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magazine



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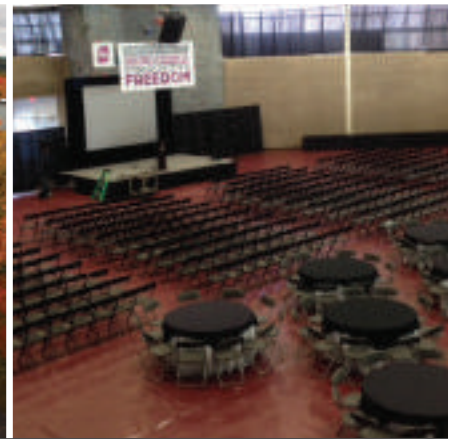
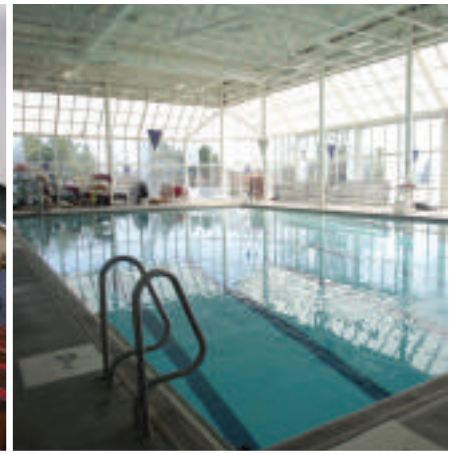
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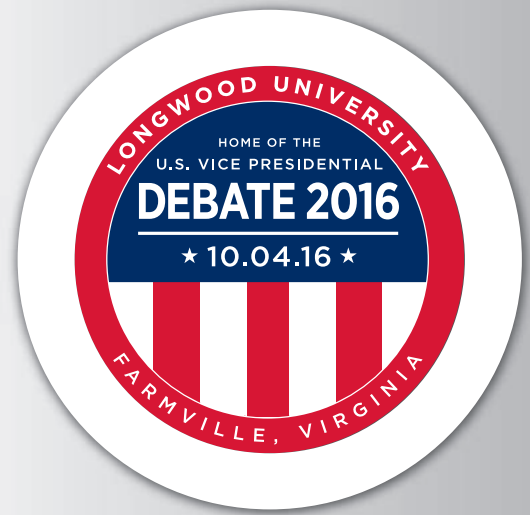
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PUBLISHER  
MICHELE NICHOLS

PRESIDENT  
CHUCK SALEM

EDITOR  
SELENA FRAGASSI

SALES  
JEANNE FEATHERS  
ANNE MCCAW (CANADA)  
LISA MORRELL

MARKETING MANAGER  
MANDY VOLPE

TECHNOLOGY  
TODD WONDERS

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES  
JEFF GEINER

PLANNER SERVICES  
SHANNON GLOVER  
ANN MCKENZIE

ART DIRECTOR  
CASIE BELDO

PROJECT MANAGER  
DIANNE TALMAGE

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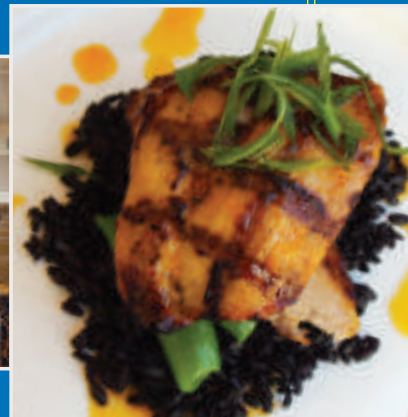
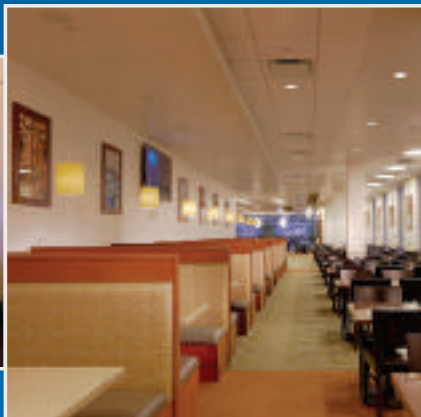
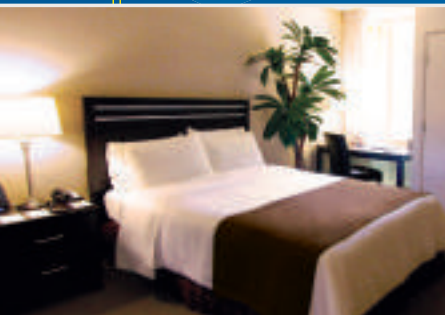


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# PUBLISHER'S LETTER



**I**N THE '60s, I grew up in a house where my parents, my brother, and I all shared one bathroom. Every morning, my mother would pound on the door if we showered for more than two minutes. "Turn it off, or there won't be enough water for your children someday," she would warn us.

It was odd; no one thought like that back then. But looking back on it, I realize how unique and extraordinary it was that she actually cared about our waste and how it contributed to our world. She really was ahead of her time.

Today, that naiveté has caught up with us, and we live in very precarious times. Global warming and carbon footprints are a normal part of our vernacular—the topics get headline news coverage and are a solid part of any political platform. But, while everyone has green on the brain, our industry is still one of the largest contributors of waste. Though we have come a long way in instituting recycling programs and paperless economies, there is still much to be done with the issues of excess food, used décor, and traditional modes of transportation.

Maybe it's because Unique Venues is getting older (we are turning 30 after all) or the fact that we are headquartered in Colorado, one of the most progressive states in the country where many carry their own hydro flask or reusable water bottle, but we wanted to investigate the impactful ways people have been approaching sustainability. The Green 2.0 if you will. And did we ever find them in our niche market.

From hiring goat "lawnmowers" to creating buildings that don't disturb wildlife habitats and engaging in energy challenges, non-traditional venues are again at the head of the pack in kickstarting programs that could literally change the world someday (see our cover story on page 46 to learn more).

Of course, we still have a long way to go to perfect the process. Even now you are reading this magazine on printed (albeit recycled) paper. However, we hope to encourage all of our readers to opt into our digital version and we continue to look for ways we can go fully digital in the future. We believe keeping the conversation going is an important part of our progress. So, tell us, what are you doing to make an ecological impact? E-mail [michele@uniquevenues.com](mailto:michele@uniquevenues.com) and we'll share all your great ideas in a future issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Nichols". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michele Nichols, Founder  
Unique Venues

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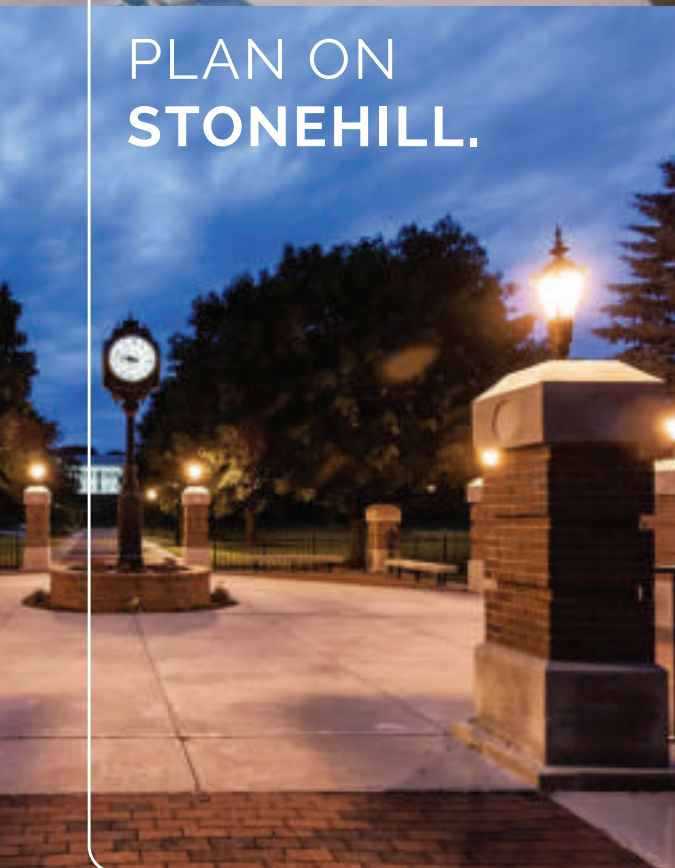
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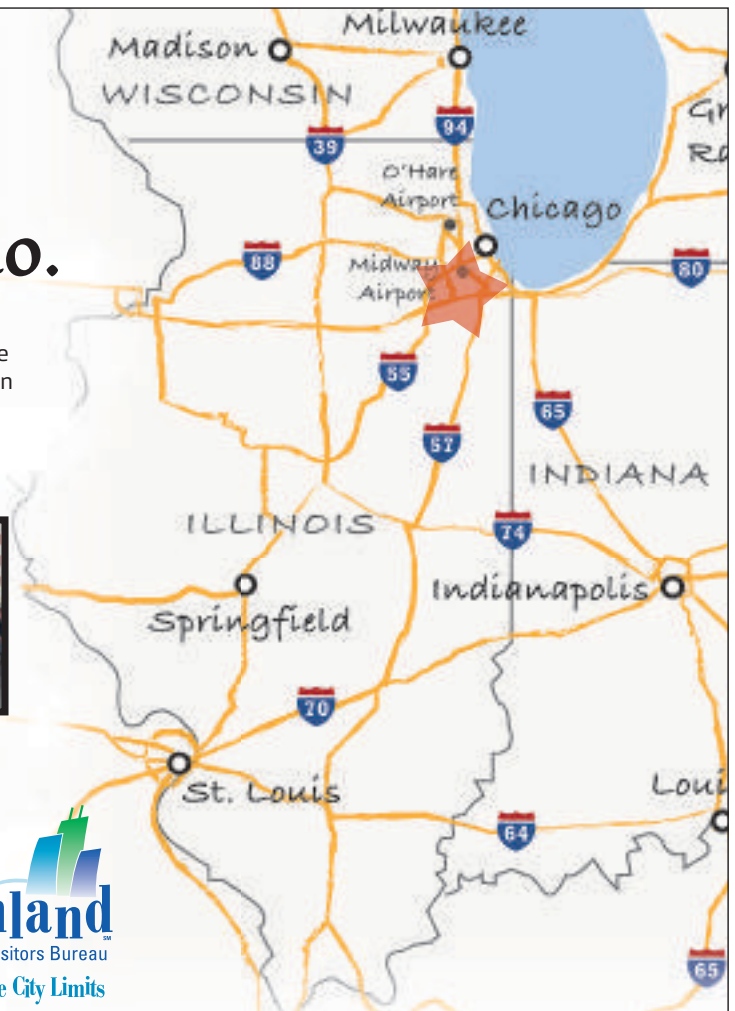
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# THE AGENDA

work / life / balance

BY TODD WONDERS, Unique Venues Technology Manager  
& JEFF GEINER, Member Services Coordinator

