

pennsylvania meetings + events

MEETINGSMAGS.COM // FALL 2017

BEST

*3 Stellar
Editor's Picks*

2017

of

PA

21 categories including:

BEST HISTORIC OR CULTURAL VENUE, A/V PROVIDER, CASINO, GOLF RESORT, BREWERY, FLORIST, MEETING/EVENT PLANNING COMPANY, RESTAURANT WITH PRIVATE DINING SPACE, ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDER/PERFORMER *and more!*



BEST
of
PA

*by
Nancy
DePalma*

**It's time to announce the winners
of the second annual Best of
Pennsylvania readers' choice awards!**



HERSHEY LODGE

WELCOME

WELCOME TO OUR SECOND ANNUAL BEST OF PENNSYLVANIA READERS' CHOICE AWARDS. LAST YEAR WE WERE PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS, BUT THIS YEAR WE WERE REALLY BOWLED OVER BY YOUR SUPPORT—WE DOUBLED THE NUMBER OF VOTES WE RECEIVED! WHILE THERE ARE A FEW FAMILIAR FACES, MOST OF THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENTS ARE FIRST-TIME WINNERS. ♣ WE ARE EXCITED TO CELEBRATE THE WINNERS AND WE KNOW YOU'RE CURIOUS TO SEE WHO TOOK THE TOP PRIZES, SO GO AHEAD AND READ ON TO LEARN MORE. HERE ARE YOUR 2017 WINNERS ...

PHOTOS: RYAN RANDOLPH PHOTOGRAPHY; (OPPOSITE) HOTEL DU VILLAGE



HOTEL DU VILLAGE

THE WINNERS

BEST HOTEL WITH MEETING/EVENT SPACE (Fewer than 200 Guest Rooms)

Warehouse Hotel at The Nook

warehousehotel.com | 855.618.6181

Runners-Up» Normandy Farm;
Fairmont Pittsburgh

BEST HOTEL WITH MEETING/EVENT SPACE (More than 200 Guest Rooms)

Hershey Lodge

hersheyhotel.com | 717.533.3311

Runners-Up» The Ritz-Carlton Philadelphia;
The Logan Philadelphia

BEST INN WITH MEETING/EVENT SPACE

Hotel du Village

hotelduvillage.com | 215.862.2300

Runners-Up» The Inn at Leola Village;
Valley Green Inn

BEST CASINO

Parx Casino

parxcasino.com | 888.LUV.PARX

Runners-Up» Sands Casino Resort
Bethlehem; SugarHouse Casino

BEST GOLF RESORT WITH EVENT SPACE

Nemacolin Woodlands Resort

nemacolin.com | 866.344.6957

Runners-Up» Springfield Country Club;
Skytop Lodge

BEST RESORT WITH MEETING/EVENT SPACE

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions

kalaharimeetings.com | 877.780.6400

Runners-Up» Nemacolin Woodlands Resort;
Bear Creek Mountain Resort &
Conference Center

BEST BREWERY WITH EVENT SPACE

Yards Brewing Company

yardsbrewing.com | 215.448.1165

Runners-Up» Appalachian Brewing
Company; The Church Brew Works

PLACES

It may be connected to the nation's largest indoor sports facility, but the **Warehouse Hotel at The Nook** stands on its own two feet. You named it the Best Hotel with Meeting/Event Space (Fewer than 200 Guest Rooms). The Warehouse Hotel is indeed that—a converted warehouse transformed into a sleek, modern hotel. The décor is largely repurposed (packing crates double as wall décor). The Warehouse features stylish guest rooms, a hip restaurant (Forklift and Palate, see page 30 for more on that), and a 60,000-square-foot fitness center, among other amenities. "With 700,000 square feet under one roof, our large group areas, trade show space and traditional meeting space is packed with areas that can be tailored from grand to intimate. Add in our full range of in-house catering, and various on-site dining options, and this is why guests and meeting attendees keep coming back," says Brittney Hemperly, sales manager.

