

# HOSPITALITY HOTLINE

December 2025



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## Dates For Your Calendar

**Ocean City's 150<sup>th</sup> Gala**  
December 12<sup>th</sup>  
OC Convention Center

**TAM Classes**  
December 16<sup>th</sup> - 1pm  
Berlin Library

**Coastal Chambers Mixer**  
January 21<sup>st</sup> - 5pm to 7pm  
Ocean Downs Casino Event Center

**OCHMRA Brand Relaunch Party**  
January 30<sup>th</sup> - 5pm  
Seacrets

**Nibble & Network Events**  
November 13<sup>th</sup> - BLU Crabhouse  
December 18<sup>th</sup> - Harpoon Hanna's  
**New!** January 8<sup>th</sup> - Aloft Hotel  
February 19<sup>th</sup> - Vista Rooftop  
**New!** April 16<sup>th</sup> - Oyster & Scales

## Member Message

*From Executive Director, Susan L. Jones*

Here we are in the last month of 2025, and there's a lot to be grateful for! For starters, our members are the best! You constantly show up with great ideas, support our events, and stay resilient no matter what the year throws at us.

We just got back from the MD Tourism & Travel Summit, and the "Ready & Resilient" session was a standout. Check out page 4 for some great takeaways, and flip to page 2 to celebrate this year's award winners. We're proud to work alongside you and to keep lifting up the amazing people who make our industry so special!

Looking ahead, your involvement continues to matter and is essential to our success. Whether you're coming to Nibble & Network events, jumping in on advocacy efforts, or helping build a stronger workforce by sharing your ideas and staying plugged in, you're a huge part of our progress.

We're getting ready to transition from the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association to the OCMD Hospitality Association. We've been serving up hospitality since 1971, and we're excited for this next chapter. Your energy is what's going to make the new brand one-of-a-kind! Check the last page for details about the official launch and celebration. Mark your calendars for January 30th! We can't wait to celebrate with you. 😊



## FEATURED PARTNERS



Your singles source for exterior building maintenance. Our comprehensive commercial service offerings include window cleaning, facade restoration, waterproofing services, safety systems, and more.



Leading high-performance commercial coatings contractor specializing in seamless resinous (epoxy, polyaspartic, MMA, urethane) polished/stained concrete, and commercial painting service - serving the mid-Atlantic.



[Member Directory](#)

# Hospitality Highlights

Whats new in the industry?

## WARM WELCOMES & CELEBRATIONS

We wanted to give a warm welcome to **Hyatt Place's** newest Director of Sales, **Robin Caruana**, who comes from the Myrtle Beach market. The **Carousel Oceanfront Hotel & Condos** welcomed a new Sous Chef to the team, **Paige Dordoni**, previously kitchen lead at Aramark Cafe, and has earned an Associate in Applied Science in Culinary Arts at Paul Smith's College AND completed Wegman's accelerated 2-year program as a Culinary Management Trainee! Welcome to OCMD!

The **Hilton Suites Ocean City Oceanfront** AND **Holiday Inn Ocean City** were both recognized with the prestigious 2025 Reader's Choice Award from Convention South - way to go, guys! **Becker Morgan Group** is proud to announce that two of the firm's recent projects have been recognized with top honors from AIA Maryland, AIA Delaware, and the AIA Chesapeake Bay Chapter (CBC) during their annual Excellence in Design Award ceremonies. Congratulations to the **Beach to Bay Heritage Area** on receiving the Henson Award for Nonprofit Excellence.

Over 200 tourism and hospitality professionals gathered for the 44<sup>th</sup> annual Maryland Travel & Tourism Summit on November 19 - 21 and a few Ocean City businesses brought home some awards. **Beach to Bay Heritage Area** won the "Best Product or Event - Medium Budget" category with History, Heritage & Homelands of Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore, **Ocean City Maryland – Department of Tourism** won the "Best Product or Event - Large Budget" category with Boardwalk Rock festival, "Best Media and Public Relations Campaign" with "Catch a Ride" and was one of six counties that won the "Cooperative Partnership" award, **D3** won the "Small Business of the Year", **Renee Seiden, Harrison Group Hotels**, won the "Audrey Davenport Hospitality Person of the Year", **Michele Burke, Maryland's Coast**, won the "Tourism Ambassador of the Year". Way to represent hospitality at the State level!!

