

# CURRENT

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DALLAS/FORT WORTH  
CHAPTER



MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL

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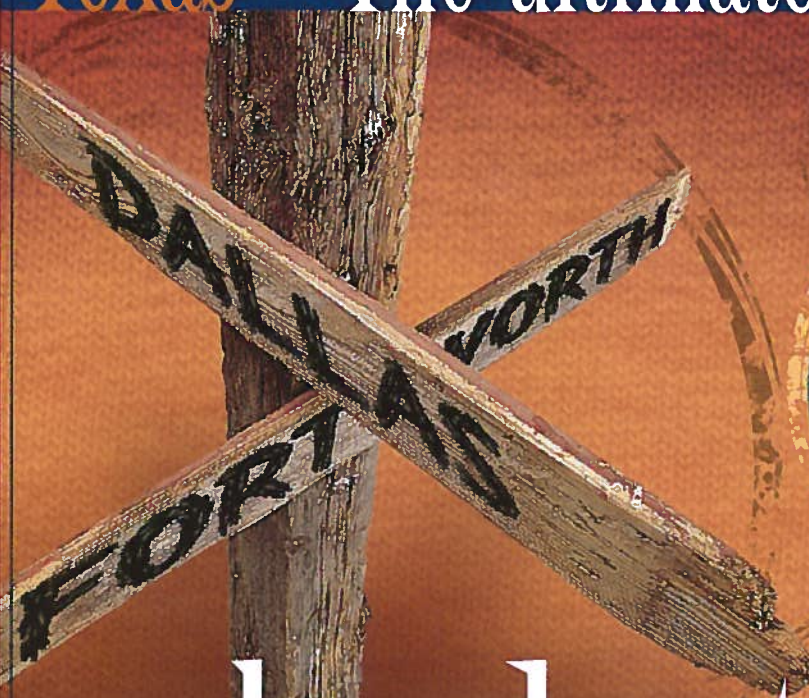
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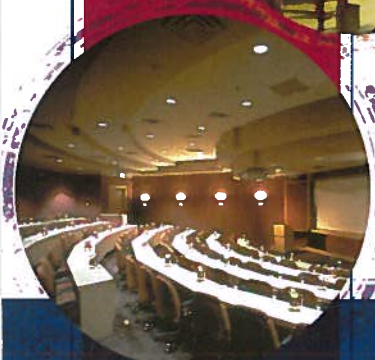
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March/April 2008

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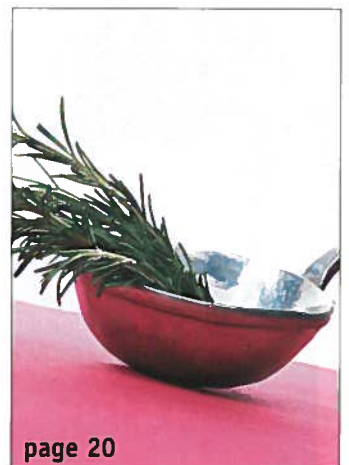
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## I am CMP

**Carole May, CTC, CMP**  
The Event Network  
Fort Worth, Texas



**In all the years I have  
been planning events,  
I always stop and take  
a few minutes to enjoy  
the view.**

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DALLAS/FORT WORTH  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Nancey Hernandez, CMP  
Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau



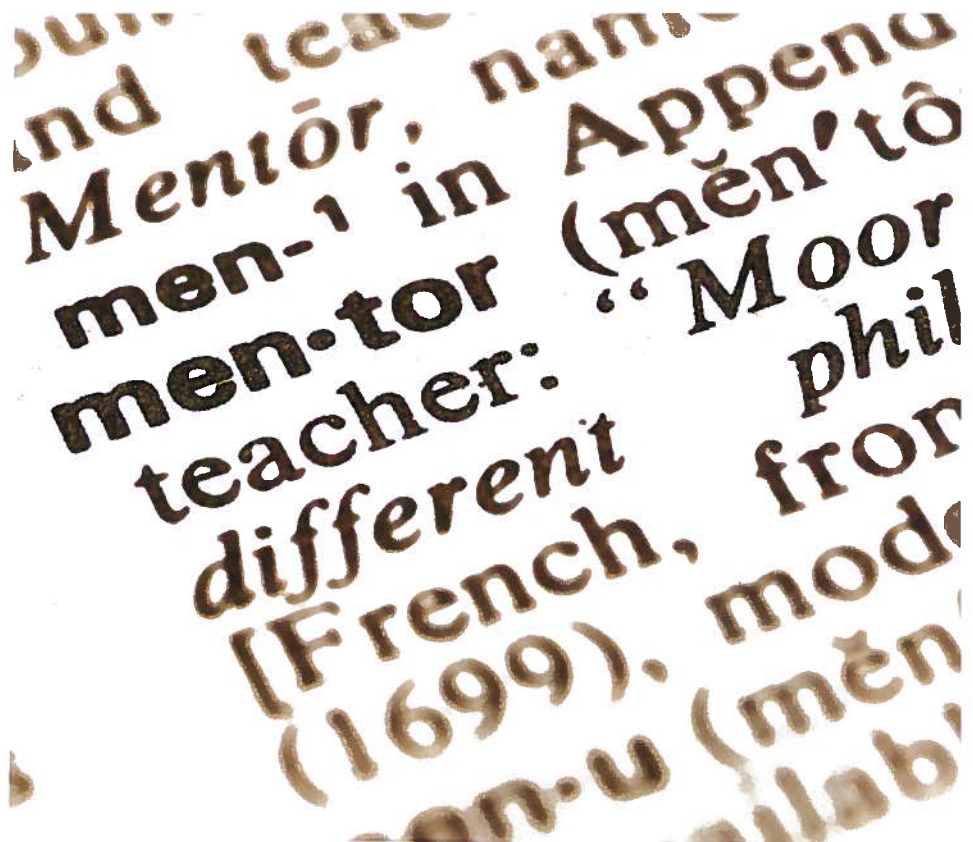
As we have discussed this year, "Building Partnerships for a Lifetime" is the initiative for the MPI D/FW chapter. For the

past several months, I have focused on "partnerships" in my notes to the chapter. Let's look at the "lifetime" part of this quote. For those of you who have been in the industry for many years, think back to how you got involved in our profession... Did you have a mentor or a coach? Someone who gave you sage advice? How did you get where you are today?

