

REC NET NATIONAL CONFERENCE

KIAWAH ISLAND GOLF RESORT
KIAWAH ISLAND, SC
NOVEMBER 8 – 11, 2025



RECREATION EXPERIENCE
COMMUNITY NETWORK

WWW.REC-NETWORK.COM
INFO@REC-NETWORK.ORG



Message from President Annie Pilek

WELCOME TO THE 44TH REC NET NATIONAL CONFERENCE!

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire Recreation Experience Community Network, it is my honor to welcome you to the 44th National Conference at beautiful Kiawah Island Golf Resort! What a privilege it is to gather with so many dedicated professionals who share a common passion for creating meaningful recreation and hospitality experiences.

This year's theme—Turning Tides—invites us to embrace the ever-changing forces that shape our world. Just as the tides shift, so do our industries, our communities, and our organizations, bringing both challenges and exciting opportunities. This conference is a call to action: to grow, adapt, and support one another as we navigate change together.

Over the next few days, you'll have the chance to engage in inspiring sessions, connect with colleagues old and new, and hear from thought leaders who are driving innovation in our field. Most importantly, you'll be part of the conversations that strengthen our community and build resilience for the future.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our incredible Board of Directors, Peggy Tempero, and our many volunteers who have worked tirelessly to bring this event to life. Their dedication has made this gathering possible. Their passion shines through in every detail.

As we dive into this year's conference, I encourage you to fully engage, share openly, and also take time to soak in the beauty of Kiawah Island. This is more than a conference—it's a celebration of our profession and the people who make it thrive.

Thank you for being here, for your commitment to REC Net, and for the work you do every day to create experiences that matter. I look forward to an amazing few days of learning, connection, and inspiration with all of you.

With gratitude,

Annie Pilek



GENERAL INFORMATION

Registration Desk Hours in WBCC Lobby

SATURDAY: 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

SUNDAY: 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

MONDAY: 8:30 am – 4:00 pm

TUESDAY: 9:00 am – 12:30 pm

Vendors

VENDOR SETUP: Sunday 8:00 am – 11:00 pm (WBCC Lobby)

VENDOR EXHIBIT HALL/Vendor Quest: Monday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm (WBCC Lobby)

VENDOR DEMOS/1:1 MEETINGS: Monday 2:00 – 3:00 pm (Azalea 4&5)

VENDOR COCKTAIL HOUR: Monday 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm (WBCC Grand Hall)

Career Fair

JOB FAIR SETUP: Sunday 8:00 am – 12:00 pm (Carolina 1–4)

JOB FAIR PROPERTY INTRODUCTIONS: Sunday 2:20 – 3:30 pm (Carolina 5&6)

JOB FAIR: Sunday 3:30 – 5:00 pm (Carolina 1–4)

Interviews

On own time. Schedule a time at conference or for when you get home.

REC Net Membership Lunch and Andy Holdnak Awards Gala

All full-conference attendees (those registered for the four-day event) are invited and encouraged to attend both the Membership Lunch and the Andy Holdnak Awards Gala, which are included with full registration. Attendees registered for the one-day Research Symposium also have the Membership Lunch included with their registration.

Guests traveling with any attendee who wish to join either the lunch or the Gala are welcome to purchase tickets at the Conference Registration Desk in the Marquis Lobby. Tickets are \$65 for the Awards Lunch and \$100 for the Andy Holdnak Awards Gala.

If you have any dietary requests/restrictions please complete the dietary request form at the Registration Desk.

Resort Packages Live Auction

Choose from FANTASTIC resort packages and more! During the conference, auction packages will be via a QR Code at Conference Registration Desk in the Marquis Lobby. There are minimum starting bids for each package that reflect extraordinary values. Bidding is live for many of the packages through our digital platform. The FINAL live auction will take place on Tuesday evening at the Andy Holdnak Awards. Student specific package(s) at affordable price points are available—great for Spring Break! Both check and credit cards are accepted for payment.

Show Your Local Flair “Swag Bag”

Participate in a great opportunity to win fabulous prizes! You have a chance to win swag bags from a member’s property, university, or even their home town—each one generously donated by our REC Net members.

This fabulous new event will be held on Sunday evening during the Theme Night Party. Chances to win can be purchased from the Ways & Means Committee Members. Be sure to come dressed in your most creative or nostalgic “REC Net Rocks” attire and get ready for a night of fun!

Chances to win will start at \$10: Cash or Credit cards accepted. This will be a digital lottery at the end of the night, no tickets awarded.

NOTE: All members donating baskets, bags, packages and swag included for the raffle, please drop off items at the Registration Desk by noon on Sunday.

Dress Code During the Conference

Business casual is suggested for all of the sessions unless otherwise stated in the program.

Conference Badge

Please wear to all sessions.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Annie Pilek

President



Brian Bevacqua

Past President



Gary Bleil

President Elect & Treasurer



Phileshia Dombroski

Secretary



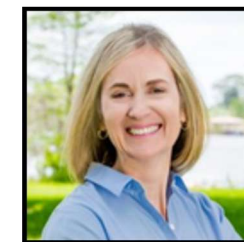
Stephanie Kriever

Director of Professional Recruitment



Marti Fowler

Director of Marketing & Communications



Lisa Jennings

Director of Member Engagement



Megan Libby

Director of Vendor Recruitment





Dining

BREAKFAST

Jasmine Porch
Nest Market
Signature Gourmet Coffee Shop
Beaches & Cream

LUNCH

Jasmine Porch
Ryder Cup Bar
Tomasso @ Turtle Point
Players' Pb
Cherrywood BBQ & Ale House
The Nest Market
Loggerhead Grill
Night Heron Grill Poolside

DINNER

Ocean Room
Atlantic Room
Jasmine Porch
Ryder Cup Bar
Tomasso @ Turtle Point
Players' Pub
Cherrywood BBQ & Ale House
Nest Market Cafe

The Ocean Room

Kiawah's premier steakhouse boasting Forbes Five-Star and AAA Four-Diamond Ratings.

Jasmine Porch

@ the Sanctuary

Authentic lowcountry cuisine and gracious southern charm on the menu daily.

Ryder Cup Bar @ the Ocean Course

Modern pub fare and creative cocktails with prime views of the Ocean Course.

The Lobby Bar

Specialty cocktails, wines, and beer with live piano music Fri & Sat evenings.

Loggerhead Grill

Relaxed fare and tropical drinks overlooking pools and the Atlantic Ocean.

Mingo Point Oyster Roast & BBQ

Seasonal outdoor dining experience and lowcountry family tradition overlooking the Kiawah River.

The Atlantic Room

Iconic seafood restaurant committed to using locally caught, sustainable fish and shellfish.

Tomasso at Turtle Point

Contemporary Italian dishes with a classic foundation, infused with local Lowcountry flavors.

The Nest Market Cafe

Grab and go meal selections for your active day as well as grocery staples and must-have sundries.

The Players' Pub

Comfort food favorites at this classic American Pub.

Cherrywood BBQ & Ale House

@ Osprey Point Clubhouse

Southern BBQ & house made sauces with over 60 local and imported beers.

Beaches & Cream @ the Sanctuary

All natural ice cream, sweets and coffee drinks.

Night Heron Grill & Bar

Casual favorites and specialty beverages served poolside in season.



