



DEDICATED AND EDUCATED TO DELIVER CREATIVE EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM IN SPECIAL EVENTS

in plain **w o r l d s**

## 25 Years to Celebrate!

It has been 25 years since *Special Events Magazine's* founding. Hundreds of issues later, it celebrates a quarter century of trends, ideas and great stories as a champion publication. But like each story, there's a beginning—let's take a look back at how *Special Events Magazine* became today's industry leader.

Starting out small in 1982, the publication was once a little quarterly insert in a tool rental magazine. The humble start blossomed into its own international publication, adding a trade show conference—The Special Event was born in 1985—a Web site and a weekly e-newsletter, *Eventline*.

Whether the theme focuses on a wedding or event entertainment, the publication continually piques readers' interest. One issue in particular was a highlight for *Special Events Magazine* editor Lisa Hurley. "Hands down, it has to be our September 2002 issue, which recapped the first 20 years of the magazine," Hurley says, who joined the magazine in 1999. "It was wonderful learning how so many people who are now titans of the industry started out small. Of course, most of them had no idea they would wind up in special events; they had been everything from actors to bankers to social workers. But they had a passion for creating events, and the whole world opened up to events in the 1980s."

Over the years, the special event profession has truly found a home in society. Hurley has



enjoyed seeing how events win great recognition—how beautiful weddings are now the backbone of many magazines and TV shows. And experiential marketing events are the hottest vehicle in branding right now.

A priority at *Special Events Magazine* is to present information that addresses all the industry's disciplines. This can be wide-reaching. "Even if you're an in-house corporate planner who never has, never will put on a wedding, we hope that some aspect of an article we may run on a wedding—logistics, problem-solving, whatever—will have some application to the corporate

events you create and make them more successful," Hurley says.

In 1999 *Special Events Magazine* and ISES formed an alliance—one that paired the two, establishing a foundation for more growth. "Over the past 20-plus years, ISES members and *Special Events Magazine* have worked together, building professionalism in the events industry," says ISES president Connie Riley, CSEP. "With the help of many dedicated volunteers, David DeLoach and I officially announced the ISES-*Special Events Magazine* Cooperative Alliance during the Opening Night Party at The Special Event 1999."

The Cooperative Alliance united hundreds of individuals, presenting endless learning opportunities, while sharing industry trends and global standards. "By recognizing the competency of ISES members, *Special Events Magazine* allowed us to produce not only the Opening Night Party but the Gala Awards Celebration as well," Riley says. "Our members are still actively involved in producing these incredible events for The Special Event Annual Conference and Trade Show."

Talented professionals meet infinite opportunities through both *Special Events Magazine* and ISES. "In every way that we interact with ISES, we gain deeper insights into important trends and get the chance to peek into the minds of the best in the business," Hurley says. From ISES to *Special Events Magazine*: Congratulations on 25 years!

**Save the date:** The Special Event 2008 runs Jan. 15-18 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. To learn more, please visit [thespecialeventshow.com](http://thespecialeventshow.com) or call 866/486-0731 or 708/486-0731. See you there!



## Political Events: Do You Know the Red Flags?

By Karen Hill

The 2008 presidential race is in full swing here in my home state of New Hampshire. As the majority of candidates spend a large portion of their time and event dollars campaigning, securing a candidate as a regular client is ideal. To do this, you need to learn the basics of providing production services for varying types of candidates.

### FLEXIBILITY FIRST

Flexibility is a must. Campaigns often make major changes that affect vendors involved in an event. From the start, you must understand the nature of a political advance team. These are the individuals who deal with all the details surrounding a political event. City to city, the team travels to produce events. When one event ends, they're on an airplane headed to the next in as little as three days. Each location welcomes new tasks such as securing venues, sound, lighting, video, catering and staging, all to produce major events just days away.

What does this schedule necessitate? In a word: flexibility. Just when you think your truck is ready for an 8 a.m. load the next day, the campaign calls at 5 p.m. to tell you everything has changed. Change can truly happen in a second. What you thought was going to be a 6,000-person event with a flown audio and lighting system is now a small-town meeting held in an elementary school library for 200.

Availability is critical to build strong client relationships, which includes being on hand by cell phone any time of day. I have taken calls from advance teams at 2 a.m. to deal with changes for an event the following morning. It's key to put their minds at ease, letting them know they're taken care of. As requirements constantly change, your attitude needs to remain positive throughout the process.

### SYSTEM OF CONTACTS

Clients want you to be everything for them. Each specific region you travel to requires a Rolodex of contacts—your source for the campaign's needs. As a production vendor with an inventory of sound and lighting equipment, I am often asked to provide video, risers, pipe and drape, confetti cannons and decor for political events—all things I do not have.

Being an ISES member has really opened the doors to countless professional relationships. I've formed contacts with diverse event vendors who have become a big part to providing one-stop shopping for my political clients. An expanding networking circle means one less vendor for the advance team to deal with, one less phone call it has to make and one less check it has to write.

### SUFFICIENT STAFFING

For political events, staffing your event is a top priority. Image and perception are big factors to a campaign's overall success. Hiring local unions to assist the technical team setup, run and strike of an event is vital.

Earlier in my career I made the mistake of hiring nonunion labor



An election night victory event for Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick.

to help my staff facilitate the production. With showtime only 12 hours to go, I had to make a major change in staffing and hire the local union. When every vote counts, including the votes of the thousands of dedicated men and women working for unions, this is a major issue of concern for the candidate. A union picketing an event would surely make the news—and tarnish the candidate's image.

