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letter

FROM THE PUBLISHER

As a student in the hotel college at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, I remember a professor once telling me, "That which is different is inherently more memorable." There is science to prove that stimulating experiences and events outside our normal routines can, in fact, help memory. It applies just as much to meetings and events: If you want your attendee to have a memorable experience, you have to make it different, unique. And many times that begins with your choice of space.

So, what exactly makes a unique space unique and how can it help you make your event more memorable? That is the question that serves as the foundation of this newest issue. As you will discover from our in-depth cover story and selection of articles, there is no one answer but rather a chorus of reasons to sing the praises of these event sites. There is, however, a defining trait that all unique spaces do share: They go far beyond the traditional ... and they are growing.

What we started in 1986 is now a fully fledged brand representing more than just colleges and universities. Our segments today encompass arenas and stadiums, camps and retreats, historical and cultural institutions, business and conference centers, cruise ships and special event venues. The growth in our members is not arbitrary, though; it reflects what's trending in the meetings and events industry: planners are looking for something different and more venues have space to offer.

As the needs of the industry have evolved, so too have our resources. Our directory of listings has now become this fully stocked and one-of-a-



kind print and digital magazine (now in our second edition) as well as a lead referral network, sales and marketing education tool and the industry's largest online portal of unique sites at uniquevenues.com and in Canada at uniquevenues.ca. These are the tools that can help you make your next meeting or event unique and memorable. Happy searching!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Nichols".

Michele Nichols, Publisher

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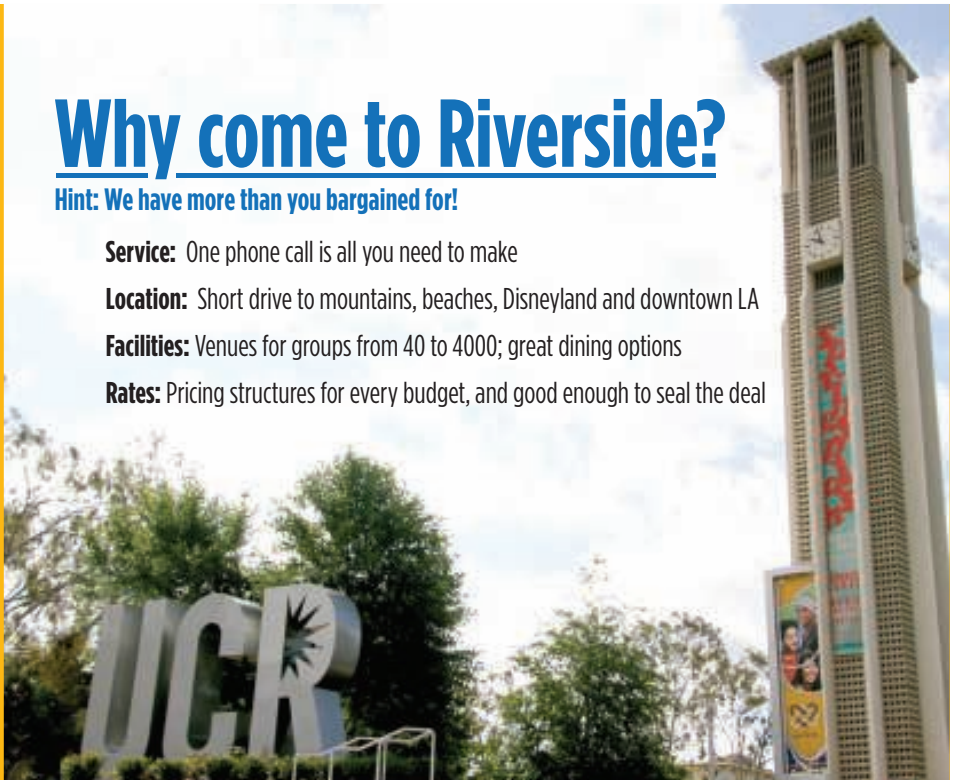
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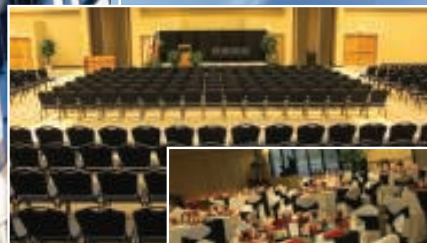
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Now's the Time for the Paperless Office

BY CORBIN BALL, CORBIN BALL ASSOCIATES

More than ever before, meeting technology is picking up speed. It's an exciting time to see rapid changes and new opportunities appear that will help you improve business processes and provide a greater attendee experience at your events. Two major trends that have been developing and working together to assist meeting and event planners are social media and mobile technology.

Most everyone now carries around a smart-phone; as such, all social media tools have become mobilized. Social interaction at events is now a cornerstone thanks to this phenomenon. Attendees are able to be much more interactive—whether they are on site or participating from home—with polling capabilities, mobile networking opportunities and event documents preloaded to their phones and tablets. This also extends to a planner's workday as well.

We've been talking about the paperless office for years—since 2010 to be exact, when the iPad debuted. In much the same way the iPod and iTunes revolutionized the music business, and the iPhone startled the telecommunications industry, the invention of the iPad and other tablets has started to take hold of the corporate world and provided our first chance to go fully paperless thanks to a large screen that lets you actually interact with documents. For meeting planners looking to keep up with today's trends, the paperless office is where our industry is headed.

It benefits planners in many ways, most specifically providing the ability to eliminate the conference bible and three-ring binders that attendees have lugged around for decades. Paperwork, even contracts and event



Corbin Ball, CSP, CMP, MS is an international speaker, writer and consultant with 20 years of experience who helps clients use technology to save time and increase productivity. He is the only person to have received both the MPI International Supplier of the Year and the MPI International Chapter Leader of the Year awards.

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1 On your desktop, convert all your documents to PDFs (there are plenty of free converter programs online).

2 Once converted, drag all the files you want synced up with your tablet into a cloud based storage system (I like Dropbox because it operates with other apps).

3 On your tablet, use a PDF annotator (I suggest PaperPort Notes or GoodReader) to access Dropbox. Your files will now be synced and you can open up your documents, edit and put back into Dropbox.

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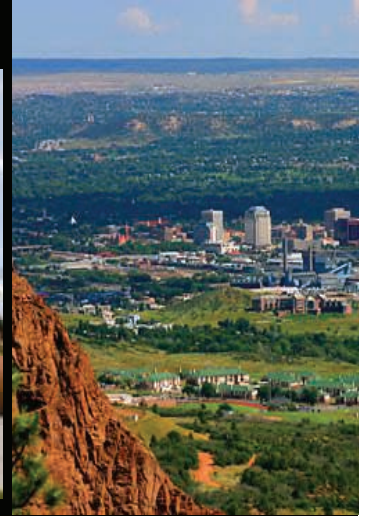


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The Bonuses and “Be In the Knows” of a Unique Space

BY CHUCK SALEM, PRESIDENT OF UNIQUE VENUES

WHEN BOOKING ANY VENUE FOR YOUR EVENTS, it's best to have all the information up front before making a decision. Unique sites such as museums, arenas and college campuses are no different. Here we look at the major bonuses and some of the “be in the knows” of these types of properties, so you know what to expect when considering them for your next function.

BONUS

⇒ AFFORDABILITY

In comparing traditional venues such as a hotel to a nontraditional venue, you'll find significant price reductions. This is because the core mission of these sites is not event revenue. Campuses, for example, already have built-in technology for their students, which means little add-on fees for planners.

⇒ AMBIANCE

Unique facilities are already unique, which means you don't have to spend a lot of time or money adding atmosphere or décor. For example, a museum's exhibits can be a great way to enhance your theme.

⇒ CURIOSITY FACTOR

You never hear people say, “I can't wait to go to that meeting in the hotel ballroom,” but notice the reaction when you announce the conference will be held in a movie theater. A change in place can help build buzz before the event.

⇒ TEAM OF PROS

A lot of planners are pleasantly surprised to find a staff of professionals at a unique facility. Part-time or not, these individuals know their business and can help you make the most of the venue.

BE IN THE KNOW

⇒ SCHEDULING

For many of these unique sites, hosting meetings and special events is secondary to their core mission. So you may have to schedule around college classes or sports games at arenas. Venues will be upfront about their availability; if you're flexible in dates, these sites can be a great option.

⇒ PART-TIME STAFF

While some unique spaces DO have special event offices or departments, you may run across one that employs a part-time event coordinator or a person who multitasks with other roles. The knowledge and professionalism is still abundant, you may just have to be patient for responses.

⇒ CATERING OPTIONS

Catering options vary at unique facilities. Some have exclusive on-site caterers, others have a preferred list. In some cases, you'll have to supply your own. Make sure you know the food and beverage options ahead of time.

