



THE MPI  
**VIRGINIA VIEW**

NEWSLETTER  
FIRST QUARTER, 2025



# BEYOND THE MINIBAR



After a busy conference, no one wants to go back to their room for off-brand shooters and stale nuts. But with more than a half dozen on-property bars and lounges, your guests can find the perfect place for happy hour. An after-work drink that you actually want to drink? That's beyond conventional.



[KALAHARIMEETINGS.COM](http://KALAHARIMEETINGS.COM)

© 2024 Kalahari Management Co. LLC

# Updates & Announcements

## Introducing The MPI Virginia View!

We are excited to unveil MPI Virginia's newly rebranded and redesigned quarterly newsletter! With a fresh format and enhanced content, we're bringing you even more valuable insights, upcoming events, and member highlights to keep you informed and engaged.

We'd love to hear your thoughts! Share your feedback and let us know what you'd like to see in future editions!

[SUBMIT YOUR  
FEEDBACK](#)

## In This Issue

- ✓ President's Letter
- ✓ 2025 Board of Directors
- ✓ Welcome Newest Members
- ✓ Member Milestones
- ✓ Member Spotlight
- ✓ Volunteer Opportunities
- ✓ Upcoming Events
- ✓ Industry Insights
- ✓ Sponsor Spotlight







# President's Letter

DWIGHT DRISKILL

Dear MPI Virginia Members,

As we step into a new year, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your dedication to the meetings and events industry. Your passion and innovation continue to shape the future of our profession, and as your MPI-VA Chapter President, I'm honored to be part of such an inspiring community. This could not be done without the help and support of both Martina James and Steve Tewksbury. Both of these past Presidents have set this chapter up for success and I couldn't be prouder to learn from their leadership.

## Industry Spotlight: Adapting to Change

One of the most pressing trends impacting Virginia planners is the evolving landscape of event technology. From AI-driven personalization to the increasing demand for hybrid experiences, staying ahead means embracing new tools while maintaining the human connection that makes our industry special. As planners, we must balance innovation with meaningful engagement to create impactful experiences for our attendees. You will see us focus on this with several of our guest speakers presenting AI type hot topics during our quarterly meetings so don't forget to sign up and attend.

## Celebrating Success

This past fiscal year, our chapter has achieved incredible milestones. Whether it was the success of our latest networking event, the monthly membership training calls, or the quarterly education meetings, we continue to demonstrate the strength and resilience of our industry. Here are some key statistics that lead to our success:



- 89% overall satisfaction rate
- 123 members with 61% planners and 37% suppliers
- Over \$50 million worth of buying power in our Chapter
- 70% membership retention rate which exceeds MPI expectations
- 96% of members said they felt welcome at Chapter meetings in 2024

Congratulations to all who have contributed—your efforts make a difference!

### **A Personal Message**

As we head into a new year, I wanted to take a moment to share some of my reflections from chapter meetings in 2024. The many educational sessions have proven to be incredibly beneficial for our members, fostering collaboration and enhancing our collective knowledge. Looking forward, we envision a strong future growth trajectory for our chapter. To achieve this, it is imperative that we increase participation from all members. Engaging more voices in our discussions will not only enrich our meetings but also facilitate a more diverse exchange of ideas and innovative solutions. We believe that by partnering together and harnessing our collective strengths, we can enhance the value that each member receives from our organization. I encourage you to share your thoughts on ways we can improve member involvement and continue to provide exceptional educational opportunities.

### **Quote of the Day**

Howard Schultz, former Chairman and CEO of Starbucks once said, "When you're surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible." That quote exemplifies the members of this chapter. As we move forward, let's continue to innovate, collaborate, and support one another. I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events and hearing how we can make our chapter even stronger.

Best regards,

Dwight Driskill  
President  
MPI-VA Chapter

# Meet the 2025 Board of Directors



**Dwight Driskill**  
President



**Martina James**  
Immediate Past  
President



**Penny Guiles**  
President Elect



**Heather Buss**  
Vice President,  
Membership



**Tracy Fink**  
Vice President,  
Education



**Shamera Stewart**  
Vice President,  
Communications



**Brittany Rice**  
Vice President,  
Finance



**Kristy Geiger**  
Director, Leadership  
Development



**Rachael Holt**  
Director, Quarterly  
Meetings & Special  
Events



**Cheryl Simmons**  
Director,  
Member Care



**Lauren Keys**  
Director,  
Communications  
and Outreach



**Kathleen Hinger**  
Director,  
Sponsorship

**Director of Recruitment position available!**  
**Fill out our volunteer interest form to learn more.**



# Welcome Newest Members



## VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Michaela Claywell  
Lauren Graf  
Jillian Lasky  
Hannah Mollenhaur  
Michaela Prescott  
Alandria Terry  
Tina Theodor

Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen  
Hillsdale Conference Center  
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalman  
The Forum Charlottesville  
  
Virginia Peninsula Community College  
James-Yorktown Foundation



REFER  
A FRIEND

We are pleased to offer you an opportunity to help a colleague, friend, or young professional experience the benefits of MPI membership.

