

# NEWS

## ESPA Records Best Conference Attendance in Four Years

By Todd McElwee

The numbers are in, and they're looking terrific for the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA).

From Jan. 11-13, ESPA welcomed 268 members to its 25th Anniversary Conference at the Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resort in Orlando. The total represents ESPA's best attendance in four years.

Robert Desautels, CMP, Sr. Manager of Convention Services for Visit Indy, was installed as President of ESPA's Board of Directors at the conference.

A 28-year member of the Visit Indy staff, he has served as Membership Manager and in tourism sales and publications. He has occupied his current post for 22 years.

David Dvorak, CMP, Vice President of Catering & Convention Services for Starwood Hotels & Resorts, becomes Past President of the Board.

"The rise in attendance at ESPA's 25th Anniversary Conference was both encouraging and the product of a lot

of pre-planning and programming that resulted in a substantive conference," Desautels told USAE.

The 268 attendees represent a return to pre-recession levels. Following the theme of "Perfecting the Art of Event Service," the event examined the issues currently facing the industry and those that may present themselves in the future.

Two of the highlights: A session during which members engaged in personal discussions with meeting planners, and a Black & White Beach Ball celebrating ESPA's 25th anniversary, during which formal attire was optional but flip flops were mandatory.

"The 20 percent plus rise in attendance is a testament to the value we provide," said Desautels. "Further, our membership over the past year has risen by a double-digit percentage as well. Both point to a bright future for ESPA. Achieving attendance in Orlando that

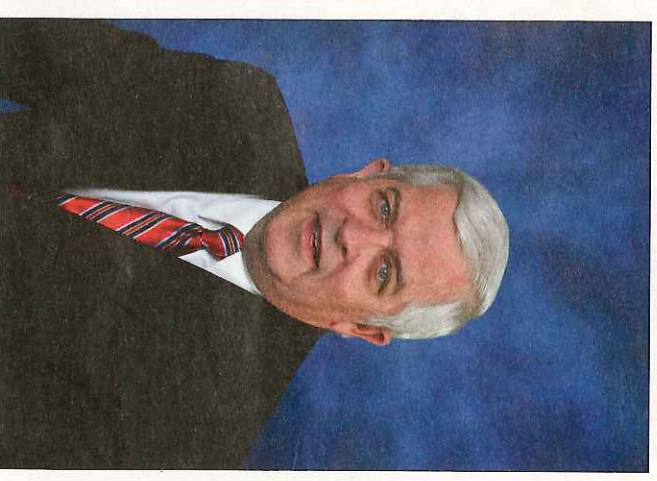
represents over 50 percent of our overall membership base reflects a positive interest in what we do."

ESPA also installed its Board of Directors. Julia Pingleton, CMP, Greater Lansing CVB will serve as President-Elect. Denise Suttle, CMP, Albuquerque CVB becomes First Vice President with Madonna Carr, CMP, Meet Minneapolis, taking over as Second Vice President. ESPA Director Paul Ruby, CMP, Sheraton Dallas Hotel, moves

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into the position of Secretary/Treasurer. Jamie Huckleberry, David L. Lawrence Convention Center/SMG; Joan Kramer, CMP, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide; Carla Quercio, Northern Kentucky CVB; Gary Stauffer, Freeman; and David Raymond, CMP, Westin Charlotte join the board.

Amy Cabe, Visit Spokane; Kathy Denkenberger, Saratoga CVB; Lois McLaughlin, Nashville Convention Center; Marcy Roitman-Boothe, Grapevine



Robert Desautels, CMP

## Dow Chemical Enters 30th Year of Supporting Habitat for Humanity

By Todd McElwee

Dow Chemical Company reasserted its commitment to Habitat for Humanity on Feb. 25, pledging a 30th year of financial, volunteer, and product support in the pursuit of housing low-income families across the world.

Dow has pledged more \$1.3 million in funding this year. Habitat and Dow volunteers are working toward building homes in 30 communities. Dow employees are also currently helping to maintain a variety of training and educational programs.

Tami Griffin is the Director of Partner Communications for Habitat for Humanity and has worked extensively with Dow. She told USAE that the Dow partnership provides Styrofoam-brand insulation products

for all Habitat houses built in the United States and that Dow is also a longtime supporter of Habitat for Humanity's Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work project.

Founded in 1976, Habitat for Humanity has assisted more than 600,000 families. The nonprofit organization constructs and rehabilitates homes, advocates for fair housing policies, and provides instruction to help those its helped continue the efforts in their communities.

Habitat works with a number of the world's largest corporations, listing Bank of America, Nissan, Wells Fargo, and Lowes amongst its key

corporate partners. Dow was one of the first to come aboard.

"We are so grateful to Dow for reaching out to Habitat to become one of our first national corporate partners and for helping to build thousands of homes during the last 30 years," said

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Jonathan Reckford, CEO of Habitat for Humanity International. Reckford continued: "I have had the privilege of working with Dow associates all over the world and so appreciate the contributions both of the organization and the individual supporters. Dow helped us create the model for developing crucial corporate partnerships

and has been pivotal in helping us building homes, communities and hope."

Since 1983, Dow has contributed \$56.9 million in cumulative donations to Habitat. Together, Dow and Habitat have helped construct approximately 39,000 homes in 24 countries on six continents. This year, work will begin in Ghana, Africa, for the first time.

"Dow and Habitat understand the importance of providing safe, affordable housing and giving families that much needed hand up toward a better future," said Bo Miller, Global Director for Corporate Citizenship at Dow. "Our 30-year partnership illustrates this commitment and passion for improving lives, and we are proud that our efforts are truly making a difference."

## Destination & Travel Foundation Kicks Off Dream Auction

By Jonathan Trager

The Destination & Travel Foundation Dream Auction is now open for bidding online, marking the 20th anniversary of the major fundraising event.

More than \$325,000 in business advertising, sporting events, trips, and other items are up for grabs in this year's auction, online at [www.biddingforgood.com/dmai](http://www.biddingforgood.com/dmai). Bidding will close on March 14 at 4:00 p.m. EST.

All proceeds from the auction go to research, education, scholarships, and programs that support the destination-marketing and travel industries.

"The Dream Auction is a fun and effective way to support the Foundation's important industry funded research, education, scholarships, and programs," said Victoria Isley,

Executive Director of the Destination & Travel Foundation. "More than 70 exclusive destination experiences, consulting expertise, and advertising packages have been graciously donated and should generate close to \$100,000 from eager bidders."

In-person bidding will be available for attendees of the Destination & Travel Foundation Dinner on March 13 and during the tradeshow at Destination Showcase the following day. A few items in this year's lineup:

- Visit Orlando Fine Dine and Stay Getaway for Two. Includes four days/ three nights accommodations at the Waldorf Astoria Orlando; one round of golf for two at the Waldorf Astoria Golf Club; two one-day tickets to your choice of any one theme park at Walt Disney World Resort; Universal Orlando Resort, or SeaWorld Orlando Resort, or SeaWorld Orlando; dinner for two at Big Fin Seafood

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Jamie Rice, Regional Director of National Accounts, Washington D.C., Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau; and Jennifer L. Erney, CASE, Director, Global Accounts, Fairmont Raffles Hotels International, at the Waterview Conference Center in Arlington, Va. during the AMIPs February monthly meeting. Photo Provided by Eddie Arrossi Photography.