Hershey Lodge wins for Best Hotel with Meeting/Event Space (More than 200 Guest Rooms). Larger meetings are never a problem for this resort, where 665 guest rooms and suites provide a welcome respite from a meeting or conference. The resort has 100,000 square feet of meeting space, with plenty of unique spaces including the Great American Hall, and the team-building opportunities are seemingly limitless (with access to three golf courses and a ropes course, and even

chocolate-themed adventures). A coffee shop, two casual restaurants and a gourmet restaurant are located within the Lodge. Add a team of on-site certified meeting professionals, and meetings are, well, sweet here. Of course, there's always Hersheypark for rides and attractions as well as the Four-Diamond Hotel Hershey with its many amenities.

Don't judge a hotel by its room numbers, since **Hotel du Village** is indeed a serious contender. It takes top prize for Best Inn with Meeting/Event Space. There are just 22 rooms at this historic estate that sits on lush grounds just 1.5 miles north of New Hope in Bucks County. Two French Country-style ballrooms and two additional venue spaces make this spot ideal for corporate retreats, though it's really all about the spectacular setting at this hideaway. "Though our uniquely appointed meeting and event spaces invite nature in with their wraparound windows and views of the gardens and terraces, when weather suits we often find empty meeting spaces. Our guests love to venture outside, enjoy the fresh air and truly get the creativity flowing. It is rare to find a venue where the groups feel so comfortable that they move their business out on the terrace, flipcharts and all!" says Kristen George, area director of corporate sales for Landmark Hospitality, which owns and operates Hotel du Village.

Parx Casino, the winner for Best Casino, is located in Bucks County just 20 minutes north of Center City Philadelphia. It's comprised

THE WINNERS

BEST HISTORIC OR CULTURAL VENUE

The Franklin Institute

fi.edu | 215.448.1200

Runners-Up» Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; Heinz History Center

BEST WINERY WITH EVENT SPACE

Chaddsford Winery

chaddsford.com | 610.388.6221

Runners-Up» New Hope Winery; The Vineyard & Brewery at Hershey

BEST RESTAURANT WITH PRIVATE DINING SPACE

Forklift & Palate

forkliftandpalate.com | 717.537.6205

Runners-Up» Fork; Water Works

BEST MEETINGS/EVENTS VENUE (No Hotel)

Spooky Nook Sports

spookynooksports.com | 717.945.7087

Runners-Up» The Franklin Institute; The Hub Conshy

BEST FLORIST

The Farmer's Daughter Flowers

thefarmersdaughterflowers.com

412.231.1238

Runners-Up» Beautiful Blooms Events; Floral Designs of Mount Joy

BEST CATERER

Starr Catering Group

starrevents.com | 215.923.2675

Runners-Up» DiBruno Brothers; Brûlée Catering

BEST MEETING/EVENT PLANNING COMPANY

Albrecht Events, LLC

albrechtevents.com | 215.699.3784

Runners-Up» The Event Group; The JDK Group

BEST TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER

J&J Luxury Transportation

jjtransportation.com | 610.776.1516

Runners-Up» King Limousine Transportation Service, Inc.; Premiere #1 Limousine Service

of the 260,000-square-foot Parx Casino and the 280,000-square-foot Parx East. From the upscale Parxgrill, the elevated Asian cuisine at Bambu Noodle Bar and the lively ambience at Chickie's and Pete's to the cocktails and bites at XLounge, foodies win big here. Whether you want space for a meeting or event or are looking for a way to bond with clients or colleagues, Parx pours it on.

Nemacolin Woodlands Resort wins for Best Golf Resort with Event Space. It's not just about the two Pete Dye-designed courses (Shepherd's Rock opened this summer), but the golf is exceptional. "Few resorts showcase 36 holes of golf of this magnitude," says Monte Hansen, managing director. Set on more than 2,000 wooded acres in the Laurel Highlands, Nemacolin's meeting facilities include three ballrooms, a 175-seat lecture hall and 25 meeting rooms. "Our something-for-everyone resort includes luxurious accommodations, world-class spa and wellness programs, award-winning dining and over 70 amenities. We are positioned to be a premier golf destination in the U.S.," says Hansen.

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions in the Pocono Mountains wins for Best Resort with Meeting/Event Space. This place may be able to claim the title of America's largest indoor water park (it's a whopping 220,000 square feet!), but it's not just fun and games at Kalahari, where meetings are a priority. Never content to rest on any laurels, Kalahari is expanding its convention center with an additional 130,000 square feet, expected to open in late 2019. What does that mean? It'll have 36 meeting rooms with a grand total of 230,000 square feet. "Kalahari Resorts & Conventions has everything groups need to make event planning a breeze—first-class service, nearly 1,000 guest rooms, premium dining, unbelievable meeting spaces, spa, shopping, America's best family-friendly amenities and more—all under one roof," says Michael Levine, director of sales.

