

MPI-WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Agenda

JULY
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VOL 47/NUM 4
2025



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Editor's Note



In my last *Editor's Note*, I reflected on change—how it's the one constant we can count on in life. I even signed off with, "Let's embrace the change this season!"

And wow, did my next couple of months have a lot of change...

April and May were personally challenging months. While I won't go into the details, I experienced loss—more accurately, people close to me experienced loss—and I found myself supporting them through it. Have you ever felt such deep empathy for someone else's pain that it physically hurt? That's what these past few months were like for me. I suppose that's what it means to be an empath (which I firmly believe is a superpower of mine).

Thankfully, as spring gave way to summer, I found myself ready to shift, too. I didn't ignore the pain, but I also didn't let it define the season. Instead, I leaned into the warm weather, the summer storms, and the joy of being outside and doing the summery things I love – baseball games, lots of walks with Miss Penny (my dog), and outdoor concerts. After months of focusing on others, I realized it was time to take care of myself and make some changes. A few ways I did that?

- 1) I cut my hair. Yep, seems silly and small, but chopping 7 inches of hair off was literally a weight off my shoulders (and somehow helped lift the burden of the past couple of months off my heart). Plus, I like my new bob A LOT!
- 2) I leaned on others. I reached out to friends and family who weren't directly involved, and their support helped me stay grounded. One friend said, "Some things in life we go through don't come with any sort of training," and it really hit home. I was figuring it out as I went – and I couldn't have done it alone.
- 3) I baked (and ate!) cake. If you know me, you know how much I love cake. It's my favorite thing to ask someone about on their birthday – what kind of cake did they have? Cake makes everything better!

Speaking of sweets...are y'all ready for *A Sweet Affair to Remember*? With a theme like that, this year's Gala promises to be a night of indulgent treats, well-deserved recognition, and unforgettable fun. I hope to see you there!

Keep calm (and eat cake!),

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria".

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MONONA  TERRACE



President's Message



Liz Unruh
MPI - WI President

I can't believe we have not met in person for what seems like forever. Although, there were several MPI Wisconsin members who attended MPI's World Education Congress (WEC) this year — the flagship event that brings together thousands of professionals from across the globe. Hosted in St. Louis, WEC 2025 delivered powerful education and great networking. St. Louis rolled out the red carpet for us from taking us into the Cardinals dugout, to having a private concert by Nelly, and allowing easy access to everything. Members left recharged and inspired, bringing back fresh ideas and best practices to elevate the meetings and events landscape in Wisconsin.

MPI Wisconsin had a strong presence at WEC, showcasing our chapter's commitment to industry leadership and collaboration. Several of our members were able

to go because of a scholarship awarded by the MPI Foundation. This is one of the many reasons why we do the Chairman's Challenge each October. The money we raise from the Chairman's Challenge we donate to the MPI Foundation. WEC continues to be a reminder that while our work is local, our impact is global. Next year WEC will be in San Antonio. Hope to see you there!

Remember to get involved. We just put out the slate for our Chapter's Board and are so excited that we had so many people who would like to be part of this. Volunteering is important because it strengthens our communities, builds meaningful connections, and helps create positive change. When people volunteer, they bring their unique skills, time, and energy to causes that matter—whether that's supporting an organization, contributing to a shared goal, or improving the organization. Remember together we can change the world.

MPI WI Summer Social

On July 31, members will have a chance to meet for our annual Summer Social. This year's event will be hosted at Event Essentials headquarters from 5pm-7pm. This casual event gives members the chance to reconnect face-to-face, welcome new members, and unwind in a laid-back atmosphere. Don't forget about our wine pull that day. If you want to donate a

bottle ahead of time or that day reach out to **Heather Harmeyer**.

A Sweet Affair to Remember: MPI WI Gala

The crown jewel of our summer calendar, the MPI Wisconsin Gala in August is nothing short of magical. Held at Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield, the Gala celebrates the achievements of the past year, recognizes chapter leaders, teams, and all our volunteers.