For many of us, we still need a mentor to take the next step. Perhaps you want to change your career path or learn a new skill set? Or, if you are new to the industry, maybe you need some guidance and support? The words "partnerships" and "lifetime" go hand-in-hand. I would not be in my current position with the Dallas CVB or the MPI D/FW chapter without the encouragement and support from so many of my mentors. I started down this path 17 years ago, and it took a lot of advice and help from colleagues I respected. This is always ongoing, and needed; I take advice every day!

Please take a moment to look at the plan our team has put together under the leadership of Kim Reynolds, CMP, CMM with Strategic Meetings Solutions. I am so thrilled to share this *groundbreaking* program with all of you!

- Nancey Hernandez, CMP  
MPI D/FW Chapter President



## Mentoring: Fred H. Knieberg Professional Development Program

By Kim Reynolds, CMP, CMM  
Director of Leadership MPI D/FW Chapter

In today's fast-paced, online, Web 2.0 environments, mentoring and coaching can play an even more important role in our industry and our life. If we are lucky and if we take the time throughout our careers, we will have an opportunity to learn from an industry peer or provide valuable guidance to another.

Mentoring and coaching is not a new business discipline; rather, it dates back to the days of Odysseus, in Homer's tale *The Odyssey*. While Odysseus was fighting the Trojan War, Mentor was entrusted to prepare Telemachus, the prince, to one

day rule the kingdom.

Today's relationship between mentors and protégés are not likely life-and-death situations; rather, they provide the framework to facilitate personal growth of the whole person and their career. It is an equal partnership where both parties have an opportunity to learn and grow throughout the entire processes. I have been fortunate to have had mentors who took the time to provide guidance in career development, exposure to new opportunities and challenges, and the support to take chances. Today, I often find myself on the

## Wild On .....MPI!



Miami to Milan,  
San Francisco to Singapore.

## WHERE DO YOU REPRESENT MPI?

The MPI Dallas/Fort Worth Chapter is challenging all members to show their MPI spirit.

When traveling around the world, take pictures of yourself with the MPI logo in the most obscure, remote places on earth and share them with the rest of the chapter.

Submit your  
Wild On .....MPI!!  
photos to  
Matthew Massengale,  
DCMP, CMP at  
matthew.massengale@eds.com



other side of the equation, in the role of mentor and coach. I find I am still growing and learning about myself every time I take on this role.

We are fortunate to work in an industry that provides multiple opportunities for these roles to develop and foster. As part of our initiative to "Build Relationships that Last a Lifetime," it seems only natural that we should have a professional development program where accomplished professionals can experience growth through coaching by providing support to the career development of members within our industry.

Fred H. Knieberg, CMP, was the original creator of the MPI D/FW Chapter Mentor Program. Knieberg dedicated the last few years of his life to creating a successful program designed to provide growth for experienced

professionals through nurturing and assisting in the development of new members.

Over the past few months, we have been working to take the best of what Knieberg created, dust it off and supplement his work with current best-in-class Growth Coach & Protégé thought leadership. It is our hope to honor the work and dedication Knieberg provided to the chapter through his many years of service by introducing the Fred H. Knieberg Professional Development Program to the chapter this spring.

Over the next few weeks, we'll be providing more information, including the online application. Space in this program is limited, so we encourage you to check the Website, submit your application and embark on your own personal journey of growth and development. ▀



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perfection, we planned  
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**By Jennifer Fortman**  
Gleneagles Country Club, Plano

This month I would like to share some of the feedback we have received on our new re-branded and re-designed *Current*. Our ultimate goal is to make this an educational and compelling publication. We need to receive your feedback on a continual basis to make sure we are staying focused on subject matter that is important to you. We also need you to contribute articles and ideas. Article submission guidelines are available online at [www.mpidfw.org](http://www.mpidfw.org) under News. You can always reach me at [editor@mpidfw.org](mailto:editor@mpidfw.org).

## Our Version of 'Letters to the Editor'

### FROM NANCEY HERNANDEZ, CMP

I was at MPI Headquarters yesterday for a brand strategy session. Bruce McMillan, President and CEO of Meeting Professional International, walked up to me with a copy of the *Current* in his hand and said how much he loved it! This is a BIG deal and you should be truly proud. I just wanted to share this with you! Merry Christmas and Happy holidays!

**Nancey Hernandez, CMP**  
MPI D/FW Chapter President

### FROM NEVA LAMB

WOW! I just had to drop you a line to say....drum roll, please..... Gr-r-r-r-e-a-t job!!! The revised newsletter is awesome. I love the layout! The color! And best of all, the wonderful articles! Pat....pat...pat.... that's me patting you on the back! You should be very proud of yourself. I know you will probably say you had some help, but you and your team deserve a lot of credit. If you ever need any articles written (with the creative "neva" flair, whatever that means?), just let me know. Again, fantastic job. Go, TEAM!

**Neva Lamb**  
A&H AwardPro

*Thanks, Neva. First of all, I do have quite a bit of help. Please see p. 9 for a list of those who commit their time to working on this project. Also, I appreciate your offer to submit an article. We do need continued involvement and submissions by our chapter members to make the Current well rounded and appealing.*

### FROM DVORAH A. EVANS, CMP

Hope that all is going well with you. A huge CONGRATULATIONS on taking over as Editor of the MPI D/FW CURRENT! What a pleasant surprise when I found out and from the look of the latest issue, it was the absolute right pick. The November issue looks amazing!!! I was blown away when I found it in my mail. The overall look is absolutely gorgeous and the educational content is spot on. Congratulations again on a wonderful job with the newsletter! Please remember to let me know if there is anything I can do to assist you in the future.

**Dvorah A. Evans, CMP**  
Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce

### FROM JESH BATRA

I am so proud of you, Girl!  
Please pass along to ALL your committee.

**Jesh Batra**  
Adolphus Hotel

*Jesh, thank you for having the faith in me to do this job. (Not really sure what you were thinking when you asked me to do it!) You are a great leader in our chapter.*

**FROM STEVEN G. FOSTER, CMP**

Well, just about the time I located the November CURRENT, here comes the December issue across my desk.

WOW! I am just blown away by the look and content of this publication. I love the full color format, and especially like seeing all the relevant chapter content. I know you're working on some adjustments, like more chapter branding (logo) for easier identification with us and wrap-up event/upcoming event notices, but I think this is just a quantum leap forward in an exciting new directions.

Please pass on my congratulations to the newsletter team, and to the entire Board of Directors. This is really good stuff. You should be very proud.

