THE VALUE OF MPI

MPI DALLAS/ FORT WORTH CHAPTER



AND

THE PEOPLE BEHIND IT

SPRING ISSUE 2026

DALLAS /FORT WORTH CHAPTER

Quarterly Newsletter for Meeting Planners International

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THE VALUE OF MPI

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

ZHANNA ATHERTON 2026 PRESIDENT

As we close the first quarter of the year, I've been reflecting on how our theme, Every Story Matters, continues to come to life through the experiences we create together as a chapter.Behind every program, connection, and opportunity is a story of collaboration, leadership, and dedication—and none of it would be possible without the incredible work of our Board of Directors and their committees. Their commitment, creativity, and countless volunteer hours are what allow MPI DFW to deliver meaningful experiences for our members month after month.

We kicked off the year with a powerful Chapter Experience featuring Michael Dominguez, whose insights on the state of the meetings and events industry challenged us to think bigger about the future of our profession. Then, we gathered for our Membership Mixer, themed "Brand New You," which encouraged members to reflect on growth, fresh perspectives, and new opportunities for the year ahead.

It was an evening filled with meaningful conversations, new introductions, and a reminder of the value of community within MPI DFW. In March, our CMP/CMM appreciation breakfast event brought one of the most meaningful moments in our profession as we celebrated our CMPs and CMP Fellows at the annual CMP Breakfast and presented our annual Colleen Rickenbacher Leadership award. Achieving these designations requires extraordinary dedication, discipline, and commitment to professional excellence.

I especially want to take a moment to recognize CMP Fellow Darryl Leavitt, whose achievement represents years of leadership and contribution to our industry. His milestone deserves special recognition and is an inspiring example of the standards and professionalism that continue to elevate the meetings and events community. Of course, none of these experiences would be possible without the support of our sponsors and partners. The continued investment in MPI DFW allows us to deliver impactful education, meaningful networking opportunities, and programs that strengthen our industry and our community.

Looking ahead, the momentum continues. April 16th brought one of our most anticipated programs of the year—Education Day—where we will gather to learn, exchange ideas, and challenge new perspectives. We then look forward to our Membership Mixer and Volunteer Appreciation event in May as we celebrate the individuals who generously give their time and talent to support our chapter. And in June, we will come together for our Annual Awards Gala to recognize the leaders, innovators, and changemakers whose stories continue to shape the future of MPI DFW.Thank you for being part of this chapter's story. Your engagement, leadership, and passion are what make this community so special, and I look forward to everything we will continue to accomplish together in the months ahead.



MPI | 2024 CHAPTER AWARD TOP PERFORMING

LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP: BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS

MPI DALLAS/FORT WORTH BOARD SERVICE 2027

Shaping the MPI Dallas/Fort Worth Chapter through board service is both a responsibility and an opportunity—one that directly influences the future of the meetings and events industry in our region and chapter.
What makes board service impactful is the ability to turn ideas into meaningful experiences. From innovative programming to fostering inclusive spaces, board members shape how professionals connect, learn, and advance.

Board service is not simply about governance; it is about vision in action. It means setting a strategic direction that reflects the evolving needs of members, while preserving the core values that makes DFW chapter strong.

Every decision—whether focused on education, networking, or community outreach with CRMS—contributes to a larger goal: building a chapter that empowers professionals to grow and lead.

It's a role that demands collaboration, adaptability, and a clear commitment to service.

Click Here To Apply



Ultimately, shaping this chapter is about legacy. The work done today creates a stronger foundation for tomorrow's leaders. Through thoughtful board service, the MPI Dallas/Fort Worth Chapter continues to thrive—not just as an organization, but as a driving force for excellence in our industry.

