

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Eco-Event Zones Revolutionize Green Meetings

Meeting Hosts Join Forces to Make Green Meetings of the Future Easier

SALT LAKE CITY – MeetGreen[®], together with meeting industry partners Meeting Professionals International and the Unitarian Universalist Association are taking green meetings to the next level.

Under a new program launched by MeetGreen[®], these organizations are working together to promote a new way to envision green meetings and the impact they can have on organizations and local host cities. The vision: creation of an “Eco-Event Zone” for meetings, which encourage two simple things. Firstly, planners hosting meetings in the same city are encouraged to work together to seek and create opportunities for green meeting infrastructure – such as recycling, transit or renewable energy - in host destinations. The second goal of the program is to help event partners better work together to understand the full scope of environmental benefits and impacts they can have throughout the planning and post-event process.

“Too often we see meetings a singular event, rather than a transformative process. This initiative shows meetings are about much more than a few days sharing in education or networking. Conferences and events are multi-month or multi-year processes that can positively transform the cities where we meet and change how we look at an event footprint if we work together with our stakeholders,” indicates Shawna McKinley of MeetGreen[®].

With the meetings industry under threat from many angles, Eco-Event Zones present a new way to define events as catalysts for community change. This is something embraced by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and Meeting Professionals International (MPI), both of whom are hosting large conferences in Salt Lake City in June and July 2009. Both the UUA’s General

Assembly and MPI's World Education Congress have a green event mandate, but were challenged to secure full composting at the Salt Palace Convention Center.

“We were thrilled to find the convention center recycled, had switched to compostable disposables and was providing limited prep-food composting. Unfortunately, however, the city didn't have infrastructure to compost meat, oil or disposables which accounts for about 15-20% of our waste. We wanted to find a way to advocate for this, but were one voice, and one event,” states Janiece Sneegas, Ph.D., Director, General Assembly & Conference Services, Unitarian Universalist Association.

Enter Elizabeth Henderson, CMM, CMP, M.E. Des., Director of Corporate Social Responsibility for Meeting Professionals International: “Leading by example, MPI is helping our industry create more sustainable and responsible meeting experiences. With each conference, we look for programs that leave a lasting contribution while engaging the host community with the attendees. When the Eco-event Zone concept was proposed, we knew it was a natural fit, and was something that could positively affect our global industry as well as our host communities.”

All three organizations have issued their support to the City to research and develop a commercial composting service that can be accessed by the meeting and hospitality industry. Presently two local hotels, a handful of downtown restaurants, and the convention center divert vegetable prep waste and coffee grounds to a small composting facility, however investment is needed to create a commercial composting operation able to handle the volume of compostable disposables like cups, and food containers from an operation the size of the convention center.

With planning already underway community groups had not even considered the meetings industry might have a contribution to make to their conversations. “The volumes of waste from hospitality are what we need to help make operations viable. We've seen how much influence an event can have. The UUA's preference for composting has caused two local hotels to reach out to us to inquire about services. The potential to expand services presents employment opportunities while the increased waste diversion reduces pressure on landfills which benefits the local environment,” states Kate Whitbeck of Momentum Recycling in Salt Lake City, a local recycling company.

“We appreciate the initiative of MeetGreen[®], the UUA and MPI in communicating to our local bodies the economic impact their events have, and the services that are important to them. Even though these organizations will have come and gone from Salt Lake City by the time commercial composting is implemented, our City departments understand this is a desired service and one that is a decision-making factor for meeting planners when selecting a city. When you consider the direct value of just these two events is estimated at over \$20 million it is easy to see the enormous impact of meetings on our local economy. The addition of commercial composting adds to our existing green meeting package for Salt Lake and increases our marketability to the meetings industry as a whole,” adds Scott Beck, President & CEO of the Salt Lake City Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Formerly known as Meeting Strategies Worldwide, MeetGreen[®] works with progressive global organizations to integrate sustainable practices and produce conferences and events that deliver targeted business results. For more information regarding MeetGreen[®] please call +1 503.252.5458 or visit www.meetingstrategiesworldwide.com.

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is a faith community of more than 1,000 self-governing congregations that bring to the world a vision of religious freedom, tolerance and social justice. More information is available at www.uua.org.

Meeting Professionals International (MPI), the meeting and event industry’s largest and most vibrant global community, helps our members thrive by providing human connections to knowledge and ideas, relationships, and marketplaces. MPI membership is comprised of more than 24,000 members belonging to 71 chapters and clubs worldwide. For additional information, visit www.mpiweb.org.

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