## POWER DOWN *Discover 5 ways to take technology down a notch.*

*Sometimes, to unplug you have to really unplug.* The life of a planner is stressful enough without having to be tied to your phone all hours of the day, fielding phone calls, e-mails, and text messages. The good news is there are ways to simplify your modes of communication and organization without having to go into a total blackout. Here are five tips.

**1 Turn off notifications.** We are a society that is being notified to death. Our tablets, phones, and desktops are constantly sending pop-ups, banners, and text messages for every trivial update and activity. Here's your challenge—Go and shut them all off and don't worry about what you're missing. How many are you actually paying attention to right now anyway?

**2 Pick one preferred method for online communication.** Having too many options can be too much of a good thing. Take communication for example. We have so many ways to get

in touch with each other that it can get overwhelming trying to keep track of the last time you spoke to a colleague or client—and on what platform. Though it might sound more archaic than texting or IM'ing, e-mail is still one of the best options for storing, searching, and organizing messages as well as maintaining a robust contact database. Just be sure to backup the program to keep your history intact.

**3 Give people a chance to respond.** With the instant gratification of messaging, we often can become impatient waiting for a response. But treat

it like you would a phone call—you wouldn't bombard someone with three calls in five minutes, so refrain from doing so via texting. Your blood pressure will thank you for it, too.

**4 Enable do not disturb.** If you haven't discovered the magic of the "do not disturb" function on your phone yet, try it—now. This function allows you to keep your phone on without letting any calls or texts to go through at times you are occupied, or sleeping. You can configure the setting to automatically kick in and disable at preferred times, and you can download an app called "Groups" that lets you organize contacts into buckets that have permission to bypass the do not disturb function. That can be especially helpful for family members and important clients that you don't want to miss.

**5 Invest in project management software.** Our favorite is Basecamp because it's a web-based program that allows multiple users to update projects simultaneously and seamlessly. On one landing page you can see all the different open tasks and who is working on (or has completed) an agenda item. You can also create cards for future projects. For example, if you plan three association meetings a year, everything can be organized well in advance with specific timelines for completion. Another great feature of Basecamp is that you can e-mail back and forth through the program, and also queue up notes to be sent only during business hours. [uv](#)



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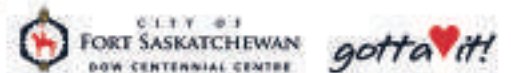
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## Using Digital Credentials to Prove Your Value



*“People have no idea what I really do. Even my clients think, ‘how hard can it be to plan a meeting?’”*

If I had a dollar for every time an industry professional said that to me, I’d be sipping margaritas on the back of my yacht in the Caribbean. This has been the event planner’s existential dilemma for a while now: the struggle to prove their value. Company executives often think that any assistant can plan a meeting. And, if an assistant does plan one, the executive has little insight into what’s involved to make it truly successful.

At the Event Leadership Institute, proving your value as a planner has been our mission since day one. It has been integral in our content development process. When we tackle a subject, we focus not just on teaching the key concepts, but also on how to use that information to prove your worth.

But, you might be asking, ‘Once I’ve mastered a given area, how do I spread the word so that my clients and colleagues really understand the level of professionalism involved in modern-day meeting management?’

Enter the Digital Credential.

### What Are Digital Credentials?

A Digital Credential is basically a clickable badge. When someone completes a professional development course with The Event Leadership Institute and scores 85 or higher on a final exam, we issue a coordinating Digital Credential, for example in “Technical Meeting & Event Production.” The recipient can then place the badge on any digital platform, including an e-mail signature, LinkedIn page, website, blog, Facebook profile, etc.

At the bottom of each badge is the phrase “Click to Verify,” encouraging anyone who sees it to click on it. Because each credential has a user-specific code embedded into it, clicking on it brings

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Founder and CEO of the Event Leadership Institute, which provides training and education for event professionals.



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## PAN-SEARED TROUT

### *Topped with Maple Pear Slaw over Chickpea Cakes*

Courtesy of Canadian Museum of History (Gatineau, QC)

*There's nothing quite like* a platter of delicious fish to evoke feelings of summertime. The Canadian Museum of History makes the meal even more memorable by pairing four trout fillets with chickpea cakes and maple pear slaw.



#### INGREDIENTS: FOR THE MAPLE PEAR SLAW

- 4 green pears, peeled and julienned
- 2 stalks celery, ribs removed
- 2 oz. red onion, thinly julienned
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- ½ Tbsp. dijon mustard
- ½ bunch green onion, thinly sliced
- ½ Tbsp. lemon juice, freshly squeezed

#### TO PREPARE:

1. Whisk together maple syrup, dijon mustard, and lemon juice.
2. Core and thinly julienne pears, and toss with vinaigrette mixture.
3. Julienne ribless celery, red onion, and green onion to the same thickness as the pears. Add to pear mixture, and season with salt and pepper.

#### GET CONNECTED

Canadian Museum of History  
Gatineau, QC  
[UniqueVenues.ca/CAMuseumHistory](http://UniqueVenues.ca/CAMuseumHistory)  
(819) 776.7012


**INGREDIENTS:  
FOR THE CHICKPEA CAKES**

- 2 tsp. canola oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- ½ tsp. dried basil
- 1 can chickpeas, drained & rinsed
- 1 egg white
- 2 Tbsp. fresh parsley
- pinch of salt

**TO PREPARE:**

1. In nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium heat and cook onion, garlic, oregano, and basil until softened.
2. In bowl, mash chickpeas with potato masher until smooth.
3. Scrape onion mixture into bowl and stir to combine.
4. Add egg white and parsley, and stir until well combined and smooth.
5. Divide mixture into four equal portions and form into 1/2-inch thick patties.
6. Place patties on parchment paper-lined baking sheet and bake at 425° F for about 20 minutes until golden, turning once halfway through.

**TO PREPARE TROUT:**

1. Rub four fillets with olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Let marinate at room temperature for 10 minutes.
2. Warm up heavy skillet on high heat.
3. Add two pieces at a time, skin side down. Cook 2-3 minutes until crispy.
4. Place over chickpea cakes and top with maple pear slaw. 

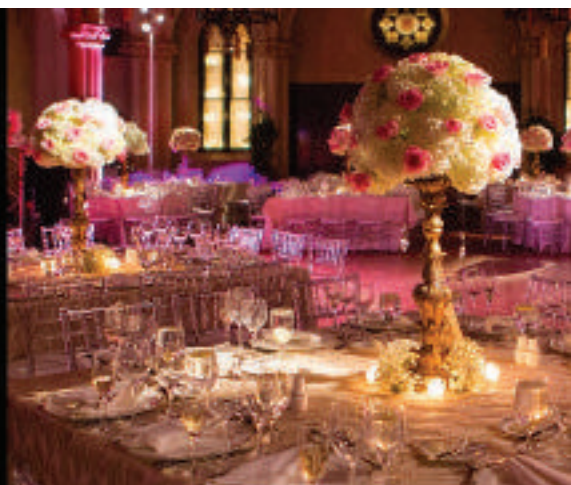
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# THE AGENDA

happy hour

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Courtesy of STARR Events  
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Art (Philadelphia, PA)

*Summer sizzles with this festive cocktail* that's a perfect accompaniment to any fireworks.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 4 oz. sparkling wine
- 1 oz. ginger liqueur
- 1 oz. pomegranate juice

### TO PREPARE:

1. Mix all ingredients together in a martini glass.
2. Top with pomegranate arils. 

*Makes 1 serving*



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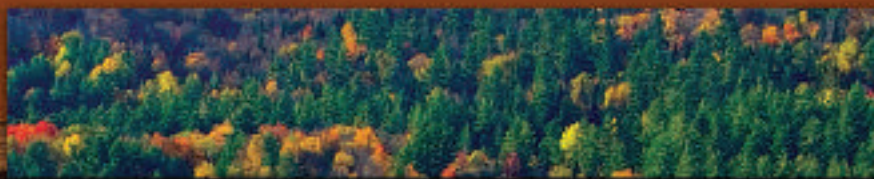
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# WHAT'S TRENDING

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



Traditional coworking spaces are even more versatile by doubling as event hubs with COTERIE Company.

## Coworking It Out

COTERIE Company has a vision to marry independent working spaces with multipurpose conference and event centers.

*Coworking space has become a substantial business trend* over the last decade, catering to an American workforce that has become more independent and less satisfied with working at cafés and in hotel lobbies. The latest spinoff though is even more intelligent—using coworking space as an event venue.

