

Lone Star News

Award Winning Newsletter

Texas Lone Star Capital Chapter
of the Society of Government Meeting Professionals

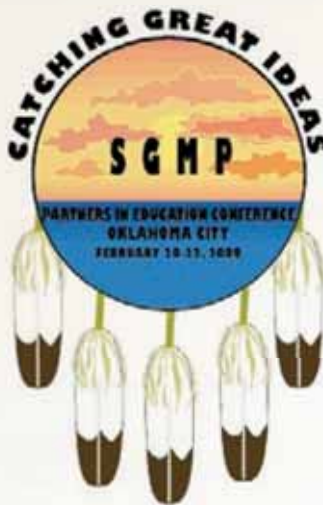
www.sgmpaustin.org

Vol. XVI, No. 1
1st Quarter 2009

THE 2009 PARTNERS IN EDUCATION CONFERENCE CATCHES *Great* IDEAS AND OVER 90 ATTENDEES

Heather Hidalgo, CMP, Texas Justice Training Center

THE WILD WEST CHAPTER OF SGMP welcomed the North Texas and Lone Star Capital Chapters to Oklahoma City for the 2009 Partners in Education Conference February 20-22, 2009. This is their first year to host the event and the first year that the Colorado chapter was invited with several of their members in attendance. When National SGMP divided the country into regions, Colorado was included in our region along with the three Texas chapters and the Wild West Chapter. Oklahoma is home to many Native Americans which inspired the theme, *Catching Great Ideas*. The logo, designed by Robert Gonzalez, a planner with the Commission on State Emergency Communications, was very fitting and was symbolized with a Dream Catcher which graced the cover of the program and the lovely conference bags sponsored by the Wichita Falls CVB. Native Americans believe that dreams are messages from the spirit world and a dream catcher is said to attract positive dreams to its "webs."



The conference kicked off with a unique opening reception sponsored by the Oklahoma CVB. Attendees were bused to the infamous Bricktown by the Red Carpet Bus Lines to Red Pin Bowling, a combination bowling alley, club, bar and eatery. The high tech lanes featured large flat screen displays of your favorite music videos at the end of each alley above the pins — talk about a distraction — try knocking down the pins and watching Justin Timberlake bringing sexy back or Beyonce putting a ring on it! Great munchies were abundant and drinks flowed and bowling shoes were the fashion statement of the evening.



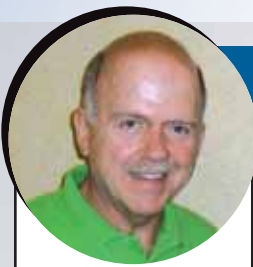
The Crowne Plaza Hotel Oklahoma City, host hotel, sponsored the delicious Saturday buffet breakfast. Attendees were welcomed by Maggie McGowan, Wild West Chapter President; Jim Zukowski, Texas Lone Star Capital Chapter President; and Fannie Smith, North Texas Chapter Immediate Past President. Danny Cavett of Cavett Kids Foundation introduced the conference charity and ask attendees to help their worthy cause.

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\$1,500 dollars were raised for Cavett Kids Foundation.



**JIM
ZUKOWSKI**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CHAPTER BOARD ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD LATER THIS SPRING. Exercise your right to vote by getting to know the members who are running for the various positions on the board. Members will have the opportunity of hearing the candidates speak at the upcoming April Education Meeting. Remember, that a position on the chapter board is a two-year commitment.

The SGMP Joint Conference was held in Oklahoma City on February 20-22, 2009. Over 90 attendees were at the event and were treated to some great motivational speakers. The kick-off speaker was Rebecca Pace who spoke on *Catching Great Ideas*. With a great deal of hilarity, she spoke to the audience on the steps one can take to avoid traps in the jungle of stress. A trade show was held later that day. Twenty-nine exhibitors greeted the attendees with a wealth of information on their properties and venues. Attendees were also provided an opportunity to attend the pilot of the Looking For Leaders program that will be available at the chapter and regional levels. Our own Grace Nied, CGMP, provided training, along with Rhonda Wise, CGMP, from the North Texas Chapter. The closing speaker was Leslie H. Blythe, Park Guide, at the Oklahoma City National Memorial. Her moving talk on Resiliency: How People Can Change The Story left the audience spellbound. Next year's Joint Conference will be held in Dallas at the Crowne Plaza Suites Hotel.

The National SGMP Annual Conference will be held on May 13-16, 2009 at the Galt House, Louisville, Kentucky. The program promises to be exciting and educationally rewarding. Go to www.sgmp.org for complete information and registration to attend the conference. Have a great and rewarding Spring. It's been a pleasure serving you! ★

Be a part of your organization!



Board Buzz



Rob Casias, CMP, National Guard Association of Texas

THIS ISSUE I would like to spotlight Ms. Linda Villarreal-Jackson, CGMP, who is serving as 1st Vice President on the TLSCC Board of Directors. Linda has been a member of our chapter since 2002 and served two previous terms on the board in the position of Director-Planner. I worked with Linda when she chaired the Membership Committee and I can speak for all of her committee members when I say that she is one of the most dedicated members we have working on behalf of our membership. In her current position on the board she serves as chair of the Communications Committee, which includes the Website, Newsletter and Public Relations committees. Through Linda's leadership on her committee, we have seen the development of a more user-friendly chapter website and have moved into the electronic age by "going green" and creating a digital version our chapter's newsletter. This change allows more members easier access to the newsletter and greatly reduces the expenses related to the newsletter's production.

It is not unusual to find Linda working late at her day job where she serves as the Assistant to the Assistant Chief of Field Operations of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC), or on the weekends to keep her committee tasks on target. She is also actively involved with the Education Committee and a participant of the Fundraising and Community Involvement committees.

