



# CONNECTS

The Quarterly Newsletter for the Sacramento/Sierra Nevada Chapter of Meeting Professionals International

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## President's Message

Wow! As my term comes to an end, I have realized that what began slowly and surely has now ended during a pandemic and our industry is being impacted in ways that we will continue to see in the months and years to come.

Right after our midterm Board Retreat, I had a feeling of exuberance; we had amazing items, visions and projects that came as a result from the time spent together at the retreat. Goals we set were coming to fruition, new items were added to our vision for the remaining months and our board was on track to continue to be an excellent chapter in the eyes of MPI global. Then, the pandemic hit. Changes to California's culture were evolving before our eyes, in many cases minute by minute. With the shelter in place orders finally instituted in California by mid-March, we knew we would need to make some serious changes and had very hard decisions to make as a chapter.

I want to acknowledge our AMAZING board this term. Once we all took the time to get our work and life adjustments to what our new normal was going to look like, we were all able to pivot (can I say this is probably one of my least favorite words now!) and focus on what our MPI chapter and community needed. While some members of the board were furloughed, teaching children from their kitchen tables at home and others completely laid off, all board members continued their commitment to see their obligation through to the end, and I say a big THANK YOU to everyone for helping keep this boat floating! I know it has been tough, but the commitment to our industry is evident!

Early on, the board knew we would have to cancel our last two events of my term, which also happened to be our largest events with the most income attached to them. While this came not only as a financial hit, it was more painful once the thought set in that we would not be able to see everyone IN PERSON until the stay at home orders were lifted/relaxed. Wow. For an industry who THRIVES on hugs, personal hellos, and drinks with friends....that was a hard pill to swallow.

Cancelling the events were the easy decisions. The more difficult thought was what do our members need from us now? With the information provided in the two town hall meetings that MPISSN offered in May, we have exciting things on the horizon! Given we are in a virtual scenario through the last half of the year, we are working quickly to produce options for you, our members. The first is offering virtual education through the summer months! Why wait until September when we are all wanting to learn as much as we can now about how to navigate through the future? And the second is the decision to work with the other chapters in the state to see how we can collaborate on these educational offerings, given we will all be looking at the same standards and changes. Everyone stay tuned!

One thing that remains on my mind is the loss our industry has felt. Please know, you and your wellbeing are foremost in our thoughts. Our industry has felt loss that has not been seen before even in some of the darkest hours as a country. We are a resilient bunch; we will make it through this and come out stronger than ever. My heart goes out to you that have lost your jobs, have faced a short-term furlough, or have a future with more questions than answers. Please know, we are all here for you in whatever capacity you need. I send my virtual hug to you all and thank you for allowing me the honor to lead this spectacular group through this year. While the word COVID may always be a part of my term, the pride I have for the things we have done and the people who persevered, will always outshine the virus. I look forward to many more great years with MPI and even better yet.... getting hugs and drinks in person again!



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## Welcome to our 2020-2021 Board

Kelly Rocha, President

Sulema Peterson, President Elect

Rachel Hickerson, Immediate Past President

Lauren Siring, VP Membership

Christine Feenstra, VP Education & Events

Amy Orr, VP Communications

Lindsay Poss, VP Finance

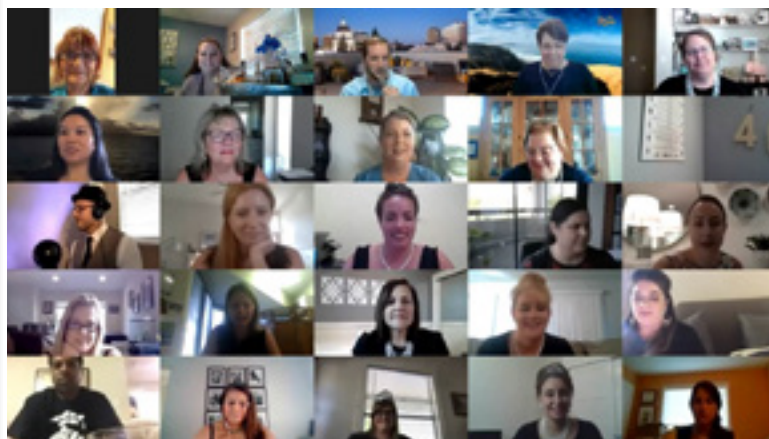
Alisha Scully, Director Recruitment & Retention

Skye Barnes, Director of Public Relations & Communications

Jessica Counts, Director of Strategic Alliance

Dee Strowbridge, Director of Special Events

Melissa Drake, Director of Education



*By Jeff Dougherty*

As a Past President of this Chapter, I think back to the night that the Board of Directors and I were sworn in at Memorial Auditorium. It was the chapter's 30th Anniversary and the Annual Gala Chair, Paula Currie (our 2020-2021 VP of Communications) and her committee put a lot of work into every detail making it a special night. The incoming Board took the stage in front of 200 people and were sworn in by Brad Shanklin from MPI Global and MPISSN Charter President, Marilyn Hauck. It was a night we will never forget.