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE
JUNE 5TH, 2026



PRESIDENT ELECT- SHAKARA SHELTON



IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT -TIM ALTBAUM

MPI 2024 CHAPTER AWARD TOP PERFORMING

OUR EDUCATION DAY

STATLER HOTEL DALLAS, TX April 16th 2026

IN A FIELD LIKE MEETINGS AND EVENTS, WHERE TRENDS SHIFT QUICKLY AND EXPECTATIONS EVOLVE EVEN FASTER, STANDING STILL IS NOT AN OPTION. EDUCATION DAY CREATES A SPACE WHERE PROFESSIONALS CAN STEP AWAY FROM THE DAILY GRIND AND INTENTIONALLY INVEST IN THEMSELVES. THAT MATTERS.



PHOTOGRAPH: LAURYN BROWN



EDUCATION DAY

STATLER HOTEL DALLAS, TX

OUR MOST RECENT EVENT

In an industry defined by constant change, evolving technologies, and rising expectations, the need for continuous learning is not a luxury—it is a necessity. Professional Education Day at Meeting Planners International (MPI) stands as a powerful reminder of this truth. More than just a scheduled event on a calendar, it represents a commitment to growth, adaptability, and excellence that defines the very core of the meetings and events profession. Just as important is the access it creates. Education Day brings together a diverse cross-section of planners, suppliers, and industry leaders in one space, turning learning into dialogue. The result is not just knowledge transfer, but idea exchange. Conversations that start in breakout sessions often evolve into collaborations that shape future events across the Dallas–Fort Worth region and beyond..



EDUCATION DAY

STATLER HOTEL DALLAS, TX

OUR RECENT EVENT



PHOTOGRAPH: PRESIDENT ZHANNA ATHERTON















PHOTOGRAPH: LAURYN BROWN

EDUCATION DAY

STATLER HOTEL DALLAS, TX

OUR MOST RECENT EVENT

There's also a leadership dimension that shouldn't be overlooked. By prioritizing education at scale, MPI Dallas/Fort Worth reinforces a culture of continuous improvement. It signals that professional growth is not a one-time effort but an ongoing responsibility. For emerging professionals, it offers exposure and inspiration; for seasoned leaders, it provides perspective and renewal.

Ultimately, the value of Education Day lies in its multiplier effect. One day of focused learning doesn't just benefit the individual attendee—it elevates the quality, creativity, and impact of the events they go on to produce. In that sense, Education Day is not just an event; it is a catalyst for a stronger, more innovative industry.









EDUCATION DAY

STATLER HOTEL DALLAS, TX



PHOTOGRAPH: IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT TIM ALTBAUM

OUR RECENT EVENT













COLLEEN RICKENBACHER LEADERSHIP AWARD | CMP/CMM

HONORING THE RECIPIENT

PAOLA BOWMAN CMP-FELLOW, CMM, ESPC



Paola's MPI journey has been foundational to who she is as a leader today; it's where she found not just a network, but a community that challenged her to grow, serve, and lead with intention. Since joining in 2016, Paola had the privilege of serving in multiple leadership roles and committees, experiences that have strengthened her strategic thinking, expanded her perspective, and deepened her commitment to elevating others. MPI has reinforced her belief that professional development is not optional, it's essential.

Pursuing designations like the CMP and CMM sharpened her business acumen, credibility, and confidence, while also fueling my passion to mentor others along that same path. Receiving the Colleen Rickenbacher Leadership Award is especially meaningful because it represents the very essence of leadership. She strives to embody service, mentorship, integrity, and lifting others along the way.

To Paola, the true value of MPI lies in two big factors: 1) the power of building relationships through a global network, and 2) in its ability to cultivate leaders who don't just advance their own careers, but who actively invest in the growth of others and the future of our industry.

HONORING THE FINALISTS

COLLEEN RICKENBACHER LEADERSHIP AWARD | CMP/CMM



NICOLE CHATTIN CMP FELLOW, CMM

Nicole represents the kind of leader the industry needs: grounded, forward-thinking, and deeply invested in excellence. Her professionalism is not performative—it is embedded in every action, every decision, and every relationship she cultivates.

