



The first MICHELIN Guide Atlanta was revealed on October 24 at Rialto Center for the Arts. The MICHELIN Guide inspectors gave 10 restaurants the Bib Gourmand distinction, and the restaurants' chefs and others celebrated on stage.

New York Society of Association Executives Honors 2023 Synergy Award Winners

By Julia Stumbaugh

The New York Society of Association Executives (NYSAE) honored its 2023 Synergy Award winners with a breakfast and ceremony on October 24 at the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) headquarters in Manhattan.

Lou Coletti, who served as President and CEO of the Building Trades Employers' Association (BTEA) for 27 years and now works as President and CEO of his own consulting firm Lou Coletti Strategies, was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Coletti previously served multiple terms on the NYSAE Board of Directors.

"At the start of my career, I didn't even know what an association was," Coletti told *USAE*. "I found about NYSAE, began to come to some of the meetings, and I've learned from the members, learned from [interim NYSAE executive director] Holly [Koenig] and [former NYSAE president

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U.S. Travel Hosting Future of Travel Mobility in D.C.

By Todd McElwee

Spotlighting issues and policies shaping the future of travel and mobility in America, U.S. Travel Association will host the third annual Future of Travel Mobility conference at Washington, D.C.'s Union Station on November 15.

An eclectic lineup of travel, transportation and aviation leaders, and elected officials will pilot the day's agenda.

"The one-day event will explore topics such as electrification and infrastructure investments needed to meet demand for an energy-efficient future," U.S. Travel said. "In addition, thought leaders will address innovative technologies that are streamlining the way we travel, the cutting-edge modes of transportation that are revolutionizing urban mobility, and the technology solutions that are enabling a more

seamless and secure air travel experience."

The Future of Travel Mobility will explore how to meet strong travel demand, industry sustainability, new modes and capabilities defining travel in the future, and how to deliver efficient travel and robust security.

A partial list of confirmed speakers includes the following:

- Jill Blickstein, Vice President, Sus-
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Associations Urge Trade Talks at U.S.-E.U. Summit

Focus Instead on Gaza, Ukraine

By Julia Stumbaugh

Despite trade associations asking U.S. and European Union leaders to focus on tariff reductions during an October 20 meeting, leaders decided to extend trade talks as the summit focused instead on ongoing wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Retaliatory tariffs imposed by the E.U. on U.S. exports, made in response to U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum, were temporarily suspended in 2021 and are currently due to

renew and increase on January 1. Hundreds of trade organizations urged U.S. and E.U. leaders to change this deadline during the summit.

The Consumer Brands Association (CBA), which represents the American consumer packaged goods (CPG) industry, joined with FoodDrinkEurope, the industry association for European food and drink producers, in urging leaders to use the summit permanently end retaliatory tariffs.

A similar message was shared by a group of 85

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Bruce Gamble, Retired Hilton Sales Manager, Dies

By Jordan Bradley

Bruce Gamble, retired director of sales for Hilton Hotels, died after he was struck by a box truck in Laurel, Maryland, on October 13. He was 82.

At approximately 9:47 a.m. on the morning of October 13, Gamble was struck by a 2016 Ford Econoline box truck backing up in a private lot on Washington Boulevard in Laurel, according to a report from the Howard County Police Department. The driver of the box truck remained at the scene of the accident. Gamble was pro-

nounced dead at the scene.

A representative from HCPD told *USAE* the investigation was ongoing and the driver had not been charged in connection with the incident.

Throughout his more than 30 years in the hospitality industry, Gamble worked in senior roles at Hilton, including as director of sales and marketing at the San Francisco Hilton, the largest hotel in California at the time, and director of sales for national accounts in Washington, DC, before he retired from Hilton in 1995, according to his LinkedIn account.

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NEWS

Organic Trade Associations Seek Greater Input on USDA Rules

By Julia Stumbaugh

A bill written with input from organic produce trade associations and introduced to the House of Representatives on October 18 could increase associations' influence on U.S. regulation of organic produce.

The International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) called the Continuous Improvement in Organic Standards Act (CIAO) "a product of a coalition of industry partners" such as IFPA, the Organic Trade Association (OTA), Organic Produce Association and Organic Farmer's Association.

The CIAO would require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which regulates the organics industry through the National Organic Program (NOP), to ask for public and industry input on NOP every five years.

"The Organic sector has grown to

more than a \$67b U.S. market, with the USDA Organic seal serving as one of the most trusted consumer labels in the marketplace," said Rebeckah Adcock, Vice President of U.S. government relations, IFPA. "However, in order to maintain that growth, the standards must be able to be responsive to changes in scientific information, environmental and ecological data, and consumer demands."

Under the new legislation, the USDA would be required to review recommendations with guidance from the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), a federal advisory board. The NOSB is staffed by industry members including Brian Caldwell, founding member of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York; Tennessee Organic Growers Association board member Dr. Dilip Nandwani; and former OTA Farm Policy Director

Nate Lewis.

"The organic sector has to be able to keep improving and evolving to meet the future needs and desires of both producers and consumers, and this legislation goes far to enable that progress," said Tom Chapman, CEO, OTA. "We are grateful to work with partners like the International Fresh Produce Association to get that done."

The IFPA and OTA say they "worked closely" to ensure the CIAO was introduced on a bipartisan basis by Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA) and Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA).

The bill was also contributed to by the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, a coalition of more than 200 specialty food associations such as the National Watermelon Association, National Potato Council, National Onion Association, American Mushroom Institute, American Pistachio Growers and

Winegrape Growers of America.

Another backer is the National Organic Coalition, whose members include the Organic Seed Alliance and Marbledseed, which runs the country's largest organic farming conference, according to the nonprofit.

The CIAO is one of 15 bills supported by IFPA and the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance that have been introduced to Congress as part of a flurry of legislation designed to be made part of the 2023 Farm Bill, which will designate federal funding for the agriculture industry through 2028.

The 2018 Farm Bill expired on September 30, and funding for many USDA programs will lapse at the end of December, so the new omnibus agriculture legislation is expected to hit the House and Senate floors in November or December.

Air Travel Associations Applaud Confirmation of New FAA Administrator

By Julia Stumbaugh

Air travel industry associations such as the U.S. Travel Association, Airlines for America (A4A) and National Business Aviation Association (NBAA)

are applauding the Senate's unanimous confirmation of Michael Whitaker as Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator, which marked the installation of the agency's first permanent leader since March 2022.

Whitaker, a former United Airlines executive and former deputy FAA administrator from 2013–2016, was approved on October 24 for a five-year term with a unanimous 98-0 Senate vote.

"Establishing permanent leader-

ship at the FAA is a key step toward alleviating strain on the current system, meeting increasing air traveler demand and building an improved air travel experience for the future," said U.S. Travel CEO Geoff Freeman.

"Establishing permanent leadership at the FAA is a key step toward alleviating strain on the current system, meeting increasing air traveler demand and building an improved air travel experience for the future," said U.S. Travel CEO Geoff Freeman.

Ed Bolen, President and CEO, NBAA, said Whitaker's "expertise will help chart a clear path toward a successful future for the aviation community."

The A4A, which represents major airlines such as JetBlue Airways, Delta Air Lines, American Airlines and United, thanked the Senate for "prompt attention to this nomination." The Senate's approval took place less than two months after Whitaker's nomination on September 7.

"We look forward to working collaboratively with the administrator

to address the critical issues facing our National Airspace System, including air traffic control staffing shortages and NextGen modernization implementation," A4A President and CEO Nicholas E. Calio said. "We are confident Administrator Whitaker will tackle these challenges and others at the agency head-on."

During an October 4 confirmation hearing broadcasted on C-SPAN, Whitaker said he viewed his new administrator role "as chief recruitment officer, certainly for the FAA, but also for the industry."

The Helicopter Association International (HAI) noted that Whitaker's confirmation hearing was "swift and lacked controversy," which came as a relief for the air travel industry after early controversies delayed the installation of a new FAA leader.

President Joe Biden's initial nominee for the position, Denver International Airport CEO Phil Washington, withdrew from consideration in March after the Senate Commerce Committee delayed his confirmation vote due to controversy over his aviation experience. Washington had worked as an airport CEO for less than two years at the time of his nomination.

Whitaker will now take the helm of the FAA at a tumultuous time for the agency. A possible near-crash between Alaska Airlines and SkyWest planes in the airspace over Portland International Airport on October 16 has led to an FAA investigation, according to *The Oregonian*, and represented the latest in a series of



Michael Whitaker

high-profile close calls on aircraft collisions that have plagued FAA throughout the calendar year.

The FAA told employees in March that there was "no question that we are seeing too many close calls," per Reuters. The *New York Times* reported in August that near misses between airplanes happened "multiple times a week" throughout 2023, according to FAA data. After the *Times* report, the FAA announced runway safety meetings would be held at 90 airports through August and September.

Whitaker will take the helm amid demands for a permanent solution to these safety concerns. In his October 4 confirmation hearing, Whitaker called ending near misses a "critical" goal.

"We will not achieve this overnight, but it is urgent work that we must continue," Whitaker said.

Mobility in D.C.

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tainability, American Airlines

- Tom Anderson, COO, Urban Air Mobility, Archer Aviation
- Heather Wingate, Sr. Vice President, Government Affairs, Delta Air Lines
- Christopher Nassetta, President & CEO, Hilton
- Joanna Geraghty, President & COO, JetBlue Airways

- Justine Johnson, Chief Mobility Officer, Office of Future Mobility and Electrification, Michigan Economic Development Corporation

- The Hon. Holly Canevari, Deputy Administrator, Transportation Security Administration

- Dave Lorenz, Vice President, Travel Michigan
- Geoff Freeman, President & CEO, U.S. Travel Association
- Brian Yutko, CEO, Wisk Aero

Find more information at thefutureoftravelmobility.com.