You will see Linda at most chapter meetings, regional and national meetings — always with a smile and ready to volunteer wherever help is needed. ★

FINANCIAL REPORT

*Donna Cottle, CMP, CHSC,
Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau*

Income

Sep. Oct. Nov. 2008

Monthly Meeting Dues	\$ 1,910.99
Raffles\$	335.00
Silent Auction	3,955.00
Revenue Share from National	1,875.00
Sponsorship Ad – Newsletter.....	1,000.00
No Shows Collected.....	\$5.00
Chapter Retreat	1,101.50
T-Shirts.....	\$5.00
Joint Conference.....	1,710.00
	\$11,896.50

Expenses.....\$11,807.05

MEMBERSHIP *Update*

Ed Howard, Chair, Hilton Hotel Austin Airport

Current Member Statistics

42% Government Planners
4.5% Contract Planners
46.5% Total Planners
44.5% Suppliers
9% Other

Membership Statistics

65 Government Planners
7 Contract Planners
69 Suppliers
14 Educator/Student/Retired
155 Total Members

Membership News

Catherine Weir — Holiday Inn Town Lake

Rhonda Durst — retired, serves on membership committee

Jeanette Allison — Texas Architectural Foundation has received her CMP

Gina Garcia — retired from the Tx Building Procurement

Commission/Texas Dept of Economic Development, renewed as contractor planner

Denise Askea — title change: Director of Special Programs &

Residential Placement Texas Juvenile Probation

Amy Ford — Director of Sales, Holiday Inn Express & Suites — was Steven Shove

Susan Smith Dorsey — Director of Administration, Archives &

Records, Texas General Land Office

Mary A. Galarza — Event Coordinator, State Bar of Texas

Serena R. Rakita — Event Coordinator, ManTech SMA

First Quarter Donors — Raffle Prizes

January 2009 Door Raffle Prizes

The following donated items for the January 2009 Door Raffle: Holiday Inn/Tyler; Jim Zukowski; Doubletree Guest Suites; Doubletree Hotel North Austin, Radisson Hotel & Suites Austin, Sheraton Hotel.

February 2009

Rose Irrizarry, Jim Zukowski, Pat Streetman, Jamie Yount, Austin Airport Hilton, Austin CVB, Lydia Starry, Holiday Inn Lady Bird Lake, Renaissance Hotel, Austin Marriott Round Rock, Holiday Inn San Antonio, Houston Crowne Plaza North, Tapatia Springs, and Bob Nichols.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Alcoholic Beverages at Events presented by Gloria Moore

THE MAY MONTHLY MEETING will be held on May 7, 2009, at the Sheraton Hotel (formerly the Marriott). The program for the meeting is: Everything a Meeting Planner Needs to Know about Alcohol at Events but Was Afraid to Ask, which will be presented by Ms. Gloria Moore. Ms. Moore developed The Dram Shop School, one of the first Seller/Server Certification programs in Texas. The School has been used to train over 250,000 alcohol sellers and servers for TABC Certification. She now works as a consultant and expert in alcohol liability lawsuits. She will share stories to enlighten us about Best Practices in the Alcohol Service Industry and provide us with policies designed to help keep us off the front page and out of court. ★

June Monthly Meeting



THE JUNE MEETING will be held on Thursday, June 11, 2009 at the Norris Conference Center. The program will feature a Member Orientation that is interactive and will give you the opportunity to learn what SGMP is, does and how you benefit from being an involved member. The meeting will include the installation of the incoming 2009-2011 Board; a recap of the SGMP National Education

Conference by President Jim Zukowski. ★

July Silent/Live Auction

IT'S TIME to start planning one of our largest fundraisers of the year. The July Silent Auction will be held on July 9, 2009 at the DoubleTree Hotel, 6505 North IH 35. Come get some great deals. The money that is raised during our Silent Auction is used for Educational Scholarships for chapter members to attend the SGMP National Conference. We are currently accepting donations, please contact Linda Wade, CEM, 512-366-4304 ext. 402 or email her at lwade@conventiondecorating.com. ★



SGMP HELPS WITH LISA'S HOPE CHEST, SAFEPLACE & CAFB

Kathy Casarez, State Bar of Texas



THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE (CIC) started the New Year by continuing to support Lisa's H.O.P.E. Chest; an organization that collects gently used professional clothing for those in need. Lisa's H.O.P.E. Chest was established in 1996 by Elissa "Lisa" Benford in Austin, Texas and provides services such as the Clothes Closet, Image Consulting and Life Skills Training. This as a year-round event and we encourage anyone with gently used clothing and accessories to bring them to any of our monthly chapter meetings. To learn more about Lisa's H.O.P.E. Chest, visit their website www.lisashopechest.org.

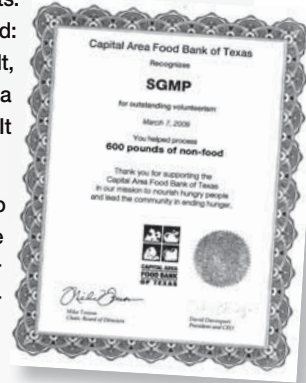


This is the second year that SafePlace has been selected as February's community involvement event. SafePlace is an organization that exists to end sexual and domestic violence through safety, healing, prevention and social change. It is available to men, women and children seeking shelter from sexual and domestic violence. The CIC gathered at Embassy Suites Hotel, 5901 North IH 35 on February 9th and assembled two different bags, one filled with travel size toiletry items such as soap, shampoo, conditioner and a disposable razor and the other filled with chocolates. Thank you to Susan Greenberg and the Embassy Suites Hotel for providing the meeting room, and Jim and Anita Zukowski for their assistance.



The CIC has volunteered at the Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB) for many years and this year was no exception. On March 7th a group of chapter members, friends & family gathered at the CAFB in South Austin to help separate and box-up household supplies. It was a massive undertaking. We sorted through boxes and boxes of various cleaning supplies such as detergents, scented candles, dryer sheets, carpet cleaner, toilet bowl cleaner and the list goes on and on. The scent of detergent was so strong at times you could almost taste it. At one point someone said they saw a bubble float aimlessly from their mouth. Needless to say, no one was particularly excited to go home and clean house. When it was all said and done the Food Bank said we had processed 600 pounds of non-food products. A big thank you to all those that participated: Patrick Bolin, Kathy Casarez, Michael Greenwalt, Lanna Johnston, Karen Krc, Nancy Ruiz, Karla Starkweather, Jyll Verturo and Catherine Weir. It was a great experience!

The CIC would like to extend an invitation to all chapter members to join our committee and our activities. If you are interested or have an organization you feel could use our assistance please contact Kathy Casarez, Chair, kcasarez@texasbar.com or by phone at (512) 427-1419. ★



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JANUARY CHAPTER MEETING: Leadership, Accountability & Winning

Jim Zukowski, Contract Planner

JIM BEARDEN, CSP, was the speaker at the January 8, 2009, SGMP Education Program held at the Omni Southpark Hotel. Mr. Bearden has had an extensive background in international consulting and for over 20 years, he has devoted a vast majority of time in professional speaking. Mr. Bearden's presentation, *Leadership, Accountability & Winning* centered on the relentless search for better ways to make our lives better and more rewarding. Jim emphasized that people, situations and circumstances in our lives change. As the people, situations and circumstances in our lives change, so do the requirements for our success. In order to satisfy the changing requirements for our success, Mr. Bearden feels that we must be willing to consider and try alternatives to the status quo. Dealing effectively with change requires us to make changes.