**Steven G. Foster, CMP**  
Circle R Ranch

*Steven, it was a pleasure receiving and sharing your feedback with the committee, especially considering your term of managing editor of the Current (2001-04). I would like to answer questions you and other members may have about the post-event recaps and event notices. Rather than a monthly publication, the Current is now distributed bimonthly. That, coupled with earlier deadlines from the publisher, creates a timeline that doesn't allow for event recaps. Photos and recaps will be posted to the Website. The "Mark Your Calendar" section in the Current will continue to list our upcoming chapter events when planned at least two months out. In this electronic age, our up-to-date chapter information will always be available on our chapter Website at [www.mpidfw.org](http://www.mpidfw.org).*

**FROM KAREN FOGLE**

By the way – just got my copy yesterday – compliments like crazy to you for the new Current. The look is beautiful and I loved the content. I want to thank you for

ALL the time you and your team put into it! Happy Holidays!

**Karen Fogle**  
Plano CVB

**FROM DANA RHODEN, CMP, CMM**

Congratulations MPI D/FW and the Board of Directors for the new look of the Current and the website! I must admit I almost threw the first edition away! It was so distinctly different from the prior look and with the lack of the familiar MPI D/FW logo I almost overlooked it, thinking it was a marketing piece. Frankly, not having the MPI D/FW Chapter logo on the cover threw me. The branding the chapter has created over the last 20-30 years have become so embedded in my mind that when a new look came along I almost missed it. I guess as a former editor myself I was stuck with that mindset. I am thrilled you took this leap with a new look and fresh content. I look forward to getting it and look forward to bigger and better things from our chapter. I am a proud member of the D/FW CHAPTER!

**Dana Rhoden, CMP, CMM**  
Physicians' Education Resource

*Dana, Thank you for bringing up the missing logo from the cover of the Current. We included it on the table of contents, but we did not realize our mistake of omitting it on the cover until later. Branding standards are in place, and I regret we didn't follow the standards the first two issues. We have made a couple changes to make*

*the Current easier to identify, with our highest priority being the addition of the logo to the cover.*

**FROM NANCEY HERNANDEZ, CMP**

Everyone received the Current today! I've received lots of KUDOS calls! Yeah team! Jennifer – your team is phenomenal! I believe a celebration is in order, now that we've cleared two major changes with the Current and the website! I did get a few comments on the lack of logo on the front of the magazine – I didn't catch it earlier... is it too late to get added for December?

Best Regards,  
**Nancey Hernandez, CMP**  
Dallas CVB

*Although we caught the mistake with Dana's help in November, we were actually too late to get it added on the December issue, which had already gone to press.*

**FROM TONY CUMMINS, CMP**

Hi Jennifer,

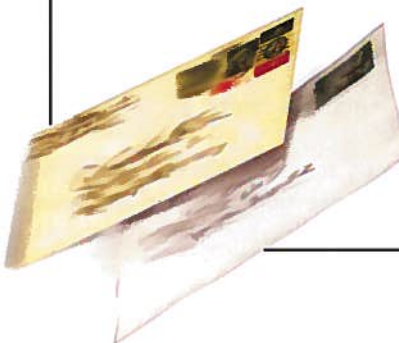
I read your article in the new Current today. What a great thing that you've taken the lead on this. It looks absolutely fantastic! Congratulations on a successful launch! Happy Thanksgiving!

**Tony Cummins, CMP**  
THE MEETING DEPARTMENT LLC

**FEEDBACK, CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED!**

As mentioned, we need to receive your feedback on a continual basis to make sure we are staying focused on subject matter that is important to you. Feel free to e-mail me at [editor@mpidfw.org](mailto:editor@mpidfw.org).

We also need you to contribute articles and ideas. Article submission guidelines are available online at [www.mpidfw.org](http://www.mpidfw.org) under News.





## MARK YOUR CALENDAR



### MARCH 27

#### March Chapter Meeting

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
The Fairmont Dallas  
1717 North Akard Street  
Dallas, TX 75201

### APRIL 7

#### Swing for a Cause

Annual Golf Tournament  
11:30 a.m. Shotgun  
\$160 per player  
\$625 per foursome  
(see ad on this page)

### APRIL 24

#### April Chapter Meeting

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
Special Events Center  
4999 Naaman Forest Blvd.  
Garland, TX 75040

### MAY 22

#### May Chapter Meeting

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
Hilton Dallas Lincoln Centre  
5401 LBJ Freeway  
Dallas, TX 75240

Online registration  
preferred at  
[www.mpidfw.org](http://www.mpidfw.org)

## CURRENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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*Society Editor*  
Trece, The Club & Villa  
O Restaurants

**Lisé Lang**  
*Society Editor*  
Morton's The  
Steakhouse

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
**Jennifer Fortman**  
Gleneagles Country Club

**Marcia Bradley**  
Hilton Anatole Dallas

**Charlotte Corn**  
Brookhaven Country  
Club

**Matthew Massengale,**  
**CMP, DMCP**  
EDS

**Lisa Yarbrow**  
Marie Gabrielle's

*Interested in volunteering? E-mail [editor@mpidfw.org](mailto:editor@mpidfw.org) for more information.*

**Swing FOR A CAUSE**

**MPI DALLAS/FORT WORTH CHAPTER**

Sign Up Today for the  
**2008 MPI-DFW CHAPTER GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
Las Colinas Country Club  
Monday, April 7  
11:30 a.m. Shotgun Start  
Scramble Format

Enjoy 18 holes of golf (including cart and box lunch), a prize packed raffle, and an exciting awards banquet, all for just ...  
**\$160/player or \$625/foursome!**

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Consider being a sponsor or taking part in the golf workshop. There is something for everyone, so please join the fun!

**For More Information**  
Additional information, registration and sponsorship forms are available at:  
**[www.mpidfw.org](http://www.mpidfw.org)**

You may also contact:  
Alison Kieckhafer  
972.661.2300  
[Alison@theproducerslounge.net](mailto:Alison@theproducerslounge.net)

City Talk is a spotlight on the new development and upcoming events in our chapter's cities, brought to you by your local Convention and Visitors Bureaus.

# Upcoming Developments: City of Fort Worth

The 17th largest city in the United States and still growing rapidly, Fort Worth continues to be one of the premier meeting destinations in the nation. Known as the "City of Cowboys and Culture," Fort Worth is an exciting meetings, convention and tourism destination. One of the biggest reasons is the transformation of the city's accommodations in its pedestrian-friendly and safe downtown. By 2008, the number of guest rooms will double thanks to new and renovated hotels, which will allow the city to host larger meetings than ever before.

Ground has been broken on the Omni Fort Worth Hotel, the new convention center headquarters facility. Expected to open in late 2008, this luxury property will feature 607 rooms and nearly 68,000 square feet of meeting space. The 294-room Hilton Fort Worth and 504-room Renaissance Worthington Hotel have completed extensive renova-

tions. The new Embassy Suites Hotel Fort Worth-Downtown offers 156 two-room suites along with meeting spaces ideal for smaller events. Opening in 2008 less than a block from the convention center, the Sheraton Fort Worth Hotel and Spa will offer 430 guest rooms and 22,000 square feet of meeting space.

While in Fort Worth, visitors can experience one of the most dynamic downtowns in the nation, exciting Western heritage and the artistic masterpieces of Fort Worth's Cultural District. Fort Worth's downtown has gained a reputation as one of the country's most lively urban settings. The 35-block Sundance Square entertainment district is home to a collection of restaurants, live music clubs, theatres, shops, exciting nightlife and the beautiful Bass Performance Hall, named as one of the top 10 opera houses in the world.

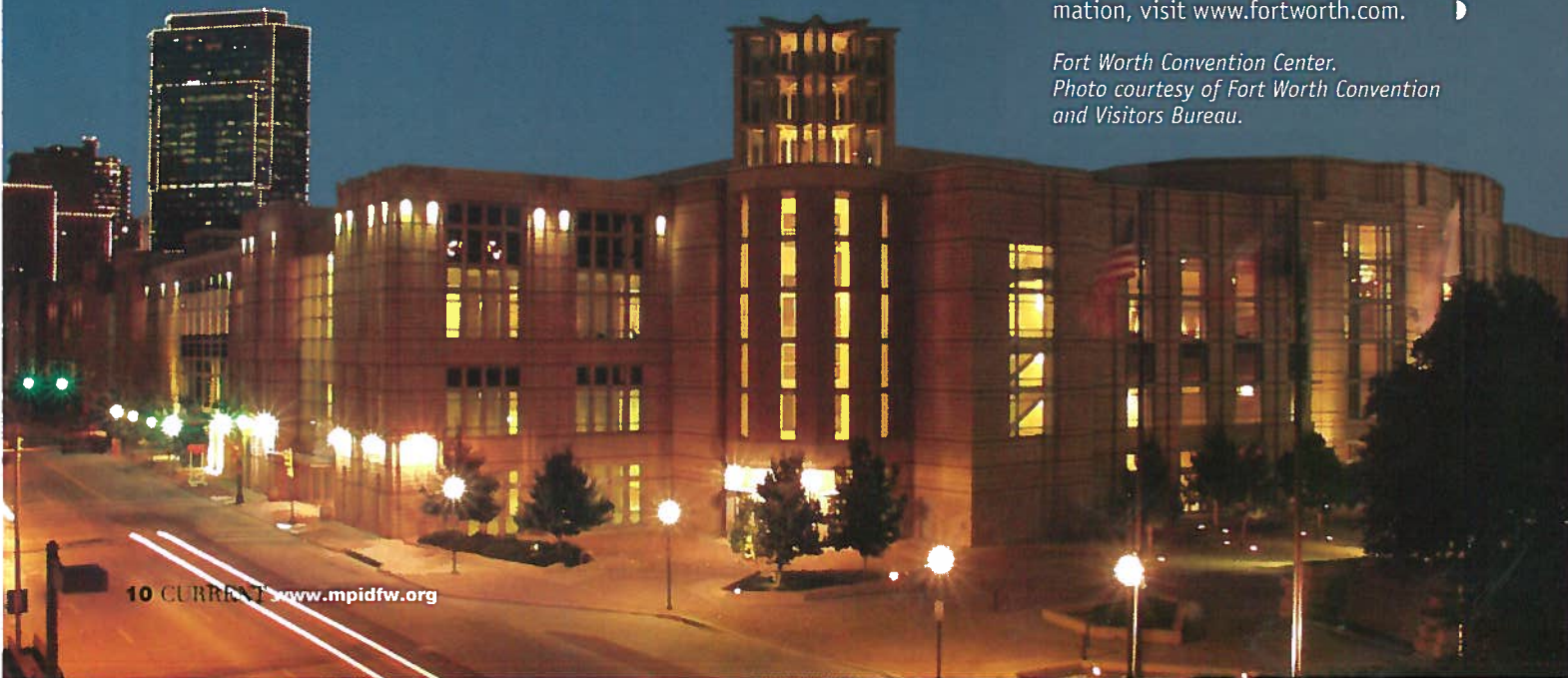
No visit to Texas is complete without a stop at the legendary Stock-

yards National Historic District. Unique attractions such as the Fort Worth Herd daily cattle drive thrill visitors year-round. Top country music performers play the stage at Billy Bob's Texas, the "World's Largest Honky-Tonk," and live rodeo takes place every weekend at Cowtown Coliseum, home to the world's original indoor rodeo. Shopping for hand-crafted cowboy boots, hats, clothing and souvenirs is abundant in the stockyards.

The cultural district is home to world-class museums. The temples of culture that line the park-like setting of the district include the Amon Carter Museum, the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, the Kimbell Art Museum, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame. It's no wonder Fort Worth is considered the museum capital of the Southwest.

Experience Fort Worth, the "City of Cowboys and Culture." You'll find out it's worth every minute. For more information, visit [www.fortworth.com](http://www.fortworth.com). ▶

*Fort Worth Convention Center.  
Photo courtesy of Fort Worth Convention  
and Visitors Bureau.*