Fast Forward to just a few weeks ago..... Soon to be President, Kelly Rocha and her team of leaders were supposed to have their special night. When Covid-19 took center stage back in March, our current leadership team held several emergency meetings to make difficult planning decisions that would ensure the financial health of the organization and safety of our members. As we turned toward virtual events, although not in its traditional format, we were hopeful that we would be able to hold the Annual Gala in person. As the months passed, like many of you have had to do in your own organizations, the committee had to quickly pivot to a virtual event.

We heard an outgoing message from President Rachel Hickerson, presented Karina Barney with the President's Award, celebrated our members who had milestone anniversary's, networked with peers in breakout rooms, awarded a special mystery box raffle item but most importantly, we swore in the new board and heard from our new President, Kelly.

I believe the planning committee did a great job on trying to incorporate the key components of our typical annual event. However, I am sad for Kelly and the rest of the incoming Board of Directors. What was supposed to be a special in person event had to be done virtually. I hope that our entire chapter can rally around this Board and show appreciation all year long. While they continue to lead this chapter through a virtual world (from board retreats to chapter meetings), they will not have the opportunity to bond the same way Boards have in the past. They have to tough year ahead of them but I think they will do an amazing job. There is a lot of new creative talent on that team! Let's all stay positive and tell them thank you every chance we get.

Cheers to our 2020-2021 MPISSN Board of Directors



**Together we can do  
Great Things**

## Board Retreat Wrap-Up

*By Kelly Rocha*

Together we can do Great Things! Wow, what an interesting time to connect! Your incoming MPISSN Board of Directors for the 2020/2021 term Annual Board Retreat was held in a very new atmosphere. We met last month virtually over the course of 2 days. We discussed business plans, budgets and the 18-month calendar and finished the day with a virtual happy hour. While this is uncharted water we are entering, this tribe of extremely talented industry professionals connected, collaborated, and created a blueprint for what is sure to be an amazing year to come. I cannot wait for all of you to share in our 2020-2021 vision.

# A Recap of MPI's Virtual Broadcast Featuring Education And Industry Panels

**DALLAS, April 16, 2020** — The economic value of meetings became the rallying cry during 'Global Meetings Industry Day (GMID): Virtual' as [Meeting Professionals International \(MPI\)](#), the largest meeting and event industry association worldwide, celebrated online with several partner industry associations, corporations and leaders on April 14, 2020.

Nearly 11,000 industry professionals joined the event, collectively making it the largest virtual event to date for MPI's global community. Previous MPI GMID celebrations allowed participants to virtually visit destinations around the globe and enjoy specific regional face to face celebrations complemented with online educational sessions, all complimentary.

With the backdrop of the global novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, this year's GMID: Virtual event was particularly important to a community facing business closures, layoffs and furloughs. For 12 hours, MPI offered an online GMID event connecting members and non-members with personal and professional education, robust panel discussion, conversations on recovery and meeting together again and moments of laughter; all while being delivered across the globe simultaneously translated into local languages.

Rallying with one another, attendees were able to observe and share content that was actionable, meaningful and inspirational. Throughout the day-long gathering, many conversed through the virtual chatroom allowing for idea-sharing and personal support.

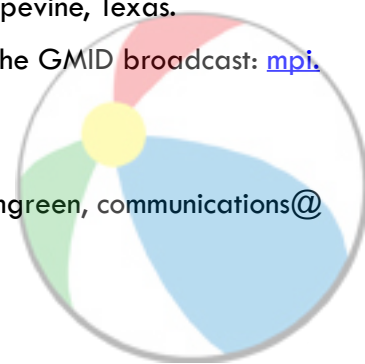
"The ability to connect in a meaningful way and generate professional opportunities is critical to leading our economic recovery, perhaps now more than ever", said Paul Van Deventer, President and CEO of MPI. "This was among the most powerful experiences we have ever delivered to our industry. It was truly awe-inspiring and very emotional to see the overflow of passion verbalized via chat dialogue from our amazing community of professionals."