Jim described the requirements for winning. The first requirement for winning is more accountability and less victimhood. The second requirement for winning is to have people who are able and willing to lead. He described the characteristics of effective leaders. What effective leaders do, and do well, is to model accountability as a compelling alternative failure and to establish accountability as a



Jim Bearden and Jim Zukowski.



Jim Bearden and family.

cultural expectation. He also stresses that a leader must facilitate continuous process improvement.

Lastly, Mr. Bearden described how winning in the real world occurs. It occurs progressively over time, not overnight. It also evolves with a little theory and lots of effort. In winning, you'll have some success and some failure. Finally, winning occurs from the inside out. It comes from what you bring to the situation.

Everyone in the audience was visibly moved by the dynamic presentation. We hope Mr. Bearden will come back and bring us another engaging session. ★



CHAPTER ELECTIONS — YOU STILL HAVE TIME TO VOTE!

Karla Starkweather, Texas Health and Human Services Commission

We are looking forward to this election; we had many members accept nominations to run for the chapter board. We continuously seek ways to improve the way we do business and provide additional benefits to our members. We are pleased to announce that election will be held online.

Chapter Elections have started and will continue through April 28, 2009. You can go to www.sgmpaustin.org and click on the link to cast your vote. The candidates are as follows:

President

Linda Villarreal Jackson, CGMP, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
Janet Spies, Comptroller of Public Accounts

1st Vice President

Angelia Johnson, Texas Department of Insurance
Murray Moore, Texas Education Agency

2nd Vice President

Jaime Yount, DoubleTree Hotel

Secretary

Rob Casias, National Guard Association of Texas
Brenda Dotson, Texas Association for School Nutrition

Treasurer

Brent Beopple, Omni Austin Southpark

Director Planner

Jean Bonner, Texas Justice Court Training Center
Kathy Casarez, State Bar of Texas
Kim Kizer, Secretary of State's Office
Bob Nichols, Governor's Center for Management Development

Director Supplier

Joe Bedsole, Arlington CVB
Kay Summerville, Plano CVB

Director At-Large

Joe Bedsole, Arlington CVB
Jean Bonner, Texas Justice Court Training Center
Kathy Casarez, State Bar of Texas
Kim Kizer, Secretary of State's Office
Bob Nichols, Governor's Center for Management Development
Kay Summerville, Plano CVB

Election Process

- Accept nominations for the chapter board through February 27, 2009.
- Submit slate and obtain approval of the official slate from national headquarters and the current chapter board.
- The slate of officers will be available to the chapter sometime after mid March. Candidate bios and photos will be placed on the chapter web site for members to peruse.
- Candidates may campaign through Sunday, April 12, 2009.
- Campaign Speeches, April 8, 2009 during the April Monthly Meeting.
- Elections will be held April 13-28, 2009.
- Candidates will be notified on April 30, 2009.
- Announcement made to chapter members on Monday, May 4, 2009.
- The new board will be installed on June 11, 2009, and officially take office on July 1, 2009.

Please give your support to each of new board members!

FEBRUARY CHAPTER MEETING: The Non-Verbal Advantage: It's What You Don't Say

Karla Starkweather, Health and Human Services Commission

OUR FEBRUARY 12 MEETING took place in the beautiful Glass Oaks Ballroom in the Renaissance Austin Hotel. Nancy Van Bramer and her staff welcomed our members with an inviting atmosphere and a delectable array of food. Thanks to the Renaissance for hosting our meeting.

Suzanne Black from The Coaching Center presented our program on body language. She is an engaging speaker who encourages audience interaction. She taught us that success comes from 86 percent people skills and 15 percent technical skills and that the number one indicator of success is confidence. Ninety-three percent of communication is nonverbal. The elements of communication consist of appearance/body language 55 percent, voice tone 28 percent and words seven percent.

The Japanese term Haragei which is literally translated into English as “stomach art,” meaning the art of one’s personal energy. According to Wikipedia, “Haragei is sometimes called ‘emotional communication’.” The principles of Haragei include matching body language and gestures, facial expression, eye contact, breathing,

tone and tempo and using the same words and phrases as the person with whom you are communicating. First impressions are made in two seconds so you need to take care with your appearance and your body language.

We extend our appreciation to Suzanne for presenting such an interesting program and to Nancy Van Bramer and the Renaissance Hotel for hosting our February meeting. ★



Suzanne Black, speaker; Jim Zukowski, President; Angelia Johnson



Jim Zukowski and Nancy Van Bramer

A SAD, UNEXPECTED PASSING Rest in Peace Brad Charlesworth, CHA, CHSP, Supplier Member

IT IS WITH GREAT SORROW that we must say goodbye to a long time, loyal member of the Sacramento Chapter, Brad Charlesworth, CHA, CHSP. Brad, had been a member of the Sacramento Chapter since 2000. He has served the Chapter in many capacities, including, but not limited to; the Education Conference and Tradeshow, the award winning PonyXpress Newsletter and even served a term on the Sacramento Board of Directors as the 2nd Vice President. He attended many of the National Conferences and was always a huge supporter of the Chapter and the national organization as a whole.

Brad passed on Sunday, April 19, 2009, of an apparent massive heart attack while napping. He leaves behind two children and his parents who reside in Canada. As funeral arrangements are made I will keep the information flowing to the membership. ★

Rest in Peace Brad, you will be missed.



Partners in Education Conference (cont. from front cover)

One of the highlights of the conference was keynote speaker Rebecca Pace. I had first experienced her at last year's National Conference and she is just that — an experience! She paints quite a colorful picture as she weaves her tales intertwining messages all the while. Her humorous "Mind Safari" took us to India where we met snakes and camels and learned techniques on avoiding self-sabotage and embracing adventure in your career.

The highly successful tradeshow consisted of twenty-eight exhibitors from all three chapters. During the breaks attendees browsed the many wonderful Silent Auction items that ran the gamut of cool jewelry to St. Patrick's Day baskets to casino stays.