⇒ INSURANCE

For some venues, you may be required to provide a certificate of insurance because the property may not have a policy covering your event. Add-ons are usually very affordable and can be a simple rider on your existing policy.

CHUCK
SALEM
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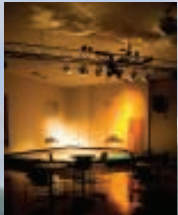
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the agenda

COOL GIFT IDEA

Travel Assurance

Security checkpoints aren't always secure. With the advent of RFID (radio frequency identification) skimming devices at many airports and transportation hubs, travelers have become even more prone to identity theft. That's because personal information is encrypted in credit cards, IDs and passports, which, unprotected, can end up in the wrong hands.

Royce Leather's new line of travel accessories comes equipped with RFID blockers to keep IDs safe—and stylish. Made from top grain nappa cowhide, these durable bifold wallets and passport ticket holders, currency wallets



and jackets are sleek and functional. Each retails for \$36 and is offered in a variety of colors including black, tan, wildberry, key lime green and ocean blue. To purchase for your clients (or yourself), visit royceleathergifts.com.

Centerpiece Showdown!

CONTEST



Recently, we asked our members to send in photos showcasing their best table décor from a recent event. We were delighted with the results, but we turned to Facebook and our planner friends to help us pick the winners. Congratulations to all!

Winner: Chicago Botanic Garden of Glencoe, Illinois

"Midwest Garden Wedding" was a highlight of a recent reception held in the venue's McGinley Pavilion. The floral arrangement and tabletop décor were designed by Jesse Deckard of Bliss Weddings, which follows in the garden's mission to hire Chicago-area florists for all private events.

↓ Runner Up #1



Albright College of Reading, Pennsylvania

EVENT: President's Council Dinner

DESIGNED BY: Dave Reppert, Wishes Entertainment and Event Design

↓ Runner Up #2



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL CHRISTOPHER GREENE

Navy Pier of Chicago, Illinois

EVENT: Wedding reception produced by RED Weddings

DESIGNED BY: Derrick Taylor of Taylor and Co., Decor-Planning-Floral

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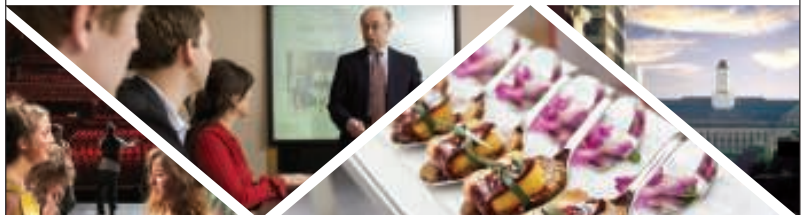
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the agenda

HOT MEAL



GUAVA CHICKEN *{Serves 5}*

INGREDIENTS:

- » 1-2 pounds chicken thighs and drumsticks
- » 1 can fresh or frozen guava juice
- » 1/3 cup oyster sauce
- » 1/3 cup ketchup
- » 1/3 cup soy sauce
- » 1/4 cup brown sugar
- » 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- » fresh grated ginger

1 Combine all ingredients in a glass baking dish and marinate for a minimum of three hours.

2 Bake at 350 degrees uncovered for one hour.

Family Recipe: Guava Chicken

This recipe comes courtesy of The Manor House in Littleton, Colorado. The restored mansion not only has a unique setting for special events, but the catering department also gives guests the option to replicate family recipes for their menus.

“We usually see this a lot with our weddings,” says Kelley Case, senior event planner at The Manor House, noting that this recipe came from a recent groom. “The family made this chicken for all of their birthday and holiday gatherings, so it meant a lot to them and they wanted to incorporate it into this celebration as well.”

The process involved some taste testing with the mother of the groom but Case notes that for others looking to add this into their program, no extra time is needed to accommodate the request. And it’s not just for weddings, she says. “We welcome our corporate clients who want to replicate their favorite recipes, too.”



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SIGNATURE DRINKS



{Non-alcoholic recipe}

Super Potion

The Conference Services team at the University of California, Santa Barbara put out all the bat signals when they recently hosted a training/talk seminar for local planners. The session was called “Be a Planning Superhero!” and the theme took off in more ways than one.

“We invited UCSB event planners, vendors in the community and the Santa Barbara Convention and Visitors Bureau to come together at the Loma Pelona Center on our campus to share ideas about how they can help each other SAVE THE DAY!” says assistant director Whitney Morris. “Vendors showed off their super powers and proved they could be trusted sidekicks throughout the planning process.”

To pack a special punch, the special event catering team at the school provided this unique drink, which was a colorful way to add on to the day, says Morris. “Participants left feeling like empowered men and women of steel. We had a blast!”

INGREDIENTS:

- » 2 pints fresh limeade
- » 2 gallons fresh lemonade
- » 5 drops green food coloring
- » 1 pound dry ice

1 Mix together in pitchers and let guests serve themselves.

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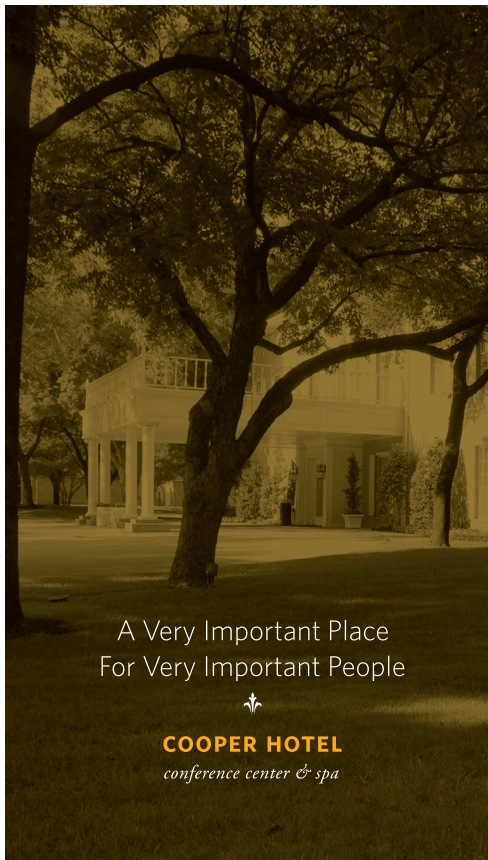
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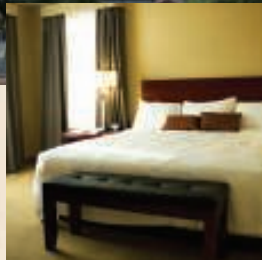
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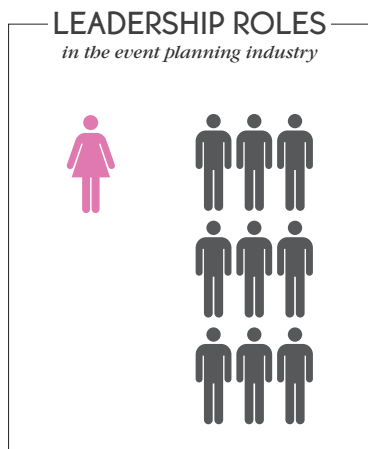
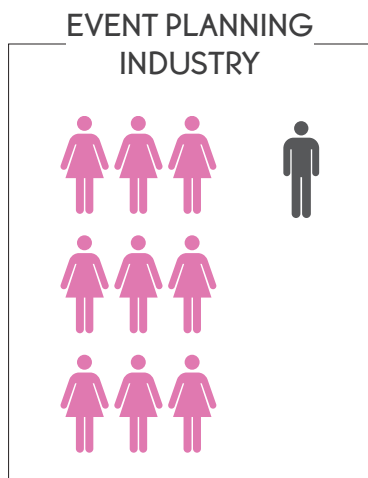


inside the industry

Ladies in *Waiting*

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT WOMEN MAKE UP A MAJORITY of the event planning industry, so why are there so few in leadership roles?



Twelve years ago, the association of Meeting Professionals International (MPI) launched a new Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) to "help bring awareness to the fact that, although women are the great majority in this industry they are the minority in leadership positions in their organizations (only 11 percent in 2002)." It was kick-started by McGettigan Partners COO Christine Duffy who questioned why she was often alone "at the top" in her elite position with the meeting and incentive management company.

Although MPI's program resulted in a website and chapter events to help women advance their careers, as well as targeted articles, research and a scholarship program, the board of directors opted to halt the initiative in 2006 saying that it

"was so successful the principles and work have been incorporated into the standards of MPI as a whole."

So why today is there so little difference for women planners seeking executive roles in meetings and events?

"I've been in the industry for more than 40 years, and in that time you watch some things change and some that never change. There still are so very few women really at the top," says Joan Eisenstodt, a hospitality industry leader who opened her eponymous consulting, facilitation and training firm in 1981. "There has been what I'd call a glass ceiling; there are many opportunities for women to en-

ter the mid-management level but very few at the high end."