With a theme of the whimsical world of Candyland, the evening will feature awards, elegance, and heartfelt moments. The energy in the room will be undeniable as we applaud the incredible efforts of those who go above and beyond to make MPI Wisconsin a vibrant and inclusive community. Congratulations to all honorees — your passion and dedication continue to inspire us all.

Liz Unruh

BEYOND THE BOXED LUNCH




Meeting food is ... well, meeting food. Under-seasoned and underwhelming. But not at Kalahari. Start your event meal with mouthwatering appetizers, like our Nashville Hot Texas quail with pickled slaw, green tomato, orange blossom honey, and butter crust bread. Our passion for food is beyond conventional.



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LET'S RALLY: What WEC St. Louis Gave Back to Me

By Nickie Rouleau

I have to start by saying...St. Louis surprised me. I had been there before, but this time around, the hospitality hit differently. Explore St. Louis absolutely nailed the host city experience. From the moment I arrived, for attendees it felt like every detail was designed to show off their local flavor. Their team made us feel seen, welcomed, and appreciated. I walked away knowing more about their city—and loving it more—than I ever expected.





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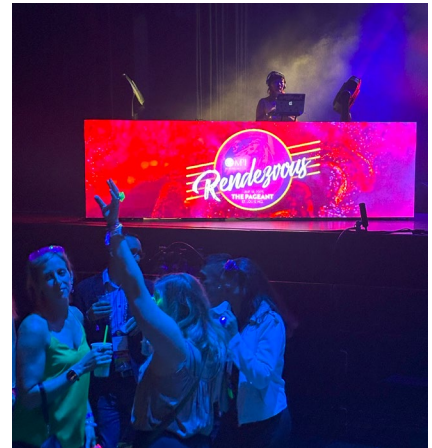
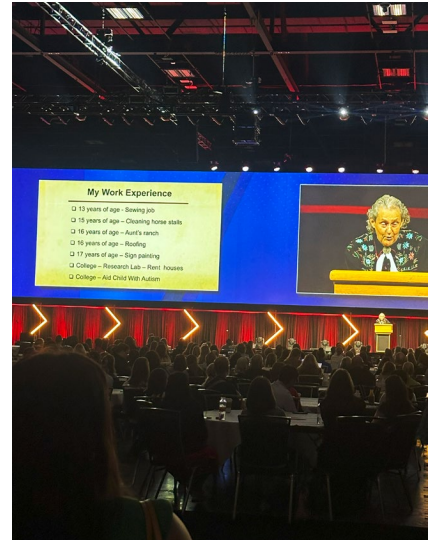


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This was my second time attending WEC, and my first time as a board member, but I felt so much more confident navigating the full experience. There's just something about having your MPI Wisconsin family there with you. It gives you this built-in audience of familiar faces, especially helpful when you're in a new city. Our chapter had an awesome showing this year, and it was so fun to have that sense of community as we explored and learned together.





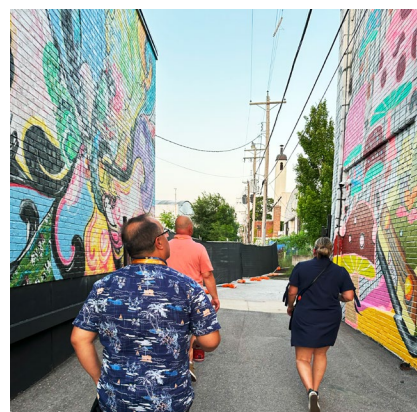
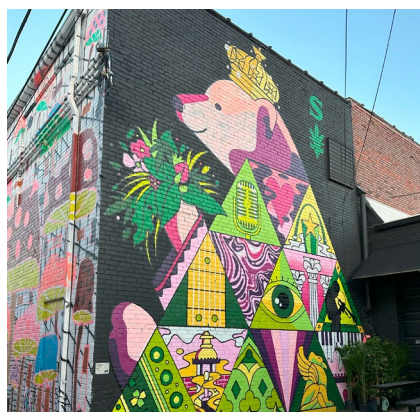
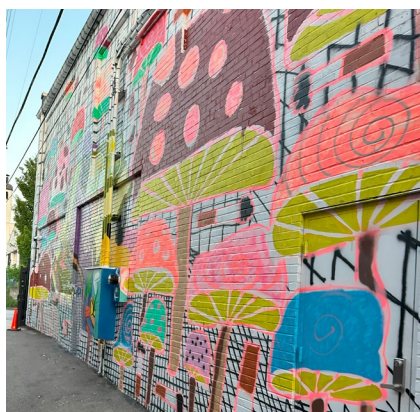
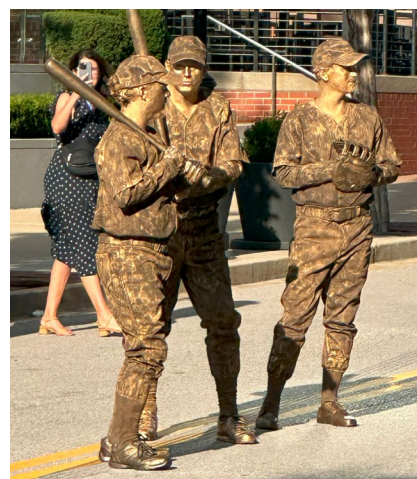
On the professional side, I was honored to represent the Baird Center during the hosted buyer meetings, where I connected with so many new planners from all over North America (shoutout to my new friends from Canada!). I also attended a

wide range of breakout sessions focused on sales and marketing. These sessions always help me challenge my routines and think a bit differently. One of the biggest themes I noticed this year: listen more. So many speakers emphasized meeting clients

where they are and delivering what they *actually* need—not just what we think they need. It's a great reminder to slow down and really hear what your clients are saying.

As for the keynotes—**Temple Grandin** stole the show for me. Her straightforward delivery and practical insights were refreshingly different. I walked away truly thinking about inclusion, communication, and how we define success for different thinkers.

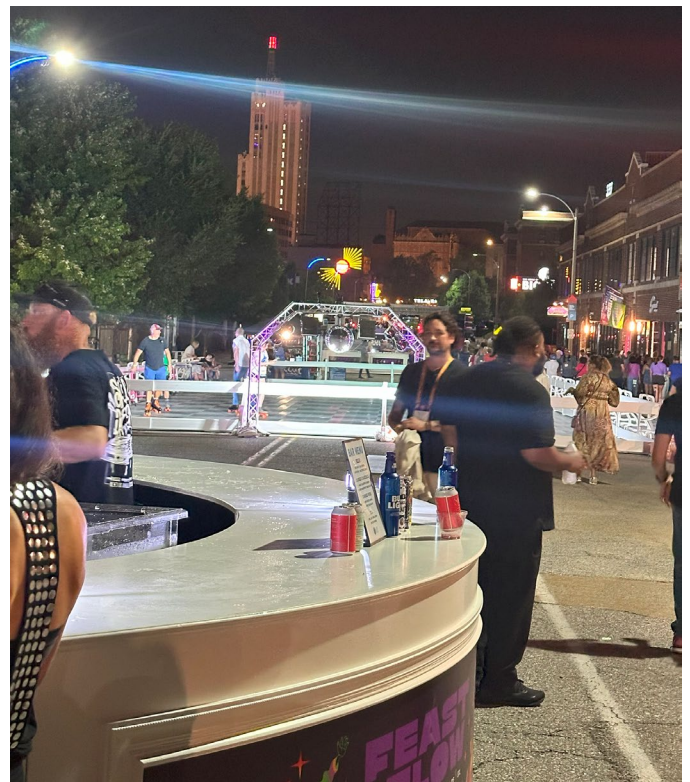
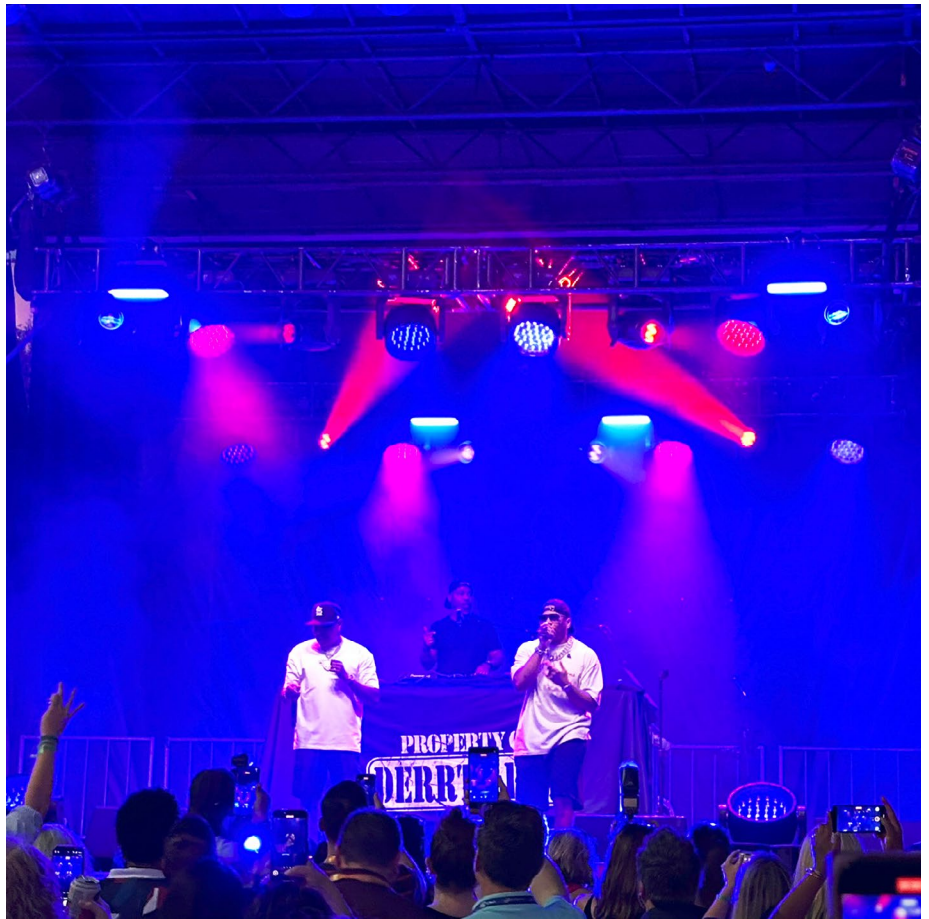
Outside of the education, the fun and local touches really elevated the experience. The opening party started out with a literal bang. Fireworks on the field at Busch Stadium. Walking on the field, even drinking a cocktail in the dugout! Where else are you getting that experience except with MPI? Rendezvous took us to the nightlife district and checking out the music venues was so fun.