Nearby Restaurants & Stores

Freshfields Village

165 Village Green Ln
Kiawah Island, SC 29455



Fishers Sports Pub & Grill (in Bohicket Marina)

1883 Andell Bluff Blvd
Johns Island,
South Carolina 29455

Harris Teeter

515 Freshfields Dr,
Johns Island, SC 29455



Java Java Cafe

375 Gardners Circle
Johns Island, SC 29455



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2025

Dress Code: Daytime – *Casual*; Evening – *Property Pride / College Colors*

2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Conference Registration Desk is Open

Location: WBCC Lobby

Pick up your name badge and learn how to access the conference program.

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Property Showcase

Location: Resort Grounds

Complimentary bikes, self-guided kayak tours, and access to Kiawah's pool areas are available—a great way to explore the island, enjoy some fresh air, and get familiar with the property before the conference. Save 20% on recreational offerings during this time!

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Board Member MENTOR Dinner Meetup

Location: Kiawah Restaurant- The Nest
Student Scholarship prep meeting.

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

DINNER ON OWN



Enjoy Kiawah's dining scene at your own pace.

7:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Newbies – Welcome and What to Expect

Location: Carolina 5-6

Kick off your REC Net journey with this brief orientation for first-time attendees. Learn what to expect, meet other newcomers, and head into the next few days week feeling confident and connected.

7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Opening Reception

Location: Carolina 5-6

Join President Annie Pilek and the REC Net Board as they officially kick off the Annual REC Net Conference with opening remarks, introductions, and plenty of energy! Show your spirit by wearing your company gear, logo apparel, or college colors. The evening also features our hosts, Majestic Circus Game Show, and more.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2025

Dress Code: Daytime – *Business Casual*; Evening – *Themed Attire: REC Net Rocks!*

7:15 am – 7:45 am

Meditation

Location: Carolina 1& 4

Start your day grounded with a few quiet moments.

7:45 am – 8:15 am

POUND by KaToya Sumner

Location: Carolina 1 & 4

Sponsored by HOULA Entertainment

Get your heart rate up and have some fun!

8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Conference Registration Desk Open

Location: WBCC Lobby

Get your questions answered here or stop to say hello!

8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Vendor Setup

Location: Conference Center

Job Fair Setup

Location: Carolina 1 and 4

9:00 am – 10:40 am

Research Symposium – Session I

Moderator: Professor A. Scott Rood

Location: Azalea 3

9:05 am–9:30 am

Activity Trends Pre/Post COVID-19 in State Park Campgrounds

Presenter: Dr. Patty Janes (Grand Valley State University)

9:30 am–9:55 am

From the Field to the Future: How Experiential Learning Supports Student Success

Presenters: Dr. Joshua Carroll (Radford University) with student researcher Makenna Adan (Radford University)

9:55 am–10:20 am

Stay to Play: Multi-Level Stakeholders and Motivations in Youth Sports Tourism

Presenter: Dr. Brumby McLeod (College of Charleston)

Co-author: Dr. John Grady (University of South Carolina)

10:20 am–10:45 am

Perceived Value of Sport in Aruba: Resident Perceptions of Health, Lifestyle, and Recreational Activity

Presenters: Dr. Steven Shapiro (University of South Carolina), Dr. Andy Gillentine (University of South Carolina), and Jo-Anne Croes (University of Aruba)

Co-authors: Sue-Ann Lee (University of Aruba), and John Wardlaw (University of Aruba)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2025

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9:00 am – 9:45 am

Professionalism in Hospitality with a Twist

Presenter: Abby Shackett

Location: Azalea 4

The Hospitality industry thrives on energy, creativity, and connection but how do you balance being the fun, engaging presence guests love and still be professional? This session explores how to blend professionalism with personality, transforming ordinary moments into memorable experiences for both guests and staff.

Turning Passion Into Profession: How to Stand Out and Succeed in the Recreation Industry

Presenter: Paul Shockley

Location: Azalea 5

You're ready to get your foot in the door—but how do you stand out when everyone's applying for the same internships? In this session, Paul shares what makes student applicants truly memorable. With over 15 years in high-end resorts and private clubs, he offers insider insight on how to break through.

10:00 am – 10:45 am

Know Your Program's Worth

Presenter: Tracye Seales

Location: Azalea 4

Find out what it takes to sell not just a product, but the full planning and experience that your company delivers. Learn when and how to upsell, anticipate client needs (even the ones they don't know they have) and present your services with clarity and impact. Improve your seller's confidence today!

Welcome Aboard! Crafting Engaging & Effective Onboarding for Hospitality Stars

Presenter: Jessie Decker

Location: Azalea 5

Set the stage for unforgettable guest experiences by first investing in your team's grand entrance. Learn how to design onboarding that inspires excellence, strengthens retention, and turns new hires into brand ambassadors from day one. Join Jessie to transform onboarding into a resort-worthy experience that reflects the service we live and breathe.

Internship Spotlight

Presenters: Charlotte Poth, Cassie Sessler, and Emma Pankratz

Location: Sweetgrass

Get an inside look at life as a resort intern! Students share highlights from Mohonk Mountain House (NY), The Quechee Club (VT), and Skytop Resort (PA).

11:00 am – 11:45 am

Recreation is Wide

Presenter: Andrew Mintun

Location: Azalea 4

Unlock the limitless potential of your recreation career! We'll delve into the diverse opportunities within the industry and explore how recreation can be a gateway to the world—enriching community programs, inspiring global travel, and creating unforgettable experiences in luxury hospitality. Together, we'll uncover the many, many paths your recreation career can take.

From Student to Professional: Early Career Perspectives

Presenters: Bailey Wall and Kerstin Surette

Location: Azalea 5

Two emerging professionals share stories from their recent transition from college to career, reflecting on their impactful experiences and growth with Omni Resorts and Chatham Bars Inn.

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Savannah Bananas – Zack Frongillo

Location: Carolina 5 & 6

Get ready for an unforgettable burst of creativity and energy! Zack Frongillo, Director of Entertainment for the world-famous Savannah Bananas, knows how to turn every moment into a showstopper. Drawing from his experience with the Bananas and the Vegas Golden Knights, Zack brings insider insights on how to build connection, excitement, and joy in every fan experience. From over-the-top promotions to heartwarming fan interactions, this keynote will challenge you to rethink guest engagement.

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Awards Lunch Buffet

Location: Carolina 5 & 6

Celebrate, connect, recharge, and recognize excellence in our growing REC Net Community.

2:10 pm – 2:20 pm

Vendor Introductions

Location: Carolina 5 & 6

Meet the powerhouse vendors fueling fresh ideas and inspiration!

2:20 pm – 3:30 pm

Job Fair Property Introductions

Location: Carolina 5 & 6

Hear from the REC Net properties represented at the job fair.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2025

Dress Code: Daytime – *Business Casual*; Evening – *Themed Attire*: **REC Net Rocks!**

2:45 pm – 3:30 pm

How to Start Your Own Recreation Business

Panel Presenters: Jordan Becker, Aidan Haas, and Debbie Regnone

Location: Azalea 5

This panel of entrepreneurs showcases three unique paths to building success in the recreation industry. Jordan Beckner, co-founder of FiberBuilt Umbrellas & Cushions and 2025 Florida Restaurant Association Hall of Fame inductee, shares insights from decades in hospitality leadership. Debbie Regnone, RCRA's founding president and owner of Resort Sports, Inc., built her career by creating opportunities where none existed. Aidan Haas, founder of Midwest Hill Fest, LLC and competitive downhill longboard racer, offers a fresh perspective on launching new ventures through permitting, sponsorship, and event operations.

Programing Do's and Don'ts

Presenter: Scott Taller

Location: Azalea 4

An outdoor enthusiast turned recreation pro shares the do's, don'ts, and occasional "oops" moments of programming. Drawing from experience across operations, marketing, guest services, and outdoor education, this session highlights real lessons learned from trying (and sometimes failing) in all corners of the recreation world.

