



Churchill Downs was the site of the opening night celebration when Louisville hosted MPI's World Education Congress from May 20–22. Left to right: Suzanne Bajek, National Sales Manager – Northeast, Visit Salt Lake; Diane Utley, National Sales Director, Western Region Single Hotel/Resort Meetings, 201–2000 Attendees, Visit Salt Lake; and Julia Wendling, National Sales Manager, Snowbird.

WNBA Investigating Las Vegas CVA Sponsorship of Aces Players

By Jonathan Trager

An agreement on \$100,000 annual sponsorship deals offered by the Las Vegas CVA to players of the Las Vegas Aces is currently under investigation by the WNBA.

The individual sponsorship deals cover the 2024 and 2025 seasons. Although they don't violate the league's salary cap because they were made with each player and not with their teams, they still could be deemed a financial advantage that other franchises cannot offer and thereby violating the spirit of the rules, according to the *Washington Post*.

The Las Vegas CVA posted a video on X of Steve Hill, President & CEO of the Las Vegas CVA, giving the sponsorship news to players in the locker room on May 17.

"The Aces have been on an historic run—two-time world champions," Hill said on the video before informing the players. "We're here to do something historic with them, too."

Afterward, Hill defended the spon-

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New Orleans Takes Steps Toward Convention Headquarters Hotel

By Jonathan Trager

The Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority has approved two resolutions critical to moving forward with the develop-

ment of a long-awaited 1,000-room convention headquarters hotel.

On May 22, the Authority accepted a formal letter of intent with Omni Hotels & Resorts to own and operate the headquarters hotel, while also

approving a \$20 million purchase and sale agreement for property located across the street from the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. That space is currently occupied by The Sugar

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Blackstone's Arizona Biltmore Sold to Henderson Park

By Jordan Bradley

London-based private equity firm Henderson Park announced on May 20 that it has completed the acquisition of the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix from Blackstone Real Estate for \$705 million.

The purchase of the Arizona Biltmore by Henderson Park was made in partnership with Pyramid Global Hospitality, which will operate the hotel, and was initially made this January. The transaction was finalized

on May 8, according to the *Arizona Republic*.

"As owners of the Arizona Biltmore, we brought our hospitality expertise and experience to enrich and preserve this historic property," said Rob Harper, Head of Blackstone Real Estate Asset Management Americas. "We're pleased to reach this agreement on behalf of our investors and position the asset for long-term success."

The Arizona Biltmore

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Historic Marcus Whitman Hotel Infuses Renovation with 'Refined Hospitality'

Steve O'Malley Honored with MPI's Industry Leader Award

By Todd McElwee

MPI took time during its World Education Congress (WEC) in Louisville to thank and recognize the only two-time chair in its history: Steve O'Malley, COO, Business Events Solutions, Maritz.

O'Malley received MPI's Industry Leader Award during the President's Dinner at the Mellwood Art Center on May 21.

"While it is very humbling, I suppose being recognized for a lifetime of service to the events in-

dustry and service to MPI is perhaps the best thing I can be recognized for," O'Malley told *USAE*. "I was thrilled to have the opportunity to serve this great organization and was honored to serve alongside the thousand volunteer leaders that contribute each year to grow the mission of MPI."

Calling an O'Malley "industry stalwart," MPI noted he "played an instrumental role in guiding it through the pandemic while shaping the future of MPI and the industry at large." O'Malley

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NEWS

AHLA Concerned About Forward Motion of N.J. Franchising Bill

By Jordan Bradley

The American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) released a statement on May 13 decrying a bill currently being considered by the New Jersey assembly and senate leadership that would significantly impact franchising models in the state.

Most recently, the New Jersey Assembly approved the bill (titled A3495) while its state senate counterpart (S2336) is pending.

The AHLA has been a vocal opponent of the bill from its introduction earlier this year, taking issue with the bill's ethos, which aims to regulate hotel franchising with new standards that would disrupt existing brand standards and franchising agreements.

