

THE MPISCC NEWSLETTER

Scoop.

APR '25



At a time when our industry is evolving faster than ever, “Tomorrow Starts Here” isn’t just a theme—it’s a call to action. It challenges us to move from passive observers to active architects of what comes next. As professionals who design experiences, build connections, and shape how people gather, we carry the responsibility—and the privilege—of influencing the future.

Tomorrow isn’t a date on the calendar. It’s every bold decision we make today. It’s how we respond to emerging technologies, shifting audience expectations, and the growing demand for meaning, purpose, and innovation in everything we do. It’s how we reimagine the familiar, take creative risks, and open space for new voices and new ways forward.

As we look ahead to [WE]Con 2025, the theme invites us not only to attend—but to arrive with intention. To show up curious, courageous, and ready to grow. It’s a chance to ask questions that don’t have easy answers, to reflect on how we lead, and to walk away not just with insights but with momentum, clarity, and a stronger sense of community.

And above all, it’s a reminder: we don’t have to wait for change. At MPISCC, we’re committed to **Making it Memorable. Shaping Tomorrow. Today.**

Let’s do just that—together.

Carlos Murillo, MPISCC President Elect, 2025

[WE]Con 2025
april 30 - may 2

TOMORROW STARTS HERE



INSIDE THE VISION AND VOICE OF [WE]CON 2025

We've reached a **tipping point**. The events industry—and the world around it—is evolving faster than ever. The way we gather, lead, collaborate, and grow is being **rewritten in real time**. And that's exactly why MPISCC's [WE]Con 2025 exists. Because while everyone else is racing to keep up, we're creating **something bigger**.

Something bold. Something honest. Something built for what's next.

This is not a conference about trends.

This is a **space for transformation**. For breakthrough conversations, radical clarity, and meaningful connection. A space for event professionals who are ready to **lead differently, think expansively, and show up more fully**—because that's what tomorrow demands. This year's theme, "Tomorrow Starts Here," is both a promise and a provocation.

It's about taking charge of what's next, not waiting for someone else to define it for you. It's about having the conversations that matter—today—so we're not caught off guard tomorrow.



WHY THIS EVENT IS DIFFERENT

The last few years have been... a lot. And many of us are still carrying the weight of uncertainty, reinvention, burnout, and blurred boundaries. What we don't need is more surface-level learning. What we do need? Space to pause, reflect, connect, and reimagine.

That's what [WE]Con 2025 delivers.



WHAT YOU'LL FIND

This is an experience designed to feed your brain and your spirit. Think:

- Interactive breakouts (no sit-and-scroll sessions here)
- Thought-provoking keynotes in a TED-style format
- Honest hallway conversations that spark big ideas
- New perspectives from people outside your usual circles
- A community that gets you—and gets you fired up again

We've built a program that's unapologetically human. Because you don't need to be perfect to make an impact—you just need to show up with intention.

YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH...

You'll walk away with:

- A deeper understanding of what's happening behind the curtain in hospitality and events
- Concrete tools for integrating AI and innovation without sacrificing authenticity
- Connection with people who are navigating the same real-world challenges you are
- A reignited sense of possibility—not just for your work, but for your growth as a human

Because tomorrow doesn't start when the next tech trend drops. It starts when you choose to lead differently. Think more expansively. And invest in what really matters.

ARE YOU READY FOR WHAT'S NEXT?

If you've been craving more depth, more connection, more fuel—this is where it starts. Not in six months. Not once things calm down. Now. **Because Tomorrow Starts Here.** And that future? It's being shaped by the people who are willing to stop doing things the way they've always been done. By people like you.

Come curious. Leave shifted.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Follow us for announcements, updates & reminders for our upcoming events!

SAVE THE DATE

[WE]Con 2025

april 30 - may 2

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN. TOMORROW STARTS HERE.

MPI | SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

Feel the Fun[draising]!

SLOOMOO

INSTITUTE

JULY 16, 2025

STRETCHING THE LIMITS OF IMPACT

MPI | SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

PROCEEDS BENEFIT SEARCH FOUNDATION
STAY TUNED FOR DETAILS!

RALLY YOUR EVENT

- ☐ SKILLSET
- ☐ COMMUNITY
- ☐ CAREER
- ☒ ALL OF THE ABOVE

MPI
WEC
st.louis

2025
JUNE 18-20

Insights that can transform your career.
Connections that can last a lifetime.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BRUNO DUARTE!