2:45 pm – 4:05 pm

Research Symposium – Session II

Moderator: Professor A. Scott Rood

Location: Azalea 3

2:50 PM – 3:15 PM

How Environmental Conditions and Risk Perceptions Influence Water Recreationist's Policy Support and Political Consumerism Behavior in South Carolina.

Presenter: Ms. Mina Kim (University of South Carolina)

3:15 PM – 3:40 PM

How Did the Pandemic Change the Role of Recreational Waters in Bringing Visitors? Analysis of South Carolina Mobility Big Data

Presenter: Mr. Seonjin Lee (University of South Carolina)

3:40 PM – 4:05 PM

Sun, Fun, & Structure: What Resort Activity Schedules Reveal

Presenters: Dr. Phileshia Dombroski (Winona State University) and Dr. Kayla D. Mohny (Commonwealth University – Lock Haven) with student researchers Rebecca Moriarty, Ava Beal, Libby Scanlon, and Emily Bailey (Winona State University)

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

The REC Net Job Fair

Location: Carolina 1–4

Over 200 opportunities await! From internships to full-time positions, this is your gateway to the next step in your career.

3:45 pm – 4:30 pm

Leading Through Change – Navigating Industry Shifts and Client/Guest Expectations

Panel Presenters: Steve Geisz, Lisa Linden, and Dan Merenick

Location: Azalea 4

Change is inevitable—but great leaders know how to turn it into opportunity. This panel brings together decades of experience spanning resort operations, global hospitality, and community recreation leadership. From managing through industry disruptions to meeting rising guest expectations, the discussion will explore how recreation professionals can stay adaptable, innovative, and grounded in service. Expect real-world insights, practical takeaways, and a forward-looking conversation about leading teams and organizations through times of change.

4:45 pm – 5:30 pm

Innovating the Classroom:

Teaching Strategies That Inspire & Engage

Moderator: Dr. Jieun Song (Florida State University)

Panel Presenters: Dr. Joshua Carroll (Radford University), Dr. Ethan Cheng (Western Carolina University), A. Scott Rood (Grand Valley State University), and Dr. Jeremy Schultz (Western Carolina University)

Location: Azalea 4

In an era of shifting student expectations and evolving educational landscapes, how can curriculum design and teaching methods spark deeper student engagement and drive enrollment? This panel explores forward-thinking strategies that bridge academic learning with real-world relevance. Educators will share insights on partnering with local organizations for experiential projects, reimagining recreation courses through a liberal arts lens, offering stackable micro-credentials, and integrating AI into teaching and curriculum design. Join us for a dynamic conversation on how innovation in the classroom can transform student outcomes and institutional success.

5:45 pm – 7:00 pm



DINNER ON OWN

Grab dinner at your own pace and recharge, because the night's just getting started! Afterward, we'll all meet up for the President's Social: REC Net Rocks!

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2025

Dress Code: Daytime – *Business Casual*; Evening – *Themed Attire*: **REC Net Rocks!**

7:30 pm – 10:00 pm

President's Social: **REC Net Rocks!**

Location: Carolina 5 - 6

Rock the night with live music, southern flair, and big energy! Show off your best "REC Net Rocks" look, enjoy a rock & roll band and gear up for great prizes, epic vibes, and a night to remember. Don't forget your cash or card to support the **Ways & Means Committee "Swag Bag showcase"**, which funds student scholarships and REC Net initiatives.

Sponsored by : HOULA Entertainment, Glow Vibe Golf, & Epic Entertainment



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2025

Dress Code: Daytime – *Business Casual*; Evening – *Formal*

7:15 am – 7:45 am

Meditation

Location: Carolina 1 & 4

Come start your day off right to balance and center you!

7:45 am – 8:15 am

POUND by KaToya Sumner

Location: Carolina 1 & 4

Sponsored by HOULA Entertainment

Get your heart rate up and have some fun!

8:00 am – 4:00 pm

Conference Registration Desk Open

Location: WBCC Lobby

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Vendor Exhibits

Location: WBCC Lobby

Connect with vendors showcasing creative ideas, resources, and tools to enhance your guest experience. Explore and be inspired!

9:00 am - 9:45 am

1 to 26.2 Miles: Running a Major Event

Presenter: Liz King

Location: Azalea 5

Come listen to Liz King discuss how she successfully has run large scale events, including a marathon!

9:00 am – 9:45 am (*con't*)

Crafting the Perfect Activity: Resin Design!

Presenter: Ashley Miller

Location: Azalea 4

Discover how a single activity can evolve into one of the most profitable and engaging experiences at your resort. This session explores the journey of launching and refining a resin art class—what worked, what didn't, and how persistence and creative problem-solving turned it into a standout success.

10:00 am – 10:45 am

Crisis Management & Leadership in Guest-Centered Properties

Panel Presenters: Scott Bushway, Ashton Jones, and Alicia Sides

Location: Azalea 5

Crisis can strike at any time, and how leaders respond makes all the difference. This panel explores practical strategies for crisis preparedness, response, and recovery in guest-centered environments. Panelists will share insights on maintaining calm under pressure, supporting staff through uncertainty, and protecting both guests and brand reputation. Learn how confident, compassionate leadership can turn moments of disruption into opportunities to strengthen trust and resilience across your team.

Cultivating Creativity

Presenter: Joey O'Reilly

Location: Azalea 4

How do you create a unique, creative, and memorable experience? We'll discuss the brainstorming process with practical tips for bringing your ideas to life in teambuilding and event settings—ending with an interactive activity to spark fresh thinking.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2025

Dress Code: Daytime – *Business Casual*; Evening – *Formal*

11:00 am - 11:45 am

Educators Meetup / Meeting

Facilitated by: Phil Dombroski

Location: Azalea 3

Connect with fellow educators to share ideas, challenges, and inspiration in a relaxed, collaborative space.

Games, Games, Games

Facilitated by: Katherine Caffrey, Jenna Diehl, Lauren Hodges, Melissa Mirocha, and Joey O'Reilly

Location: Carolina 1-4

Get ready to move, laugh, and play! This hands-on session is packed with interactive games designed to spark creativity and fun. You'll leave with fresh ideas to bring excitement and variety to your own programs.

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Mid-Note Speaker: Cruise Ship on Land

Presenter: Tyler Gray

Location: Carolina 5-6

In experiential entertainment, the key to driving revenue is to think like a cruise ship—non-stop programming, layered engagement, and high-production value. At Plant Riverside District, we saw how a fully immersive environment with theatrical lighting, live performances, and interactive storytelling can transform a space into a multi-revenue hub. A strong host presence is crucial—someone who isn't just an announcer, but a guide for the fun, setting the tone and keeping guests engaged. On a cruise ship, the Cruise Director ensures something is always happening, seamlessly moving guests from one experience to the next.

The more produced and guided an experience feels, the more guests perceive its value and are willing to spend—through ticketed events, VIP packages, or F&B sales. By applying this cruise ship on land model, we can build high-energy, high-revenue experiences that keep guests engaged, spending, and coming back for more.

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Lunch Buffet

Location: Carolina 5-6

Enjoy your lunch while hearing updates and insights from the REC Net Board during the annual business meeting.

Business Meeting – Board of Directors

Location: Carolina 5-6 (with Board of Directors)

Get your inside look at what's next for REC Net! The 2025 Board of Directors will share highlights, goals, and opportunities to engage. All are welcome.

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Vendor Demos

Location: Azalea 4 -5 & Grand Hall

This is more than a meet-and-greet! Vendors will lead interactive demos where you can try things out, ask questions, and see their products in action.

3:15 pm - 4:00 pm

Excellence in Programming Presentations

Location: Azalea 5

Come listen to fellow members showcase the programs they're most proud of—creative, impactful, and inspiring examples of excellence in action. Enjoy the presentations and cast your vote for your favorite!

5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Vendor Mixer

Location: WBCC Grand Hall

Behind every great conference are vendors who show up, stand out, and make it happen, and tonight we raise a glass to them! Enjoy cocktails, **live music from HOULA Entertainment**, and great company as we celebrate REC Net's vendor community.

6:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Andy Holdnak Award Gala , Dinner & Cash Bar

Location: Carolina 5-6

Join us for an Andy Holdnak Award Gala, an evening celebrating the accomplishments and creativity of our members. Enjoy a buffet dinner, a cash bar, and the company of friends and colleagues before the excitement of the live auction begins—supporting student scholarships and the future of REC Net.

8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Auction

Location: Carolina 5-6

The property auction kicks off Saturday at the registration desk and will continue in a speed round of a Live Auction featuring REC Net properties. All proceeds support student scholarships and the volunteer efforts that keep REC Net thriving.

9:00 pm - 10:30 pm

DJ Dance Party

Location: Carolina 1 and 4

This is your time to shine and show off those cool dance moves you have been practicing all year (or learn some new ones) while the DJ tears up the dance floor with your favorites!

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2025

Dress Code: Daytime – *Business Casual*

9:00 am – 12:30 pm

Conference Registration Desk Open

Location: WBCC Lobby

This is your last chance to grab any REC Net logo gear from the conference!

9:00 am – 9:45 am

Town Hall

Location: Carolina 5 - 6

Wrap up the week with purpose! Join Committee Chairs, the Board of Directors and fellow members for a collaborative Town Hall session where we'll gather real-time feedback, celebrate fresh ideas, and chart the next bold steps for REC Net's future.

10:00 am – 10:45am

Things that go bump in the night: Exploring tourism potential of haunted tourism and dark historical narratives

Presenter: Dr. Susan Weidmann

Location: Azalea 4

Haunted tourism, also known as ghost tourism or paranormal tourism, involves visiting locations linked to reported paranormal activity, hauntings, or ghost sightings. Often considered a subset of dark tourism, it appeals to travelers seeking encounters with the supernatural or an exploration of eerie and often tragic historical narratives.

This presentation will define and explore the background of haunted tourism, highlight notable examples, and examine the opportunities it presents within the broader tourism industry.



Beyond Recreation: Connecting Guests to Nature Through 5-star Environmental Education

Presenter: Christian Carter

Location: *Meet in Lobby Entrance Doors*

Maximum 12 Participants

Discover how Kiawah brings sustainability to life through immersive guest experiences. Join this small-group, on-the-ground session to explore creative ways to weave environmental education into luxury recreation programs. You'll brainstorm how to elevate existing activities with eco-friendly practices—and leave inspired to turn sustainability into a signature part of every guest's experience.

10:00 am – 11:30 am

Ultimate Program Innovation Challenge

Location: Carolina 5-6

Join us for a highly interactive, hands-on session where participants collaborate in small teams to design and deliver an innovative recreation or experience program in real time. This engaging session blends creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, and a touch of friendly competition—offering a true “learn by doing” experience. Expect an inspiring mix of fun and relevance as we tackle the real-world challenges and opportunities recreation professionals face today.

11:45 pm - 12:45 pm

Endnote: Hot Trend Events – 2026

Presenter: Ben Lorenzen

Location: Carolina 5-6

The future of clubs and hospitality is being written right now—and 2026 is shaping up to be the year of bold, imaginative engagement. Join nationally recognized speaker **Ben Lorenzen** for a high-energy endnote session, as he dives into the most innovative and surprising ways to connect with both staff and members.

From cutting-edge event concepts to reimagined traditions, you'll discover fresh strategies that spark connection, boost participation, and make your club stand out in a competitive landscape. Just as the tides shift, so must our approach to creating experiences that are meaningful, memorable, and fun—this session delivers the playbook for success in 2026 and beyond.

12:45 pm – 2:00 pm



Lunch on Own

Grab one last bite of local flavor before the final session!

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Low Country InvestiGATOR: Escape Box Experience

Location: Night Heron Park-Camp Kiawah

If you're looking for a program you can really sink your teeth into, sign up for our tabletop escape experience! You will be tasked with using fun and factual information about alligators posted around the room to solve a series of clues provided at your team table. Do you have what it takes to chomp down on the solution that will get you into the naturalist's locked case before time is up?



KEYNOTE SPEAKER BIOS



Zack Frongillo

Director of Entertainment for the Savannah Bananas



With an impressive background in sports entertainment, Zack Frongillo has built a career around creating unforgettable fan experiences. From 2017 to 2021, he was part of the Vegas Golden Knights' entertainment team, helping elevate the excitement surrounding every game. In 2021, he joined the Savannah Bananas as Director of Entertainment for the One City World Tour, curating the high-energy performances that define each Bananas and Party Animals event.



In this role, Zack oversees the moments that captivate audiences—from player rehearsals and promotions to special effects and innovative in-house technology. A fun highlight from the 2023 season: the Bananas executed more than 1,050 unique promotions and scoring celebrations, setting a new bar for fan engagement. His creative approach to live entertainment continues to push the boundaries of what's possible on and off the field.



Tyler Gray

Director of Entertainment & Guest Experience at Celebrity Cruises

As a dynamic Entertainment Professional, Tyler Gray brings visionary flair to the realm of live experiences, infusing his broad expertise from theatrical electric avenues to the serene escapades of luxury cruises and exotic resorts. His career is a tapestry of transformative experiences, where he has channeled his robust fiscal acumen—overseeing budgets from \$1.3 to \$20+ million—into crafting entertainment landscapes that captivate and resonate with a kaleidoscope of audiences. He is passionate about leveraging his proven track record and comprehensive suite of skills to now pursue an executive role where he continues to drive the evolution of entertainment paradigms. His ambition is to spearhead initiatives that not only reach set goals but also redefine what's possible, ensuring that each venture is as exhilarating for the audience as it is rewarding for the enterprise.

Ben Lorenzen

Creative Director and Chief Memory Officer at Champions Run

A passionate advocate for infusing fun into the fabric of organizations, Ben Lorenzen is the Creative Director and Chief Memory Officer at Champions Run, a premier private golf club in Omaha, Nebraska, and has dedicated his career to creating memorable experiences that resonate with teams and clients alike. His journey has led him to keynote stages nationwide, where he shares insights on how the power of fun can drive engagement, IGNITE creativity, and enhance organizational culture. Whether you're in hospitality, corporate leadership, education, or any industry seeking a fresh perspective, Ben is here to help your team think outside the box and embrace the transformative power of fun.



SPEAKER BIOS

Jordan Beckner



Jordan Beckner is the founding partner & President of Sales of FiberBuilt Umbrellas and Cushions. He graduated from Northwood University with his bachelor's degree and earned an MBA from the South University in Savannah, Georgia. Since 2000, when he and Paul Knapp founded FiberBuilt Umbrellas, Inc., he has been an enthusiastically engaged member of the hospitality industry. He has served on the Board of Trustees for the American Hotel Lodging Association's Educational Foundation, as a member of the Allied Executive Committee of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association, and on FRLA's Educational Foundation, as a board member of the Culinary and Hospitality Academy at Forest Hill Community High School in Wellington, and co-chair of the Suppliers' Council of the American Resort Development Association. In October of 2025 Jordan was inducted in the Florida Restaurant Associations Hall of Fame as supplier of the year.