If passed as is, the bill would require franchisees to negotiate property improvements such as Wi-Fi, mobile check-in and other offerings at each individual property, instead of collectively as a brand within the state, which AHLA argues would weaken

brand standards in New Jersey.

At a May 13 meeting of the New Jersey Assembly Committee on Commerce, Economic Development and Agriculture, the sponsor of the bill, Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak, did note that lawmakers are currently working on amendments to the bill that would address concerns brought to light by AHLA.

However, AHLA is "not entirely clear in terms of what those amendments are and what the timeframe is for kind of unveiling those," Sarah Bratko, AHLA Vice President and Policy Counsel for State and Local Government, told USAE.

AHLA is concerned that the bill would negatively impact the quality and reliability of service at franchise hotels within New Jersey, leading to severed agreements. Still, AHLA is

invested in the process, Bratko said.

"Our hope and our view is that the bill itself—the underlying bill itself—is flawed," Bratko said, "and we would prefer not to see any bill move forward. But we want to be responsive to

the process and try to engage with the sponsors on the bill. But our proposed amendments are specific to managing vendor transparency and disclosure requirements."

Of major concern for AHLA and several of its New Jersey members, Bratko explained, was the bill's proposed changes to loyalty point reimbursement within the state. Should the bill move forward and become law as it stands, it would require New Jersey-based hotels to have a state-specific reimbursement formula, she said.

In order to accommodate that, a

brand would need to create a new system just for New Jersey franchise hotels, which would create unintended negative consequences.

"The challenge behind that is these are global systems—loyalty points are global systems," Bratko said. "So a brand would have to either somehow figure out a way to create a New Jersey specific formula or they could simply cut New Jersey hotels out of the loyalty point system which is a more likely outcome."

AHLA has submitted specific concerns about the bill, including concerns regarding the vendor agreements and loyalty points disbursement, Bratko added.

"We have submitted some proposed amendments to both sponsors and to assembly and senate leadership," Bratko said. "And, you know, I would hope that we could be part of that conversation as the bill moves forward. We have deep concerns with any bill that targets the hotel industry and would have it treated differently than any other franchising bill."

Should the bill move forward and become law as it stands, it would require New Jersey-based hotels to have a state-specific reimbursement formula, she said.

MPI Award

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was chair in 2019 and 2020.

"Even before I became involved in Board service, MPI was a part of my Maritz daily life as we have so many members involved on so many levels," O'Malley said. "MPI has provided education for our associates, leadership opportunities at the Chapter and Task force level for many and has partnered with every other association that we are invested in to help increase the level of professionalism in the industry. MPI really is our home for professional development in the event industry."

A 2023 Events Industry Council Hall

of Leaders inductee, his profile noted he is a past president of Site International Foundation and was awarded the Richard Ross Past Presidents award by Site Global in recognition of outstanding service to the incentive travel industry in 2019.

Asked who he'd like to thank, O'Malley said: "My family first. They have always supported my taking on extracurricular work to support the industry that supports my employment. They are a blessing to me and I hope I have made them proud. And thanks to MPI and its members for allowing

me the honor to serve. It was a joy and I hope I contributed to a stronger and more vibrant association."

The President's Dinner also included recognition Rise Awards recipients.

"Even before I became involved in Board service, MPI was a part of my Maritz daily life as we have so many members involved on so many levels," O'Malley said.