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)



# Membership Milestones

Join us in celebrating these amazing members and their commitment to MPI Virginia

## 1-Year Members

- Rachael Holt, *The Westin Richmond*
- Jordan Hook, *Richmond Flying Squirrels*
- Lori Whaley, *Tradewinds Consulting Inc.*

## 2-Year Members

- Pam Melita, *Swedish Match*
- Kristin Pettway, *Drive Smart VA*
- Megan Seagram, *Seagram's Systems A/V*
- Kelsey Thompson, *Leadership Council on Legal Diversity*

## 3-Year Members

- Jeff Bristow, *Colonial DJ's, LLC*
- Lindsay Hale, *Mountain Lake Lodge*
- Daniele Woerner, *Holiday Inn Oceanside*

## 5+ Years

- Kimberly Martin, *Virginia Association of Realtors* - **6 Years**
- Beth Castro, *World Law Group* - **14 Years**
- Megan Hazzard, *Henrico Sports & Entertainment Authority* - **15 Years**
- Michelle Moker, *Omni Richmond Hotel* - **22 Years**
- Carol Torricelli, *Retired* - **27 Years**



# Member Spotlight



**Shamera Stewart**

Meetings Manager,  
American Physical Society

**Member Since:** August 2023

**Can't Live Without:** My phone — it keeps me connected and organized.

**Go-to Meal:** Seafood!

## Why She Joined MPI VA

"I joined to build deeper connections within the meetings and events community here in the Commonwealth. I wanted to get more involved locally and give back to an industry that's given so much to my professional growth."

## What She Loves Most About the Industry

"Creating environments where people can connect, learn, and share meaningful experiences. Every event is different—and that variety keeps me excited and always learning."

## Her Advice to Newcomers

"Stay curious, be flexible, and build genuine relationships. The more involved you are, the more you'll grow. Don't just focus on the details—remember the bigger picture and lead with passion."

*Know someone we should spotlight next? Or want to be featured yourself? Let us know now!*

**Nominate**

# VOLUNTEER

## Opportunities

## LOOKING TO GET INVOLVED WITH MPI VA?

We're currently welcoming volunteers across a variety of areas—whether you're passionate about planning events, creating content, connecting with members, or supporting behind the scenes, there's a place for you! Bring your creativity, leadership, and enthusiasm to help us grow and serve our community. Complete the Volunteer Interest Form below to let us know how you'd like to get involved with MPI VA! We'd love to have you on board.

[Volunteer Today](#) >



### Annual Conference Committee

Want to be part of planning one of our biggest events of the year? Join the Annual Conference Committee and help shape the experience taking place this August in Portsmouth.

**Interested?** Contact [Kristy Geiger](#)



### Education Committee

Passionate about learning and professional development? Join the Education Committee and help shape the programming that brings valuable insights and meaningful experiences to our members throughout the year.

**Interested?** Contact [Tracy Fink](#)



### Marketing and Communications Committee

Are you creative, social-savvy, or love writing? Help us tell our chapter's story! We're looking for volunteers to support social media, email marketing, and content creation for The MPI Virginia View.

**Interested?** Contact [Shamera Stewart](#) or [Lauren Keys](#)

## BENEFITS OF GETTING INVOLVED

- Expand your network of event and hospitality professionals
- Build your leadership and communication skills
- Get early access to chapter events and planning
- Boost your resume while having fun with a collaborative team



# Upcoming Events



## **GLOBAL MEETINGS INDUSTRY DAY (GMID) 2025**

**SAVE THE DATE:** Join MPI for Global Meetings Industry Day (GMID) 2025: A special online experience celebrating the power of meetings and events.

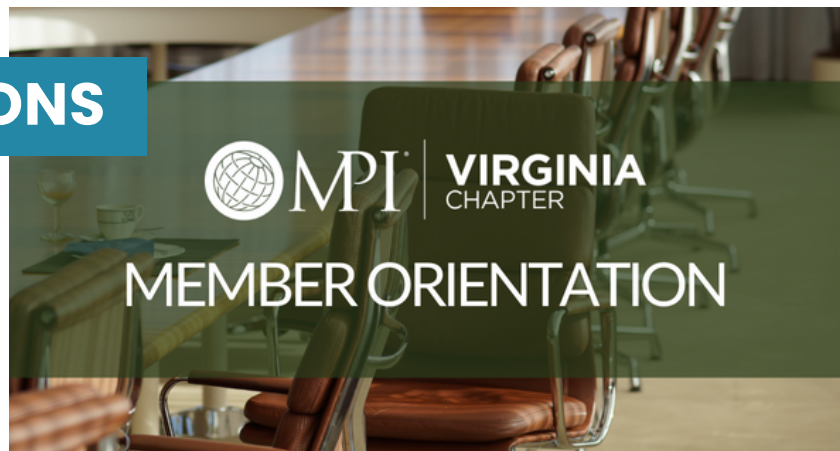
This program will bring together industry professionals from around the globe to recognize the impact of face-to-face connection and the evolving journey of event professionals.

