southwest in Fontana, The Abbey Resort is tucked onto 90 acres of land snuggled against the west end of Geneva Lake. The Abbey offers 334 guest rooms and 40,000 square feet of flexible indoor/outdoor meeting space, including a 10,000-square-foot ballroom and up to 14 breakouts. The resort's seven Geneva Rooms were recently stripped down to the studs, says Dan Dolan, director of sales and marketing, then redesigned and modernized with features such as LED halo lighting and magnetic dry-erase boards.

But what meeting guests especially love is the fact that, when their work is over, they can easily stroll down to enjoy the lake, head to the marina to rent a boat or start walking on the city's famous Geneva Lake Shore Path, which runs right past The Abbey in its 25-mile circuit around the lake. They also appreciate the resort's serenity.

"One of the big surprises for meeting attendees, especially during the summer, is that the west side of the lake is much more laid-back," says Dolan. "The whole Lake Geneva area isn't overrun with people during the summer."



©THE GENEVA INN

Also located on the scenic shores of Geneva Lake is The Geneva Inn. It offers panoramic lakeside views from the hotel and restaurant. The inn offers planners

a charming location and award-winning cuisine options. Its seasonal lakeside patio grants a quaint setting for an outdoor cocktail event complete with dazzling views of the lake.

The Baker House and Maxwell Mansion are great venues for smaller groups seeking the unique. The Baker House is right across from Geneva Lake, offering attendees sweeping views of the water from its English-style lakefront gardens, which can hold up to 150. Inside 75 people can be seated for corporate events.

The Italianate Maxwell Mansion hotel was built in 1856 and has the distinction of being the first mansion constructed in Lake Geneva. The luxe facility contains a ballroom, cocktail bars and even a speakeasy, plus perennial gardens with a croquet lawn and fountain. Up to 120 business guests can be accommodated here for a reception, with the ballroom seating up to 40 for dinner.

A short distance away, along 2 miles of Delavan Lake's shoreline, Lake Lawn

Resort's beautiful facility and historic grounds provide a picturesque backdrop for meetings and events.

Lake Lawn Resort offers 32,000 square feet of adaptable and flexible meeting space. Its 22 meeting rooms can accommodate groups of up to 500. Planners can host a board meeting in an executive boardroom or a corporate retreat with a golf outing at the 18-hole championship golf course.

The 271-room resort also offers boat and water sport rentals, two outdoor swimming pools, an indoor swimming pool, a 170-slip marina and a fitness center for guests to enjoy. Its Calladora Spa provides a perfect setting for peace and relaxation after a long day of meetings. Its three restaurants provide ample opportunities to dine on site.

Fun and Team Building Easy to Achieve

When a city has easy access to three recreational lakes, meeting and convention attendees have plenty of opportunities to relax and enjoy. The lakes offer boat tours and rentals, jet skiing and fishing services.

Planner's Perspective

FDM Business Development recently held its annual sales meeting in Lake Geneva. Employee Terry Bleau, who planned the event, says FDM will be returning in 2020.

Where FDM was in 2019: We used The Ridge, which had everything we might want for a meeting without being a huge complex.

Why FDM is returning: Things went well at all the locations we used — The Ridge and restaurants Pier 290 and the Hunt Club — so why wouldn't we use them again and again?

Showing the love: The homepage on FDM's website features a photo of the staff on a boat on Geneva Lake.

The GENEVA INN

— on the lake —



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Did You Know?

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- Named for Geneva, New York.
- A site for gristmills and sawmills in the early days.
- Known as "Newport of the West," a popular year-round resort for wealthy Chicago residents who built summer homes and estates on the lake and in the wooded hills.
- Populated by many Chicagoans living in these homes year-round after their homes were destroyed in the Chicago Fire.
- A shipper of ice to Chicago until the onset of World War II.



And, of course, customized options. "You can put your group on a cruise boat heading to a dinner location on the lake, complete with cocktails on the way there and dessert on the way back," says Smolarek.