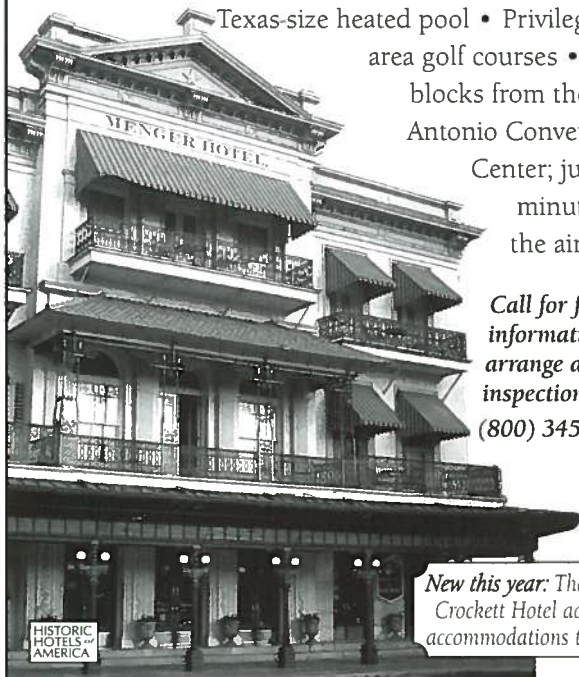


# THE HISTORIC MENGER AT THE ALAMO

204 Alamo Plaza  
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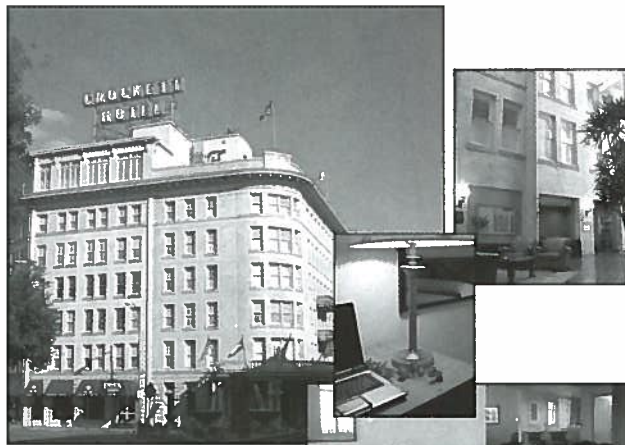
Next to the Alamo and RiverCenter Mall, gateway to The River Walk and all the fun of San Antonio • Meeting rooms for groups of 5 to 500 • 316 guest rooms • Full service spa, fitness center, Texas-size heated pool • Privileges at area golf courses • Two blocks from the San Antonio Convention Center; just 15 minutes to the airport.

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*New this year:* The Menger and the newly renovated Crockett Hotel across the street give you combined accommodations totalling over 450 rooms & suites!



## Pure Texas Hospitality

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Every room has been refurbished in shades of soothing sage, furnished in traditional styles. Be sure to see our new Executive Board Room and adjacent top-floor suites, ideal for hospitality and small team meetings.

Schedule a site visit at  
(800) 292-1050 today.



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\*Based on availability. New contracts only. Program must be contracted by 12/31/08. Cannot be combined with any other discounts or offers.





# Include Green Standards In Your RFPs



By Shannon Kilkenny

When choosing a venue for your next meeting, conference or convention, name brand, price, past performance and even location are not the only significant criteria any longer. Environmental practices are now just as important. Studies show that not only socially and environmentally responsible companies prefer green venues to traditional ones, but mainstream businesses and organizations are also turning to greener properties. Many departments of the government have issued greener requirements for the venues where their meetings and events are held, and the general public is following suit. The biggest issue in the past has been the lack of choices, but that is beginning to change.

Hotels, resorts and convention centers have come a long way to improve their green practices. Some are more environmentally conscious than others. And even when they are somewhat green, they will vary in their levels of environmental performances. This is where a detailed request for proposal (RFP) will help distinguish one green venue from another. You can judge for yourself whether they meet your environmental criteria or not.

The best way to ensure a venue is committed to environmental practices is

through your RFPs. In some cases you may be locked into a venue because of lack of choices, size of event, specific city or state, style of event, required amenities, etc. Even in those cases, when the choice is out of your hands, some green practices can be implemented for the duration of your meeting.

But when the choices are vast, here are some requests to include in your RFP. The following summarized requirements can be broken down to include more specific and detailed green practices if desired.

Request the facility have:

- A recycling program for glass bottles, plastic bottles, aluminum cans. Have containers throughout the event space.
- A linen/towel reuse option that is communicated to guests and the staff is trained accordingly.
- All food and beverage served on or in



non-disposable serving ware and reusable serving napkins and tablecloths.

- Environmentally friendly cleaning and other products with low toxicity; organic or locally grown or made goods.
- Easy access to public transportation or shuttle services.
- An energy efficiency program such as sensors or timers used to control lighting in intermittent-use areas, or programmable thermostats with motion detectors used to control HVAC in guestrooms. A policy to turn off lighting and air conditioning when rooms are not in use.
- A water-conservation program with, but not limited to, 1.5 gallons-per-minute (gpm) faucet aerators; 2.5 gpm showerheads; 1.6 gallons-per-flush toilets.



- Paperless check-in and check-out for guests and billing.

- A program to buy and use recycled or recyclable products and

reusable versus disposable goods and buy supplies in bulk where possible; requiring vendors to take back pallets and crates.

- Partnerships built with green suppliers and vendors.
- Food sources from local growers or a policy to consider the growing practices of farmers who provide the food.



- An established composting system and food donation policy for leftovers.
- A policy to buy and use bio-based or biodegradable products, including bio-based eatery-ware (greenware) when china and glass cannot be used.
- A green department or team on staff with environmental training and a training program for staff.
- A marketing campaign that visibly communicates to guests, shareholders, vendors and the public their environmental efforts.

Not all facilities will be able to meet many of these requests, so it will be your decision as to what works for you and your organization. The great news is the hospitality industry is stepping up to the environmental movement in enormous strides. Every little change in the direction is a good one. Keep up with who is doing what in this fast-paced environmental movement.

When the property has a good reputation for green practices, it will attract like-minded organizations, environmental groups, conservation organizations, governmental entities and educational groups to use that venue. As this trend gathers awareness and momentum, more and more groups will require environmental practices from their venue. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) spends about \$50 million a year on travel and meeting spaces. The federal government is estimated to spend \$14 billion a year! You want their business, don't you? ▶

*Shannon Kilkeny, author of The Complete Guide to Successful Event Planning, is currently speaking at conferences and conventions, teaching workshops and seminars, writing articles, as well as consulting on greening up the hospitality industry. She can be reached at [eventresults@aol.com](mailto:eventresults@aol.com), 415-868-1415 or visit [www.successfuleventplanning.com](http://www.successfuleventplanning.com)*



### \*QUICK POLL:

Are you planning Green Meetings?

Yes: 33%

No: 28%

Don't Know: 7%

Somewhat: 32%

\*from MPI D/FW Website poll

# Branding Expert



By Rachel Phillips-Luther  
National Director of Marketing  
Champps Entertainment, Inc.

**Branding doesn't equal logo. Think beyond the logo and really get to know the brand's attributes.**

## ■ Add *That* to Your Business Card

Yes, I know, yet another article on branding. "Branding" really has become the Britney Spears of the marketing world. It has reached its peak, made people some serious cash and now exists as an over-used, worn-out strategy that still makes headlines.

As the director of marketing for a restaurant group, I, too, have created many a brand strategy, sat through more than my share of brand explorations and delivered countless brand seminars. Did any of it increase sales? The bottom line is, I don't know. I do know that delivering on a brand promise and increasing brand loyalty is a must in today's market, thus it must not be ignored.