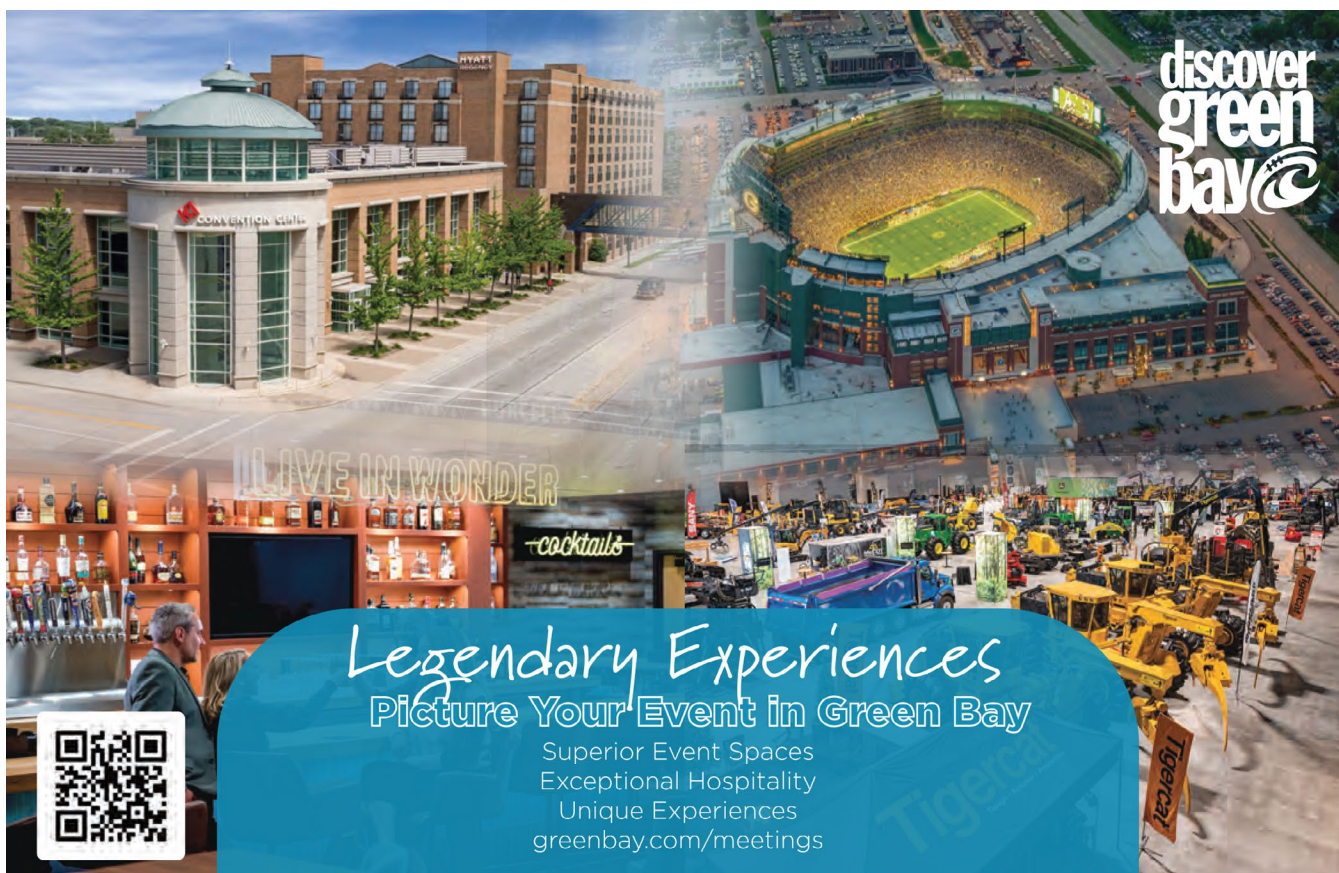


The closing block party—complete with **Nelly (!!)** was such a perfect vibe. I help to plan a block party in my own Milwaukee neighborhood, and this one hit close to home in the best way. And yes, I made sure to grab some gooey butter cake before heading home. No regrets.

If you're thinking about going next year, my advice: do as much as you can. Say yes to the dinners, the meetups, the learning labs, the dance parties. Talk to as many people as possible and if you can, find a buddy to help show you the ropes. It's a big event, but it's also filled with people who want to connect.

I left St. Louis feeling completely re-energized about our industry. About events. About people. And that's exactly what WEC is supposed to do. ▴






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Let's get Social

Chapter Summer Social

BY HEATHER HARMEYER & ED BUCHNER

Thursday, July 31st Event Essentials Headquarters

We're well into our summer season and everyone could use a margarita! Stay connected with like minded professionals and celebrate all you've conquered and the things you are about to accomplish. Let's celebrate this amazing industry together at the MPI Wisconsin Chapter Summer Social!

Event Essentials is eager to spoil you by hosting dinner, dessert, and drinks. Join us in a vibrant yet relaxed, social atmosphere, ideal for building relationships, sharing ideas, and having some well-earned fun! Get a behind-the-scenes

look at the Event Essentials warehouse between rounds of cornhole, Jenga, or tic-tac-toe.