The afternoon offered several outstanding breakout sessions. A new interactive pilot program, Looking for Leaders, explored time-tested leadership models and strategies to address leadership challenges. The program, pioneered by Grace Nied, CGMP and Rhonda Wise, CGMP, is similar to National's and includes on-going projects, assignments and web-based modules. Those participating took a role in shaping the development of this new program.

Other sessions included Reducing Identity Theft and Fraud taught by Special Agent Daniel Baker whose aim was to alert us to the many methods that our identities can be compromised and what the U.S. is trying to do about it. The presentation by Rick Borry, PhD of Certain Software, Inc. went hand in hand with Agent Bakers by addressing Security Issues in Meetings Technology. He shed light on the regulations and security measures all planners need to utilize when dealing with technology. Former National President Lynette Schick repeated her excellent program on *Will You Be Ready When Disaster Strikes?* on emergency preparedness relating to meetings. Lisa Fortier's customer service presentation addressed the importance of "Give 'em the Pickle" — after all it is just a pickle . . . which inspired us all to commit to raising our level of service to all our customers.

Saturday night featured a pulled pork and fried chicken dinner buffet followed by a dance with a rockin' live band sponsored by the Lubbock CVB. Of course it only took moments after the first chord was struck before we were out on the dance floor.



The conference ended on a high note with Leslie H. Blythe speaking on *Resiliency: How People Can Change their Story*. Leslie reinvented herself many times after receiving her B.A. in Historic Preservation.

This year forty-four suppliers and thirty-seven planners were once again shown that the Partners in Education Conference is an excellent source of learning, networking, camaraderie and fun bringing SGMP chapters together. Thanks you to all the Partners in Education Conference Committee members led by Carrie Rohr, Chair, Wild West Chapter; Kelly Roche CGMP, North Texas Chapter; and Karla Starkweather, TLSCC, Co-Chairs. A special thank you to our conference sponsors for helping make this event memorable! Certain Registration, Crowne Plaza Dallas Hotel, Crowne Plaza Hotel OK City, Dallas CVB, Irving CVB, Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion Area, Lubbock CVB, National Center for Employee Development Conference Center, National Conference Logistics Center, Norman and Stillwater CVB's., Oklahoma City CVB, Red Carpet Charter, Renaissance Tulsa Hotel & Convention Center, Sheraton Downtown OK City, Sheraton Midwest City Hotel at the Reed Conference Center, Wichita Falls CVB, North Texas Chapter and Wild West Chapter. Also thank you to all our exhibitors.

Be sure the save the date for next year's conference, _____ 2010 to be held at the Crowne Plaza Suites in Dallas, Texas, which will be hosted by the North Texas Chapter. **See you there! ★**



MARCH CHAPTER MEETING: Listen to the Language: Contract Negotiations for the Government Market

Robert Gonzalez, Commission on State Emergency Communications

THE SITE OF OUR MARCH MEETING was at the Hilton Austin Airport. Guests were welcomed to a very leprechaun friendly meeting room where they had the opportunity to indulge in the Hilton's generous buffet that included an appropriate selection of Irish Cheddar and Guinness Fondue with Irish Soda Bread . . . the rack of lamb was not too shabby either.

As Bob Nichols introduced our March guest speaker, he emphasized that part of being a professional is being a good listener. One look at Tricia Hall's experience of over 23 years in the meeting planning and association industry instantly makes her the ideal candidate for addressing such a topic. Tricia provided us with a comprehensive overview on issues unique to planner and suppliers in the government market. According to Tricia the formula is simple, successful meeting planning is more about the partnership between both planner and supplier. Tricia walked us through a great exercise that highlighted some of the responsibilities that each should make in their effort for effective listening and communication skills.

The presentation included the recommendation that planners inform the supplier up front about any expectations that are part of the Request for Bid (RFB) process, so if attrition is non-negotiable, then say so clearly. Suppliers on the other hand must understand that in the government market, reading the RFB is the way to listen to the market as opposed to an associations

market where you easily pick up the phone and ask your questions. All in attendance came out with a better understanding of going about to improve their efforts at landing the kind of meeting contract they desire. When not presenting to SGMP groups, Tricia runs her company Tricia Hall and Associates, we would like to thank her for traveling from New Mexico to come and visit with our group.

Although the March meeting was accompanied with some rain that did not hold back our guests from attending a standing room only event! A total of 64 members and guests were able to network and listen to a great presentation that evening. Members also took the time to generously contribute to the national charity and raised \$150.00 according to Kathy Casarez. After our guest speaker presentation we also were showered with numerous prizes from the monthly drawings. We even had our own paparazzi show up to capture all those special moments at our meeting, thanks to Jerry Hughes from Artists Studio 12.

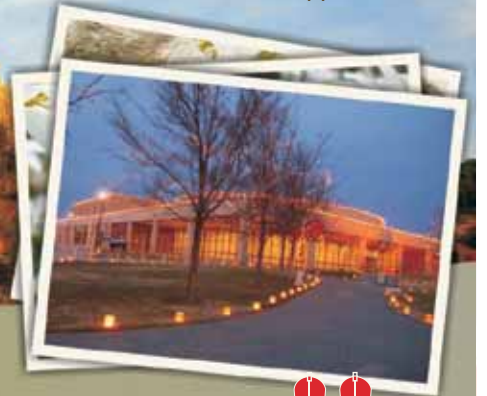
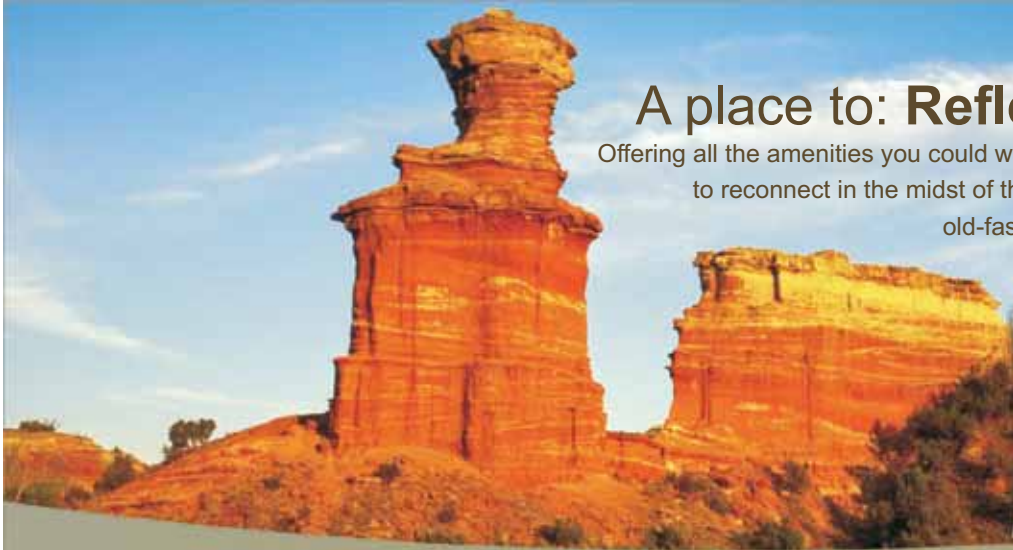
A very special thanks to all of our sponsors for that evening: Hilton Austin Airport, Keena & Company, McAllen CVB, Omni Austin Hotel Downtown, Plano CVB, The Governor's Center for Management Development, and the Waco CVB. ★





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IT'S EASY BEING GREEN!

