



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VENUE MANAGERS REGION 5

September 2022 Newsletter

IAVM REGION 5 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE



HELP US INCREASE OUR
REGION 5 MEMBERSHIP BEFORE
VENUE CONNECT 2023

MEMBER WHO REFERS THE MOST APPLICANTS
BEFORE VENUE CONNECT WILL WIN A
\$500 PRIZE!



INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
VENUE MANAGERS
REGION 5

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Region 5 is looking for volunteers for the Membership and Young Professionals Committees.

Membership Committee -- This committee works to represent the interest of general membership constituents relative to recruitment, retention, and membership value through programs, networking opportunities and other services designed to assist industry professionals. Creative methods to increase membership through membership campaigns or other means is expected. The Membership Committee meets regularly via conference call.

Young Professionals Committee -- This committee works with the Region 5 Board to act as a think tank for new and emerging trends in communications, social media, technology and membership. A majority of the members of this committee must be 30 years of age or under. The Young Professionals Committee meets regularly via conference call.

If you are interested in serving, please contact Carol Moore at carol@newnancentre.com.

INTERESTED IN HOSTING A CHAPTER MEETING?

Chapter meetings are a great way to network with industry peers in your local area as well as provide beneficial education opportunities. Chapter meetings can be as small as a luncheon or networking after-hours social to a full day of sessions.

Never planned a chapter meeting? No worries, your Region 5 Chapter Meeting Committee is here to help you through the process and provide resources to help you plan a successful meeting.

If you want to get started please reach out to your Region 5 Chapter Committee Chair, Bryan Miller, at bmiller@vbgov.com.

NEWS & VENUE UPDATES

FLORIDA



DESTIN/FORT WALTON BEACH - The Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center is excited to welcome our new Senior Sales Manager, Chianti Cleggett, to the team!

Chianti C. Cleggett is the senior sales manager with the Destin-Fort Walton Beach CVB and Convention Center. A native of Birmingham, she is an enthusiast for her new hometown. It has been one of her favorite places to escape since her freshman year at the University of South Alabama.

Once a full-time journalist, Chianti's byline and feature pieces have graced the pages of varied publications, including *Birmingham Magazine*, Essence.com, *The Crisis Magazine*, and the *Birmingham Times Newspaper*, among others. A servant of the community, she created and lead the Young Women's Empowerment Conference (YWEC) -- a non-profit to inspire teen girls with an annual career-focused event and mentorship program -- for 11 years. Chianti is also a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and a former board member for the Birmingham Education Foundation.

In her downtime, she enjoys exploring the sites, sounds and tastes of her new city, traveling, reading and laughing with her family and friends.

MIAMI BEACH - THUY "TWEET" VUONG JOINS OVG360 AS ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER OF THE MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER (MBCC)

OVG360, a leading full-service venue management and hospitality company, is growing—and today, it's excited to announce the addition of industry veteran Thuy "Twee" Vuong to its South Florida management team. Joining



OVG360 as Assistant General Manager of the Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) and its associated campus, Vuong will initially oversee Event & Guest Services, Venue Operations, Sales, Public Safety and Transportation, while being intricately involved in contractor and client relationships coupled with a variety of strategic initiatives.

Throughout her career, Vuong has amassed more than 27 years of event management and operations experience at some of the largest arenas, entertainment venues, and convention centers in Florida—a top-tier international market for hospitality and events. As Director of Operations for Informa Markets, Vuong managed everything from event logistics and signage to transportation, sustainability, and security for Florida Boat Shows. She spent more than 20 years working for ASM at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center, starting as Event Manager and eventually working

her way up to Director of Sales, Event Services, and Marketing. Other major Florida venues she has worked at include The Bayfront Center: Times Arena and Mahaffey Theater in St. Petersburg and the Orange County Convention Center and Addition Financial Arena (at the University of Central Florida) in Orlando. Before that, Vuong worked at the Georgia World Congress Center, where she was appointed Sector Coordinator for the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games.

In her new role, Vuong will assist Freddie Peterson, General Manager of MBCC, in managing the day-to-day planning, maintaining, managing and event operations across the entire MBCC Campus—which includes the convention center, Pride Park, Collins Canal Park, and the new Venu and The Rum Room. Outside of her supervisory roles, Vuong will observe MBCC’s administrative organization, procedures, policies and programs, and make recommendations where necessary. Drawing on her decades of expertise, a large part of Vuong’s job will be to ensure every event is exceptional to create memorable experiences for all MBCC visitors.