As a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) Fellow and Certified Meeting Manager (CMM), Nicole's credentials speak to her depth of expertise, but it is her application of that knowledge that truly distinguishes her. She leads with clarity, makes decisions with intention, and consistently elevates the work and people around her. Her leadership is not defined by title, but by influence—she builds trust, fosters collaboration, and inspires others to push beyond their perceived limits.

What makes Nicole especially noteworthy is her commitment to mentorship and industry advancement. She understands that leadership is not just about personal success, but about creating pathways for others. In doing so, she strengthens not only her immediate team but the broader professional community.

HONORING THE FINALISTS

COLLEEN RICKENBACHER LEADERSHIP AWARD | CMP/CMM

CHERYL BATZING CMP

Cheryl is the epitome of a high-caliber Certified Meeting Professional (CMP). With her vast experience, meticulous attention to detail, and a deep understanding of the meetings and events industry, she consistently delivers exceptional results. Her expertise extends beyond just logistics—Cheryl knows how to create impactful, seamless experiences that leave a lasting impression on attendees.

Her leadership skills are second to none; she balances the needs of clients, vendors, and teams with remarkable ease, ensuring that every aspect of an event is executed flawlessly. What truly sets Cheryl apart, however, is her unwavering commitment to innovation. She keeps her finger on the pulse of the latest trends and technologies, always looking for ways to elevate her events and make them more dynamic.

In a world where the smallest details matter, Cheryl's reputation for excellence is a testament to her professionalism and her ability to drive success through every event she touches.



ANNUAL CMP/CMM BREAKFAST





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LEADERSHIP: MENTOR | MENTEE

Strong professional communities don't happen by accident—they are built through intentional investment in people. The MPI Dallas–Fort Worth Mentor-Mentee Leadership Program is a clear example of what that investment looks like in practice. At a time when the meetings and events industry continues to evolve rapidly, structured mentorship is no longer a "nice to have"—it's essential.
What sets this program apart is its dual impact. For mentees, it provides more than advice; it offers access, perspective, and confidence.

Emerging professionals gain real-world insights that can't be found in textbooks or webinars, learning how to navigate challenges, build networks, and lead with purpose. For mentors, the experience is equally valuable. Guiding the next generation sharpens leadership skills, encourages reflection, and fosters a deeper connection to the industry's future.
The Dallas–Fort Worth chapter benefits as well. Programs like this strengthen the local professional ecosystem by creating a culture of collaboration rather than competition.

They help retain talent, elevate standards, and ensure continuity of leadership within the chapter and beyond.
In a landscape where relationships often determine opportunity, the Mentor-Mentee Leadership Program is more than a professional development initiative—it's a strategic advantage. Its true value lies not just in the connections it creates today, but in the leaders it shapes for tomorrow.



MENTOR: NICOLE CHATTIN

" I want to take a moment to sincerely thank Nicole. She has been incredibly welcoming, inclusive, and thoughtful throughout this entire experience. I've learned a great deal from her, and her guidance has significantly expanded my understanding of the events industry."

- Matt Yigit



MENTEE: MATT YIGIT



THE VALUE & IMPACT

SPONSORSHIP

HILTON ANATOLE HOTEL DALLAS, TX



INTRODUCTION

WITH JULIAN HUERTA

Sitting down with Julian, the conversation quickly moved beyond networking and into something more meaningful: the real value of sponsorship within MPI. What stood out wasn't just the structure of the program, but how it creates space for partnerships that endure—relationships built on trust, shared goals, and mutual growth. These aren't transactional connections; they're the kind that shape careers while also enriching the person behind the profession. When partnerships are cultivated with intention, the impact becomes all-encompassing, blurring the line between personal fulfillment and professional success in the best possible way.