## Welcome New Members

**ALLIED**

**Evolution Sustainability Group**  
[evolutionsg.com](http://evolutionsg.com)

**Ferguson Facilities Supply**  
[ferguson.com](http://ferguson.com)

**Keller Brothers**  
[kellerbrothers.com](http://kellerbrothers.com)

**M&T Bank**  
[mtb.com](http://mtb.com)

**Hyett Refrigeration**  
[hyettrefrigeration.com](http://hyettrefrigeration.com)

## What's Hot 2026

By: National Restaurant Association

The 2026 What's Hot Culinary Forecast offers a look at the flavors, ingredients, and menu ideas that will shape dining next year. Chefs and food experts from around the country shared their insights, highlighting what's set to influence dishes, drinks, desserts, condiments, and more.

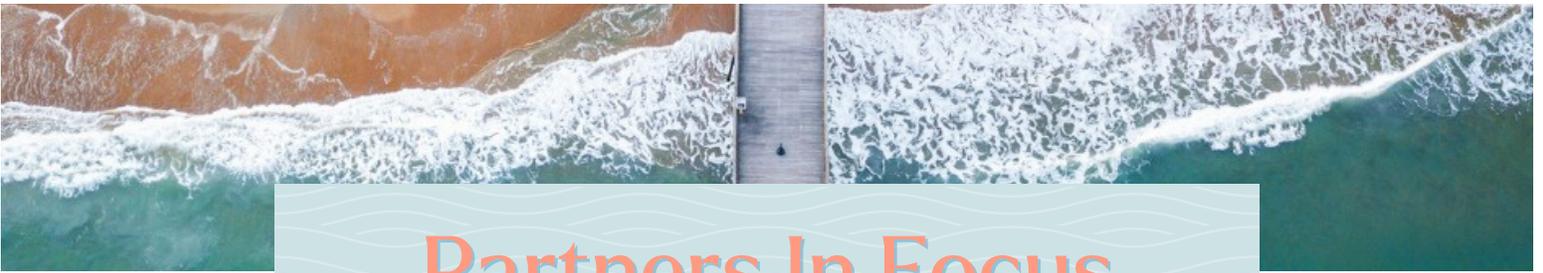
### What guests want...

- **Comfort food with a global spin** is on the rise, with diners craving familiar dishes that still bring a sense of adventure, like globally inspired burgers, Caribbean-style bowls, and elevated instant noodles.
- **Health, wellness, and value** also continue to drive choices, with guests seeking feel-good, budget-friendly options such as protein-packed items, nutrient-rich bowls, and more low or no alcohol beverages.

The Forecast shares the industry's Top 10 Overall Trends, the Top 5 Breakout Trends in every category, and the key insights driving menu innovation, marketing strategies, and guest expectations in the year ahead.

[Download your copy](#) of the 2026 What's Hot Culinary Forecast





# Partners In Focus

## Hampton Inn & Suites Ocean City Bayfront Convention Center Completes Renovations

The Hampton Inn & Suites Ocean City Bayfront Convention Center is proud to announce the completion of a full-property renovation, bringing a refreshed coastal charm and elevated guest experience to one of Ocean City’s most convenient locations. The transformation includes modernized guest rooms and suites, an updated lobby and breakfast area, and enhanced outdoor spaces overlooking the bay. With its ideal setting adjacent to the Roland E. Powell Convention Center, the hotel now offers an even more inviting atmosphere for business and leisure travelers alike—combining comfort, style, and the signature Hampton hospitality guests love.



Hampton Inn & Suites Ocean City Bayfront/Convention Center



## Business Feedback Survey

Attention Business Owners and Managers! The Worcester County Public Schools would like to hear from you. Please take about 3-5 minutes to complete a questionnaire about your workforce needs. **This is your opportunity to shape programs to develop the workforce your business needs.**

You can access the questionnaire [here](#). If you have any questions, email Nancy Schwendeman at [nschwendeman@worcestermd.gov](mailto:nschwendeman@worcestermd.gov).

Your response is requested by December 19, 2025.



## OCHMRA & Junior Achievement Partnership Summary

Junior Achievement and OCHMRA are dedicated to building a stronger future—by preparing young people for success and supporting the industries that keep our community thriving.

Since opening, the JA Center, located in Salisbury serving the entire Shore, has welcomed **27,596 students** from **11 school districts**, completed **310 simulations**, and worked with **1,537 amazing volunteers!**

Check out the full summary report [here](#).

Our Travel Hub needs you! Flip to page 8 for details on JA’s two programs and how you can get involved!

# Business Briefs

## Last Call For OCHMRA Keycard Distribution & Advertising

This convenient, pocket-sized 4x6 OC Keycard Holder is supplied **COMPLIMENTARY** to our hotel members for inserting plastic guest keys.

If you're a restaurant, attraction, or business looking to connect with visitors, the OC Keycard Holder is a must for your advertising plans. It's a **HIGHLY EFFECTIVE** way to reach guests directly, without relying on brochure racks!