Scott Bushway



Scott Bushway is the Recreation Director at The Quechee Club in Quechee, Vermont, bringing over 35 years of experience in aquatics and recreational leadership. For the past 16 years, Scott has been an integral part of The Quechee Club team, overseeing the Health Club, Aquatics, and Recreation Departments with a focus on safety, engagement, and community enrichment. Throughout his career, Scott has held numerous certifications, including American Red Cross First Aid, CPR, AED, Lifeguarding, Lifeguard Training Instructor (LGTI), Water Safety Instructor (WSI), and WSI Instructor. His extensive background also includes planning and coordinating both large-scale and small group events, demonstrating a strong ability to create memorable and well-organized recreational experiences. Scott currently resides in Charlestown, New Hampshire, with his family, where he continues to pursue his passion for building healthy, active communities.

Christian Carter



Christian Carter is the Nature Program Manager at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, where he combines his expertise in biological sciences, environmental education, and outdoor recreation to lead a full-service, resort-embedded nature program. With a diverse background spanning education, management, and customer service, Chris brings together his ecological expertise and passion for conservation to craft programs that spark curiosity and foster meaningful connections with nature. He is known for making complex scientific concepts engaging and accessible, helping guests of all ages explore the natural world through storytelling, discovery, and hands-on learning.

Katherine Caffrey



After graduating from Marymount University with a degree in Business Management, Katherine worked in the surf/skate/snow recreation industry. Realizing a career working with children was her passion, she spent 10 years teaching kindergarten, obtaining certifications in mental health for youth/adults and serving on a community service board for changes/increases in youth mental health services. In 2017 Katherine moved back into the recreation industry, becoming the Recreation Manager at Reston Association. She currently oversees youth programs, including 16+ summer camps, allowing her to hire/work with 70+ staff members, as well as touch the lives of thousands of children.

Dr. Ethan Cheng



Dr. Ethan Cheng is an Associate Professor of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Western Carolina University College of Business. Dr. Cheng was named one of the Notable Hospitality Leaders in 2024, one of the Global 30 Most Influential Educators in Hospitality in 2023, and one of the 100 Most Powerful People in USA Hospitality in 2022 by the International Hospitality Institute. He also received the 2023-2024 Board of Governors' Creative and Innovative Teaching Award, the 2023-2024 Engagement Award, and the 2022-2023 Excellence in Research Award from the Western Carolina University College of Business. Dr. Cheng brings his international industry experience and a global perspective to his courses and publishes articles in top-tier hospitality and tourism journals.

SPEAKER BIOS

Jessie Decker



Jessie Decker is a Human Resources specialist with the heart of a Recreation professional. She is the Director of Training & Employee Engagement at Chatham Bars Inn, a Forbes Five-Star luxury Cape Cod resort. Jessie holds a degree in Recreation Management from the University of New Hampshire and has worked with the luxury resort since 2000. In addition to leading the resort's training and development initiatives, Jessie has held several positions throughout the Recreation, Spa, and Human Resources departments.

Jenna Diehl



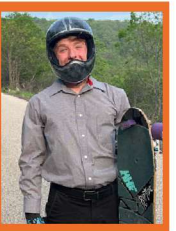
Jenna Diehl is the Recreation Supervisor at the Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, Florida. Jenna graduated from Winona State University in 2023 with a Bachelor's degree in Recreation and Tourism, completing her internship at the Ocean Reef Club. She then continued with Ocean Reef Club, becoming the Recreation Supervisor in May 2024, specializing in kids programming and special event planning. Her favorite part of her job is interacting with members and guests, providing them with the best experience possible. In her free time, you can find her rock climbing at the local gyms and enjoying island life.

Steve Geisz



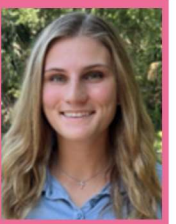
A 37-year member of RECNET (formerly RCRA) having served on the board of directors for 12 years, two terms as President and 6 years as treasurer. Other committee affiliations within the organization include Ways and Means chairman, and By-law Committee. I started my career graduating from Western Illinois University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology/Chemistry with a minor in Recreation, Park and Tourism with a resort management emphasis. Worked in several resorts over the years to include Lake Carroll Resort in Northern Illinois, Sapphire Valley Resort in the mountains of North Carolina, and from there to the beach at the Doral Golf Resort and Spa in Miami, FL, holding positions from Director of Recreation to Director of Resort Operations. After leaving Miami, I felt my longing for home and returned to the Midwest and became the General Manager at Grand Harbor Resort and Waterpark along the banks of the Mississippi River in Dubuque, Iowa for almost 20 years. Currently I am honored to the General Manger for Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa in Galena, IL

Aiden Haas



Aiden Haas is an early-career entrepreneur and downhill longboard racer from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. While an undergraduate at Winona State University, he founded Midwest Hill Fest, LLC, a sanctioned downhill longboarding event that debuted in Winona in 2024 with full permits and sponsor support. Since completing his internship, he's been traveling the U.S. to compete—most recently placing 87th in the Qualifying Series (Open Skateboard) at the World Downhill Skateboarding Championship in Park City (best run 1:57.833, Sept 25–28, 2025). Drawing on hands-on experience with permits, sponsorships, risk, and race ops, Aiden brings the “from-scratch” perspective to the How to Start Your Own Recreation Business panel, with a 2026 relaunch of Midwest Hill Fest in the works.

Lauren Hodges



Lauren Hodges has a Bachelor of Science in Coastal and Marine Biology from the University of North Florida, and began her career as a Naturalist at the Omni, where she combined her passion for environmental education with hands-on guest engagement. Lauren started her career at the Omni first as a naturalist then was promoted to Supervisor, and then to Manager - which she has served as for the past two years. Currently, Lauren oversees the nature programs and team operations while continuing to foster a strong connection between guests and the natural world.

SPEAKER BIOS

Ashton Jones



Ashton Jones has been part of The Beach Club by Spectrum Resorts family since 2010. Throughout her time with the resort, she has served in several roles and has proudly led the Activities Department as Activities Manager for the past 14 years. Under Ashton's leadership, the department has earned the Premier Recreation Operation Award three times since 2016, recognizing its excellence in guest engagement and programming.

Elisabeth (Liz) King



Elisabeth began her career as a Naturalist at Kiawah Island Golf Resort in 1992 and currently serves as the Director of Recreation at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, where she leads a team of over 130 staff members and oversees a diverse range of programs, including the Resort's Nature Program, Camp Kiawah, Teen and Family Programming, Art Studio, Corporate Recreation events, Aquatics, Beach Services, and Bicycle Rentals. Since 2007, she has been the Race Director for the annual Kiawah Island Golf Resort Marathon/Half Marathon, which attracts more than 5,000 participants. Additionally, Elisabeth served as the Race Director for the Kiawah Island Golf Resort Triathlon from 2014 to 2024 and acts as a volunteer coordinator for the annual Swim Across America/Kiawah charity swim. She has served on the Town of Kiawah's Environmental Committee since 1994 and is currently a member of both the Town of Kiawah's Resiliency Committee and the Kiawah Conservancy's Restoration & Enhancement Committee.

Lisa Linden



An innovative leader and enthusiastic trainer, Lisa brings a strong foundation in customer service, program development, recreational marketing, and team supervision. Throughout her career, she has established herself as a consultant and independent contractor in the cruise, event, and hospitality industries, partnering with world-class companies and properties to design, elevate, and deliver exceptional guest experiences. Her collaborations include Constance Hotels & Resorts of the Indian Ocean, Oceania Cruises, Hard Rock International, Atlantis The Royal in Dubai, and Atlantis Paradise Island in the Bahamas to name a few.

Dan Merenick



Dan Merenick is a Senior Program Manager at Reston Association with extensive experience in recreation across resorts, clubs, YMCAs, parks, and homeowner associations. He has served as Chair of the Ways and Means Committee and the Professional Member Committees within RCRA/RECNET, completed two three-year terms on the RCRA/RECNET Board of Directors, and is the recipient of RECNET's Debbie Regnone Service Award as well as the Howard Uibel Lifetime Achievement Award.

Ashley Miller



With a degree in Resort, Recreation & Hospitality Management from Slippery Rock University (2015), Ashley has built a distinguished career in resort recreation over the past nine years. Beginning as a front desk intern at Disney, she transitioned to Marriott Vacations Worldwide as a Recreation Attendant before taking on the role of Recreation Supervisor at Kiawah Island Golf Resort in Charleston, SC. Returning to Orlando in 2018, Ashley rejoined Marriott Vacations Worldwide, leading to her current position as Director of Activities at Marriott's Crystal Shores in Marco Island, FL. Passionate about pushing the boundaries of programming, Ashley thrives on creating unique, unforgettable experiences that elevate guest engagement and redefine resort recreation.

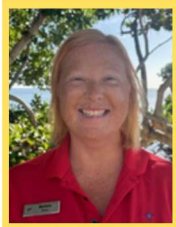
SPEAKER BIOS

Andrew Mintun



Andrew Mintun is a passionate hospitality and recreation professional with over thirteen years of experience in the field. His diverse background has enabled him to lead teams worldwide and make significant contributions to local communities. Andrew's career has seen him develop innovative programming on cruise ships, within local communities, at large-scale resorts, and currently at the prestigious Nemaocolin resort. His mission is to empower young professionals by equipping them with the tools, knowledge, and pathways necessary to thrive in the recreation industry.

Melissa Mirocha



Melissa Mirocha is currently the Recreation Administrative Supervisor at the Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, Florida. She has been actively involved within the recreation industry for the past 20 years through her hometown park district up to her current position. After graduating from Illinois State University with a degree in Recreation Management, she moved to Key Largo for her Recreation internship and never left the sunshine! In her 12 years of recreation at the Ocean Reef Club, she has programmed children's activities, ran summer camps and executed corporate group events with additional 'back of house' responsibilities within the Recreation Department and club operations. In her free time, she enjoys reading, watching most sunsets in the Everglades National Park, and baking.

Joey O'Reilly



Serving as the Group Recreation Sales Manager at Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, NY since 2022, Joey O'Reilly oversees team-building events and the logistics that bring them to life. With a background in the sciences, holding a B.S. in Environmental Science and an M.S. in Lake Management, he brings analytical insight to creative program design. His extensive experience includes guiding outdoor trips, leading high and low ropes courses, and managing climbing gyms. Joey's greatest passion lies in creating and facilitating meaningful team-building programs at our resort.

Emma Pankratz



Emma Pankratz is a senior majoring in Resort, Recreation, and Hospitality Management at Slippery Rock University. She currently serves as a Shift Supervisor at Hampton Inn & Suites, where she continues to develop her leadership and guest service skills. Emma previously completed an internship with the recreation department at Skytop Lodge, gaining hands-on experience in resort operations and guest programming. She enjoys traveling, building connections, and learning from new experiences— including studying abroad in Ireland, which deepened her appreciation for hospitality and cultural exchange.

Charlie Poth



Charlie Poth is a Peer Leadership Educator and senior at Appalachian State University, majoring in Recreation Management with a concentration in Commercial Recreation and Tourism. She is also pursuing minors in General Business and Leadership Studies. As a 2025 LEAD Team member, Charlie is passionate about developing her leadership skills and building community through recreation. She recently completed a summer internship at Mohonk Mountain House, where she gained valuable experience in resort operations and guest engagement. Her enthusiasm for learning and connecting with others continues to shape her future in the recreation and hospitality industry.

Debbie Regnone



Ms. Regnone has always created her own opportunities. Most every position she has ever held was one that did not previously exist. From her student internship with the City of Fort Myers Parks and Recreation Department to her ownership of Resort Sports, Inc. (34 years and counting!), Debbie has shown the vision to see a need and convince others to believe in her and create an opportunity to the benefit of all. Debbie has extensive resort experience at South Seas Plantation and Marquis Hotels & Resorts. She is most notable known for being a co-founder and the first President of RCRA. Ms. Regnone has been involved in numerous community groups throughout her career in a leadership capacity. Many young people, both locally and nationally, credit Debbie with giving them their start, their inspiration or the courage to create new opportunities and reach unexpected heights.

SPEAKER BIOS

A. Scott Rood



Scott Rood is an Associate Professor of Hospitality & Tourism Management at Grand Valley State University, in Grand Rapids, MI. He has over 30 years of entrepreneurial experience in various facets of the recreation and hospitality industry. He has expertise in applied research and innovative curriculum development. Scott is Senior Editor of “Introduction to Commercial Recreation and Tourism: An Entrepreneurial Approach, 8th edition.” He is a former President of RCRA, and recipient of its “Fellowship Award.”

Tracye Seales



Tracye Seales is a dynamic leader. A proud graduate of Georgia State University, Tracye served as Director of the Spotlight Programming Board, where she led all major student programming—from high-profile concert and speaker series to large-scale events like “Nights at Six Flags Over Georgia” and exclusive evenings at the Georgia Aquarium. In 2018, she launched her hospitality career as a Concierge Loyalty Ambassador and Front Desk Assistant Manager. Today, she serves as Group Recreation Manager, where she oversees the development and execution of engaging group activities and experiences that elevate the resort’s reputation for world-class service. With a background in event planning, guest services, and team leadership, Tracye brings creativity, energy, and a guest-first mindset to every aspect of her work

Jeremy Schultz



Dr. Jeremy Schultz is an Associate Professor of Parks & Recreation Management at Western Carolina University. His passions revolve around communicating the value of leisure in society through experiential, critical, community-based classrooms. Dr. Schultz is continually an academic and community advocate for conservation and recreation in the outdoors.

Cassie Sessler



Cassie Sessler is a senior at Florida State University, majoring in Recreation and Tourism Management. At Florida State, she is the Vice President of the Recreation and Tourism Student Association and serves as Internal Communications Chair for the Dedman College of Hospitality’s Student Leadership Council. Last year, Cassie attended the REC Net Conference, where she had a valuable and transformative experience growing her professional network and gaining the opportunity to intern at the Quechee Club. She is a passionate leader with experience managing summer camp programs for children and youth, organizing large-scale recreational events, and supervising diverse teams of up to 100 staff. Cassie is known for helping teams succeed, developing creative programs, and making sure every participant has a positive experience.

Abby Shackett



Abby Shackett is the Recreation Manager at Omni Hilton Head in South Carolina. With a career sparked by her natural high energy and passion for creating unique guest experiences, Abby brings creativity and joy to everything she does. She believes the key to exceptional recreation is thinking about what makes a trip feel truly special and recreating that for others. As a manager, she finds just as much fulfillment in mentoring her team—helping people grow into their best selves while still enjoying their work—as she does in delighting guests.