Steve O'Malley, COO - Business Events Solutions, Maritz (right), was honored by Paul Van Deventer, President & CEO, MPI, and the association with its MPI Industry Leader Award. The award was bestowed during the MPI President's Dinner at Louisville's Mellwood Art Center. Photo by RVRB

Winners include:

- Young Professional Achievement - Evan Nielson, CMP, MPI Potomac Chapter
- Member of the Year - Jenny Dao, MPI Ottawa Chapter
- Meeting Industry Leadership - Steven Foster, CMP, MPI Dallas-Fort Worth Chapter
- Innovative Educational Programming - MPI Tennessee Chapter
- Marketplace Excellence - MPI Wisconsin Chapter
- Industry Advocate - MPI Indiana Chapter
- Membership Achievement - MPI

Pittsburgh Chapter

"It is with great pride and enthusiasm that we recognize the extraordinary efforts of the outstanding MPI members and chapters who received 2024 RISE Awards," said Paul Van Deventer, President & CEO, MPI. "Each award recipient inspires us to pursue excellence within the community and reimagine how we can serve the greater good in our chapter, region, and global community. Congratulations to each one of our honorees."

Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter, Aloe Blacc performed during the gala.

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HOTS

HOTS Kyle Kan't Hack It... A group of individuals all named Kyle gathered in Kyle, Texas, in a failed attempt at breaking the world record for the most amount of individuals with the same name gathered in one place. On May 18, 706 Kyles attended the second Gathering of Kyles outside of Austin in an attempt to beat the record, according to NBC News. Last year, the town held a gathering with 1,490 Kyles in attendance. The record for most people named with the same name to gather in one place is currently held by a town in Bosnia with 2,325 Ivans. HOTS thinks the third time's the charm for Kyles everywhere.

✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧

HOTS Great 8...An eight-year-old from Indiana has done what the Kyles couldn't: earned a Guinness World Record. Louisa Royer has earned the record for youngest drone videographer for her outstanding drone footage, according to UPI. Royers' drone videography—which she captured on trips to Europe, Japan, Australia and South Korea—won her the 2023 Nest New Drone Pilot Award at the AZDroneFest International Film Festival. "Understanding how to safely fly the drone in different countries and locations was tough," Royer told Guinness World Records. "You have to be very aware of your surroundings to avoid airports and obstacles like power lines or trees." HOTS hopes Royer can keep her feet on the ground amid her high-flying success!



Cleo Battle, President & CEO, Louisville Tourism, speaks at a general session during MPI's WEC at the Kentucky International Convention Center. The conference was in town from May 20-22.

IAEE Renames Award to Honor Retiring Executive Cathy Breden

By Todd McElwee

IAEE Executive Vice President and COO Cathy Breden, CMP-F, CAE, CEM, is being honored for her dedication and leadership by the association, which has rebranded its IAEE Woman of Achievement Award as the IAEE Cathy Breden Woman of Achievement Award.

Breden, who also serves as CEO of the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR). She is retiring from IAEE on June 28.

"This award being named in my honor was a true surprise," said Breden. "Who knew that all those years ago when the IAEE Women's Leadership Forum was first held that it would

be the success it is today. It shows that women needed and wanted support with programming designed for them. They still do."

Breden began her association management career in 1984 after graduating from Florida State University. She has served as a member of sev-

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ASAE Honors Susan Sarfati with Inaugural Global Association Visionary Award

By Todd McElwee

Susan Sarfati, FASAE, CAE (Ret.), CEO of High Performance Strategies, has been honored by ASAE for her commitment, innovation and engagement within the association sector with its inaugural Global Association Visionary Award.

Sarfati was honored at IMEX Frankfurt. ASAE established the honor to recognize an association leader who has demonstrated a lifetime of commitment and service in advancing and elevating the visibility and impact of the association profession globally.

"I am thrilled to be the inaugural recipient of the Global Association Visionary Award, and I couldn't be more proud of ASAE's expanding global presence," Sarfati said. "Receiving this honor at IMEX is truly unforgettable—it's a gathering where everyone is welcomed

into a vibrant, innovative and socially conscious global community."

Sarfati, CEO of High Performance Strategies, currently consults with associations around the world, including in India, Uganda, Thailand, Malaysia, Jordan, Serbia, South Africa, Bangladesh and, most recently, the Republic of Georgia.

"What I've discovered [in my career] is that learning is a two-way street. Despite our differences in culture and background, people are fundamentally similar," said Sarfati. "Now, more than ever, the world needs us to bridge divides and reach out globally. Together, we can make a difference on a scale we've never imagined."

