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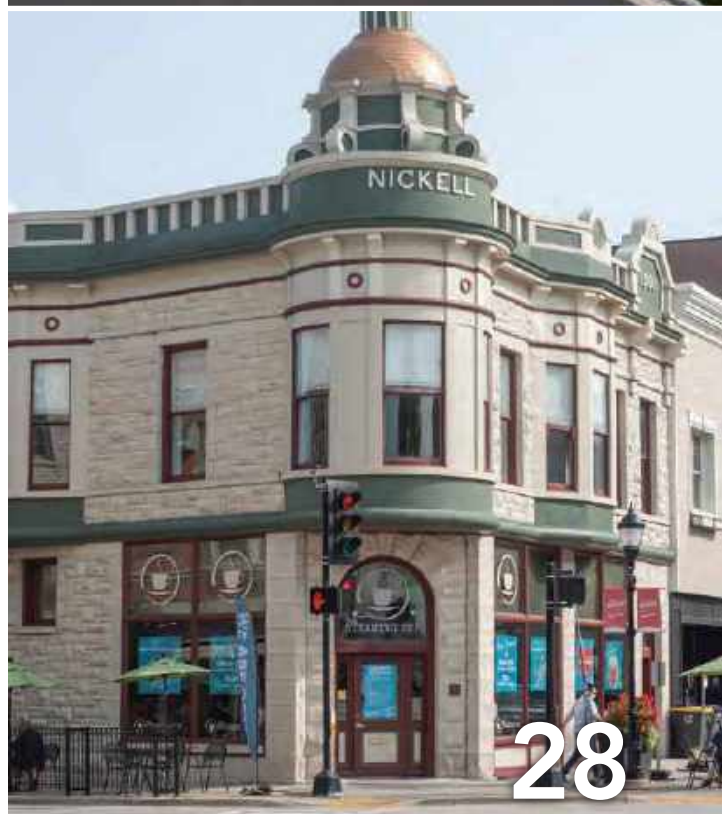
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## EDITOR'S LETTER

My mother-in-law recently made a list of words she doesn't like. The list includes the words: pandemic, COVID-19, shutdown, fear, anger, sickness and death.

She later made a list of words she likes. This list includes words like family, health, faith, love and hope. Today, she lives by those words after first tossing the other list in the garbage.

Like my mother-in-law, life handed the meeting and events industry more than its share of lemons since the pandemic took hold. But slowly we're learning to make some lemonade. As summer ends and fall begins, planners across the state express a sense of optimism and a can-do attitude in the face of adversity and misfortune.

Some resilient planners grabbed hold of hope earlier than others. Make-A-Wish Wisconsin, for example, forged a fresh path, holding a virtual meeting just weeks after the pandemic shutdown began. This event raised \$600,000 to help the nonprofit organization grant wishes for critically ill children. The Wisconsin Technology Council took a similar leap of faith. Its virtual 2020 Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Conference drew 320 attendees.

Both organizations deemed their events a tremendous success and plan to host future virtual and hybrid meetings. In "The Show Must Go On," event organizers share suggestions for hosting successful virtual meetings.

Hope also abounds with convention and visitor bureau (CVB) leaders across the state who believe Wisconsin's meetings and events industry will bounce back. These leaders cite the state's accessibility by car and the great outdoors as top reasons for a comeback. "Wisconsin Positioned for a Pandemic Rebound" shares what CVBs are doing to secure a return.

Three areas ready to return to normal include Brookfield, Waukesha and Pewaukee — the subjects of the fall issue's destination profile. Combined, these destinations, just off I-94, offer a true meetings and events trifecta.

Alison Hutchinson, our featured planner, also kept a list of all the things she would do as the incoming president of MPI Wisconsin. She scrapped her list for a different one to guide her peers through the COVID crisis.

Hutchinson believes the pandemic's challenges created opportunities for growth and says she expects the lessons learned to persist long after the pandemic ends.

As we turn the page on the old and usher in the new, one truth remains: Meetings and events may never return to "normal," but the new normal can be better than we ever imagined.

Enjoy the read!

Ronnie Wendt  
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## IN THE NEWS

GRAND GENEVA RESORT

### GRAND GENEVA RESORT ADDS HOTEL BUYOUT PACKAGE

The Grand Geneva Resort & Spa lets groups reserve private accommodations and book entire buildings throughout its 1,300-acre resort campus. The resort offers functional conference spaces and room options designed to accommodate any event and social distancing requirements (while following the resort's CleanCare Pledge). Grand Geneva's hotel buyout package includes private group accommodations with the option to reserve a resort building, breakfast, wired and wireless Internet access, audio visual and use of its conference center. There is a designated remote registration area and two private entrances. Complimentary parking, fitness center and spa access, and access to outdoor running trails round out the package. Rates begin at \$129 per person.

### DEER DISTRICT TO WELCOME NEW HOTEL AND MUSEUMS

Madison-based North Central Group is partnering with the Milwaukee Bucks to build a new hotel in Milwaukee's Deer District.

The Bucks organization says it will be an upscale and luxury hotel under the Marriott brand with 230 rooms. Construction will not begin until fall 2021, with an opening in 2022 or 2023.

In addition, the Deer District will soon be home to both the Milwaukee Public Museum and Betty Brinn Children's Museum, both of which recently announced plans for new facilities to be built on a 2.4-acre site located on the corner of Sixth and McKinley streets.



### MADISON'S DEB ARCHER TO RETIRE

For more than 20 years, Deb Archer has led Destination Madison (DM), but in a recent letter to DM partners, Archer announced she will step down at the end of the year.

"I know this may not seem like an ideal time for me to depart the organization, but honestly, I think it could prove to be an ideal time. As our community and industry strives to recover, there is an amazingly talented group of professionals at Destination Madison and we have a board and industry and community partners that most organizations like ours would covet. Together with an industry that is eager, hungry and creative, with new leadership, I know this destination will emerge as a leader and sought-after place to hold meetings, sports events and spend leisure time.

Archer added: "After two-plus decades in this position, I am hopeful that one of the legacies I leave is a community that understands and values visitors and the visitor economy more than when I began. Visitors are truly the lifeblood of many communities and when visitors begin to return to greater Madison, our region — and the businesses and workers we all rely on for much of our enjoyment and pride — will begin to revive and recover."

### COBBLESTONE BREAKS GROUND ON NEW HOTEL

Cobblestone Hotel recently broke ground on a new hotel in Little Chute. The hotel chain also held a grand opening for a new hotel in Two Rivers. The company did not specify an opening date for the Little Chute location.



## POTAWATOMI ALLOWS GAMING RESERVATIONS

Potawatomi Hotel & Casino no longer limits admission to club members. The casino now allows guests over age 21 to reserve three-hour gaming sessions. The venue requires masks and temperature checks. Guests sign up for gaming sessions at [paysbig.com](https://paysbig.com). Potawatomi remains open from 9 a.m. to midnight daily.

## SPRING GREEN RESTAURANT ON HISTORIC REGISTER

The Wisconsin Historical Society has placed the Spring Green Restaurant on the State Register of Historic Places. Frank Lloyd Wright designed the restaurant, constructed in 1967-1969, in his signature Usonian style. Taliesin Associated Architects completed the design in the same style. Currently known as the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitors Center and home to Taliesin Preservation Inc., the building is open to the public and offers information about the architect and his work.

## CUBANITAS TO OPEN NEW EVENTS VENUE

Marta Bianchini, the operator of downtown Milwaukee's Cubanitas restaurant and other businesses, plans to open an events venue on Historic West Mitchell Street. The Mitch will open in October. The venue will host weddings, birthdays, quinceaneras and other events.

## MARCUS HOTELS ANNOUNCES MORE LAYOFFS

Marcus Hotels permanently laid off more associates at several Milwaukee-area hotels. Affected employees had their employment terminated August 31. None of the associates have bumping rights. The Pfister Hotel permanently laid off 31 hourly associates and eight management associates. The Saint Kate—the Arts

Hotel added 68 hourly associates and one management associate to the permanent layoff list. The Hilton Milwaukee City Center permanently laid off three hourly associates and three management associates. Grand Geneva Resort & Spa added 28 hourly associates and nine management associates to the permanent layoff list. The Hilton Madison Monona Terrace permanently laid off seven hourly associates and two management associates. The layoffs are added to earlier layoffs during the spring and summer.

## COLLECTED SALES TAX RISES IN DOOR COUNTY

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue reports Door County collected roughly 0.5% more sales tax so far this year than the same timeframe in 2019. But Door County Tourism Zone Commission data finds the county fell short with room tax collections. The lowest county-wide room taxes collected appeared in April, when the total plummeted to \$6,803 from \$43,362 the month prior. Properties also reported about 20,000 fewer available rooms this year than in 2019, and that the occupancy rate dropped from 53% to about 41%.

## DOOR COUNTY PARTNERS WITH ETHICS ORGANIZATION

Destination Door County joined forces with Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, a Colorado-based environmental education nonprofit, to draft seven principles aimed at lessening human impact on the local environment. The principles are part of Destination Door County's ecotourism campaign. Door County is the first tourism destination in Wisconsin to partner with Leave No Trace.

## CARRIERS DROP TICKET CHANGE FEES

Major carriers American Airlines, United Airlines and Delta Air Lines have all dropped their \$200 fees for those who change a ticket for travel within the United States.

Starting in January, United says it will let customers fly standby for free on other flights departing the same day as their booked flight.

U.S. air travel has recovered modestly since April, but passenger traffic remains down about 70% from a year ago. Several carriers, including Delta, Southwest and JetBlue, limit seating, although American and United try to sell every seat. The four largest U.S. airlines lost a combined \$10 billion from April through June.





## LA CROSSE CENTER NEARS 40% COMPLETION

The \$42 million expansion project to the La Crosse Center reached 40% completion and the community gathered for a 'Topping Out' event where construction crews placed the last beam atop the structure. Crews will complete the North Hall and front set in January 2021 and the rest by October 2021.



## CANCELLED EVENTS LEAD TO FINANCIAL LOSSES IN MILWAUKEE

Visit Milwaukee reports COVID-19 led to the cancellation of 97 events, \$70 million in economic impact and the cancellation of 91,000 room nights. Visit Milwaukee also estimates the economic impact of the Democratic National Convention on Milwaukee at \$3 million. Original predictions put economic estimates at \$200 million before the pandemic took hold.

## ORGANIZATION PREDICTS RESTAURANT CLOSURES

Restaurants expanded outdoor dining options to attract more customers during the pandemic. But in Wisconsin, outdoor dining comes with an expiration date. Restaurant owners are adding heaters and other innovations to make their businesses viable during the winter. Kristine Hillmer, president and CEO of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, predicts without such measures, 30% of Wisconsin restaurants will go under this winter. "If they cannot increase their capacity safely inside once they can't use the outdoor dining option, it is going to be really, really hard to be solvent," Hillmer told Wisconsin Public Radio.

## GOVERNOR APPOINTS NEW MEMBERS TO COUNCIL ON TOURISM

Gov. Tony Evers announced three new appointments to the Wisconsin Governor's Council on Tourism. The new appointments join three council members appointed earlier this year. The new appointees are: Deborah Cary, founder and president of New Glarus Brewing Company; Missy Tracy, the municipal relations coordinator at Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison and a tribal member of the Ho-Chunk Nation; and Luke Zahm, the host of "Wisconsin Foodie," which airs on Wisconsin Public Television.