It's an idea that Joanna Bailey hopes to capitalize on with COTERIE Company. Her boutique brand of high-end communal spaces will debut in Charlotte, North Carolina in July, with plans to rapidly expand to 60 cities over the next four years including a double vision to provide a female-focused network of professional communities that can also be used as all-inclusive meeting and event space.

"I think there is considerable opportunity for evolution in the industry, and COTERIE Company is absolutely an

example of that," she says, noting that the business is positioned to become the first global brand for coworking women in a field still 80% dominated by men—and also one of the first to cater to the booming meeting and event industry.

"I know a lot of coworking spaces are hosting internal events, but my vision when mapping out my company was to provide spaces for external groups," she says. "Many times, when a meeting planner is looking to host a social or professional event like a launch party or

book signing, they don't want to go to a hotel ballroom or wedding venue and they don't need a cavernous space like a loft. COTERIE presents that multifunctional opportunity."

The idea naturally evolved from Bailey's ambitious 25-year trek in hospitality and event management. She started her career with Disney, and by her early 20s, had cut her teeth in property management and restaurants, where she discovered her eye for design. Soon she was consulting with a number of established brands to build out entertainment venues and vacation clubs before launching a luxury wedding business in 2001. "What I have been known for, and what I really love to do, is look at something and design an entire experience," Bailey says. "When I see raw space or consider a concept, I know what the takeaway should feel like."

As such, Bailey is very specific when it comes to picking the right spot for each COTERIE Company location. "As I develop each one, I make sure to ask, 'How can we serve our small event needs? And, do we have great conference space or can we carve it out?'"

Her rule is that the property must have at least 25,000 square feet of hybrid space for about 300 people as well as outdoor areas for overflow and ambiance. All of the locations will have mobile glass walls and doors that can offset the individual work areas from the simultaneous conferences by day and events by night, so there is no disruption.

And though COTERIE does work off a membership model, like other coworking venues, meetings and events can be booked by anyone. "We offer everything a planner would need," says Bailey, noting that spaces can be reserved seven days a week. "Each community is run by a team of talented concierge, trained to accommodate any request. From the time a client sends in an RFP, we are already working on matching them up with our preferred culinary partners, and



taking care of the details. Those things are inherent in signing with us.”

Technology and A/V are also included. The flagship Charlotte location even has Google Fiber connectivity. As well, “every client will also have their own IP address. We take physical and digital security very seriously,” says Bailey.

One of the most important tenets is that everything is included in the rental price. “I’m not a fan of the nickel and dime concept,” she furthers. “We believe in service first.”

COTERIE already has clients lining up in advance of the first four openings (also including Pittsburgh, Orlando, and Dallas) with a confirmed private roundtable for an international women’s leadership conglomerate and a large technology and government conference that will bring in 300 guests early next year. “We have been pleased to see the proposals coming in,” says Bailey.

“I want people to see the value of COTERIE beyond just another place to work. We hope people will come for our unique spaces, and return for our unparalleled service.” **uv**

#### GET CONNECTED

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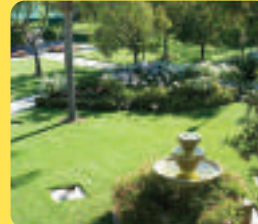
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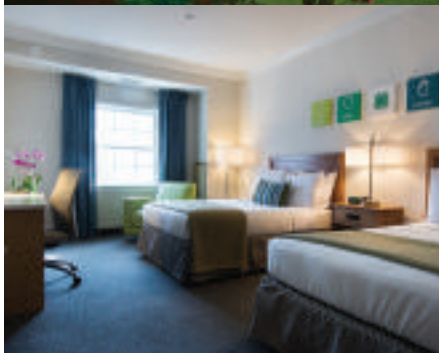


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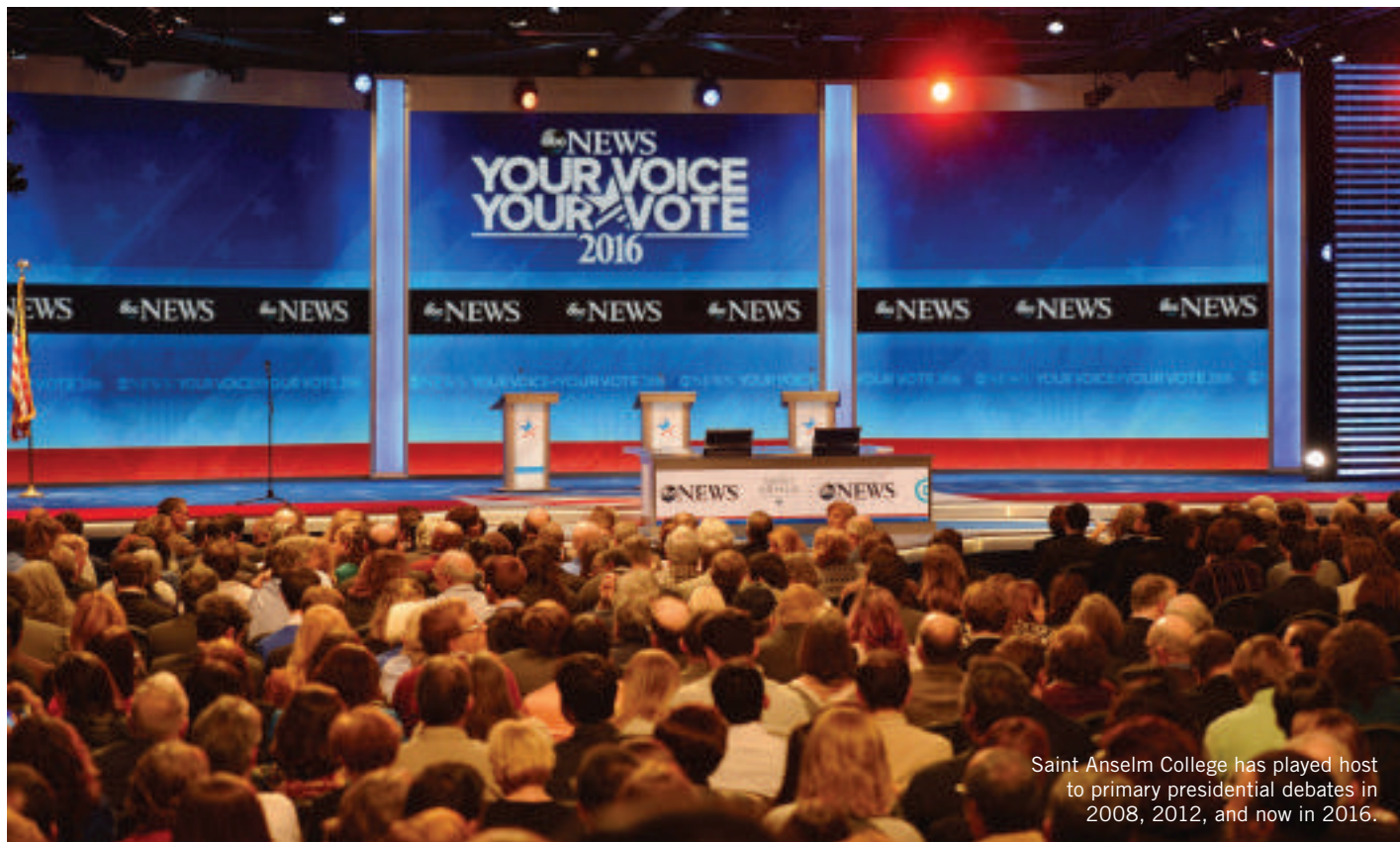
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# THE MAIN EVENT

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



Saint Anselm College has played host to primary presidential debates in 2008, 2012, and now in 2016.

## *The BIG Debate*

Saint Anselm College has been ground zero for the primary debates the last three elections, and with such a smooth operation, it's easy to see why they get the popular vote.

*It only happens once every four years.* And when a new presidential election kicks off, Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire starts preparing. The sprawling campus has played host to the televised first-in-the-nation primary debates the last three terms, including 2008, 2012, and now 2016. Most recently, they welcomed the Democratic candidates in December and the Republican hopefuls in February.

“One of the reasons I think we are attractive is that we have the New Hampshire Institute of Politics on campus, which is very active with both the local and national scenes. We bring in speakers all the time, and had almost every one of the candidates here for an event prior to the debates,” says Assistant Vice President for Facilities Bill Furlong. The other

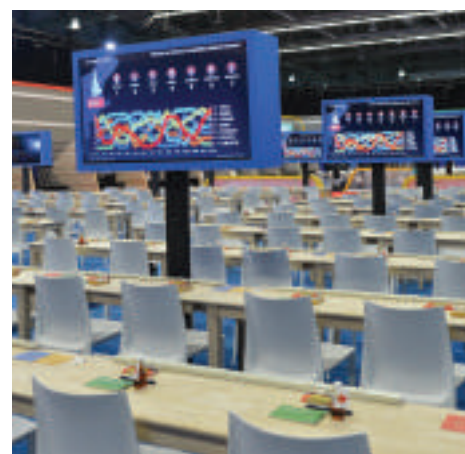
big reason, he says, is familiarity. The college has enjoyed partnerships with a number of major news networks over the years, including ABC, FOX, and CNN. “We really do roll out the red carpet for networks. Because they’ve worked with us before, we know what they want and need, sometimes before they even know.”

This time around, that meant

anticipating the incredible demand for the debates, which became a part of one of the most notable races in American history. Unlike years past, the parties decided to oversee ticketing and allow in nearly double the audience size. Nearly 1,000 guests were present at each event, full of registered local citizens who had been vetted by party leaders to prevent hecklers and other disruptions. The large increase meant Furlong and his staff had to act to find a more conducive building.

“In the past, the debates have normally taken place at our Dana Center Theatre, which seats 550,” he says. “But, because of the demand, we ended up using our recreational athletic facility, the Carr

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: SAINT ANSELM COLLEGE.