Prior to starting her own consulting firm, Sarfati was the founding president & CEO of The Center for Association Leadership and executive vice president of ASAE. She also was president & CEO of the Greater

Washington Society of Association Executives (GWSAE) for nearly 13 years.

Among her achievements are launching the Nation's Capital Distinguished Speakers Series, which hosted such global luminaries as Queen Noor Al Hussein, F.W. de Klerk and Desmond Tutu. In addition, Sarfati pioneered the first-ever Global Summit on Social Responsibility in 2008.

"ASAE and the association community owe Susan Sarfati a debt of gratitude for her visionary leadership and innovative thinking over her decades-long career," said Michelle Mason, FASAE, CAE, President & CEO, ASAE. "Susan's passion for associations and her driving commitment to advancing this vital sector around the world made her the obvious choice for ASAE's inaugural Global Association Visionary Award."

WEEKLY NEWS OF ASSOCIATIONS, CVB'S AND HOTELS

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NEWS

Mark Schulman, Heather Crider Rock Out at MPI General Session

By Todd McElwee

Arguably the loudest keynote in sector history was designed to help its audience quiet their minds.

Mark Schulman, a veteran drummer and author who's performed in front of millions while backing the likes of P!NK, Beyoncé, Foreigner and more, and neuro-performance coach Heather Crider presented "Rocking the Rhythms of Leadership" on May 21 during MPI's World Education Congress (WEC) Louisville.

Set to the backbeat of Schulman's drumkit, the session guided attendees through an exploration of how the beat of rock and roll and the insights of brain science can amplify confidence and performance, with the predominant theme being overcoming "brain hijack."

Brain hijack was described by Crider as moments when fear, uncertainty and doubt take over and one cannot tell difference between what is real and what is imaginary. Together, the duo

shared multiple mental and physical exercises to help overcome the fog and regain cognitive control.

During multiple points, Schulman stepped behind his drums after sharing stories from his time with Cher, P!NK, Billy Idol and Velvet Revolver. He told the tale of stepping onto stage at Ozzfest with Velvet Revolver shortly after joining the supergroup for his friend Matt Sorum, who could not perform due to an injury, and lead singer Scott Weiland forgot his name. Feeling the panic of brain hijack, Schulman regained composure, went into a drum solo and then personally engaged the audience of 40,000 as the show went on.

Schulman and Crider touched on connection, commitment and collaboration over competition. Explaining and exploring each "C", they are enlisted the audience for exercises illustrating their points. For connection, Schulman led the audience through a variety of rhythmic clapping to promote togetherness.



Mark Schulman, rock drummer and author, and neuroperformance coach Heather Crider presented the keynote, "Rocking the Rhythms of Leadership," May 21 during MPI's World Education Congress (WEC) Louisville.

Rockstar superpowers including W.I.N (What's Important Now) and P.O.P (Power of Pause) were also highlighted. The former was explained as clearing the murkiness of

brain hijack to understand what is important at the moment, with the later explained by Crider that the brain needs roughly 90 seconds to recover after a trauma.

New Orleans

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Mill event venue and an adjacent parking lot.

"Today's votes signal the Authority's approval to move forward with a plan

that will finally give New Orleans the new, dedicated headquarters hotel it deserves," said Russell Allen, President of the Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority. "Partnering with Omni Hotels & Resorts will help us transform this visionary concept into

a reality and seize a unique opportunity to propel our community forward while making a lasting impact on our economic landscape."

Consideration of a headquarters hotel has been evaluated for nearly a decade in New Orleans but the project had yet to get off the ground.

"The Authority's actions take us one step closer to attracting the trade shows, conventions and events that only an adjacent headquarters hotel can," said Michael J. Sawaya, President & CEO of the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. "Building a headquarters hotel will be transformative for New Orleans tourism and realize a vision many years in the making."