## SUMMERFEST ANNOUNCES NEW 2021 FORMAT

Milwaukee World Festival Inc. plans to hold Summerfest 2021 over three consecutive weekends. The organizer notes the new format provides an extended booking window for the festival to schedule more national artists during the day. Organizers traditionally held the annual festival for 11 days over two consecutive weeks. Milwaukee World Festival cancelled the 2020 festival for the first time in its 53-year history because of the coronavirus pandemic.

## NEW RENAISSANCE MILWAUKEE WEST OPENS

Renaissance Milwaukee West in Wauwatosa opened in August, inspiring community confidence that the hospitality industry is making a comeback. The Renaissance Milwaukee West serves as a unique hub for both travelers and locals, alike, within convenient proximity to businesses and entertainment. Concord Hospitality Enterprises manages the property.

## BUROS NAMED GM OF HOTEL RETLAW

Chad Buros assumed the role of general manager at Hotel Retlaw in Fond du Lac just three months after signing on as director of sales and marketing at the landmark hotel. Hotel Retlaw reports Buros' ties to the community, his past tenure with the property when it was the Ramada Plaza Hotel and a resume that spans 30 years of hospitality experience at major resorts in the state made him a logical choice for the position.



## DESTINATION KOHLER ADDS PRIVATE CABINS

Destination Kohler adds Lake and Pond to its portfolio of private lodging offerings. The two new cabins are a 10-minute drive from the American Club resort-hotel. Lake comprises two bedrooms and two bathrooms to accommodate four guests. The 1,200-square-foot cabin features a chef-inspired kitchen, a wood-burning fireplace, Kohler fixtures and a wrap-around porch with fire pit. Pond accommodates four guests. Set over 1,200-square feet, the cabin features two bedrooms and two bathrooms, alongside a cozy kitchen and living space with a wood-burning fireplace and stove. A spacious wooden porch wraps half-way around the shingled roof cabin. [www.destinationkohler.com](http://www.destinationkohler.com)



## VENUE SPOTLIGHT

# A NEW TAKE ON TRADITION

FARM WISCONSIN DISCOVERY CENTER OFFERS MODERN MEETING AMENITIES WITH AN AGRICULTURAL TWIST.

BY RONNIE WENDT

The brilliant hue of sunflowers reaching for the sun highlight that there is something unique about a massive barn located just off Highway 43 near Manitowoc. The structure isn't a barn; it is home to the Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center, opened in 2018, to educate visitors about the state's rich agricultural heritage.

Time for Kids named the 29,000-square-foot ag museum as one of the "50 Coolest Places of 2019," but the \$13 million agriculture education center offers experiences for both young and old. This happening place doubles as a site for corporate meetings and events, and delivers an experience that attendees won't soon forget.

The Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center offers impressive and comfortable meeting spaces for intimate receptions to large-scale events, from 10 to 300 guests. But should planners desire a less traditional event experience, meetings can include entry to 10,000 square feet of interactive ag exhibits, a calf birthing barn and bus tours to nearby Grotgut Dairy Farm, which milks 2,500 cows daily.

"When you book a conference rental with us, you get admission into the center for \$5 [per attendee] versus \$16," Katie Wade, program director at Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center, explains. "Attendees can tour the center during breaks or after the meeting ends."

She says the center can be an eye opener for those separated from rural life and unaware of

modern farming practices. Though the ag industry represents \$100 billion to the state's economy, Wade states many people remain unaware of the state's varied agricultural industry. Educating others about agriculture, from alfalfa to zucchini, is the center's chief purpose.

Wade explains Norval Dvorak proposed opening the center after visiting Fair Oaks Farms, a 25,000-acre Indiana farm experience center known as the "Disneyland of agriculture." "Dvorak devoted his life to improving agriculture and educating the public and pushed for the educational center," Wade says. "Sadly, he passed away before the center opened."

The center rounds out its educational offerings with a fully equipped meeting and event center. Farm Wisconsin reserves the north conference room for larger events (up to 200 people), and the south conference room for smaller ones (less than 100). But by removing a wall between the spaces, the center can accommodate up to 300 guests. A separate entrance, a coat rack, bathrooms, parking and lobby area allow attendees to skip the Discovery Center's public areas and head directly to their meeting.

Planners also secure access to Farm Wisconsin event staff who help customize the space. "We are a relatively new venue to the area and can transform the space into what our guests are envisioning," Wade says "Fresh ideas are always welcome."

Planners can book any part of the center for an event. Wade explains some planners have hosted cocktail hours in the lobby area near a grand sculpture of a farmer's hands holding the earth, while others have used the theater to play personalized videos. "We have multiple spaces that can be transformed for a group's needs," she adds.

Because the rental fee covers everything from utensils to napkins, tables and chairs, planners can leave the worrying to event staff, who set up the rooms for them. The center plans for audio visual needs with microphones, conference phones and three 85-inch televisions available to display PowerPoints, videos or corporate branding.

The center caters food and beverages. The kitchen presents a varied banquet menu with dishes prepared with locally sourced Wisconsin ingredients. Menu customizations are available to meet dietary restrictions. An on-site bar serves up drinks for cocktail hours.

To inquire about reserving space at the Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center for your next meeting or event, please call (920) 726-6009 or email [events@farmwisconsin.org](mailto:events@farmwisconsin.org). **WM**



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## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

# BEAT TEMPTATION

### WHEN IT COMES TO FIGHTING TEMPTATION, IT'S BEST TO COOL IT.

BY MOLLY ROSE TEUKE

*"I can resist everything except temptation."*  
—Oscar Wilde, Irish playwright

Temptation is as old as the Bible — that famous apple in the garden — and as easy to trip over as a piece of chocolate birthday cake or the next episode of that hot new Netflix series. Sometimes we even go looking for it. We go shopping with friends for "retail therapy." We browse through old episodes of our favorite show so we can binge-watch. We set our phones to ping us every time a friend posts on Facebook.

Our inability to resist temptation — our lack of self-control — can turn quickly to regret, and regret doesn't feel all that good. Several studies have linked self-control to self-esteem, which has personal, social, professional and health implications.

In addition, lack of self-control can have consequences far beyond the moment. A weight gain that 10 years from now has significant health consequences. A pattern of procrastination that has both short- and long-term career consequences. An out-of-shape body that keeps us from activities we would love to pursue.

Plentiful studies have found that self-discipline is associated with better health, more rewarding interpersonal relationships, more satisfactory savings habits and higher financial security.

There are plenty of reasons to at least strive to resist. And it turns out there is science to support the resistance.

## COOL IT

In his 2014 book, "The Marshmallow Test," based on his studies with young children in the early 1960s, Walter Mischel describes a useful framework for thinking about temptation: hot and cool brain systems. The hot system is our impulsive, emotional response to stimuli. It quickly lets you feel, quite viscerally, how scrumptious that rich, decadent chocolate cake will taste and feel in your mouth. The cool, cognitive system relies on the prefrontal cortex (PFC), where we do that thing we call thinking. The PFC enables us to reason our way past temptation by thinking about both the short- and long-term benefits of resisting.

When we're unable to resist temptation, it's because the hot emotional system overrides our cooler, more rational thinking. Science offers several strategies for keeping the cool system in control.

**1. Picture the better choice in living color.** Imagine the benefit in vivid detail. This helps you shift the heat from the temptation to a more desirable outcome. Instead of giving free rein to how good that cake will taste in your mouth, imagine, in as much detail as you can muster, how you'll feel wearing that flattering new swimsuit in the Caribbean. Instead of giving yourself license to surf the web for party ideas, imagine your new office when your workplace diligence gets you promoted. Imagine yourself in the interview where you're offered the new job. Imagine what you're wearing, imagine your acceptance remarks, imagine the luxury of a view, the warmth of sunlight from the large windows, the deference of your new assistant.

The limbic system and PFC operate in an inverse relationship. When the limbic system ramps up, the PFC is tamped down. And when you consciously ramp up the PFC, as you must do to visualize an outcome in any detail, you automatically tamp down the limbic system, making it easier to thwart the "hot response" and be guided by your brain's cool response.

**2. Reframe it.** Behavioral psychologists call this cognitive reappraisal, which simply means changing how you see something. The older children in Mischel's marshmallow experiments were masterfully creative in cognitive reappraisal. When faced with the choice of a marshmallow right now versus two in a little while, one child put an imaginary picture frame around the marshmallow; another pictured it as a puffy white cloud in an otherwise blue sky. The older the child, the more successful the effort. One 12-year-old, when asked how he managed to resist, said, "I can't eat puffy clouds." Another noted, "You can't eat a picture."



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*Temptation is a fact of life, but we don't have to move through life on the losing end of the power struggle.*



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**3. Distract yourself.** The common sense of this strategy belies its value. It is perhaps the best way to resist temptation — focus your attention elsewhere. Even kids as young as five or six were able to resist by simply thinking of something else. “Just sing a song,” said one, while another said, “I guess I’ll go to outer space.” One wise 9-year-old suggested, “Don’t look at what you are waiting for.... Use what you have now to entertain yourself.” He makes it sound easy, and yet, he’s got a point. A brisk walk around the block or even to the water cooler could be even more effective, thanks to another strategy called psychological distancing.

**4. Keep your distance.** This strategy is about taking a step back from the scene of temptation, and it can work from three different perspectives. First, it’s no surprise that something you can’t see is less likely to inspire a hot, demanding urge. A piece of cake across town at grandma’s house is a less compelling temptation than a piece of cake in

plain sight on your own kitchen counter. Putting some physical distance between you and the temptation is almost certain to shore up your willpower.

Second is something called temporal discounting. It’s a quirk of the human brain, that something we must wait for is less demanding (i.e. less tempting) than something we can have right this minute. When that urge for a slice of cake or a social media binge strikes, tell yourself you can have it in half an hour. Chances are, when that time is up, the urge will have loosened its grip. Besides, that gives you a half-hour to find something suitably distracting.

Third is cognitive distancing. Can you view the tempting scene from the perspective of someone else? Imagine someone in the room who would have an easier time resisting and believes you can resist. Suppose Super Woman was on the couch next to you. What would she do — grab the remote or get outside?

**5. Prime your brain.** If you decide this morning that when the dessert cart comes by this evening, you’re going to say, “Thanks, I’ll just have coffee,” you’re much more likely to say that. It sounds crazy, but it works. If you haven’t given it any thought ahead of time, your response to the dessert cart is driven by the hot system of desire. Once you put the notion of an alternate behavior in your mind, you’re much more likely to engage your cooler PFC. If you have a habit of checking social media after any meeting, give yourself an alternate plan: When I return from my 10 o’clock meeting, I’ll immediately start on the report that’s due Friday.

**6. Tidy up.** Research by Roy Baumeister, author of “Willpower, Rediscovering the greatest Human Strength,” suggests that we have a lot more willpower in a tidy environment. Cleaning up your desk will make it easier to stick to work instead of checking social media. Keeping your kitchen counter clear of clutter is likely to help you make better snacking choices. Turns out Mom was right: Make your bed, pick up your socks. It’ll just make life easier.

