

# INSIDE BUZZ



The membership newsletter of the  
Michigan Society of Government Meeting Professionals (MiSGMP)

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March/April 2026

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## |||President's Pen

Greetings!

Our chapter has been busy!

Since I last wrote, we were preparing for our February monthly meeting on mental health in the workplace. The session was outstanding. I also realized that juggling six jobs, including event planning, may be increasing my risk for a heart attack, so I probably need to add another day on the treadmill.



Overall, it was a fantastic presentation, and I look forward to more of the great educational speakers our committee brings in.

Most recently, we held our Annual Education Conference, and it was incredible. The sessions were amazing, the reception was fun and unique, and had visitors from Area 51, and the awards celebration truly soared to new heights of fun and excitement. I cannot thank the AEC Committee enough for all they did. Congratulations to all of our award winners, and thank you to everyone who helped with the small details around the hotel. As always, thank you for spending two and a half days with me — I know that is no easy task!

As we look ahead, we only have two more monthly meetings before we go quiet for the summer. In April, we'll be heading near the Thumb to Bay City, and in May, we'll return to Lansing to wrap things up. June will bring the National Education Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Don't forget to complete the AEC evaluation if you attended. If you did not attend AEC, our member Jamie Mathews is putting together a planner/supplier "yellow pages" directory. This complimentary resource will be available to every SGMP member, and she needs your help completing the survey. If you did not receive the link, please [complete the survey now](#).

The national membership “pennant race” has come to a close, and hats off to Katy Golden, Sherida Aikins, and Tammy Novak for helping the Michigan Chapter finish in second place.

The results of our chapter board election for 2026–2028 were released (via email), and I look forward to working with the new members of the board.

In addition, the microcredentialing and online CGMP classes are going strong. If you are interested, please reach out or visit the National SGMP website.

I hope everyone is enjoying the warmer weather, beginning to plan vacations, and having a little fun. I appreciate each and every one of you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your board members — we are here for you.

Take care, and I'll see you all soon.

P.S: Don't forget to follow us on **Facebook** to get quick updates about the chapter.

Warm wishes,

**Nick Stratton**

Event Specialist

**Kelley Cawthorne**

(C) 269.425.2495

And President of the *Michigan Chapter of Society Government Meeting Professionals*



## SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

**Kenny Polzin | Director of Sales**  
**Hilton Garden Inn Lansing West**

Tell us a little more about yourself.

I started in hospitality in June of 2021 and, over the last year and a half, have served as the Director of Sales at the Hilton Garden Inn Lansing West. Prior to hospitality, I worked in the



non-profit field for 15 years. I have my CTA certification through Choose Lansing. I have a wonderful wife named Violet, and we have a 1-year-old son, Parker.

Tell us a little bit about the hotel you represent.

The Hilton Garden Inn Lansing West is a beautiful property located on the corner of Saginaw and Canal roads. We offer 5,500 sq ft of banquet space, a full-service bar and restaurant, an indoor swimming pool, a 24-hour fitness center, and 124 guest rooms.

How did you get connected to SGMP and the Michigan Chapter, and what do you like most about your membership?

I was connected to SGMP by Stephanie Wohlfert as we have worked closely bringing events to the west side of Lansing. My favorite part of this membership is getting the opportunity to meet several wonderful people who will be hosting events.

Want to be featured in our next eNewsletter?  
Complete the MiSGMP NEW [Member and Member Spotlight Form](#)  
and share your story!

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT



## NEW MEMBERS



### The Brag Board

Promotions, awards, milestones, or big wins—this is your spot to shine! Don't be shy—email [swohlfert@lansing.org](mailto:swohlfert@lansing.org) to get featured in the next newsletter.

## UPCOMING MiSGMP EDUCATION MEETINGS



### Stretch the Budget, Not the Planner: Strategies for Cost-Effective Events

April 15, 2026

Speaker: Darla Bishop

Competency: Financial & Contract Management

Budgets are tight, expectations are high—and planners are feeling the pressure. In this fast-paced, practical session, Dr. Darla Bishop shares cost-saving strategies that help you deliver high-impact events without burnout or budget bloat. Learn how to prioritize spending, collaborate effectively with suppliers, and make smart financial decisions that serve both attendees and your sanity. Whether you're planning a board meeting or a statewide conference, you'll leave with actionable tips to stretch your budget—without stretching yourself too thin. [Learn more and register.](#)

LOCATION: [DoubleTree Bay City](#); One Wenonah Park Place, Bay City, MI 48708  
Call the hotel directly to make reservations at the government rate of \$98.00 ++  
(989) 891-6000

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### Leading Through Change Without Burnout

May 20, 2026

Speaker: Kenisha Coon, Kenisha Coon Consulting



Competency: Education and Programming

This training equips leaders and teams to navigate high-stress, evolving systems without burning out. Rooted in equity, evidence-based coaching, and trauma-informed leadership, participants will gain practical tools to lead with clarity, sustain impact, and foster team cultures that thrive—especially in environments demanding continuous change, emotional labor, and systemic transformation. [Learn more & register here](#)

LOCATION: [Courtyard Downtown Lansing](#)

Details for our room block (night of 5/19) will be available soon.

## TRENDING TIPS FOR MEETING PLANNERS

# TRENDING TIPS

### The "Shoulder Up" Principle

The idea is to focus your highest-impact decorating efforts on the space that is **at or above eye level** when guests are seated."

~ Kalin Sheick, *Founder, Sweetwater Floral*

### 75% at Breakfast

Consider that some of your attendees may skip breakfast or come in only for coffee. Drop your breakfast guarantee down a bit to save a little revenue.

~ Debbie Kopkau, *Director of Certification, Michigan School Business Officials*

If you have helpful TIPS you would like to share, please email them to: [dkopkau@msbo.org](mailto:dkopkau@msbo.org).

## GOVERNMENT MEETING SPECIALIST (GMS)



### GMS Certificate Program

The Government Meeting Specialist (GMS) Certificate is an SGMP Chapter program recommended for all planners and suppliers seeking the knowledge to perform their job functions effectively and professionally in the meeting industry. This voluntary certificate requires participation in educational programs that benefit both planners and suppliers, including new and experienced meeting professionals. The program is especially beneficial for government meeting professionals who are new to the industry, serves as an excellent precursor to the Certified Government Meeting Professional (CGMP) designation, and offers government meeting training focused on state and local topics.

To earn the GMS, members must complete a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of professional development through their local chapter. Track your hours using the [GMS Tracking](#)

**Form. Chapters** offer monthly education programs, typically six (6) to ten (10) hours each year. The GMS program typically takes between 3-5 years to complete. Hours must be earned within each of SGMP's **Core Competencies**.

Check your activities on the Website to see if you are due for renewal or need to complete the process.

If you are just starting, go to [GMS Certificate](#) and get Started Today!



MiSGMP | 5859 W. Saginaw Hwy. #144 | Lansing, MI 48917 US

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