I also know this. If you're reading this article you're most likely a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP), an aspiring CMP or vendor for CMPs. Having spent many years marketing to you folks, going to meetings with you and listening to what you accomplish daily – most of you are already integrating branding into everything you do. So, as you re-focus this year and begin to set your professional goals, perhaps think back to some of your most successful endeavors and consider this: A brand is more than a name and a symbol. Strong brands express the promise behind an organization – the pledge to everyone about what they will experience when they do business with that company. A strong, clearly understood brand contributes to the momentum of growth.

Recall the last meeting or event you planned for a corporate client. Now, really begin to think about how much you know about the company, how passionate you were about the logo appearing on specific items, the alignment between the speaker and the current campaign, the determination to convey the company's goals and promises with every element of the event. That is branding. My point is this – you've been a strong partner in building brands for your clients for years. Don't let them forget. Everyone is aware that the competitive environment we play in is getting fiercer with each passing year, so make sure you're selling not only your logistical planning expertise, but your ability to affect the company's overall mission and in turn, brand loyalty.

My favorite example of brand loyalty is Henry J. Heinz's definition of ultimate brand loyalty: A man goes into a shop to buy a can of baked beans, doesn't see a Heinz can so he walks away with nothing. A definition that aptly summarizes why we bother with branding at all, but can a value be attributed to this, and if so, what is that value?

The value has become clear to many of today's industry



leaders. If you aren't the preferred brand, you're sunk. Becoming the preferred brand requires defining and delivering your brand promise in every element of the brand that an employee of the company or customer of the brand touches. It's an enormous undertaking when you think about it, and brand loyalty has become increasingly valuable.

Can you do it on your own? Certainly not. If a brand promise hasn't been defined, then incorporating that promise into every element of an event would be impossible. However, a planner who becomes a partner to their client and takes the time to realize the company's long-range brand promise will be viewed as a long-term asset. So, as you begin to develop strategy for each client this year, make sure you take the time to really understand their goals, not just for their event, but for their long-term success.

Events are the most tangible and interactive elements that exist. Promotional events can be a platform for brand growth or brand bust; you have the ability to determine which. Long before Red Bull aired commercials with its slogan "It Gives You Wings," it attacked college campuses with promotional events that delivered upon the company's goals and brand promise. Would it have been successful if the promotion teams hadn't had an "edgy" appearance – in line with its goal to be the premier energy drink of the new generation? What if it hadn't distributed great mixed-drink recipes with Red Bull logos? Another energy drink could have easily given it a run for its money, but its event strategy proved flawless. Strong event planners with the company's mission in mind were behind these grassroots marketing efforts and can be applauded for their success.



Are you poised for applause this year? If you're one of the planners who's been aiding my fellow marketers in building events that not only coincide with company goals but actually add value to the company's brand promise, you're on the right path. If you're still struggling to grasp how brand loyalty fits into what you contribute, review the following:

- What does your initial planning meeting consist of for a corporate client? Do you focus primarily on budget, number of attendees and location? You are missing something big! Inquire about the company's brand promise, mission and vision and other "big picture" elements. You'll find that these will become the platform for your strategy and viewed as an asset to the client.
- What does the client want "taken away" from the meeting or event? Can you contribute to the goal by including messaging in your event materials?
- Branding doesn't equal logo. Think beyond the logo and really get to

know the brand's attributes. Work with them!

- Think about your team. Are the people you've selected to work on this program a good fit? A young company with edgy brand attributes might be best suited by a driven, eager and passionate team, whereas a conservative client that aims to deliver "consistency" might prefer an event team that flies under the radar.
- In the end, don't forget to ask the client. When asked directly, "Did we help you accomplish your main goals for the meeting and did the event align with the brand?" most clients will be honest. If you're afraid to ask, you may need to revisit your strategy! ▸

*Rachel Phillips-Luther is the national director of marketing of Champps Entertainment, Inc. She lives with her family in Denver. Prior to moving to Colorado, Phillips-Luther was a member of the MPI D/FW Chapter. You can reach her at [rachel.phillips-luther@champps.com](mailto:rachel.phillips-luther@champps.com).*

**A brand is more than a name and a symbol. Strong brands express the promise behind an organization - the pledge to everyone about what they will experience when they do business with that company.**



By **Tony Cummins, CMP**  
THE MEETING DEPARTMENT LLC

# Hotel Contracts: What's Out, What Needs to Be In?

## What's happening in the hotel marketplace today?

Demand is up and supply has not kept pace, in spite of the daily briefs announcing new hotel properties. The result? It's been a seller's market. It's taking longer to find available space for meetings. Rates are also increasing. Hotels are taking a closer look at the profitability of your meeting business. In general, hotels are offering less for more, not more for less. (This may change with our ever-increasing price of fuel and talks of a recession.)



### **How is this impacting your contract?**

Items that once were "given" are now considered concessions. Examples include room upgrades, complimentary suites and other complimentary items such as one comp room for every 50 paid guest rooms. Hotels are asking for room rental for just about every meeting room, even if it's only a nominal set-up fee. It's becoming more and more common for hotels to ask that you take your allowed slip-page in advance of the meeting dates as opposed to offering it at the end. Items that were once "in" are now "out," and items that were "out" are now "in." In general, hoteliers are shifting contract terms in their favor and becoming less flexible.

### **So, what can you do about it?**

First, the concessions and items discussed in this article have not gone away. You just have to work a bit harder to get them. That's not to say you have to become the hotel's adversary, but you don't get what you don't ask for.

### **Now, let's take the discussion to a higher level.**

Negotiating a sound hotel contract goes much further than rates, space and amenities. Performance is critical to each party, the hotel and the client. It is not always what's in the contract that matters the most, but what's not in the contract that determines your exposures and liabilities. When all goes well, there's not much to do when it's over except to pay the bill and plan the next program. However, when plans go awry, when attendance suffers, when plans change, when services contracted for are not rendered, when the hotel management changes, when someone is injured or property damaged, what then?

The possibilities are endless, and you can't cover every contingency. Years ago, we had never heard of things like SARS, avian influenza (bird flu) or tsunamis, and terrorism did not represent the threat it does today. So, whether you choose to make modifications to the hotel contract, provide your own or use an addendum, here's

a start on some important items to consider when negotiating your next hotel contract.

### **Contract Basics**

If you don't understand the basic concepts of a binding agreement, take time to find out. Seek help from your company's legal department or other competent advisor. Know how to make revisions the right way and how to properly execute contracts. The contract should clearly indicate the names of the parties involved (legal entity names and any d/b/a names), and should be signed, dated and countersigned to make the contract binding.