Alicia Sides



With more than 25 years of experience in recreation, Alicia Sides brings a versatile background spanning Campus Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality, Non-Profit, and Parks and Recreation settings. She holds two bachelor’s degrees from Pfeiffer University and has held leadership roles across multiple sectors, including 12 years as Director of Recreation and Aquatics at the Shoals Club on Bald Head Island, NC. Alicia currently serves as the Director of Parks and Recreation for Wythe County, VA, where she continues to create innovative community programs such as 24 hours of programming for Relay for Life and the Shoals Club intern program. She has also led training initiatives and developed comprehensive safety protocols for both Shoals Club and Wythe County.

SPEAKER BIOS

Dr. Jieun Song



At Florida State University, Dr. Song serves as teaching faculty as well as the Director of Recreation and Tourism Management. Her teaching areas include programming recreation experiences, leadership, and commercial and public recreation. Dr. Song is a passionate advocate for spending time outdoors and for the conservation of natural and cultural resources. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, hiking, camping, and visiting national parks—having explored over 40 so far. Dr. Song holds a Ph.D. in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences from Texas A&M University and an M.B.A. from Bowling Green State University.

Kerstin Surette



Kerstin Surette is the Assistant Manager of Corporate and Leisure Activities at Chatham Bars Inn located in Chatham, Massachusetts. She is a 2024 graduate of the University of New Hampshire's Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics where she received a bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management. Upon graduation, Kerstin has gained valuable experience in a management role and is honored to learn and grow at such a prestigious resort. At Chatham Bars Inn, she is responsible for the planning and execution of corporate activities, leisure events, annual resort programming, and the resort's world-class Kids Crew. With 5 years of leadership and management experience in the recreation industry, Kerstin's main goal is to create a memorable and lasting impact on all guests who come to Chatham Bars Inn.

Paul Shockley



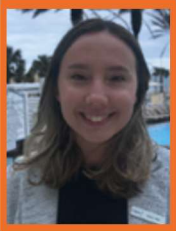
Paul has spent the past 15 years in the resort and club business working at three luxury properties in Virginia and South Carolina. In his current position Paul serves as the director of Recreation at Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville, Virginia having started in this role in December of 2020. Paul oversees youth programs, camps, holiday and special events, teambuilding, art studio, kids club, and employee events and programs. Prior to relocating to Virginia, Paul spent seven years at Kiawah Island Golf Resort. Hired initially as a summer intern, he worked his way up to oversee Camp Kiawah, Turtles Nest Art Studio, family and holiday events, corporate team building events as well as the co race director of the Kiawah Marathon and Triathlon. Paul graduated from George Mason University with a degree in parks and recreation management. He is a past president of RCRA (2017) and spent 6 years on the board of directors. In his free time Paul enjoys spending time outdoors running, mountain biking, hiking and camping!

Scott Taller



Just another outdoor enthusiast who found a way to turn his passions into a career! Scott Taller has explored many aspects of the recreation world—from programming and guest services to business operations, marketing, and outdoor experiential education. A graduate of Appalachian State University with a degree in Recreation Management, he has held roles with Charleston Adventure Forest, Wild Dunes Resort, and Grandfather Golf and Country Club. Most recently, he served as Director of Operations at Isle of Palms (IOP) Beach Chair Company and considers himself fortunate to have called the IOP shoreline his home office.

Bailey Wall



Bailey began her recreation career in 2019 as a Recreation Attendant at the Omni Amelia Island Resort. After graduating high school in 2021, she was promoted to Recreation Supervisor, a role she continued to grow in while completing her college studies. In March 2025, she earned another promotion, a testament to her dedication to creating memorable guest experiences and leading successful recreation programs. Outside of work, Bailey enjoys searching for shark teeth along the shores of Amelia Island and spending time with friends.

Dr. Susan Weidman



Dr. Susan Weidmann is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Recreation Management and Physical Education at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. She teaches recreation, tourism, and marketing topics, and her research areas include the intersection of immersive horror leisure, tourism experiences, and emotions, and haunted/fright tourism marketing. Her current research investigates environmental storytelling at haunted attractions, a forthcoming book chapter on Halloween, and a new article on Halloween event design for all ages in Parks and Recreation Magazine.

ENTERTAINER BIOS (WITH HOULA ENTERTAINMENT)

Nick Black



Nick Black is quickly becoming one of the most recognizable names in the Pop/Soul music scene. He grew up between two worlds: his family's deep ties to church and Memphis where Soul, RnB, Rock N' Roll, and Blues legends made names for themselves, Black's sound is an organically grown phenomenon. Since his first album in 2012, *The Soul Diaries*, his authenticity and passion have been the foundation of his identity, both as a person and as an artist. Venturing into new territory, Nick is excited to pursue his curiosity in electronic music, adding dance beats to his extremely versatile sound. Influenced by the feel-good music of Justin Timberlake, Al Green, Sting, and Bruno Mars, Nick has created his music to sound unique, yet familiar and nostalgic.

BJ Griffin



BJ Griffin, born just a few houses down from Hitsville U.S.A. in Detroit, Michigan, is a singing cellist with boundless musical passion. Growing up, he excelled in the Virginia Youth Symphony Orchestra, performing nationally and internationally. At James Madison University, BJ triple-majored in music education, cello performance, and music industry, while also launching his singing career with the all-male a cappella group Exit 245, dazzling audiences up and down the East Coast. After college, BJ moved to New York City, where he perfected his unique blend of singing and cello playing. As a solo artist and leader of diverse ensembles, he breaks genre barriers by mixing classical, jazz, and pop. BJ's talents have graced TV and internet specials, and in 2013, he formed the BJ Griffin Band which has shared stages with Smash Mouth, Andy Grammer, and Lionel Richie, Ms. Lauryn Hill and most recently opened for Erykah Badu. Most recently, BJ captivated millions on America's Got Talent with his soulful rendition "Let's Stay Together," leaving the audience spellbound. BJ is in the studio now anticipating his first full studio release early next year.

The Jared Stout Band



An electrifying alt-country band with musical styles that are as diverse as the Appalachian landscape they call home. Runner-ups for the coveted "The-Rise" award at FloydFest 22, The Jared Stout Band has quickly solidified their presence in the national music scene. The band's dynamic sound seamlessly weaves Appalachian rhythms with Blues and Rock undertones, creating a tapestry of emotion and energy that resonates with audiences of all ages and musical tastes. Jared Stout's songwriting is soulful and relatable, with an authenticity that draws listeners in and guides them through a journey of life's ups and downs. From the

moment the Jared Stout Band steps onto the stage, this remarkably talented, emotionally charged set of musicians command attention with a unique sound and an unparalleled, captivating intensity.

Kristen Merlin



It all started with the voice – the voice of a first-grade girl in a blue and white sailor shirt singing her heart out to "Never Never Land" at her elementary school's rendition of "Peter Pan." From that moment on, Merlin performed at every opportunity and in her junior year of high school, she was given the best gift she'd ever received – her first guitar. In a few short months, she was a self-taught guitarist and writing her own material. After earning her BA in Music and Sound Recording from the University of New Haven in Connecticut and brushing up on her performance chops all over Massachusetts with her own band, Merlin's talents landed her a spot on NBC's Emmy Award-winning series, "The Voice." Her audition of Sugarland's "Something More" received heated haggling between coaches Adam Levine and Shakira. Merlin made the decision to join Team Shakira and became a powerhouse female staple of "The Voice: Season 6". Merlin, who finished fourth overall on "The Voice," is now making her debut with original music.