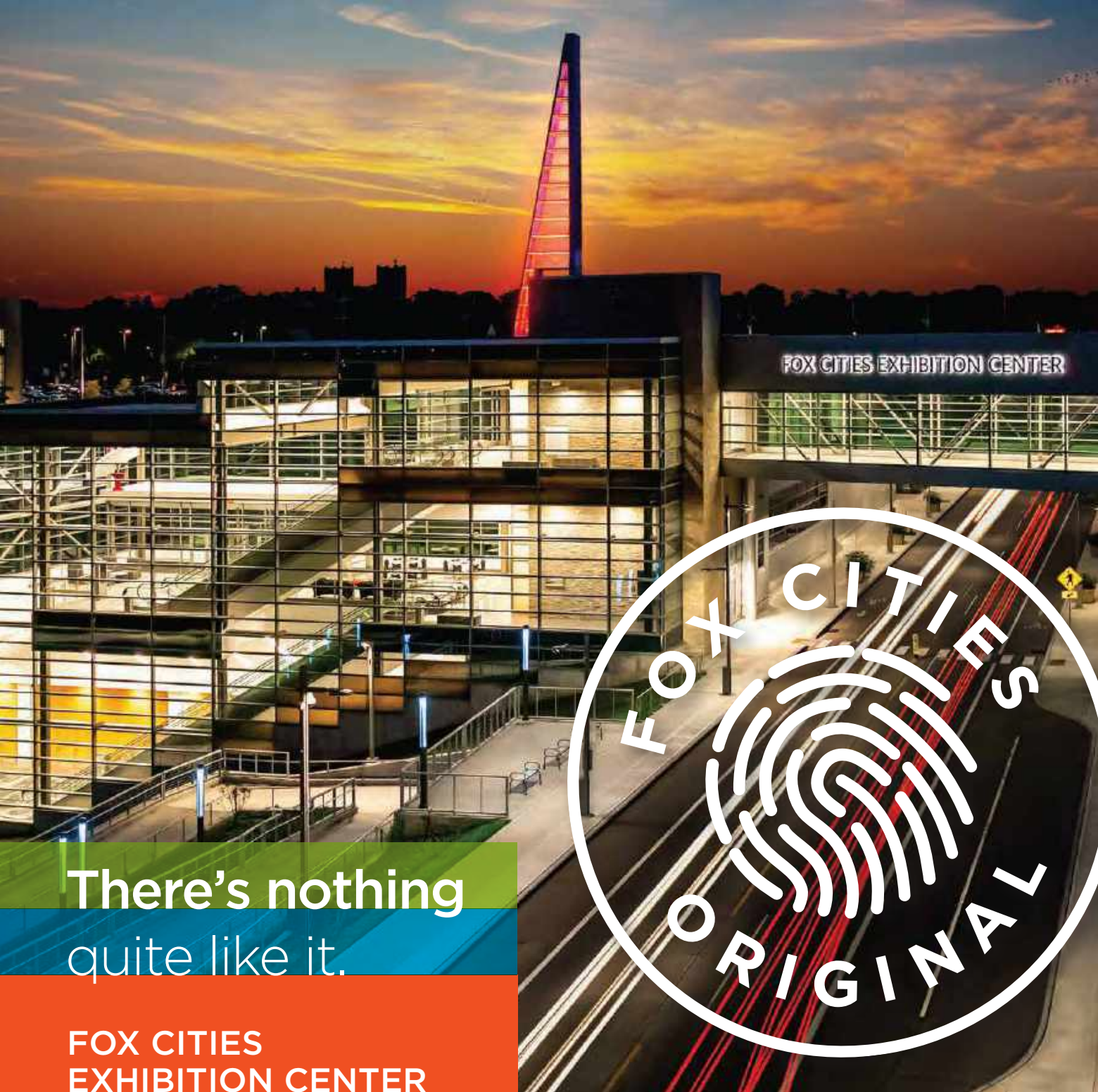
**7. Monitor your progress.** Tracking your progress, whether in a notebook, on a spreadsheet or just on a sticky note, helps you keep better choices top of mind. First, it engages the cool system of the PFC, and second, tracking your good behavior will make you happy, and a happy brain is a stronger-willed brain.

Temptation is a fact of life, but we don’t have to move through life on the losing end of the power struggle. Resistance is a learnable skill. Try different strategies. Build your resistance muscle by noticing your response and then practicing whatever works until it becomes habit. [www.wm.edu](http://www.wm.edu)



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 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@mollyrosec coaching.com](mailto:mollyrose@mollyrosec coaching.com).





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## PLANNER BASICS

# SHOW YOUR VALUE

HOW CORPORATE PLANNERS CAN MAKE THEMSELVES INDISPENSABLE DURING THE PANDEMIC.

BY RONNIE WENDT

The modern workplace appears quite different from in the past. More employees work from home, businesses require social distancing and masks in the office, and many meetings are taking place virtually.

In this changing atmosphere, corporate planners also face new roles or feel they need to justify their positions.

"Corporate planners need to keep visible. They may not be planning meetings, but they play a crucial role in helping the company navigate engagement," says Terri Lynn Yanke, owner of Eventful Advantage.

She points out there's much planners can do to keep employees engaged, especially if most of the workforce works from home.

"Planners can keep people connected and information flowing," she says.

If the entire staff works remotely, planners can identify approaches to keep employees connected. Yanke recommends helping teams establish daily conference calls or video chats and planning weekly company-wide calls. She also suggests scheduling monthly video chats that encourage connection and fun.

"Host a virtual happy hour or something that's not work related to keep employees connected. When

you're not working together in an office, you lose that personal relationship, which is important to productivity," she says.

### Guide the Return to In-person

Yanke stresses that in-person meetings are essential even as the pandemic pushes on. Companies affected by the COVID-19 shutdown need strategic planning sessions to navigate these setbacks.

"Strategic planning is best done in person," Yanke says. "Strategy meetings need that natural flow of ideas and brainstorming that only happens when people meet in person."

Planners play a pivotal role when companies return to in-person meetings. It becomes their responsibility to establish safety protocols and rules that keep attendees safe.

When planning to meet in person, Yanke stresses planners must organize both an in-person meeting and a virtual one and be ready to switch on a dime. "Unfortunately, that's more work for the planners, but right now you absolutely must have a contingency plan," she says.

Know the local requirements for gatherings. Yanke points out that Dane County, for example, limits inside gatherings to 10 people while Wisconsin Dells caps the number at 25. This knowledge helps planners decide where to hold their meeting.

*"Corporate planners ... may not be planning meetings, but they play a crucial role in helping the company navigate engagement."*

*—Terri Lynn Yanke, Owner, Eventful Advantage*

Planners also can elect to plan a hybrid meeting to reduce attendance numbers. Getting up to speed on technology requirements and engaging two audiences is something planners can do to ready themselves for hybrid meetings, Yanke says.



"With the hybrid meeting you have the challenge of engaging a virtual and an in-person audience. That challenge grows if you want these two audiences to interact with each other," she says.

Planners must collaborate with venues to introduce safety measures. These steps may include sitting everyone at separate tables, boxed lunches, cleaning the meeting room midday, temperature checks before entering the meeting space and more.

Yanke adds it's also time to sharpen negotiation skills, which helps planners land a great price from venues where business is down. She reminds planners to include a force majeure clause in every contract. "If the governor restricts meetings further, this clause lets you reschedule or get your money back," she says. "Many people got burned during the shutdown because they did not have these clauses in their contracts."


Remember to add in some fun, she adds. Many people fear in-person events. Provide a care kit that comes in a reusable bag with a mask that has the company's logo on it, hand sanitizer and information about what steps are being taken to keep attendees safe. "This shows employees that the company cares about their health," she says.

Planners also can aid in developing safety rules and communicating those rules to employees attending the meetings.

Educate employees on the health expectations for the meeting, such as stay home if you're ill or have a temperature. Also inform attendees of what the company expects of them during the meeting to keep everyone safe.

"Tell them these are the rules we have in place to keep everyone safe," says Yanke. "It's important to remind employees about handwashing, social distancing and mask requirements."

Corporate planners need not fear the pandemic pushing them out. Their position plays a more important role than ever before. It's their job to keep people connected safely. **WM**



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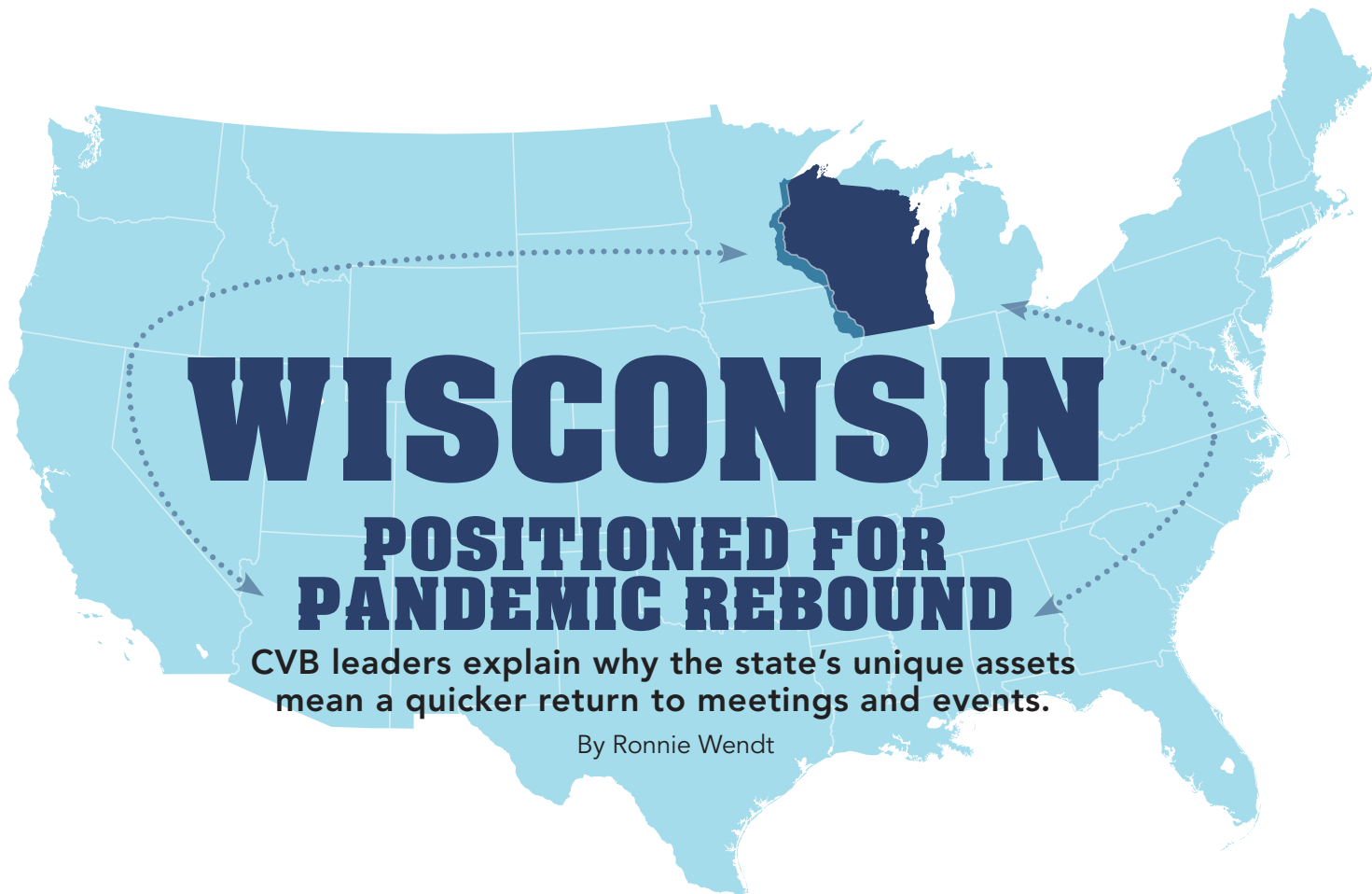
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BUT THEY FEEL  
COMFORTABLE  
DRIVING TO A  
DESTINATION.”**

*—Penny Strom, Executive  
Director, St. Germain  
Chamber of Commerce*

### **Announcements of major event cancellations have rocked Wisconsin's tourism industry and local economies since March.**

From the EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, to Summerfest in Milwaukee and the World Dairy Expo in Madison, the hits from the COVID-19 pandemic keep piling up.