Following are key stats from MPI's 2020 Global Meeting Industry Day: Virtual:

- **There was a 30-fold increase in registrations compared to last year's event.** A total of 15,084 meeting and event professionals registered, of which 3,197 registered day-of and 10,983 attended the virtual event.
- **Engagement** from attendees was strong. Cumulatively, attendees consumed 51,071 hours of programming with an average time of consumption standing at 4.5 hours. Throughout the broadcast, there were 12,134 chat entries between the attendees.
- In total, MPI delivered **18 education sessions** with many focusing on topics relevant to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and including crisis communications, business agility, virtual event planning, sustainability and more, providing eligibility for attendees to get up to 12 total certification hours.
- There was also a special '**State of the Industry**' leadership panel which provided timely updates and insights on how the industry can recover. The panel, moderated by Annette Gregg, Senior Vice President of Experience at MPI, featured: Roger Dow, President & CEO, US Travel Association; Steve O'Malley, Division President Maritz Travel, Board Chair, MPI; Paul Van Deventer, President & CEO, MPI; Susan Robertson, President & CEO, ASAE; Amy Calvert, CEO, Events Industry Council; and Jason Dunn, Group VP, Cincinnati USA Convention & Visitors Bureau, Chair, NCBMP.
- **The MPI Foundation**, the philanthropic arm of MPI, announced it released almost \$300,000 to assist members in distress continue their professional engagement as part of the day's outreach to the global community. To complement their ongoing subsidy, the foundation raised \$6,888 via online donations far surpassing its one-day goal of \$5,000. Funds raised will go towards ongoing educational scholarships and allow recipients to attend MPI's World Education Congress in Grapevine, Texas.

A link to the recording of the GMID broadcast: [mpi.org/gmid20](https://mpi.org/gmid20).

Media Contact: Drew Holmgren, [communications@mpi.org](mailto:communications@mpi.org)





# California State Update

By Lynn S. Mohrfeld, CAE and Jennifer Flohr, CMP

The current state of tourism and travel in California is cautiously optimistic for a gradual re-opening of the economy. Critical data used by the state and counties to determine which businesses may reopen is currently favorable and travel demand is increasing, if at very slow pace. Some of the largest barriers to recovery rest primarily upon maintaining low infection/mortality rates and reestablishing consumer confidence in sanitation practices.

## Watch the Numbers: Data is Key

The State of California is using data to inform its response to the coronavirus pandemic and determine how quickly the state reopens. Specifically, the state is tracking key criteria to ensure that infection rates and mortality rates do not increase exponentially or exceed hospitals' ability to treat new patients. Though the coronavirus remains widespread, key data measuring the severity of the disease, including mortality rates and infection rates, and the state's ability to respond shows that the rampant proliferation of the virus has been slowed and medical personnel are becoming more adept when identifying and treating infected patients. According to state data at the time of writing, there have been 113,006 people confirmed infected with coronavirus in California, but mortality rates are leveling off and, in many regions, dropping.

This is great news, both for our health and our industry, because this data demonstrates that California can continue opening up the economy and brings us one step closer to recovery.

## Transfer of Power: State to Local

Though Governor Newsom initially imposed statewide Stay at Home orders that applied evenly across every California municipality, local governments are now permitted to submit "Attestations" which, when approved by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), allow local

jurisdictions to open at a slightly faster rate than would otherwise be allowed under the state orders. As of the time of writing, 50 counties have submitted attestations and been approved by the CDPH to open certain sectors, including dine-in restaurants, retail stores, and schools, faster than the state.

## Phase 2.5: Making the Jump to 3.0

Several months ago, Governor Newsom unveiled a Re-Opening Roadmap with four stage denoting how California will lift its Stay at Home orders. Each individual stage determines what type of businesses will be permitted to operate and at what time. Last month, Governor Newsom amended the list of businesses permitted to operate during stage two, leading to an intermediary stage 2.5. Under the stage 2.5 amendments, hair salons, retail stores, and several other industries are permitted to operate in counties which have received approval for their re-opening attestations.

Businesses and hoteliers are now awaiting stage three, which is expected to be announced in the coming weeks and will permit tourism travel and hotel use across the state. However, group size will still be restricted until stage four, which could be weeks or months away.