We're thrilled to celebrate Bruno Duarte, Special Events & Marketing Manager at Ralph Brennan's Jazz Kitchen, on being recognized as a Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) during Visit Anaheim's recent annual event!

Bruno's passion for hospitality, commitment to excellence, and deep knowledge of what makes Anaheim such a vibrant destination make him the perfect representative for this honor. As a CTA, Bruno joins a community of dedicated professionals who go above and beyond to ensure every visitor feels welcomed, informed, and inspired.

Way to go, Bruno — your enthusiasm and dedication make Anaheim shine even brighter!



BE AN MPI: MEETING PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER SERIES

Deanna Zercher: How One Member Turned Connection Into Career Growth



If you've ever wondered what it really means to **Be an MPI**, look no further than Deanna—an active member of our MPISCC Marketing Committee and a shining example of what's possible when you dive into the MPI community.

Deanna's journey began in the Bay Area, where her employer gifted her an MPI membership and encouraged her to attend events. That one gesture set the stage for a career filled with momentum, starting with her CMP certification—an early milestone that opened doors and built confidence. Over time, Deanna's involvement with MPI deepened. Through volunteer roles, she explored areas like marketing and communications, stretching her skill set beyond her day-to-day responsibilities and stepping fully into her leadership style.

One of her most memorable MPI experiences? Attending WEC in San Francisco, where she connected with professionals from around the world and earned a Meetings at Sea certificate—proving there's always something new to learn in this ever-evolving industry.



Outside of work, Deanna is a passionate traveler and sociology enthusiast who values social causes and new experiences. Her yearly resolution is to visit a new country or state, and her career anthem, Stronger by Kelly Clarkson, speaks to her resilience and drive.

Deanna is proof that MPI is more than an association—it's a *community* that helps you grow, stretch, connect, and lead. We're lucky to have her on our team—and even luckier to share her story.

your seat AT THE TABLE

B O D N O M I N A T I O N S O P E N I N G S O O N !



It's that time of year again—MPI Southern California Chapter is opening the window for Board of Directors nominations, and we're calling on bold thinkers, generous doers, and passionate leaders to raise their hands.

Serving on the Board isn't just about filling a seat. It's about **shaping the future of our chapter** and being at the center of the conversations that matter in our industry. Whether you're a seasoned member looking to give back or a rising professional ready to grow, **this is your moment.**

Board service is more than monthly meetings and strategic plans. It's where community and career collide. It's where relationships are built over real work—and real wins. It's the opportunity to contribute your ideas, challenge yourself, elevate others, and have a direct impact on the direction of one of the most active and visible chapters in MPI.

Not sure if you're "ready"? That's exactly why you should consider it. This is a space where growth happens. You'll be supported by a team of peers who believe in collaboration, mentorship, and rising together.



The window to nominate yourself or another leader is open now through May 30, 2025. **Don't wait—make your mark.**

Visit [\[insert nomination link\]](#) to learn more about open roles and how to nominate. **Because when you serve, you don't just show up. You shape what's next.**



THE RISE OF WELL-BEING: WHY MENTAL HEALTH MUST BE PART OF EVERY EVENT STRATEGY

A NEW ERA FOR EVENT PROFESSIONALS

The role of the event professional is evolving. According to IMEX Impact 2.0's Spring 2025 article, *The Power of Experience: Redesigning Events for Human Interaction*, we're moving from behind-the-scenes executors to intentional architects of healing and human connection. This shift is not only timely—it's essential.



DESIGNING WITH INTENTION

Mental health shouldn't be an afterthought. Whether it's reimagining networking, incorporating wellness zones, building in mindful breaks, or simply easing up on overwhelming agendas—small decisions can have a big impact. When we prioritize well-being, we not only improve the attendee experience but reinforce our industry's long-term sustainability.



LONELINESS: A PRESSING HEALTH THREAT

The IMEX report cites loneliness as one of today's most urgent health issues. And while events are built to bring people together, they can just as easily miss the mark without thoughtful design. As planners and producers, we have a unique ability to create spaces where people feel genuinely seen, supported, and connected.

THE CHALLENGE – AND THE OPPORTUNITY

As the article warns, "If our industry doesn't start to flex and respond to a series of growing challenges and pressures, then others will make those changes for us—be they governments, NGOs or citizens." The time to lead is now. If we want to future-proof our work and deepen its impact, we must center well-being in everything we do.

A CALL TO ACTION FOR PLANNERS

At MPISCC, we believe events are more than logistics—they're an opportunity to shape how people feel. As you design your next experience, consider how mental health and well-being can be integrated from the start. The future of events isn't just about what people do—it's about how they feel.

**READ THE FULL IMEX ARTICLE:
[THE POWER OF EXPERIENCE – IMEX EVENTS](#)**



COMMUNITY SERVICE IN A BOX: MAKING GIVING BACK THE EASIEST PART OF YOUR EVENT



Let's be real—everyone wants to do something meaningful at their event, but between sourcing supplies, coordinating logistics, and making sure it actually works, the idea often gets scrapped before it starts. Enter Community Service in a Box (CSIAB), a no-hassle way to bring CSR into events of any size, anywhere.

CSIAB makes giving back as easy as opening a box. Their all-in-one DIY kits provide everything needed to assemble and personalize goody bags for local heroes—think first responders, healthcare workers, educators, and more. With pre-packed supplies, heartfelt thank-you cards, and creative elements, these projects turn any meeting or corporate gathering into a purposeful experience that's both simple and deeply impactful. Whether you're looking to add a quick team-building moment to a leadership retreat or want to turn an all-company meeting into something more meaningful, CSIAB is a seamless, ready-to-go solution.

Gone are the days of complicated service projects that require months of planning. CSIAB empowers event organizers, HR teams, and businesses to make giving back a natural (and fun!) part of their culture. Participants get to engage in an easy, hands-on activity that fosters connection, boosts morale, and spreads gratitude. Plus, every completed kit counts—CSIAB tracks the impact, so companies can see the real-world difference their teams are making.

With over 2,150 boxes shipped and more than 7,200 heroes thanked, CSIAB is proving that corporate social responsibility doesn't have to be complicated. It just has to be done. So why overthink it? Just open the box, bring your team together, and make a real difference—no stress, no heavy lifting, just a whole lot of heart.

Contact <https://communityserviceinabox.org/> for more info.

Trend Alert

Sustainable Style: How Events Are Embracing Eco-Friendly Practices at Every Level

Sustainability isn't just a buzzword—it's becoming the standard for thoughtful event design. From décor to dining, here are some of the most impactful ways planners are going green without losing the wow factor.

Design That Makes a Difference

Forget throwaway décor. Today's events are leaning into living design—think potted herbs, succulents, and floral arrangements that guests can take home. Add in recycled signage, biodegradable fabrics, and compostable tableware, and you've got beauty with a purpose. Bonus points for minimalist, multi-use furniture that looks great and reduces waste.

Swag That Sticks (in a Good Way)

No more landfill-bound freebies! Reusable tote bags, plantable seed paper, bamboo utensils, and low-waste personal care items (hello, shampoo bars!) are taking over. These gifts are practical, purposeful, and continue the event's message long after guests leave.

Catering with a Conscience

Local. Seasonal. Plant-forward. That's the new catering checklist. Sustainable menus reduce environmental impact while keeping things fresh and delicious. Ditch single-use plastics and embrace compostable serviceware or beautiful reusable alternatives.

Mindful Movement

Transportation is a big opportunity to make a difference. Encourage carpooling, offer shuttles, or choose venues close to public transit. Some events even offset travel emissions or offer hybrid/virtual options to reduce unnecessary flights.

Smart Sourcing = Big Impact

From printers using soy-based ink to AV teams with energy-efficient tech, working with like-minded vendors ensures sustainability is baked into every layer of production.

Share the Why

Let attendees know how their presence is contributing to a greener future. Include sustainability dashboards, signage, or quick stats to highlight impact. Some events even offer sessions or digital tips on how to bring eco-friendly habits home.

The Bottom Line:

Going green doesn't mean sacrificing experience—it means enhancing it. When sustainability is thoughtfully woven into your event, attendees leave feeling inspired, engaged, and connected to something bigger.

*Deanna Zercher,
MPI SCC Volunteer, 2025*

for inspiration



**Retreat Venues &
Experiences
with a Twist:**

WANDERLUST

**Where to Escape
Beyond the Ordinary**



TREEBONES RESORT

TREEBONES RESORT - BIG SUR, CALIFORNIA

Imagine waking up to the sound of waves crashing below you while nestled inside a handcrafted wooden nest perched on a coastal bluff. At Treebones Resort, guests can choose between ocean-view yurts or their iconic human-sized bird's nests, woven from branches and suspended high above the rugged cliffs of Big Sur. By day, hike through towering redwoods or take a private sea-kayaking tour along the jagged coastline. By night, indulge in omakase sushi made from fish caught that morning, then fall asleep under a sky bursting with stars. This is off-the-grid luxury at its most magical.