But the city offers more than water-based fun. The Tristan Crist Magic Theatre provides Vegas-style illusion shows, for example, while The Dancing Horses Theatre features artistic equestrian performances. Lake Geneva Canopy Tours is known for its heart-pumping zipline tours and furnishes meeting space for groups of up to 50.

Not surprisingly, when it comes to team building, groups have no shortage of options either. In addition to utilizing the lakes, zipline and other commercial amenities, the resorts each offer an incredible and diverse array of team-building activities. Over at Grand Geneva, meeting attendees can participate in everything from extreme sled-building and pizza challenges to laser tag and kickball, says Lyles, adding the list of options keeps growing.


Dolan says The Abbey has more than 100 team-building ideas for meeting planners and also creates activities based upon a group's goal. One of his personal favorite team builders involves giving teams cardboard, bubble wrap and duct tape, then 90 minutes to create a seaworthy boat that can carry a passenger.

Stephanie Klett, the new president and CEO of VISIT Lake Geneva, wants planners to know the resort town is open and active year-round, and embraces winter, offering ice skating, snowshoeing, skiing, sledding and ice fishing. In addition, the U.S. National Snow Sculpting Competition is held here annually during the city's Winterfest celebration and, last year, the award-winning Ice Castles tapped Lake Geneva to become its sixth North American location. The wintertime attraction boasts LED-lit ice sculptures, frozen thrones, ice-carved slides and more.

The resorts celebrate the cold weather, too. "One thing we did last winter that went over very well was to put up igloos," says The Ridge's Karabas. The plastic-

domed structures were set up in the resort's outdoor patio area, and furnished with couches, benches, tables and blankets. Meeting attendees relaxed inside the unique structures, where they enjoyed food and drink. This winter, The Ridge is considering erecting larger igloos that can be used for meeting breakouts.

Klett, former secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, says the tourism bureau's goal is for meeting planners and attendees to enjoy their Lake Geneva meeting so much that they'll want to come back.

"We know of people who have moved here because of their good experience at a conference," she says. "Talk about the ultimate compliment!" 



Melanie Radzicki McManus often writes about Wisconsin from her home in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. In 2015, she received the 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.



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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 visitors bureaus (CVBs) 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 requests for proposals, 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 is memorable.

In this issue, we focus on the great meeting and convention destinations of Janesville, 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 these communities are the right fit for your group and, if so, include 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.

JANESVILLE



QUICK FACTS

CONTACT INFORMATION

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janesvillecvb.com/
meeting/meetings

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Population: 64,359
Number of hotel rooms: 870
Largest meeting facility:
12,000 square feet
Largest exhibit facility:
12,000 square feet
Airport: Chicago O'Hare
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DISTANCE FROM

Madison: 40 miles
Milwaukee: 70 miles

Chicago: 120 miles
Minneapolis: 305 miles

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MANITOWOC

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manitowoc.info

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Population: 80,000
Number of hotel rooms: 1,000
Largest meeting facility:
20,000 square feet
Largest exhibit facility:
36,000 square feet
Airport: Austin Straubel
International, Green Bay

DISTANCE FROM

Madison: 139 miles
Milwaukee: 81 miles

Green Bay: 42 miles
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visitoshkosh.com/meetings

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Population: 67,000
Number of hotel rooms: 1,000
Largest meeting facility:
24,000 square feet
Largest exhibit facility:
40,000 square feet
Airport: Appleton
International Airport (20 miles)

DISTANCE FROM

Madison: 86 miles
Milwaukee: 87 miles

Chicago: 176 miles
Minneapolis: 274 miles

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Paul Upchurch knocked off work early one summer afternoon and headed to the golf course. After playing a few holes, he caught up to a man in his 20s who had done the same thing. They played together and wound up joining another young man for the rest of the round.

"The two didn't know each other, but they both had tattoos on their arms that said Milwaukee," says Upchurch, who is president and CEO of VISIT Milwaukee, although he announced he will be leaving that position at the end of the year.

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PAUL UPCHURCH REFLECTS ON HIS TIME WITH VISIT MILWAUKEE,
THE FUTURE OF BREW CITY AND HIS NEXT STEPS.

