

**Upper Midwest Convention & Visitors Bureaus
2017 Fall Conference
Speaker Bios**

Mark Lynch

Don Welsh is a seasoned tourism executive with more than 35 years of experience in the industry, Welsh serves as the President and CEO of Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI), the global trade association for official destination marketing organizations (DMOs). Welsh leads the organization's efforts to advocate for the professionalism, effectiveness, and significance of destination marketing organizations worldwide. Since joining the association, Welsh has set forth key priorities, including: returning to a member-centric organization, placing the right people in the right jobs, putting the "I" back into DMAI, renewing its focus on education and more.

Shelley Williams

Leah Chandler

Al Kidd

Mike Gamble

Sam Richter is an internationally recognized expert on sales intelligence and online reputation management. He has been named one of the world's Top 25 Most Influential Sales Leaders and his best-selling book, "Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling" is in multiple editions and was named Sales Book of the Year. Through his Know More! business improvement programs, Sam has trained leading organizations and entertained tens of thousands of persons around the globe. Sam's proven techniques for leveraging online information to grow sales has directly resulted in millions of dollars of new business for his clients and program attendees. Sam has been featured in thousands of newspaper, magazines, television and radio programs and websites and he has won numerous awards including a Gold Award at the International Film Festival and a Codie Award, the Oscars of the software industry. He serves on the boards of directors for numerous technology companies, and he is a past finalist for Inc. Magazine Entrepreneur of the Year.

Bill Baker

Greg Edwards

John Groh has been president/CEO of the Rockford (IL) Area Convention & Visitors Bureau since 2009. Prior to that he worked at the Rockford Chamber of Commerce as executive vice president. He began his career working his way through college serving tables at restaurants and staffing a hotel front desk. John can be described as a husband, father, marketer, civic entrepreneur, idea generator, destination developer, agitator and Gen X leader. Within his industry, he is a board member of The Destination & Travel Foundation and serves as vice chairman of the Illinois Council of Convention & Visitors Bureaus. Locally, he serves on the boards of the Rockford Chamber of Commerce and the Rockford Area Economic Development Council.

TBD

Ray Hoyt

Janet Sperstad's professional history reflects her lifelong vocation: driving excellence in meeting and event management execution and education. She has dedicated her career to defining the competencies and career pathways that articulate meeting planning as a design discipline requiring skills in the social sciences, executive leadership, and the cognitive sciences. Her contributions are global in scope and rooted in over 25 years as a meeting professional and executive leader in the corporate and non-profit sectors. Ms. Sperstad has been employed by a Fortune 500 global company, a statewide association, and owned a professional event management firm.

She currently leads Madison College's Meeting and Event Management Associate degree program, which she founded in 2002 and recently been selected as Competency Model Champion from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Janet's volunteer service includes high-profile leadership roles that are shaping how our industry defines itself, and how competencies impact education and standards development at every level. Current and most recent volunteer commitments include:

- Chair, Certified Meeting Professional Governance Commission
- Member, US Department of Labor, Hospitality, Tourism and Event Industry Competency Model Task Force
- Co-Chair, Convention Industry Council, Industry Education Task Force

Ms. Sperstad is the recipient of the 2015 Meeting Professionals International Chairman's Award, 2015 Outstanding Achievement in Industry Leadership Award from International Association Exhibitions and Events, as well named as being named one of the top 30 CMP Influencers by the Convention Industry Council. In addition, in 2014 she was the Professional Convention Management Association Professional Achievement Educator Honoree, named as an Event Industry Trendsetter as well as she was the Meeting Professionals International Planner of the Year for 2007-2008. She was recognized by her excellence in teaching through the Devi Bhargava award in 2010 and as Madison College's Distinguished Teacher of the Year in 2005.

Ms. Sperstad has written for and been featured in a variety of industry publications, white papers, academic journal and is an internationally recognized meeting professional, teacher, and speaker.

Steve Maly

Jon Schmieder has over 20 years of direct experience in the sports tourism industry having held senior leadership roles with three different sports commissions; Phoenix, Tulsa, and Denver. Schmieder brings a wealth of experience in sports tourism and economic development having also served in lead staff positions for the Senior Olympic Games and Pop Warner Football and Cheerleading. Schmieder served as Chairman of the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC) and was on the organization's Executive Committee for six years. While Schmieder served as the President of the Phoenix Regional Sports Commission, the NASC chose the organization as the 2012 Large Market Sports Commission of the Year. Schmieder was also named 2012 CEO of the Year by the Phoenix Chapter of the Organization of Non-Profit Executives. During his sports industry career, Schmieder and his work teams hosted events that generated over \$1.3 billion in direct visitor spending.

Jon is the Founder and CEO of the Huddle Up Group, LLC. Formed in 2012, the Huddle Up Group is a sports tourism, marketing, and event consulting company made up of experienced award winning executives. Our team has a successful track record of leading non-profit sports tourism organizations through strategic growth and increased community collaboration. We have extensive experience in building cohesive organizations and external relationships while working with volunteer boards, donors, elected officials, hospitality community leaders, and various corporate partners. The Huddle Up Group was selected as the winner of the 2017 NASC Superior Service Award, the highest honor a consulting firm can earn from the National Association of Sports Commissions.

Schmieder holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Arizona. He also holds a master's degree in higher education leadership from Northern Arizona University.

Unique Fact: Schmieder is one of only two, 2-time Chairmen of the NASC.

Adam Curl

John T. Meyer is co-founder and CEO of [Lemonly](#). Lemonly helps companies tell their story through visuals. Specializing in infographics, videos, and microcontent Lemonly works with brands like Marriott, Major League Baseball, Netflix, Under Armour, the Green Bay Packers, and the United Nations. John was a 2016 Finalist for EY's Midwest Entrepreneur of the Year and in 2013 was named to Entrepreneur Magazine's Top 10 Emerging Entrepreneurs. John loves to cheer on the Minnesota Twins, spend time with his wife Paige and daughter Margot.

Peter J. Pantuso is President and CEO of the American Bus Association (ABA)

The American Bus Association is the largest transportation, travel and tour organization in the United States, with nearly 4,000 member companies and organizations, representing nearly 65 percent of all motorcoaches on the roads.

Pantuso holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh and a master's degree from George Washington University's school of Business and Government.

He serves on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Committee of 100 leading association executives and is on the Boards of the American Highway Users Association, the Roadway Safety Foundation, the Motorcoach Marketing Council, and the Boy Scouts of America – National Capital Area Council. He is also an appointee to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Council and to the National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure.