

MPI-WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Agenda

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VOL 47/NUM 6
2025




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MPI-WISCONSIN CHAPTER Agenda

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Editor's Note



As 2025 draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey our MPI-Wisconsin Chapter has taken this year. From inspiring education sessions to unforgettable networking events, we've continued to show the strength, creativity, and resilience that define our community of meeting professionals.

This time of year invites us to pause and appreciate the connections we've made, the challenges we've overcome, and the

growth we've experienced—both personally and professionally. It's also a time to look ahead with intention. What do we want 2026 to look like? How can we continue to elevate our industry, support one another, and embrace innovation?

One exciting way to wrap up the year is by participating in our 2025 Holiday Auction! This online event is open to both members and non-members, offering a fun and festive way to support our chapter while bidding on some fantastic items.

Whether you're looking for a unique gift or just want to join in the spirit of giving, we encourage you to check it out and share it with your network. The auction will run from November 28th (Black Friday!) through December 5th. Visit the MPI-WI website and click on the "More Information" button under the Holiday Auction headline in the coming weeks to check out and bid on all of the amazing items available!

In this issue of AGENDA, you'll find stories that celebrate our chapter's accomplishments, spotlight our members, and offer insights to help you prepare for the year ahead. Whether you're wrapping up a busy event season or planning your next big move, I hope these pages leave you feeling inspired and energized.

Thank you for being part of this vibrant community. Here's to a joyful holiday season and a bold, bright 2026!

Maria

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MONONA  TERRACE



President's Message



Liz Unruh
MPI - WI President



As we look ahead to a new year and new leadership, I encourage each of you to stay connected, stay curious, and stay involved.

As we approach the end of another vibrant year with MPI Wisconsin, I find myself reflecting on our chapter's collective journey—and most importantly, on *you*, our members. When I stepped into the role of President, I had one clear goal: to deepen engagement and invite more of you to step into the heart of this organization. Together, we've done just that.

From our education and networking events to our volunteer committees and community outreach, this year has been all about building meaningful connections. We've seen new faces join our chapter and familiar ones step up in new ways. We've tackled important conversations, celebrated milestones, and worked hard to make this chapter feel like a place where everyone belongs and everyone has something valuable to contribute.

One of the things I'm most proud of is how many members raised their hands to get involved—whether by volunteering at an event, serving on a committee, or simply showing up and engaging in conversation. *You are what makes MPI Wisconsin thrive!*

We know that life and work can be demanding, and that time is precious. That's why every moment you gave to this chapter—big or small—mattered. And for those who've been waiting for the "right moment" to get involved: it's never too late. Your voice, your perspective, and your energy are needed now more than ever.

As we look ahead to a new year and new leadership, I encourage each of you to stay connected, stay curious, and stay involved. Whether it's attending an event, joining a committee, or simply reaching out to a fellow member to say hello, you have the power to shape the future of MPI Wisconsin.

Thank you to every member who showed up, spoke up, and stepped in to help us build something truly special.

Here's to another year of growing together, learning together, and lifting each other up.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Unruh". The script is fluid and cursive.

Liz Unruh

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2025 - YEAR IN REVIEW FROM OUR BOARD MEMBERS

Nickie Rouleau asked each of our board departments these three questions:

- Within your area of leadership, what accomplishment or highlight from 2025 are you most proud of?
- How did your committee's work this year make an impact on MPI Wisconsin members, partners, or the broader community?
- What's something unexpected, surprising, or just plain fun that happened in your committee this year?



Greta McCue
VP Education



Our Education team had a truly epic year! Lindsey did an incredible job leading Monthly Programming, ensuring flawless events with fun social

elements, while Jacob once again led the charge in taking Spring Education Day to an award-winning level. None of it would have been possible without our amazing volunteers, who handled details big and small—from securing great speakers to double-checking logistics, snapping photos, and crafting previews and recaps. A special shout-out goes to the committee that supported the RFP process—thanks to their work, we were able to announce our full 2026 education calendar back in August, a huge accomplishment that will maximize attendance and engagement in the year ahead!



Kortnee Carroll
VP Communications



The Communications Team has absolutely been killing it this year! If you've seen our social pages filled with awesome digital posts, reels,

and photos capturing events as they happen, that's all thanks to the incredible work of Grace Abrahamson. We're so lucky to have her on our team and so thankful for her creativity and dedication!