Omni is investing \$500 million to finance the project. It will also require about \$70 million of investment by

the convention center.

"Today's action will make New Orleans' an even more competitive destination for meetings and conventions," said Walter J. Leger III, President & CEO of New Orleans & Company. "New Orleans is Built to Host, but it's critical that we develop new product offerings to remain competitive, especially when cities such as Las Vegas, Dallas, Nashville, Austin, Orlando and others are making significant investments in new hotels, convention centers and major tourist attractions."

Negotiations will conclude with final agreements ready for the Authority to consider at the end of 2024. Design and construction will begin in 2025, with an expected opening in 2028-2029, the convention center said.

MPI's WEC Louisville Largest Event Since 2019

By Todd McElwee

Nearly 1,900 were on site at Louisville's Kentucky International Convention Center for MPI's World Education Congress (WEC)—an increase of 33% over WEC23 in the Mexican Caribbean. Attendance was the highest since the 2019 edition in Toronto.

Paul Van Deventer, President & CEO, MPI, provided a WEC update. Held May 20-22, this year's edition welcomed more than 700 planners. Approximately 50% of the audience were attending WEC for the first time.

"This further showcases both the event's appeal and the strong desire for educational opportunities within the industry," the association said.

WEC's sold-out hosted buyer program was the largest in more than a decade. It included 180 buyers and 175 suppliers, resulting in a record 2,000 appointments.

Michelle Allgauer, CAE, CMM, CMP Fellow, Sr. Vice President, Education & Engagement Financial Services Institute (FSI), MPI

International Board Chair, highlighted membership numbers and growth.

MPI is experiencing its highest member count since April 202, counting nearly 12,500 members. This includes a 9% year-over-year increase in 2023 and an additional 6% increase year-to-date. More than 4,500 new members fueled MPI's membership growth in 2023.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the MPI Foundation (MPIF). To commemorate this milestone, a 40th Legacy Wall has been created to highlight MPIF's numerous initiatives. MPIF has also facilitated scholarships for 75 attendees to participate in WEC Louisville.

During WEC Louisville, a pickleball event hosted by Visit Seattle on May 20, a live auction at the Presidents Dinner, and tickets for Rendezvous at the Mercury Ballroom sponsored by Live Nation Special Events and Louisville Tourism were forecasted to raise more than \$145,000.

Find more information about the WEC and MPI at mpi.org.

Breden Award

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eral boards of directors and was 2022 chairperson of the Events Industry Council. Breden was recognized with the IAEE Chairperson's Award in 2015 and is also a CMP Fellow.

"This is a fitting way to celebrate Cathy's amazing contributions to IAEE as well as the industry during her 29-year tenure with the association," said IAEE President & CEO Marsha Flanagan, CEM. "She embodies all the qualities that this award recognizes, and I am thrilled her legacy will live on through all who receive this honor."

The call for nominations for the 2024 IAEE Awards remain open until August 30. Find more at iaee.com.



Cathy Breden

NEWS

Historic Marcus Whitman Hotel Infuses Renovation with ‘Refined Hospitality’

By [Jordan Bradley](#)

The historic Marcus Whitman Hotel and Conference Center in Walla Walla, Washington, has completed a top-to-bottom renovation of its 133 guest rooms and suites, lobby, and its restaurant and bar, The Marc.

General Manager Ted Hawksford has been with the Whitman since

October last year, overseeing the renovations and guiding the property into a new chapter.

For Hawksford and the Whitman, the renovation was done with the term “refined hospitality” as the driving ethos for design and programming choices at the luxury property, he said.

“We chose—with intention—[the idea of] refined hospitality because

we can offer that in every corner of our building and with every guest interaction,” Hawksford said. “And that’s what we’re trying to bring to Walla Walla.”

The expansive renovation in the guest suites included flooring, wall-paper, fresh paint, new light fixtures, furnishings, hardware and art.