Having completed a three year, \$620-million-dollar reimagination in late 2018, today, the MBCC stands as one of the most advanced venues of its kind in North America, with 1.4 million square feet of flexible event space (including the largest ballroom in South Florida), approximately 10 acres of open green space, a 10,000 square food production kitchen, a curated art collection worth over \$7.1 million and over 1,600 miles of technical cabling to support unparalleled IT communications.

“Our world-class convention center and campus is thrilled to have someone with Twee’s experience, caliber, knowledge and professionalism join the team,” said Peterson. “We all look forward to working very closely with her to continue bringing all that we do to the next level while driving economic impact and excellence in customer service.”

Vuong earned a Bachelor of Science in Marketing from the University of Central Florida and later studied Facility Management at the School of Public Assembly in West Virginia. Her success in the industry is a credit to her hard work, determination, and attention to detail. Managing many different departments, Vuong takes a team-oriented approach to her work and handles her daily responsibilities with enthusiasm and a calm, friendly demeanor.

“I’ve been in the event industry for almost 30 years,” says Vuong. “I enjoy meeting people, learning about different events, and seeing the evolution of those events as they come to life. I started my venue management career in arenas before transitioning to convention centers. I’m so excited to work with the team at OVG360 to see what we can accomplish together in Miami Beach.”

The Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) is the centerpiece of Miami Beach's events, meetings, conventions, and tradeshow industries. As part of the center's corporate social responsibility (CSR) program, they have implemented structural changes and incorporated green initiatives to become more sustainable. The MBCC is committed to environmental stewardship by creating a more resilient ecosystem, inside and out. After the center's renovation, the MBCC incorporated climate-friendly building features and sustainable business practices into every aspect of its operation, including all onsite events.

"Our venue partner teams, led by our **OVG360** venue management team, are putting more effort than ever into establishing sustainable practices in every aspect of our events and meetings here at the MBCC," stated Freddie Peterson, General Manager, MBCC. "We collaborate closely with our clients and contractor partners to establish and promote environmentally friendly measures and improvements."

To help drive the sustainability efforts at the MBCC, the management team recently formed an internal CSR/Sustainability Committee to promote collaboration, encourage input, and expand overall efforts.

"Several of our committee members are taking the Event Industry Council's (EIC) comprehensive 'Sustainable Event Professional Certificate' course, which empowers us to create sustainability action plans and connect our clients to the local and resilient infrastructure available in Miami Beach and greater Miami-Dade County," said Ariane Hildebrand, Director of Marketing & External Relations and CSR/Sustainability Committee Chair at the MBCC.

Commitment to Natural Resource Conservation, Waste Reduction, and Recycling

The Miami Beach Convention Center's (MBCC) commitment to sustainable practices includes the reduction of landfill waste and the creation of an environmentally friendly space for all to enjoy. The MBCC is supporting the City of Miami Beach's **plastic-free campaign** and continues to utilize single-stream recycling onsite, a collection method in which recycled materials are sorted and processed off-site. This activity eliminates cardboard, paper, plastic, and aluminum cans from ending up in landfills and provides an efficient recycling program for show management, exhibitors, employees, and attendees. In addition, plastic water and beverage bottles have been replaced with aluminum cans as a direct result of the City of Miami Beach's new **agreement** with PepsiCo. Water bottle refill stations are also available.

During the renovation process, the MBCC installed reduced flow water faucets and flush fixtures to increase water efficiency with an expected 36 percent reduction in water consumption. This equates to approximately 115,000 gallons of water saved annually.

Reduced energy consumption is supported by sun-shading "fins" along the exterior perimeter of the building preventing excessive solar heat gain. The venue leverages daylight in its public spaces to reduce the need for artificial lighting and uses high-efficiency LED lighting in the ballrooms and meeting rooms with occupant light sensors. This new design reduces energy consumption by 20 percent.

The reality of continuous sea-level rise is a critical concern for the City of Miami Beach. The MBCC addresses this challenge in several resilient ways. Critical building systems such as emergency generators, communication systems, electrical switchgear, electrical panels, and emergency responder radio enforcement systems have all been raised above new flood level requirements.

Sodexo Live!, the exclusive food and beverage partner of the MBCC, also brings additional sustainability solutions to the 'table'. Serving tens of thousands of guests at the MBCC annually, Sodexo Live! utilizes eco-friendly service ware and showcases displays made from both renewable resources and post-consumer recycled materials, providing an array of biodegradable, compostable, and recyclable options.