Cheers to **Yards Brewing Company** for winning Best Brewery with Event Space. Like a

lot of craft breweries, Yards was started by two college friends. It's now located in Northern Liberties, having started in Manayunk in 1994. Book a tour or reserve the tap room for a private group event.

The Franklin Institute was voted Best Historic or Cultural Venue. Popular with tourists and school kids during the day, the Franklin Institute is also a popular choice for events hosted by Fortune 500 companies, United States Presidents, foreign dignitaries and local businesses. "Our Franklin Hall, inspired by the Roman Pantheon, is home to a 20-foot statue of Benjamin Franklin which sits beneath an 82-foot domed ceiling and gilded Oculus," says Gina DeGiovanni, senior event manager. "Our Fels Planetarium, the second oldest planetarium in the nation, has star struck guests as they dine under their own customized star fields," adds DeGiovanni. Guests are invited to mingle with history here. "Cocktails are enjoyed among our many interactive exhibits and artifacts [at the Franklin Institute]," she adds. "The Franklin Institute blends history and elegance together in a way that will help make any event unforgettable."

Chaddsford Winery wins for Best Winery with Event Space. Founded in 1982, Chaddsford Winery has been impressing wine drinkers with its Made in PA wine since 1982. The winery produces over 30,000 cases annually, making it one of the larger wineries in the Keystone State. Chaddsford is also a terrific spot for events, with tent options in the warmer months and a cozy cottage that is open year-round.

Forklift & Palate, tucked inside the Warehouse Hotel, wins for Best Restaurant with Private Dining Space. The interior echoes the hotel's industrial chic sensibility with tables crafted from repurposed wood. "The refurbished materials and lighting create a warm, relaxing environment," says Jenna Martin of Forklift & Palate. The size is impressive in its own right, with seating for as little as 10 and up to 600 for private events. And the food? "It's a home run," adds Martin.



NEMACOLIN WOODLANDS RESORT



KALAHARI RESORTS & CONVENTIONS

THE WINNERS

BEST CVB IN TOWN/AREA MORE THAN 300,000 IN POPULATION

Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau

discoverphl.com | 215.636.3300
Runners-Up» Discover Lancaster;
Visit Bucks County

BEST CVB IN TOWN/AREA LESS THAN 300,000 IN POPULATION

Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau

visithersheyharrisburg.org | 717.231.7788
Runners-Up» Destination Gettysburg;
Lackawanna County CVB

BEST A/V PROVIDER

Synergetic

sslproductions.com | 215.633.1200
Runners-Up» IMS Technology Services;
Eventions Productions

BEST EVENT DÉCOR PROVIDER

Albrecht Events, LLC (tie)

albrechtevents.com | 215.699.3784

Party Rental Ltd. (tie)

partyrentalltd.com | 201.727.4700
Runners-Up» Roberts Event Group;
Shumaker PDT

**BEST ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDER/
PERFORMER**

The Philly Keys

thephillykeys.com
Runners-Up» Philly Event Group; Michelle
Lee Entertainment

BEST PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER

Jeremy Hess Photographers

jeremyhessphotographers.com
717.390.7050
Runners-Up» Leeann Marie Photography;
Richard Barnes Photography



STARR CATERING GROUP





The menu changes seasonally and spotlights many Lancaster County ingredients.

Events can really be a ball when you turn to **Spooky Nook Sports**, selected as the Best Meetings/Events Venue (No Hotel). “We offer everything under one roof—restaurant, team-building packages, formal banquets or receptions and a lot of flexible, unique meeting and event space throughout the entire facility,” says Danielle Work, sales manager. Spooky Nook Sports is the largest indoor sports facility in North America and offers everything from indoor climbing and soccer to field hockey and flag football, but “we have so much more to offer than just sports,” adds Work.

SERVICES

Everything is coming up roses for **The Farmer’s Daughter Flowers**, your pick for Best Florist. Lauren Work Phillips may have earned her chops at a floral boutique in Brooklyn’s hip Park Slope, but the siren song of home called her back to Pittsburgh. The name hints at her past—she is in fact a farmer’s daughter. The company grows 30 percent of what it sells from July to October, and source from local flower farms as much as possible. In addition to flowers, Phillips likes to use foliage, fruit, herbs and branches in her designs to showcase her creativity.