By Nancy A. Herrick

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"Those two random guys on the golf course were passionate enough about their city to wear it permanently on their arms," Upchurch says. "That pride that Milwaukeeans have is very sincere, very welcoming. It's part of Milwaukee's appeal and we hear about it all the time from visitors to our city."

"It's also part of what made my job easier."

For nine years, Upchurch was at the helm of the organization that markets Milwaukee to convention planners, and leisure and business travelers. While he might not have a tattoo, his pride in Milwaukee is evident. He and his family lived in more than a dozen cities during his career in the hospitality industry, including a stint with Milwaukee's Marcus Corporation. It was his fondness for Milwaukee that helped him make the decision to return in 2010 to lead VISIT Milwaukee, its 38 employees and its \$10 million annual budget.

His tenure has been marked by significant growth, as reflected in these statistics for the greater Milwaukee area:

- Total business sales related to tourism grew from \$4.2 billion in 2011 (the first full year of Upchurch's term) to \$5.7 billion in 2018.
- Tourism-generated state and local tax revenue grew from \$300 billion in 2011 to \$372 billion in 2018.
- Tourism-supported full-time jobs increased from 47,442 in 2011 to 52,357 in 2018. Without tourism jobs, Milwaukee County's unemployment rate for 2018 would have been three times higher.
- Perhaps most significant of all, 24 new hotels opened in Milwaukee County since 2011, with 12 of them downtown. Those figures include the new Cambria and Drury hotels downtown, which are scheduled to open soon.

"Milwaukee truly has come a long way in recent years with billions in development, including the \$524 million Fiserv Forum, The Hop streetcar that makes getting around downtown easier, and urban renewal efforts in the Menomonee Valley, the Historic Third Ward and the Deer District, just to name a few," he says.

Many would say Upchurch's most significant accomplishment was leading VISIT Milwaukee's effort to help land the Democratic National Convention. Arguably the most visible of all conventions, the July 2020 event will bring as many as 50,000 visitors to Milwaukee, including Democratic officials, delegates and their families, security personnel, media and more. The economic impact is estimated at \$200 million. Milwaukee was selected over the two other finalists: Houston and Miami.

He put his heart and soul into VISIT MILWAUKEE, AND IT SHOWED.

DON SMILEY,
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
MILWAUKEE WORLD FESTIVAL INC.

"The Democrats who made the official visits told us that VISIT Milwaukee stood apart and gave them the confidence that Milwaukee could handle the convention," Upchurch says with pride.

A JOB WELL DONE

Those who have worked with Upchurch are generous in their praise.

Marty Brooks is president and CEO of the Wisconsin Center District, which operates the Wisconsin Center, the UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena and the Miller High Life Theatre. He credits Upchurch with coordinating the details that

went into impressing the Democratic National Committee.

"I don't believe the community appreciates the role Paul and VISIT Milwaukee made in securing the convention," Brooks says. "He has great recall of the facts, figures and rationale behind decisions. Paul and his team handled it all in a seemingly effortless way."

Omar Shaikh, chair of VISIT Milwaukee's Board of Directors and co-owner of the SURG Restaurant Group (among other endeavors), is heading the effort to find Upchurch's replacement.

"Paul has been an excellent leader and tourism has shown growth every year since he has been at the helm of VISIT Milwaukee," Shaikh says. "He's very good at the numbers and has taught me so much about how things should be run."

Stephanie Klett, former Wisconsin Secretary of Tourism, and current president and CEO of VISIT Lake Geneva, worked with Upchurch in his role as chair of the Governor's Council on Tourism.

"He is enormously capable, and has an even temper and a way of engaging people," she says. "He's a straight shooter with a history of success every step of the way."

Don Smiley is president and CEO of Milwaukee World Festival Inc., which produces Summerfest. He also is chairman of the Miller Park District and sits on the board of VISIT Milwaukee.

"Paul has done a great job of juggling the convention side and the tourism side, developing an excellent blend and balance," Smiley says. "Then when you add his ability to work with the different entities, such as the Wisconsin Center



WITH CONNECTIONS *all around the country, where does Paul Upchurch, president and CEO of VISIT Milwaukee, choose to travel?*

"I like to go to places that are kind of like Milwaukee, with great local restaurants and art festivals," Upchurch says.