At left: Both the Democratic and Republican debates used the campus' three basketball courts. Above: More space was allotted for news crews and press who were closely monitoring the action.

Center.” In addition to the actual televised event that took place on all three main basketball courts, one court had to be shut down as a holding area for ABC’s stage that they left on-site from September through February. FOX NEWS crews were also on campus for an entire week in February prior to the Primary, delivering daily coverage from the Davison Dining Hall.

Yet another spatial issue came with the sheer number of candidates in the Republican primary debate (nine total, as opposed to three in the smaller Democratic pool). “That became challenging because they all needed green rooms and working space,” says Furlong. “School was still in session so finding all those extra areas was difficult, but we did it.”

He credits the creative brainstorming of his team for finding workable solutions for every trial that came along in the eight-month planning process. Even

the IT department had to get involved to ensure there would be enough bandwidth to provide a strong signal for all the networks that would converge on campus.

“It took a lot of our in-house people to make it happen, even the miscellaneous jobs, from grounds keeping and snow removal to parking and traffic details,” says Furlong. With a large student body still attending classes, parking on campus was rather tight so the team set up satellite lots and buses to ensure the safe transport of audience members.

Overall, though, one of the biggest concerns was security, particularly in an election cycle that had become heated early on. “We ended up with hundreds of hours of security coverage. The last thing you want to happen is something going wrong when you’re on live TV,” Furlong admits. Saint Anselm’s director of safety and security dealt directly with the Secret Service and state and local police to ensure adequate detail.

“Everything went as planned, both debates went really great,” he says, furthering that one of the biggest learning moments came in understanding how to act on their feet.

“You really have to be able to react to nuances. As much as you can plan in eight months, little details are always missed,” he says. “But no matter who the client is, we want them to be satisfied and feel like they are seen and heard so they can remember their experience and hopefully come back.” **uw**

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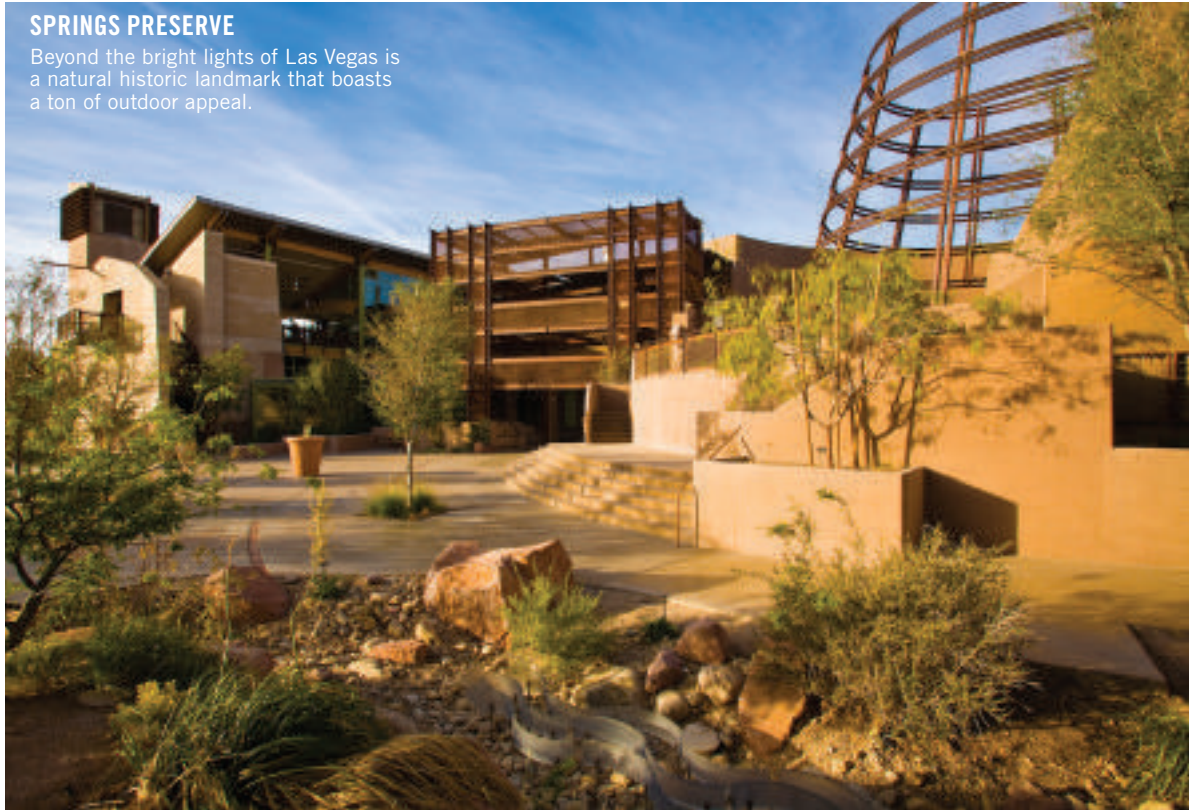
# ON THE ROAD

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



## SPRINGS PRESERVE

Beyond the bright lights of Las Vegas is a natural historic landmark that boasts a ton of outdoor appeal.



## *South By Southwest*

Historical, cultural, and natural event venues show why many planners are still going west for meetings and events.

*If you're still digging for gold* when it comes to venues, consider these five southwest gems for your next meeting, event, or conference. From a health and wellness center to an accredited science museum and national historic landmark, these hot spots prove why the west is won.

**National Museum of Nuclear Science & History (ALBUQUERQUE, NM)**  
Science is everywhere at the National Museum of Nuclear Science & History, from the Periodic Table embossed on the floor of Periodic Hall to the background scenery of fighter planes at the nine-acre Heritage Park. The museum is located in Albuquerque, not far from the town of Los Alamos, which was the site of the famous Manhattan Project that became an integral part of the Atomic Age.

"We are nationally accredited through the American Alliance of Museums,

which is the highest honor a museum can have," says Claudia Madrid, facility sales & special events coordinator. "We are also affiliated with the Smithsonian and the only congressionally-chartered museum in our field." As such, the venue has played host to a number of prestigious groups including The White House Office of Technology & Policy and even film and television productions ("Breaking Bad" is one of the most notable).

The marquee rental space is Periodic Hall, the main banquet room that can comfortably seat 200 people for a sit-

down dinner and 300 people for a cocktail reception. Tables, chairs, and linens are available as are screens, projectors, microphones, and complimentary Wi-Fi. There is also a preferred list of caterers you can choose from for food service.

"Any event that is held at our museum also provides each attendee with full access to all of our exhibits," says Madrid. "We also give discounts for military and nonprofit organizations."

**Parsons Center for Health and Wellness (PHOENIX, AZ)**

Downtown Phoenix is in the midst of a substantial revitalization project, and at the heart of that is The Parsons Center for Health and Wellness. The multi-purpose building is at the site of the former Chan-





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### PARSONS CENTER FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A revitalized downtown Phoenix includes the Parsons Center, which has modern spaces for meetings and events.

nel 12 News building, which was extensively renovated a few years ago and now has modern touches such as open ductwork, brushed nickel finishes, and exposed brick. Inside there are offices for medical groups, a specialty pharmacy and vitamin shop, and impressive community spaces for meetings and events.

“We’ve done everything from weddings to corporate events,” says Facilities Manager Barry Wilson. “We cater to everyone, with spaces that can be arranged in any formation, from classroom setup and theatre-style to banquets with formal roundtables.”

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The location of The Parsons Center is also ideal, a short light rail ride from Sky Harbor International Airport and across from several hotels and brand-new retail projects. Fitting in with the developing area, Wilson says, “We are a work in progress, but we are building quickly.”

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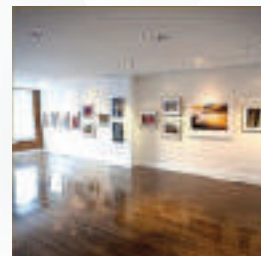


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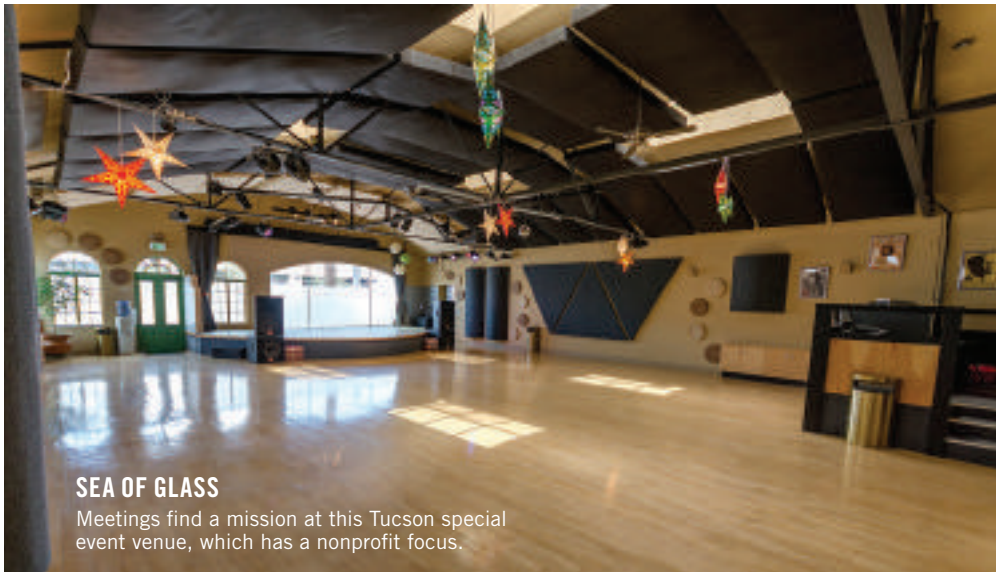