THE PROFESSIONAL VALUE

Hilton Anatole's partnership with MPI - D/FW has delivered exceptional professional value by strengthening our connection to the Dallas–Fort Worth meetings and events community. Through MPI - D/FW, I've been able to engage directly with industry leaders, planners, and partners, while showcasing Hilton Anatole as a premier destination for meetings, conventions, and events. The chapters educational programs, networking opportunities, and collaborative initiatives have enhanced our market visibility, generated meaningful business relationships.

THE PERSONAL VALUE

On a personal level, my involvement with MPI - D/FW has been equally rewarding. The chapter fosters a sense of community built on trust, collaboration, and shared passion for the industry. I have personally been able to volunteer my time to help with Education Planning, Sponsorship and a Sponsored Event. Over time, professional connections have evolved into genuine relationships, creating opportunities for mentorship, friendship, and mutual support. Being part of MPI - D/FW allows us to give back, stay inspired, and feel deeply connected to the people who make this industry special!

Hilton Anatole
DALLAS

THE VALUE & IMPACT

SPONSORSHIP

THE GREENLEIGH, HOUSTON TX



INTRODUCTION

DUSTIN MATTHEWS

Every strong organization is shaped by the people who bring energy, vision, and a commitment to making a difference. Dustin Matthews is one of those individuals—someone whose presence reflects both professionalism and a genuine dedication to building meaningful connections.

With a focus on collaboration and forward-thinking ideas, Dustin consistently contributes to an environment where growth and engagement thrive. His approach is rooted not only in achieving results, but in strengthening the relationships that make those results possible.

As our community continues to evolve, leaders like Dustin Matthews help set the tone—driving progress, inspiring others, and reminding us that success is built through both purpose and people.

THE PROFESSIONAL VALUE

We often say our industry is the biggest small industry out there—and MPI is where that becomes real. It's a space where relationships drive outcomes, and where a single connection can turn into long-term partnership. Throughout my career, MPI has been one of the most consistent platforms for bringing planners and partners together in a way that feels intentional and impactful. As we prepare to introduce The Greenleigh, a new Autograph Collection hotel in Houston's River Oaks District, that kind of connectivity is invaluable. MPI doesn't just create opportunity—it creates alignment between people who want to build something meaningful together.

THE PERSONAL VALUE

On a personal level, MPI has always been about more than business. It's where colleagues become friends, and where conversations extend beyond transactions into trust, perspective, and shared growth. In an industry that moves quickly, having a community that grounds you—and challenges you—is invaluable. That sense of connection is something I've carried into how I approach both my career and what we're building at The Greenleigh: an experience rooted in genuine hospitality, where people feel welcomed, understood, and part of something lasting.

THE

Greenleigh

RIVER OAKS

NEW MEMBERSHIP

HONORING OUR NEW MEMBERS

JESSICA ROGERS, CMP
VP OF MEMBERSHIP



Building meaningful connections in a new community can feel overwhelming—but it doesn't have to be. That's where our Ambassador Program steps in, turning first introductions into lasting relationships. Designed to create a more welcoming and supportive environment, the program pairs each new member with a dedicated Ambassador within their first week. These Ambassadors aren't just volunteers—they're friendly, familiar faces who help bridge the gap between joining and truly belonging. From checking in regularly to attending events side by side, they make sure no one has to navigate the experience alone.

More than just a point of contact, Ambassadors serve as trusted guides—ready to answer questions, offer insight, and help new members feel confident and connected from day one. Their presence transforms what could be an uncertain start into an engaging, personal journey.

If you've ever wanted to make a meaningful impact, this is your opportunity. Becoming an Ambassador means shaping someone's first impression, strengthening our community, and building connections that last well beyond the first hello.

Ready to step into that role? Sign up today and be the reason someone feels right at home.