Lately, his travel is family-oriented.

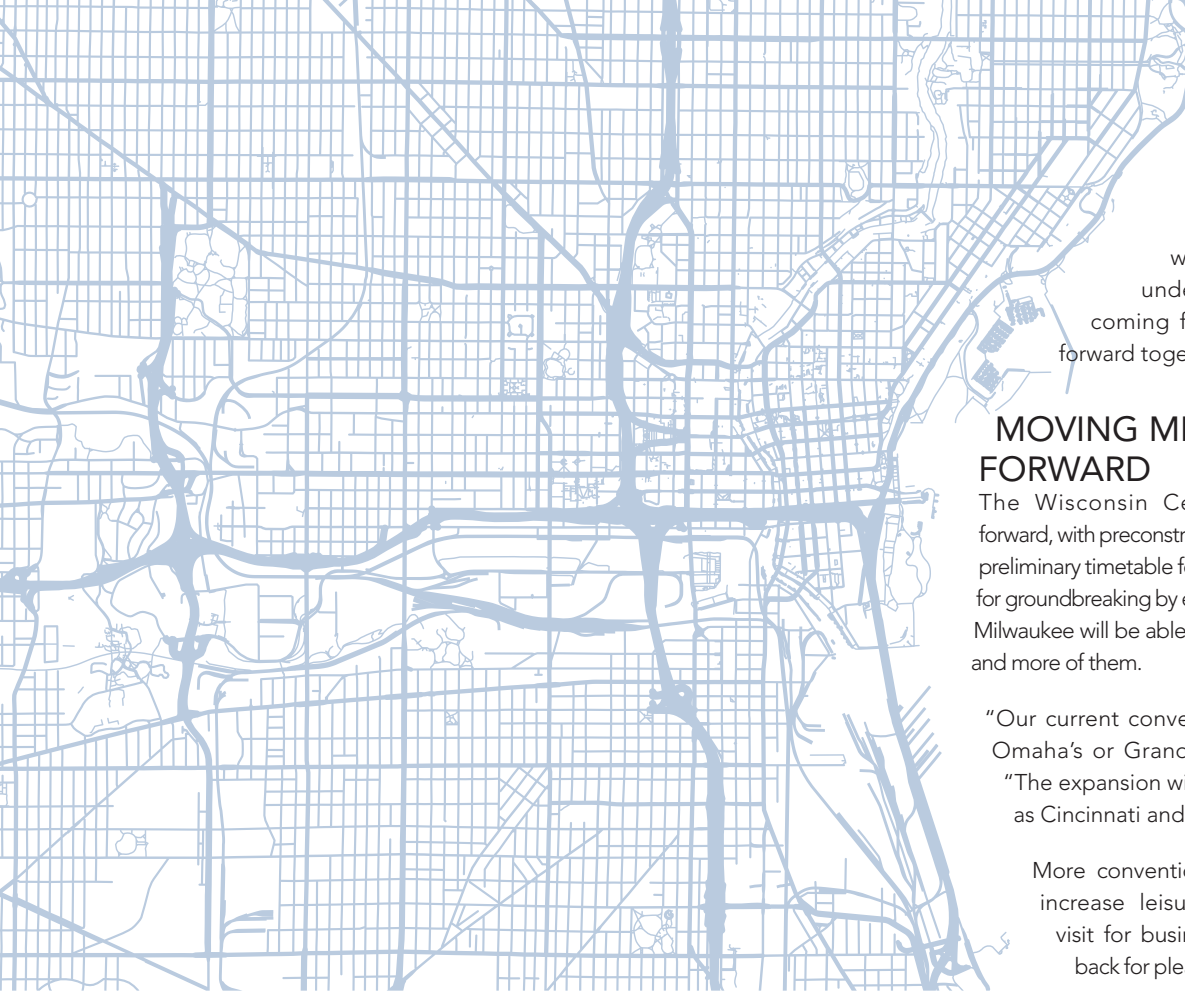
"My adult children have settled on the West Coast, so my wife and I do a lot of traveling out there."