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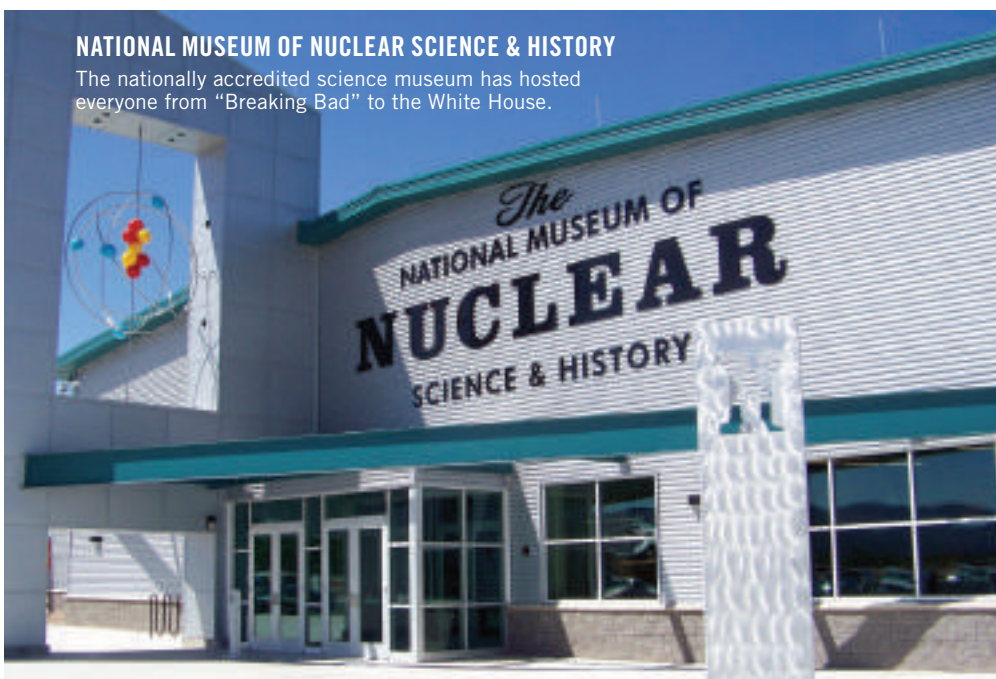
# ON THE ROAD

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



## SEA OF GLASS

Meetings find a mission at this Tucson special event venue, which has a nonprofit focus.



## NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NUCLEAR SCIENCE & HISTORY

The nationally accredited science museum has hosted everyone from "Breaking Bad" to the White House.

### Sea of Glass (TUCSON, AZ)

Meetings can find a mission at this performing arts center, located in the middle of Tucson's cultural district. "Our tagline is global change through higher consciousness," says Mycenay Plyler, booking agent at Sea of Glass. "We try to bring in events with a positive message, whether that's live music, independent films, workshops, dance, yoga, or speakers."

The venue is part of a larger nonprofit organization for global change, and proceeds of each meeting or event goes back to various programs, including cultivating an organic garden and eco-village as well as rehabilitation programs for the homeless and at-risk youth in southern Arizona.

Inside Sea of Glass are two rentable spaces, including a large 1,500-square-foot Performance Hall with a capacity of 280 people and a smaller 440-square-

foot gallery space for small receptions and presentations. "The larger venue has been engineered for excellent sound quality with a full high-tech PA system," says Plyler. There's also stage and dance floor lighting as well as a projector and movie-style screen for PowerPoints and videos. Sea of Glass also provides professional photography, video, and post-production services to capture each event.

In addition, two levels of courtyard space are available, including a downstairs patio that features a lush fountain while the upstairs has views of the Catalina Mountains.

Though catering isn't available on-site, groups are allowed to bring in food, with Plyler suggesting the many great establishments in Tucson. "We have a great gastronomical trend and are located in the middle of a whole strip of restaurants and shops." A fair trade and local artisan boutique is also located at the venue for even greater monetary impact.

### Springs Preserve (LAS VEGAS, NV)

In addition to the neon lights, Las Vegas also has wonders of nature, such as the national landmark Springs Preserve. Located just a few miles from the world-famous Strip, the 180-acre Springs Preserve is the site of the city's first water source. "We house eight acres of award-winning Botanical Gardens, interactive museums and galleries, and even live animal exhibits," says Pietra Sardelli, group sales supervisor.

The property has won sustainability awards for its array of Platinum LEED buildings that offer a variety of indoor and outdoor event spaces, which have been used by the Nevada Women's Film Festival and The Royal Airforce/Marines, among other clients.

The Desert Living Center offers a stunning 2,678-square-foot Banquet Room made with reclaimed trestle beams and



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# ON THE ROAD

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



## UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Buildings at this Albuquerque campus pay homage to the city's iconic southwest adobe style.

bamboo floors; it fits 180 people. For open-air events, a flexible main amphitheater can seat 2,000 and is commonly used for concerts, elegant dinners, and receptions. The Botanical Gardens also has an amphitheater for 30 to 250 people. As well, “There are combination indoor/outdoor spaces such as the Garden Terrace & Patio and Divine Café offering sweeping views of the Las Vegas skyline,” says Sardelli.

Divine Catering is the on-site food provider, ranked one of the best in the city. They also offer a unique schedule of cooking classes and host happy hours and seasonal brunches that can be reserved by groups. Other in-house services include full A/V and tours led by trained staff that focus on sustainability, architecture, history, archeology, gardens, and zoology.


### University of New Mexico (ALBUQUERQUE, NM)

There’s no state that gives a full taste of the southwest quite like New Mexico, and no way to get a more impeccable view than to take the world’s longest tram ride up to the peak of the Sandia Mountains. It’s just one of the excursions that conference guests of the University of New Mexico can enjoy.

“We are an urban campus, so we are right in the heart of the city, which pro-

vides a lot of unique opportunities,” says Christopher Cardenas, manager, sales & events. Other options include comprehensive tours of the historic city aboard the ABQ Trolley or booking the 20-person Duke City Peddler for a group bike ride to the city’s many brew houses.

But when it’s time to get down to business, the university has a wealth of options with functional meeting spaces that encourage an environment of learning. The Lobo Room has space for 120 guests and access to nearby breakout rooms while the Mirage is perfect for small meetings of about 10 people. For the largest functions, there is an 18,000-seat arena as well as a Grand Ballroom for 200 to 1,300, equipped with state-of-the-art audiovisual features and on-site catering. One of the most unique spaces is the quaint Alumni Chapel built in the area’s traditional adobe style that can fit 150.

“We also have two golf courses, one with a pavilion that can be rented out for conferences or social events,” says Cardenas. And just in case you never want to leave the comfort of this bustling campus, there are nearly 2,000 beds available during the summer months. 

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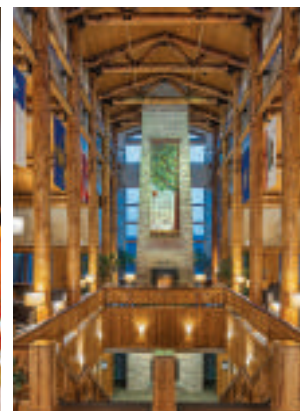
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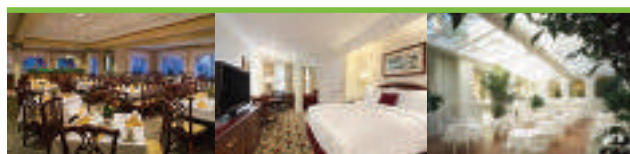
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# RECYCLE REUSE REPEAT

BY NOW EVERYONE HAS 'GONE GREEN.' BUT SOME VENUES ARE DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY WITH PRACTICES THAT COULD CHANGE THE WORLD.

BY SELENA FRAGASSI







REPEAT

REUSE

RECYCLE

**IN** 2016, the Internet has become known as the web of viral animal videos. There are cats shrieking at cucumbers, baby pandas sneezing like old men, and dogs mastering street hockey. But when the University of California at Berkeley innocently released a Facebook video last summer of a herd of goats cascading down a hillside, no one ever thought they'd be the next in line. "Goats gone wild," read the headlines in media outlets from CNN to the Daily Mail, with the video racking up over three million views on social media.

While the video was certainly entertaining—it's not every day you see hundreds of goats stopping traffic—the story behind it became the catalyst for its popularity.

The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, which is operated by the campus, has "hired" the goats every summer for the last 17 years to be eco-friendly lawnmowers. The herd of 500 is represented by Goats R Us (no joke) who delivers them in a goat limousine no less to the 100-acre plot of land where the

herd efficiently eats overgrown grasses and weeds that could otherwise become wildfire kindling.

"They do excellent work, and it's almost impossible for humans to do the same [job] they're doing with their everyday routine," said Tom Price, maintenance supervisor of facilities at the lab, in an interview with *The Daily Californian*.

More than just a conversation starter, the so-called "vegetation management plan" has become a win-win for ev-

eryone involved. Goats get to live out their wildest dreams while the lab saves considerable money and gives back to the environment by avoiding the use of gas-guzzling mowers.

As UC Berkeley shows, it's not good enough to just be green anymore; rather, many venues and planners are working together in earnest to find comprehensive new ways to problem solve sustainability and create a much smaller carbon footprint.



PHOTO COURTESY OF: MATEGIRL.



## A WASTE LAND

“We have more waste than anywhere you can think of,” says James Spellos, a former planner for 20 years who now runs Meeting U, a niche training company that aims to make industry personnel more comfortable with new technologies. Fifteen years ago, Spellos connected with Rock and Wrap It Up!, an award-winning anti-poverty and anti-hunger think tank with a specific purpose to reduce waste and end hunger by taking leftover food from events and bringing it to people who need it.

The organization started in the music industry with a theatre in Long Island that held rock concerts. “[Founder Syd Mandelbaum] was able to connect with bands and have it put in their riders that any excess food would be donated after the show rather than being thrown away,” says Spellos. It developed from there and built a huge following. Rock and Wrap It Up! now serves 40,000 cities in North America and has expanded into schools, hospitals, and — with the help of Spellos—professional meetings and events.

“It really hit home to me,” he says. “When I was a planner in the ‘80s and ‘90s, I always got pushback from hotels that said they were not able to donate

food from events, because they thought it was illegal to do so and cited potential lawyer roadblocks.” That changed in 1998 when the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act was passed through Congress that waives any liability to an organization if they donate food that is prepared (but not served) to charitable organizations as long as proper refrigeration and timing is adhered to. Ten years later, it was further supported with the passing of the Federal Food Donation Act, sponsored by Rock and Wrap It Up!.

“But what we have found is that there’s still a lot of misinformation fed to planners. And some aren’t aware about the ‘no liability’ clause and really don’t understand just how easy it is to do this,” Spellos says. The company vets all the charities, including churches, food banks, and soup kitchens, and has runners to coordinate pick-ups and drop-offs. “Yet, we are still finding incredible resistance.”

To help everyone better understand the impact that donating can have, Spellos points to the Whole Earth Event Calculator ([wholeearthcalculator.com](http://wholeearthcalculator.com)), a rather poignant online tool that allows a planner—or anyone—to enter

“Planners can reach out to us and ask us questions anytime. They don’t have to figure it out, we will do the work. And together we can keep food from going to landfills and instead serve people.” — James Spellos

in the pounds of food they have to donate and it will return the number of meals it will serve and the number of pounds that will be kept away from landfills. “There’s also calculations for composting and paper and plastic recycling. All free of charge.” The results can be shared on Facebook and Twitter (there’s also hashtag suggestions). A new, coordinating app also launched earlier this summer to make the process even easier.

“Planners can reach out to us and ask us questions anytime,” says Spellos. “They don’t have to figure it out, we will do the work. And together we can keep food from going to landfills and instead serve people.”

## MORE THAN AN OLD COLLEGE TRY

Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania also has people-centric missions with their reuse programs. Leftover floral decorations get donated to retirement villages within miles of campus or to food service and housekeeping staff on-site. “We like to do so to make them feel appreciated,” says Lynn McManness-Harlan, director, conference & event services. And for remaining food, she says, “A group of students does food rescues and will take it to local shelters and churches, or food kitchens and food pantries.” College staff also works with the local women’s shelter to create community gardens they can harvest for an eco-friendly food supply.

While part of the intent is goodwill, part of it also is progressing towards Allegheny’s mission to achieve climate neutrality by 2020. In 2007, Allegheny (which is one of the country’s oldest educational institutions, founded in 1815) signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. “It’s a collection of 700 colleges and universities that got together and said environmental sustainability is something really important, climate change is a scientific fact, and we need to think about how we can make positive changes and provide a social mandate to teach students about efficiency,” says Kelly Bolton, the campus’ sustainability coordinator. “And what we have been finding is that all the things we have been doing to get closer to our goal are actually really good for efficient operations.”

Some of the initiatives include purchasing all electricity from wind-generated sources and installing solar panels across campus, as well as developing a number of LEED certified buildings and creating several alternative food sources. That includes an aquaponic system (raising both fish like tilapia

and plants in water) and an on-campus production garden run by students who grow greens, scallions, herbs, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, peas, and beans, all of which gets supplied to dining halls.

There are also a number of rain gardens to minimize storm water runoff and provide attractive pockets of landscaped space. In addition, water refill stations are available across the grounds. “For all our freshmen, we give away stainless steel bottles they can refill around campus,” says Bolton “We always see freshman purchase bottled water, but by senior year that drops off because they realize that the social norm around here is to carry a bottle with you.” Another program Allegheny coordinates every summer is an annual energy challenge. “We ask everyone on campus to reduce energy consumption by 10% just by changing small habits,” Bolton furthers. “We do that for four weeks, and the money saved from it is put into various sustainability projects around campus.”

But it’s not just students that benefit. Many of these programs carry over into the summer conference season, which welcomes around 80 groups. “Summer is the peak production for our gardens, so a lot of visiting groups eat the veggies we grow on campus,” says McManness-Harlan. In the summer, the garden also has a

table where they sell produce if people are interested in buying. “Some guests have kitchens in their rooms so they can get fresh veggies and herbs and cook with them.” The dining halls also have a reusable takeout container program for groups that stay a minimum of three days. In addition, all of the waste in the food centers is fully composted for a rich fertilizer used for campus lawns and sports fields.

Bolton estimates that the wide range of eco-friendly programs has saved the college millions of dollars over the past decade, which has allowed McManness-Harlan to keep rates consistent. “Because we have been able to keep costs to a minimum, we have not raised our fees in a few years,” she says. “We really just try to encourage sustainability with all of our summer groups.”

REPEAT

REUSE

RECYCLE



## CREATING NATURAL HABITATS

Planners will find a similar structure at The Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada—a retreat-like arts and culture institution with a full meeting, event, and conference center for up to 1,000 people. “We have a very unique setting relative to our natural environment, but because we don’t use our sustainability measures as a marketing tool there’s no ability to pass on those costs to guests, and therefore we remain competitive,” says Vice President and Chief Operations Officer Luke Sunderland. Here, environmental programs are standard since the Centre is located in the mountains of Banff National Park, a protected world heritage site.

“It’s incredibly important that any business in Banff be proactive in environmental practices, so everyone within the park is pretty progressive,” says Sunderland. “But we think we take it one step further. We have worked with our environmental team to focus on three areas—habitat, sustainable sourcing, and energy.”

One of the most original parts of The Banff Centre is that the primary meeting spaces on the 40-acre property have floor-to-ceiling windows. “The only thing that might interrupt a meeting is the animals that are outside,” he jokes

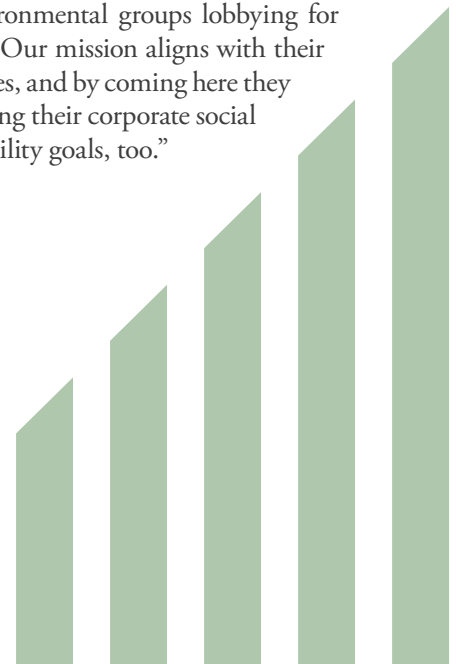
of the deer, elk, and occasional bear that passes by. “We really made a concerted effort to make the habitat of this campus as natural as it possibly can be, and part of that was maintaining all wildlife corridors.” That also includes restoring grasslands, he says. “We brought back the wild spaces in place of the manicured plots with absolutely no pesticides used anywhere on the grounds. When people get here sometimes they think we don’t cut our lawn but that gives us a chance for storytelling.”

Groups also find it fascinating to learn about the sourcing of the food in their daily meals. All of the micro greens used in menus are grown on-site, “but being in the mountains there’s a limited growing season,” says Sunderland. “So we use an urban cultivator that’s able to grow our greens and herbs year-round. It’s operating right in the main dining room where guests can see it.” The Banff Centre was the first property of its kind in Canada to institute the idea. Meats are also sourced locally and seafood comes from Ocean Wise, which ensures ocean-friendly practices. “It’s not the least expensive choice, but we want to provide a high-quality product that upholds our sustainable mission.”

That goes for the actual landscape of

the buildings, too. “We are a Four Green Key Hotel and Meeting destination, awarded by the Hotel Association of Canada, and we are in the Gold tier with the International Association of Conference Centres,” says Sunderland. “We’ve been doing carbon footprint audits since 2007 to monitor our status and make changes where needed. Every year, we also allocate capital to retrofitting the grounds to use LED sensor lights and energy-reducing windows so we can bring down our rates of consumption.” A recycling program also diverts approximately 2,000 liters of organic waste every week.

As such, The Banff Centre draws a lot of business from socially conscious organizations, particularly government and environmental groups lobbying for change. “Our mission aligns with their core values, and by coming here they are meeting their corporate social responsibility goals, too.”





REPEAT

REUSE

RECYCLE

## HOW THE GARDEN GROWS

The same can be said of Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, Illinois, a 385-acre living plant museum, which won the award for “best green venue” in the 2015 Unique Venues Best of Awards. It was recognized for various building designs such as a new LEED certified children’s learning center opening this year, innovative programs like rainwater collection for landscaping, and a number of greenhouses and gardens that supply food services. It’s run by Windy City Harvest, an urban agriculture education and job-training initiative that employs at-risk youth and the formerly incarcerated.

“It’s great to be recognized for the programs we have going on here, and it has helped us get more business,” admits Director of Sales & Special Events Connie Bolle. Because of the environmentally friendly setting, Brown Flynn opted to book a two-day conference on sustainability at the grounds, which offers a variety of 16 indoor and outdoor spaces. Wedding planner Megan Estrada says her clients chose the Garden because of its vegan and sustainable practices. “It’s a completely unique property where what is grown on-site is not just for visual appeal, but it is actually consumed by guests and incorporated into the menu. Most catering companies have to source local products from farmer’s markets or local distributors instead.”

In addition to being a popular venue for eco-friendly corporate and social events, the venue also hosts quarterly roundtables for local businesses that want to implement some of the same sustainable ideas. “We run a whole operation of external outreach to larger businesses, and invite

leaders to come in and meet with our team to talk green methods,” says Bolle.