Silver LEED Certification

In 2020, the MBCC received the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Silver certification, recognizing environmentally friendly infrastructure and sustainable practices incorporated into the venue as part of its recently completed \$620M renovation.

Building Design

The nationally-acclaimed team at Fentress Architects and Architectonica collaborated to create a state-of-the-art sustainable design with eco-conscious operational features. Builders used recycled materials throughout the project, with more than 20 percent of the materials sourced locally in Miami and the greater Florida area. Over 90% percent of the construction waste was recycled.

Green Space Projects

The MBCC's \$620M expansion incorporated many environmentally friendly features to support green initiatives and help achieve its coveted LEED® Silver certification. The site maximizes open spaces including the transformation of approximately six acres of asphalt into a vibrant public park known as Pride Park and close to three acres into Collins Canal Park. This feature alone reduced the heat island effect and increased the campus's green space by 245% when parking was moved to the venue's rooftop. The landscape conservation design preserved more than 100 existing trees and allowed for the planting of a new canopy of more than 1,330 trees. A beautiful Strangler Fig Tree has become the central focus of the outdoor space in the northeast corner of the MBCC Campus. The design also promoted incorporated irrigation and environmental stabilization through plant species selection.

Conventions C.A.R.E.

Conventions C.A.R.E, a donation program launched by the MBCC, was created to give back and help support the local community in Miami Beach and greater Miami-Dade County as part of the center's commitment to corporate social responsibility. Many large-scale conventions, meetings, and events leave behind products that can be repurposed and reused by local non-profit and charitable organizations.

Organic Waste Reduction and Food Donations to Local Charities

Sodexo Live! gives back to the local community by donating unused prepared food from events at the MBCC to The Caring Place, the Miami Rescue Mission, and Food Rescue US – South Florida helping those in need while also diverting organic food waste from local landfills. The Sodexo Live! and MBCC teams continue to foster and build strong relationships with local organizations to address food insecurity in the area. The MBCC works with organizations like Food Rescue US – South Florida both before and after events to organize the pick-up of any unused products in addition to prepared foods once the event concludes.

"I learned throughout doing this that decomposing food in landfills is one of the worst contributors to climate change," stated Ellen Bowen, Director of Food Rescue US – South Florida. "The methane gas that is produced from decomposing food is 86 times more powerful than CO²."

Composting Program

The Sodexo Live! team at the MBCC has recently forged a new partnership with Compost For Life (C4L) to collect and compost organic food waste generated at the venue. The organization picks up and converts wasted and non-donatable organic food scraps like fruits, veggies, egg shells, and more to be sustainably composted, which in turn supports local farmers, protects biodiversity, and helps counter the effects of climate change. This new and inclusive composting program was first launched at the 'Aspen Ideas: Climate Summit' held at the MBCC in May 2022.

"I'm proud to work with C4L to establish an efficient composting program at the MBCC", said Danny Medina, Sodexo Live!'s Regional Vice President/ General Manager. "We are extending this option to all show management and meetings to come. Our first collection weighed in at about 500 pounds, to date we have donated over 7,500 pounds, and we look forward to continuing this partnership to further enhance our sustainability efforts."

Sodexo Live! is currently undergoing a "Food Recovery and Waste Reduction" training and assessment program with acclaimed sustainability consultant Dr. Aurora Benton of Astrapto.

MIAMI BEACH - SODEXO LIVE! APPOINTS MICHELLE VAZQUEZ AS ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER AT THE MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER

The Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) and Sodexo Live!, the official caterer of the Miami Beach

venue, are excited to announce that Michelle Vazquez has been named Assistant General Manager of Sodexo Live! at the MBCC. A native of Puerto Rico, Vazquez has worked with Sodexo Live!—originally Centerplate—since 2016.

Understanding all aspects of the business, Vazquez started at the company as a banquet server at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, FL. From there, she quickly worked her way up the ranks—becoming Hospitality Supervisor, taking a temporary HR role, and then earning another promotion to HR Assistant due to her dedication to that temporary position. Here, she handled all scheduling, hiring and employee management practices for Sodexo Live! clients, including some of the largest event venues and convention centers nationwide.