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District, the result has been success on many fronts.

"He also has a way of working with people and understanding where they are coming from so that all can move forward together."

MOVING MILWAUKEE FORWARD

The Wisconsin Center expansion is moving forward, with preconstruction planning underway. The preliminary timetable for the \$300 million project calls for groundbreaking by early 2021. When it is complete, Milwaukee will be able to attract bigger conventions and more of them.

"Our current convention center is the size of Omaha's or Grand Rapids'," Upchurch says.

"The expansion will put us in the same league as Cincinnati and Pittsburgh."

More convention business, in turn, helps increase leisure tourism: Once people visit for business, they might just come back for pleasure, often with their families.

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*Paul has been an excellent leader and
tourism has shown growth*



EVERY YEAR SINCE HE HAS BEEN AT THE HELM OF VISIT MILWAUKEE.”

OMAR SHAIKH, CHAIR, VISIT MILWAUKEE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“We hear time and time again that visitors didn't know what Milwaukee would be like,” Upchurch says. “They tell us their actual experience was different from their original expectation, more positive. After their visit, they compared Milwaukee to cities like Austin and Denver.”

Outstanding local restaurants, entertainment districts, craft breweries, walkable shopping—Milwaukee does many things well, Upchurch says. That's in addition to events such as Summerfest, ethnic festivals, State Fair, Milwaukee Brewer and Bucks games, museums and more.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO MILWAUKEE

“Once people visit, the city speaks for itself,” Upchurch says.

And often return, just as he and his family did.

A native of Inkster, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit, Upchurch received a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Michigan, intending to go on to medical school. While waiting and hoping for an acceptance letter after graduation, he worked at a hotel and was asked to participate in the parent corporation's management training program.

“I really liked it,” he says. Soon he was hooked.

He was working at a hotel property in Grand Rapids in 1981 when the Gerald Ford Presidential Museum opened.

“After the dedication, I met Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Jimmy Carter, and I realized it was a pretty cool thing for a guy in his 20s,” he says, laughing.

Through the years, he managed many high-end properties, and

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He adds, "Mr. Dye's Pies, Gee's Clippers ... businesses like those are a big part of what makes Milwaukee special. It makes sense to promote Milwaukee's emerging neighborhoods and expand tourism efforts beyond the typical events."



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learned the hospitality business inside and out, living and working in Michigan, Alabama, Texas, Kansas City, St. Louis and Milwaukee—twice. His first stint was as vice president of hotel operations for Marcus Corporation, choosing to return to lead VISIT Milwaukee.

"It's a very friendly, livable city," he says. "We've truly enjoyed it."

He acknowledges that many positives came together on his watch to contribute to the growth in tourism, including the rise in experiential travel and the economic recovery that occurred after the Great Recession.

"Seeking unique experiences has become a priority for millennials and empty-nesters alike, and people now have more money to go out and find those experiences," Upchurch says. "The Instagram moment has become more important than, say, an expensive new

sofa. And Milwaukee's vibe happens to match what travelers are looking for."

Being named the nation's Coolest Underrated City by Vogue magazine in 2018 didn't hurt either.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR UPCHURCH?

"Milwaukee has wonderful momentum going on now and there's plenty to keep me busy," he says. "I will think more about what's next at the end of the year."

Those who have worked with him are sad to see Upchurch go.

"He put his heart and soul into VISIT Milwaukee, and it showed," says Smiley.

Says Brooks: "I know I will miss him and anyone who won't probably doesn't know him." **WM**



Nancy A. Herrick writes about architecture, design, home décor, home improvement, gardening, domestic travel, health and Wisconsin business. Her work has appeared in House Beautiful Kitchens and Baths, Woman's Day Remodeling and Decorating, The Washington Post, Elle Decor, Chicago Tribune, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and dozens of other publications.

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FIND A WAY TO GIVE BACK

Incorporate a service project at your next meeting or event to support a good cause and promote team building.