She points to Paul Van Deventer, MPI's new CEO, as one example, noting the online comments from members in her various women-in-hospitality groups that find it misleading to have a man running an organization that has quoted, at times, 75 percent female members. "If you look at the makeup of associations, there are many directors of meetings

“There has been what I'd call a glass ceiling; there are many opportunities for women to enter the mid-management level but very few at the high end.”

— Joan Eisenstodt, Eisenstodt Associates, LLC

who are female, most of them having moved up the rank from administrative to entry-level meeting planner, but so few have gone on to be CEOs," Eisenstodt comments. "It's something to be aware of and pay attention to."

Ten years ago, she started a retreat for women in hospitality that asked attendees important questions: What

is the role of women in the industry? How do we do meetings? Are we leaders? Do we want the top level jobs?

And what she discovered was gender does matter. "Women manage differently than men. There's a lot I think could be different if we were in charge," she says. "Women would likely have different ideas for how to allow people to gather better, how to build meeting rooms differently and find resolutions for labor issues. Women are by nature more observant and therefore see things differently, which could revolutionize our industry if more were given leadership roles."

It's this trait that drives many women to the meetings and event industry in the first place. "Women tend to be more nurturing and take care of the attendee as if they were welcoming them into their home," says Patti Shock, a full-time professor of the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration at UNLV for 25 years and an academic consultant for The International School of Hospitality in Las Vegas. Shock was one of the first to incorporate meetings and events training into higher education and even today notices a sharp increase in the number of female students.

"About 75 percent of UNLV's hospitality program are women; at the International School of Hospitality it's more like 90 percent," she says, noting that 100 percent of her wedding planning students are female. "It's probably not considered masculine to be a wedding planner," Shock says, but she also recognizes that females are more detail oriented when it comes to the vast amount of paperwork involved.

Of the male students Shock does have, most are interested in trade shows and festivals and a bulk of them are international. "A lot of our male students come from Asia. Korea is aiming to be a convention hub and so a lot of our Korean students are sent by the government because they want to know how we meet successfully here."

Shock doesn't see the female majority trend changing anytime soon, either. "This will always be an attractive job for women. They can do work from home and work around family schedules," she says.

But in order to enact change for women in the industry, Eisenstodt believes it will take more active, and not passive, conversations. "We need to stand up more for ourselves," she says. "And get the message across that we deserve more and are good at our jobs."

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MPI
mpiweb.org

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main event

Top Chefs

The International Association of Conference Center's Copper Skillet Competition picks its winner. We meet the finalists from the U.S., U.K. and Canada who were fired up and ready to fight for the title.

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

Started in 2004, the annual Copper Skillet Competition is the International Association of Conference Center's (IACC) opportunity to showcase the great culinary skills of its member conference centers around the world. The showdown is held each year at the IACC-Americas summit where competing chefs are presented with a secret basket filled with produce, grains and proteins to use in their meal. Each chef is granted 15 minutes to plan his or her dish and 30 minutes for the cook-off.

After, three judges assess the meals on criteria of creation, presentation, texture, flavor and hygiene in the work area. This year's winner was Pascal Marcin of Dolce La Hulpe in Belgium. Here we meet the three finalists from the U.S., U.K. and Canada who fill us in on the experience and what they will take with them to the kitchens at their conference centers.

U.K.

Iain Miller of the Woodside Conference Centre in Kenilworth, Warwickshire

HIS BACKGROUND ...

Since beginning his culinary career at the age of 17, chef Iain Miller has come full circle. "I apprenticed at Woodside as a teenager and as of last year I came back here to where it all began," Miller says. Of course in between there were chef appointments at a number of Michelin-rated restaurants, including head chef at Simply Simpsons where Miller earned a Bib Gourmand in the Michelin Guide.

"I like being able to change my menu on a daily basis," he says of the appeal of the conference center. "You're feeding people for multiple meals a day for several days a week, so you have to keep your menus fresh and varied because if you don't, people will notice."

THE EXPERIENCE AT COPPER SKILLET ...

Although Miller has medaled at several cooking competitions within the U.K. in the past, this was his first time competing in the Copper Skillet. "It's the competition I've enjoyed the most," he says. "Everyone is on par and everyone has the same chance."

Miller's tactic was to think outside the box with his proteins. "I assumed everyone would go for the steak so I went for the pork and lamb," he says of his strategy. What resulted was a trifled lamb pâté with mango salsa and pork filet with caramelized apples and crushed potatoes.

THE ONE THING HE'LL TAKE WITH HIM BACK TO HIS KITCHEN ...

"It's interesting to go to other places and see what people do with food. One morning [during the competition stay] I had a scrambled egg with chorizo for breakfast. I had never thought to do that before. It's those little things that can change your whole perspective as a chef."

U.S.

Shane Brassel of the Charles F. Knight Executive Education & Conference Center in St. Louis, MO

HIS BACKGROUND ...

It all started in high school. That's when chef Shane Brassel caught the cooking bug. He was working at an Italian restaurant on the weekends and received a scholarship to a culinary program at Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island.

Although he has migrated in roles, his current position with Washington University's Charles F. Knight Execu-





SHANE BRASSEL

tive Education & Conference Center has really stuck, perhaps thanks to the variety Brassel gets to exercise. “There are so many different options to make it diverse for all our clientele,” he says.

THE EXPERIENCE AT COPPER SKILLET ...
This year was the first time Brassel had participated in the competition—and to great success. Not only was he the U.S. finalist, but Brassel walked away with the runner-up silver medal as well. “My focus was to work on the protein,” Brassel says.

And his strategy worked. Brassel’s winning dish was a combination of Dijon-crust pork tenderloin medallion with natural jus and pan-seared beef filet, accompanied by a Pabst Blue Ribbon beer sauce, buttered poached asparagus and a southwestern bean relish.

THE ONE THING HE’LL TAKE WITH HIM BACK TO HIS KITCHEN ...

“Always being creative. If you don’t get a delivery in time or you are out of stock of an item, you have to be able to work around it and think about something else you can prepare—but that’s what makes the job fun.”



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MURRAY HALL

Canada

Murray Hall of the BMO Financial Group Institute for Learning in Toronto, Ontario

HIS BACKGROUND ...

Chef Murray Hall started his culinary education at Caribou College in British Columbia and later apprenticed at the Banff Springs Hotel in Alberta. His first chef position came with the Marriott Hotel and Resorts Group at a hotel in, of all places, Bermuda. After a few rotations at various Marriott properties, Hall joined Dolce Hotels and Resorts five years ago and now works at their Institute for Learning center in Toronto where his focus is on healthy catering. “I look at my menus to see where I can reduce fats and eliminate sugars and add foods that hit low glycemic levels,” he says.

THE EXPERIENCE AT THE COPPER SKILLET ...

Hall has been named the Canadian finalist the past four years, perhaps because he’s able to flow with the mishaps that come during the day. “I couldn’t find the cream for the life of me,” he says of one of the day’s challenges. “Our table was also rocking quite a bit so it knocked the water off the stovetop—but other than that it was great.”

Although chefs weren’t privy to the contents of their food baskets before arriving, Hall says, “50 percent of my menu was made up in my head before I got there,” which helped him tremendously in preparing his dish. His final presentation offered a pork tenderloin with sweet mashed potatoes, seared scallops and buttered asparagus in a lemon beurre blanc sauce with crushed chilies for spice.

THE ONE THING HE’LL TAKE WITH HIM BACK TO HIS KITCHEN ...

“As an executive chef you’ve always got to be thinking on your feet the entire time. There’s no such thing as a regular day in this industry. The competition reinforced that idea for me.”

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BY SELENA FRAGASSI

From Connecticut to Maine, the New England coastline has always been a popular vacation destination—but with more and more boutique inns and unique sites fit with modern-day amenities, the corporate world is taking notice, too. When booking events along the Atlantic, planners find an escape from the city and customized personalization not often seen in the big markets. Plus, appealing day trips encourage attendees to extend their stay.



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THE AMBER ROOM COLONNADE/DANBURY, CONNECTICUT
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As such, The Amber Room Colonnade has gained quite a reputation for creating that ‘wow’ factor planners are looking to achieve. What once was a rustic, informal property in the 1960s has become a prestigious, award-winning location set on 26 acres popular for hosting black tie affairs, corporate galas and weddings from nearby New York City and Long Island. “When you get out of those markets you’re almost getting meals for free when you analyze the differences in price per person,” says Howe.

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people walking around with laptops while playing basketball or canoeing,” recalls Brunner. “It’s interesting to see how people react when they don’t have the lights and noise of the city. It’s dark here and you can see stars at night, but that’s appealing to certain groups who are urban most other days of the year.”