The economic fallout from the pandemic mounts as well, especially in the hospitality industry.

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) CEO Missy Hughes describes a “crisis that hits every person, every region, every economy in our state, and beyond our borders” in the organization’s pandemic impacts report. The WEDC study finds state businesses reported \$22.2 billion in income losses, and another \$37.8 billion in other economic losses.

However, representatives from the state’s convention and visitor bureaus see a silver lining amidst the doom and gloom. They predict a comeback for Wisconsin’s meetings and events industry. The rebound, they say, will come from innovation and the unique meeting and event opportunities across the state.

“In every challenge there is opportunity. The pandemic forced the hospitality industry to move outside the box and reimagine their spaces,” says Leslie Johnson, director of sales for VISIT Milwaukee. “It will be interesting to see how venues reinvent themselves and use their spaces differently than they have in the past.”



## #1 A DRIVABLE DESTINATION

"I can only speak for Wisconsin Dells, but our location in the state puts us in an ideal position for meetings and conventions moving forward," says Jessica Rieflin, sales manager of the Wisconsin Dells Visitor & Convention Bureau.

Rieflin explains Wisconsin Dells is centrally located in the Midwest and easily accessible by automobile, train and even plane, with the Madison airport being less than an hour drive away. The Amtrak train stops in downtown Wisconsin Dells, and there are four easy on/off exits from Interstate 90/94.

Destinations farther north echo Rieflin's sentiment. Penny Strom, executive director of the St. Germain Chamber of Commerce, reports business picked up quickly after the shutdown. She adds, "People are cancelling their long-range, destination travel. They don't feel comfortable getting on a plane and traveling, but they feel comfortable driving to a destination."

Strom continues, "The Northwoods is an easy drive from surrounding states. We are four hours away from Minneapolis, six hours from Chicago and seven hours from Indianapolis."

The Fox Cities also attracts planners hoping to seat meetings in a drivable destination. Alison Hutchinson, group sales manager of the Fox Cities CVB, reports that being a smaller, nearby destination attracts planners to the area. "It will take time for people to gain confidence and travel to more distant destinations," she says.

Johnson also finds Milwaukee ready to return. The city of 602,000 is centrally located in the United States and a short drive from Chicago, Minneapolis and Indianapolis. The destination's easily accessible international airport and world-class amenities remain a big draw. She predicts "leisure travelers will come back first."

COVID-19 struck Madison hard. The city of 233,000 lost two big events — the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association's boys

basketball tournament and the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism — within weeks of the shutdown. Even so, as a drivable destination with a sizable regional airport, it stands ready to welcome back events, though at press time indoor gatherings were still limited to no more than 10 people per local health regulations. Likewise, its more loosely packed urban density allows for social distancing.

"Attendees can practice social distancing in a very walkable environment and that provides some comfort to people, and several of our key partners are adopting the highest safety standards possible, including the GBAC [Global Biorisk Advisory Council] protocols," says Deb Archer, president/CEO of Destination Madison.

## #2 THE GREAT OUTDOORS

"Outdoor venues are seeing a big surge," says Hutchinson. "People feel there's less risk if they're outside."

The Wisconsin State Park System, which includes both state parks and state recreation areas, offers 66 state park units, covering over 60,570 acres.

"These areas are available for outdoor events," Johnson says.

Even the state's larger cities offer plenty of outdoor opportunities for meetings and events, and activities after the meeting ends. "We offer kayak rentals, paddle taverns, Duffy boat rentals and fishing charters — all great opportunities for team building events," says Johnson.

Fishing, boating, biking, kayaking and other outdoor activities also abound in Madison, where Archer reports the CVB has launched the Explore Outdoor Madison promotion. The campaign highlights the fun activities and natural physical distancing found in the city that offers five lakes, dozens of parks and 240 miles of bike trails.

"We are pushing outdoor activities because we're hearing from both leisure and business travelers that people feel safer outdoors than inside a meeting space all day," says Archer.

Madison's efforts also include its "Streatery" restaurant program, which allows restaurants to expand outdoor dining onto sidewalks, on-street parking areas and in privately owned parking lots. "It's expanding, which is awesome, because people feel more comfortable eating outside right now," Archer says.

Wisconsin Dells pushes planners to select intimate outdoor activities. Rieflin recommends seeing the iconic sandstone bluffs and Wisconsin River on a Dells Boat Tour. The tour company will customize outings to a time schedule and include shore landings upon request. The Ducks will pick up conference attendees at area hotels and resorts to explore the area on land and water.

**“OUTDOOR VENUES ARE SEEING A BIG SURGE. PEOPLE FEEL THERE’S LESS OF A RISK IF THEY’RE OUTSIDE.”**

—Alison Hutchinson, Group Sales Manager, Fox Cities CVB

## #3 SMALLER SIZE VENUES

Planners are moving meetings to smaller venues, reports Hutchinson. Here, Wisconsin also stands out.

In Wisconsin Dells alone, for example, the Sundara Inn & Spa offers event space for smaller meetings as does Coldwater Canyon, with 700 square feet of meeting space. The Northwoods Children's Museum in Vilas County offers a Celebration Room for up to 60 people. More sizable venues, such as the Wisconsin Center, Alliant Energy Center, Kalahari Resorts & Conventions and Glacier Canyon Lodge at the Wilderness Resort, stand ready to host larger meetings, but also offer flexible space for smaller events.

# Wisconsin A Drivable Destination

## FROM MINNEAPOLIS TO:

Madison: 268 miles

Milwaukee: 370 miles

Wisconsin Dells: 217 miles

Minocqua: 226 miles



## FROM CHICAGO TO:

Madison: 152 miles

Milwaukee: 92 miles

Wisconsin Dells: 201 miles

Minocqua: 374 miles

## FROM INDIANAPOLIS TO:

Madison: 330 miles

Milwaukee: 276 miles

Wisconsin Dells: 379 miles

Minocqua: 531 miles

Milwaukee offers a number of large and small venues, all of which offer indoor and outdoor spaces in a variety of sizes, reports Johnson. VISIT Milwaukee partners with venues to help them develop sanitation practices that keep attendees healthy. "People will be more mindful of safety and sanitation. Planners do not want to pack people into a general session anymore," she says.

Whether venues are large or small, Hutchinson advises planners to ask about sanitation and cleaning practices. "The venue should be upfront about it," she says. "If it is like pulling teeth to get information, they are not prepared. But if they say, 'We provide masks and gloves to all employees, we added hand sanitizer stations, here's how we space people six feet apart, we fog the room during your lunch break,' and things like that, they are ready for you."

## #4 COST EFFECTIVE

Destination Madison took steps to expand the city's value for meetings and events before the pandemic took hold. Its innovative and customer-centric One City. One Contract.™ program allows planners to sign one master contract for all city hotels. The singular contract standardizes force majeure, indemnification and cut-off date administration.

"The contract addresses a key concern of planners: risk mitigation," states Archer. "We offer a no-attribution policy on room blocks until 11 months out through 2024. Other cities offer no attrition through 2020 or into 2021. We are taking a different approach. We are saying we know you won't know what your room blocks are until the future. This allows planners to lock in a percentage of the rooms and leave the remaining rooms as a courtesy block until the customer or the hotel needs them."

Madison also revised the contract's core force majeure clause after the pandemic. "We've adjusted our force majeure clause to 90 days out," Archer says.

Besides protecting risk, Madison and other destinations protect the pocketbook. "Planners have two main concerns: How the pandemic will affect attendance and the bottom line," Archer says. "Planners cannot believe it when I tell them our coffee is under \$40 a gallon."

Food and beverage cost savings are possible across the state, when compared to venues in other states, Archer adds.

Hutchinson says cost savings magnify in smaller regions, like the Fox Cities. "Our services are very cost effective. Parking, for instance, is \$5 versus \$20 for a day, and everything is easy to get to because of our small size," she says.

Pandemic or not, CVB leaders agree Wisconsin's many pluses position it for a rebound. They say Wisconsin's meeting and events industry will recover as the pandemic pushes planners to seek drivable destinations, outdoor and smaller-sized venues, at a price they can afford. **WM**





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By Ronnie Wendt

# THE SHOW MUST GO ON

**How two organizations moved a fundraiser and a conference to a virtual format during the pandemic shutdown.**

The expanding COVID-19 pandemic prompted organizations to cancel events, postpone meetings and shutter venues in March to contain the outbreak.

Some state organizations, however, decided the show must go on as the pandemic took hold. These savvy planners leapt into virtual formats when Wisconsin's Safer at Home Order blocked in-person gatherings larger than 10.

Make-A-Wish Wisconsin held a virtual fundraiser and raised \$600,000 to grant wishes for children battling critical illnesses; and the Wisconsin Technology Council made its 2020 Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Conference digital and attracted 320 participants.

These organizations deemed their livestreamed events a success and say they will host virtual events again. The following case studies offer their tips for holding virtual events.





## 5 WAYS TO KEEP ATTENDEES ENGAGED

In today's COVID-19 meetings and events scene, the term Zoomed out describes the fatigue and zoning out attendees' experience after endless virtual meetings, chats and quizzes.

Keeping people engaged during virtual meetings requires planners to stretch their creativity, states Michael Dickinson, director of operations for Conference Technologies Inc., a Milwaukee audio/visual company that helps plan virtual meetings.

Dickinson offers 5 approaches to keep attendees' attention during virtual events.

**ADD IN GAMIFICATION.** Putting attendees in a quest for prizes keeps engagement high. Dickinson suggests using jackbox TV. Here, attendees connect to a jackbox.tv web address, enter a code and join the game. The game might involve trivia, virtually visiting event sponsors, or taking polls or surveys.

# 1

**HIRE AN EMCEE.** An emcee livens up a virtual event and keeps attendees talking. A good virtual emcee adds in audience interaction throughout the event. He or she also might guide and read off poll results or direct Q&A sessions.

# 2

### ADD IN LIVE POLLING AND Q&AS.

Live polls and surveys personalize a virtual event and enhance the overall experience. Polls keep attendees on their toes while providing data on attendee participation and engagement. Asking questions of experts and letting them answer also provides opportunities to learn.