Not long after, Vazquez was appointed Human Resources Manager of the MBCC, where she helped manage the venue's 2018 \$620 million renovation and expansion and led the MBCC's operational response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On a day-to-day basis, Vazquez was responsible for implementing all employee processes and protocols at the South Florida venue, including training, payroll, problem-solving, hiring, performance management and, most importantly, building and maintaining a positive work environment. Through it all, she displayed her lifelong passion for hospitality and serving others, and solidified her skills as an effective leader in the workplace.

Now Assistant General Manager, Vazquez oversees all department initiatives for Sodexo Live! at the MBCC, from banquets and culinary to sales, retail, employment matters, and more. She constantly looks for ways to ensure a positive visitor experience and is committed to rebuilding her high-quality team with full- and part-time staff in a post-pandemic world.

“Michelle's incredible skill set, passion and aptitude for learning new aspects of the business quickly has been evident from the beginning,” said Freddie Peterson, General Manager of the MBCC. “Having worked in everything from banquet service to HR, she has a unique perspective of how we can enhance both the customer and employee experience at Sodexo Live! and the MBCC. I look forward to seeing all that she will accomplish in her new role.”

Most exciting for Vazquez is the platform she will have to do what she loves most: serve the heartstrings of her company—its people.

“Everything starts with our employees. I show our employees that we care about them, and they, in turn, go on to care for our clients,” says Vazquez. “My employees give their all and we work together to make everything run smoothly. I love the team that I have had a large part in creating.”

MIAMI BEACH - OVG360 NAMES PATRICIA M. RIOS, MSHRM, NEW HUMAN RESOURCES BUSINESS PARTNER | IT OPERATIONS AT MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER

The Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) is excited to announce that Patricia M. Rios, MSHRM—who has been Human Resources Business Partner at OVG360 at MBCC since 2019—will now oversee all human resources and IT operations at the MBCC as Human Resources Business Partner | IT Operations.

A veteran industry professional, Rios brings over 20 years of experience in hospitality and human resources management at reputable brands like OVG360, Centerplate, Interstate Hotels & Resorts, Starwood Hotels, and KSL Resorts. Working through a human resources lens, she has overseen property openings, transitions, and renovations at major venues all over the country and implemented lasting policies and procedures designed to build department infrastructure and increase efficiency in HR. Through it all, she has led employees with positivity, inclusion, excellent communication, and an emphasis on teamwork—focusing on talent development and retention to foster a constantly growing, evolving, and improving the environment.

“In her three years with us, we have been able to witness and benefit from the profound impact Patricia's excellent leadership, customer service, professionalism, management, and hospitality expertise has had on our venue but most importantly, our MBCC family,” said Freddie Peterson, General Manager of the

MBCC. “No matter what is asked of Patricia, her innate ability to step up, pivot, problem solve and get the job done is truly unique. As we look at how HR and IT continue to integrate, we are perfectly positioned with even more success in having Patricia in this additional role.”

In her last role, Rios was responsible for aligning business objectives with employee protocols, consulting with management about human resource issues, and being a champion for company employees. Under her new title, she looks forward to further enhancing the work experience by incorporating innovative technology that makes the day-to-day employee and data experience safer, easier, and more effective.

“I have already begun making changes department-wide by standardizing certain IT processes and finding ways to be more efficient and productive,” says Rios. “It is also critically important for our teams to have the ability to collaborate and share information safely and efficiently, which is one of many exciting projects I want to accomplish in my new venture with OVG360.”

Both personally and professionally, Rios is passionate about community involvement. She is currently a member of the South Florida Hospitality HR Association, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Miami-Dade County Summer Youth Internship Program. At OVG, she is co-champion of the Hispanic Latin Alliance Employee Resource Group, which promotes company-wide Hispanic and Latin cultural awareness, creates safe spaces for Hispanic and Latin employees, and develops more opportunities for those employees to obtain leadership positions at OVG360.

Driven by her love and appreciation for her cultural heritage, Rios sees this next move not just as an exciting step in her career but as a Hispanic woman. She looks forward to getting to further advocate for diversity in the workforce with her team at OVG360.

“OVG360 understands that, to continue positively disrupting the industry, we need a diverse team to help us do it. We also believe that inclusivity drives innovation, strengthens our people, improves our service, and raises our excellence,” Rios says. “When I started my career over 20 years ago, it wasn’t easy to position myself in a leadership role as a woman with a Spanish accent. I have worked hard and am happy to have found individuals who believe in me as much as I believe in myself.”