As part of the restaurant refresh, Hawksford said, it was important to incorporate the region’s history and strengths into the design as well as the new menu. The Walla Walla region of Washington heavily relies on agriculture—specifically wheat, the sweetest variety of onions, and hops—and is home to a robust wine country with more than 130 wineries.

Hawksford shared that The Marc is preparing to host collaborative dinners over the next few months that pair a local winemaker and farmer to “collaborate with our chefs to design a menu that truly is celebrating what’s available in that particular season in this particular market” to create unique culinary experiences for guests and locals.

“We want it to be relevant to Walla

Walla and to this agricultural community that we’re part of while at the same time attracting people who are foodies, who are pursuing a food and beverage and wine country experience that is unique,” Hawksford added.

The Marcus Whitman Hotel first opened in 1928, acting as host to presidents and celebrity guests in its heyday. Shortly after it was built, the city of Walla Walla passed an ordinance that ensures no building can be built taller than the Whitman’s 13 stories. And in 1999, the hotel was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

With the last renovations and upgrades completed in the early 2000s, as a result of the construction of the property’s west wing, Hawksford explained that the hotel’s owner and operating company, Columbia Hospitality, has several plans for the future of the hotel.

Those plans include upgrades to the property’s conference center as well as the addition of a spa and a rooftop restaurant concept to truly capitalize on the ordinance that gives the Whitman the best views in the city.



The historic Marcus Whitman Hotel & Conference Center

Visit Milwaukee Releases First-Ever Cookbook

By [Jonathan Trager](#)

Visit Milwaukee on May 21 announced the digital edition of “The Milwaukee Cookbook,” which features nearly 100 recipes from more than 60 local chefs.

“The Milwaukee Cookbook” is authored by Milwaukee Magazine dining critic Ann Christenson with photographs by photographer Kevin Miyazaki.

Visit Milwaukee said “visitors and locals alike can explore those dynamic

flavors through a collection of personal recipes from local chefs who champion Milwaukee’s diverse food and restaurant culture every day.”

“We’re so proud to launch ‘The Milwaukee Cookbook’ and know that it will continue to elevate Milwaukee’s reputation as a world-class dining destination,” said Visit Milwaukee Chief Marketing Officer Josh Albrecht. “We know that dining experiences drive visitation and spending in Milwaukee, and we’re certain this Cookbook will add to that.”

With a foreword penned by four-time nominated and two-time James Beard award-winning Chef Paul Bartolotta, the cookbook features recipes for drinks and appetizers, entrees and desserts, all of which have a personal story from the chef that created it.

The cookbook is designed to capitalize on Milwaukee’s star turn in Bravo’s Top Chef while giving visitors nearly 100 more reasons to choose Milwaukee. The project was led by Visit Milwaukee Creative Director Kathryn Lavey.

The cookbook will be promoted through Visit Milwaukee’s paid and earned channels as well as through a new food and beverage-themed monthly newsletter and a partnership with Fourava Media’s podcast.

“We can’t wait for even more visitors to see all that Milwaukee’s amazing chef-driven dining scene has to offer,” Albrecht said.

The physical edition of the cookbook will be offered for sale through visitmilwaukee.org in time for the 2024 holiday season.

Arizona Biltmore

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originally opened February 23, 1929, on 39 acres and was designed by Albert Chase McArthur, a protege of famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright, according to the *Republic*.

During the 1940s through the 1960s, the Biltmore was host to politicians, celebrities and other public figures, including Marilyn Monroe and several U.S. Presidents, according to the hotel’s website.

“We take the stewardship of the Arizona Biltmore very seriously and will work with our partners to position this iconic hotel for continued success,” said Nick Weber, CEO and Founder of

Henderson Park.

He added: “This transaction presents a rare and compelling opportunity to acquire a historic, but newly refurbished hotel in one of the country’s premier hospitality markets and to both immediately capitalize on accelerated performance and to further enhance the resort’s offering into the future.”