WELCOME NEW MPI DALLAS/FORT WORTH CHAPTER MEMBERS

LISA HARRINGTON *CAE*
MAGGIE SUTTON
MARY MIGHELL
KALEY MANCUSO
MELODY COKER
CRYSTAL DOUGLASS
TRISH HALLIGAN *CMP*
MOUSUMI JOHNSON

CAMERON WEBSTER
CARLY BLONDIN
KIM DUBOSE
BRANDON ROJAS
KELLY ANTIFONARIO
KRISTEN GEEZ
CAMERON PETTY

RANDI LAW
KELLY PARKER
TIFFANY WEBSTER
HAYDEN WILLIAMS
TANCY TURNER
KENIA WAY
BILLIE FIELDS
MELISSA BRASHEAR

MEMBERSHIP: MILESTONES

HONORING OUR MEMBERS

ALSTIN SPENCE
DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP



OUR 5 YEAR MEMBERSHIP

MAUREEN GUTIERREZ

CORY ELFORD

MILDRED ORTIZ

IRIS HENDRICKS CMP

JEANETTE RIPPS

OUR 15 YEAR MEMBERSHIP

CHERYL OSWALD CMP, CMM

MELISSA ATCHLEY CMM

LISA CAUSEY CMP, CMM

OUR 10 YEAR MEMBERSHIP

KRISTY HOLLINGSWORTH

OUR 20YEAR MEMBERSHIP

ALISON BLACKWELL CMP

OUR 35YEAR MEMBERSHIP

STEVE KEMBLE

"A MILESTONE PINNING WITHIN MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL IS MORE THAN A FORMAL RECOGNITION—IT IS A REFLECTION OF GROWTH WITHIN A DYNAMIC AND EVER-EVOLVING INDUSTRY. EACH PIN REPRESENTS NOT ONLY TENURE OR ACHIEVEMENT, BUT A COMMITMENT TO ELEVATING THE STANDARDS OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS WORLDWIDE."

CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS



NEW & UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

May 21, 2026
Game On! Level Up the Power of Connection!
Membership Mixer and Volunteer Appreciation Event
Shenaniganz, Rockwall
June 2-4, 2026
MPI World Education Congress (WEC)
San Antonio, TX

June 18, 2026
Awards of Excellence Gala

August 20, 2026
Chapter Experience
September 17, 2026
Chapter Fundraiser Event
Fall CMP Study Group
Contact cmpstudygroup@mpidfw.org for more information
November 12, 2026
Chapter Experience Luncheon: Fall in Fort Worth
December 12, 2026
Holiday Party and 2027 Board Induction

UPCOMING EVENTS

WORLD EDUCATION CONFERNCE

Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is the largest meeting and event industry association worldwide.
Founded in 1972, MPI provides innovative and relevant education, networking opportunities and business exchanges, and acts as a prominent voice for the promotion and growth of the industry.

MPI has a global community of 60,000 meeting and event professionals, including more than 17,000 engaged members and its Plan Your Meetings audience.
It has more than 70 chapters and clubs in 75 countries worldwide.
This is the first time MPI WEC will be in San Antonio.

MPI WEC 2026 in San Antonio is more than just a conference—it's a global stage, and this year, our Meeting Professionals International DFW Chapter has a powerful opportunity to show up, stand out, and represent our region as a world-class destination for meetings and events.

"DFW Welcomes the World"

We encourage you to register, attend, and be part of this unforgettable experience, while also showing your support for our "DFW Welcomes the World" activation at the Welcome Reception. This is our moment to amplify the strength, creativity, and collaborative spirit of our chapter on an international platform. We're still welcoming partners and supporters to help bring our vision to life, so whether you're attending, activating, or cheering us on, your presence and participation matter. Let's show the world what DFW can do.



OPENING EVENT:
Anticipated Attendance: 2,500
Date: June 2, 2026 | Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Location: LDR, Grotto, Merida Plaza with River Parade and Entertainment in Grotto

UPCOMING EVENT

GLOBAL MEETINGS INDUSTRY DAY

CELEBRATE, CONNECT, AND ENGAGE WITH VISIT ARLINGTON, FRISCO, FORT WORTH AND MORE.