The *Agenda* can be a beast of a project, but Nickie Rouleau dove right in, got it back on track, organized, and even ahead of schedule! Nickie also won the Rising Star Award at this year's MPI Gala, so well deserved! On top of that, she and her team at the Baird Center, who hosted our Spring Education this year, completely knocked it out of the park and took home Team of the Year!

We're so proud and grateful for everything this powerhouse duo has accomplished, their hard work, talent, and passion continue to raise the bar for our communications efforts year after year.



Reggie Driscoll

Immediate Past President



One of the biggest highlights this year is having an incredible board in place for 2026. We have a great blend of returning board members and new board members stepping up to the plate. The 2026 board will be great for all of the MPI-Wisconsin members.

We were also able to connect in person with almost all of the guests and first-time attendees at the education events. This goes a long way in making new members feel welcome and that they are part of the association.

Hopefully, this will help with getting the new members involved early and help them grow in the association and their careers.



Heather Harmeyer

Director — Strategic Alliances & Sponsorships



I enjoyed planning the gala silent auction. The committee was structured well, we were able to promote MPI's mission, and had incredible results.

We also continue to demonstrate a solid financial trajectory for the organization so we can continue to host high end corporate events with value and CMP credits to our members.

I think a highlight was seeing our Director, Ed, win the President's Award. He is so fantastic to work with and provided amazing guidance and patience throughout the year. It was nice to see him rewarded for his hard work and contributions to the organization!



Kim Casey

Director — Awards and Scholarships, Recruitment



Awards Gala voting was successful with the launch of all URLs to members for voting. Outside chapters were enthusiastic in responding to requests for weighing in thoughtfully on nominees. We also awarded a student scholarship this year as the outreach to schools was met with great response.



MPI Wisconsin Chapter 2025 Holiday Auction

Friday, November 28th thru 11am Central Time, Friday, December 5th
Experiences and memories make great holiday gifts and one size fits all!

Coming Soon! 2025 MPI Wisconsin Holiday Auction

There is still time to donate a certificate, be recognized, and help a great association!

Download the Holiday Auction Donation Form



You survived 2025 and another year of successful programs and events! Our January event kicks off on Wednesday evening, January 21, with an opportunity to relax, share stories, play games and unwind in our first MPI Wisconsin Pajama Party! Wear your comfy sweats or your favorite pj's and join us as we recover from 2025 and the Holidays. Appetizers provided with a cash bar.

The main event takes place on January 22, featuring dynamic speaker **Dave Molenda**, founder of Positive Polarity, a Midwest-based business coaching firm that challenges the status quo with positivity and purpose.

Dave will lead two insightful sessions: *Lead with Calm: Conflict Resolution That Strengthens Event Teams*. This session will help teach us how handling challenges effectively can foster stronger teamwork and enhance event success. The second session, *Listening with Purpose: Building Trust from First Contract to Final Details* will help discover the power of active listening in building trust, identifying hidden needs, and creating exceptional experiences. Dave is also the author of *Growing on Purpose*, an Amazon #1 Best Seller in three categories, offering practical strategies to elevate team performance and improve client satisfaction. ■



Dave Molenda



FOOD FOR THOUGHT



EXECUTIVE CHEF CHARLES LAZZARESCHI

THE MADISON CONCOURSE HOTEL
MADISON, WI

Executive Chef Charles Lazzareschi discovered his passion for cooking early on while spending time in his father's Italian restaurant in San Francisco. A graduate of the California Culinary Academy, he began his culinary career as a sous chef at the Palo Alto location of the acclaimed restaurant *Stars*, working under California cuisine pioneer Jeremiah Tower. Charles has spent more than two decades in hotel kitchens, including five years as Executive Chef at the Embassy Suites in Denver, before joining The Madison Concourse Hotel in 2006. He now oversees all food and beverage operations at The Madison Concourse Hotel, including CIRC, The Bar, and banquet services. ■

FOUR CHEESE STUFFED PORTOBELLO MUSHROOMS

INGREDIENTS

- 12 large portobello mushrooms, stemmed and gills removed
- 6 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup fresh bread crumbs
- 1 cup grated Parmesan
- ½ cup goat cheese
- ½ cup Boursin cheese
- 4 tablespoons freshly chopped parsley leaves
- 4 tablespoons freshly chopped basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons freshly chopped oregano leaves
- 2 whole eggs
- 12 (1/2-inch) slices fresh mozzarella, roughly 1 to 1 1/2-ounces per slice

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.
2. Toss the portobellos in the balsamic vinegar, 1/4 cup of olive oil, salt and pepper, to taste. Arrange the mushrooms on a baking sheet and roast in the oven for about 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool to room temperature.
3. While the mushrooms are cooling mix together the goat cheese, Boursin, herbs and eggs.
4. Combine the bread crumbs and the remaining 1/4 cup olive oil.
5. Turn the mushrooms so the cup side is facing up. Divide the cheese and herb mixture between the portobellos.
6. Place 1 slice (2 if the mushrooms are large) of mozzarella over the cheese and herb mixture, distribute the bread crumbs evenly over mozzarella, and return to the oven to roast for 5 to 6 minutes or until the cheese is molten and the bread crumb topping a nice golden brown. Serve either hot or at room temperature and enjoy.



