



*To enhance and promote the expertise of government meeting professionals.*

June 2021

Hello SGMP Louisiana members and friends!

As I sit here and write this, my last letter as your SGMP President, I must admit I've struggled to find the words to adequately represent the past two years. I have pushed Backspace and Delete more than a few times and this may be draft 6 or 7. Instead of crafting something eloquently written, I think it best to speak from my heart.

When I took my seat as your Chapter President I was eager and ready to do the work. I was committed to our membership and the organization. I came in with a vision and we started our term off with a strong Board Retreat. I was pumped! As a group, we identified goals and targeted plans to meet those goals. I just knew we were going to make this chapter the best it had ever been.

We put in a lot of work the first year of our term. We unveiled a new logo and color scheme. We switched website providers and payment processors. We redesigned our sponsorship and fundraising packages. We developed official templates for documents. We had an amazing Annual Conference in Toledo Bend. We reached out to more government meeting planners than ever before and had planned a special networking breakfast to engage them in what our organization has to offer.

Sure, there were struggles that year, but their impact was minimal to our operations. We were on a roll!

As we began to navigate year two we had yet another strong Board Retreat. We even walked away with the foundation of what will become the Chapter Policy Manual. Our programming was going great! We were able to schedule speakers on engaging and requested topics.

Literally days after our March 2020 Education Luncheon our state shutdown due to COVID-19 restrictions. Everything around us was changing and it became a lot to process. It was a monumental task to keep the chapter operating when our membership was losing their jobs left and right. How could I ask someone to fulfill their commitment to SGMP while they were worried about how they were going to provide for their families? I couldn't, so I didn't. Instead I offered my support in anyway it was needed.

I'm not sure if it were magic, grace, will-power, or what but our Programming Committee has done an AMAZING job this past year keeping us engaged in spite of all the setbacks and complications. We are one of the few chapters that have offered uninterrupted educational programming. I'm proud of that. I'm proud of us.

SGMP LA Chapter  
SGMPLAChapter@gmail.com  
PO Box 84285  
www.sgmpla.net  
Baton Rouge, LA 70884



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Our membership has suffered greatly over the last year because of COVID-19. Suppliers haven't been working. New Orleans is only now fully reopening. Government planners haven't been planning meetings and events. Most of us can't book any events until the new fiscal year now that we are so far into the current one. We went more than a full year without anyone spending money on events in our state. That was rough. Really rough. For everyone. Our current membership is half of what it was pre-COVID.

That awesome board we started the two-year term with? Several were forced to realign their priorities and resign their positions. I don't blame them at all. Life changed for all of us in 2020. Their resignation forced us to reduce to a five person board. Suddenly a really small group of people were doing the work of several committees. It was a lot. There has been burn out. There has been miscommunication. There may have been some tears (mine). I can remember sitting on my couch one evening trying to get the newsletter published and out to inboxes. Nothing was working right. There was no one I could call to fix it. I remember feeling defeated and deflated. 2020 got the best of me, too.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the social injustices, inequities, and inequalities that began to be discussed on a deeper level this past year as a direct result of current events happening all around us. The emotional toll it has taken on our black members has been brutal. If I leave you with anything from my term as your President, it is to be nice to each other. Give each other grace but hold each other accountable when the time and situation is appropriate.

Despite it all, we end year two successful. We raised an incredible amount of funds for our Spread the Love campaign, which benefited the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, and for the hurricane victims (donated to the Cajun Navy). We will close our books in the black and not red as we initially feared. We are operating and functioning. That's a win in my book!

My definition of what it means to be successful has definitely evolved over the past two years. I'm learning (ever so slowly) to adapt and embrace obstacles as growth opportunities. I plan to be around as your IPP, but please reach out at any time. Let's do lunch or drinks!

All my best,

**LeAnna Toups-Bennett, CGMP**  
SGMP Louisiana Chapter President

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SGMPLAChapter@gmail.com  
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www.sgmpla.net  
Baton Rouge, LA 70884