Stacy Morris, CMP, Institute of County Government

MANY MEETING PLANNERS, especially government meeting planners, continue to think green meetings are too expensive and difficult, especially in this economy. However, just by virtue of the facility or vendors that you use, a meeting planner can take steps to go green, thanks to many changes that convention centers, hotels meeting facilities and vendors are making.

The Environmental Protection Agency, in conjunction with the Convention Industry Council had developed a list of green activities for meeting facilities. Meeting planners would be surprised how many of these activities your properties are already participating in or could be participating in at no cost to the meeting planner. You just have to ask! Take this handy list with you to site inspections to gauge a facility's green commitment:

- Recycling program
- Linen/towel reuse program
- Easy access to public transportation or shuttles
- Policy to turn off lights and a/c when rooms are not in use
- Reusable service utensils, napkins and tablecloths
- Bulk dispensers or reusable containers for beverages, food and condiments
- Energy efficient program
- Water conservation program
- Paperless check-in and check-out for guests
- Use of recycled or recyclable products
- Use of locally grown foods

Many facilities are going the extra mile by composting or donating leftover food, using environmentally friendly cleaning products, selling or donating old furnishing and establishing purchasing policies to buy environmentally friendly products.



Some locations are building or retrofitting their facilities to meet standards established by the US Green Building Council's LEED Program. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System provides a suite of standards for environmentally sustainable construction. The Austin Convention Center is the first building in Austin that is LEED-EB Silver certified. Everything in the building is adapted to meet LEED standards for existing buildings — light fixtures and sensors, the HVAC system, carpeting, furniture, cleaning materials and more.

Talk with your vendors about green products for your meetings. Recycled note pads, pens, tote bags, and printed material are surprisingly affordable alternatives that are readily available. Think outside the box when ordering supplies and securing vendors for events; each sector of our industry is doing their part to go green.

Do not forget to tell your green story to your clientele; take advantage of your vendor's green initiatives and share the news of their good deeds with your group. ★

It's *EASY* Being *GREEN!*





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PREDICTABLY IRRATIONAL: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions

Dan Ariely, Copyright 2008; Review by Darlene Morgan, Crowne Plaza Houston North Greenspoint

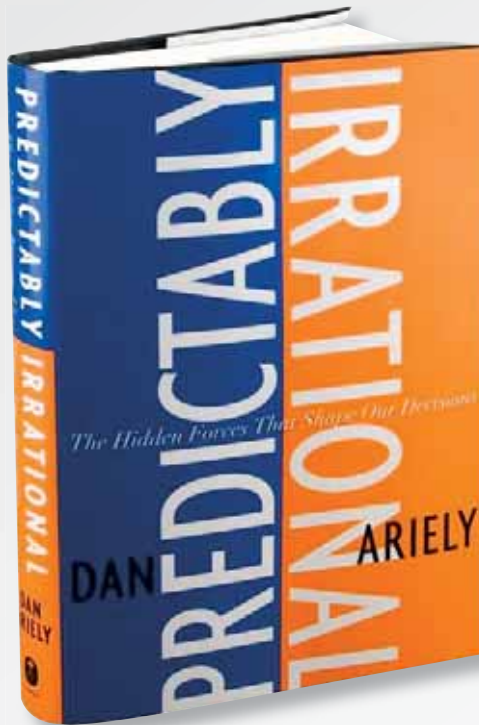
THIS SURPRISINGLY ENTERTAINING book will have you thinking about how we make decisions in our life. Dan Ariely is a genius at showing us how we can prevent being fooled and helps us to unfold the tricks our mind plays on us when making decisions and our lives. Irrational behavior is very much part of the human nature. In this book Ariely explains to us that the behavior that people tend to have that seeming is irrational is in actuality predictable.

Ariely, an MIT Professor, researched and discovered in 20 years that “people behave irrationally in a predicable fashion.” This look at behavioral economics can show us why people make poor decisions in their personal life, why an expensive drug might seem to have greater relief over its cheaper counterpart, and why honest people might steal small things such as office supplies and office food and look as if as not stealing as if they were stealing money. By looking at an individual’s motivation and consumer choice, and education we can see opportunities in understanding their behavior. This will present us with opportunities in understanding what makes us all “tick” and why we respond in the ways we do.

Ariely fills the book with clever experiments, engaging ideas, and delightful anecdotes. As we read we see ourselves, clients, and the bloopers of everyday decision making. *Predictably Irrational* will reshape the way you see the world and yourself for good according to James Surowiecki, of the author of *The Wisdom of Crowds*.

Reflections in the book include:

- Why do our headaches persist after taking a one-cent aspirin but disappear when we take a 50-cent aspirin?
- Why does recalling the Ten Commandments reduce our tendency to lie, even when we couldn’t possibly be caught?
- Why do we splurge on a lavish meal but cut coupons to save twenty-five cents on a can of soup?
- Why do we go back for second helpings at the unlimited buffet, even when our stomachs are already full?
- And how did we ever start spending \$4.15 on a cup of coffee when, just a few years ago, we used to pay less than a dollar?



- When we make decisions in our lives, we think we’re in control and are making smart, rational choices. But are we?

Ariely successfully blends everyday experience with groundbreaking research; Ariely explains how expectations, emotions, social norms, and other invisible, seemingly illogical forces skew our reasoning abilities.

It was surprising to see that not only do we make astonishingly simple mistakes every day, but we make the same types of mistakes according to Ariely. Besides consistently overpaying, underestimating, and procrastinating, we fail to understand the effects of our emotions on what we want and we often overvalue what we already own. These behaviors are neither

random nor senseless. They’re systematic and predictable and this then makes us predictably irrational.