Frostwood Farms

Lasagna Give Back & MPI Foundation Chairman's Challenge

By: Nickie Rouleau

We kicked off our October program at Frostwood Farms for the Lasagna Give Back & MPI Foundation Chairman's Challenge, and it ended up being one of my favorite parts of the week. The setting is beautiful, but more than that, the vibe was just easy and welcoming.

We all put on aprons, turned on some music, and started assembling trays of lasagna together. It was just people talking, laughing, and working side-by-side. It felt like exactly what our industry is about: community, connection, and rolling up your sleeves to make something happen.





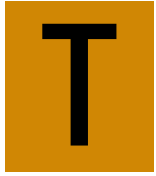
And knowing those meals are going directly to local food pantries made it feel meaningful in a really simple, real way. No big speeches, no overthinking, just... do something good together.

If your group is looking for an activity that brings people together in a way that feels genuine (and not forced), Frostwood Farms is a great option. I'd absolutely go back. ■



October Chapter Meeting at the **Marriott Madison West**

By: Jenna Schaefer



his month's meeting kicked off by enjoying the best that the Marriott Madison West had to offer over a delicious lunch and lively

networking with fellow planners and suppliers. The relaxed atmosphere set the tone for meaningful conversation and connection before diving into the day's educational program.

Brett Sterenson's session, *The Planner–Supplier Relationship*, explored the shared dynamics between event planners and suppliers, emphasizing that “we are all salespeople.” He described three levels of evolution for both roles, from basic transactional relationships to a mastery stage defined by empathy and strategic partnership. For planners, success comes from understanding not just the logistics but the *why* behind meetings, while top-tier suppliers move beyond selling to deeply understand their clients' goals and constraints.

Sterenson discussed the importance of effective communication, whether through email, phone, in-person meetings, or text, and how choosing the right medium can shape collaboration. He offered strategies for enhancing negotiation techniques, and reminding both sides they are selling something. The planners sell the value of the meeting, and the suppliers sell their venue and/or service. He also highlighted how both parties can increase mutual ROI, with suppliers offering multi-year discounts and broader support, and planners reciprocating through referrals and testimonials.

The session concluded with candid insights into common frustrations





and best practices for maintaining professionalism. Planners' top pet peeves included sloppy proposals, miscommunication, and sneaky fees. While suppliers cited ghosting, post-contract negotiation, and unrealistic deadlines. Sterenson encouraged proactive communication, flexibility, and transparency, especially around budgets and fees to build trust and long-term relationships. He closed by noting the evolving landscape of external influences, from rising labor costs to market unpredictability, underscoring the need for both planners and suppliers to adapt, collaborate, and continue elevating their partnerships in a changing events environment.



Our second session featured dynamic Nora Burns, who brought incredible energy and humor to her presentation, Using Speakers to Amplify Event Impact and Reduce Planner Workload. From the moment she took the stage, Nora had the audience fully engaged, connecting effortlessly with attendees



Continued from page 13

from every corner of the room through her interactive style and real-world insights. Her session focused on how planners can strategically partner with speakers to enhance event value while saving time and effort, offering tangible takeaways such as creating speaker promo videos, leveraging social media collaboration, and matching the right speakers to the right roles and audiences.

Nora shared practical strategies for maximizing speaker partnerships, including negotiating added-value opportunities during the contract phase, exploring off-season deals, and even partnering with other organizations to share fees. She emphasized the importance of communication, like hosting pre-event calls with speakers and even gave insider tips such as using eSpeakers.com for fee transparency. Throughout the session, her engaging delivery reinforced her message: when planners and speakers collaborate intentionally, both sides win and the audience experience soars.