By Amy Wunderlin

Today's companies are more focused on social responsibility and service to their communities than ever before. Incorporating service projects into annual meetings and events is a perfect way for organizations to meet both goals, while providing a fun networking experience for attendees.

"Meeting group service projects are really mutually beneficial experiences, and they add deeper meaning and purpose to the meeting being held," says Lindsey McKee, communications manager at VISIT Milwaukee. "They also contribute to—and even build—a bond with the community in which the organization is hosting its event."

Why Include a Service Project?

The Wisconsin chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI) has a long history of being involved in different charitable causes and service projects.

"As long as I can remember, we've supported different charities at our events and education meetings," says Kathy Reading, the director of publications and community outreach for MPI Wisconsin.

Sometimes it's something as simple as a food drive in which members are asked to bring different supplies or goods to an event. This year, however, the organization set a goal to enter into a year-long partnership with a local charitable cause and support that cause at chapter events throughout the year.

The membership chose the Wisconsin Humane Society. During its spring educational meeting, MPI Wisconsin made fleece tie blankets for the organization.

"We knew it was something the Humane Society needed. It's also one of the many suggested projects on the organization's website," explains Reading. "They go through these blankets quickly—it's kind of a never-ending need. If they're not donated, they have to use their much-needed funds to purchase them."

Attendees at the spring meeting helped make 60 fleece tie blankets for the Humane Society to use in its kennels. Once pets are adopted, the blankets go home with them.

The Humane Society helped with the details, such as sizing and measurements, so MPI Wisconsin could maximize the fabric and supplies.

According to Reading, in addition to supporting a charitable cause, service projects provide a great team-building activity for meeting attendees.

"You get everyone at the table interacting and getting to know each other in a way that's maybe a little more comfortable than handing out a business card," she says, adding that it's also "nice to have something that's a little more hands-on to break up the day and keep the juices flowing."

How to Choose a Project

Reading says it is important to put thought into choosing a charity that resonates with your audience.

"Make sure it's something that will connect with your audience. Work closely with your charity partner to find a project that is engaging and offers networking opportunities, while also providing a valuable service," she explains.

A good service project should align with your company's mission, McKee adds.



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An advertisement for "MEETINGS IN LA CROSSE COUNTY". The top half features a purple and orange graphic with the text "explore LA CROSSE .com" and "MEETINGS IN LA CROSSE COUNTY". Below this, a man and a woman are walking on a paved path next to a body of water, with a modern glass building in the background. The bottom right corner contains contact information: "explorelacrosse.com/meetings", "Group Sales: 608-782-2220", and "Convention Sales: 608-782-2298".

An advertisement for the La Crosse Center. The top half shows the exterior of the building with the text "LA CROSSE CENTER" and a sign that says "La Crosse Center". A large red banner across the middle reads "RENOVATION COMING SOON!". Below the banner, there are images of a rodeo rider on a horse, a red classic car, and a monster truck. The bottom section contains the text "Wisconsin's only Convention Center on the Mississippi River", "Riverfront Views ■ Skywalk Access to Hotels & Parking", and contact information: "300 Harborview Plaza | P.O. Box 1027 La Crosse, WI 54602", "608.789.7400", and "www.lacrossecenter.com".

IDEAS FOR SERVICE PROJECTS

FOOD SORTS: The Hunger Task Force and Feeding America offer opportunities to visit their facilities and sort food that is then distributed to those in need.

BLOOD DRIVES: The BloodCenter of Wisconsin offers mobile blood banks that can be set up in the corner of a convention center where attendees can donate blood.

BIKE PROGRAMS: Free Bikes 4 Kidz helps coordinate the purchase and assembly of bikes for donation to local youth.

BOOK READINGS AND DONATIONS: Next Door of Milwaukee holds book drives and is always looking for volunteers to read to children to promote educational development.

For example, a book donation or volunteer reading experience at a teachers' convention would be a perfect fit.

"It's good to have something that relates back to your mission. ... Something that not only demonstrates your service to the community, but also shows what your company is all about," she says.

