



February Quarterly Education Session Recap*

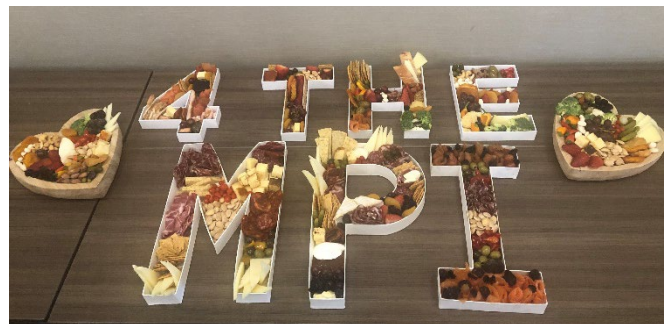
by Allyn Hodgins

What better way to kick off the first quarterly event of the year than a trip to the beach?! It was chilly, but oh so nice to get away for a couple of days.

We held our February Education and Networking program, along with our silent auction at The Delta Virginia Beach Waterfront February 6-7, 2024. We want to thank our gracious hosts, including Shantelle Jefferson and her amazing team, for their hospitality and ensuring we had fun and a successful event.

Our first session of the two-day program, *Enhancing Your Executive & Leadership Presence*, presented by Shawn Smith, was engaging and enlightening. We learned that executive presence, the combination of internal and external characteristics and attributes that support an executive's success, is extremely important as it plays a role in your own personal production, helps determine how people see and respond to you, and it can positively contribute to your overall personal fulfillment and satisfaction. But did you know, in order for executive presence to be effective, it should be authentic, motivational and inspirational, and it has to drive strategy? Additionally, how we act, how we speak and how we look are all skills we can enhance to support our executive presence. I will sum up the session with one of the quotes Shawn shared: "One of the most important factors in how others see you is.... How you see yourself."

Next up, we participated in a hands-on activity of making charcuterie boards, directed by the Delta culinary team. Each group created a compilation of yummy-ness (meats, cheeses, veggies, and fruits) and assembled various charcuterie boards, some of which met standards for pescatarian, and Kosher. We arranged these into letters and shapes to spell out "4 the Love of MPI", our theme of the program. Thank you, Chef Mora and team, for leading us in this fun and creative session!



Then, we moved from making the charcuterie boards to eating them at the reception! Not only was there ample opportunity to network with attendees, but we were also delighted to have Jeff Bristow with **Colonial DJs** provide us with some beats and photo booth to capture memories with great friends, and Chef Mora (stir) fried up some Mongolian-style noodle bowls. The evening wrapped up with a short jaunt over to the hotel restaurant and bar where we had two MPI teams battle it out in Music Trivia. Neither team was in tune enough to be a winner in trivia, but we all had a blast hanging out with each other.

The next morning, on day 2 of the meeting, attendees enjoyed a delectable breakfast spread and wonderful conversation, before we rolled into the third session of our educational program, ***AV Essentials from Beginner to Veteran Event Planners***, presented by Bryan Schmidt. Bryan highlighted best practices for planners when working with their AV team, and provided some insights on what new technologies planners can use to enhance their events. One big take away from this session was that planners and the AV team need to work together to set up expectations for all of the AV elements. If the planner can provide ample details of the event, the AV team can easily outline AV needs and suggestions to ensure a successful event.

Next up, we moved into a very serious (and somewhat scary) session, ***Identifying, Reporting, and Preventing Human Trafficking in the Hospitality Industry***. This was a thoroughly engaging session presented by DeDe Wallace and Robin Gauthier, where astonishing facts and scenarios were laid before us. Did you know that 90% of sex and human trafficking victims within US borders, are US citizens? As hoteliers we have an obligation to understand the signs of human trafficking and do everything we can to prevent it, including reporting it. If you see something off, trust your gut, and make a call. You could save a life!

Next, for some levity, we wrapped up the silent auction. Thank you again to all of our donors! We raised more than \$2,000.00 for the chapter. We'll be doing another silent auction at the Annual Conference in August, so if you're interested in making a donation, please reach out to [Sarah Lester](#) or [Megan Hazzard](#).

Our final session of the February program was ***Large Scale Event Execution & Safety***, a panel discussion with members from Virginia Beach Fire, EMS, Police, Parks and Recreation, and Transportation. This 9-person panel discussion reviewed how Virginia Beach first responders and agencies coordinate efforts throughout the city when multiple large-scale events are taking place at the same time. They also discussed how building relationships, not only with event producers, but the community as a whole is key to ensuring everyone's safety should an emergency situation arise.

MPI Virginia continues to plan for future events and we invite you and your colleagues to attend our next Quarterly program which will be April 15-16, 2024, at the Hilton Richmond Downtown. Registration is open, so register [here](#) today.

We are currently working on educational sessions for the April program, as well as our Annual Conference, scheduled for August 5-, 2024, at Kimpton The Forum Hotel in Charlottesville, Virginia, and November Quarterly program, which will be November 19-20, 2024, at the Hilton Norfolk The Main. If you have any suggestions for topics or speakers, we ask that you submit your feedback to [Penny Guiles](#). Don't forget to save the dates for all of our upcoming education programs!

Lastly, we want to give one final round of applause and thank you to our host, The Delta Virginia Beach Waterfront, our amazing speakers, our sponsors, and our members who support us at each and every meeting. Thank you!

We hope to see everyone in April!