Join us in a relaxed, social atmosphere—ideal for building relationships, sharing ideas, and having some well-earned fun! Plus, with a donation of only \$15 you WILL win a bottle of wine or spirits at the Wine Pull! Your donation goes toward the MPI Chapter to help support things like scholarships and other chapter support. ▴



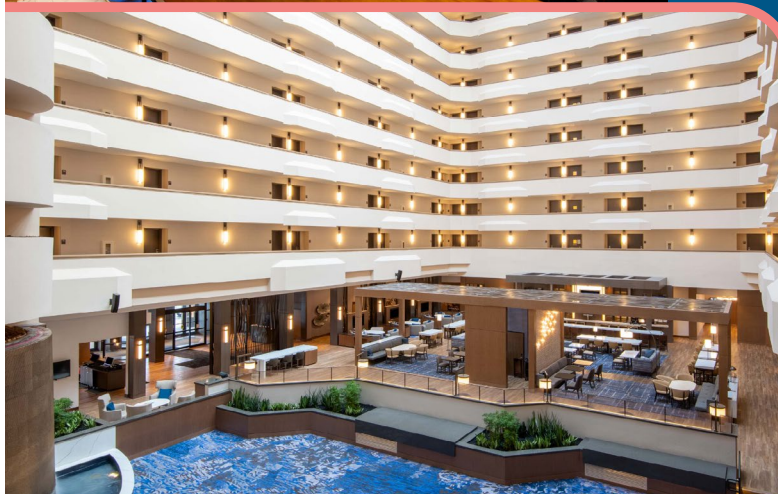
Meet in the Middle

Middleton, Wisconsin, is anything but ordinary. Choose from one of nine hotels, including the area's largest convention hotel, and enjoy one of our 80 cafés and restaurants, two shopping districts, award-winning brewery, local cidery, quirky attractions, and beautiful scenic spaces. Come discover why it's the *middle* things that will make your meeting memorable.



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Planner Spotlight: MICHELLE EGGERT



MICHELLE EGGERT
Conference Direct

What drew you to becoming a planner?

I have a unique situation as an intermediary. I'm a planner member with MPI – but work with both planners and suppliers assisting planners find the ideal location for their event and negotiate the best contract terms to reduce costs, increase revenue, minimize risk, and enhance attendee experience. I love working with both the planners and suppliers to achieve a win/win partnership. I also work onsite with my clients – which is the second favorite part of being an intermediary. I thrive in the environment of challenges and solving problems as they arise and anticipating the problem, based on past experience, and providing a solution before disaster strikes. Finally – I enjoy consulting with clients and hotel colleagues in event strategy, budget development, and all things related to documentation for the future.

I've always had the "planner gene" - back to high school. I wasn't interested in planning the homecoming dance - I was planning the homecoming parade, working with police, securing route permits, etc. And I just continued on from there!

What is your business philosophy or approach to working with suppliers?

Timely, complete, and professional follow-up throughout the site search and contracting process. Suppliers are inundated with leads. When questions arise I am a firm believer in responding within 24 hours, preferably before end of day.

What's something you're passionate about outside of work? What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Spending time with my hubby, hiking & fishing, time with my (2) daughters – especially when we are enjoying theatre in Chicago, and of course my (4) "littles" (grandkids)! Quiet time is always spent with a knitting project.

What would your walk-up song be?

Fight Song by Rachel Platten is my "get moving" song. My family said to clear the dance floor for my entrance with *Atomic Dog* by George Clinton.

A SWEET AFFAIR TO REMEMBER



MPI Wisconsin Awards Gala

August 21, 2025
Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield Hotel

SAVE THE DATE for a magical evening inspired by the whimsical world of Candyland, celebrating our amazing members and chapter milestones.

The fun begins at 6 PM with a candy-themed cocktail reception—mingle, sip, and snack on sweet treats while connecting with fellow professionals.

At 7 PM, step into the vibrant Brookfield Room, transformed into a Candyland paradise, as we honor top members and welcome our newest Hall of Fame inductee.

Then, keep the celebration going at our Afterglow Party poolside. There, attendees will have a place to mingle and enjoy a few beverages and late night eats.

Dress to impress in Candyland flair—peppermint chic, bubblegum glam, or chocolate-inspired style welcome!