Universal Studios, Sunset Amphitheater, Convention Center Renovations, FIFA….it is all happening right here in North Texas!
Join fellow meetings and events professionals as we celebrate Global Meetings Industry Day (GMID) - a day when the Dallas–Fort Worth events industry comes together to recognize the vital role meetings and events play in driving economic growth, collaboration, and innovation.

This year's program will feature a distinguished panel of Convention & Visitor Bureau leaders representing Arlington, Dallas, Frisco, Fort Worth, and McKinney. Panelists will share insights on new and emerging venues within their destinations, highlight key industry trends shaping the region, and discuss opportunities for event professionals as the meetings landscape continues to evolve.

Celebrate, connect, and engage with industry peers as we honor the power and purpose of meetings on Global Meetings Industry Day.

EVENT:
Date: May 6, 2026 | Time: 11:30AM-1:30 p.m.
Location: Ten10 Events
1010 N Collins St.
Arlington, TX 76011

THE PEOPLE BEHIND EVENTS

Paige is DFW chapter member and her leadership story is a powerful example of how commitment to a profession can shape both people and progress. As the current Southwest Regional Chair for MPI Global and Past President of the MPI D/FW Chapter, she has consistently demonstrated that leadership is not just about holding a title—it's about creating momentum.

Now, at the regional level, her influence reaches even further. She brings the same clarity of vision and collaborative spirit, helping chapters align, grow, and adapt in an evolving industry. Her work reflects a broader truth: strong leadership in professional organizations doesn't just benefit members—it shapes the future of the field itself.



Paige Mejia
Current Board Position: Southwest Regional Chair - MPI Global
Past President: MPI D/FW Chapter

UPCOMING EVENT

37TH ANNUAL PARTY FEST

BE OUR GUEST

ANNOUNCEMENT



EVENT:
Date: July 29th, 2026 | Time: 11AM-4 p.m.
Location: Dallas Market Hall
2200 N Stemmons Fwy,
Dallas, TX 75207

The 37th Annual Partyfest isn't just another industry gathering—it's a pulse check on the creativity, innovation, and ambition driving the D/FW event scene. In a single, invitation-only day, the region's top event professionals come together to showcase what's next: smarter designs, bolder concepts, and experiences that push celebrations beyond the expected.

What makes Partyfest stand out is its balance of inspiration and practicality. It's not only about dazzling displays—it's about real connections. From exhibitor raffles to live product demonstrations, every moment is designed to spark ideas and build relationships that translate directly into better events.

Whether you're planning a corporate gala, wedding, or community celebration, this is where trends become tools. At its core, Partyfest reinforces a simple truth: great events don't happen by accident—they're built through collaboration, creativity, and access to the right talent. For anyone serious about elevating their next event, this showcase isn't just useful—it's essential.

Mark your calendar. Because this is, quite simply, where great parties begin.

SPONSORSHIP

HONORING OUR ANNUAL PARTNERS

A MESSAGE FROM SPONSORSHIP

THE VALUE & IMPACT OF SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship with MPI offers more than logo placement—it creates a direct pathway to meaningful engagement within the meetings and events industry.

Through sponsorship, businesses gain access to a network of decision-makers, planners, and industry leaders who are actively seeking trusted partners. It's an opportunity to move beyond traditional marketing and instead build authentic relationships—ones that often translate into long-term collaborations and repeat business.

Equally important is the credibility that comes with association. Being seen as a supporter of professional development and industry growth positions your organization as invested, reliable, and forward-thinking. It signals that you're not just participating in the market—you're helping shape it.

In an era where connections drive success, MPI sponsorship is not just a promotional tool—it's a strategic investment in visibility, reputation, and lasting business growth.

Kalahari CONVENTIONS

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Dallas/TX • Washington DC • Chicago • Nationwide

OMNI BARTON CREEK

Hilton Anatole DALLAS

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