## Travel Demand: Reestablishing Consumer Confidence

Travel in California is in an unprecedented position, but forecasts and data from other regions suggests that rebound in demand will be relatively swift. According to forecasting by CBRE, economic activity will begin to stabilize in Q3 and recovery will be underway in Q4. However, one of the largest barriers to recovery will be business traveler's and the public's desire to limit potential exposure to infectious disease. Industry groups, including the California Hotel & Lodging Association, are working to promote the sanitation standards in their respective industries and reestablish consumer confidence.

Over the past several weeks, the general public has demonstrated a strong demand for travel,

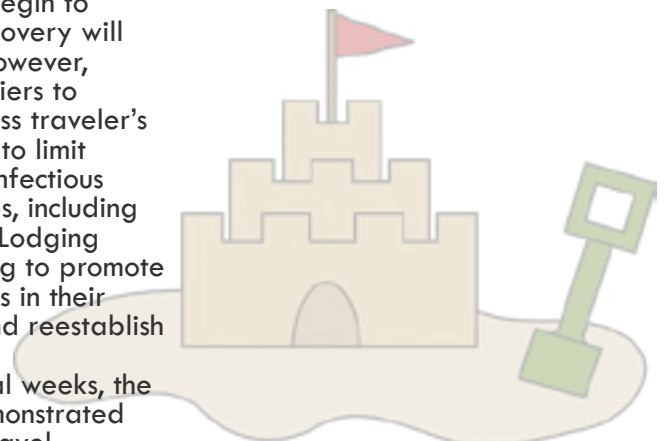
particularly following Stay at Home orders. Local health officials will be monitoring health data to determine what sectors can be re-opened safely and at what speed. Businesses are beginning to terminate telecommuting programs and bring employees back into the office, a crucial step towards permitting travel to events and conferences.


## Potential Issues: Opening Quickly, Opening Slowly

With local control comes local guidance. Though 50 counties have submitted attestations to reopen faster than under state orders, eight municipalities, located primarily in the Bay Area, have not yet submitted attestations. Some counties, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, have reopening plans that are far slower than the statewide orders. Unfortunately, these latent reopening plans will continue to impact tourist and business travel.

On the other end of the spectrum, some counties which were quick to reopen, such as Sonoma and Lassen, are re-imposing restrictions following spikes in transmission rates. These counties highlight the difficulties of balancing infection rates with business operations that will likely continue to challenge counties in the coming months.

Despite the challenges facing Californians and our businesses, there is significant good news as businesses are reopening, infections are generally decreasing, and people are adapting.



A photograph of a baby sitting on a grassy lawn, seen from behind. The baby is wearing a diaper and dark socks. To the left of the baby is a large, brown, shaggy teddy bear. Overlaid on the teddy bear is the text "Providing Homeless Babies with Diapers" in white, sans-serif font.

# Providing Homeless Babies with Diapers

## Message from Assistance League of Sacramento

Recent months have challenged us in ways that we never could have imagined.

Assistance League of Sacramento was well on its way to fulfilling our mission and meeting this year's philanthropic program goals. But our world changed on March 13, when the devastating effect of the COVID-19 virus halted much of our community outreach and temporarily closed our resale shop, Fabulous Finds on Fulton.

School-based programs ceased operating until fall. But the good news is that much of our outreach takes place at the beginning of a school year. 4,500 children in Title-1 schools received much needed clothing for school. We also put 6,800 pleasure reading books in the hands of children, many never having owned their own book.

Services to foster youth and homeless individuals are our most critically affected programs, as these needs are ever present. By March, we had served 2,853

homeless individuals and over 1,100 foster youth and sex-trafficked victims. That's a lot to be proud of!

Another bright spot in this story is that in May, we honored our scholarship commitment to 23 deserving community college students. Fourteen first-time scholarship winners, four repeat scholarship winners, and five foster youth scholarship winners received scholarships totaling \$52,000.

During this pandemic, we continue services to Maryhouse. Each month we provide diapers for the homeless babies and toddlers that visit each day. Over 80 babies each month are kept clean and dry through our support.

Plans are underway to re-open our resale shop, Fabulous Finds on Fulton on June 18, 2020. and hope to begin taking donations on June 22, 2020. We eagerly look forward to the day that we resume serving our community through our philanthropic programs. The support and recognition from MPISSN are critical to helping fulfill our mission and keeping our spirits high.

Keep well and safe,

Assistance League of Sacramento





## Town Hall

*By Rachel Hickerson*

Thank you to all that participated in our very first ever town hall meetings in May. The town halls were separated so that Planners and Suppliers could speak amongst their peers and brainstorm with our leaders on what was most important and needed to each of them in their different roles. Each session was excellent and informative, and it was discovered that in most cases both demographics had a lot of the same wants and needs as it relates to our chapter education. The following thoughts for future education were identified:

- The Future of Contracts / New Clauses
- BEOs / New Social Distancing Standards / Hygiene requirements
- Hybrid Meetings / Technology
- Career Training/Crash Course for a Post COVID career change or reentry
- “Streaming for Now”- Pivoting from Virtual to in-person meetings and knowing when the time is right
- Budget Friendly education and meetings

Included in both sessions was a desire for MPISSN to look into collaborating with other chapters on statewide initiatives and education.

You spoke and we listened! Currently, MPISSN is working with the chapter leaders from Northern California, Southern California, Orange County and San Diego on potential joint virtual events and hoping to roll out education through the summer months as directed by our participants.

Thank you again for all of you who participated in these town hall meetings. Our hope is to continue to hold town halls throughout the years in an effort to meet the needs of our members, especially as we navigate through these waters.

## President's Award

*By Rachel Hickerson*

Each year, the outgoing President has the chance to recognize a member of MPISSN that has impacted their presidency and shows the spirit of being involved in the organization. This year's recipient is an example of this through and through. Thank you to Karina Barney (pictured far right) with Marriott for being a source of strength and leadership this year. While her title was Director of Special Events, she was a valuable member of the Education team, jumping in and helping wherever she was needed. Even when she was home schooling two children, facing her own furlough and navigating the impact of shelter in place, she kept her level of activity high and continued to contribute to anything that was thrown at her, often with a very quick turnaround! I have appreciated having her as a part of the MPISSN Board and am grateful for all that she gave to MPI SSN in this term, making our organization stronger under her leadership.





# When Is California Reopening Meetings And Events?

*By Jeff Dougherty*

Well, your guess is as good as mine. Unfortunately, I do not have a crystal ball. Covid-19 has taken a toll on the meetings and events industry. So many of our Supplier members have been let go or furloughed with no end date in sight. Our Planners are being

asked to pivot their focus to virtual events and become experts in this overnight. While we all may not want to sit through another Zoom call, it might be a long while before meetings go back to "normal". Instead of waiting for things to return to the way they were pre-COVID, it is important for us to be working together to find solutions that fit where we are today. We can all stay informed by listening to our public health officials, reading articles and learning best practices from others. A lot of additional time and planning will have to go into events.... even smaller and shorter meetings. What is normally a small turnkey event will take weeks of planning to accommodate for social distancing (both during the event and during breaks), food and beverage service, flow and additional safety practices.

For California to reopen meetings, hotels and convention centers will have to have robust safety protocol plans in place. These protocols are to protect the health of workers, residents and their customers and to prevent a resurgence of infections. Meetings and events are currently in phase Four of reopening, along with mass public gatherings (i.e. festivals). The California Travel Association and most of the state's larger convention centers, visitor bureaus, tradeshow decorators and related unions formed the California Convention Center Coalition, collaborated on a 22 page white paper, [Safe Reopening Plan Minimum Standards](#), to educate public officials about the ways in which meetings could safely return to California. The paper was sent to Governor Gavin Newsom's office in mid-June. Some of the topics covered in this paper relate to social distancing, flow and the commitment of most of our California convention centers to pursue the [Global Biorisk Advisory Council \(GBAC\)](#) Star Accreditation.

Visit Sacramento is also working to educate our public health officials about the ways in which meetings can be held safely and in accordance with the highest standards. In order to look ahead and preserve a tourism and events future that is safe and successful, our organization has formed the Sacramento Events Coalition. This coalition is made up of the region's key event venues, business leaders, elected officials, and event professionals. We are in consistent communication with City and County leaders, along with coalition members, to continue to move these important conversations forward.

Mike Testa, President and CEO of Visit Sacramento says, "While much of the path forward will be dictated by County Health Officials, we believe that it is important to create a plan that helps to lead the recovery and that we be ready to implement that plan when the time comes. Together, we can create a cohesive event strategy and package that positions Sacramento as a welcoming, standout, and attractive destination amongst other West Coast destinations."

California's meetings and events business is vital for our economy, and in creating jobs. Meetings and events provide \$4.6 billion in economic impact and more than 270,000 jobs to its communities statewide. Now, more than ever, it is important for both planners and Destination Marketing Organizations to keep the lines of communication open between each other. Please feel free to reach out to me or any other destination on updates on meetings and events in their city.



# A Year Full Of Memories...



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**Questions?** Call Sulema H. Peterson at (916) 316-7632 or Christina Bauders at (916) 441-3039

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