THE RED LION INN/STOCKBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Located in one of the world’s top destinations (according to National Geographic’s *Traveler* magazine), The Red Lion Inn has welcomed guests to its historic property for more than 200 years. The venue offers 125 antique-filled guest rooms with modern amenities (like free Wi-Fi) and several private or semi-private event spaces for up to 80 people that provide a “one-of-a-kind experience for all events,” according to Red Lion’s corporate sales manager Gayle Murphy.

Recent functions have included weddings, anniversary parties, birthday celebrations and an on-site meeting for a health care company that participated in team-building activities such as a group scavenger hunt and margarita-making contest. On site, guests have access to formal and casual dining options, a gift shop, pub with nightly entertainment plus amenities such as an in-house florist and in-room massage therapy.

“Whether they are leisure guests or business travelers, our guests take comfort in knowing they are spending money at a venue that makes an exceptional effort to sustain its community,” Murphy says, noting Red Lion’s locally sourced menus, donations to area nonprofits and company wide volunteering efforts. For a good cause, too, since New England is such a gorgeous landscape. “It’s a great region to book events because everything is in close proximity. We have mountains, beaches, small towns and big cities within a couple of hours of each other. There is something for everyone here.”

Although Howe cautions that not every amenity is an “automatic” like larger markets (accessibility to public transportation, oversized ballroom capacities and large blocks of rooms may not always be available), there’s something that small communities offer exclusively. “There’s unparalleled privacy, serenity and relaxation. Guests often build a visit around their event to experience all that’s available to them in the region.”

MEDOMAK RETREAT CENTER/ WASHINGTON, MAINE

What started as a summer camp in 1903 has now become a popular summer destination for groups looking for a comfortable retreat. “Who wants to be in Orlando in August?” questions Medomak director David Brunner. “New England is a wonderful place to enjoy the outdoors while the rest of the country is in air conditioning dealing with the heat.”

Of course since the turn of the century, Medomak has added to the demand by refurbishing old cabins and building new ones to meet the higher comfort needs of its adult groups. Waterfront facilities set on 125 acres offer three meeting rooms and various breakout spaces as well as a dining lodge, which uses vegetables and dairy products cultivated on site.

The retreat has played home to various music and arts festivals like the University of Michigan’s graduate music conductor program. For 15 years, the department has hosted an annual 17-day summit of intense music score study that culminates in a concert for the public. “It beautifully highlights our spaces’ acoustic capabilities,” says Brunner. Another recent group was a young startup from Silicon Valley. “There were

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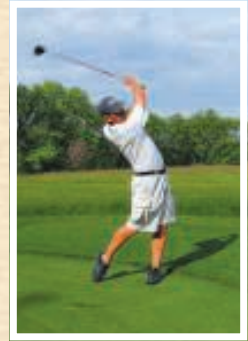
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BY SELENA FRAGASSI



LUTHERIDGE, ASHEVILLE, NC



FEDEXFIELD, LANDOVER, MD

According to the dictionary, unique is an adjective that means “being the only one of its kind; unlike anything else.” Nothing could come closer to describing the special collection of event venues that have broken out of the traditional mold, creating an industry model that values originality and memorability. Here we break down just what makes the seven segments of Unique Venues, well, unique.

ARENAS & STADIUMS

Imagine the looks you’ll get when you announce your next meeting or event is at FedExField, the home turf of the Washington Redskins. It might be the same look as a band playing their first stadium show: sheer awe. That’s because arenas and stadiums are not only impressively sized but offer just as large add-ons that help create considerable buzz pre-, during and post-event.

“When you’re booking an event that requires an RSVP, having it take place at a stadium is a huge plus because it’s going to draw out a lot more people than a standard hotel ballroom,” says FedExField’s special events manager Heather McKenzie. “There’s no standard meeting here. We can offer VIP stadium tours [including the press box, cheerleaders’ dance studio and Redskins locker room], arrange alumni player appearances and also provide branding opportunities, such as broadcasting the company logo or welcome message on our HD video board.”

It’s unique touches like these (plus free on-site parking and custom menus) that keeps McKenzie’s customer renewal rate high. “We have a great return with clients who continue to rebook events every single year because we have such a variety of spaces we can tailor to them. And it is such a unique experience that not only serves a purpose but entertains guests as well.”

The facilities aren’t just relegated to game day outings, either. “Groups can rent out a suite for one of our major sporting events for a team-bonding experience or they can come on non-game days as well and rent out a specific location,” McKenzie notes, stipulating that the larger events must be held on the team’s away days. “We have various spaces throughout the stadium encompassing small meetings to a trade show for 5,000 people.”

Some clients really get into the team spirit and even send their attendees home with parting gifts, according to McKenzie. “I’ve had a few who work with our team store and set up goodie bags with Redskins merchandise to present guests as they’re leaving. ... It’s just another example of how we can transform an average meeting into a memorable experience for our clients and their guests.”

CAMPS & RETREATS

The biggest advantage of this type of unique setting is the vast team-building opportunities that await visiting groups.

“We can pull recreation and team-building activities into a retreat more easily than in a hotel ballroom,” affirms Mike Ward, vice president of advancement at Lutheridge, a site nestled into the mountains of North Carolina. “We have a group interaction course, a climbing tower and wall. If you want to go for a walk, we have nature and hiking trails at our back door.”

Denise DuVall, director of sales and marketing for Nebraska’s Lied Lodge & Conference Center, offers a similar array to her repeat corporate and conservation clients. “Instead of being in meeting rooms all day, groups might convene for an hour and then spread out on our campus and that’s part of their meeting,” she says, noting that her site also offers nighttime activities. “We can do tractor hayrides that pull up to a bonfire gathering and do a wine tasting after. ... It’s the best of both worlds with hotel-like amenities, but people are able to get away, get refocused and become rejuvenated.”

To DuVall’s point, you can rest assured these camps and retreats are not like the rustic overnight lodges you stayed in as a kid. “From day one, our purpose was to be a true IACC Conference Center,” she says. As such, the site offers 144 guest rooms and 14,000 square feet of meeting space with complete meeting packages that offer A/V services and a dedicated tech team.



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE, WA

At Lutheridge, the setup is much the same, according to Ward. “We’ve put \$8 million into the facility in the last 10 years, including a meeting space that can seat more than 550 people in a theater-style setting.” Additional features include airport service, campus-wide Wi-Fi, a fitness center and a chef that can create top-notch menus ... and ice sculptures.

Ward does caution that Lutheridge’s main booking season is August through May (since summer does become sold out for regular camp groups); however one benefit to your stay is often having sole use of the property. “You won’t have to trip over other groups or be worried about what they are doing when you’re trying to have your event.”

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

“You get considerable bang for your buck,” says Lynn Smith, coordinator of conference service programs for the University of Arizona. His opinion echoes the sentiments of a number of planners who have booked their meetings and events at a college or university campus.

Rates are typically all-inclusive and are able to stay low because a school caters to the needs of a modern student body; planners just get to take advantage of what’s already on site. For the University of Arizona, that includes state-of-the-art classrooms and auditoriums, 7,000 beds in various residence halls (complete with linen service), a student union, food and beverage service and access to a variety of expert speakers.

“The best thing we offer, besides our high level of customer service, is the academic atmosphere,” says Smith. “There are so many departments and things to do and see within the 1-mile radius of the campus. We offer a lot of diversification.”

Also diverse are the residence halls. Because the ages of the buildings vary (“from many years old to a few months old,” says Smith), amenities may be different from building to building. In one example, “Guests should be prepared that although our restroom facilities are modern, most are shared.” Yet knowing that upfront, planners can expect colleges to be more accommodating than a traditional environment especially in the non-peak months.

Another benefit to campus environments says Leonard O’Connor, general manager of the conference services at the University of Washington, is the esteem that comes from being



THE BANFF CENTRE, ALBERTA, CANADA

affiliated with a university. “There is a cachet to putting on an event in an educational environment that is appealing to a lot of organizers,” he says, noting particular nonprofit groups that benefit from the collaboration. “In our case, to be associated directly with the University of Washington is highly valued.”

CONFERENCE & BUSINESS CENTERS

Although conference and business centers may, on the surface, seem as traditional as they come, a closer look reveals distinct differences including specialized services and functional, if not fairy-tale, settings. Take for example, The Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada.

“We actually started as a fine arts institute in the 1930s,” notes marketing officer Deborah Whittle. “Now, we’re a unique learning environment where everyone is here for a conference or meeting, a leadership program or an art program.” The addition of an arts-focused wing extends nicely into a conference’s day and night programs as well. Whittle explains, “We have many opportunities for delegates to attend performances, visit a gallery or take group clay molding sessions.”