Starr Catering Group takes the cake for Best Caterer. If the name rings a bell, it’s because Stephen Starr is behind some of the city’s most popular restaurants, so expect the best when it comes to haute cuisine and top venues. Some of the full-service catering company’s exclusive venues include the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Barnes Foundation, the Rodin Museum and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as well as New Liberty Distillery.

For those tasked with handling an event or meeting and looking to outsource, it seems there is no better than **Albrecht Events, LLC**, selected as the Best Meeting/Event Planning Company. “The key to success for event and meeting planning is listening to your client and working collaboratively to make their

vision a reality. Our team goes above and beyond to provide innovative ideas, connect with the best resources, and provide attention to detail from concept to execution flawlessly,” says Ashley Albrecht, president.

J&J Luxury Transportation wins Best Transportation Provider. This Allentown-based business dispatches from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and New York to anywhere in the U.S. J&J may have started with just three stretch limousines in 1986, but it now has over 100 vehicles in its modern-day fleet including sedans, navigators, vans, sprinters, Mercedes, limo vans, luxury limo coaches and small to large passenger buses.

Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau is the top pick for Best CVB in Town/Area More Than 300,000 in Population. “At the PHLCVB we strive to go the distance for our convention clients,” says Rick Staub, senior vice president of convention sales. “Customer service for us goes beyond dates, rates and space and we have distinguished ourselves by enhancing and branding the overall convention experience from assisting with preliminary site inspections and pre-planning meetings, to programming and city-centric events. We have cemented our position as the primary resource to assist planners in accessing and navigating city and regional assets and services and our clients have come to expect a superior level of service when working with us.”

Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau is the Best CVB in Town/Area Less than 300,000 in Population. “It may sound cliché, but the individuals on our sales team are this bureau’s greatest asset for planners,” says Audrey Bialas, sales director. “An organization can present a menu of services to planners with all the latest bells and trendy whistles and add-ons that they throw in to appear competitive, but in my two decades of sales it always comes down to the experience, knowledge and attitude of the person handling your meeting or event that makes or breaks your overall experience when hosting an event in a particular destination.” Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau also has plenty of experience: “We have over 100 years



SPOOKY NOOK SPORTS

PHOTOS: SARAH DICICCO PHOTOGRAPHY; SPOOKY NOOK SPORTS

of experience collectively,” shares Bialas.

You selected **Synergetic** as the Keystone State’s Best A/V Provider. “Three words: details, details, details. Every single person on our team is trained extensively on the importance of details. This means immaculately clean set-ups, properly taped cables, the perfect amount of light on a floral centerpiece, and even the color of shirts we wear,” says Jason Weldon, president and CEO.

Albrecht Events, LLC and Party Rental Ltd. tie for Best Event Décor Provider.

“Every event tells a story, and the décor that we design creates a reaction and emotions. Décor sets the tone and ambiance for the event, and it is what guests remember and sets the scene to encourage conversation and personal connection,” says Albrecht of the Lansdale-based company. From pharmaceutical powerhouses to universities, Albrecht has designed events large and small for a variety of clients.

Party Rental Ltd., with branches in Connecticut, Maryland, Washington, D.C., New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia, has a comprehensive collection of linens, tables, chairs, china, glassware, flatware, kitchen equipment, and display and illuminated furniture (the combined warehouse space is over 375,000 square feet!).

The Philly Keys wins for Best Entertainment Provider/Performer. With dueling pianos, live guitars and customized tracks, The Philly Keys bring energy and fun to events. Fun isn’t all they bring to events—they even bring those pianos!

Jeremy Hess Photographers was voted Best Photographer/Videographer for its full-service cinematography and photography offerings and the way it effectively captures conferences, meetings and events. Hess, who grew up in his family’s catering business, knows how to handle events. It’s not just a job for Hess, who takes great pride in what he does. “The event is a special moment that will never happen again ... I am there to capture pictures that honor it,” says Hess. 📸



SYNERGETIC



ALBRECHT EVENTS, LLC

PHOTOS: JENNIFER CHILDRESS PHOTOGRAPHY; ANN MARIE CASEY PHOTOGRAPHY