McKee suggests choosing something that is important to your host city if you can't find a project that matches your company's mission.

"It's always a good idea to connect with your local convention and visitors bureau (CVB)," she adds. "CVBs like VISIT Milwaukee have the pulse not only on the best destination attractions and venues, but they also are aware of the local community's most pressing needs and services."

In 2015, VISIT Milwaukee helped coordinate a park cleanup for the National Association of Sports Commissions during its annual meeting. More than 100 association members participated in the cleanup of Washington Park, the original home of the Milwaukee County Zoo. They completed tasks

like mulching and raking, and even assembled benches throughout the park.

McKee also recommends collaborating with local volunteer associations that can direct groups to service projects in the area. She specifically points to the United Way of Greater Milwaukee, which is very aware of volunteer needs and efforts in the local community.

In addition, McKee suggests looking at local news stories to unearth potential service projects that meet the needs of the local community.

Preventing Project Pitfalls

Planning an event or meeting is a challenge. Now add a service project on top and it's easy to see why these projects sometimes fail. Whether that's due to a lack of participation, not enough time or an overly complex project, Reading and McKee offer the following advice to prevent those pitfalls.

"We put a lot of thought into coming up with projects that work well for introverts and extroverts alike and people of different needs," Reading says.

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MPI Wisconsin's recent tie blanket project worked well, she notes, because it was simple and offered a lot of adaptability to suit many different personality types.

The simplicity also helped with time management. MPI Wisconsin allotted up to 45 minutes for the project, but because other events were running long, participants ended up completing the project in 30 minutes, which Reading says was not an issue.

She adds that some people finished their blankets at another time throughout the day and that worked well, too.

"I've attended other events where the projects were too complicated or too time-consuming. Then I think people find it easy to opt out. Keeping it simple, fun and easy to accomplish in a short period of time is key," Reading concludes.

McKee advises planners to do their research and ask the right questions. It's also important to have a backup plan, especially if the project is weather-dependent. For example, if your project is a walk or run, and you are unable to participate due to weather, you want to make sure there is another

option available. This might be a cash donation to the chosen charity or gathering into a shared space to learn more about it.

Designating a lead coordinator on your planning staff is also helpful, as well as procuring additional volunteers outside your staff to help manage time wisely.

"This is where your CVB can come in handy," McKee says, noting that VISIT Milwaukee has a group of over 200 volunteers available to help groups with staffing.

To combat participation challenges, McKee says you should promote the project on your website and conference materials. Having volunteers on site to register people when they get to the conference and offering incentives, such as a lunch or a giveaway item, can also boost interest.

"Of course, it is going to be a lot of work, but you need to work your public relations efforts to make sure that the project is not only rewarding for your attendees, but also demonstrates social responsibility. You



©MPI WISCONSIN

want to show the community you are not just here to meet in their town, but to participate in their community, that you are happy to be here and to help where you can," she adds. [WM](#)



Amy Wunderlin is a Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin-based journalist. She has written for several weekly and daily newspapers, in addition to trade publications such as Supply & Demand Chain Executive, Food Logistics and Concrete Contractor.

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By Ronnie Wendt

Summer Scents

In the heart of Milwaukee lies Jazz in the Park, an outdoor music festival that quenches the thirst of revelers with flowing red and white wine, is furnished with meandering blankets and cheese plates, and is endowed with a myriad of familiar faces, dancing and music. Milwaukee Candle Company's new soy candle, Jazzmine in the Park, is inspired by Milwaukee's favorite free outdoor summer music series. This unisex scent combines jasmine flowers, musk and sandalwood to bring you back to those warm summer nights in Cathedral Square, Milwaukee—even in the dead of winter.



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Collect beer caps during your meeting or event, and display your collection with a Wisconsin map from Beer Cap Maps. The Wisconsin Beer Cap Map is 20 by 21 inches and holds 89 bottle caps, perfect to showcase your favorite breweries across the state. The Beer Cap Maps lineup has expanded to include all 50 states, 12 countries, 14 cities, games, coasters and other beer-related products, and is made in Milwaukee, a city known for beer.