The businesses learn takeaways about how Chicago Botanic Garden operates on both a daily basis and for special events. That includes using disposable plates and silverware made out of bamboo and plastic, which are recycled on-site. Recycled linens from plastic bottles are also available, and the Garden’s vendors deliver goods in reusable boxes.

“For more formal events, we recycle all cork from wine and bottles to be repurposed,” says Bolle of yet another example, also noting that the program is also open to the public.

Operationally, there are also strong eco-friendly initiatives. The sales team doesn’t prepare folders or kits or print out menus; they don’t even mail receipts. “Everything is 100% green from our office. We do it all online and through e-mail.” Bolle and her staff also encourage clients to use smartphones, tablets, or laptops to take notes and to download the free Chicago Botanic Garden app. “It will track where you are in the garden and tell you where all the plants

and flowers are that you want to see.”

To encourage more healthy transit, the Garden also built walking paths from the local commuter train stop and is an official station for a rental bike program called Divvy.

“What’s great about being here is that our people come up with new ideas all the time, so there’s a lot of trendsetting. It’s not only a natural place to institute programs, but staff and members really have a passion for green living,” says Bolle.

That’s an important distinguishing piece for the future, admits Spellos.

“Eight or nine years ago, right before the recession hit, we were just about to really jump into sustainability as an industry but the economic turnback pretty much took it off the table and made people focus on bottom lines,” he says. “Now, with a younger generation coming in that is very focused on this and understands we have a lot of excess, we are having these conversations more and more and developing solutions. And in so doing we can really impact not only our world but the world in general.” **uv**

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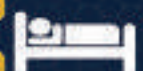
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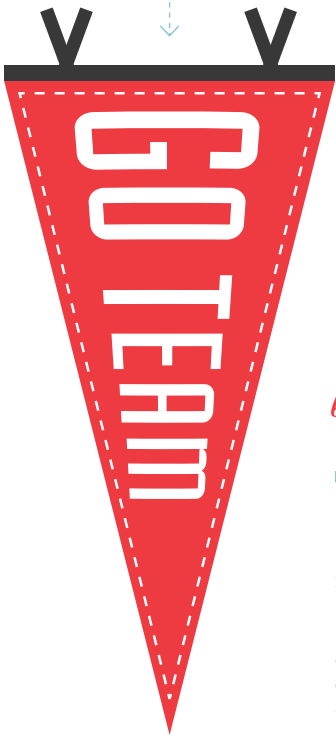
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BY SELENA FRAGASSI



*MARLENE CHASE CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME SHE HAD TO PLAN AN ICEBREAKER. "GROUPS DON'T EVEN NEED THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE SO INTRIGUED BY WHAT WE HAVE GOING ON HERE," SAYS THE MANAGER OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT HUNTSMAN FUNDY DISCOVERY AQUARIUM. LOCATED IN ST. ANDREWS, NEW BRUNSWICK, RIGHT OFF THE BAY OF FUNDY, THE 20,000-SQUARE-FOOT AQUARIUM WAS EXPANDED IN 2011 AND PRESENTS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISITING GROUPS.*

One of the most memorable is a 40-foot touch pool full of aquatic life from the intertidal zone of the Bay, such as rare lobsters, sea stars, sea potatoes, sea peaches, crabs, sand dollars, clams, mussels, and scallops, with new creatures added on a regular basis that brings people together in the spirit of science and allows them to explore nature together. "Guests are able to walk up to the pool and actually touch and feel them," says Chase. Interpretive staff are also on hand at all times to answer any questions, and Chase and her team can build itineraries and team-building events including lab time, beach combing, and guest speakers. "People seem to be very fascinated by it."

That certainly is the case for Heidi Tourkistas, an executive with East Coast Seafood that has hosted buyers at a biannual Lobster/Salmon Academy at Huntsman the past six years. "We find that Huntsman's remote location, with its spectacular views,

encourages communication amongst our guests and promotes learning," she says, noting the group uses a theatre and wet lab for classes. "There are no words to measure the positive influence the event at Huntsman has had. Their entire experience is a magical one which bonds people for life."

The aquatic excursion is just one example of how team-building opportunities have become increasingly dynamic for a savvy crowd that lives in a culture of YouTube and GoPro cameras. Though technology has put the world at our fingertips, it can make almost any activity seem as though we've been there, done that. And that has put the burden on many planners to come up with novel ideas that won't lose people's interest. Thankfully, there are a number of non-traditional places that meet that demand head on with a range of ideas that truly many people have not tried yet.



Huntsman Fundy Discovery Aquarium (St. Andrews, New Brunswick)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: MIKE MACLELLAN, VICTORY PARK OHIO.





Victory Park Ohio (North Ridgeville, OH)

### *EVERYONE IS A PART OF THE GAME*

At Victory Park Ohio, that means making each attendee an actual game piece.

The 60-acre outdoor sports and entertainment facility in North Ridgeville, Ohio regularly coordinates “human Jenga” and “human foosball” as well as “bubble ball,” which combines soccer and bumper cars into one very physical sport. “We’re really trying to bring different and unique sporting tournaments to our park,” says Marketing Communications Manager Christy M. Angie. “Groups really find it exciting to participate in something that is completely outside the box from what they might normally be doing in the office or at an outing.”

The idea for the human contact sports grew out of a very popular NXL Great Lakes Open International Paintball Tournament that Victory Park Ohio hosted over three days last June. “Last year, we had 2,500 people, and all the hotels were booked [from here] to downtown Cleveland for the event,” says Angie. The park will bring it back for a second year in August. “This year is targeted to be even bigger with more corporate teams playing in an intramural tournament.”

In the future, the sporting complex hopes to set up a permanent paintball field to make it a year-round draw, as well as continuing to create activities that makes them known as the “oddball” rec facility. That includes hosting dueling dogs, where canines jump into a pool and race, or arranging Quiddich, a “Harry Potter”-themed broomstick game. Though they sound zany, one-of-a-kind opportunities do create a lot of value for groups, says Angie. “If it’s something that’s completely different from what employees are used to, it will bond them together and develop trust as they problem-solve the game together.”

### *KEEPING AN EYE ON THE BALL*

That philosophy is something that SPiN abides by as well with their original take at team-building. The “Ping-Pong social club,” co-founded by actress Susan Sarandon and with locations in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Toronto, has three main tenets to its business: culture, community, and connection.

“The connection piece is really important,” says Global Sales Director Lou Dean Canakes II, CMP. “Ping-Pong is such a unique game that transcends age, gender, and social and ethnic differences and brings everyone together for a shared experience. You not only have to pay attention to hitting the ball, but also to the person across from you, and that interaction is second to none.”

Furthering the community aspect is the fact that SPiN hires local artists to design each location and donates used ping-pong tables to underprivileged youth every year. The cultural part, says Canakes, comes into play with building a following for the game through retail guests, members, and a lucrative group business that caters to parties of 10 or more. “Lucky for us, Ping-Pong seems to be on the rise,” he says, which also makes it an attractive option for planners looking for something a little different that everyone can love.

### *WE’RE IN THIS TOGETHER*

Of course, all skill levels are welcome at SPiN, and each location has on-site event planners that can go a step farther and arrange lessons and demos from actual Ping-Pong professionals. “They can set up team-building exercises and mini-tournaments with formatted games,” says Canakes. One example, called “The Runaround,” puts the boss or supervisor at one end of the Ping-Pong table while his or her employees line up at the other side to volley; any player that misses is



eliminated until the winner is left standing.

SPiN can also create customizable options, such as producing trophies and paddles with printed logos. But even if a person is not actually playing the game, “they’re still celebrating the other players and enjoying a social club environment,” says Canakes. So, in that way, “the experience is for everyone.”

Victory Park Ohio also can dial down their offerings to appease everyone. “We have eight ball diamonds, four sand volleyball courts, and six multipurpose fields, as well as corn hole boards and horseshoes,” says Angie, for those that want a more traditional group outing.

At Huntsman Fundy Discovery Aquarium, adaptability is also key. “All programs can be arranged for any length of time and for any group,” says Chase. “We can drill down and get serious for science-based groups that want to work in our lab, or if someone is here for a wedding and just wanted to take a tour, we can also do that for them.” The center has rotating exhibits with 30 varieties of species, daily seal and seahorse feedings, and a walking path to the beach where guests can go combing for the animals they learned about inside. Chase and her team have even coordinated programs for attendees’ children who have been invited to tag along and receive their own itinerary. “The knowledge base doesn’t matter, we can still teach you something,” she says.

### *GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE EXPERIENCE*

The activities are the key draw to all three locations, but the added amenities also add to the outing.

“People normally stay around three hours with us,” says Canakes of a typical SPiN experience. The club offers an array of full-service food and beverage packages. Private suites are also available for rent and include lounge seating and a DJ booth in addition to playing tables.

Victory Park Ohio is also getting ready to open its own two-story restaurant at the end of the summer. It will be catered by Victory Grille with seating on the main floor and a second-floor lounge and viewing deck overlooking the volleyball courts. “We also have relationships with food trucks in northeast Ohio and can bring those in as well,” says Angie. The mobile catering will be a big part of the Electrical League of Ohio’s Corporate Challenge that the park will host this fall. It will be anchored by games during the day and a concert (and fireworks) at night using a convenient stage setup that is also on-site.

Huntsman Fundy Discovery Aquarium also does their own catering using a commercial kitchen and can arrange a host or cash bar. But because it was originally founded as an educational institute, they also offer lecture space and overnight accommodations. “We have a 218-seat theatre that’s great for giving presentations and a meeting room for 30 people with an underwater



SPiN (Multiple locations)

PHOTO COURTESY OF: NOAH FECKS.

view of the seals in their habitat,” says Chase of the unique setup, “as well as Anderson House, an historic inn that has 20 executive-style suites and a 60-person dining hall as well as common space and a lounge. It’s located next to the Algonquin Golf Course, which has a beautiful view of Passamaquoddy Bay.”

**THE MORE YOU KNOW**

Though most of the booking processes are pretty straightforward, Victory Park Ohio does make attendees sign waivers since there is a lot of body contact in their events. “But we’ve never had any issues,” Angie admits.

The most important part, she says, is knowing the number of people that will be attending and what kind of activities you would like, whether it’s low-key or unique and different. “For some of the games we work with outside vendors who come in and set it up, so we need at least six weeks minimum notice,” she says, advising that January to March is their busiest booking window for the year.

But once the date is reserved, there is a lot to look forward to, says Angie. “We get a lot of feedback that our programs enhance company morale, cultivate leadership potential, and improve productivity and motivation.” And that’s a win-win for all. **uv**

**GET CONNECTED**

**Victory Park Ohio**  
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 UniqueVenues.com/victoryparkohio  
 (440) 954.8703

**SPiN**  
 New York, Chicago, San Francisco,  
 Los Angeles, Toronto  
 UniqueVenues.com/Spin  
 (214) 862.4646

**Huntsman Fundy Discovery Aquarium**  
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# INDUSTRY UPDATES

news & awards

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

## The Bently Reserve Caters to New Moms with Special “Mother’s Room”

Working moms are the focus of a new feature at San Francisco’s Bently Reserve. The historic special event venue (once the Federal Reserve Bank) has just opened a “Mother’s Room,” which allows private and tranquil space for breastfeeding while attending a meeting or function. “We’re increasingly receiving requests from meeting planners for a private room for mothers who are breastfeeding, and we wanted to create a truly comfortable space for them,” said Director of Events and Sales Jim Bruels. The new space is also aligned with the U.S. Department of Labor’s “Affordable Care Act.” It comes stocked with relaxing and convenient amenities including cozy chairs, a private wet bar, mini fridge, water and tea station, magazines, and complimentary Wi-Fi. The “Mother’s Room” is available Monday through Friday during operating business hours, and must be booked with two weeks notice and in conjunction with an additional meeting room reservation.

[UniqueVenues.com/BentlyReserve](http://UniqueVenues.com/BentlyReserve)



## New Program at MacEwan University Is the Bee’s Knees

The Edmonton-based university is joining the sting operation of urban beekeeping, according to a report in CBC News. In particular, the rooftop of MacEwan’s downtown City Centre campus was just outfitted with four hives as the latest chapter in ongoing sustainability initiatives. Beekeeping has become a hot topic since populations of honeybees are now dwindling due to climate change and pesticide use, though they still serve an incredibly important role in pollinating a majority of food crops around the world. The university has hired a certified beekeeper to maintain the hives, which will impart a “flow process” that utilizes a clear viewing window to see when the honey is ready to harvest. The nectar produced will be used—and sold by—Dining Services.

[UniqueVenues.ca/MacEwanUniv](http://UniqueVenues.ca/MacEwanUniv)



## Wedding Bells are Ringing for Two Award-Winning Venues

Love is in the air for two Unique Venues members that have received attention for their boutique wedding services. Waterview, a brand-new event venue in Vancouver, was named one of Canada’s “loveliest wedding venues” in 2016 by Weddingbells.ca, a planning service for to-be brides and grooms. “False Creek and Granville Island act as scenic backdrops [for the] aptly named Waterview, which provides a breathtaking view through panoramic floor-to-ceiling windows. This versatile, open concept venue is perfect for any type of wedding celebration,” says Weddingbells.

On the other hand, Gallery J, a special event venue in Orlando, Florida is glowing over being named one of the “most outrageous wedding venues” by alt publication Orlando Weekly. “Brick walls and faux balconies graced with hanging flowers will make it feel like you just got married at a café corner in an unknown European town,” says the paper, honing in on Gallery J’s unique French Quarter vibe.

[UniqueVenues.ca/WaterviewBC](http://UniqueVenues.ca/WaterviewBC)

[UniqueVenues.com/Galleryj](http://UniqueVenues.com/Galleryj)



## Mount Vernon Nazarene University Provides a Room of One's Own with New Hotel

The Mount Vernon Grand Hotel is now open. The boutique property, in Mount Vernon, Ohio, provides visitors with a step back in time with the Victorian décor and other gilded features including a parlor and grand staircase. Operated by Mount Vernon Nazarene University, the four-story property is an ideal spot for multi-day conference guests with 39 rooms and seven suites (plus, two conference spaces). Overnight stays also include access to a fitness center, business center, complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi, free parking, and an upscale breakfast every morning. A special meeting room package also offers one complimentary meeting space with 10 booked rooms. Online reservations are now available for your next stay. [uv UniqueVenues.com/MVNU](http://uv.UniqueVenues.com/MVNU)



## EVENTS AT COLBY-SAWYER COLLEGE

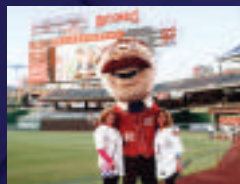
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[colby-sawyer.edu/functions](http://colby-sawyer.edu/functions)



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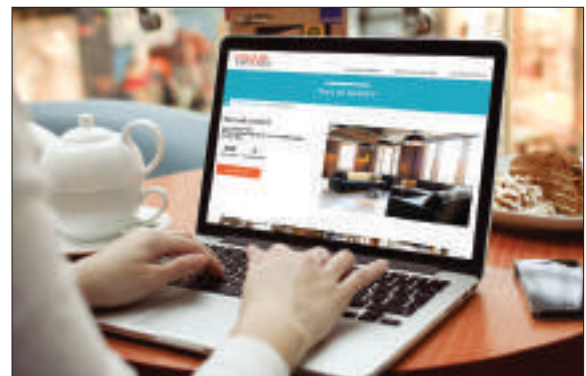
THE FOLLOWING PAGES FEATURE A COMPREHENSIVE INDEX OF ALL THE UNIQUE VENUES MEMBERS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA. EACH LISTING IS ORGANIZED ALPHABETICALLY FOR EASE OF USE AND FEATURES THE NAME OF THE VENUE, CITY AND UNIQUE VENUES WEBSITE ADDRESS, WHICH HOLDS EVEN MORE INFORMATION FOR PLANNERS.

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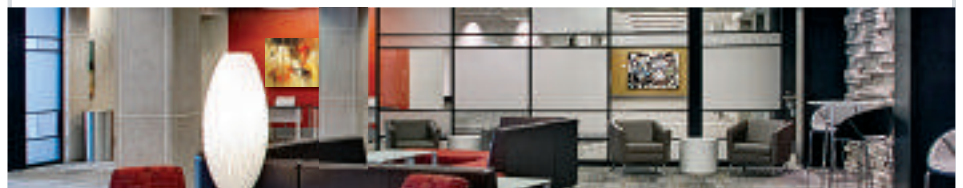
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# PERSON OF INTEREST

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

## Just Getting Started

Andrew Clouse began his career in the startup world, which taught him how to do business differently at his Washington, D.C. event venue.

*“If you looked at my résumé, you’d have no idea how I ended up here,”* jokes Andrew Clouse, co-owner of The Loft at 600 F. Before opening the boutique event space in Washington, D.C. in 2013, Clouse had zero experience in the hospitality industry. Rather, the startup entrepreneur was co-managing a California tech firm called Terra Eclipse that was looking to expand to the East Coast.

Upon acquiring a historic building in D.C., across from the Verizon Center sporting arena, Clouse and his business partners gutted the three-floor property and wisely reserved one floor for function space for clients. “We never realized how in demand it would be,” he says. “Something told me there was an opportunity here.” Within 18 months, The Loft at 600 F had hosted 600 events, all with raving five-star reviews. “We created a snowball, but handling that much growth, with so many positive experiences, has been very rewarding.” Clouse shares his wisdom on doing business differently.

**Unique Venues:** Why did you decide to switch gears and focus on hosting events?

**Andrew Clouse:** “I have always had a natural inclination towards hospitality, and empathizing with a client or guest to create an experience just for them. As an entrepreneur, whether a tech or brick-and-mortar business, you always need to be thinking about the user experience to be successful. Looking back, I can see a huge amount of parallels in both worlds.”

**UV:** What do you do differently that benefits your guests?

**AC:** “I’m used to the Internet generation where people expect a fast response. The standards in tech are so incredibly high. So that’s one of the things we have emphasized from the beginning—making our operation responsive, concise, and efficient. Also we pride ourselves on being able to take ideas

like tech and boil them down for the other person to understand. Planners are organizing massive amounts of logistics, so being able to speak their language is a huge step.”

**UV:** The Loft at 600 F must have some high-tech equipment, then.

**AC:** “We put the same equipment into the venue that we have been using. We’ll let clients use our iMacs for their video conferencing and even our Polycom [IP laptop] phones when in a pinch. We also offer very fast fiber Internet to everyone, all within one flat rate. It was a bit of a culture shock to realize that’s the exception.”

**UV:** Are there any other interesting features inside that set you apart?

**AC:** “One of the other owners has a hobby of renovating antique lamps, so a lot of his pieces are throughout the space. There are also hardwood floors, exposed brick, and a long window line looking out at the landmark museums. We’ve been taken aback by how astounded people are that the space has so much character and is so different than the windowless rooms you’d find elsewhere. There weren’t that many options like this in D.C., but that is changing.”

**UV:** What’s next for you?

**AC:** “There’s a huge amount of underutilized space still in the area, so we are partnering with different groups to leverage more opportunities to provide the community with unique functional options.” **uv**



ANDREW CLOUSE  
Co-Owner of The Loft at 600 F

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