CONVENE MANHATTAN,
NEW YORK CITY, NY

Although the center is focused on its creative mission, Whittle is firm that it does not distract from the high levels of conference services.

“We are an IACC member, which means we have to meet stringent standards to retain that membership, including ergonomic desks and chairs and complimentary Wi-Fi,” she says. “Our property is committed to making it a true conference experience with full service on site. So, unlike a hotel, it’s not a space we’re changing into a meeting room; it’s dedicated meeting room space.”

Chris Kelly, co-founder of Convene, has the same ethos for his spread of conference centers in Manhattan. Together they have become the go-to destination for local, off-site meetings of 25-250 people, most notably New York’s elite Fortune 500 companies.

“We were able to see the opportunity and demand for a new type of conferencing center,” he says of the foreshadowing he and partner Ryan Simonetti gathered in 2009 to redesign existing structures for more productive collaboration and innovation.

Equating their vision of transforming conferences to the way Apple revolutionized technology, Kelly and Simonetti invested in several key strategies: building a consultative team rather than a sales team; incorporating as much built-in technology into their spaces as possible; and analyzing the way attendees eat to develop menus that suit the conference sessions (e.g. all meals can be consumed without needing a knife).

“We analyze and understand the actual things people are trying to accomplish and see how much less difficult we can make the job of the meeting planner,” says Kelly. “Our single purpose is to facilitate the most productive meetings possible. There’s no other agenda for us.”

CRUISE SHIPS

“The nice thing about doing an event on a ship is that it has something for everybody. Regardless of age or background or interests, everyone will find something they like in our entertainment, activity and dining options,” says Lori Cassidy, director of corporate, incentive and charter sales at Royal Caribbean. And she isn’t kidding when she calls a cruise line



a floating resort. “Anything that a resort destination can provide to a meeting or a conference, we can conduct on board a cruise ship,” she says.

That includes state-of-the-art meeting spaces for up to 1,400 people, entertainment options such as Broadway shows *Hairspray* and *Chicago*, and access to a Royal Promenade, which offers an array of restaurants, bars and shopping. “It can also be a great way to keep spouses and families engaged while employees are meeting,” notes Cassidy.

Although it’s a new idea for planners, Cassidy says once they come on board

and visualize what can be done on a cruise ship, they realize how accommodating it really is for meetings and events, including value propositions. Much like all-inclusive vacations, cruises offer “all your meals, entertainment, activities” in one package, according to Cassidy. Plus, “meeting space is complimentary, as is audio visual equipment and standard coffee breaks.”

She does caution that the lingo is different in the cruise industry so “our terms and conditions may be slightly different



GRACELAND, MEMPHIS, TN



LINCOLN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, SPRINGFIELD, IL



PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S COTTAGE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

from a hotel, but it's not overwhelming. Planners will soon realize how easy and turnkey it is to host an event on a ship."

And exciting for attendees, too. "Most North Americans have never cruised. It's still about only 20 percent of the population," says Cassidy. "So by bringing an event on board a cruise ship, planners are offering something completely new and that can increase attendance."

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Built-in décor is one of the biggest draws of historical and cultural venues like Elvis' Graceland. Here guests can mingle in the late singer's car museum next to his famous pink Cadillac and the red MG from *Blue Hawaii*.

"It's our number one venue," says special events manager Marianne Murphy, noting that Rockabilly's and Crown Grill restaurants are other options. "The designer created it to look like a Memphis drive-in on a summer night. There's a nearly full-size movie screen plus huge vignettes that bring Elvis' career to life."

It was this appeal that drew actor Anthony Hopkins to host his birthday party here. "Of all the places in the world, he chose us," Murphy says, still shocked. Yet she shouldn't be. Graceland has become a popular destination, mostly

for adult birthday parties, which Murphy says can sometimes cause a challenge. "Because we don't have any dedicated event venues, we have to be respectful of our day guests and not interrupt their experience, but at the same time make things perfect for evening events," she says. "But in my 20 years of doing this, we haven't messed up yet."

In Washington, D.C. President Lincoln's Cottage is another big draw. What started as a national soldiers' home became a vacation spot for presidents during term breaks. Lincoln, however, was the one who used it most to his advantage.

"The Lincoln family would literally move all of their belongings out of the White House and into the cottage every summer and live here until the fall," says education coordinator Sahand Miraminy. "It was a much more peaceful and quiet place that allowed him to think through his big decisions, which included writing the Emancipation Proclamation the first year he was here."

Today, groups of up to 100 people can enjoy intimate dinners in the cottage amidst a sensory experience. "When visitors are here, they can hear the stories of Lincoln. We use technology to bring those stories to life," including wall-mounted speakers, says Miraminy.

Because it is an historic site, there are some restrictions including no red wine or open flames; yet the site is also progressive, including welcoming their first same-sex wedding ceremony last April—the first ever in U.S. history on a military base.

SPECIAL EVENT VENUES

Movie theaters, mansions and presidential libraries might not be the first place a planner thinks of for a meeting or event—but as these special event venues prove, they should be.

Cineplex, one of Canada's leading entertainment companies of motion picture theater circuits, operates 1,449 screens—"and all 1,449 are available for rent as a meeting room," says Julie Wiggins, executive director of sales.

Hosting a meeting at a movie theater is more advantageous than you might initially think.

"Theaters not only provide a great visual presentation but also an amazing sound system," says Wiggins. "When you plug in your laptop, the presentation is going through the best possible projectors and speakers." Plus, the sight lines for audience and speaker are unparalleled.

Wiggins has been most successful with the corporate crowd looking to wow with PowerPoint presentations or host satellite video from an executive in another city; but she says prospectives shouldn't limit themselves to just that. "Last fall, a high-end retail store used our facilities to host a Christmas training program. They turned the whole building into a winter wonderland with festive decorations and music that was piped into the lobby; they even had machines drop snowflakes on guests as they entered. It looked amazing."

Maryland's Elegant Settings and the Lincoln Library in Illinois are two more examples of special event venues, both with historic affiliations.

The 10 historic mansions and manors of Elegant Settings are actually a part of the Department of Parks and Recreation, all of which have been restored to illuminate their grandiosity but also provide modern amenities. Each has a story to tell ("Franklin D. Roosevelt was rumored to visit often, which is why one of our buildings has an elevator," says Darlene



NEWTON WHITE MANSION, MITCHEVILLE, MD



CINEPLEX, LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT CANADA



OXON HILL MANOR, OXON HILL, MD

Watkins) plus unique architecture and manicured lawns that make the setting ripe for photography. “Unlike hotels where you have to go somewhere else to capture pictures, our settings encourage shoots on site,” Watkins notes.

Although the buildings can hold, at most, 250 people, Watkins says advantages include use of the entire property and reasonable prices. “We’re very competitive with our costs and that includes professional staff who are able to work with you from start to finish.”

Opened in October 2004, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is creating a new model for both historical and presidential libraries. To date, the site offers 50,000 items relating to Lincoln’s life, many of which can be incorporated into events. One of the most popular are the History Lessons.

“We work with our historians to create a 30-minute presentation with prepared remarks

and a Q&A session, along with artifacts that relate to the topic,” says facility rental manager Britta Brackney, noting the advantage of having a built-in speaker. “A big hit with management and staff training groups has been ‘Lincoln and Leadership,’ which talks about the president’s leadership style and humor in managing people.”

Actor features and immersive exhibits are also popular add-ons, especially for the frequent groups that host evening events after a day at the nearby State Capitol. Although Brackney admits à la carte pricing and room capabilities for up to 500 are big draws, it’s the artifacts themselves that keep people engaged. “They encourage a sense of learning, and really that’s the most important takeaway for any event.”

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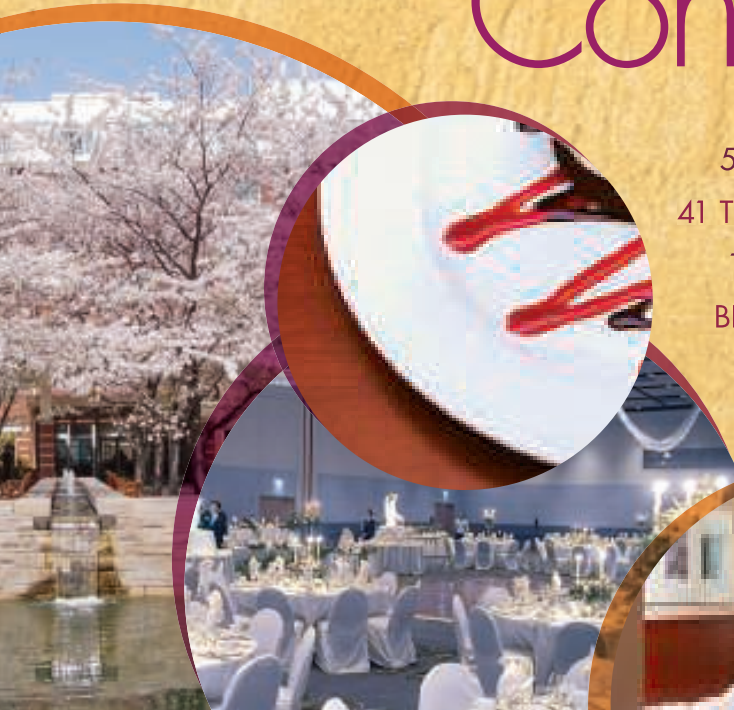
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A NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM



With built-in ambiance, educational value and exhilarating artifacts, Sodexo's spread of cultural destinations gives a permission slip for event attendees to have more fun.