Ariely explains how to break through these patterns of thought to make better decisions. *Predictably Irrational* will change the way we interact with the world one small decision at a time. As we change we will look at how we drink coffee, choose a partner, eat at work, and choose a romantic partner. As conference managers this book will help us to pinpoint those difficult attendees ahead and perhaps prevent some of the predictable events from happening. We may even look at our behaviors and decide how we might improve things we have done for years that might be affecting the outcome of our conferences without even being aware of it.

Enjoy this entertaining and revolutionary book. A fast read you will not be able to put it down. Dan Ariely “is the Alfred P. Sloan Professor of Behavioral Economics at MIT, where he holds a joint appointment between MIT’s Media Laboratory and the Sloan School of Management. He is also a researcher at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and a visiting professor at Duke University. Ariely wrote this book while he was a fellow at the Institute for Advance Study at Princeton. His work has been featured in leading scholarly journals and a variety of popular media outlets, including the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the Boston Globe, Scientific American, and Science. Ariely has appeared on CNN and National Public Radio. He divides his time between Durham, North Carolina, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the rest of the world.” ★

APEX — JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME!

Bob Nichols, CMP, Governors Center for Professional Development
 WITH APEX (ACCEPTED PRACTICES EXCHANGE) where are we going? APEX can be a journey or a destination depending on your expectations.

We're off to see the Wizard. After arriving unexpectedly in the Land of OZ our heroine must now find help to return home. Guidance from new friends says follow the Yellow Brick Road to seek the Great Wizard of OZ who will provide the answers at the end of the journey. Along the way three companions who are also in need of assistance from the Great OZ join in this journey. Seeking the way home, a Brain, a Heart, and Courage this unlikely crew head toward their quest, the Great OZ located in the Emerald City. Through various unexpected challenges they all eventually fulfill their quests at the end of a successful journey.

As meeting professionals we too are on a journey toward the Emerald City of Excellence. The difference for us, there is no end to our journey. Our Yellow Brick road is the great resource we call APEX. As we journey along this road we pick up along the way processes dealing with Post-Event Reports (PER), Event Specification Guides, Housing and Registration, RFPs, Contracts, Meeting and Site Profiles and all the other functions that result in that exceptional event.

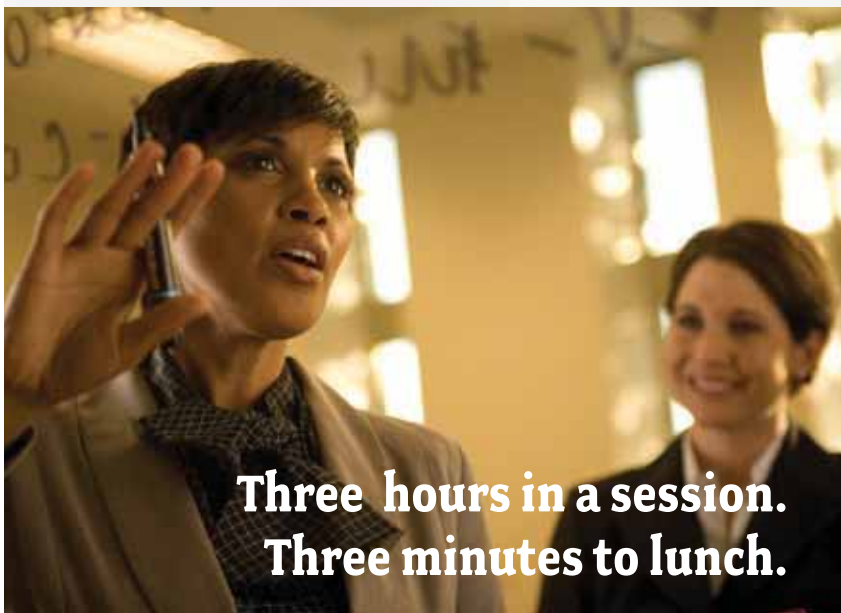
We often hear questions concerning implementation dates for APEX. We are on the journey now heading toward the goal of consistent excellence. Why is it important that we join in this journey? In a recent article Ruth Hill wrote, "In a fast-changing industry, standards aren't



static, they need to be reviewed and changed to meet contemporary needs, so crafting the next generation of APEX standards is under way."

Use of APEX standards is providing significant ROI results through saving significant amounts of time for planners, as well as improving leverage with suppliers. A standard contributing to this savings is the electronic RFP, which is contributing to a reduced supplier response time. Additional time saving event management tools can be found at the Convention Industry Council (CIC) webpage, www.conventionindustry.org, and www.APEXsolution.org.

APEX has been with us for a few years and there are still many in the meetings industry willing to keep their heads in the sand, staying with processes that offer the false comfort of life without change. SGMP is a collaboration of meeting professionals sharing with and supporting one another. Supporting this collaboration APEX offers many resources to become part of the growing group of exceptional event planners. We must encourage colleagues and friends to use their brains, exhibit great heart; and be courageous in joining this journey toward the Emerald City of Excellence. This journey will not lead us to the Great Wizard of OZ. Using the tools of APEX puts us on a continuous journey of excellence. In our life's journey we travel in joy, happiness and love because these are not ends in themselves. APEX is no different it is a life long journey. You may just find the Great Wizard in you. ★



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PLANNER SPOTLIGHT: Susan Ruiz

Robert Gonzalez, Commission on State Emergency Communications



AS A CONFERENCE PLANNER and program supervisor, SGMP newcomer Susan Ruiz has several duties at Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), among them is playing a role in their annual statewide conference. According to Susan the conference draws

about 1,700 participants and conference responsibilities are divided among TWC staff. Susan works closely with the Agenda Committee on developing the conference agenda, which can have up to 70 concurrent sessions. According to Susan, “We try to secure speakers from the local level, from out of state, economic development entities, educational entities as well as from government agencies to address workforce and economic development issues at the conference. “Susan admits that it requires a lot of detailed work and planning for one year to get the agenda completed for the next conference.

To break away from being knee deep in securing speakers for her annual event, you may find Susan with her knees in the dirt. Her interest in gardening often finds her pulling shrubs and fixing the greenery around her home. “I find it peaceful to work with my hands and be outdoors.”

Once she gets away from her garden activities Susan will kick back at some of Austin’s music venues and listen to her favorite group, The Forbidden Blues Band. It is no secret that Susan has her eye on the harmonica player who also plays the role of her husband when not playing at one of his gigs.