GEORGIA



ATLANTA -COBB GALLERIA CENTRE & COBB ENERGY PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE WELCOME NEW FOOD & BEVERAGE DIRECTOR

The Cobb-Marietta Coliseum & Exhibit Hall Authority is pleased to announce the hiring of Shawn Stinson to the position of Director of Food & Beverage at the Cobb Galleria Centre and Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. Stinson has 25 years of experience in venue and food & beverage management. As Director of Food & Beverage, Stinson will provide strategic leadership and execution of the company’s food and beverage concepts.

“Shawn’s background and credentials bring a fresh perspective to our venues,” said Michele Swann, General Manager & CEO of the Cobb-Marietta Coliseum & Exhibit Hall Authority. “She brings a depth of knowledge that will add to our already incredibly talented team and elevate the guest experience.”

Stinson, a Michigan native, began her career in country club management. Additionally, she spent 12 years with the Academy of Medicine at Georgia Tech and most recently was the General Manager of Proof of the Pudding at Savanna Hall (Zoo Atlanta). She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business

LOUISIANA



NEW ORLEANS - New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center and NOLA ChristmasFest Deliver Letters to Local Veterans

Today, the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center and **NOLA ChristmasFest** hand-delivered dozens of letters written during Jolly in July to the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Home.

Attendees celebrated the first-ever **Jolly in July** event this past weekend with a holiday

snowball contest. Celebrity judges and attendees voted on their favorite holiday-flavored snowball created by some of the most well-known stands in New Orleans. STOP-JOCKIN SNOBALLS took home the title of “Kids’ Favorite” as the snowball flavor voted most popular by event participants, and SWEET THANGS NOLA won the crown for “Best Overall Snowball,” chosen by the panel of celebrity judges including Tiffany King, Megan Braden-Perry, and WGNO’s Kenny Lopez

The night was (snow)capped off with a movie screening for the entire family to enjoy. Jolly in July guests walked away with photos with Swirly the Elf and Summer Santa, as well as memories of a night of family fun and Christmas spirit.

“It was a fun night. We were happy to host an event designed to encourage family togetherness and spread the Christmas spirit to the people of New Orleans, a little earlier than usual” said Michael J. Sawaya, Convention Center President. “After seeing all the joy-filled faces and the letters attendees wrote to our veterans, we are really already looking forward to NOLA ChristmasFest this December.”

Jolly in July is the summer spinoff of **NOLA ChristmasFest**, a 10-day event featuring an ice rink, a Yuletide Market and several kid-friendly holiday attractions. Dates for this year’s NOLA ChristmasFest are December 21st-30th. Tickets for this year’s NOLA ChristmasFest will go on sale this fall. Follow NOLA ChristmasFest on **Facebook**, **Instagram** and **Twitter** for updates on ticket sales.

For more information, visit nolachristmasfest.com.



NEW ORLEANS - The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center Receives Sixth LWCC “Safest 70” Award

The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center has received their sixth “Safest 70” award from the **Louisiana Workers Compensation Corporation (LWCC)**, the largest workers’ compensation carrier in the state. The award acknowledges excellence, outstanding performance, and commitment to workplace safety, and is given to the top 70 of approximately 20,000 policyholders insured by LWCC.

The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center was recognized based on the effectiveness of their safety efforts in preventing injuries and maintaining a consistent workplace safety history in 2021. In addition to this year’s Safest 70 award, The Convention Center also received the title in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

“Being safe on the job, no matter the job, is an immensely important aspect of the work we do here at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center,” said Michael J. Sawaya, Convention Center President. “When event planners schedule events, they look for teams and facilities that have a proven track record of safety-minded excellence. This award, our sixth from the LWCC, proves that it is not just the policy that makes the Convention Center a safe place to work, but the culture that this workplace inspires and demonstrates that we are Built To Host.”

Recently, the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center was awarded the Top Workplaces award by **NOLA.com/Times-Picayune**, which celebrates winning employee cultures in New Orleans and around the country.

“Between six LWCC ‘Safest 70’ awards, and seven ‘Top Workplaces Awards’, we could not be happier with the dedication to the safety of our guests and external clients that our employees, who we consider internal partners in the success of our facility, have shown throughout the years,” Sawaya concluded.

“I couldn’t be more proud of our Team and their hard work, dedication and commitment to continually keep our internal and external customers safe, at all costs, said Adam J. Straight, Convention Center Vice President of Operations. “These accolades are a direct result of their sheer focus on the mission to deliver unrivaled results for our internal and external customers in safe, hospitable, exceptionally well-maintained facilities through innovative and collaborative efforts that contribute significant benefits to the New Orleans and Louisiana economy.”