Contact us to reserve your 2026 advertising space!

**Restaurants & Attractions** - [click here](#) to reserve your space  
**Hotels** - [click here](#) to sign up for next year's distribution

## RESOURCES

### Top Ways to Maximize Your Partnership

8 simple ways to stay engaged and make the most of your partnership—so you never miss a valuable opportunity!

### OCHMRA Member Portal Guide

Update your listing on OCVisitor.com, pay dues, update contacts, & register for events.

Use this [step-by-step guide](#) to get started!

### November OC Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes

Catch up on the latest OC Tourism Department News

## 5 Strategies for Thriving in a Disruptive World

*By Nolan Nichols, A Million Dreams, Presentation at Maryland Travel & Tourism Summit*

- 1. Storyworthy Moment of the Day** - Reflect and write/type a few sentences on what is the most memorable moment from the day? It could be meaningful, funny, small, or surprising. There's no wrong answer. What's the moment from the day that you want to hang onto?
- 2. The "Glads" Recap** - Think about the past day or week.
  - Grateful - What's something you're thankful for?
  - Learn - What's one thing you learned about yourself or the world?
  - Accomplish - What did you get done that you're proud of?
  - Delight - What moment gave you a sense of happiness?
  - Scared - What stretched you outside your comfort zone, but you did it anyway?
- 3. Invest in Relationships** - Small moments of outreach can create big waves of impact.
  - Reconnect with a friend- send the text, hop on a call or plan a quick coffee.
  - Take a walk with a friend or family member. No agenda, just connection.
- 4. Enjoy the Journey** - Take a moment to reflect on where you were 20 years ago, 10 years ago, and even 10 months ago. Notice how much you've grown and the resilience you've built along the way. Remember, your day-to-day challenges don't define your entire journey. Growth happens over time, and your overall progress is far greater than any single moment.  
**Joy isn't an output but an input. Discover what lights you up, and invite that joy into each day.**
- 5. Build A Day-Tight Compartment** -  
**Reset the Mind & Body:** Take a walk, Get fresh air, Take a break & breathe deeply, Prioritize sleep.  
**Practice Mindfulness:** Meditate/Pray, Morning workout, Spiritual books, Daily grounding reflections.  
**Connect with Others:** Call a friend, Walk with spouse or friend, Laugh & find moments of humor.  
**Shift Your Perspective:** Assume positive intent, Celebrate small wins, Practice gratitude & positivity.  
**Use Simple Mood Boosters:** Create a go-to music playlist, Listen to instrumental music, Dance, Read.

# Hilton's 2026 Trends Report: The Whycation: Travel's New Starting Point

*The Whycation: Travel's New Starting Point* reveals that in 2026, the journey will start with purpose, not just a place. More travelers are embracing intentional approaches by designing trips that balance exploration, comforts, and new beginnings. Hilton's 2026 Trends Report highlights emerging behaviors shaping the future of the stay experience.

## Hushpitality: Seeking Sweet Silence



**48%** of travelers report adding solo travel days to their itineraries before or after their family trips.



**54%** of travelers say they'd take a business trip just to get a break from their family or partner.



**#1 motivation** for leisure travel is "to rest and recharge" (**56%**), with top desires also including spending time in nature (**37%**) and improving mental health (**36%**).



**28%** of jetsetters plan to seek more quiet moments by themselves, even while on group trips.



**61%** of travelers report finding AI tools valuable when planning their trip.

## Home Comforts are the New 'Carry On'



**77%** of travelers say they enjoy visiting grocery stores abroad, and **almost half (48%)** cook their own meals while away.



**64%** of pet owners say they prioritize their pet's needs over their own when booking a trip, and **75%** of plant parents factor watering into their vacation prep.



**60%** of global travelers would take an extended break from work to travel for months or even years, if they could.



**44%** of global travelers would go as far as leaving a job if denied a vacation.



**72%** of travelers have a desire to take time off to explore a personal passion, skill, or hobby.

## The U.S. Road Trip Returns



**71%** of Americans plan to drive on their next vacation.



**90%** of road trip travelers say a comfortable bed is the most important amenity after a day on the road.



**83%** of road trip travelers say free breakfast is a must-have.



**61%** of travelers say they won't drive more than five hours without stopping for a hotel stay.

## Generation Permutations: The Expanded (and Playful) Family Vacation



Globally, **73%** of those who travel with their children or grandchildren expect to actively encourage the kids to help plan the family vacations.