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY,
CHICAGO, IL

When patrons walk into Chicago's famed Museum of Science and Industry (MSI), they are immediately greeted by fascinating treasures resurrected from some of the world's greatest scientific advancements and its ages of industrial revolution. As the largest science center in the Western Hemisphere, boasting 400,000 square feet of space, the halls of this lustrous building (once used for the 1893 World's Fair) hold such relics as a 252-foot German submarine from World War II, an original 1934 Pioneer Zephyr train and the museum's latest addition, a real-life, 40-foot tornado.

Every year, more than 300,000 schoolkids get to learn about the storied pasts of these priceless artifacts—35,000 in total—during daytime field trips. But at night, the museum takes on a whole new life as an unparalleled and exciting event venue. One where a seated dinner for 150 can be orchestrated next to the original Apollo 8 Command Module or a holiday gala for 3,000 can be set up in the art deco Rotunda amongst the museum's yearly display of Christmas Trees from Around the World. Of the myriad options of spaces and setups available, it becomes clear that hosting an event at a unique venue like MSI becomes more than just gorgeous scenery; it's an unforgettable experience.

Unlike a traditional venue, planners get a whole lot more when they book events at a cultural destination like a museum "because you automatically receive built-in atmosphere and entertainment," says Kerrie Van Horn, who, along with colleague Sarah Finlayson, acts as a senior marketing specialist of special events for Sodexo's Leisure division that manages food and facilities at venues such as MSI.

"Unlike static hotel ballrooms, our museums and other facilities are really unique to the city that they're in and inspire a sense of place and time for the meeting or reception. When a planner selects a cultural destination, they select the backdrop that the venue brings to the event, whether it's art interactions or exhibits. You really get the entire experience of what that venue has to offer."

The Museum of Science and Industry is one of the largest venues Sodexo manages in its spread of nearly 40 nationwide institutions, which also includes zoos, gardens, conference and convention centers and sporting venues. At MSI in particular, Van Horn, Finlayson and their team are able to handle the entire special events program, which is a huge benefit to time-pressed planners looking for coordination assistance. "We handle all inquiries from the renting or use of the venue to the sales and marketing and meeting the needs of food and beverage, décor and A/V. We try to make it a quick and easy one-stop shop for the planner," says Finlayson, who recommends building in lead time for more custom affairs.

She also notes the advantages that come from helping steer the cultural aspects of the event program along with the venue. "These institutions are really pillars of their own community, and when we're developing special event programs, we really look to work along with the property to incorporate their mission and give the planner every inch of what the museum offers," she says, noting that guided tours of limited-time exhibits and venue-specific team-building activities like scavenger hunts are often the most popular add-on for meetings and special events.

"I think, given a shift in the economy and in corporate strategy the past two years, planners are now looking for educational tie-ins more and more. So, while the end result is still about enjoyment and networking and fun, there is an added need for an educational element to round out the experience," Finlayson adds.

At MSI, for example, the chef's focus on gastronomy runs parallel to the museum's science-based ethos. "Oftentimes we'd find that the educational department was providing liquid nitrogen ice cream as a demonstration for students during the day, and we worked with them to develop stations we could sell for our special events, too," recalls Van Horn. "It's an example of the bridge we can offer that merges the educational element of the facility with something that is very current and hot in the special event industry."

At another venue, The National Zoo in Washington, D.C., Sodexo is looking to purchase and build out food trucks that will operate on the zoo's property both for public use and special events. "It can be an extra rental or add-on that could be sta-

tioned outside an event at the new Elephant Community Center, for example, so guests could grab a treat as they are leaving," says Van Horn of the team's vision for the new amenity. "This type of feature also goes back to the mission of the venue since food trucks are very sustainable and seasonal, like the National Zoo strives to be."

There are some restrictions that planners should be aware of at unique sites such as these. Van Horn points to the National Zoo as an example. "As part of the Smithsonian Museum complex, there can be no social events that are personal in nature on site, such as weddings," she says, also noting some cultural properties restrict critical fundraising since they are nonprofits themselves. "It's a venue-to-venue question, but we try to make it really clear and visible on Web pages, for example, so that clients have all the information up front." Yet if planners are flexible, they can take advantage of some of the best bonuses cultural institutions offer, like availability 364 days a year (most only close for Christmas Day) and a service orientation that aligns with many corporations' social responsibility programs.



FORT WORTH MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY, FORT WORTH, TX



MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY, CHICAGO, IL

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CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN, GLENCOE, IL

“When a planner chooses to embrace a unique facility like a museum or a zoo or a public garden, they’re ultimately supporting the arts and programs those venues present to the general population,” says Van Horn, noting a specific example of Chicago Botanic Garden, which invites at-risk youth to summer programs that teach urban farming; the produce is then used in menus for special events. “Since many of our venues are not-for-profits, companies who book events can inherently affect the future of the properties and their ability to move forward with the financial support.”

So, the next time you book a night at the museum, you can relish in the fact that your parting gift is furthering the experiences of all the students who get to enjoy the exhibits, too.

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industry updates

NEWS & AWARDS



The University of Montana Rocks the Bike with Wheel-Generated Speakers

The campus' University Center in Missoula now offers the One Bike/One Speaker Pedal Power PA System for both indoor and outdoor events. This environmentally friendly (and fully portable) speaker system is powered by a wheel generator that emits clear, amplified audio when someone rides the bike hooked up to it. A microphone or MP3 player plugs directly into the speaker with no mixer needed. The bike also creates an interactive piece for events by inviting participants to pedal and be engaged.

uniquevenues.com/universityofmontana



The Marcum Hotel & Conference Center Renovates "Down to the Soap Dish"

Located on the lush campus of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, The Marcum recently completed an overhaul of all its guest rooms and event spaces with an emphasis on sustainability. This includes locally sourced menu items, electric car charging stations, water bottle refill stations in all conference rooms, geothermal units throughout the building and recycling bins in all guest rooms.

uniquevenues.com/tbemarcum



Airlie Center Shows its Green Thumb with Comprehensive Gardening Series

Founded as an "Island of Thought" 50-plus years ago, the Warrenton, Virginia-based conference and event center continues its forward-thinking green initiatives with a seven-lecture series devoted to organic gardening, flower arranging and beekeeping. Sponsored by the Center's Local Food Project, remaining sessions for 2013 include Celebration of Bees (Sept. 8), All About Organic Flowerbuds (Sept. 29) and Fall Festival (Oct. 26).

uniquevenues.com/airlie



THE CAROLINA GIRL YACHT HOSTS A DAY FOR THE KIDS

Charleston, South Carolina's exclusive special events yacht recently treated a deserving group from the Epworth's Children's Home to a day at sea. All 80 kids got to spend their day aboard the 100-foot vessel, learning how to operate the ship, trying their hand at the GPS and sitting in the captain's chair. When they weren't practicing sounding the horn, the group got to dance the day away to the music spun by the ship's DJ and take in the views of the harbor. This is the third year *The Carolina Girl* has hosted the memorable occasion.

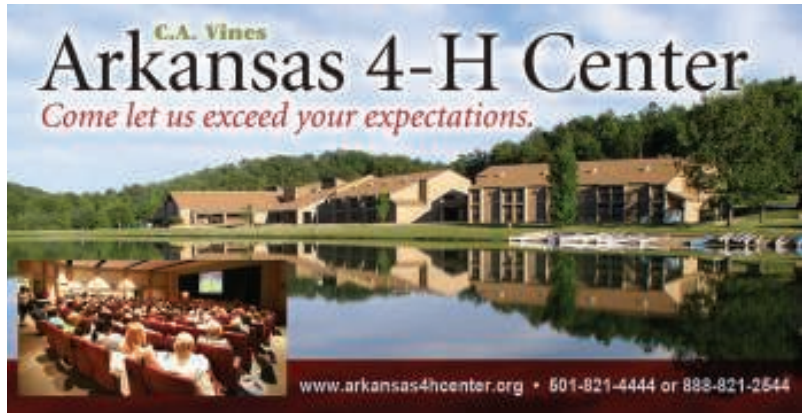
uniquevenues.com/tbecarolinagirl



ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL MAKES A QUANTUM LEAP WITH NEW SHIP

It's not only a marvel of physics but also a marvel of event destinations. Royal Caribbean International recently unveiled its newest ship, *Quantum of the Seas*. With newly designed staterooms, innovative features and transformative venues, the vessel takes cruising (and meeting) to an entirely new level with room for nearly 5,000 guests. Catch sail starting fall 2014 from New York.