### **Purpose of Meeting**

Clearly state the purpose of the meeting and note the expectations of the attendees. This information can be helpful in situations that can arise later.

### **Hotel Rates/Promotional Rates**

Have discussions with the hotel about rates that will be offered over your meeting dates to other groups and/or individuals. Insist that you be given credit for all rooms reserved by your attendees, regardless of rates or method of reservation. If the hotel is willing to black out promotional rates over your dates, that's all the better. Ask!

### **Attrition/Cancellation**

This is a tricky area. Read carefully and understand your obligations. Understand how many rooms you will be required to pay for if you do not meet your room block. Under what circumstances, if any, can you reduce or increase your block without penalty? How is attrition calculated? Are you being given credit for "resold" rooms?

Some of the same concepts hold true for cancellation. What damages are due if you cancel and how are they calculated? Are you given credit for rooms "resold"? Can you apply your damages to a future meeting date? Or, what happens if the hotel cancels the contract, or fails to provide the contracted services? The terms of attrition and cancellation are almost always

negotiable. If you're not comfortable with negotiating these terms, consult a qualified meeting professional or industry attorney.

### **Date Changes**

Include terms that allow you to change the dates of the meeting one time with minimal or no penalties attached.

### **Walk Clause**

Many hotels include a walk clause in their contract to accommodate guests in the event of overbooking. If not included, include one and make sure you get credit to your room block for any "walked" room nights.

### **Force Majeure**

There are volumes of legal material covering force majeure (acts of God). Be sure you have an adequate clause to cover unforeseen events, and don't be scared by the complexity of the legal verbiage. For example, if you feel that weather conditions (actual or forecasted) could be a significant factor in your attendance, add the verbiage and ask the hotel to honor it as a force majeure event. Include a provision that allows you to cancel the meeting if more than 30 percent of your attendees cannot come due unforeseen circumstances such as restrictions on air travel, threats of terrorism, weather events or other circumstances that compromise the overall purpose of the meeting.

### **Food and Beverage**

Contracts more commonly require minimum expenditures for food and beverage and sometimes include ancillary income (resort/casino activities). Be sure these numbers are reasonable, within your budget and there's some room for reduction, or slippage. The most common mistake is to sign the contract before considering the hotel's pricing for banquet services. You may get a great room rate based on the time of year or other circumstances and end up paying banquet rates that are way out of your league.

*continued on page 18*

continued from page 17

### Audit Provision and Hotel Reports

Include a provision that requires the hotel to provide timely reports and allows you to audit the reservation records, drink ticket counts or other variable cost factors that go to your final bill.

### Miscellaneous Charges

Ask the hotel to disclose any standard fees that apply to all guests at check-in, e.g. resort fees or other simi-

lar access fees for recreational facilities. Ask about internet and other "user" fees, minimum charges or minimum service fees.

### Other Groups in Hotel

What other groups are in the hotel? What potential impact could that have on your meeting? Address this in the contract.

### Construction/Remodeling

This is a huge item for a good hotel contract. Know the status of recent

renovations to reduce risk, and know what areas most need improvement in order to assess the likelihood of construction during your event dates. Ask specific questions and include a provision requiring the hotel to report any activities to you. Reserve the right to cancel if remodeling plans can significantly impact the desired outcomes of your program or access to popular amenities (golf, spa, restaurants, etc.)

### Reciprocal Indemnification

Many hotels include a provision requiring you to indemnify and hold them harmless against claims that arise out of your negligence or willful misconduct while using the facilities. Make sure the provision is reciprocal, i.e., it applies to "either party," that each party to the contract agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the other where claims are levied upon one of the parties due to the negligence or willful misconduct of the other.

In conclusion, this outline of "What's Out, What Needs to Be In" is cursory at best. Almost every contract is different, even those from major brand hoteliers. Every company has its own culture, and every meeting is as unique as the individuals who attend. Hotel contracts are complex documents that represent potential exposures. When you have questions about contract provisions that may impact the desired outcome of your meeting, the financial impact on your bottom line or the overall comfort and safety of your attendees, don't hesitate to contact a meeting professional and/or a qualified hospitality attorney. ▀

*Tony Cummins, CMP, planner/consultant, offers site selection and contract services, in addition to full-service meeting management through his Dallas-based company, THE MEETING DEPARTMENT LLC. Cummins is a 15-year member of MPI D/FW. He was named Chapter Supplier of the Year in 2005 and received the Chapter President's Award in 2007 for his service to the chapter. For more information about the professional services of THE MEETING DEPARTMENT LLC, call 214-343-9838, or contact us at [info@themeetingdepartment.com](mailto:info@themeetingdepartment.com).*

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## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# Larry Lawson, CMP, of Cadbury Schweppes

**Q. How long have you been working for Cadbury Schweppes?**

Two years.

**Q. What is your position?**

Senior Planner, Corporate Events.

**Q. What are your job responsibilities?**

Manage the development, administration and execution of corporate meetings and events.

**Q. What is the most rewarding aspect of your position?**

Collaborating with stakeholders to successfully accomplish their vision of an event or meeting.

**Q. What professional accomplishment are you most proud?**

Completing the Certified Meeting Professionals (CMP) process.

**Q. What is your favorite vacation spot, to get away from it all?**

Beaver Creek, Colo.

**Q. What is your favorite meal?**

Pot roast, potatoes, green beans, cream corn and tomatoes.

**Q. What is the last book you read?**

*The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership*, by James C. Hunter.

**Q. If you had to TIVO a show, what would it be?**

*American Idol*.

**Q. What is your favorite band?**

Eagles.

**Q. Who is your favorite singer?**

Steven Curtis Chapman.

**Q. What is your best all-time memory?**

The birth of our two adopted children, Luke and Hope.