**78%** of parents and grandparents agree that their children inspire them to seek out new travel experiences.



**50%** of parents with multiple children are taking trips with kids individually for one-on-one bonding.



**29%** of travelers who travel with children are embracing skip-gen trips, sending kids off with just the grandparents.



**Nearly 20%** of global travelers cite sports and entertainment as the "why" behind their travel plans in 2026.

## Inheritourism: Travel Runs in the Family



Among those traveling with adult children, **44%** of parents globally pay for the entire trip, with only **14%** of adult children paying for most or all of their trip.



**59%** of travelers agree that whoever pays for the trip gets to decide on the destination.



**73%** of travelers say their travel style has been shaped by their parents, and **66%** report the same for their hotel preferences.



**58%** of travelers say their parents have influenced the loyalty programs they use.

## Update: Tariff Relief on Key Food & Agricultural Imports

President Trump issued Executive Orders removing many food and agricultural products from IEEPA and global reciprocal tariffs on Brazilian and other imports, lowering costs for restaurants, distributors, and suppliers.

### Key Exemptions:

- Coffee & tea
- Beef
- Avocados, bananas, oranges, and tomatoes
- Tropical fruits & juices
- Cocoa & spices
- Fertilizers
- Other items listed in [Federal Annexes](#)

Non-agricultural and industrial goods remain subject to tariffs.

### Effective Date & Refunds:

- Retroactive to Nov. 13, 2025
- Importers may request duty refunds; review entries prior to Nov. 20

### Next Steps:

- Review invoices/purchase records
- Confirm updated pricing with suppliers
- Request duty refunds as applicable (CBP guidance: [Brazilian products](#) | Other [agricultural products](#))

## Music Licensing Update

*Provided By: Maryland Hotel Lodging Association*

Music, whether live, karaoke, or background, enhances customer experience and encourages repeat business. But under federal copyright law, businesses must obtain permission from music creators. The easiest way to do this is through Performing Rights Organizations (PROs), which license songs on behalf of songwriters, composers, and publishers.

Each PRO represents a unique catalog, and creators can only affiliate with one. To legally play a wide range of popular music, businesses often need licenses from the four major PROs: BMI, ASCAP, SESAC, and GMR.

- **BMI** and **ASCAP** cover over 90% of music on U.S. radio and streaming platforms.
- **SESAC** and **GMR** represent most of the remaining 10%.

New PROs with limited catalogs have emerged, request their song lists to determine relevance to your business. The [infographic here](#) outlines key PROs to help you choose the right licenses.

## Demystifying AI and the Tools You Need to Know

*Presented by Acme Paper & Supply*

In this fast-moving digital landscape, AI is reshaping how companies operate—but most projects still fail to deliver results. In Demystifying AI, Orases President Nick Damoulakis breaks down what makes the difference between failure and success.

You'll learn:

- Why 95% of AI initiatives fail and how to avoid the "Valley of Death" in change management
- How to align vision, consensus, and skills to manage complex transformation
- Simple frameworks for identifying high-impact, low-risk AI opportunities
- The essentials of prompt design, governance, and readiness for enterprise adoption

Nick will share practical tools like the Change Curve, ICE Prioritization Matrix, and the ASCEND AI Framework to help your team innovate with confidence and build sustained momentum in this new era of intelligent systems.

At Acme Paper, innovation has always driven how we serve our clients and communities. Don't miss this opportunity to gain the knowledge and perspective you need to lead confidently in the age of AI.

This promises to be an exciting executive session to help leaders understand and harness AI.

[Click here](#) to register for the December 9<sup>th</sup> class from 10 to 11am.

## WMD 528 (Coastal Highway) Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Project

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (SHA) has initiated the MD 528 (Coastal Highway) project as part of the [Pedestrian Safety Action Plan \(PSAP\)](#), which identifies areas of need and prioritizes corridors for pedestrian and bicycle safety projects.

To make travel safer for all road users, this project will make [Context Driven](#) improvements along 3.13 miles from 15th Street to 67th Street in Worcester County. Please visit the PSAP website for more information regarding the PSAP program and other associated initiatives.

The State Highway Administration will hold a public informational workshop, 5 - 7pm, December 8<sup>th</sup>, at the Roland E. Powell Convention Center, to present proposed improvements for pedestrian and bicycle safety along the corridor and gather community feedback. The workshop will provide attendees with an opportunity to view project details on maps and displays. The maps, displays, and other information will also be available on the Project Portal page at the QR code below.

At the workshop, State Highway Administration representatives will be available to listen to your feedback and answer project-related questions. This information is important and may be taken into consideration to advance and improve project development. There will be no formal presentation. Attendees can arrive at any time during the workshop hours and view displays at their own pace.

