



WEEKLY COMMUNITY  
NEWSPAPER OF  
ASSOCIATIONS, CVBs  
AND HOTELS

# USAE

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The 330-room Hilton Des Moines Downtown next to the Iowa Convention Center opened March 21. Left to right: Gerry Neugent, IEC Board of Directors; Tom Loughlin, Hilton; Matt Felling, the hotel's GM; Mike Tousley, Weitz Construction; and Greg Edwards, CEO, Catch Des Moines. See story page 8

## Guns at Conventions: Are Association Being Careful Enough?

By Todd McElwee

Where does the association community stand when it comes to firearms at meetings and conventions? Are we being careful enough?

In the wake of the recent tragedies in Las Vegas, Florida, Maryland and elsewhere, *USAE* looked to find some answers.

Questions of if, where and when firearms are permitted can be complicated. Association policies are largely shaped by destination laws and venue codes.

Adherence to local statutes and venue regulations shape their respective firearm policies ASAE, PCMA, IAEE and Destinations International told *USAE*.

MPI said it does not permit possession of a handgun (whether concealed or openly carried) at events unless local laws say otherwise.

For the legal perspective, *USAE* asked Jeffrey S. Tenenbaum, Sr. Counsel, Lewis Baach Kaufmann Middlemiss PLLC, an association law expert. He said associations have the right to apply reasonable restrictions that go beyond local law since their events are private. Similarly, he noted, sporting events, concerts and other private happenings regularly ban firearms and employ various manners of security for entry.

Here are some current examples of industry association firearms practices.

In January 2017, PCMA's Convening Leaders was held in Austin, which *Please turn to page 3*

## Destinations International Releasing Financials at Annual Convention

*Introducing New Dues Structure*

By Jonathan Trager

Destinations International said it will present its final financial numbers to members for approval at its Annual Convention in July, following the completion of an audit.

*USAE* published a story last month about the deficit the organization faced in 2017, largely because of legal challenges. The newspaper was told the revenue and expense figures listed in

the association's annual report were preliminary, and more information would be available after meetings on March 19 and March 20.

"We'll look forward to sharing that information with you then and will be happy to review the financials with you at that time," wrote Chief Financial Officer Julie Hart in an e-mail to *USAE* on Feb. 28. "Thanks in advance for your patience."

In an interview on March 22, Destinations International President & CEO Don

Welsh said the financials won't be provided to members before the convention. However, they'll be posted on the group's website after the Annual Convention and be accessible after a member logs into the online member portal.

Welsh said it's unlikely the numbers will change between now and July, but "you can't assume anything won't change until July until the audit is done."

In 2018, Destinations International will *Please turn to page 4*

## Hilton to Cut Third-Party Commissions

By Grant Broadhurst

Hilton Hotels is planning to cut third-party vendor commissions for group business from 10 percent to to 7 percent starting October 1, *USAE* has learned.

"At Hilton, we recognize the important and integral role group intermediaries play in our meetings and events

business, and we are proud to partner with a wide network of travel professionals to create meaningful experiences for our guests," Danny Hughes, Hilton's Senior Vice President and Commercial Director, Americas, told *USAE* in a statement. "At the same time, we also have to balance the needs of all parties, and we

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## Indianapolis Considers Options for New 800-Room Convention Hotel

By Grant Broadhurst

Indianapolis officials are in the midst of weighing development concepts from three developers for a convention hotel with a minimum of 800 rooms as well as climate-controlled access to the convention center and at least 45,000 square feet of grand ballroom space. The opening is targeted for between 2021 and 2023.

"The whole project getting to this point has been a result of that demand analysis and convention center optimization study," Leonard Hoops, President & CEO of Visit Indy, told *USAE*.

Hoops said Visit Indy did internal research such as talking to their customer advisory

board as well as external research with firms like HVS. He said the research found Indy needs a new headquarters hotel – located on the east or south side of the convention center – with 800 to 1,000 rooms and at least 45,000 square feet of ballroom space.

He said this is needed to keep some of Visit Indy's largest annual groups as well as effectively sell the building when a single group isn't using its entire functionality. He said the south campus isn't sold as effectively as the north end because of a lack of hotel room density and easy access to ballrooms on that side.

Responses to a request for information (RFI) put out

*Please turn to page 2*



# HOTS

Golden Snowstorm... Gold showered down from Siberian skies on March 15. The hazards of getting hit with millions of dollars worth of gold aside, HOTS would have liked to be there when the cargo hatch of a Cold War-era cargo plane carrying \$378 million worth of gold, platinum and diamonds ripped open during takeoff, spilling more than three tons of gold. Most of the 200 ditched gold bars fell on the Yakutsk Airport's runway, but the plane had to fly 10 miles to make an emergency landing at another airport, dropping gold goodness along its route. Fortunately for gold diggers, "most" of the gold has been recovered, which means there's probably a stray bar or two still out there. HOTS would book a flight to go hunting, but HOTS isn't sure landing on a gold-riddled runway is as

good an idea as it sounds. A gold-plated runway, however, might worth it.

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Driver's Ed... HOTS prefers to be chauffeured around in stretch Cadillacs because it's so much more comfortable than driving a mechanized brick of doom (also called a car in some circles). A 17-year-old girl who recently took her road test for her driver's license might agree. On March 21, she accidentally put her Chevy Equinox in drive instead of reverse and plowed into the exam station during the test.