As we wrapped up the event, we extended our sincere appreciation to our sponsors and the volunteer planning committees, the true champions who make these meetings possible month after month. Their continued support allows us to create valuable opportunities for planners and suppliers to network, share ideas, and collaborate with like-minded professionals across the industry. This session served as a fantastic finale to our in-person meetings for 2025, leaving attendees inspired and energized. We look forward to keeping the momentum going with our Virtual Happy Hour in early December and an exciting lineup of 2026 education sessions ahead. ■

Additional photos on page 20





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Restaurants with group spaces

Planner Spotlight: TAMARA P JESSWEIN, CMP

**Planner Profile:**

Tamara P Jesswein, CMP

Company you work for:

HID Global

What are your three favorite parts of being a planner?**What drew you to becoming a planner?**

Organizing, negotiating, and collaborating! These are my favorite things to do and all well served in the event industry. I was drawn to it in 2000 when my then career in software technology was changing drastically. It was a perfect fit for me and I have never looked back!

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

Always work to make it a win/win. If you press too hard, your service levels will suffer. Both sides must be happy with the contract/agreement in order to have a successful outcome.

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

My crazy work schedule along with our move to a very remote rural setting has taken my all-time favorite hobby of singing barbershop out of reach. That said, I love to read and make that a priority year-round as well as gardening when weather permits. Reaching my volunteer hands out into the local community as my work/life balance settles in is a work progress.

What would your walk-up song be?

This one was 'given' to me years ago during an MPI event and it has stuck with me. I find myself humming it to myself when I am striding toward a challenging day! *This Girl is on Fire* by Alicia Keys.



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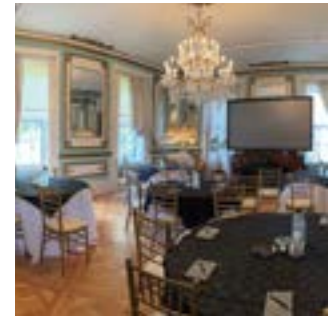
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Supplier Spotlight: TOM GRAYBILL

**Supplier Profile:**

Tom Graybill

Tri-Marq Communications, Inc.

What are three unique things that set your company apart?

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As show producers, we are not limited by miles, oceans, or country borders. We have directed events on six continents - coming for you Antarctica! - while always enjoying working in our backyard here in Wisconsin.

Dazzling audiences with unique experiences is one of the best parts of our jobs. Creating a hologram of Whitney Houston on stage? Incorporating a water wall into an annual meeting? Projecting a seamless 130 foot wide image that reviewers described as “3-D without the glasses?” Working with Hall of Fame rock stars as well as heads of state? Projection mapping indoors & outdoors? The list goes on and on. In our 37+ years of helping clients, these are just some of the ways we have turned conferences into memories.

Perhaps the biggest service we bring to our clients is trust. Those who work with Tri-Marq know we will take care of them and their audience. This is why the vast amount of our work is repeat business and referrals.

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

I have been blessed with a wonderful wife going on 34 years and two amazing daughters. I cherish family time and appreciate that my girls still like hanging out with their parents...occasionally.

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

My philosophy is simple. What is the best solution for the client. What delivers the most bang for the buck. How do we deliver an experience so the meeting planner doesn’t have to worry about the A/V and production. They have enough to worry about!

We need to perform every time for every client, no matter the size, venue, or presentation.

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

There are several advantages for planners to work with Tri-Marq. Because we are not an equipment company, we can work anywhere. And when we rent the gear we need, the cost is passed through to the client. We don’t make a dime on it. This approach allows us to select the right technology for the event, rather than being constrained to “what we have in the back.”

We collaborate extensively with our clients to ensure no surprises. This includes doing room layouts and working with venues to determine the best stage and room design, presented to clients before any setup begins.

Our almost four decades of experience means we have seen all that can go wrong - and right! - and can adapt to unforeseen circumstances. We bring ideas and concerns based on doing dozens of shows a year, sometimes five or more in the same week!

I play guitar - badly - and picked up target shooting as a hobby a few years back. There is something cathartic about blasting a clay target with a shotgun that can’t be described in words. I enjoy taking newbies out and introducing them to this fun sport.

For more than 14 years, I have been teaching students - both college and high school - and adults the fine art of networking. This skill is so crucial in our industry but is truly beneficial for anyone for the rest of their lives. It is an amazing experience for me to see a classroom grow in confidence from the lessons I share, with many people reaching back to me even years later on how it helped them in their careers and life.

What would your walk-up song be?

“Thunderstruck” - AC/DC. Thanks Ed!