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industry updates

NEWS & AWARDS



Cool Couples Get Married at the McNamara Alumni Center

Buzzfeed.com, one of the top 100 sites in the U.S. for trending news, named the McNamara Alumni Center in Minneapolis as the 10th coolest place to get married. The list includes 22 sites across North America. The center offers breathtaking architecture, award-winning D'Amico catering on site and tunnel connections to a 500-car parking structure and hotel.

uniquevenues.com/mcnamara



CONVENE TAKES OVER MANHATTAN WITH THIRD INNOVATIVE CONFERENCE SPACE

In April, Convene (formerly Sentry Centers) unveiled a new 36,000-square-foot site at 32 Old Slip in the financial district of Manhattan. Sprawling across the second floor of a 36-story, 1.1 million-square-foot office building, Convene's third and newest location; it joins two others in the Midtown area. The space underwent a \$4 million renovation to provide a dozen meeting rooms of varying sizes including a 212-seat auditorium.

uniquevenues.com/conveneat32



ACCED-I RECOGNIZES IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY AS A ONE-STOP SHOP AND OUTSTANDING INSTITUTION

The Conference Planning & Management unit of Iowa State University in Ames recently received two nods from the Association of Collegiate Conference and Events Directors-International (ACCED-I). First, the campus received the 2013 International Outstanding Institutional Achievement Award. Second, they earned ACCED-I's One-Stop Shop certification that recognizes collegiate operations that deliver one contact, one contract and one bill to meeting planners—in this case, for groups of 50 to 15,000 participants.

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unique venues index

The following pages host a comprehensive index of Unique Venues members across the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Each listing is organized alphabetically for ease of use and features the name of the property, city and Unique Venues website address, which holds even more information for planners.

Uniquevenues.com is the largest online database of non-traditional event venues including arenas and stadiums, camps and retreats, colleges and universities, conference and business centers, cruise ships, historical and cultural event venues and special event venues. Here, you can uncover availability and accommodation offerings including bath types, technology capabilities, rental fees, plus targeted info about meeting specifications including group capacities and square footage of each space. You can also view videos and browse photo galleries to get the full perspective before making a decision to book your event. The best part is the website offers a free search service that requires no fees or registration—and there is no commission for using the site or sending RFPs. You can browse without commitment and request additional information with the click of a button.



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uniquevenues.com/shoccosprings

↘ **Tom Beville Conference Center & Hotel** // Huntsville
uniquevenues.com/bevilleconfcenter

ARIZONA

↘ **Arizona State University** // Tempe
uniquevenues.com/asu

↘ **Black Canyon Conference Center** // Phoenix
uniquevenues.com/blackcanyon

↘ **Desert Willow Conference Center** // Phoenix
uniquevenues.com/desertwillow

↘ **High Country Conference Center at Northern Arizona University** // Flagstaff
uniquevenues.com/highcountry

↘ **The University of Arizona** // Tucson
uniquevenues.com/universityarizona

ARKANSAS

↘ **Arkansas 4-H Center** // Little Rock
uniquevenues.com/arkansas4hcenter

CALIFORNIA

↘ **AMA San Francisco Conference Center** // San Francisco
uniquevenues.com/amasanfrancisco

↘ **California State University Channel Islands** // Camarillo
uniquevenues.com/calstatechannelislands

↘ **California State University, Northridge** // Northridge
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↘ **California State University, Stanislaus** // Turlock
uniquevenues.com/calstatestanislaus

↘ **Chapman University** // Orange
uniquevenues.com/chapman

↘ **Concordia University Irvine** // Irvine
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↘ **Event Services at U.C. Berkeley** // Berkeley
uniquevenues.com/ucberkeleyunion

↘ **Fairplex Hotel & Conference Center** // Pomona
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↘ **Loyola Marymount University** // Los Angeles
uniquevenues.com/loyolamarymount

↘ **Occidental College** // Los Angeles
uniquevenues.com/occidental

↘ **Pepperdine University** // Malibu
uniquevenues.com/pepperdine

↘ **Pickwick Gardens Conference Center** // Burbank
uniquevenues.com/pickwick

↘ **Pomona College** // Claremont
uniquevenues.com/pomonacollege

↘ **San Francisco State University** // San Francisco
uniquevenues.com/sfsu

↘ **San Jose State University** // San Jose
uniquevenues.com/sjsu

↘ **San Ramon Valley Conference Center** // San Ramon
uniquevenues.com/sanramonvalleycc

↘ **Sonoma State University** // Rohnert Park
uniquevenues.com/sonomastate

↘ **Sparky's Hot Rod Garage** // San Carlos
uniquevenues.com/sparkys

↘ **UCLA Lake Arrowhead Conference Center** // Lake Arrowhead
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↘ **University of California, Davis** // Davis
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↘ **University of California** // Los Angeles
uniquevenues.com/ucla

↘ **University of California** // Riverside
uniquevenues.com/ucriverside

↘ **University of California, Riverside - Palm Desert Graduate Center** // Palm Desert
uniquevenues.com/ucrpalmdesert

↘ **University of California** // Santa Barbara
uniquevenues.com/ucsb

↘ **University of California** // Santa Cruz
uniquevenues.com/ucsantacruz

↘ **University of Redlands** // Redlands
uniquevenues.com/univredlands

↘ **University Student Union, California State University** // Long Beach
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↘ **Whittier College** // Whittier
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COLORADO

↘ **Colorado College** // Colorado Springs
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↘ **Colorado Mountain College** // Leadville
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↘ **Colorado School of Mines** // Golden
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↘ **Colorado State University** // Fort Collins
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↘ **History Colorado Center** // Denver
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↘ **Pepsi Center** // Denver
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↘ **Pueblo Community College** // Pueblo
uniquevenues.com/puebloloc

↘ **The Manor House** // Littleton
uniquevenues.com/themanorhouseco

↘ **University of Colorado Boulder** // Boulder
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↘ **University of Colorado** // Colorado Springs
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↘ **University of Denver** // Denver
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CONNECTICUT

↘ **Southern Connecticut State University** // New Haven
uniquevenues.com/southernct

↘ **The Amber Room Colonnade** // Danbury
uniquevenues.com/amberroom

↘ **The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts** // Hartford
uniquevenues.com/bushnellcenter

↘ **University of Hartford** // West Hartford
uniquevenues.com/univhartford

DELAWARE

↘ **Chase Center on the Riverfront** // Wilmington
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↘ **Delaware Art Museum** // Wilmington
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↘ **University of Delaware** // Newark
uniquevenues.com/univdelawaren Newark

↘ **University of Delaware** // Wilmington
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↘ **Virden Retreat Center** // Lewes
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↘ **1331 G Conference Center** // Washington
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↘ **20 F Street NW Conference Center** // Washington
uniquevenues.com/20fstreetcc

↘ **AMA's Washington Area Executive Conference Center** // Arlington
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↘ **African American Civil War Museum** // Washington
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↘ **District Architecture Center** // Washington
uniquevenues.com/districtarchitecturecenter

↘ **Dumbarton House** // Washington
uniquevenues.com/dumbartonhouse

↘ **FHI360 Conference Center** // Washington
uniquevenues.com/aedconferencecenter

↘ **Globe Theater** // Washington
uniquevenues.com/globetheater

↘ **Hillyer Art Space** // Washington
uniquevenues.com/hillyerartspace

↘ **Ibiza Nightclub** // Washington
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↘ **Josephine Butler Parks Center** // Washington
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↘ **La Maison Francaise at the French Embassy** // Washington
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↘ **McLean Gardens Ballroom** // Washington
uniquevenues.com/mcleangarden

↘ **National Academy of Public Administration's Conference Center** // Washington
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↘ **Nationals Park** // Washington
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↘ **Partnership for Public Service Conference Center** // Washington
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↘ **President Lincoln's Cottage** // Washington
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↘ **The Carriage House** // Washington
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↘ **The National Zoo** // Washington
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↘ **The Whittemore House** // Washington
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// Washington
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// Melbourne
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↘ **Georgia Institute of Technology** // Atlanta
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Georgia International Horse Park // Conyers
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↘ **Georgia Southern University**
// Statesboro
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Georgia State University Housing - Conference Services
// Atlanta
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↘ **LOFT at Castleberry Hill**
// Atlanta
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Morrow Center // Morrow
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// Savannah
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// Valdosta
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IDAHO