“LWCC has always prioritized workplace safety and will continue to support safe work practices for all policyholders as we strive to better Louisiana, one business and one worker at a time,” said Kristin Wall, LWCC President and CEO. “We are proud to celebrate policyholders who are committed to this vision and to the safety of their workforce through the Safest 70 awards. Their efforts elevate Louisiana!”



NEW ORLEANS - Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority Adopts Development Agreement with River District Neighborhood Investors

The Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority Board (the Authority) today moved to adopt a master development agreement with its development partner, River District Neighborhood Investors, LLC (RDNI).

At the Authority’s August meeting, the board voted to approve terms for a mixed-use development of 39-acres of land adjacent to the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center (NOENMCC). Advancing a partnership many months in the making, today’s board action grants RDNI the permission to proceed with developing plans that will fulfill the Authority’s vision to create new experiences for residents and visitors alike.

Of key importance to the agreement moving forward: the developers have made a hard commitment to a total of 900 mixed-income housing units, of which 450 will be affordable and workplace housing units.

According to experts, this agreement with RDNI provides a model for diversity and equity that may serve as a national model for public/private partnerships of this nature. The Authority created financial incentives for RDNI to distribute ownership of the eventual development to a diverse set of equity partners, while still meeting its fiduciary responsibilities.

The new development represents a generational opportunity to activate undeveloped urban riverfront land as a transformative asset for the New Orleans region and the state of Louisiana. Set to include new dining, retail, housing, and entertainment options, the riverfront hub will make the Convention Center more competitive in the national event and meeting marketplace, further enhancing the facility’s reputation as being “Built to Host.”

“We are thrilled to partner with River District Neighborhood Investors as we work toward our shared vision of a vibrant riverfront neighborhood that will expand economic opportunities all around,” said Authority President, Jerry Reyes. “This is a major milestone for all of us, as this partnership and project development plan will create hundreds of new jobs while providing additional business opportunities to small, emerging and disadvantaged businesses enterprises in our community.”

The project plan is expected to have elements of a traditional mixed-use development, incorporating the latest trends in urban planning with a focus on creating green spaces and community gathering places as opportunities for greater engagement among members of the community and visitors alike. In addition to various dining, retail and entertainment options, the abandoned former power plant on the adjacent property is expected to be transformed into a major anchor of activity.

“Our transformative project, the River District, is one step closer to reality today, thanks to the action of the Ernest N. Morial Exhibition Hall Authority,” said Louis Lauricella, co-managing member of RDNI. “We want to thank Jerry Reyes and the Authority board for embracing our bold vision of New Orleans rising at this one-of-its-kind development. Our project will bring people, culture and commerce together in a uniquely New Orleans, mixed-use neighborhood along the banks of the Mississippi River and contribute significantly to the local economy. We will continue to work intentionally on the project’s pre-construction and master planning, so we are able to break ground in 2023.”

Currently in the pre-development process, the NOENMCC and RDNI expect to commence construction of phase 1 of the development in Q3 of 2023.



CVE CORNER - ROBERT ROSE



1. When people inquire about how we as venue managers got into this industry, most people say they just fell into it. How did you happen to get into this crazy industry we all love so much?

As Darth Vader would have shared with me, "It is your destiny!" I thought Smokey the Bear was what I was destined to be. Graduating from Michigan State University with a degree in Parks and Recreation, I had internships in various Michigan State Parks. This was a great start in that direction. However, an intriguing opportunity developed as Facilities Specialist for the Parks and Recreation Department in Allen Park, Michigan. This urban recreation position placed me on the path to facility management for the next 41 years. Operating an ice arena, auditorium, banquet hall and meeting spaces was a much bigger universe of facilities to manage than I could ever imagine.

Fortunately, the Department Director was a great mentor and the staff was highly skilled in operating these facilities. I did my very best to learn as much as I could by watching them to see what worked well operationally and who I could count on to successfully operate these venues eighteen hours a day.

Upcoming stops at the University of Florida's O'Connell Center with Lionel Dubay and the Thunderdome/Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Florida were amazing adventures to advance my growth as a Venue Manager.

My past twenty years at the Tampa Convention Center started under the leadership of Mina Boyd and a great team in Tampa, Florida. It is indeed an industry that we love so much and I learn something new every day!