[Visit their website](#) to learn more about the project!

### SCHEDULE

Project Phase	Estimated Schedule
Planning	Completed in 2025
Design	Preliminary Investigation (30% design completion) anticipated in Summer 2026
Construction	Start anticipated in Summer 2028



# Community Connections

## Volunteer at the OCHMRA Travel Storefront

*Engage, Inspire, & Empower the next generation by volunteering at the Perdue Henson Junior Achievement Center.*

Your role as a volunteer is to oversee and mentor small groups of students throughout their day at Finance Park and BizTown to ensure that students remain focused on their prospective businesses. No special budgeting expertise or preparation is necessary. You can train when you arrive as sample discussion prompts are provided.

JA Finance Park and JA BizTown allows middle and high-school grade students to see, touch, and live the experience of personal finance in a real-life setting of stores, shops, and financial institutions, by becoming "an adult for the day."

### Finance Park

- Students learn about personal finance and career exploration. They receive a "life scenario" including a family, job, and income. They rotate through 18 different Storefronts and budget for items such as healthcare, childcare, insurance, etc. They will identify personal interests, skills, work preferences, and values that will help them identify future, real-life career interests.

### Biztown

- Students become business leaders, consumers, and employees for a day. They rotate through 18 different Storefronts and learn what it takes to run a successful business, manage personnel, and business finances, and work as a team

Scan the QR Code to sign up or [click here!](#)



## OC Museum Society Presents Holiday Open House – A Day of Coastal Cheer

The OC Museum Society invites the community to celebrate the holiday season at its annual Holiday Open House on December 7, from 10am to 4pm at both the OC Life-Saving Station Museum and the Museum of Ocean City. Admission is FREE for everyone; both locations will be filled with festive activities, local history, and coastal holiday charm.

Guests are invited to take advantage of a special 20% off storewide sale, providing an excellent opportunity to pick up unique, locally inspired gifts for everyone on your list.

[Click here](#) to view more details!



## Ocean Downs Casino 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Toy Drive

*Hosted by Joe & Nick's Networking Happy Hour*

Stop by Ocean Downs Casino on December 9, from 5 - 8pm, for their annual Toy Drive.

This event combines the joy of giving with the excitement of Ocean Downs Casino and the community spirit of Joe & Nick's Networking Happy Hour. It's the perfect chance to connect, give back, and maybe even win big!

Let's make this year's toy drive the most memorable yet. Invite your friends, family, and colleagues to join in the holiday spirit

[Click here](#) to view more info!



Join us for our  
*December Nibble & Network*

**DECEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2025**

HARPOON HANNA'S - 142<sup>ND</sup> ST. ON THE BAY

**MENU OVERVIEW**

Hot Appetizers & Cold Appetizers

Carving Station

Pasta Station

Dessert station

***Full Menu On The Back***

Networking & Food from 5:30pm - 8:00pm & Door Prizes 8:00pm - 8:30pm • \$55pp inclusive

Please RSVP by Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup> to [susanjones@ocvisitor.com](mailto:susanjones@ocvisitor.com), scan the QR code or visit the link below.

<https://oceancitymdassoc.weblinkconnect.com/events/December-2025-OCHMRA-Nibble-Network-197/details>

Payment is required in advance or at the door | Reservations not honored may be billed



To be entered for door prizes, bring dry & pre-packaged goods - help stock the food pantry at Diakonia!

*Ready-to-eat items, pop-top cans, fruit cups, juice boxes, plastic silverware, etc.*

SPONSORED BY:





# M E N U

## **HOT APPETIZERS**

**Chesapeake Crab Dip with Toasted Baguette**

**Spicy Tuna on Crispy Rice**

**Bacon Jam Smash Burger Sliders**

**Crab Cake Egg Rolls**

**Blackened Shrimp over Corn Caprese with Boursin**

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## **COLD APPETIZERS**

**Mini Wedge Salads**

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## **CARVING STATION**

**Steamship served with Mushrooms & Onions**

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## **PASTA STATION**

**Cheese Tortellini in a Creamy Pesto Sauce**

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## **DESSERT STATION**

**Sticky Bun Bread Pudding**

**Godiva Chocolate Brownies**

**Banana Cream Cheesecake**



# Join Us & Celebrate

After 54 years as the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association, **WE'RE REBRANDING** as the

## OCMD Hospitality Association

Enjoy a casual night of light bites, cocktails, and music as we celebrate our next chapter for Ocean City hospitality!

Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026 | 5:00  
PM

Seacrets 49<sup>th</sup> St. – Morley Hall



RSVP to [susanjones@ocvisitor.com](mailto:susanjones@ocvisitor.com)