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// Coeur d'Alene
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ILLINOIS

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum // Springfield
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↘ **AMA Chicago Executive Conference Center** // Chicago
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// Chicago
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// Glencoe
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↘ **Chicago's North Shore Convention and Visitor's Bureau** // Skokie
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↘ **DePaul University - Loop Campus** // Chicago
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↘ **Illinois State University**
// Normal
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↘ **Lake Williamson Christian Center** // Carlinville
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Lewis University // Romeoville
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↘ **Loyola University Chicago**
// Chicago
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Loyola University Chicago Retreat & Ecology Campus
// Woodstock
uniquevenues.com/lucretreatcenter

Midwest Conference Center
// Northlake
uniquevenues.com/midwestconfctr

Museum of Contemporary Art
// Chicago
uniquevenues.com/mcachicago

↘ **Museum of Science and Industry** // Chicago
uniquevenues.com/msichicago

Navy Pier Chicago // Chicago
uniquevenues.com/navypier

North Park University // Chicago
uniquevenues.com/northparkuniv

Northern Illinois University Conference Centers // Naperville
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↘ **Summit Executive Centre**
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// Chicago
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Palais Royale at Morris Performing Arts Center
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// West Lafayette
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The Children's Museum of Indianapolis
// Indianapolis
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// Biddeford
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↘ **University of Southern Maine**
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Billingsley Manor // Upper Marlboro
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Lodge at Little Seneca Creek
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↘ **National Aquarium in Baltimore** // Baltimore
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Newton White Mansion
// Mitchville
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↘ **Osprey Point Retreat & Conference Center** // Royal Oak
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Oxon Hill Manor // Oxon Hill
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Snow Hill Manor // Laurel
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↘ **Towson University Event & Conference Services** // Towson
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↘ **Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center** // Rockville
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// Baltimore
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↘ **University of Maryland Baltimore County** // Baltimore
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↘ **Washington College**
// Chestertown
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↘ **Babson Executive Conference Center**
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↘ **Campus Center at UMass**
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↘ **Curry College** // Milton
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↘ **Endicott College** // Beverly
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↘ **Hampshire College** // Amherst
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Merrimack College
// North Andover
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↘ **Metro Meeting Centers**
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↘ **Mount Holyoke College and Willits-Hallowell Conference Center** // South Hadley
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↘ **Stonehill College Conference & Event Services**
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The Red Barn at Hampshire College // Amherst
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The Red Lion Inn // Stockbridge
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Tufts University // Medford
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↘ **UMass Hotel and Conference Center** // Amherst
uniquevenues.com/umassamherst

↘ **University of Massachusetts** // Dartmouth
uniquevenues.com/umassdartmouth

↘ **University of Massachusetts** // Lowell
uniquevenues.com/umasslowell

↘ **Western New England University** // Springfield
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↘ **Westfield State University** // Westfield
uniquevenues.com/westfield

Wylie Inn and Conference Center at Endicott College // Beverly
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MICHIGAN
Bernhard Center - Western Michigan University // Kalamazoo
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↘ **Faholo** // Grass Lake
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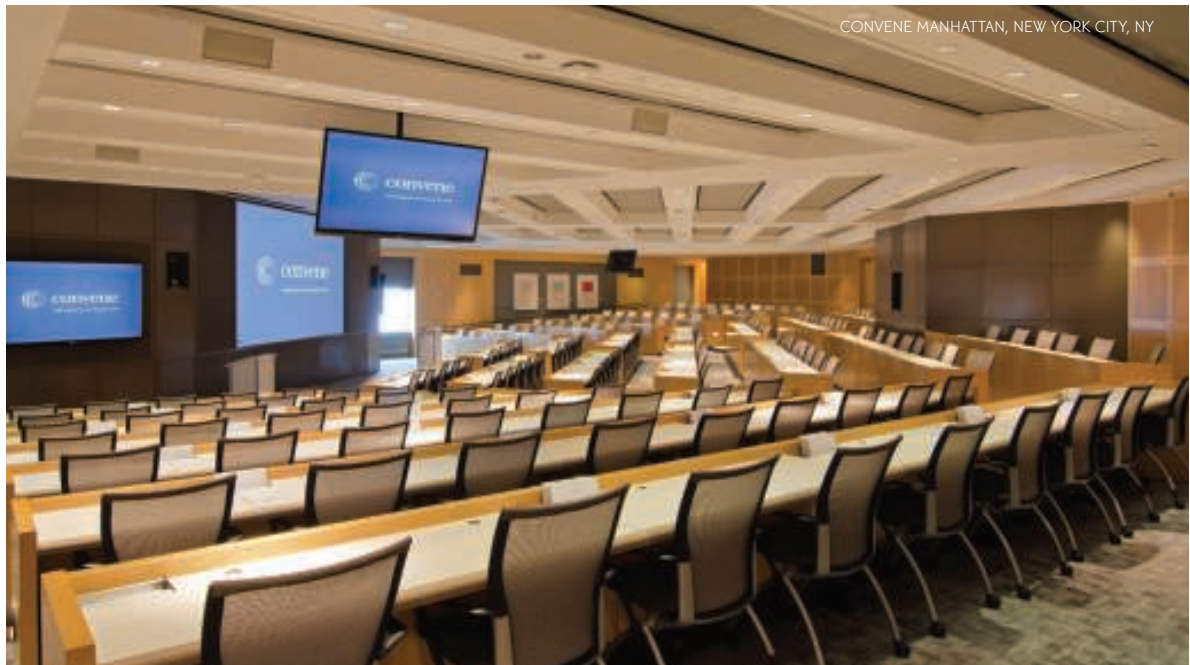
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Personalities

Girl on Fire

With 20 years at American Management Association Executive Conference Centers, Valerie Mazzilli-Brown makes all the right calls when it comes to conferences (and events and seminars...)

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

This year, American Management Association (AMA) welcomes its 90th birthday. At the helm of the celebrations is Valerie Mazzilli-Brown, who has just as much reason to mark the occasion. In 20 years, she has risen from an administrative assistant role to a noted position as the manager of meeting planning, supporting the organization's five locations in Atlanta, Chicago, New York City, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. With her unique marketing strategies and an eternal love of working with people, Mazzilli-Brown is ready to bring her company into its centennial.

UNIQUE VENUES: *What has been your favorite part of your job thus far?*

VALERIE MAZZILLI-BROWN: "We used to organize two large conferences—the Administrative Professionals Conference and the Human Resources Conference, both for more than 2,000 attendees. I became the planner for the APC, which was the highlight of my career. It was a three-and-a-half day event with 20 concurrent sessions at a major venue such as Vegas or Orlando. I loved creating themes and working with vendors to make it a reality."

UV: *What skills have helped you succeed in your career?*

VMB: "Negotiation and people skills. I'm good at negotiating and understanding contracts, but I also love working with people—from my vendors to my suppliers to the customers. I've found that quick follow-up is important, especially with leads. I look forward to talking to customers and seeing if we can fit their needs at one of the AMA Centers."

UV: *What have been some of the strategies you've developed to make AMA thrive?*

VMB: "First, I interpret data that comes in, anything from industry segments to job titles and locations. Then I research the marketplace. I analyze what companies do business with us now, and I pursue other similar individuals. I also develop solid partnerships with convention bureaus, neighborhood alliances and chambers and see what marketing opportunities they have available. Event marketing and getting the word out is really the focus of my job, so I've created online campaigns and e-blasts that have been effective. Most of my job is in figuring out where people can find us so I really try to find ways to reach customers."

UV: *Have you found any challenges?*

VMB: "When you're dealing with the public, there's always something to handle. At other conference and meeting centers I've worked with, I dealt with everything from Internet blackouts to fires, choking victims, non-working escalators



and floods. As a planner, you preplan as much as you can for your event, so when things like this happen, you are on autopilot and ready to find solutions. You have to know your resources, whether it be people or your history of working with venues."

UV: *What benefits does AMA offer to planners?*

VMB: "We don't nickel and dime anyone, and we have no service charges. Our purpose and premise is to make meetings simple and affordable. We run 3,000 meetings and training seminars inside and outside our centers every year; because we're planners, we have a strong understanding and empathy of what planners want and need."

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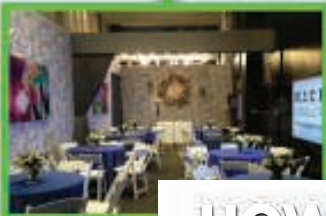
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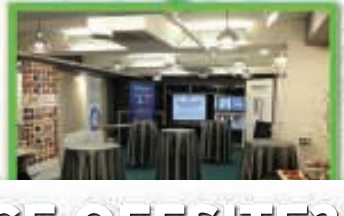
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