HOTS

HOTS This Show's for the Dogs... Have you ever wanted to visit an art museum but didn't want your dog to feel left out? Residents of Mexico City no longer have to worry about this problem. The Museo Tamayo recently opened a modern art exhibition designed to be attended by both dogs and humans, Reuters reported. Although the dogs must be leashed, their furry minds are free to appreciate the exhibit. HOTS respects all the canine connoisseurs of modern art, but it can't help but feel they might appreciate the exhibit even more if Max Ernst had created surrealist art with bacon instead of paint.

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HOTS Centenarian Skydiving Record... A 104-year-old woman who recently went skydiving, potentially breaking the Guinness World Record for oldest person to jump out of a plane, passed peacefully in her sleep just a week after her daring jump. The woman, Dorothy Hoffner, jumped 13,500 feet from plane in Ottawa, Illinois, and made her first jump at 100 years old. Hoffner was living at the Brookdale Senior Living center when she passed, according to NPR. "We were thrilled to see her continue to live with passion and purpose, skydiving earlier this month at 104 and ultimately proving that age is just a number. She will be greatly missed by our entire community," said the Brookdale Senior Living. The Guinness World Records was working to confirm her new record when Hoffner passed. HOTS hopes Hoffner is posthumously awarded!



The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was the recipient of the inaugural Tourism Diversity Matters (TDM) Diversity & Inclusion Award. The Awards Dinner, sponsored by Meet Boston, took place on October 23 during TDM's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Conference, The Collective Experience, in Philadelphia. Shown here during a panel discussion (left to right): Geoff Freeman, President & CEO, U.S. Travel Association; Leon W. Russell, Board of Directors Chair, NAACP; and Martha Sheridan, President & CEO, Meet Boston.

AAHOA Supports Wyndham's Rejection of Choice Hotels Merger

By Jordan Bradley

Following revelations surrounding a potential merger of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts and Choice Hotels International, the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) has spoken out against the deal and has called for a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) investigation.

"This news of a potential merger has sent a shock wave of high concern and even fear through our AAHOA membership," said Laura Lee Blake, AAHOA President and CEO, on October 17.

"To have one franchisor, Choice Hotels, control so many economy and limited service hotels will give our members little opportunity to have a say in whether the franchise mandates and requirements are fair, and significantly limit their options to find a different brand under which they could successfully operate their hotels," said Bharat Patel, Chairman of AAHOA's board of directors.

Choice and Wyndham had been in talks regarding a buyout for several months, according to both companies, before negotiations deteriorated and Choice went public with their offer on October 16 in an attempt to bring Wyndham representatives back to the bargaining table. Wyndham's board voted unanimously to reject Choice's offer, releasing their own version of events to the public the following day.

AAHOA represents 20,000 owners and franchisees throughout the

United States, including more than 66% of both Choice- and Wyndham-branded hotels. A merger between the two hotel companies would be disruptive for owners and franchisees at best, AAHOA representatives said, and the resulting company would "dominate the economy/limited service segment."

NYSAE

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and CEO] Joel Dolci, so this is a very special recognition for me."

Jazmen Johnson, Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, ICSC, accepted the DEI Champion award. Johnson manages ICSC's Launch Academy, which provides summer internship opportunities for students from underrepresented groups.

"I want to stress that the future of all of our industries depend on this work," Johnson said. "So, if you have not done so already, I encourage each of you to support your association's DEI initiatives. Start having those challenging conversations, and let's move this work forward together."

Mary Jane Eimer, longtime Executive Director of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT), received the Chief Executive of the Year award. This is not Eimer's first time being honored by NYSAE, which named her the Outstanding Executive of the Year 21 years ago.

"Association management has been a wonderful profession," Eimer

Though Choice and Wyndham both cater to a variety of accommodations throughout the hotel industry, each of the companies have strong footholds in the economy and select-service segments. Because of that, the news was concerning enough to AAHOA representatives

Please turn to page 4

said. "How lucky was I that I found my profession my first job out of college?"

The Meetings Professional of the Year Award went to Jennifer Klein, Manager of Event Operations for the International Trademark Association (INTA). After beginning her work with the association in 2022, Klein managed INTA's 2023 annual meeting in May in Singapore.

"I had a full year to work and build relationships that are extraordinary," Klein told USAE. "I now have friends around the world."

Justin Smulison, Business Content Manager for RIMS, the risk management society, accepted the Excellence in MarCom award. Smulison hosts the RIMScast, a risk management-focused podcast with more than 250 episodes, which he called "my favorite thing that I've ever done."

Rising Star award honorees included Annie Farley, Assistant Vice President, Conferences and Events, Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA), and Scott Clifford, Program Manager, Events, Secured Finance Network. Farley and Clifford were not able to attend but accepted their awards in absentia.

NEWS

Kelli Donahoe Tapped as Sr. Vice President/COO of Music City Center

By Jonathan Trager

Kelli Donahoe, CMP, has been appointed Sr. Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the Music City Center (MCC) in Nashville, the organization announced on October 23.

Donahoe most recently served as general manager of the Dayton Convention Center in Dayton, Ohio. She takes over the MCC position from

Elisa Putman, who announced her retirement in April, after nearly 35 years with the old Nashville Convention Center and the current 2.1 million square-foot building.

In her new role, Donahoe will oversee the day-to-day operations of the facility. She'll also assist in the planning and implementation of all functions and resources of facility departments.

"I am excited to share my passion

of this industry with the team and put down roots in Nashville," Donahoe said. "I am honored to have the opportunity to continue the standard of service our team delivers to every guest walking through our doors."

A native of Tampa, Florida, Donahoe has more than 20 years of convention center sales and operations management experience with hospitality entities in Pittsburgh, Orlando, and San Jose.

"We're thrilled to have Kelli join the team," said Charles Starks, President & CEO of MCC. "Her perspective, experience, and drive will be a tremendous asset, not only for our team but also our guests, our community, and our future as Nashville's convention center."

Donahoe and Putman will work in tandem in the senior leadership role for an unspecified period of time to



Kelli Donahoe

ensure a smooth transition.

"I still love coming to work every day, and I'm excited for MCC's future as Kelli brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with fresh ideas and renewed energy to the team," said Putman.

Merger

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and members that the association is calling for an investigation "fully to protect competition in this segment of the industry," Blake said.

At press deadline, neither Choice nor Wyndham had responded to USAE request for comment on AAHOA's stance and call for an FTC investigation.

"We have seen in the past the major impact that mergers and acquisitions by the big hotel franchisor corporations can have on our members as the hotelier Franchisees. Indeed, our AAHOA members fear a significant further dilution of the brands, and fighting over the guest reservations on one reservation system," Blake added. "The changes can be highly disruptive to their business practices, and even cause a significant decrease in revenues overall."

Tim Boobar Named Chief Finance Officer at MPI

By Todd McElwee

Meetings industry veteran Tim Boobar has been hired by MPI as Chief Finance Officer (CFO), starting his new job on October 30.

Boobar arrives at MPI after having served as CFO for Marketplace Chaplains, a faith-based nonprofit operating a network of more than 2,000 individuals across North America.

"I am excited to join MPI and contribute to an organization that plays such a vital role in our industry," said Boobar. "MPI has a rich history of supporting meeting professionals, and I am eager to work with the team, and their exceptional Board Members to ensure the organization's financial strength and stability as we move forward."

In his new role, Boobar will oversee all financial aspects of MPI, including budgeting, financial planning and ensuring the organization's fiscal health. He'll assist in developing and executing financial strategies that support MPI's mission to connect and educate meeting and event professionals worldwide.

"We are thrilled to welcome Tim to the MPI family as our new Chief Financial Officer," said Paul Van Deventer, President & CEO, MPI. "His depth of experience has provided him with a strong understanding of the unique



Tim Boobar

financial challenges and opportunities that meeting and event professionals face. We believe his insights and strategic financial leadership will be invaluable as we continue to serve our members and navigate the evolving landscape of our industry."

Prior to Marketplace Chaplains, Boobar was CFO at Children's Advocacy Center of Collin County and before that held the same post at The Expo Group. He also spent 13 years at Freeman occupying a variety of finance-related posts, including senior vice president, and has worked in accounting.

Abandoned Louisiana Casino Approved for \$270 Million Transformation

By Jordan Bradley

The operating company looking to revive a defunct and abandoned casino in Bossier City, Louisiana, was granted the proper regulatory approvals to operate the forthcoming Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana by the Louisiana Gaming Control Board on October 19.

LRGC Gaming Investors is an affiliate of The Cordish Companies, the company that has been seeking to acquire and transform the abandoned Diamond Jacks Casino & Hotel property from a riverboat operation into a land-based casino. The transformation of the 26-acre property will cost Cordish \$270 million and will include an events and meetings center as well as several dining and entertainment venues when completed.

"We're grateful to the Louisiana Gaming Control Board for their approval and thank them for their consideration and enthusiastic support through this process," said Joe Weinberg, managing partner at The Cordish Companies.

Cordish has an established history of developing casino resorts throughout the United States, including several Hard Rock Hotel & Casinos and Live! Casino & Hotels in Florida, North Carolina and more

throughout the South Central and Southeast regions. The company purchased the Diamond Jacks property in April from Foundation Gaming.

"Cordish has an exceptional reputation in providing first rate casino experiences as well as hospitality and entertainment venues across the country. We are pleased with their decision to bring their Live! brand to the State of Louisiana," said Ronnie Johns, Chairman of the Louisiana Gaming Control Board. "We feel comfortable that their commitment to a first class \$270 million project will help grow the Bossier City/Shreveport gaming market."

Cordish's plans for the new Live! property include more than 47,000 square feet of gaming space; an upscale 550-room hotel with a resort pool and fitness center; 25,000 square feet of multi-purpose meeting and event space; a parking structure; multiple digital media experiences, including an LED media wall; and more than six new food and beverage offerings, including a Professional Bull Riding Cowboy Bar, a fine dining steakhouse.

"We are extremely excited to continue moving forward with this project and deliver a world-class destination to the region," said Weinberg.

NEWS

Hospitality Industry Begins Relief Efforts After Attacks on Gaza

By Jordan Bradley

Hotels in Israel have taken to sheltering evacuees from Israelis fleeing war in the Gaza Strip.

Atlas Hotels, a boutique hotel company based in Israel, is one of many hotels offering shelter. Since the outbreak of recent conflict on October 7, Atlas has been “inundated with numerous requests, both directly to us and through various organizations and private entities, to provide shelter for the evacuees,” said Yaron Lipman, Vice President of Headquarters and Strategy, in an email to *USAE*.

As of October 19, approximately 60,000 evacuees were residing in hotels throughout the country, Lipman said. Israel, however, has only 56,000 hotel rooms, and Atlas’ 16 hotels account for just 1,100 of those rooms. To date, Atlas has donated 100 rooms to evacuees free of charge. Other rooms are being provided to

evacuees through aid organizations who pay cost for the rooms.

“The situation is in constant flux, with unexpected developments at every turn,” Lipman said. “None of us were truly prepared for this scenario.”

Lipman said approximately 500 Atlas Hotel rooms are currently occupied by evacuees. The hotel brand has 11 hotels in Tel Aviv, three in Jerusalem and one in Eilat. Evacuees have been arriving at an Atlas Hotel daily after having been referred by an aid organization.

To accommodate the costs incurred by aiding evacuees, Lipman said, the hotels are running with approximately 60% of their staff, with the remaining at home on standby or caring for young children.

“We are witnessing an exceptional and heartwarming mobilization of restaurants, artists, musicians, event organizers, and the entire Israeli community,” Lipman said. “Amidst all

the sadness and sorrow, this is a truly inspiring aspect that fills us with pride and offers optimism and hope.”

Brown Hotels, an international hotel chain with hotels in Israel, Greece and Croatia, converted their conference hall at their Tel Aviv hotel into a donation, services and entertainment center for evacuees following the eruption of conflict.

“There will be times where the BOBO conference hall will continue hosting lavish events. But for now, we have converted the space to a donations center, and a place for our guests from the south of Israel to enjoy performances, have a quiet moment, maybe have a haircut or redo their nails, maybe have a laugh in this crazy, horrible time,” said Brown Hotels in a Facebook post.

The message was shared alongside a video full of evacuees and professionals offering entertainment, lessons and services in the Brown

Bobo Conference Hall. Beloved pets, hair stylists, a clothing drive, hula hoopers, nail technicians, acrobats, visual artists and more can be seen uplifting spirits and offering support in the video.

“Artists and professionals are coming to meet the guests and the children. People from all over the country are donating whatever they can to help the evacuees,” the hotel chain said. “Thank you to everyone who comes and gives, it warms our hearts.”

Though several airlines have halted flights to Israel, a Royal Caribbean International cruise ship shuttled Americans out of the conflict, according to a report in *USA TODAY*.

The cruise line’s Rhapsody of Seas ship—capable of holding up to 2,400 passengers, according to Royal Caribbean’s website—transported U.S. Nationals from Haifa, Israel, to Limassol, Cyprus.

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U.S.-E.U. Summit

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trade organizations such as the National Restaurant Association, National Retail Federation, American Apparel & Footwear Association and American Chemistry Council.

Another coalition of business organizations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, Computer & Communications Industry Association and ACT|The App Association urged Biden to use the summit as an opportunity to discuss other European policies limiting American businesses, including pending E.U. digital sovereignty laws and sustainability reporting regulations the organizations argued raise

costs for American companies.

Instead, U.S. President Joe Biden, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen focused mainly on discussing sustaining support of Ukraine and how to address the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, according to Reuters.

In a joint statement released by the White House, the leaders said they had “made substantial progress” on discussing the aluminum and steel issues and “look forward to continuing to make progress on these important objectives in the next two months.”

Those promises weren’t enough of a guarantee for trade associations worried about the industry impact of retaliatory tariffs set to increase in the

New Year.

Chris Swonger, CEO of Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, the trade association representing producers and marketers of spirits, said distillers “were holding out hope that this summit would result in an agreement that ensured the tariffs on American whiskey would not return in the new year.”

Since the suspension of the retaliatory tariffs, “whiskey exports to the E.U. have bounced back and surpassed pre-tariff levels,” Swonger wrote.

“The U.S. distilled spirits industry has worked hard to regain its footing in the E.U. market and a return of the tariffs would bring this positive momentum to a screeching halt,” Swonger said. “We urge the Biden

administration to continue to prioritize the permanent removal of these debilitating tariffs.”

The dispute between the U.S. and E.U. over tariffs stems back to 2018, when former president Donald Trump raised tariffs on steel and aluminum imported from Europe as a method to address what the Trump administration considered global overproduction of the products.

If these tariffs allowed to resume, the E.U.’s response will add billions of dollars in tariffs to U.S. exports including agricultural and textile products. It is likely business and trade organizations will continue lobbying American and European Union leaders for tariff relief as the December 31 deadline approaches.

— OBITUARY —

Bruce Gamble

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Gamble went on to establish a research and development company called Capital R&D, where he continued his passion for ideas, according to numerous friends and former colleagues.

David Giger, retired senior director of sales and industry relations for Hilton Worldwide, told *USAE* he had spent approximately 30 years working with Gamble, calling his passing is a “deep loss.”

“He cultivated many, many lines of business for Hilton World-

wide—and in the process made many friends,” Giger said.

He added: “There’s nobody I know of that could ever say anything bad about Bruce. He was just a kind man. He was calm and easy. And just very pleasant.”

Brian Stevens, Executive Chairman for ConferenceDirect, worked with Gamble at the San Francisco Hilton in the early years of Stevens’ career. Stevens said Gamble “left an indelible mark on the lives of countless individuals.”

“Today, I can unequivocally declare that I owe my current position and knowledge to Bruce. His mentorship

extended beyond the realm of business, imparting valuable life lessons,” Stevens said.

Dave Scypinski, FASAE, former senior vice president at ConferenceDirect, first worked with Gamble at the San Francisco Hilton in 1986. Reflecting on that time, he called Gamble the “unofficial dean” of sales at Hilton with a “wicked sense of humor.”

“His mind was racing all the time. And I think that was an amazing attribute because he was always looking at a new angle and he was very successful in booking business,” Scypinski said. “And that’s why—one of the reasons—that he was so respected at Hilton

because people knew Bruce always had a better idea about how to book a piece of business.”

Gamble, a resident of Beltsville, Maryland, was born in Collingwood, New Jersey, and grew up in Tucson, Arizona, according to his son, Bradford Gamble. Gamble received a degree in hotel, motel and restaurant management from the University of Arizona.

Gamble is survived by his sons, Andrew and Bradford Gamble, and his brother, Jeffery Gamble. Gamble’s family is in the process of making end of life arrangements for him.

NEWS

Women's Tennis Association Denies Rumors of Bankruptcy, ATP Merger

By Julia Stumbaugh

Women's Tennis Association (WTA) CEO Steven Simon shut down rumors the association is being driven by financial problems to seek a merger with the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), the international governing body for men's tennis.

"The WTA is in a healthy financial position, a merger with the ATP is not under consideration, and we are excited about our strong future during which we will continue [to] grow and expand women's tennis," Simon said in a statement reported on October 23 by *Tennis365*.

"Earlier this year, the WTA an-

nounced an increase of \$400 million in compensation to players over the next 10 years maintaining the WTA's position as the leading women's sports organization globally," Smith added.

WTA is headquartered in St. Petersburg, Florida. ATP, which has historically been a better-funded organization than WTA, is based in London.

Simon's statement followed a report from Kazakhstan Tennis Federation Vice President Yuri Polsky, who said in an interview with the Russian news outlet *Championat* earlier this month that WTA was "in a very bad place and could even go bankrupt in 2026 or 2027 if their financial

situation doesn't change," per *Tennis Infinity*.

Polsky's comments came one month after the *London Telegraph* first reported WTA and ATP planned to discuss a potential merger at the end of September.

The *Telegraph* described the possible merger as an "urgent" response to rumors that Saudi Arabia is planning on founding its own tennis league in a manner similar to the Saudi golf program LIV Golf, which the country launched in 2022 to rival the U.S.-based PGA Tour. After a year of competing for players, LIV Golf and the PGA Tour merged in July.

Saudi Arabia came one step closer to officially stepping into the world of tennis on October 19, when the country announced plans for a December exhibition match in Riyadh featuring top-ranked ATP players Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz, according to *The Athletic*.

Rather than a response to Saudi incursion into the sport, however, Polsky described the potential merger between the international governing bodies for men's and women's tennis

as "a matter of survival" for WTA and "a matter of reputation" for ATP.

"ATP leaders don't want the WTA to collapse because the optics would be bad," Polsky said, per *Championat* and *Tennis Infinity*. "The ATP is exploring its options, the question is, on what conditions could the merger be achieved? It is unclear what ATP's share would be and to what extent the ATP is willing to subsidize the WTA."

ATP recorded \$176.8 million in revenue in 2021, according to *ProPublica*. That more than doubled WTA's reported revenue of \$87.8 million the same year.

Those financial differences are often reflected in the league's respective purses. Although Grand Slam tournaments offer equal pots to men and women winners, ATP events often provide larger prizes than their WTA equivalents.

The WTA says it is on trajectory to change that. The association in June announced a plan to achieve equal pay for men's and women's winners in combined ATP and WTA events by 2027 as well as equal pay in separate WTA events by 2033.

Heather Dean Joins ASAE as Chief Finance and Administrative Officer

By Todd McElwee

Heather Dean, CAE, who boasts more than 25 years of experience in a variety of facets of nonprofit finance and operations, is joining ASAE as Chief Finance and Administrative Officer (CFAO).

Dean's experience spans the areas of financial planning and analysis; internal controls; business process re-engineering and optimization; risk management; policy development; and governance. She starts in her new position on November 6.

"I am thrilled to be returning to work in the association/nonprofit community to work for an organization that I have admired for years," said Dean, who is a CPA. "I am looking forward to helping the team maneuver the pivot to Destination 2026 and the change and growth that will come with it. I couldn't be more thrilled to work with the amazing folks at ASAE."

Most recently, Dean was managing director at Cordia Partners, now a Cherry Bekaert company. She worked with association and nonprofit CEOs to develop high-level financial strategies and performed organizational assessments to identify where efficiencies could be found to build capacity by optimizing people, process and technology, ASAE said.

"ASAE is excited to welcome Heather Dean to the exceptional ASAE staff team, where she will perform the critical role of ensuring ASAE's continued fiscal integrity



Heather Dean

and modeling transparency and accountability for the organization and the broader association community," said Michelle Mason, FASAE, CAE, President & CEO, ASAE. "As ASAE continues its strategic journey toward Destination 2026, Heather will work closely with the ASAE Executive Team and our Board of Directors to help ASAE execute financial strategies that align with the organization's strategic objectives."

Prior to joining Cordia Partners, Dean held executive roles in a number of nonprofit organizations, including deputy executive director and chief operations officer at the National School Boards Association and deputy executive director, programs and operations, at National PTA. She has also held various roles in public accounting firms doing financial planning and analysis, compliance and audit work.

Council Approves Firms for Austin Convention Center Expansion Project

By Jonathan Trager

The Austin City Council in Texas has unanimously approved the selection of two joint venture companies as the architecture and construction managers for the redevelopment and expansion of the Austin Convention Center.

The architecture firm LMN Architects and Page Southerland Page (LMN/Page) has been chosen to provide design and architectural engineering services. In addition, JE Dunn Construction and Turner Construction (JE Dunn/Turner) will cover preconstruction and construction services.

The council's action on October 19 gives the city full authority to negotiate and execute the contracts. The goal is to initiate design work for the estimated \$1.6 billion project in early 2024.

Trisha Tatro, Director of the Austin Convention Center Department, said the approval "marks a pivotal step in moving this transformational project forward."

"The selected firms bring unparalleled expertise in their respective fields and have a demonstrated ability to provide innovative thinking toward design and construction techniques," Tatro said. "This effort aligns perfectly with our goal of constructing a culturally iconic, state-of-the-art convention center in Austin."

The current project timeline estimates that building closure, demolition, and construction activities will begin in 2025, with the new facility reopening in late 2028. The expansion and redevelopment target is to nearly double the 376,000 square feet of rentable space currently available.

Relief Efforts

continued from page 5

"This has truly been an incredible effort as our teams worked tirelessly over the past week to make this mission possible," said Jason Liberty, President & CEO of the cruise line's

parent company Royal Caribbean Group, in an email obtained by *USA TODAY*. "My heartfelt gratitude goes out to all involved and especially to the ship's officers and crew for their unwavering support of this call to serve others in the midst of unimaginable tragedy."

Scene at TDM’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Conference



Scene At NYSAE Synergy Awards



NEWS

Hilton Breaks Ground on First Project H3 Property

By Jordan Bradley

Hilton broke ground on their first Project H3 by Hilton hotel, the company's newest extended stay offering, on October 25 in Kokomo, Indiana.

"This project represents a significant milestone, not just for our team but for the extended-stay hospitality segment as a whole," said Bharat Patel, co-founder, Chairman and CEO of Sun Development & Management Corpo-

ration, owner of the inaugural hotel.

The 137-room hotel is designed to cater to travelers seeking stays lasting more than 20 days. Rooms in Project H3 by Hilton hotels feature spacious, apartment-style accommodations, equipped with ample storage, easy-to-move furniture for guests to arrange and adapt their rooms to their needs, and a full kitchen.

Each Project H3 by Hilton hotel also offers guests a "hyper-functional

lobby" that gives guests easy access to the property's fitness center, guest laundry areas and small retail market.

"Backed by the power of Hilton, we're confident that this brand will set a new standard for long-term accommodations, and we couldn't be happier to plant the brand's first flag in Kokomo," Patel said.

The inaugural Project H3 by Hilton hotel is expected to open in summer of next year. Hilton announced the new brand in late May of this year, angling for a stronger foothold in the expanding extended stay segment.

"We have looked forward to this

day with tremendous excitement as Project H3 is truly different from anything in the current market," said Matt Schuyler, Chief Brand Officer of Hilton. "This game-changing brand was created specifically to address the needs of guests who seek accessible quality in a long-stay hotel and provide owners with a cost-effective extended-stay hotel to build and operate."

Hilton said the brand has received "tremendous interest" with more than 350 Project H3 properties in negotiations at the time of the groundbreaking.



Representatives from Hilton, Sun Development & Management and the city of Kokomo gathered for a traditional groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the inaugural Project H3 by Hilton hotel in Kokomo, Indiana, on October 25.

Innovation Specialist Diana Kander Presenting Holiday Showcase Keynote

By Todd McElwee

Saying association management roles and responsibilities have evolved beyond simple job descriptions, Association Forum has tapped *New York Times* best-selling author Diana Kander to deliver a keynote on unleashing curiosities and innovation at Holiday Showcase. The event will take place November 29–30 at the Hilton Chicago.

"Have your roles and responsibilities evolved beyond your job description? Are you continually being asked to do a lot more with a lot less?" Association Forum asked. "What you need is to unleash your curiosity and become an innovator. Insert Diana Kander."

The Forum said Kander will draw from her book *The Curiosity Muscle*. The group added she will guide attendees in recognizing their potential as innovators regardless of their job description as well as unveil the essential skills and practices needed to nurture an idea, pose more incisive questions, and make innovation an enjoyable and accessible endeavor.

Kander's website profile says she is serial entrepreneur who entered the United States as a refugee from Ukraine at age 8. She launched and sold millions of dollars' worth of



Diana Kander

products and services by her early 30s. The Forum said her first book *All In Startup*, has been used by more 100 universities and countless large organizations to help their employees think more like entrepreneurs.

"Walk away from Diana's keynote empowered to leverage the force of curiosity, opening up a world of new opportunities and propelling growth for you and your organization," the Forum said.

Find more information at associationforum.org.

Global DMC Partners Releases Results of Planner Survey

By Jonathan Trager

While increasing costs remains a top challenge for planners, less than 40% say their budgets increased across 2023 for meetings and incentives, according to the results of the new Q2/Q3 Meetings & Events Pulse Survey from Global DMC Partners (GDP).

GDP bills itself as "the largest global network of independent Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and specialized event service providers." The new report, issued on October 24, covers topics including current challenges, the importance of sustainability, in-person event attendance, hiring trends and more.

Although costs remain high, meeting and incentive budgets for many planners are not increasing to account for rising costs, GDP found. Many remain unsure about 2024 budgets; however, 37% say their 2024 meeting budgets are increasing, while 26% report 2024 incentive budgets are increasing. More than one-third of planners report that their meeting and

incentive budgets will remain stagnant from 2023 to 2024.

"Increasing costs in relation to budgets continues to be a primary challenge for many of our clients, as evident in the recent survey responses," said Global DMC Partners President & CEO Catherine Chaulet. "With nearly all aspects, from airfares to F&B, increasingly getting more expensive, planners are required to be more creative with the ways they spend their budget. We hope that we can continue to leverage our valued network to collaborate and help our clients succeed during these challenging financial times."

The survey polled 200 meeting and event professionals, 60% of whom are U.S.-based, with 19% in the UK and Europe and 9% in Canada. Respondents were divided between corporate/direct planners (58%) and agency/third-party planners (42%). Responses were collected throughout June and July 2023.

For more information, visit globaldmcpartners.com.



Visit Greater Palm Springs team welcomed students from Cal State University San Bernardino, Palm Desert Hospitality Program to IMEX, where they came to experience the IMEX event and all of its programming. Left to right: Carolina Viazcan, Visit Greater Palm Springs Vice President of Sales; Dr. Joseph Torme, Director of Hospitality Management program at California State University San Bernardino, Palm Desert Campus; Alejandra Portillo, student; Evyanah Campa, student; Mathew January, student; and Colleen Pace, Visit Greater Palm Springs Chief Sales & Marketing Officer.

Join us for networking and industry connections!

\$20 DONATION TO THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY FUND



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The MIF Board will match up to \$4,000 collected on Giving Tuesday

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MPI, FLEX, NCBMP, and ASAE to Join Us!

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