The license examiner received non-life-threatening injuries, but fortunately no one else was hurt. For HOTS, this is just another reason to look forward to the day when the stretch Cadillac and Chevy Equinoxes can drive themselves so we can blame General Motors instead of infuriatingly tricky automatic transmissions. No word on whether she passed the test or not.



Choose Chicago held a client event featuring Joe Flamm, Executive Chef of Spiaggia, at the AJAX in Washington, D.C. on March 20. Shown here are the participants of the gnocchi rolling activity. From left to right: Lori Adlesick, Choose Chicago; Brian Motyka, Spiaggia; Joe Flamm, Spiaggia; and Marc Anderson, Choose Chicago. From left to right: Heather Carnahan, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; Laura Northrop, Society for Human Resource Management; Flamm; Caryn Pepper, Interel + Meetings Management Group; Sondra Williams, American Benefits Council; Patrick Reilly, Pulmonary Hypertension Association; and Marc Anderson, Choose Chicago.

## VISIT Milwaukee Launches New Website

By Jonathan Trager

VISIT Milwaukee unveiled a new website designed to capture "the spirit of Milwaukee's people, neighborhoods, events, and attractions."

The updated website, [www.visitmilwaukee.org](http://www.visitmilwaukee.org), went live on March 17. The site is a rebranding of how VISIT Milwaukee represents the region to meeting planners, corporations, recruiters, and visitors.

"Our research reinforced that people are most interested in visiting cities that spark a passion for discovery and offer

the chance to collect unique experiences" said Megan Suardini, Vice President of Marketing & Communications for VISIT Milwaukee. "From the Riverwest 24 [bike race] to Koz's Mini Bowl [bowling tournament], Milwaukee is overflowing with unexpected and charmingly quirky experiences that are unique to our city."

The site was created in conjunction with marketing firm Hanson Dodge. CEO Tim Dodge said the company was excited to partner with VISIT Milwaukee on the project.

"Early in the process we saw the opportunity to create not just a website,

but a memorable digital experience that inspires visitors to come here and experience Milwaukee for themselves," said Dodge.

One of the new site features is a slot-machine-style "randomizer" on the homepage that randomly pulls up interesting things for visitors to do in the city. A new "My Trip" tool allows visitors to plan their trip to Milwaukee by "curating a virtual shopping cart with the unique experiences they find while exploring the site," according to the organization.

In addition, the site boasts an expand-

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## Guns

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mits open carry. Deciding against firearm admittance, PCMA placed signage at the center entrances informing attendees guns were not permitted within the convention center during the event.

MPI's World Education Congress (WEC) is scheduled for June 2-5 at Indianapolis' Indiana Convention Center (ICC). Indiana allows for open or concealed weapons to be carried by anyone with a valid permit.

However ICC allows clients the right to restrict weapons from private areas – halls, meeting

rooms, etc. – they are leasing for their event, which MPI said aligns with its policy and will enforce. MPI noted however, per ICC security, common areas of the convention center, such as the lobby, do not qualify as they are open to the general public and thus MPI's rules do not apply within these areas.

Mark Herrera, Director of Education, International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM), said research conducted by VenueDataSource of approximately 50 convention centers showed 61% of those surveyed would not permit firearms in the venue at all if they had

a choice. IAVM does not take a legal position, though as a professional association it is concerned about members' responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for both employees, and guests recognizing that even a patron lawfully carrying a firearm held in public assembly venues can contribute to anxiety, panic or other like responses by others.

None of the associations USAE contacted mentioned enlisting armed police officers – uniformed, plain-clothed, or off-duty – for security. Officers, though, are regularly present at convention centers and ASAE said they are often provided by cities for opening events. In January PCMA used a police detail for its Guinness World Record Attempt in Nashville. IAEE had security dogs and their handlers onsite for Expo! Expo! last December in San Antonio.

The regular usage of metal detectors was also not cited by those contacted – the exception being the upcoming Opening Celebration for ASAE's Annual Meeting & Exposition this August in Chicago. Attached to McCormick Square, the Wintrust Center, home of DePaul University's basketball teams, will be part of the festivities and has policy of using magnometers. ASAE will adhere

to the policy and prep attendees on the protocol.

Event and venue security education and resources have and are currently being developed by the association community.

MPI's Emergency Preparedness For Meetings and Events certificate program was created in partnership with the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) at the University of Southern Mississippi, and is a deep dive into incident management strategies as needed for the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from all-hazard emergency incidents. The association's Plan Your Meetings has also published information concerning firearms including an interactive map detailing local laws.

IAEE and Exhibition Services and Contractors Association (ESCA) have worked on industry-wide security guideline and standards.

Working with multiple organizations and Bob Mellinger, Founder & CEO, Attainium Corp., ASAE's M&E Section Council has developed a crisis communications plan for facilities and their staff teams.

Regarding liability should a tragedy occur, Tenenbaum said the general standard of liability for an association or facility would be negligence, which would include the absence of reasonably appropriate measures such as an ample number of security guards. Of course since each instance is unique extraordinary circumstances could apply.

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