2. What is the most unique event you have experienced at a venue in your career?

The Republican National Convention (RNC) was the event of a lifetime! In August of 2012, we hosted the RNC Media Center at the Tampa Convention Center. Our staff dedicated 18 months to planning, training, and related preparations to successfully host this unique event. The week of the event we operated 24 hours a day due to the extensive contingent of national and international media to meet their deadlines in local time zones. We had help from Hurricane Isaac that blew around much of the outdoor set-ups. The hurricane ended up being a blessing because it significantly reduced the expected number of protesters. Who wants to live in tents with hurricane winds and torrential rain to contend with for several days? The event organizers were well organized, experienced and very skilled negotiators. Our facility was rented for 61 days start to finish. Some of their senior leadership had RNC experience dating back to the 60's and the 70's. The pre-planning and discussions with the previous RNC host site in Minneapolis and staying current with daily updates at the 2012 DNC site in Charlotte proved to be invaluable!

3. Many of us have had mentors or venue professionals who saw something in us and encouraged us to go further in this industry. Is that true for you and, if so, who were your mentors?

During my early years with the IAAM (now IAVM), I looked up to the association's senior officers. It was a time when the annual conferences were often a family affair where we included a little vacation before or after the conference in the host city. Lionel Dubay provided great guidance for me in creating lasting relationships with concert promoters, athletic department contacts, as well as developing our staff through industry training opportunities. Ray Ward was instrumental in providing leadership and dedication to the success of the Public Assembly Facility/Management School (now VMS). Cliff Wallace and John Christison brought awareness to the importance of international involvement in the association. I will be forever grateful for the friendship and inspirational guidance of Courtney Dyer, Jan Addison, Carol Moore, and Dave Anderson. Each of these leaders had very different and effective methods to get the volunteer work of IAVM committees accomplished.

4. What is one of your best and one of your worst days on the job?

We are fortunate in this industry to have so many best days!! One of my most memorable "best days" was to help make it possible for a "Dream Wish" to come true for a little girl to have her picture taken with her favorite artist. Even though the mother did everything she could through the approved channels, her daughter's wish was never approved. We "unofficially" arranged for the mother and the daughter to be outside the dressing room door and MC Hammer graciously agreed to have a photo taken together. I received a note two weeks later from her mother stating that her daughter had passed away. She was so incredibly grateful that we could make this DREAM and final wish come true! Best days are so satisfying when we can make a difference in the lives of others!

The worst day involved a horrific rain storm during a rock concert. We had six inches of rain in one hour causing extensive flooding inside and outside the stadium. The stadium had a unique roof that moved under the stress of high wind and rain causing the stage trusses to drop about six feet. Water was cascading down the stairs like waterfalls and hundreds of guests had to be relocated. The promoter was going to pull the artist due to the uncertainty of how the rigging would be impacted. Fortunately, the roof designer was present at the show and explained how the roof was designed to the satisfaction of the promoter. Everything returned to normal just as the designer indicated it would be when the storm passed. As they say, "The Show Must Go On!"

5. What or who was the motivator that made you want to pursue your Certified Venue Professional designation?

The CVE certification was a long-term goal that I strived to achieve by taking the necessary steps to successfully earn this designation. I saw more and more of our industry leaders stepping up to pursue the CVE designation. It was at that time that I decided to get more involved with professional development, committee work, actively participating in conferences, and developing a more diverse network of industry contacts. Excellent opportunities are available today with VMS, AVSS and the addition of the Certified Venue Professional (CVP) certification process.

The CVE designation gave me access to an expanded network of venue managers that I could call upon for assistance whenever needed. Cliff Wallace continues to be an inspiration in my career development. His leadership, mentorship and encouragement helped me to see the importance of achieving the CVE designation.

6. What would you say to those colleagues who are qualified to obtain their CVE but don't do so due to various reasons?

There is so much joy and feeling of accomplishment when you finally realize you have achieved the goal you have pursued for so long! I looked around the room at a recent CVE breakfast and spoke with the newest recipients as well as the veterans. They all share in their own words that it was such a great journey and well worth the time investment. Don't miss out! You will learn more about yourself, the industry, and that desire to encourage others to move forward to begin their own CVE adventure. I have been blessed to actively support two candidates through the process in my career. Encouraging them to utilize the resources available through the IAVM Headquarters team who will go the extra mile to ensure you receive what ever you need. I was so grateful for the support of Rosanne Duke and Dana Glazer during my CVE process! It is achievable, it's a rewarding experience and you will never regret the time investment to achieve your CVE designation. If you have any doubts, call or email me today! Don't wait! I will gladly share the long-term benefits of this certification and re-certification process. It is a thrilling victory like no other!

