



SACRAMENTO/  
SIERRA NEVADA  
CHAPTER

# CONNECTS

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

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## President's Message

I am deeply honored to be the President of the MPI Sacramento Sierra Nevada Chapter, and I am grateful that we have such a wonderful community to help carry our Chapter and peers through these trying times. We have all been impacted by the events of this year in one way or another, yet our industry has pulled together, and I believe we have become closer than before.

As our meetings, events, and lives shift in response to COVID-19 so must MPISSN's approach to delivering our members what they need. We recognize that connecting, networking, and education are critical at this time. We will continue to deliver education virtually, hold Coffee, Cocktails and Content sessions, host book clubs, and be a resource to our members. Myself and the Board of Directors are here for you, so please reach out if you have any requests, suggestions, or input on how MPISSN can help you.

For the remainder of board term, we will continue to focus on giving you the tools you need. Please know that along with your local chapter, MPI Global is also there for you. They offer education, financial assistance to membership and online learning, career help, and resources for mental and physical wellbeing. Together we will grow, and face these new challenges together as an MPI family.

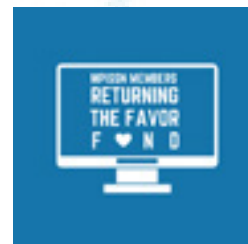
- Kelly Rocha

## Returning the Favor Fund

The hospitality industry has taken some of the hardest hits in 2020. So this year, the MPISSN Board is pleased to introduce the "MPISSN Returning the Favor Fund." This scholarship program pays for fellow MPISSN members to attend our chapter educational and social events. We feel that this fills a current need, and it fits the theme of the year "Together, we can do great things." Whether you're a hotelier who is furloughed, a supplier who has seen income dry up and events cancel, or a planner whose training budget has been slashed, we invite you to not be shy in reaching out to request a scholarship.

Scholarships will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis, prioritizing those who haven't been awarded one before. If there are additional funds at the end of the year, MPISSN will assess if the need is still present and roll the scholarship funds over, or award a scholarship for an MPI Global program. (Current MPI membership is required).

**Request a Scholarship** by emailing [exec@mpissn.org](mailto:exec@mpissn.org) (please list specific event you're interested in attending. Funds are primarily for MPISSN Chapter Events, but may be applied to events like the Golden State Collaborative on a case by case basis.)



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digital events. The day concluded with local chapter happy hour meet-ups.



# The Golden State Collaborative

## A statewide effort involving all five chapters in California

As this audience of meeting professionals knows – launching a new event takes vision, strategy and leadership....and sometimes more than a year or two to pull off. Well, in the case of California meeting professionals – a new idea went from concept to launch in just seven months. This event brought five MPI chapters together to produce a virtual event for more than 320 industry professionals from across the state.

The planning effort was spearheaded by our very own Rachel Hickerson, MPISSN Past President.

She shared, “This event was sparked from a discussion during a virtual chapter meet-up during the early stages of the pandemic. We listened to our membership and from there a collaborative was formed across California to plan this statewide event focused on the recovery of meetings in California and beyond.” She makes it sound easy, but it truly was a herculean effort involving countless hours, meetings and more than 20 volunteers from all five chapters across California to pull off.

The event was titled, The MPI Golden State Collaborative – Moving Events Forward and was held October 8. An opening panel of DMO CEOs from San Diego, Anaheim, Los Angeles, and San Francisco talked frankly about the challenges and opportunities they’ve faced this year along with their re-opening strategies. The panel discussion was led by the CEO of Destinations International, Don Welsh. Breakout sessions followed on the topics of contracts, food and beverage, diversity/inclusion, professional development and

What participants liked about the event:

- Breakouts were repeated so participants could attend two of the five options during the event (and view the others afterward through the recordings)
- Collaborative connection with other industry professionals from across the state
- A moderator who kept the conversation flowing
- An event emcee to kick off the event and provide a flow in between sessions
- The Swapcard platform
- Length of the program (11 am – 3 pm)
- High level execs from DMOs speaking directly to the audience
- Interesting breakout topics
- Reasonable pricing
- Live presentations
- Event photo booth

The professionalism and collegial support felt amongst the planning team along with the request for more statewide programming was enough motivation for the group to discuss a potential annual event for the California chapters. Stay tuned for more!





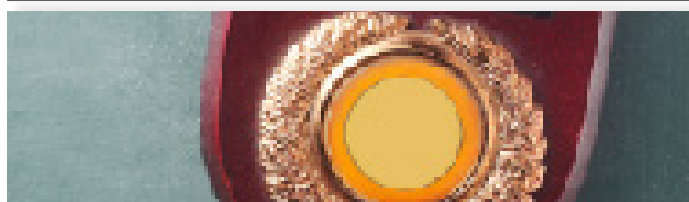


## Chapter Leader of the Year Felicia Price, CMP

Felicia Price, CMP joined Advocacy & Management Group, an association management firm in Sacramento, as a Meeting and Event Manager in January of 2018. She manages a wide range of conferences and events for multiple clients, including speaker management, comprehensive event logistics, exhibits management, Continuing Medical Education (CME) accreditation and compliance, and committee and board support. Before joining AMG, Felicia worked for LeadingAge California as Director of Meetings and Events from 2004-2018 and the California Physical Therapy Association from 1991 – 2004. Felicia has been an active member of Meeting Professionals International Sacramento/Sierra Nevada Chapter for almost 25 years, serving on various committees and Board positions, including serving as President in 2016-2017. She has in-depth knowledge of the history of the organization and helped with understanding where we are as a chapter based on experience of where we currently were. She is always willing to help out in providing support to the chapter, and mentoring others. We are proud to celebrate Felicia as our Chapter Leader of the Year!

## Rene McDonald Rising Star of the Year Award Marques Davison

Marques Davison is in his 5th year with MPISSN, representing the Capitol Event Center at The MAY building in downtown Sacramento. He has over 15 years' experience as an event coordinator and AV technician throughout the region. From the Commissioner of Student Affairs at Sacramento City College to Co-Slammaster of the Sac Unified Poetry Slam, he is invested in producing high quality accessible events that reverberate international recognition. Typically you'll see Marques in a professional setting, yet outside of the 9-5 he is a husband, father, internationally ranked poet, youth mentor and front man of the anthem rock band Blaquelisted. Marques is our chapter's scholarship recipient to attend this year's WEC. His fellow MPISSN members share their appreciation for Marques' dedication as social media chair for multiple years and his many contributions to the communications team. Marques is always quick to respond and available to step up when needed.



## Longevity Pins

Longevity pins are awarded to recognize MPISSN members who have held membership for consecutive years in five-year increments.

Christina Hake, CMP, 5 Years  
Kelly Rocha, 5 Years  
Rachel Hickerson, CMP, 5 Years  
Timothy Pasisz, 5 Years  
David Stone, CMP, 15 Years  
Lynda Sagar, 15 Years  
Regina Sanchez, 20 Years  
Stephanie Pridmore, 20 years

# MPISSN Awards

## Chapter Leader of the Year

This award recognizes outstanding service to MPISSN by a Chapter leader (officer, board member or committee chair). MPI Sacramento/Sierra Nevada honors one individual each year as Chapter Leader of the Year. Chapter Leader of the Year Recipients:

1993 Grady O'Hara, CMP  
1994 Sharon Noss, CMP  
1995 Julie Bianucci, CMP  
1996 Cheryl Cox  
1997 Sharon Bock, CMP  
1998 Laurie Carney  
1999 Susan Crane  
2000 Wendy Chynoweth, CMP  
2001 Kimber Chavez, CMP  
2002 Laura Bohannon, CMP  
2003 Roberta Campbell  
2004 Susan Buntjer, CMP  
2005 MaryAnne Bobrow, CAE, CMP, CMM  
2006 Hillary Burton  
2007 Amy Orr, CMP  
2008 Litza Coughlin, MAS  
2009 Amanda Flangas  
2010 Theresa Stamey  
2011 Becky McGuire  
2012 Jennifer Flohr, CMP  
2013 Jeff Dougherty  
2014 Mary Cook, CMP  
2015 Lynda Sagar  
2016 Marcia Durst, CMP  
2017 Christina Hake, CMP  
2018 Teri Schrader, CMP  
2019 Amy Orr

## Rising Star

This award recognizes a member who has devoted significant time and effort to MPISSN, but has not yet attained "leadership" status. The nominee may not currently serve as an officer, board member

or committee chair. Rising Star Award Recipients:

1994 Ken Merchant, CMP  
1995 Ed Skapinok  
1996 Pam Grey, CMP  
1997 Peggy Brown  
1998 Margie Starr, CMP  
1999 Chad Ammon  
2001 Lisa Burge  
2003 Hillary Burton  
2004 Cindi Williams, CMP  
2005 Joy Florentino, CMP  
2006 Sara Maitri  
2007 Anita Shumaker, CMT  
2008 Teresa Fung  
2009 Robert Best  
2010 Kellie Schroeder, CMP, CAE  
2011 Denise Yee  
2012 Debra Kurtti/Laura Thomas  
2013 Jenn Wheaton, CMP  
2014 Michael Hutchings  
2015 Rich Heike, CMP, CGMP  
2016 Jessica Counts  
2017 Barbara Mattox  
2018 Sulema Peterson  
2019 Alisha Scully

## Crystal Platter

This award recognizes the venues that host education luncheon meetings and the annual event. This award was developed to call attention to their dedication and sponsorship. Attendees evaluate the venue and results are tabulated to determine the most outstanding in the area of facility, service, and food and beverage. Crystal Platter Award Recipients:

2001 Holiday Inn Northeast  
2002 Red Lion Sacramento Inn  
2003 Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova  
2004 Hyatt Regency Sacramento  
2005 Sheraton Grand Sacramento  
2006 Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova  
2007 Hyatt Regency Sacramento

2008 Delta King Hotel  
2009 Sheraton Grand Sacramento  
2010 Hyatt Regency Sacramento  
2011 Sheraton Grand Sacramento  
2012 Mulvaney's B&L  
2013 Sacramento Assoc. of Realtors' Mack  
Powell Event Center  
2014 Holiday Inn - Capitol Plaza  
2015 Arden Hills Country Club & Spa  
2016 The Falls Event Center, Elk Grove  
2017 The Falls Event Center, Elk Grove  
2018 McClellan Center  
2019 Westin Sacramento

## President's Award

This award is given by the President to a member who has provided exceptional support to the President in the execution of his/her duties. President's Award Recipients:

2006 MaryAnne Bobrow, CAE, CMP, CMM  
2007 Amanda Flangas  
2008 Cindy Miglino, CMP  
2009 Susan Crane  
2010 Diane Ramsdell  
2011 Robert Best  
2012 Lynette Magnino  
2013 Jeff Dougherty  
2014 Kellie Schroeder, CAE, CMP  
2015 Marcia Durst, CMP and Lu-Lu Ramos  
2016 Rachel Hickerson  
2017 Felicia Price, CMP  
2018 Lauren Siring, CMP

## Planner & Supplier of the Year

These awards recognize outstanding performance in the areas of commitment to MPI, service and achievement in the industry and community contributions. Planner of the Year Recipients:

1988 Kaye Griggs, CMP  
1989 William Sprague, CMP  
1990 Barbara Davis, CMP



1991 Rena McDonald, CMP  
1992 Becky Castillo, CMP  
1993 Larry Jacinth, CMP  
1994 Jan Stieger, CMP  
1995 Cynthia Wilcox, CMP  
1996 Sharon Bock, CMP  
1997 Julie Bianucci, CMP  
1998 Marie Coleman and Pam Grey, CMP  
1999 Ken Merchant, CMP  
2000 Marilyn Hauck, CMP  
2001 Carol Berry, CMP  
2002 Debbie Pate-Newberry, CMP  
2003 Laura Bohannon, CMP  
2004 Kimber Chavez, CMP  
2005 Carolyn Tienken, CMP  
2006 MaryAnne Bobrow, CAE, CMP, CMM  
2007 Susan Buntjer, CMP  
2008 Amy Orr, CMP  
2009 Roberta Campbell  
2010 Heather Tanfani, CMP

2011 Laura Deorio, CMP  
2012 Kellie A. Schroeder, CMP, CAE  
2013 Robin Rinehart, CTSM  
2014 Felicia Price, CMP  
2015 Jennifer Flohr, CMP, CAE  
2016 Deb Kurtti  
2017 Paula Currie, CMP  
2018 Cynthia DeOliver, CMP

**Supplier of the Year Recipients:**

1988 Carolyn Muller Brown  
1989 Cheryl Cox  
1990 David Stone, CMP  
1991 Gail Sutton  
1992 Tina Miranda  
1993 William McColgin, CHA, CMP  
1994 Susan Crane  
1995 Litza Coughlin, MAS  
1996 Patty Arteaga, CMP  
1997 Sheri Thomas  
1998 Shelly Nelson, CMP

1999 Dori Andreoni  
2000 Terri Schrader, CMP  
2001 Wendy Hand  
2002 Tracy Saunders, CMP  
2003 Janet Waldie, CMP  
2004 Kris Keesling-Long, CMP  
2005 Karen Leland-Dolce  
2006 Joy Florentino, CMP  
2007 Hillary Burton  
2008 Amanda Flangas  
2009 Margie Starr, CMP  
2010 Ed Mahoney  
2011 Lynda Sagar  
2012 Jennifer Mann  
2013 Paula Higgins  
2014 Robert Best  
2015 Kristine Van Winkle, CMP, CAE, CTE  
2016 Jeff Dougherty  
2017 Lauren Siring, CMP  
2018 Karalee Adams



## 2021-2022 Nominations & Elections

Serving on the board is extremely rewarding. The experience contributes to your personal and professional growth at the benefit of our chapter. Please consider joining the MPISSN leadership team! Prospective candidates are planner members or supplier members who are in good standing, active in and familiar with chapter functions and events, willing to fulfill the obligations of office, have

a history of involvement, accomplishment and dependable service and willing to contribute time, energy and creativity to the chapter. Call for Nominations Timeline:

Nominations are open currently

We will close them January 4th

Interviews will happen January 4th-22nd

Posted by January 25th

Approved by February 25th

Submitted by March 1

New Board begins July 1

If interested in getting involved in the future, we encourage you to reach out to our Current Board of Directors and to read the brief Board of Director Descriptions on our website.

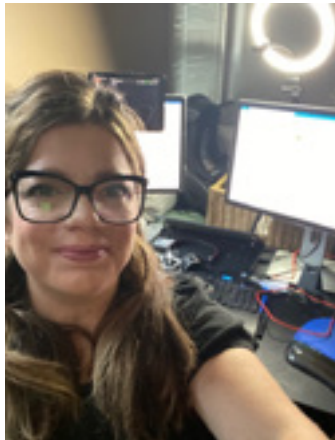
# 2020 had many challenges but we were still able to find the bright side



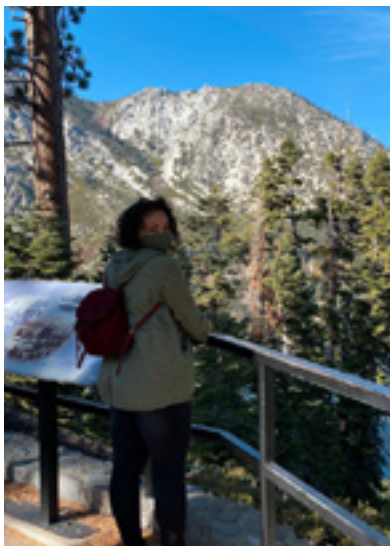
Amy Orr and her daughter have been having fun with technology.



Kelly Rocha recently took a trip up the coast to Ft. Bragg & Eureka.



Christine Feenstra has embraced her new virtual world.



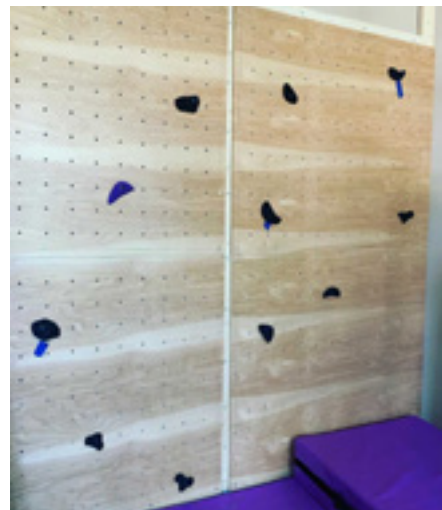
Jessica Counts said "With the impact of the pandemic, this year has reminded me to be thankful for the simple things life has to offer.

Despite the challenges in 2020 and limited outlets, enjoying the outdoors safely has been such a personal accomplishment for me. It's that break I've needed to help me reset and has really fulfilled my self-care needs. Adventuring outside to admire the scenery then coming home to cook up new recipes to add to my list of favorites has been calming. I've enjoyed making recipes from blueberry banana pancakes to buttered chicken. Share a recipe with me and let me know what you've been cooking up this year!"



Emilia Cowan shared "Since innoVia shifted to virtual events, through our platform Zenevent, I've worked hard to connect with new and existing clients to help them pivot to the digital space.

At the beginning of September, I was promoted to a Strategic Account Manager position, and I'm proud to continue the work that I'm doing during this time."



Emiliar Cowan also said "Personal accomplishment: Bouldering is one of my favorite hobbies and when Covid hit I wasn't able to visit my gym anymore.

So, I spent the summer building my own climbing wall. It was a challenging project that I roped my whole family into, and it's cool to be able to spend time building climbing routes in my own home. I still miss the gym and can't wait to go back when the time is right!"





Jennifer Flohr CAE, CMP and family went rafting down the Truckee River this summer.

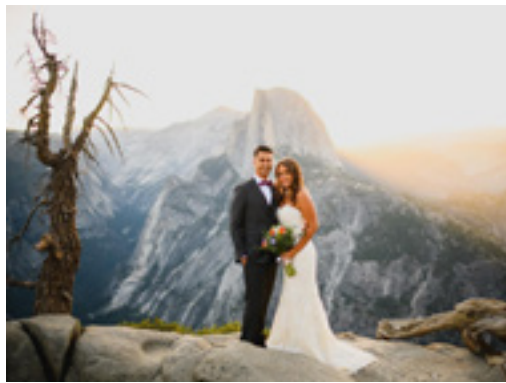


Jennifer Flohr CAE, CMP interviewed Yana Anwary, Director of Safety and Security of the San Francisco Marriott Marquis for her SAFE Conference which focuses on hotel safety and security, which of course, was virtual this year.



Jennifer Richards said "The pandemic has been devastating, both with the impacts to the health and wellness of our community, as well as the deep, deep financial challenges that have been faced. I am thankful for my good fortune to still be work through and to have the opportunity to support our hospitality industry. I have been challenged to think outside of the box in how we lean into that support, but I have really enjoyed tackling new projects, taking on new responsibilities, supporting our Staff and Partners in new ways. I am grateful to have built deeper connections, while working to support others through the difficulties that this year has brought upon us all.