**Q. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PASTIME?**

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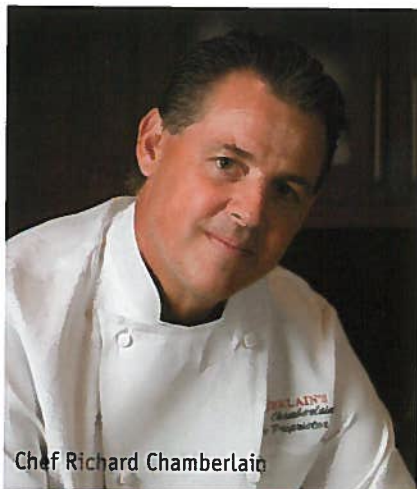
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## What's Cooking With Chef Richard Chamberlain



By Matthew Massengale, DMCP, CMP EDS

Chef and owner of Chamberlains' Steak and Chop House, specializing in aged prime beef, lobster and seafood specialties (opened in 1993) and Chamberlain's Fish Market, specializing in fresh flown-in seafood, steaks, chowders and gumbos (opened in 2000), Chef Richard Chamberlain is considered one of America's leading chefs. Before opening his own restaurants, Chef Chamberlain spent three years as the executive chef of the exclusive Little Nell Hotel in Aspen, Colo., where he was recognized by the James Beard Foundation as one of the best chefs in the country. He also served as the executive chef at San Simeon Restaurant, Ratcliff's both in Dallas, executive sous chef at the world famous Hotel Bel Air in Los Angeles and sous chef under



Chef Richard Chamberlain

Join us as we turn over a new leaf. Welcome to "Off the Vine," the hottest place to come for the latest trends in food and beverage, cool tips from great local chefs and the latest news from the culinary world. "Off the Vine" is proudly sponsored by The Grapevine Convention and Visitors Bureau.



Dean Fearing at the Mansion on Turtle Creek. Chef Chamberlain has been consistently recognized by the world's top restaurant and dining publications. His awards include "One of America's Top Tables" (*Gourmet*), "One of America's Top Restaurants" (*Zagat Guide*) and "Award of Excellence" (*Wine Spectator*).

**Off The Vine:** Chef Chamberlain, what do you feel is currently "HOT" in food and beverage?

**Chef Chamberlain:** Local ingredients, sushi and sashimi, Kobe beef, cooking classes, boutique wines and heirloom melons.



**Off The Vine:** Do you have a culinary tip or trick that you would like to share?

**Chef Chamberlain:** Plant a simple herb garden. It's fun to use the herbs all year long. Make herb oils by blanching leaves in boiling water for five seconds and then place in ice water immediately. Blend the herbs with olive oil and strain through a cheese cloth. Store the herbed oils in the refrigerator.

**Off The Vine:** Would you like to share your favorite hors d'oeuvres recipe?

**Chef Chamberlain:** Top a warm pizza crust with a light cream cheese, smoked salmon slices, capers, red onion and dill. Drizzle with lemon and slice into small squares. For more formal occasions, top with caviar. ▸



**Off The Vine:** What future trends in food and beverage do you see?

**Chef Chamberlain:** Cooking dinner theaters, slow food and everything organic.

### For More Information

For more information on Chef Chamberlain's restaurants, visit [www.chamberlainsrestaurant.com](http://www.chamberlainsrestaurant.com).

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Cocktails, Couture and Canapés is our publication's Society Section. Sandie Fouke and Lisé Lang will bring you the latest in event trends, keep you posted on what's hot, what's not and, generally speaking, keep you "in the know!"



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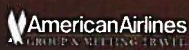
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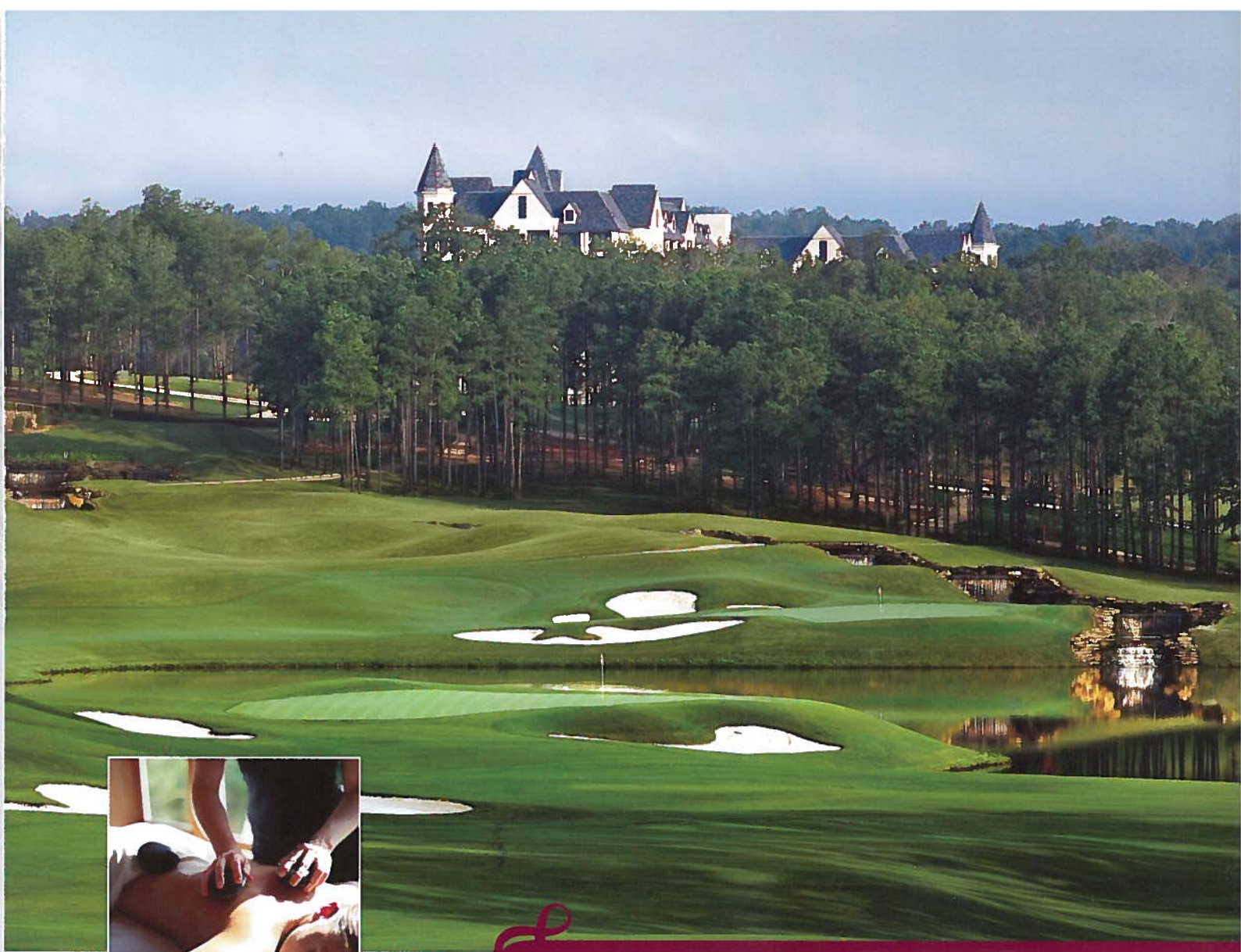
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