7. In this industry, we work long hours and lots of weekends. What is your ideal way to spend the weekend when not working?

I recently became a Grandpa! Spending time with my Granddaughter Faith and our family is relaxing, rewarding, and a time to cherish whenever possible. Memories are built through meaningful relationships and time to build these relationships. Working puzzles, building towers, and just reading great books with her as we cuddle on the big pillows will be forever treasured! She loves to ride the "Choo Choo" train at the mall and eat ice cream. Me too! My wife and I like to hike in various local parks with so much variety in Florida. Colorful birds, exotic vegetation, and beautiful sunsets are forever present in this beautiful, tropical climate in which we live. It is still a thrill to see alligators, butterflies, eagles and an occasional roseate spoonbill up close in the wild. Taking photos along the way capture the serenity of this place. It is always a favorite hobby!!!

8. When was the last time you changed your opinion/belief about something major?

One person can make a significant difference and legacy. The area around our convention center has dramatically changed over the past eight years due to our Mayor's vision to create a more dynamic downtown and the inspiration of a \$3 billion dollar investment for a bright future of downtown by the owner of our local hockey team.

One outstanding contribution from a staff member could greatly reduce expenses or create a revenue opportunity in unbelievable ways. We had an artistic fountain that cost a tremendous amount of money to maintain. A team member consistently recommended that we should make the fountain into a 360-degree waterfront bar. Today, that bar generates over \$1,000,000 in annual revenue and has created a waterfront destination with boats, bikes, walkers and tourists along the Riverwalk!

9. What could you do with two million dollars to impact the most amount of people?

"Dream On" is one of my favorite Aerosmith songs! Dreaming up my strategic plan for creating the greatest impact from \$2,000,000 breaks down to these primary goals:

- Establish 100 college internships at IAVM venues coordinated by the IAVM Foundation each year for the next three years.
- Provide start-up funding for a Winter Edition of the Venue Management School by creating 100 scholarships for participants to complete the two-year program.

- Create an IAVM Employee Recognition Program and Incentive Program Committee to oversee a matching grant at IAVM venues for the most effective ways to keep employees inspired, engaged, and appreciated. Who knows... maybe someone reading this article could make this dream come true by donating \$2 million for scholarships, internships and recognition programs.

10. What has been the hardest lesson you have learned in life?

In order to be my best, I need to know the right times to delegate, empower, and mentor my direct report team members. When I try to do too much myself, there is less overall productivity and job satisfaction for the team. Keeping the best and brightest engaged as well as appreciated, has yielded much better results in my life. There are too many ways to fail by doing too much independently and getting lost in the details. Helping my team members to achieve their goals and to be empowered has helped us to be more productive in serving our clients, guests and other departments in our organization. We have more energy and synergy by trying out new ways to be more productive and supportive of each other.

11. What risks are worth taking?

What are the benefits? What will be the worst outcome if the end result is a failure? Taking on events that would likely impact the safety of others is not worth the risk. Better planning and preparation create better opportunities for more successful events with acceptable risks. What can be done to minimize the risk? Do I have the means to manage the outcome? Booking back to back events with very tight turnovers are the types of risks worth taking, but sometimes the complexity of circumstances outweighs the potential rewards.

Hiring employees is a risk worth taking with well formatted interviews, background checks and training. I recently was asked by the HR Director whether I would risk my reputation on an applicant that did not pass the background check. I indicated that I knew that this person would be a great employee for us and requested that we be allowed to hire him. He has been a stellar employee and well worth the risk.

Is the CVE certification process that the Certification Committee has established a risk worth taking? Absolutely! I thought about the possibility of not passing the various steps, but there is a path to follow to achieve success. Ask the right questions, prepare with all of the incredible resources available and receive a great feeling of achievement when you receive that passing score!

SAVE THE DATE

GUESTX - Atlanta, GA | January 30 - February 1, 2023

Academy for Venue Safety and Security (AVSS) - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania | February 25 - March 3, 2023

Venue Management School (VMS) & The Graduate Institute - Tampa, Florida | June 3 - 10, 2023

Venue Connect 2023 - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania | July 31 - August 3, 2023



Check out this photo from VenueConnect 2022 in Phoenix! Pictured are Todd Mastry (Landers Center, Southaven, MS), Abby Hunt (Landers Center), and Todd Hunt (Venue Coalition).



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