Don't miss this colorful night of recognition, connection, and confections. We can't wait to celebrate with you!

Supplier Spotlight: KIM MARIE CASEY



KIM MARIE CASEY

Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield Hotel

What are three unique things that set your company apart?

1. Our recent \$20M renovation in guestrooms, meeting rooms and public spaces. It's like a completely new hotel!
2. Diversity of team members - we are truly global.
3. Constantly updating, adapting and changing with the times.

What is your business philosophy or approach, to working with clients?

Listen. And, be open-minded, but not so open-minded that your brain falls out!

What unique solutions or services do you offer to meeting and event planners?

As a full-service hotel, we have all the amenities you wish for under one roof. We are in a suburb of Milwaukee, but still are part of that community.

What's something you're passionate about outside of work? or what do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Swimming! I'd be lost without my WAC membership. Also staying connected with family and friends.

What would your walk-up song be?

Simply the Best (Tina Turner)



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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

At a young age I fell in love with the culinary industry working for my uncle Stephen Feldmann when he worked as the Executive Chef of Steakhouse 100. Like most young men, I wanted to run the streets and get into trouble with my friends, but my mother would have none of that. After a long conversation between my uncle and my mother, I started working in his kitchen washing dishes and bussing tables. You can say I was less than thrilled about being in a 100-degree kitchen, with minimal ventilation, around surly, fast moving, and gruff line chefs. It wasn't long, though, before I began to see the heart of the kitchen, the seemingly coded language between chef and cooks. Words like "heard," "behind," "fire that," "86 it," "sharp," as the symphony of movement of the way his line cooks moved around each other in an almost ballet-like choreography. The sheer level of passion that each person in that kitchen had along with the smells, noises, fire, heat, and fast-paced flow of service of a busy night, it was PUNK ROCK, and I was hooked!

Working in my uncle's kitchen at Steakhouse, was my start. I learned a lot working under him and his staff. I learned that a chef is whatever the restaurant needs them to be and you can't let your ego get in the way of service and getting the job done well. I learned to be humble from this experience. As I progressed from various restaurants around Milwaukee learning whatever I could from great chefs like Gregg des Rosier with Anaba, Tochi Ramen and Jovan Djokovic with Twisted Fork, Jason Stevens with Watts Tea Room, and Paul Funk of Hinterland, they all taught me something that I carry with me to this day, and I am better man and Chef for their lessons.



Executive Chef Christopher Feldmann

Coming into The Sheraton Hotel Milwaukee Brookfield has not only been an honor and a privilege to add to a great team but also to be a part of a historic building in the city of Brookfield. The Sheraton and Craft Room is intended to reflect the spirit of the neighborhoods and communities around us through our drinks, food, and service. We want EVERYONE to feel welcome here and we encourage everyone to dine with us because we have a little something for everybody. Our menus and happy hours are diverse just like this incredible city. As a born and raised Milwaukee boy, I LOVE my city, so I want our guests to experience what Milwaukee/Brookfield has to offer and see what I, and many others who

call this place home, enjoy every day as citizens of the Brew City! Our breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as our drink menus, are meant to be a love letter to Milwaukee, showcasing local breweries and distilleries, using locally sourced product, and creating dishes and drinks that are inspired by our Midwest flavors. Ultimately, when a guest dines with us, it is my intention to inspire them, or at least intrigue them, to go out and venture around Milwaukee, take a brewery tour, check out Old World Third, and just see that Milwaukee has so much beauty, flavor, and culture to experience. Whether you are traveling from afar or live just around the corner, you will always have a seat waiting for you at The Craft Room. ▴

Bacon Jam



Ingredients:

Raw Diced Bacon – 2lbs
 Cooked Diced Bacon – 1lb
 Minced Garlic – 4 oz
 Minced Onion – 6 qz
 Balsamic Vinegar – 3 cups
 Brown Sugar – 4 cups
 Worcestershire – 1/4 cup
 Thyme – 2 oz bundle
 Water – 3 cups
 Cornstarch Slurry

Procedure:

1. In a hot rondou, start cooking raw diced bacon.
2. When the bacon is starting to brown and the fat is beginning to render, remove from heat and drain half the rendered fat.
3. At this point return the heat and add minced garlic and onion. Sweat the onions and stir consistently.
4. Add thyme bundle and stir in with the mix.
5. Bacon should be browned by this point.
6. Add balsamic and reduce by a quarter.
7. Add worcestshire and boil.
8. Add brown sugar and melt down and stir until fully incorporated.
9. Add water and bring to a boil.
10. Once boiling, reduce heat to low to medium and let simmer until it reduces by half or thickens to a thin grazy-like consistently.
11. Once you've reached the consistency you like, pour into a plastic container.
12. Cover "but leave a hole open to vent," label, and date.

Volunteer Spotlight: ELIZABETH POH

If you're interested
in volunteering,
reach out to us at
admin@mpiwi.org



We're sending a huge thank you to **Elizabeth Poh** for being a true rockstar volunteer and supporter of MPI Wisconsin!

Elizabeth is a former board member and continues to be one of the first people to raise her hand when help is needed. Whether it's lending a hand at events, joining a committee or jumping in behind the scenes—she's always there with a positive attitude, and a can-do spirit.

Most recently, she's been doing an amazing job on our Donations Committee, helping us secure exciting items that make our raffles and fundraisers so impactful.

We're so grateful for your continued dedication, Elizabeth. MPI Wisconsin is stronger because of volunteers like you!





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MPI WISCONSIN

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Congratulations to those members celebrating a milestone anniversary in July/August!

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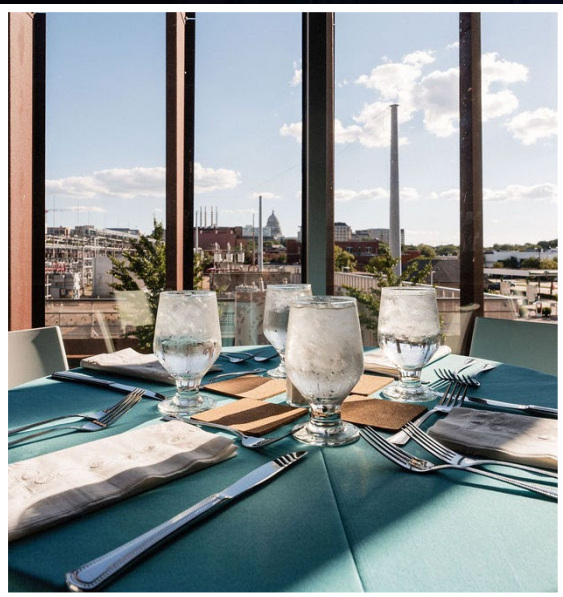
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WHO'S **IN THE** NEWS

Compiled by Nickie Rouleau

► **ARIEL BILSKEY** was married over 4th of July weekend to her fiance Nick – Congratulations!



NOTE: if you have any news to share in this column, please contact Nickie Rouleau, Director - Publications & Community Outreach, nrouleau@wcd.org.



Kortnee Carroll • 1st

Booking unforgettable events at Kalahari — surviving on coffee, calend...
15h •

Celebrating 4 years with Kalahari today! 🎉

Here is one of my favorite photos in the 4 years. I love this work family and am incredibly grateful for everyone that I work with! ❤️

[Kalahari Resorts & Conventions](#)





Grace Abrahamson is with **Jason Abrahamson**.

July 6 at 5:49 PM · 

We're growing our family — Baby Abrahamson arriving late October 2025!

Our hearts are full, our home is getting cozier, and we're so excited for this next adventure.



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SAVE THE DATE

2025 CHAPTER EVENTS

08 2025 AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

○ **August 21, 2025 // Annual Awards Gala**
Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield, Brookfield, WI

09 2025 SEPTEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4

○ **September 18, 2025 // Chapter Program**
Lake Lawn Resort, Delavan, WI

10 2025 OCTOBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

○ **October 23, 2025 // Chapter Program**
Madison Marriott West – Middleton, WI