DUNTON HOT SPRINGS - DOLORES, COLORADO

Once an abandoned 19th-century mining town, Dunton Hot Springs has been meticulously transformed into a high-end retreat where rustic history meets indulgent comfort. Guests stay in restored log cabins (some with original miner's scribbles still on the walls), dine in a saloon serving gourmet fare, and soak in natural geo-thermal hot springs. Spend the morning horseback riding through wildflower-dotted meadows, the afternoon exploring ancient Ancestral Puebloan ruins, and the evening sipping craft cocktails in the ghost town's dance hall. Every inch of this place tells a story.



DUNTON HOT SPRINGS

CAMP WANDAWEGA - ELKHORN, WISCONSIN

Step into a Wes Anderson film with a stay at Camp Wandawega, a "summer camp for grown-ups" that embraces nostalgia in its truest form. Originally a 1920s speakeasy and later a Prohibition-era bootlegging hideaway, this retreat has since evolved into a dreamy escape where guests stay in vintage Boy Scout tents, A-frame cabins, and lake-side bunks. Days are filled with archery, fishing, rowboats, arts-and-crafts (think: macramé and tie-dye), and bonfire storytelling. There's no WiFi—on purpose—so expect a full digital detox that forces you to embrace simpler joys, like writing letters on a vintage typewriter in the mess hall.



CAMP WANDAWEGA

THE LODGE ON LITTLE ST. SIMONS ISLAND - GEORGIA

A true hidden paradise, Little St. Simons Island is an 11,000-acre nature preserve accessible only by boat. Here, just 32 lucky guests at a time enjoy seven miles of pristine private beach, thick maritime forests, and a wildlife sanctuary teeming with rare birds and sea turtles. Each day is guided by a naturalist who leads intimate excursions: kayaking through salt marshes at sunrise, foraging for oysters with a marine biologist, or spotting dolphins from a skiff. At night, return to the lodge's historic cottages for communal seafood feasts and storytelling under Spanish moss-draped oaks.



THE LODGE ON LITTLE ST. SIMONS ISLAND

UNDER CANVAS - VARIOUS NATIONAL PARKS

Imagine waking up to the golden hues of a Grand Canyon sunrise, the towering peaks of Glacier National Park, or the mystical fog of the Great Smoky Mountains—all from the comfort of a safari-style tent. Under Canvas brings the spirit of African glamping to the great American wilderness, offering high-end tents with plush beds, wood-burning stoves, and en-suite bathrooms. The experience is fully immersive—think private guided hikes, astronomy nights with professional telescopes, and chef-prepared campfire meals. It's nature at its most luxurious, without losing the essence of the wild.



UNDER CANVAS

WINVIAN FARM - MORRIS, CONNECTICUT

No two stays at Winvian Farm are ever alike. This collection of 18 architect-designed cottages in the rolling Connecticut countryside offers guests the chance to sleep inside an authentic restored 1968 Sikorsky helicopter, a treehouse suspended 35 feet in the air, or even a library-themed cottage with walls lined floor-to-ceiling with books. The experience is equally eclectic, with farm-to-table feasts, hot air balloon rides, and immersive wine tastings in a 5,000-bottle wine cellar. Perfect for those who crave whimsy and high-end escapism in equal measure.



WINVIAN FARM

THE RANCH AT ROCK CREEK - PHILIPSBURG, MONTANA

For those who dream of the frontier but with five-star service, The Ranch at Rock Creek delivers an authentic cowboy experience in the heart of Montana's Big Sky Country. Guests can start their day with a sunrise horseback ride through rolling meadows, try their hand at fly-fishing on a world-class trout stream, and end with a fireside whiskey tasting inside a century-old barn. Accommodations range from luxury glamping cabins to a fully restored homestead lodge, where farm-to-table meals and frontier-style hospitality transport guests to a time when the West was still wild.

THE RANCH AT ROCK CREEK



THE GREENBRIER - WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, WEST VIRGINIA

Tucked into the rolling hills of Sulphur Springs, The Greenbrier is where Southern charm meets timeless elegance. Here, mornings begin with mist rising over manicured lawns as guests sip coffee on wide front porches, and days are spent indulging in age-old traditions—from mineral spring soaks that have drawn visitors for centuries to croquet on the lawn and afternoon tea in the grand lobby. Whether staying in a stately guest room or a private cottage nestled among the trees, each experience feels like stepping into a storybook.



THE GREENBRIER

BOULDER GARDENS - YUCCA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

For those craving something entirely off-grid, Boulder Gardens offers an ethereal desert retreat hidden in the canyons of Joshua Tree. Built over 30 years by self-sustaining artist Garth Bowles, this 640-acre property is an eco-wonderland of surreal rock formations, organic gardens, and small cave dwellings where visitors can meditate, stargaze, and reconnect with nature. Yoga sessions are held on boulders at sunrise, meals are cooked over open fires, and at night, the Milky Way stretches across the sky like a cosmic tapestry. There's no electricity, no distractions—just pure, untamed desert magic.

BOULDER GARDENS



Retreats no longer have to mean cookie-cutter wellness resorts or basic nature escapes. The new wave of retreat experiences blends adventure, artistry, history, and deep connection with the land. Whether it's embracing childhood nostalgia at a summer camp for adults, sleeping inside a helicopter, or soaking in a hot spring in a ghost town, these destinations prove that a retreat can be anything but ordinary.

Where will your next escape take you?

CELEBRATING MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Tammy Bucklin | 25 years
Sandra Lady | 25 years
Adam Rosenthal | 15 years
Lauren Sherman | 10 years
Amanda Ma | 5 years
Delaney Sargent | 5 years

and Celebrating 1 Year

Tina Adkins
Jessica Barganski
Toby Benson
Jace Cohen
Aleksa Draganic
Lisa-Marie Ebright
Eric Edmunds
Dave Green
Marco Guerra
Vonnie Havener
Nicole Hoyt
Deanna Jones

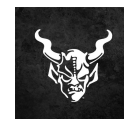
Amber Karson
Ryan Kugler
Ivan Lazarev
Margaux Macgregor
Katrice Offord
Roshni Patel
Jennifer Payne
Jesus Tamayo
Carol Waring
Amber Washington
Sydney Zimmerman

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Wayne Baruch
Jenni Benson
Melissa Camhi
Ileana de Cardenas
Grant Gordon
Debbie Holmes
Mark Kaussner
Laura Kent

Michelle Libert
Allison Moore
Katie Nottage
Robert Ramirez
Joseph Romo
Brandon Taba
Gabrielle Weiss
Julia Willmott

Thank You SPONSORS



BALANCING CREATIVING AND LOGISTICS: IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE?

Imagine a client wants a visually stunning, high-tech entrance experience that feels futuristic and immersive. The initial idea? A massive LED tunnel that guests walk through as they enter the venue. But – the venue doesn't have the power supply for that kind of installation nor does the budget support a build-out of that scale. Instead of scrapping the idea altogether, the creative and logistics teams work together to find an alternative. What if the experience could be created with projection mapping instead? What if strategic lighting, sound design, and mirrored panels could simulate the effect of walking into the future—without the prohibitive cost and power requirements? The end result might be even more impactful than the original idea.

This is where the best ideas come from—not from unlimited creative freedom, but from the challenge of working within constraints. Some of the most innovative events have been born out of limitations. Maybe the budget isn't there for an elaborate stage design, but what if the storytelling and content are so strong that the audience is fully engaged regardless? Maybe the venue doesn't allow for large-scale pyrotechnics, but what if the moment could be created through synchronized lighting and digital effects? When approached the right way, limitations don't kill creativity, but rather refine it.

Another key to balancing creativity and logistics is flexibility. No matter how well an event is planned, things will change. A vendor will drop out at the last minute. A shipment will be delayed. The client will suddenly decide they want something completely different two weeks before the event. The ability to adapt—and to do so creatively—is what separates good event pros from great ones. Rigidity is the enemy of both logistics and creativity. The best planners know how to pivot without panic, using creative problem-solving to turn challenges into opportunities.

And let's not forget the human element. One of the biggest roadblocks to harmony between creativity and logistics is the mindset that one side is "right" and the other is "wrong." The logistics team isn't there to crush dreams, and the creative team isn't there to make life difficult for operations.

The best teams foster a culture of collaboration, where both sides respect and value what the other brings to the table. When creatives understand the nuances of event execution, they become better at generating feasible ideas. When logistics professionals appreciate the power of creative storytelling, they become more invested in making those ideas happen.

At the end of the day, every event is a dance between vision and execution, dreaming and doing. And while the tension between creativity and logistics will never fully disappear, the best events happen when they work synergistically. Because the most unforgettable experiences aren't just imagined – they're delivered.

Laine Thelian, MPISCC Marketing Volunteer, 2025