# 3

**SET UP A LOBBY.** If the event begins at 10:30 a.m., Dickinson recommends opening a virtual lobby at 10 a.m. Include chatrooms for networking, gamification, and polls to promote participation. Include a performance to infuse flavor and interest. "I had one company hire a magician to perform in the 'lobby' of their virtual event," Dickinson says. "Attendees loved it."

# 4

**DON'T OVERLOOK PRODUCTION QUALITY.** Virtual events call for a professional look to keep interest high. Make branded backdrops, great visuals and high-quality video a mainstay for every virtual event.

# 5



“Next year we are considering having the live event and livestreaming a video program to the broader public the following day.”

—Forrest Doolen,  
Director of Marketing  
and Communications,  
Make-A-Wish Wisconsin

# A VIRTUAL FUNDRAISER

## HOW MAKE-A-WISH HOSTED AN ONLINE GALA AND RAISED \$600,000 TWO WEEKS AFTER THE COVID-19 SHUTDOWN BEGAN.

“A wish has the power to change lives,” said Steve Stark, as his family accepted the 2020 Wish Award at the annual Make-A-Wish Wisconsin Wish Night fundraising gala held in April.

Stark’s emotional speech shared how his son Kaden helped others during his 14 years. “He taught all of us to do more,” Stark said.

He shared that Kaden’s dream was to give other kids wishes. His vision set his family on a journey to donate 100 wishes. As the family nears its goal, Stark said, “100 wishes aren’t enough,” and added, “we plan to live by example and continue to do more.”

He concluded, “This all started because of Kaden’s love for Make-A-Wish.”

The Stark family’s heart-rendering acceptance speech began an evening packed with similar stories.

Though the gala flowed similarly to previous years, COVID-19 ushered in a few changes; the biggest of which was holding the entire event online instead of at The Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee.

“Wish Night is an event we’ve put on for over 25 years, raising over \$8 million. The gala is an important event for us, so when things began shutting down, we needed to pivot quickly,” says Forrest Doolen, director of marketing and communications for Make-A-Wish Wisconsin.

Leaders of the nonprofit organization collectively agreed the show must go on. The funds the event raises make a difference in the lives of hundreds of critically ill children annually.

The resulting April 2 gala would have made Kaden proud. The Facebook Live event raised more than \$600,000.

“Our [in-person] event was budgeted to raise \$750,000,” Doolen says. “Though we didn’t quite reach our original goal, we raised enough money to help grant 100 wishes.”

The live broadcast, which featured stories on children whose wishes had been granted, drew over 6,400 total views between Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

### WISH NIGHT

Over 650 people typically attend Wish Night, which includes a cocktail hour followed by a full dinner, a diamond pull, wine pull, silent auction and a two-hour program. Part of the evening includes sharing stories about Wish kids like Kaden, that touch people’s hearts and drive donations.

“We put a high production value into sharing these stories, with a producer who shares his time and talents to tell the impact of a Wish,” Doolen says. “He had already shot footage for the stories.”



However, the virtual format removed the in-the-moment part where families of Wish kids see their stories brought to life. "We supplemented the video stories with video content from Wish families as they watched their videos for the first time," he says. "We wanted authenticity in the moment."

Make-A-Wish Wisconsin asked the Stark family and others to record their reactions as they watched their videos. The organization incorporated these videos into the live event. "If you're doing a virtual event, you want people to connect with the content you put out," he says. "These videos engaged the heart."

The organization supplemented these videos with videos from Patti Gorsky, president and CEO of Make-A-Wish Wisconsin, and others.

"We had our videographer string the videos together. He added graphics pointing viewers to the website, the time bidding closed and things like that, and put music in different spots," he says.

The organization interspersed live interactions between the videos to make the event appear live. Make-A-Wish Wisconsin selected OneStream.live to livestream the broadcast, ensuring audience participation and a seamless presentation.

"It cost \$39 for one month and we only used it for one month," Doolen says. "That \$39 was the best investment ever. We added Periscope at the last minute to livestream on Twitter. We didn't promote the Twitter event but thought it would not hurt anything."

The event began at 7 p.m., April 2, with 600 viewers watching on Facebook and YouTube. Those 600 viewers stayed online the entire event. To date, the event's total Facebook impressions are over 14,000; Twitter impressions are over 10,000; and YouTube views are over 14,000.

## DRAWING ATTENTION TO A VIRTUAL EVENT

Staff hit the phones as soon as Make-A-Wish Wisconsin moved to a virtual format. The organization needed to notify sponsors and hosts of the change. The organization also sent emails to sponsors and hosts that told them how to access the livestream event.

The nonprofit started a Facebook event page and promoted the event on social media. By April 2, more than 1,800 people expressed interest in attending.

"We raised just over \$600,000 in net revenue," he says. "Our silent auction raised over \$128,000. We nearly sold out of the 350 wine bottles we had, and our diamond pull brought in almost \$7,000. We were down a little over \$50,000. The goal for paddle-raised donations was about \$225,000 but we still raised \$101,000 there. We counted all of this as a huge win."

Make-A-Wish Wisconsin learned virtual events add tremendous value. "Sharing the program virtually gave us access to a much wider audience," Doolen says. "Next year, we are considering having the live event and the following day livestreaming a recorded program to the broader public."

## KEY TAKEAWAYS:

**TEAMWORK:** Without everyone working together, a virtual event is impossible to pull off. Make-A-Wish Wisconsin staff held daily virtual meetings leading up to the event to gather input from staff members and keep plans on track.

1

2

**COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE:** Develop an effective communication plan that keeps staff on the same page and guests aware of the change. Leverage email, social media, texts and instant messaging to inform everyone about registration and participation in the livestreamed event.

**STAY TRUE TO YOUR MISSION:** Keep the heart of your mission in mind and do not stray from it. While it is important to do things that keep people engaged, it is also essential to stay true to the organizational mission. Doing so drives decision making and keeps the focus where it should be.

3

# VIRTUAL INNOVATIONS

## HOW THE WISCONSIN ENTREPRENEURS' CONFERENCE PIVOTED TO A VIRTUAL FORMAT.

Brian Pinkerton, keynote speaker at the Wisconsin Technology Council's (WTC's) virtual 2020 Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Conference, emphasized that technology is a tool and what matters is how people use it.

The statement by the chief architect for Siri at Apple seemed especially fitting as the WTC leveraged digital technology to host its first virtual conference June 4.

Normally WTC holds the event, dubbed one of the largest events for entrepreneurs and early stage investors in the Upper Midwest, at one of the state's larger meeting and event venues. This year, the pandemic put a wrinkle in WTC's plans.

But the organization took a leap of faith and produced its first virtual conference using the pandemic to guide its planning. Over 320 attendees logged into the insightful, multi-faceted conference, which kicked off with Pinkerton's presentation about his work on Siri for Apple.

### STAYING TRUE TO ITS MISSION

"There were parts of this long-standing event that we needed to preserve as we moved to a digital format," reports Tom Still, WTC president. "Whether these three things were live or virtual, we needed to preserve the integrity of these events," he says.

Attendees customized their experience by adding information about themselves and topics of interest to their profiles. Guests also participated in small group workshops and discussions, watched presentations from participants in the Governor's Business Plan Contest, and voted for the first-ever People's Choice award.

WTC kept the event's sponsor exhibits. This portion proved somewhat challenging as Still explains a virtual trade show is quite different from a trade show floor where people can wander by. "We had to produce content that was valuable for attendees and sponsors," Still says.

Sponsors crafted product videos, and some offered prizes for attendees who watched them. They allowed video calls and took questions via the virtual platform's chat feature. WTC encouraged attendees to visit booths by printing and mailing a program that included sponsor advertisements.

He adds they held trivia contests with prizes and polls throughout the day-long event to keep attendees engaged.

Still credits Pathable's online SaaS platform, which recorded conference sessions including the award ceremonies. "Pathable has done a lot of events like this," Still says. "They were helpful and very customer conscious. The company offers different price points, depending on how many attendees we expected and how many bells and whistles we added.

"The only downfall to the virtual platform is that sometimes people do not engage as much as they might when it's live," Still says. "We also learned that if you have a chatroom, you need to have at least two people moderating the chat, so it doesn't fall on a single moderator to keep the conversation flowing."

The platform also allowed attendees to take part in 1:1 private video conference meetings, message each other individually, participate in discussion boards, and to visit virtual sponsor booths and engage with them via a video call. The platform recorded all sessions, which attendees can access for up to a year.

### FUTURE PLANS

COVID-19 still presents uncertainties for state meetings and events. This may mean changes for WTC's next big event, the Early Stage Symposium scheduled in November. [WM](#)

## KEY TAKEAWAYS:

### BREAKOUTS ARE IMPORTANT:

Organizers scheduled regular breaks during the event to allow time for one-on-one virtual meetings and to take care of household tasks.

1

**SPONSOR BOOTHS:** Staff virtual booths. Sponsors tied videos to their booths and some offered prizes for those who watched them. Some took questions via the virtual platform's chat feature. WTC printed and mailed a program, which contained sponsor ads.

2

**STAFF THE EVENT:** Appoint employees to act as customer happiness agents during the event. These individuals can help attendees with log in or chat problems and questions.

3

**BUILD IN FUN:** Poll the audience, hold a trivia contest with prizes, host a scavenger hunt that requires attendees to visit virtual booths or connect with another attendee.

4



# MIDDLETON

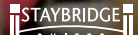
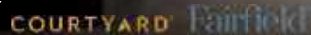
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— DESTINATION —

# Waukesha County

COUNTRY LIVING MEETS CITY CHIC IN THE  
MEETING AND EVENTS TRIFECTA OF BROOKFIELD,  
PEWAUKEE AND WAUKESHA.

By Ronnie Wendt



TOFTE'S TABLE WAUKESHA

*“Our obvious plus for meetings and events is location, location, location. We’re located just off the interstate, which makes us very easy to find.”*

—Nancy Justman, President/CEO  
of Visit Brookfield

Just minutes west of Milwaukee is Waukesha County. Home to a number of Milwaukee suburbs, including the communities of Brookfield, Pewaukee and Waukesha, this area is just a short drive down the interstate from General Mitchell International Airport, the Lake Express ferry and the Wisconsin State Fairgrounds, among dozens of other attractions and points of interest.

While each community has its own unique identity, they all share commonalities, including their ability to host successful meetings and events.

Nancy Justman, president/CEO of Visit Brookfield, explains, “Our obvious plus for meetings and events is location, location, location... We’re located just off the interstate which makes us extremely easy to find. We have well over 2,000 hotel rooms, and our available meeting space can accommodate small corporate events to large-scale conferences with up to 1,800 attendees.”





DOWNTOWN WAUKESHA RIVERWALK



THE INGLESIDE HOTEL

Add in Pewaukee and Waukesha's varied venues and eclectic amenities and planners encounter a true meeting and events trifecta.

Waukesha and Pewaukee are hidden gems nestled in the heart of Lake Country. Visitors will delight in the area's many lakes, rivers, parks, shopping, art studios and fine dining, states Tammy Tritz, executive director of the Waukesha Pewaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Tritz also cites location as Waukesha and Pewaukee's strengths. "We're about halfway

between Milwaukee and Madison, and all of our properties are right off the interstate, making it very easy for meeting planners and attendees to find us," she says.