Rob Rasner



One of the stars of this season's *Masters of Illusion* on The CW, Rob Rasner combines clean comedy with mind-blowing magic for an unforgettable experience. Known as the "Magician to the Stars," he's performed for Hollywood A-listers like Adam Sandler, Jack Black, Nicole Kidman, and Steve Martin. A graduate of Las Vegas's prestigious Mystery School, Rob has entertained audiences across the U.S. and China and appeared on NBC, MTV, A&E, and Comedy Central. Get ready for laughter, amazement, and nonstop fun!

Dewayne White



Dewayne White is quickly becoming one of the most sought-after comics on the scene. Hailing from Washington, D.C., his no-nonsense, East Coast demeanor seamlessly transforms into hilarity on stage. He draws on his experiences as a combat-wounded Army vet, husband and father with a no holds barred attitude. With irreverent observations and an infectious energy, Dewayne always delivers an unforgettable evening of laughter. He's shared the stage with comedy heavyweights like Josh Blue, Mark Normand, and Jo Firestone, Now he's headlining comedy clubs across the country and touring internationally with the USO or Armed Forces Entertainment.

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Dr. Josh Carroll



Dr. Joshua Carroll is a Professor of Recreation, Parks and Tourism at Radford University. His teaching and research focus on sustainable, nature-based tourism and recreation, and how this can be used as a pathway toward positive community development and ecological integrity. Dr. Carroll holds a Ph.D. and M.S. in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, both from Colorado State University.

Jo-Anne Croes



Ms. Jo-Anne Croes has over 10 years of professional experience in the tourism and hospitality industry, including digital marketing strategy, timeshare sales, and small business consulting. She holds bachelor's degrees in international hospitality management from Christelijke Hogeschool Noord Nederland in Leeuwarden (NL) and Business Information Technology and Communication from Hogeschool Rotterdam (NL). She also has a master's degree in international Leisure and Tourism Studies from the University of North London (UK).

Dr. Andy Gillentine



Andy Gillentine is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sport and Entertainment Management at the University of South Carolina. His areas of interest in research include sports management concerns, professional development, and sport marketing. Dr. Gillentine is recognized as one of the leading experts on the legal, management, and marketing elements of tailgating at sports and entertainment events. His research initiatives for various sports organizations have produced more than 50 papers, four books, and more than 100 national and international presentations.

Dr. Patty Janes



Dr. Patty Janes is a Full Professor at Grand Valley State University and founder of Michigan Cares for Tourism (MC4T). With expertise in strategic marketing, CSR, and data-driven storytelling, she turns research into actionable insights. She is currently leading a two-year visitor behavior study with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, helping organizations enhance visitor experiences across parks, trails, harbors, and campgrounds.

Ms. Mina Kim



Ms. Kim is a Doctoral Student in the Richardson Family SmartState Center for Economic Excellence in Tourism and Economic Development at the University of South Carolina. She is interested in the sustainability of tourism. In particular, she focuses on uncovering the psychological and behavioral traits of pro-environmental tourists.

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Mr. Seonjon Lee



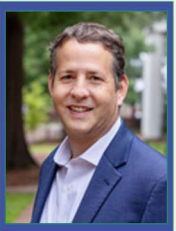
Mr. Lee is a Doctoral Student in the Richardson Family SmartState Center for Economic Excellence in Tourism and Economic at the University of South Carolina. He is interested in resilience of tourism and network analysis of tourist flows.

Dr. Brumby McLeod



Brumby McLeod is currently an Associate Professor at the College of Charleston, School of Business in the Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management. He is a research fellow with the Office of Tourism Analysis and the Riley Center for Livable Communities. The focus of his research is on overnight accommodation. His undergraduate teaching responsibilities include courses in service operations management, hotel management, travel and tourism, and destination management and marketing. On the international front, he leads an annual winter study abroad course about Adventure Tourism to Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada and a summer study abroad program to Iceland about Destination Management & Marketing.

Dr. Stephen L. Shapiro



Stephen Shapiro is a Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Sport and Entertainment Management at the University of South Carolina. Dr. Shapiro's line of research is focused on ticket pricing, consumer behavior, and mediated consumption. He has published articles in leading sport management journals including the Journal of Sport Management, Sport Management Review, and European Sport Management Quarterly. He has also authored or co-authored chapters in eight sport management textbooks.

Dr. Kayla Mohney & Dr. Phileshia Dombroski



Kayla D. Mohney, Ed.D., is an Associate Professor within the Department of Early Childhood Education and Exceptionality Programs at Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania - Lock Haven. For the past twenty years, her career has centered on the education of individuals with exceptionalities across K-12 and postsecondary settings. She prepares future educators through teaching, community engagement, and program development, while also leading advocacy and policy initiatives. Dr. Mohney's work is driven by a commitment to building inclusive communities grounded in understanding and respect.

Phileshia Dombroski, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Recreation, Tourism, and Therapeutic Recreation at Winona State University. Known by her students as "Dr. Phil," she earned her Ph.D. in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Management from Penn State University, with research focused on community development and residents' perceptions of local leisure amenities. With over three decades of experience in recreation management, Dr. Phil has held roles ranging from program and camp director to resort activities manager, and was executive director of a community foundation. A REC Net member for over ten years, she now serves on the Board of Directors. Dr. Phil previously served as a faculty member at Lock Haven University and Keystone College and remains active as an accreditor for the American Camp Association and as a volunteer with Winona County Dive Rescue Team.

5 TIPS TO MAKE REC Net WORK FOR YOU

#1 NETWORK

Increase your professional connections in the recreation field by attending as many conferences, seminars and roundtables as possible. Use the Member Directory to locate REC Net members in your area and form a monthly roundtable discussion. REC Net's National Conference is a MUST attend networking event, as students, professionals, educators and vendors attend from around the world. Regional Workshops are also emerging as ways to gain knowledge of the latest trends and how to facilitate them effectively.

#2 RECEPTION & AWARDS

REC Net is proud to recognize the outstanding contributions of its members with awards that are presented at the National Conference. Nominate your colleagues, programs or properties for going above and beyond! YOU can make it happen!

#3 RECRUIT EMPLOYEES & STUDENT INTERNS

Contact REC Net to have job listings posted on the REC Net website. This is also a great student tool when looking for an internship. The National Conference hosts the annual REC Net Job Fair & Internship Fair where a majority of our professional members recruit for full-time and internship positions.

#4 GET NOTICED

Write an article and share photos of your property and be showcased in an upcoming newsletter. Consider making this an assignment for student interns, providing great experience and exposure for them. The articles will make a great addition to your personal portfolio and will have a definite impact on your manager.

#5 GET INVOLVED

REC Net is successful because of the dedication its members devote to the Association's future. Sharing new ideas and creativity is accomplished through active participation in the Association's committees. Contact REC Net and see what committee is right for you.

Get Involved with REC Net and become a Committee Member

Ask a Board Member How

- Membership Committee
- Communication Committee
- Ways & Means Committee
- Conference Program Committee
- Vendor Committee
- Site Selection Committee
- Awards Committee
- Internship / Approval Site Committee
- Social Committee

We cannot have a conference without members volunteering!

Thank You REC Net Vendors!



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Thank you

Dear Members,

Thank you for being part of the 2025 REC Net National Conference. Your presence and participation mean the world to us. As REC Net continues this exciting new chapter, we hope you'll keep learning, growing, and sharing your passion for recreation with our community.

We look forward to hearing your feedback, continuing the conversations started here, and seeing you again soon.

Safe travels home!

Sincerely,

The REC Net Board



Picture yourself at Eagle Ridge next year... we look forward to seeing you there!