Volunteer Spotlight: NATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

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



Celebrating National Volunteer Day — December 15

As we close out another incredible year, we want to take a moment to celebrate **National Volunteer Day** and thank every MPI Wisconsin volunteer who gave their time, energy, and heart in 2025. Whether you served on a committee, helped plan an event, donated an auction item, or simply showed up to lend a hand — you've made a difference.

Our chapter thrives because of members like you who make connections happen and keep our community strong.

If you've ever thought about getting more involved, there's no better time than now! Volunteering with MPI Wisconsin is a fun and rewarding way to grow your network, develop new skills, and shape the future of our industry.





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WHO'S IN THE NEWS

Compiled by Nickie Rouleau



After 34 years with Chula Vista Resort, **Renata Prellwitz, "CMP"** has taken on a new role as **Director of Sales at the all-new Dellshire Resort**, set to open in **Spring 2026** in Wisconsin Dells. The first phase of this highly anticipated property will feature 208 guest rooms and meeting space for up to 350 attendees. "I've always wanted to open a property from the ground up, and the Dellshire Resort has given me that fabulous opportunity," says Prellwitz. This upscale themed resort **greet guests with a 60-foot fire-breathing dragon and an immersive augmented reality experience**, bringing a new level of service, creativity, and charm to Wisconsin Dells.

NOTE

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





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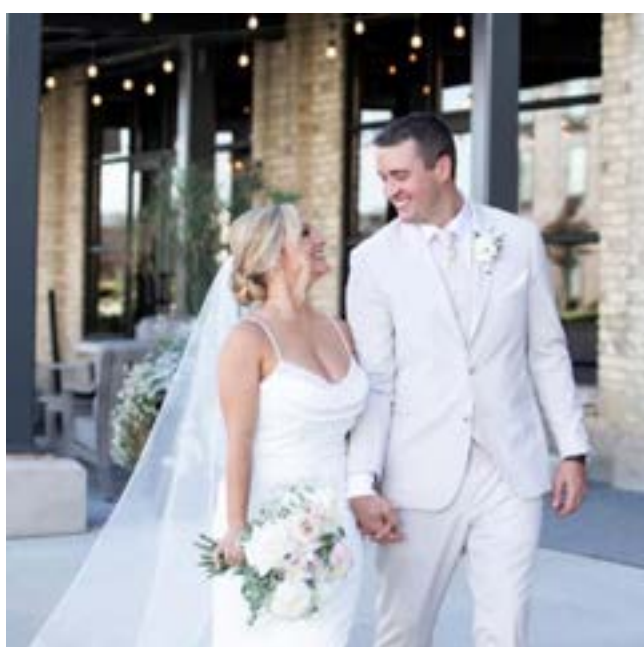
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We're celebrating some amazing recognition for Milwaukee! 🎉

Baird Center has won a 2025 Prime Site Award, and Visit Milwaukee has been honored as a Top Destination in Facilities & Destinations Magazine's 2025 Awards of Excellence!

These awards highlight the energy, collaboration, and creativity that make Milwaukee a world-class meetings destination.

Take a virtual tour of the Baird Center here <https://lnkd.in/gaPnGPhS>



Our own *Agenda* editor, **Tyler Priefer** is now **Tyler Lewis** – she was married on September 27, 2025 – ***Congratulations!***

Enhance your meeting planning career with the

MPI ACADEMY

With hundreds of hours of free education for MPI members, the MPI Academy is your one-stop shop for meeting planning and event industry skills training, CE credits and certificate courses. Featuring online and in-person classes and webinars, it's the perfect resource for the job you have - or the job you want.

CERTIFICATE COURSES: <https://www.mpi.org/education>



The image shows a graphic for the 2026 Event Schedule for the MPI Wisconsin Chapter. It features a blue background with white stars and a white border. On the left, the MPI logo (a globe) and the text 'MPI | WISCONSIN CHAPTER' are displayed vertically. The main content is a table with two columns: the date and the event details. The events are listed for January, February, April, May, August, September, and October.

2026 EVENT SCHEDULE	
January 1/22	Madison, WI Madison Concourse Hotel & Governor's Club
February 2/19	Milwaukee, WI Hilton Milwaukee Downtown
April 4/15-4/16	Lake Geneva, WI Spring Spectacular & Education Grand Geneva Resort
May 5/14	Wisconsin Dells, WI Wilderness - Glacier Canyon
August 8/20	Fond du Lac, WI Chapter Awards Gala Hotel Retlaw
September 9/24	La Crosse, WI La Crosse Center
October 10/22	Oshkosh, WI Oshkosh Marriott Waterfront