Waukesha-Pewaukee's 10 hotels offer 1,100 guest rooms, a mix of both large and small event spaces, and diverse activities. Attendees won't want to retire to their rooms when they can explore Pewaukee Lake, the largest lake in Waukesha County, stroll along the Fox River in downtown Waukesha or take in the area's fine dining and unique shopping.

"The Fox River runs through historic downtown Waukesha, and there's about a one-mile walk around the river through Frame Park. It is a beautiful experience, and not the sort of experience one expects to find in a suburban setting," Tritz says.

### ***A Venue for Every Meeting***

People use the term "new normal" to describe post-pandemic life. But in Brookfield, with the recent addition of the Brookfield Conference Center, the phrase means something different. The Brookfield Conference Center's towering ceilings, banks of



**BROOKFIELD CONFERENCE CENTER**  
©HOLLY LEITNER



**THE INGLESIDE HOTEL**



**THE HISTORIC COURTHOUSE**

floor-to-ceiling windows, shiny terrazzo floors, and walls of hand-glazed terracotta set a new normal for the conference industry.

At 54,000 square feet, the conference center, seated on the south end of Brookfield Square, is the largest event space in the city. It features an intuitive and flexible design that accommodates events up to 1,800 attendees.

Its 18,000-square-foot Connect Ballroom splits into 11 configurations, while the center's smaller, 6,000-square-foot Collaboration Ballroom splits into three configurations. "The center's flexibility accommodates requests from clients who sought a divisible space they could use for different functions," Justman says.

A state-of-the-art boardroom, 9,000-square-foot outdoor garden and an 8,000-square-foot outdoor ballroom add to the center's adaptability.

The Hilton Garden Inn, with 168 rooms, attaches to the conference center and the Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield Hotel is just steps away. The Sheraton offers nearly 20,000 square feet of meetings and event space, with the largest being the Brookfield Ballroom, holding up to 900 people.

"We can host events that use multiple hotel properties. There are 2,000 hotel rooms within a one-mile radius of the conference center," says Justman. "We work with the Sheraton for breakout sessions and other opportunities."

The Residence Inn reopens this fall after an extensive renovation. Also opening soon are a Fairfield Inn and a Holiday Inn Express in The Corridor, a new development located just I-94 in Brookfield. Room counts will rise to over 2,500 once the hotels open.

The Ingleside Hotel is the largest venue in Pewaukee-Waukesha. Owners renovated the former Country Springs Hotel two years ago. The hotel offers 40,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space and 20 private event venues to serve groups of two to 720 people.

"The Ingleside Hotel speaks to the association [meeting] market," Tritz says. "It provides general session and breakout space. The on-site waterpark makes it an excellent family destination too."

The hotel sits on 40 acres sprinkled with walking trails. "We have a lot of outdoor space, which is great for people wanting to hold an outdoor meeting," says Tiffany Woodward, director of marketing and waterpark sales at The Ingleside Hotel. "They can move the meeting outside and do a group or a team building event, and we can help them with that."

Nearby, the renovated Marriott Milwaukee West offers 281 guest rooms and 11,000 square feet of meeting space. Its ballroom breaks down into two smaller ballrooms or two small ballrooms and a breakout space. The site also offers boardrooms for breakout sessions.

"This hotel has a very corporate feel," says Tritz.





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***“ The area has over 150 restaurants and over 250 shopping opportunities. We also have some new attractions that are very exciting. We have Whirlyball, the Marcus Movie Tavern and a gamut of unbelievable restaurants. ”***

***— Nancy Justman,  
President/CEO of Visit Brookfield***



Down the road, the Holiday Inn, a Frank Lloyd Wright-style building, features a sizeable meeting room in the lower level and several smaller meeting spaces. "This hotel offers 119 guest rooms and serves the corporate traveler," Tritz says. "It's a great location for committee meetings, strategic planning and smaller association events."

The Holiday Inn's sister property with a Northwoods feel lies nearby. Wildwood Lodge sits next to the popular Machine Shed restaurant and offers space for smaller meetings and events.

"All four properties sit across from one another," Tritz says. "Attendees have choices of hotels and great dining experiences in the same area."

### **Varied and Unique**

The Clark Hotel in downtown Waukesha combines contemporary sophistication with old-world charm. The Irish-themed hotel, built from several historic properties combined into one, offers 20 unique guest rooms, conference rooms and a 2,000-square-foot ballroom.

"It's fun to have a boutique property amongst our properties," Tritz says. "It offers a unique look and feel for guests."

Tritz points planners to Waukesha's historic courthouse built in 1893 as another option. Planners can rent this elegant beauty, which offers space for up to 300 guests. "The courthouse is stunningly beautiful and can be used for social events or a combination thereof," she says, adding that The Rotunda in downtown Waukesha also is a unique space. The site of the original Waukesha post office delivers rich history and historic elegance for meetings up to 250 guests.

The Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts also offers many beautiful event spaces. Its Harris Theater offers a posh place for performances, corporate meetings, and other private events while the Kuttemperoor Grand Hall's exposed wood beams and floor-to-ceiling fireplace provide an open, airy space for gatherings. The Burke Colonnade is available for outdoor events, while the Elmbrook Rotary Fireside Lounge and Ploch Art Gallery provide space for intimate gatherings.

### **Shop & Play**

Brookfield ranks high among shoppers for good reason. The area boasts over 3 million square feet of shopping.

The two biggest draws are Brookfield Square and The Corners, two major shopping centers that bookend a 4-mile stretch of Bluemound Road. Recent expansions at Calhoun Crossing, The Corners and The Corridor added nearly 250,000 square feet of shopping opportunities. Ruby Isle, Galleria West and Fountain Square also remain as local shopping favorites.

"The area has over 150 restaurants and over 250 shopping opportunities. We also have some new attractions that are very exciting. We have Whirlyball, the Marcus Movie Tavern and a gamut of unbelievable restaurants," Justman says.



VELOCE INDOOR SPEEDWAY MILWAUKEE



DOWNTOWN WAUKESHA  
©HOLLY LEITNER

## NECA 2020 Winter Meeting

The Wisconsin Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) held its 2020 Winter Meeting at The Ingleside Hotel in Pewaukee. The meeting's 100 attendees deemed the event a success. Tara Ripp, NECA administrative manager, shares more of the group's Pewaukee experience.

### WHY DID YOU SELECT WAUKESHA-PEWAUKEE FOR THE EVENT?

To be honest, it was The Ingleside Hotel that brought us to Waukesha-Pewaukee. We are always on the lookout for a nice hotel or resort, especially one willing to offer concessions.

### WHY WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THIS AREA TO OTHER PLANNERS?

The area is an easy drive, located off I-94 with nice hotels and unique shops downtown.

### WHY WILL YOU RETURN TO THE AREA?

We will return for the overall experience of a small-town atmosphere with charm, venues with friendly staff and the dedicated team at the Waukesha Pewaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau.

### WHAT ATTRACTIONS MIGHT OTHERS BE UNAWARE OF?

Waukesha is the home of Les Paul who is famous for developing the first electric guitar, and if you look around town, you will find decorative guitar statues in his honor.

### WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THE AFTER-HOURS ACTIVITIES?

Having a waterpark at the hotel was a hit. There is also an abundance of restaurants in the area.



Whirlyball combines whiffle ball, lacrosse, hockey, basketball and bumper cars into what's described as a game of skill coupled with a touch of chance. The facility also offers bumper bowling where the aim is to hit the bumpers as the ball rolls down the alley, and laser tag; all of which make great team building opportunities, reports Kim Casey, sales manager at Visit Brookfield.

"There's plenty of golf here in Brookfield, if anyone is looking to golf, and all Milwaukee venues are very close and available for different functions," Justman adds.

In Waukesha, locals say the start of Friday Night Live signals the onset of summer. The event, held downtown on Friday nights from June to August, offers live music on every street corner, late night shopping and delicious food.

But downtown Waukesha offers an eclectic mix of businesses and unique dining experiences every night of the week. Visitors can experience rooftop dining or outdoor cafes, sip wine at a local wine bar or smoke a stogie at the cigar bar. Boutiques, bookstores and antique shops complete the downtown experience.

Tritz recommends taking in the guitar displays throughout the downtown. "Artists

have given quite a nod to Les Paul, who was the inventor of the electric guitar," she says. "There are 10-foot, artistically decorated, fiberglass guitars on display, and a series of murals focused on Les Paul and the history of Waukesha."

Allô! Chocolat hosts fun, educational and tasty classes for groups. "Many of our groups have taken part in these classes where you can learn about making chocolate or using chocolate in your cooking," Tritz says.

Pewaukee Lake presents opportunities on the water and on the shore. The lake boasts the best musky fishing in southeast Wisconsin and there are fishing charters and guides available to take groups out fishing. Koha Yoga offers paddleboards for rent, paddleboard yoga classes and sunset paddleboarding for groups.

The lake also offers plentiful opportunities for the traditional Wisconsin fish fry. Tritz recommends checking out Artisan 179 for a farm-to-table dining experience, and the 5 O'Clock Club for its daily fish fry.

Planners hosting a meeting in Brookfield, Waukesha or Pewaukee areas are in for a treat. These suburban settings deliver an experience that is only captured when country living collides with city chic. **WM**



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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 Manitowoc 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.



## MANITOWOC



### QUICK FACTS

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

RaeAnn Thomas  
920-686-3077  
4221 Calumet Ave.  
Manitowoc, WI 54220  
rthomas@manitowoc.info  
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  
Stevens Point: 110 miles

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The Manitowoc Area Visitor & Convention Bureau offers a full line of convention services to help you host the best meeting ever. We look forward to being your host on the coast!



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## DESTINATION SHOWCASE



## REAL RACINE

### QUICK FACTS

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Eileen Arnold  
262-884-6407  
14015 Washington Ave.  
Sturtevant, WI 53177  
eileen@realracine.com  
aboutracine.com

#### COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Population: 130,000  
Number of hotel rooms: 1,400  
Largest meeting facility:  
10,000 square feet  
Largest exhibit facility:  
17,000 square feet  
Airport: General Mitchell  
International, Milwaukee

#### DISTANCE FROM

Madison: 100 miles  
Milwaukee: 25 miles

Chicago: 68 miles  
Minneapolis: 356 miles

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# THE NEW NORMAL

## FOR CATERING, CLEANING AND COLLABORATING

By Ronnie Wendt



How caterers, venues  
and meeting planners  
are changing their  
practices to protect  
people from COVID-19.

As the state emerges from its pandemic cocoon, the State of Wisconsin encourages planners to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for in-person meetings. The CDC recommendations include keeping meetings small and always adhering to recommended social distancing practices. The CDC also advises wearing masks and discourages sharing objects.

Even with guidelines in place, it is natural to approach your first in-person event with apprehension. The safety and wellbeing of attendees rests on your plans. Just as COVID-19 concerns changed how you plan, it's also changing how caterers, hotels and venues approach meetings and events.