The time working from home has also helped me focus in on the many gifts in my life. The additional time with my daughter has been something that I am forever grateful for. I am also thankful to have been able to stay safe so that I could still visit with my parents, without risking their health, because they are such an important part of our life. I have always had a passion for cooking and this time working from home and staying home has also brought more time to enjoy creating long time favorites, as well as new recipes - and expanding my love of baking (even though I do not eat carbs so all my creations are shared with others!). Beyond that, I am also proud to be adding to and maintaining my wellness goals."



Skye Barnes is now Skye Menezes. Her and her husband, Brandon, cancelled their large wedding, and got married in Yosemite July 25th with a few friends and family.



Melissa Drake and kids at the State Capitol standing up for who they love.



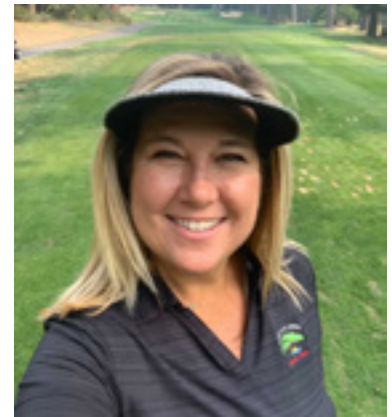
Marques Davison said his experience at MPI's World Education Conference 2020 was extremely inspiring. He was able to build bonds and relationships that will undoubtedly last a lifetime.



Yush Sztalkoper shared that "My greatest and proudest achievement this year, during a pandemic, while juggling working remotely, pivoting the team to virtual events, and caring for a 3.5 year old toddler at home...is most definitely growing my little human being. Our son was born in September and he brings much joy and happiness during a very challenging year! His big brother finally has a playmate!"



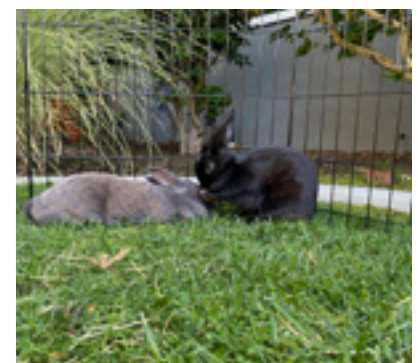
Lindsay Poss, CMP Held her first virtual Summits. Her and her team repurposed the content from their cancelled Annual Conference in April to 4 half day Summits in September.



Danelle has been having a good time teeing off!



Katy Contreras said "to add more crazy to our lives our family has recently recused these two bunnies. Their names are lucy and Kona and they bring us so much joy. We have been having lots of fun reading to them, upgrading their home, and watching them run around the yard.





# Check out the Podcast our very own Kelly Rocha was featured on!

Amy Vetter, a speaker at our recent educational session interviewed our President, Kelly Rocha on her podcast, Breaking Beliefs.

## Episode 51: Stay Positive: Keep Moving With Kelly Rocha

The current global pandemic has created a degree of chaos and unrest in many people's lives. The threat of the disease extends far beyond the contraction of an ailing body; it's been the cause of a lot of mental and emotional stress. In this episode, Amy Vetter interviews Kelly Rocha, the President of the Sacramento Chapter of Meeting Planners International (MPI). Kelly shares her vulnerable story of how COVID has impacted the meeting industry and the profession she loves so much and how, like many, she is doing her best to cope and stay positive.



*Is anyone else missing our MPISSN Events? Take a virtual tour through our photos courtesy of photography partner SPN Photography! Thank you Steve Pate-Newberry for your continued support of MPISSN!*

## MPI EVENT PHOTOS

[HTTPS://WWW.MPI.ORG/CHAPTERS/SACRAMENTO-SIERRA-NEVADA/PHOTOS\\_VIDEOS/PHOTOS](https://www.mpi.org/chapters/sacramento-sierra-nevada/photos_videos/photos)





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**Return this completed form to:** Christina Bauders, Executive Director, MPISSN  
1800 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95811 • Email: [exec@mpissn.org](mailto:exec@mpissn.org)  
**Questions?** Call Jessica Counts at (916) 554-2665 or Christina Bauders at (916) 441-3039

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