Throughout its history, the Arizona Biltmore has undergone several renovations and expansions, the most recent being completed by Hilton in May 2021. Today, the property boasts 705 guest rooms and suites, 200,000 square feet of meeting space, seven swimming pools, multiple food and beverage outlets and a 28,000 square foot spa.



Henderson Park acquired the historic Arizona Biltmore from Blackstone on May 8. Credit: Arizona Biltmore

NEWS

Adam Patenaude Becomes President of Dreamscape Hospitality

By Jordan Bradley

Dreamscape Hospitality, owner of the Rio Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, announced on May 20 the appointment of Adam Patenaude as President.

Patenaude takes the place of Eric Birnbaum, the hospitality company's founder. Patenaude will lead Dreamscape from its Dallas headquarters.

"We're ecstatic to have Adam join the Dreamscape Hospitality family as our new president," said Birnbaum, who will act only as Chairman at Dreamscape going forward.

Prior to his new position with Dreamscape, Patenaude spent 15 years with Aimbridge Hospitality. Pat-

enaude most recently acted as senior vice president of operations, leading cross-functional teams supporting hotels and owners in select service, full service, luxury, independent and resort properties.

During his time with Aimbridge, Patenaude worked his way from general manager and area general manager to regional director of operations in Houston then vice president of operations based out of Plano, Texas, according to Patenaude's LinkedIn.

"His unmatched expertise and relentless drive for innovation are a seamless match for our mission and brand," Birnbaum. "With Adam steering the ship, I'm confident Dreamscape Hospitality will flourish and redefine

the essence of excellence in hospitality management."

Patenaude holds a degree in communication and media studies from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon.

"I'm honored to bring my passion and expertise for our industry to Dreamscape Hospitality during this exciting and innovative time for the company," said Patenaude. "I look forward to leading our team in developing a culture that not only reflects exceptional hospitality and industry excellence, but also creates enduring value for our stakeholders."



Adam Patenaude

USAE's Pets Pix



Luna Lovegood Reilly turned one in January, she is a pittie super mutt.

She is super playful and will make a racetrack of the home or backyard for herself if she's not playing with her cousins. She is also super loving and likes to give lots of kisses. In her downtime, she enjoys walks and chewing on a nice bone or antler.

Sent in by Kathleen Reilly, Graphic Design Manager at Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau

Publication of your pet's photo is a special benefit of being a USAE paid subscriber. [Become a paid subscriber](#); then email us at petspix@usaenews.com a favorite photo of your pet, and we'll try and run it in a future issue of USAE.

Las Vegas CVA

continued from page 1

sorships in an Associated Press interview.

"We did this the right way," Hill said. "We did something that we think works for Las Vegas and I think is great for the players. We did this without the team. It was our idea, and any questions they ask they'll find that out."

Hill added that the Las Vegas CVA has 100 influencers it pays to represent the destination and the deal with Aces players "isn't any different

than that."

The CVA sponsorship is higher than the earnings of six Aces players, according to the website Spotrac. Star players A'ja Wilson and Kelsey Plum are the highest-paid Aces at \$200,000 each.

This is the second time the WNBA is looking into the Aces. Just last year, the league suspended Aces Coach Becky Hammon for two games and took away the Aces' 2025 first-round draft pick because the franchise violated rules regarding impermissible player benefits and workplace policies.



Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter Aloe Blacc performed during May 21's President's Dinner at Louisville's Mellwood Art Center. The event was part of MPI's WEC. Photo by MPI

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Scene At MPI's WEC Louisville