After 31 years of state service, Susan retired in December of 2008 but she came back to TWC. Susan admits “I know I still have a lot of years left.” It is evident that the annual conference strikes that cord of perfection that few people have as she and the conference team work on ways to tweak and improve the conference agenda. Susan is committed to showcasing her agency and providing great quality speakers to the conference audience. “It is a lot of work but the payoff is when you are on site and you hear people say “Great conference,” that is what makes my job fulfilling.” ★

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SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT: Kenny Skadal

Jim Zukowski, Contract Planner

KENNY SKADAL is a Sales Manager at the Hyatt Regency Austin, Downtown on the Lake and has held this position for over two years. He is new to SGMP and wants to get more actively involved in the chapter. Kenny is especially interested in the networking and communication aspects of the association. Meeting people is Kenny's favorite aspect of his job. He comes from a hotel industry background. His father has been with the Hyatt Regency Houston for 20 years as the Director of Sales and Marketing.

Kenny was born in the great town of New Orleans and raised in Houston. He moved to Austin to further his education and pursue his passion for baseball by participating in the college baseball program at Concordia University in Austin where he also graduated with a business degree. Kenny spends a great deal of time golfing, running, lifting weights, and playing baseball. I'm sure these activities were instrumental in Kenny losing 60 pounds in 2008.

Kenny also enjoys spending a lot of time with his girlfriend, Kat, her dog, Baby, and his recently rescued dog, Bentley. As expected, his favorite movies include *Field of Dreams* and *Bull Durham*. His pet peeves include lack of communication and dishonesty.

Kenny, along with his girlfriend, recently signed up as volunteers for Habitat for Humanity in Austin. He is looking forward to using his hands to help those less fortunate.



Kenny wants to become more active in our local chapter and to meet and work with government meeting planners in the greater Austin area. Please welcome Kenny to our wonderful association! ★

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OIL PRICES AS A FORCE MAJEURE?

Jean Bonner, Texas Justice Court Training Center

THE FORCE MAJEURE CLAUSE essentially frees either party from any liability or obligation to perform when an emergency, extraordinary event, or other circumstance beyond the control of the parties prevents one or both parties from fulfilling their obligations under the contract. The clause is a critical one, because it can allow a party to completely cancel a convention contract and totally escape the typically huge cancellation penalties that are buried in most contracts. Those penalties usually are equal to the total value of all sleeping rooms that were reserved and sometimes a portion of expected food and beverage revenues too, and they can be substantial enough to bankrupt some organizations.

As you might imagine, hotels and convention centers like to word a force majeure clause very narrowly so that it covers only a small range of events that are highly unlikely to occur, such as war in the United States, acts of God (earthquakes, tornadoes, etc.), and similar extreme emergencies. By contrast, good meeting planners try to word the force majeure clause much more broadly to cover the widest possible range of unexpected events and emergencies that might cause an organization to want to cancel its convention. Often, the parties compromise somewhere in the middle.

Sky-High Fuel Prices

Although at presstime, crude oil prices had begun to fall, anyone who has been reading the newspaper lately knows that oil prices have been skyrocketing over the past several months, with gasoline increasing as much as 10 cents per gallon per week in some parts of the country this past summer and jet fuel up as much as 40 percent in just a few months. The effects of high oil prices ripple throughout our economy. Many people cannot afford to drive their large cars and have canceled plans for vacations and other long trips. And airlines are raising prices, filling planes to maximum capacity, charging extra for the first checked bag, and charging for onboard snacks that used to be free in order to make some extra money as they teeter on the edge of bankruptcy from extraordinarily high jet fuel prices.

Because conferences and conventions are often planned and booked as much as five years in advance, it is quite possible that from the time a conference contract is signed to the time the conference is held, fuel prices will have climbed so high that nobody can afford to attend the conference, because the cost of travel has doubled or tripled from what is normal. If that were to occur, could you cancel your conference and escape legal liability by claiming that high fuel prices constituted a force majeure event that made it impossible to hold your event?

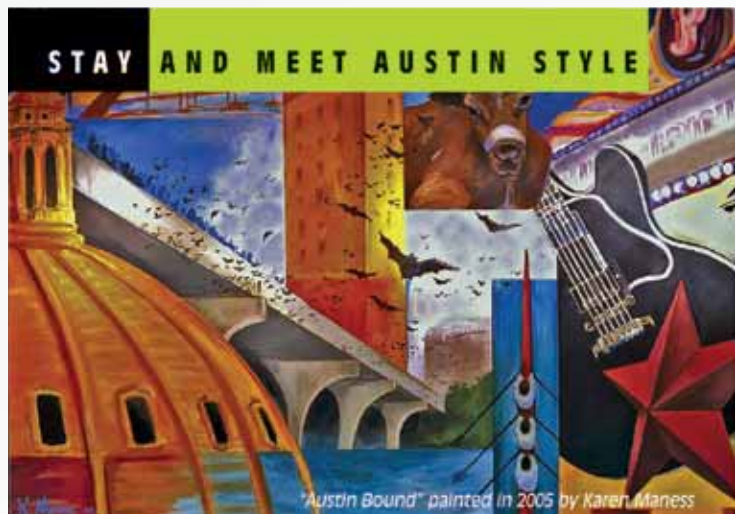
Under most current force majeure clauses found in hotel contracts, the answer is probably "no." And the reason is that current clauses fail to account for this new fuel price phenomenon. Some meeting planners are savvy enough to make sure that the force majeure clause has "fuel shortages" listed as a force majeure event, and some hotels will agree to such a provision. But the problem with that phraseology is that we currently live in an environment where there is no true "shortage" of

fuel. Instead, there is still an ample supply the price of which is simply reaching the point where nobody can afford to buy it.

But it might be possible to fashion new language for the typical force majeure clause that could cover high fuel prices as a new kind of force majeure event. For example, you could add as a force majeure event a phrase such as "fuel shortages or a 50 percent or more increase in the price of oil, gasoline, or standard airfare during the period from the execution of the contract to the date of the event." Of course, the trick would be selling such a clause to the hotel's conference manager. At the current time with demand for hotel space still fairly robust, it might be a hard sell. But if oil prices resume their climb and groups begin to drastically reduce the number of their meetings, it may very well be possible to sell such a clause to a hotel, especially if the alternative to rejecting the clause is that you refuse to book any conference at all, and the hotel ends up empty-handed.