**April 3, 2025 8am - 4pm CT** [Register Here](#)

**We look forward to celebrating with you on Thursday, April 3.**

## **MEMBER ORIENTATIONS**

**SAVE THE DATES:** Join us to meet fellow members of the MPI Virginia Chapter, and learn more about how to get the most out of your membership.



### **Upcoming Orientations:**

- 1. April 14, 2025: 11am - 12pm EST** [Register Here](#)
- 2. May 12, 2025: 11am - 12pm EST** [Register Here](#)

Learn more about ...

- Networking Opportunities
- CMP Information
- Virtual & Live Educational Sessions
- Member Engagement & Getting Involved
- And Much More!

After registering, you will receive a Zoom link to attend the event virtually the day before the event.

[Stay Up-To-Date and View All Our Events](#)

# More Events



## APRIL 2025 EDUCATION AND NETWORKING PROGRAM

Join MPI Virginia in Harrisonburg for two days of professional development and connection at Hotel Madison & Shenandoah Valley Conference Center, April

16–17, 2025. This program will feature sessions on AI and cybersecurity, leadership in the digital age, emotional intelligence, and more—plus interactive discussions and networking with fellow industry professionals.

**Early bird registration is open through April 4.**

**Special hotel rate available—book by April 4.**

[Register here](#)

## 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**SAVE THE DATE:** MPI Virginia's 2025 Annual Education Conference will take place August 6–8, 2025 at the Renaissance Portsmouth–Norfolk Waterfront Hotel in Portsmouth, VA.



**Call for Presentations:** Do you have a session idea that can educate, inspire, or energize meeting professionals? We want to hear from you! Suggested topics include leadership, AI and new technology, budgeting, contract negotiation, event trends, DEI, and more. Creative formats and interactive learning are highly encouraged. **Proposal deadline:** April 30, 2025, at 5 PM.

[Click here for more information and to submit your proposal](#)



# Industry Insights

*Curated reads to keep you sharp, savvy, and in-the-know.*



## HOW TO NURTURE FUTURE LEADERS

By Holly Woolard | *Smart Meetings*

As industry veterans retire, there's a growing need to empower emerging talent with the tools and confidence to lead. Mentorship, career development programs, and early exposure to leadership roles can help build a solid foundation. Cultivating a culture of support and intentional growth is key to shaping the next wave of impactful leaders.

[Read More](#)



## TRENDS THAT WILL SHAPE 2025: A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE OF EVENTS

By Elaine Pofeldt | *Meeting Professionals International (MPI)*

The events landscape is shifting fast, and 2025 is set to usher in bold changes—from hyper-personalized experiences to AI-driven planning and analytics. Attendee expectations are evolving, and planners will need to focus on creativity, flexibility, and measurable value. These trends point toward a future where technology and human connection go hand in hand.

[Read More](#)



## 8 EASY WAYS TO USE AI TO PLAN, EXPAND, AND MEASURE YOUR EVENTS

By Christine Loomis | *Meetings Today*

AI tools are making event planning smarter by simplifying decisions, streamlining logistics, and generating content with ease. From budget tracking to enhancing attendee experiences, these strategies help planners stay organized and efficient. Embracing AI doesn't replace human creativity—it enhances it.

[Read More](#)



## CONTRACT CLAUSES YOU NEED IN 2025

By JT Long | *Smart Meetings*

As events grow in complexity, planners must protect themselves with stronger contracts. New considerations include force majeure clarity, labor strike protections, cybersecurity language, and terms addressing delayed payments. Working with legal experts to build proactive, adaptable agreements can help planners mitigate risk and ensure smooth execution in 2025 and beyond.

[Read More](#)

# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

## PLATINUM SPONSOR



## SILVER SPONSOR



## MEETING & EVENT PARTNERS



FOGO DE CHÃO

SOCIAL 52

lost office  
COLLABORATIVE

cvent

Become a Sponsor Today! [Click here to learn more.](#)



That's a wrap on this edition of The MPI Virginia View! Thank you for being part of our MPI Virginia community. Stay engaged, stay inspired, and we'll see you at the next event!



## LET'S CONNECT!

Stay in the know with event updates, industry trends, and networking opportunities. Follow us on social media to stay connected with the MPI Virginia community!



[Instagram](#)



[Facebook](#)



[LinkedIn](#)

## HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

We'd love to feature your success, insights, or industry expertise in the next edition of The MPI Virginia View! Submit your ideas here:

[Submit Your Ideas](#) 