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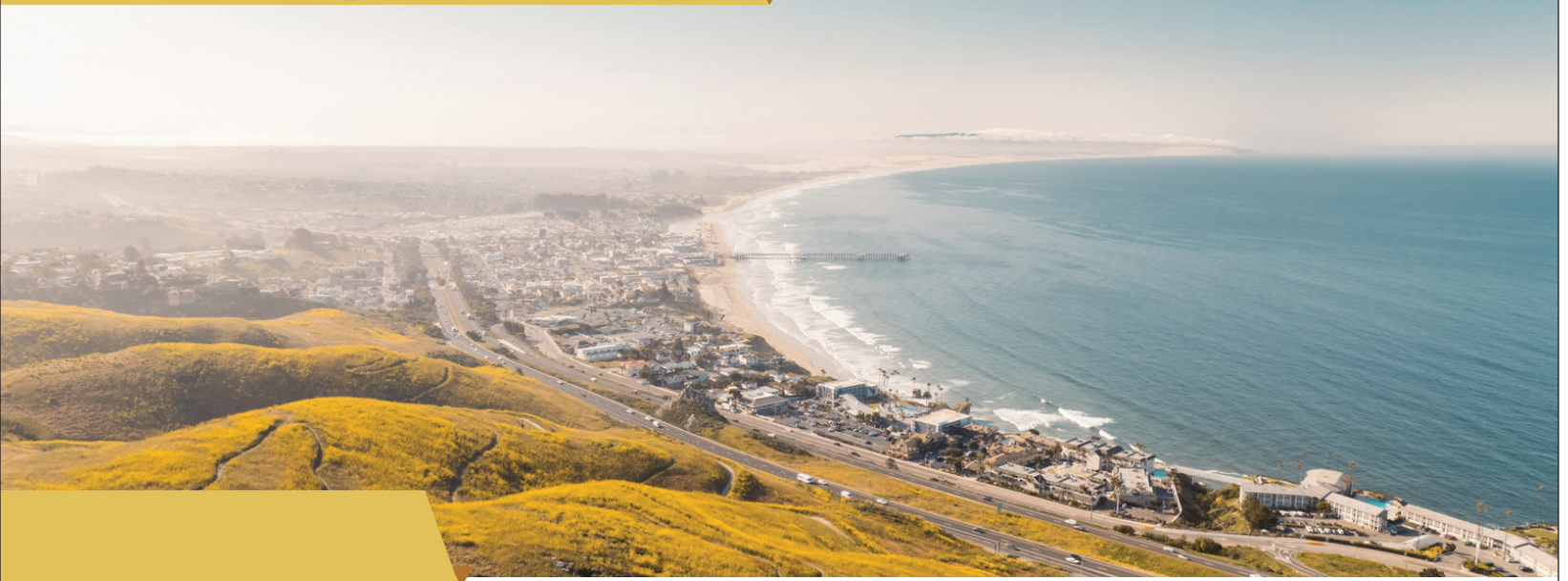


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President & CEO Opportunity

Visit SLO CAL is the non-profit, countywide destination marketing and management organization for San Luis Obispo County, California – SLO CAL®. Visit SLO CAL is responsible for promoting the community as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Visit SLO CAL's mission is to inspire travel, foster unique experiences, and champion the quality of life to create life-long ambassadors and economic growth for SLO CAL®. Through the impact of travel, they strengthen the economic position and provide opportunities for people in the eight (8) authentically diverse communities they serve. Built on research with a strategy of continuous improvement, Visit SLO CAL strives to be a favorite West Coast destination known for its signature slower pace of life and unique mix of incredible, immersive guest experiences including beaches, wine regions, and urban settings.

Visit SLO CAL is seeking an accomplished, collaborative President & CEO to lead a passionate and motivated team of 18 with a budget of \$9M. The President & CEO will oversee the organization's operations, culture, values, and mission. The successful candidate serves as the strategic and visionary leader serving the Board, investors, elected officials, partners, stakeholders and the community to promote SLO CAL® to domestic and international travelers.

The ideal candidate will develop and foster a supportive and collaborative workplace culture that empowers team members to thrive while leveraging their individual strengths to drive organizational success. A passionate advocate for destination marketing and management, the new President & CEO will display a track record of positively impacting residents' wellbeing while growing tourism.

Highly qualified and experienced destination marketing & management leaders should submit your resume, letter of interest, and references to: VISITSLOCAL@winnerpartners.net.