As the campaign progresses and the candidates thin out, additional security comes to the forefront. The staff you chose to produce the event must be able to supply their birth dates and Social Security numbers. Any staff member convicted of a crime will not be allowed to take part in the event. Have this information readily available to pass along to the advance team for background checks.

At the campaign's close, team members often move on and join the next campaign. To secure a candidate's future call—no matter who he or she is—just remember, maintain a positive attitude and extreme flexibility, provide a one-stop shop and supply whatever the advance team needs to produce its event.

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# CSEP Changes to Meet Your Needs

By Kevin White, CSEP

As the event industry evolves, so does the certification process for establishing a professional standard.

The United States and many other parts of the world recognize ISES' Certified Special Events Professional designation as the leading certification for the event industry. The CSEP process is assessed constantly so it will accurately gauge the industry's expertise. Specifically, the examination process has undergone a stringent review over the last two years.

Recognizing its strengths and finding its weaknesses was just a start. The ISES Certification Committee, along with independent testing administrator Schroeder Measurement Technologies, logged hundreds of hours refining and improving the exam and its administration process.

The results below outline recent program changes that are a giant step forward in improving the exam's ability to test candidates accurately. They also make it extremely accessible to event professionals worldwide.

## ACCESSIBILITY

- Testing locations can now be provided worldwide for any candidate who requires a facility.
- The exams are now available four times a year—a jump from two to three times a year. At each time, the CSEP candidate can choose the most convenient day from a 15-day window. This greater flexibility allows candidates to take their own schedule into consideration when registering.

## STREAMLINING

- The exam is now two examination sections instead of three, while maintaining its reputation as one of the most rigorous certification exams in the hospitality industry.
- The entire process is completed on a computer using a proprietary testing interface. The various exam components—multiple-choice and written sections—are now a breeze, with full-review capabilities, bookmarking, timing, calculations and progress-tracking all in front of the candidate's eyes.

## VALIDITY AND ACCURACY

- A vast effort to evaluate current questions for fairness, applicability, usage and contradictions was undertaken. Now, a bank of up-to-date standardized questions exists. The exam itself is based on a wide scope of event management work and general knowledge.
- SMT ensures that all questions reflect accurate measurement of a candidate's abilities.

- The exam's written portion was redesigned to more accurately test a candidate's ability to apply currently accepted event management practices to specific event scenarios.
- A redesign of the grading mechanics reduces the subjectivity in certain exam sections' scoring. The scoring is now far more objective.

## MODERN INNOVATION

- The computer-based testing interface managed by SMT enables scores to be received faster.
- Because test scores and question-answer patterns are archived, the exam can be updated regularly and assessed for question validity.
- ISES will now have an "archive of performance" to gauge its certification program and look at multiyear progress of the industry and the exam as a whole.
- ISES is potentially the only association that has designed a certification process that includes both multiple-choice and written components for testing purposes.

Evolution is a slow-moving process that is the aggregate of countless individuals' efforts over many, many years. The CSEP exam is now the product of these innovators, the 2006-07 ISES Certification Committee, led by Michael Tannen, CSEP, who took on the monstrous project of updating and modernizing the CSEP designation, and those who commit themselves to the process of becoming certified in the event industry. We hope the impact of these recent changes will have a lasting impact on global certification and standardization.



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**know?**

## Board of Governors Welcomes Sue Werb, CSEP

*An Interview with Sue Werb, CSEP*

Alongside 2007-08 ISES president Connie Riley, CSEP, Sue Werb, CSEP, joined the International ISES Board of Governors at Eventworld® 2007 in Montreal. Read on to discover more about one of ISES' new leaders, from her start in the industry to joining ISES.

**Q: Tell me a little about your current position and role at Simply Elegant Events Inc.**

**A:** I am president of my company, which I formed shortly after receiving my CSEP designation in 2003. Simply Elegant Events designs, produces and manages events. While I have the ability to produce many types of events, I believe I have the most experience designing and producing corporate and/or social events.

**Q: How and when did you get involved with ISES?**

**A:** I attended my first Philadelphia ISES meeting in October 1999 and joined the association in January 2000. In 2001, the Philadelphia chapter needed a secretary,

and since then I have served on committees and in leadership positions.

**Q: What has been the greatest value or highlight of being an ISES member?**

**A:** The greatest value is in all of the ISES relationships that I have been privileged to form in the past seven years. I have attended every Conference for Professional Development/Eventworld, The Special Event and Northeast Regional Conference since 2000. Those relationships gave me many opportunities to work outside of Delaware. In addition to attending these educational conferences, I've had the opportunity to travel to destinations I may otherwise never have visited. The education and leadership training I have received has expanded my knowledge in the special event industry. Although obtaining my CSEP designation has been both valuable and a highlight, one of the most memorable highlights was being named Volunteer of the Year in 2006.

**Q: Why are you interested in serving on**

**the ISES Board of Governors?**

**A:** Serving on the Philadelphia board since 2001 and as regional vice president for the past two years has given me the opportunity to learn many aspects of the association on the chapter and regional level. I would like to expand my knowledge and involvement within ISES on a global level, and I feel that serving on the Board of Governors will allow me to continue my commitment to serving my peers.



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