## COVID CATERING BEST PRACTICES

- ☐ Staff serving food
- ☐ Servers wearing gloves and masks
- ☐ Social distancing guides on floors
- ☐ No self-serve drink or food stations
- ☐ Prepackaged or boxed food items
- ☐ Disposable utensils and condiments

## COVID CATERING

According to “Considerations for Events and Gatherings,” by the CDC, there’s no evidence that COVID-19 spreads by food. However, that same CDC document finds “people sharing utensils and congregating around food service areas poses a risk.”

The CDC advises against offering self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, salad bars or drink stations. Alma Kulata, director of sales at The Iron Horse Hotel, notes the venue handles food differently now. The Milwaukee hotel adjusted menu options and processes for meetings/events before reopening June 1.

“Our first meeting [upon reopening] originally planned a nice buffet breakfast and lunch, and we changed that pretty quickly,” Kulata says. “Buffets just are not possible right now.”

Does this mean the buffet is dead? “Not exactly,” reports Alison Hutchinson, president of MPI Wisconsin. She predicts cafeteria-style buffets where the waitstaff dishes up plates for attendees versus people serving themselves.

The Ingleside Hotel in Pewaukee now forgoes buffets and passed hors d’oeuvres. Servers instead deliver plated food to individuals. The hotel also breaks up larger buffets into multiple

stations, then mans each station with a server to dish food onto individual plates. Servers call people to stations in smaller groups to maintain social distancing.

Physical guides, such as stickers on floors or signs on walls, remind attendees to stand six feet apart in line. “You can’t just have a buffet line with 20+ people standing in line, then serving themselves,” says Tiffany Woodward, director of marketing and waterpark sales at The Ingleside Hotel.

Caterers predict a reversal in sustainability practices. The CDC recommends using disposable food service items such as utensils and dishes. Caterers offer more individually packaged meals and utensils to meet the CDC standard. “The goal is to keep the amount of contacts or touches to a minimum,” Hutchinson says.

The standard has led many caterers to remove community salt and pepper shakers and condiments from the tables. “We went to individual packets,” says Woodward. “Packets aren’t the prettiest to look at, but they are necessary to keep everyone safe.”

Health protections become limited when everyone touches a carafe, pitcher or spigot. Hotels find gathering drink orders then serving attendees individually works better. This practice limits the number of people touching a carafe, spigot or pitcher. “Our servers wear gloves and masks when serving beverages,” Kulata adds.

Boxed meals and snacks boost protection too. Kulata recommends offering a variety of dietary options such as vegan, vegetarian, paleo, gluten-free, allergen-free and Keto. “Many clients feel safer with prepackaged meals than plated and wrapped food,” says Kulata. “It’s important to ask what your clients feel most comfortable with.”

**“You can’t just have a buffet line with 20+ people standing in line, then serving themselves.”**

*—Tiffany Woodward, Director of Marketing and Waterpark Sales, The Ingleside Hotel*



The Iron Horse Hotel also limited its menu. The move lets the hotel expand kitchen sanitation, food preparation, and serving times. "We offer some customization," Kulata says. "But our menu is not as varied and customizable as in the past. We treated our reopening as a new hotel opening where there is much to learn."

### COVID CLEANING

The CDC encourages cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces between uses or at least daily in meeting rooms. The recommendation applies to door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, grab bars, hand railings, cash registers and more.

Destination Madison teamed with venues, convention facilities and hotels to develop sanitation cleanliness standards across the city. "We want planners to feel confident that their attendees will be protected from one venue and one hotel to the next," says Deb Archer, president and CEO of Destination Madison.

**"We put an ionizer in rooms after the event ends to clean and disinfect them before housekeepers do a deep clean."**

*—Alma Kulata, Director of Sales, The Iron Horse Hotel*

The Ingleside Hotel responded with its "Safe Promise" protocol, which it shares with employees and guests. The document lists guidelines for social distancing and explains its cleaning practices.

With Safe Promise, hotel employees deep clean meeting rooms daily and disinfect high-touch areas on a closely monitored schedule. Employees disinfect audio visual equipment, including microphones, podiums,



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A festive advertisement for "Micro Holiday Parties". The background shows a table with a white tablecloth, a bottle of "The Brown Bottle" beer, and some greenery. In the background, a Christmas tree is visible with warm lights. The text is overlaid on the image.

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### COVID CLEANING BEST PRACTICES

- ❑ Frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces
- ❑ Use of EPA-certified disinfectants
- ❑ Ionizing of meeting and guest rooms
- ❑ Cleaning standards and checklists
- ❑ Expanded time to clean meeting areas
- ❑ Supervisory oversight



switches and controls between uses. The hotel also added hand sanitizer dispensers to all podiums and banquet and meeting rooms.

The Ingleside Hotel increased the time spent cleaning each room, whether a meeting room or a guest room. Housekeepers follow a cleaning checklist for each area, even back of the house areas like the kitchen or banquet staging areas. The company uses EPA-certified disinfectants that housekeepers apply during cleaning. "We are giving housekeepers more time to hit those high touch surfaces more frequently," Woodward says.

The Iron Horse Hotel's Kulata says housekeepers once cleaned public areas and meeting spaces every hour, now they do so every 20 to 30 minutes. "We are constantly sanitizing," she says. "We put an ionizer in rooms after the event ends to clean and disinfect it before housekeepers do a deep clean. And our housekeepers wear PPE."

The Iron Horse Hotel doesn't schedule back-to-back meetings anymore to give housekeeping more time to do their jobs, cleaning every door handle, light fixture and even the buttons on the projector. A supervisor goes back through to make sure everything gets done and then wipes down the door handles again as he leaves.

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## COVID COLLABORATING

There are also practices meeting planners can put into place on their own to keep attendees safe. It's no longer a good idea to pack hundreds of people in a room, 10 to a table and other things that were once common practice.

Most venues assist planners in making meetings safe for all. "We are seeing venues being very responsive to the health guidelines," says Leslie Johnson, director of sales at VISIT Milwaukee. She explains venue staff help planners space seating, provide ready access to hand sanitizer, require mask wearing and plan safe meals.

Planners should ask attendees to supply information on where they are traveling from, where they will stay and how to reach them after the event during registration. This effort ensures planners have key contact information should a health issue arise during or after the event.

The meeting industry is embracing touchless registration. Planners can supply a QR code that allows attendees to check-in and print their badge before they arrive on site. This keeps event staff and attendees healthy. Consider making temperature checks mandatory and having attendees fill in a health questionnaire before entering.


The CDC recommends events adhere to recommended social distancing guidelines. Consider the layout of the room and arrange the furniture to ensure proper spacing between people. Some hotels, like Marriott Hotels, use a space-to-customer calculator to adjust meeting room capacities for social distancing. Set the room's capacity lower than approved occupancy numbers. Position an attendant at the door to scan attendees and manage capacity. Limit the people in restrooms to allow for social distancing and do not allow lines or crowds to form near them.

Planners should do their part to promote healthy practices by supplying complimentary masks and hand sanitizer. Incorporate signage that reminds attendees to socially distance, wash hands and use hand sanitizer. Mark floors to show proper social distancing wherever lines may form.

**"While there's an immense value in face-to-face events, meeting social distancing requirements may mean offering an in-person and a virtual option."**

*—Leslie Johnson, Director of Sales, VISIT Milwaukee*

Consider a hybrid event to keep attendance down. "The pandemic propelled us into the future," Woodward says. "People still want to hold in-person meetings, but we installed technology so they can livestream their event to people from all over the world. We've also upped our bandwidth to one gig, so we can handle pretty much anything a company throws at us."

Johnson adds, "I think technology will play a big factor in meetings going forward. While there's an immense value in face-to-face events, meeting social distancing requirements may mean offering an in-person and a virtual option. You might see planners offer a virtual keynote that attendees watch in their hotel rooms and then smaller breakouts that are in person. There's a lot of room for innovation." 



### HEALTHY MEETING BEST PRACTICES

- ☐ Social distance attendees
- ☐ Ready access to hand sanitizer
- ☐ Provide masks for all
- ☐ Touchless registration
- ☐ Hybrid meetings to keep attendance down
- ☐ Limit lines near restrooms
- ☐ Temperature checks and health questionnaires

SUNDARA INN & SPA

# Trendy SPACES

BY RONNIE WENDT

HOTEL GOODWIN

THE CHARMANT HOTEL

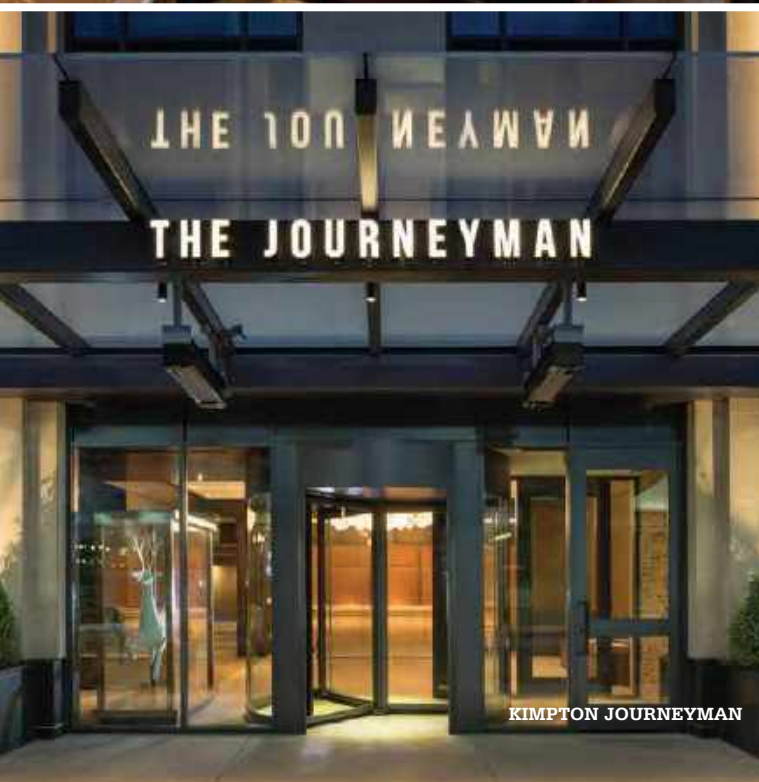




HOTEL GOODWIN



MAXWELL MANSION



KIMPTON JOURNEYMAN

## Boutique hotels offer unique and intimate settings for smaller meetings and events.

A Social Tables article promoting the benefits of boutique hotels named location, facilities, amenities and venue space as primary differentiators when compared to hotel chains. But in the post-pandemic new normal, planners may also cite the health atmosphere of these smaller, intimate spaces.

Planners desiring an authentic, local experience for their meeting will find it at a boutique hotel. Locally sourced food, florals and furniture, and a rich local history are prominent at these trendy spaces. Likewise, planners on a mission to provide meeting attendees with a personalized experience can deliver it at a boutique hotel. These smaller, 25- to 100-room hotels specialize in personalizing guest experiences.

Boutique hotels also inject a unique flavor not found in most hotel chains. Owners locate these hospitality options in historic buildings or innovative modern structures and fill them to the brim with eye-catching artwork, live music and historic relics.

Nearly every tourism destination in Wisconsin offers a boutique hotel experience or even two. Here is a sampling of some favorites across the state.





HOTEL GOODWIN

## SUNDARA INN & SPA, WISCONSIN DELLS

Sundara Inn & Spa is tucked away in an 80-acre pine forest on the outskirts of Wisconsin Dells. Much awarded by the readers of Travel + Leisure and Condé Nast Traveler magazines, Sundara is intimate by design, with 34 suites for overnight guests, a restaurant and rooftop greenhouse, light-filled fitness studio, indoor and outdoor heated pools, 26 treatment rooms including four Spa Together rooms and a salt therapy treatment room. Complimentary fitness and wellness classes, an adjacent championship golf course and flexible meeting spaces for small groups with inspiring views of surrounding woods round out the experience. This destination spa resort is adult-only and electronics-free in the common areas. [sundaraspa.com](http://sundaraspa.com)

## THE OXBOW HOTEL, EAU CLAIRE

In the heart of downtown Eau Claire lies the Oxbow Hotel and The Lakely. The property comprises two distinct buildings — The Main House and The Flats — joined by a courtyard and a comfortable, woodsy patio. The Main House hosts The Lakely — a locally sourced restaurant, bar and music venue — and an on-site outdoor outfitter offering bikes and other adventure gear. The property features flexible spaces for meetings and events, including The Lakely dining room, complete with a stage for presentations, and The Gallery, an inspiring space that features local artwork and a modern atmosphere. Full audio/visual functionality and complimentary Wi-Fi access are available. [theoxbowhotel.com](http://theoxbowhotel.com)



THE OXBOW HOTEL

## KIMPTON JOURNEYMAN, MILWAUKEE

The Kimpton Journeyman Hotel is a new venue in a historic district that respects the past while incorporating the best of the present. Visitors are greeted by expansive windows, a grand chandelier, thoughtful art, a concrete stenciled floor and conversational seating. A rooftop restaurant and bar, The Outsider, and a Mediterranean-inspired American restaurant, Tre Rivali, dish up culinary delights. Eclectic guest rooms feature well-worn carpets, plush footstools and rough, hand-hewn desks. Guests enjoy amenities such as morning coffee hour,



KIMPTON JOURNEYMAN



evening social hour, in-room yoga mats, complimentary bicycles and pet-friendly policies. The Milwaukee hotel offers a group package called “Meet with Confidence,” which allows groups to book with easy cancellation. [journeymanhotel.com](http://journeymanhotel.com)

### **MAXWELL MANSION, LAKE GENEVA**

Maxwell Mansion is one of the first mansions built in Lake Geneva, features beautiful gardens, lounges, outdoor fireplaces, a heated pool, croquet and bocce ball amusement. The historic mansion offers six traditional rooms with exquisite antiques, en-suite baths and old world sophistication, while the Carriage House & Stable Suites are more modern and dramatically designed with an equestrian “urBarn” (urban/barn) style featuring unique furnishings, sleek accents and reclaimed Wisconsin barn finishes. The mansion’s most luxurious rooms are located in the stables with Dutch door access, heated floors, two person peek-a-boo steam showers and decadent decor pieces. All rooms mix century-old charm with modern sophistication, with full amenities and personal touches. The Italianate mansion is also an exquisite and historic location for events up to 120 guests. [maxwellmansion1856.com](http://maxwellmansion1856.com)

### **SAINT KATE—THE ARTS HOTEL, MILWAUKEE**

Saint Kate – The Arts Hotel is a luxury boutique hotel boasting spacious suites, panoramic views and fine dining in the heart of Milwaukee’s arts and financial district. Located just a few blocks from the convention center, Fiserv Forum, Milwaukee Art Museum and the lakefront, Saint Kate is ideally placed for guests to explore downtown Milwaukee. Saint Kate features spacious guest rooms with high-end amenities, three restaurants, two bars, and four art galleries with exhibitions all year long. Saint Kate is created by artists for artists. The moment visitors step into Saint Kate, they experience the heart of the creative inspiration behind the space itself. The hotel’s seven meeting rooms offer 5,000 square feet of exhibit space and 11,600 square feet of meeting space. [saintkatearts.com](http://saintkatearts.com)

### **HOTEL GOODWIN, БЕЛОИТ**

Hotel Goodwin mixes history and modern luxury for a unique guest experience.

Each room is filled with distinctive eye-catching art, turntables and unique record collections, and glass showers. Geronimo Hospitality Group manages the 34-room hotel. The venue is steps away from Beloit’s varied shops offering everything from handmade quilts to bestselling books and spiritual crystals, and to nearby restaurants, which serve deli foods to seafood and steak. For those who want to stay in, the hotel’s in-house restaurant, Velvet Buffalo Café, dishes up a variety of flavors. Hotel Goodwin offers spaces for smaller events. Its trademark rooftop banquet space delivers breathtaking views of downtown Beloit. The 1,000-square-foot Grand Room accommodates 48 guests. [hotelgoodwin.com](http://hotelgoodwin.com)

### **COPPERLEAF BOUTIQUE HOTEL & SPA, APPLETON**

From the moment visitors step into Appleton’s CopperLeaf Boutique Hotel & Spa, they understand this is no ordinary hotel. Modeled after small, family-owned and operated European hotels, CopperLeaf offers personalized service in a warm, inviting and unique atmosphere. The comfortable venue lies steps away from vibrant downtown Appleton, with over 60 distinctive shops and more than 30 pubs, clubs and live music venues. The hotel is also a prime location for smaller group events, ranging from four to 84 guests. The Globe Boardroom features an executive table that seats 10, while the Autumn Room accommodates up to 84 guests but can divide into two smaller rooms. [copperleafhotel.com](http://copperleafhotel.com)

## 5 Benefits of Boutique Hotels

### **SMALL SIZE:**

Boutique hotels are smaller than most corporate hotels, with 10 to 100 rooms. Their intimate size frees hotel staff to cater to guest needs and deliver customized experiences.

### **CHIC AND CULTURAL STYLE:**

Boutique hotels leave the same-old-same-old behind to create a chic vibe that reflects local culture and trends.

### **UNIQUE OFFERINGS:**

Boutique properties offer a distinct vibe, varied amenities and unique experiences like roof-top terraces, trendy music venues or art galleries.

### **A WORTHWHILE ESCAPE:**

Boutique hotels are more than a place to sleep. Owners situate these hotels in historic buildings or modern new builds for a unique home away from home.

### **HEALTHY MEETINGS:**

Their intimate meeting spaces appeal to pandemic conscious planners. Smaller meetings and fewer guests add to attendee comfort levels as they return to face-to-face meetings.



MAXWELL MANSION

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THE CHARMANT HOTEL



HOTEL NORTHLAND

### HOTEL NORTHLAND, GREEN BAY

Hotel Northland opened in 2019 after a \$50 million update. The four-star, 160-room hotel in Green Bay features restored historic woodwork, plaster, terrazzo floors and accents. Its modern amenities include valet parking, a fitness room and luxury suites. Developers pay homage to the venue's football past by weaving football memorabilia throughout the hotel. The venue offers 11,000 square feet of flexible meeting space in beautifully appointed rooms. The popular Crystal Ballroom, which seats up to 140 people, brings back the grandeur of the 1920s with soaring high ceilings, stately chandeliers and towering floor-to-ceiling windows. The Walnut Room Bar and Restaurant features dishes made from locally sourced ingredients. Poke The Bear restaurant delivers fresh, full-flavored food with a sports history theme. [hotelnorthlandgreenbay.com](http://hotelnorthlandgreenbay.com)

### THE CHARMANT HOTEL, LA CROSSE

The Charmant Hotel offers 67 distinctive and attractive guest rooms. The rooms feature reclaimed maple wood flooring, exposed wood beams and brick, and lofted ceilings. Each room is slightly different due to the hotel's underlying structure. The décor combines comfort, convenience and charm, from thoughtfully curated furniture to retro-style lighting fixtures to memorabilia celebrating the history of La Crosse and the building's origins as a candy factory. The Charmant Hotel also makes a fine backdrop for events with its modern event spaces, creative banquet menus, diverse dining options, exceptional staff and well-appointed guest rooms. In addition to being within walking distance of countless restaurants, bars and breweries, the hotel offers dining options on-site. Its restaurants source from regional farmers and purveyors, and work with local breweries and spirit makers. [thecharmanthotel.com](http://thecharmanthotel.com) **WM**



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## PLANNER PROFILE

# LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

ALISON HUTCHINSON APPROACHES MPI WISCONSIN PRESIDENCY WITH A HOSPITALITY HEART.

Alison Hutchinson kept a list of the things she would do when she presided over the Wisconsin chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI) for a year.

But Hutchinson recognized the need to alter her lofty goals weeks before she took over as MPI Wisconsin's new president. In April, she added to her list goals designed to lead members through an industry-wide shutdown.

"Six months ago, I had it all planned out. I even knew what I planned to say in my intro letter. But now, with the current situation, my goal is to be a servant leader, be there for members and show that we care," Hutchinson says.

The 22-year industry veteran focuses on helping members recover and thrive in a new normal. Nationally, MPI began hosting webinars to help members navigate changes brought on by the pandemic. Locally, MPI Wisconsin offers post webinar chats where members share their ideas and experiences navigating the shutdown and reopening.

Hutchinson adds to this momentum by increasing risk management education for MPI Wisconsin members. She draws from her time as an adjunct professor teaching event management at Fox Valley Technical College to lead the chapter's new educational endeavors.

"I want to increase online educational opportunities," she says. "We've noticed that the post-webinar group

chats encouraged participation from members who normally won't attend a meeting in person. I want to build upon that."

Caring and serving others comes naturally for the hospitality-industry professional. Hutchinson explains she comes from a family of nurses, though she knew early on that nursing wasn't for her. Hutchinson pursued a degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, which led her to the sales side of the meetings and events business. She worked event sales at hotels in Chicago, Green Bay and Neenah, before landing her present position as Group Sales Manager for the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Being in sales brings a unique perspective to MPI Wisconsin's lead role. "In sales you need to be in tune with your clients and their lives," she says. "Sales taught me to be a good listener and helps me respond to members when they tell me what they like about the organization, what they want more of and topics they care about."

Watching her peers lose their jobs during the pandemic altered the types of connections she makes. Hutchinson helped the chapter add an online job board where planners can post resumes and companies can post job openings for free. "I hope that we can help make employment matches. I want it to be a resource for my colleagues and friends," she says.

Though the pandemic brought tough challenges to the industry, Hutchinson admits it also ushered in opportunities for growth. Before COVID-19, she says most planners knew virtual events were possible, but few took them on. The virus forced planners to approach meetings differently and Hutchinson expects the lessons learned to persist long after the pandemic passes.

"The coronavirus shutdown pushed planners out of their comfort zone but now they know how to host virtual events. They know how to leap from an in-person meeting to an online one if they need to. They know how to meet virtually and keep attendees engaged," she says.

COVID-19 changed Hutchinson's plans for her presidency, but it did not dampen her enthusiasm for the role. She devoted the first part of her presidency to supporting members and leading through change. She will use her remaining term for face-to-face work. "I cannot wait to see my peers in person and give them a big hug," she says. [www.mpiwi.org](http://www.mpiwi.org)

*Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is the largest meeting and event industry association worldwide, providing innovative and relevant education, networking opportunities and business exchanges. For membership information, go to [www.mpiwi.org](http://www.mpiwi.org).*





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