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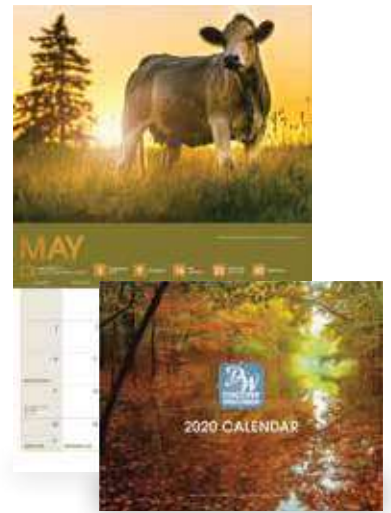
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PLANNER PROFILE

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THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

AS COMPETITION FOR ATTENDEES HEATS UP, JOELLEN GRABER OFFERS SOME ADVICE ON MAKING YOUR EVENT STAND OUT.

BY RONNIE WENDT

When 125,000 riders roared into Milwaukee for Harley-Davidson's 105th anniversary, JoEllen Graber, incoming president of the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Wisconsin chapter, was there to help them celebrate the occasion. She booked music and tours, and put displays and exhibits across southeastern Wisconsin.

She recalls managing the logistics as quite the ride.

"Everyone wants to drive their motorcycles to these events," she says. "Finding room for the motorcycles was something I'd never thought about."

The music, the motorcycles and the crowd generated volumes of noise, making it necessary for the 14-year planning industry veteran to partner with neighbors and area businesses.

"It was a huge learning curve for me," she says. "I learned the true power of networking with other planners and suppliers. It's not a question of if something is going to go wrong, it's when. And when it does, you need to know who you can call to help you out."

Graber sees the Harley-Davidson bash as the highlight of her events industry career. She worked as a planner for Wisconsin Lottery and Harley-Davidson, then went to the supplier side for five years. Her varied experience gives her insight into what planners and suppliers want in an events industry association.

More companies and planning positions are seeking certified meeting professionals (CMPs). Planners

increasingly join associations, like MPI Wisconsin, for CMP education hours. "Continuing education elevates the quality of the people in the events industry. You need five years of experience to take the exam and the exam itself is very difficult," she says. "MPI Wisconsin is the go-to place in the state for education."

Graber strives to boost awareness of the association and bump up its educational opportunities in 2020. MPI Wisconsin's membership is a mix of planners and suppliers at differing experience levels from Wisconsin and neighboring states, and even as far away as Arizona.

"I want to make sure the education speaks to all members," she says. "I also hope to offer more volunteer opportunities for members."

It is an exciting time to be in the events industry, reports Graber. Companies are freeing funds to host bigger and better events, and technology is changing how meetings are run and what they have to offer.

Graber sees virtual reality as a true game-changer. "Virtual reality saves time and money. You don't have to travel to a venue to get an idea of what it has to offer," she says.

Attendee expectations are also evolving. Graber says this demands that planners think outside the box and take a fresh approach. But, she says, it also makes planning more creative and fun.

"People used to come to a meeting, and fill their downtime with dinner and drinks," she explains. "Now planners must plan activities outside the actual event to keep people busy. Attendees seek one-of-a-kind experiences they cannot get anywhere else."

She adds, "People no longer want to sit in a classroom all day either. They want soft seating, shorter breakout sessions, more networking options and a standout venue."

Food and beverage also must include more than a gravy-covered meat option, rice pilaf and a vegetable medley. She says today's attendees expect their specific dietary needs to be met. Planners should survey attendees to understand their needs, then work with their food and beverage vendors to craft menus with high-quality, gluten- and allergen-free options, she says.

Graber offers some sage advice as the industry evolves. "Don't get stuck in the mundane and do things a certain way because that's the way it's always been done," she says. "Ask yourself, how can I make sure my events are fresh and creative every time?" The sky is the limit.

Every event may not have the wow factor of 125,000 motorcycles rolling into town. But competition for attendees is heating up. "Conferences are fighting for every attendee they can get," says Graber. "The ability to make your events unforgettable and up your game will set your meeting apart." **WM**



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