Ben Tesdahl, Esq. is an attorney concentrating in nonprofit, corporate, tax, and contract law, including meeting and convention law. He is with the law firm of Powers, Pyles, Sutter & Verville, P.C., in Washington DC.

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"Austin Bound" painted in 2005 by Karen Maness

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STAY YOUR OWN WAY™

NEW TECHNOLOGY ENGAGES EVENT ATTENDEES

Heather Hidalgo, CMP, Texas Justice Court Training Center

TOUCHWORK is a company whose primary goal is to help companies who hold events interact with and understand their customers. Since 2003 Touchwork has been using mobile technology to engage attendees at events around the world. The Message4Events (M4E) system consists of several components that address different solutions. Their key advantage is convenience and immediacy by utilizing the cell phone, something all attendees have. They provide the most immediate and convenient channel for interacting with conference delegates. Touchwork's M4E solution includes Message2Meet, Message2All, Message2Rate, and Message2Hunt.

Touchwork recognized the value of this technology for the Meeting and events Industry. After researching the conference and tradeshow market they came up with a solution suite under the M4E brand. Touchwork tested M4E in a number of markets by implementing the M4E suite at events in Europe, South Africa and the US. They refined their solutions and began marketing it as a networking tool. Most conferences do not publish the contact details of attendees, so it can be difficult to make a connection. The original idea was to facilitate that by way of the Message2Meet solution by acting like a broker service to the other party, who then sends a message back accepting a request to meet. Message2Meet facilitates the secure exchange of contact information.

Message2All is an application that the organizer can use to send a message to all attendees. Information is sent by announcement to attendees during sessions, and though this may be effective at smaller events when you have an event with multiple sessions it becomes very difficult to guarantee

information is getting where it needs to go. Message2All immediately gets the right message to the intended audiences in a much easier way than traditional channels by use of the cell phone. By sending out a text message to attendees, announcements can be made such as a change in meeting room or event time.

Message2Rate allows organizers to send out a text message containing a polling question during the course of an event. For example: What are the main issues presently facing the industry? The attendee responds with A, B, C or D to the various answers presented. At the end of the day or at a certain time the polls are published. Using cell phones to poll delegates provides quick feedback in a way that is convenient for attendees and timely for organizers.

Message2Hunt is a "Treasure Hunt" that uses cell phones as a tool to guide attendees through events. Many tradeshows use cards or stamps to push attendees to different vendors as a means to encourage attendee and exhibitor interaction. This application mobilizes that process by matching participants with vendors by setting up the path that they follow through the tradeshow. Message2Hunt customizes the experience by categorizing vendors and allowing attendees upon entrance to select their specific areas of interest. Attendees don't go to a booth just to get a stamp but instead are interacting because they are actually interested in the service the vendor has to offer. It's a win-win for the vendor and attendees.

Touchwork's M4E solution is focused on providing service during an event, when people are in-between sessions and don't have the time to reference their Internet



networks. The convenience of using a cell phone is the primary advantage. Many networking tools tend to focus on networking prior to an event with profile matching solutions but M4E picks up where pre-networking leaves off. You can get information out during an event by email, but again you have to have access to your email. The old system of rating that requires attendees to fill out cards after an event is very slow. This is a more instant, on-the-spot way of getting feedback. Instead of an in-depth survey it is really trying to simply send and receive concise information instantaneously.

Examples of messages that can be sent to attendees are:

- #1 Alert.** Welcome to the conference! Please join us at the opening reception at 7pm in the ballroom.
- #2 Alert.** Please join the keynote address that will start in 30 min at 9am in the main conference center.
- #3 Alert.** The bus for the site visit will leave in front of the lobby at 1pm. Please wear sturdy shoes and a hat. Estimated return at 5pm.

All of the tests of the M4E solutions have proven to have added value to those events. Attendees have been kept up to date and participated in the implementation of these tools. For further information visit their website www.touchwork.com. ★

Recipes

Recipes submitted by Lisa Grinstead, Sales Manager, Lubbock CVB

Stuffed Pork Chops

- 2T butter or margarine
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2T onions, chopped
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- ¼ tsp. sage
- 1 ½ c. bread crumbs
- ¼ tsp. basil
- 4 pork chops, cut thick



Heat oven to 325 degrees. Slice into pork chops to make a pocket. Melt butter, then add onion, spices, salt and pepper and mix well. Stir in bread crumbs. Fill pork chops with mixture and bake 1 hour or until tender. Enjoy!

Easy Peanut Butter Cookies

- 1 c. creamy peanut butter
- 1 c. sugar, plus extra for decorating
- ½ c. mini chocolate chips
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. baking soda



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream peanut butter, sugar and salt with mixer. Add egg and baking soda, mixing until well blended. Stir in chocolate chips. Roll dough into small balls and place 1 inch apart on greased baking sheet. Moisten fork, dip in sugar, and press balls to make a crosshatch pattern. Bake 10 minutes, and let cool.

Since flour isn't used in this recipe, this is a great recipe for those with wheat allergy or gluten intolerance.

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 Gloria Moore, Speaker
 Sheraton Hotel

May 13-16th, 2009



National Conference

June 11, 2009

Installation of Officers and Recap of National
 Norris Conference Center

July 9, 2009

Silent Auction and Volunteer of the Year Program
 Doubletree Hotel

September 10, 2009

Legislative Update
 Stacy Napier, Deputy AG for Government and
 External Affairs
 AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center

August 28-30, 2009

SGMP TLSCC Professional Development Seminar
 Hampton Inn & Suites
 Pre-conference Educational Opportunities/Networking

October 8, 2009

What to do in Case of a Hotel Fire
 "Fire Prevention Month"
 Tony Callaway
 Bosses Appreciation Night
 Radisson Hotel Town Lake

November 12, 2009

Supplier + Planner = Win/Win
 Supplier Appreciation Night
 Hilton Garden Inn

December 3, 2009

Annual Holiday Party & Awards Ceremony
 Silent & Live Auction/Blue Santa
 Crowne Plaza Austin

For details go to www.sgmpaustin.org

Schedule is subject to change.

SGMP National
Society of Government Meeting Professionals

www.sgmp.org

SGMP Mission Statement

To improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of government meetings through education, networking, and professional development.

Chapter Information

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www.sgmpaustin.org

Chapter Vision Statement

Meeting professionals boldly leading the way in education, effective communication, and efficiency in government meetings and conferences.