

## HAPPY NEW YEAR! 2026

### Officers & Directors 2025-'26

#### Officers

##### President

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##### Treasurer

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##### Chairman of the Board

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Amanda Masilunis

Rosen Hotels & Resorts

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The Mid Florida Chapter presents:

### General Membership Meeting Tuesday, January 27, 2026



#### Menu

Cash bar will be available

##### Salad Course:

*Port Poached Pear Salad – Arugula, Golden Beet, Herb Crusted Goat Cheese, Shaved Fennel, Candied Walnuts, Apple & Maple Vinaigrette*

##### Entrée Course:

*Herb Roasted Chicken – Butternut Squash Risotto, Roasted Brussels Sprouts, Pepitas, Truffle Chicken*

*Vegetable Napoleon (Vegan, Gluten Free) Squash, Zucchini, Eggplant, Tomato, Saba, Roasted Brussels Sprouts, Butternut Squash Risotto*

##### For Dessert:

*Dulce de Leche Cheesecake (Nut Friendly) - Dolcely Whip Cream, Graham Cracker Crust, Milk Chocolate Swirl*

#### Program

**Effective Employee-Robot Collaboration Strategy**

**Presented By:**

**Ruby (Hong Ngoc) Nguyen**



See more on pg. 3

#### Location & Parking

**Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center**

**Room: Desoto 1-2 and Foyer**

6000 Osceola Pkwy,

Kissimmee, FL 34746

Free Self Parking

#### Cost

Members with RSVP \$65

Non-Members & Guests \$75

Student Chapter Members \$35

#### Additional Information:

R.S.V.P. is **required**. Please visit our website [midfloridahftp.org](http://midfloridahftp.org) or respond to your personal e-vite from the chapter Secretary. Please RSVP or cancel no later than 5:01 PM, Friday prior to the event. Unfortunately, we cannot accept walk-ins, or credit any no-shows or late cancellations.

*\*Any opinions expressed in the Mid-Florida Chapter newsletter and web-site are solely those of the editor, web master or author of the article and are not associated with HFTP Global. Additionally, all works and publications are created entirely through volunteer time. Please excuse any mistakes or errors. Please consider volunteering content to be shared with your fellow members by emailing the editor.*

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## **From Our President**

Dear Members,

Before we turn the page to 2026, I want to express my gratitude and thank the past presidents who participated in our December panel discussion. In my opinion, there is no better way to spark interest for those individuals who are on the fence about joining the board than to hear about the experiences from the experts themselves. It was also a great way for our chapter to close the year.

Happy New Year to all HFTP Mid-Florida Members! I find myself reflecting on the incredible momentum our chapter built throughout the past year. January always brings a unique sense of renewal, and in the world of hospitality finance and technology, it marks the start of a season where we take the lessons of the previous year and apply them to the innovations of the next.

I hope to see many of you at our first general meeting of the year on January 27th at the Gaylord Palms Resort. Our topic will be IT-related and it's also a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with colleagues and set your professional goals for the first quarter. Let's make 2026 our most innovative and connected year yet.

Sincerely,

Dennis Villegas

President

Mid-Florida Chapter



## **2025-26 Committee Assignments**

### ***Call for Volunteers***

#### **Legislative/ By-Laws**

Dennis Villegas – DVillegas@Rosenhotels.com

#### **Membership Relations/ Recruitment**

Glen Carr – Glen.Carr@gmail.com

#### **Communications/ Social Media/ Webmaster**

Dennis Villegas – DVillegas@RosenHotels.com

Lori Schefstad – LSchefstad@Profact.com

Randy Andersen – RAndersen@Profact.com

#### **Newsletter**

Jose Santos – Jose.santos@partnersfcu.org

#### **Programs/ Speakers/ Education**

Jose Santos – Jose.santos@partnersfcu.com

#### **Locations**

Amanda Masilunis – amasilunis@rosenhotels.com

#### **Scholarship/ Awards**

Justin McCann – jmccann@mtg-fl.com

#### **Nominations**

Gayle Edwards – GEduards@Profact.com

Daron Sandberg – DSandberg@Rosenhotels.com

Chad Curtis – CCurtis@Rosenhotels.com

#### **Chapter of the Year & Regional Conference**

The Board\*

#### **Global Liaison**

Gayle Edwards\* – GEduards@Profact.com

#### **Engagement Committee**

Christina Finch\* – Christina@FinchSearchPartners.com

#### **Nametags**

Nick Seddon

#### **Networking**

Grethel Flores

#### **Registration Table/ 50/50:**

Randy Andersen – RAndersen@Profact.com

#### **Community Service**

Gayle Edwards\* – GEduards@Profact.com

#### **Charity Golf Event**

Camp Boggly Creek – It's all for the kids!

Jack Griffith\* – Jack.Griffith@Sodexo.com

#### **Historian/ Photography**

Michael Dryden\* – Michael.Dryden@Hilton.com

#### **Job Board**

Dennis Villegas – DVillegas@Rosenhotels.com

#### **Keeper of the Calendar**

Justin McCann – jmccann@mtg-fl.com

#### **Technology/Website**

Daniel Morris – Demorris504@gmail.com

## Meet Our Presenter

### ***Effective Employee-Robot Collaboration Strategy: Balancing between Human Touch and Technology-enabled Efficiency in Hospitality Services***

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Ruby (Hong Ngoc) Nguyen is a PhD Candidate at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida (UCF). Originally from Vietnam, Ruby has over ten years of combined experience, studying abroad and working for large-scale hospitality brands across Asia and the US. Prior to joining UCF, she has also accumulated 3 years of experience teaching hospitality courses at universities in Vietnam. Ruby's primary research interests include examining the impacts of smart technology (including service robots and AI) on hospitality operations, marketing, and employee well-being.



## **Our Charity: Camp Boggy Creek**

*By Jack Griffith*

In 2002, then President Randall Rickmann and Vice President Diana Hull, along with other leaders of our Chapter met with representatives of about a handful of local charities. The objective of this endeavor was to choose the Chapter's charity. Three (3) of the charities were JDRC, Give Kids the World, and Camp Boggy Creek. As the story goes there was a personal relationship between someone connected to our Chapter and the Camp that swayed the vote. That's how Camp Boggy Creek became the charity of our Chapter.

The Camp was relatively new as it had been founded in 1996, born out of the experience of a seriously ill child who had spent time at one of Paul Newman's "Hole in the Wall" camps for kids. Upon returning home to Central Florida, she asked her parents why there wasn't a camp like that in Central Florida. The Camp's literature refers to a poem written by Jennifer Masi, a South Florida teenager undergoing treatment for cancer. It was this poem that inspired many, including founders Actor Paul Newman and General Norman Schwarzkopf, Jennifer's parents Nick and Wendy Masi, and David Horvitz just to name a few. Here is her poem, *The Dolphin*:

*A dolphin swimming through an endless sea,*

*Struggling through each new obstacle....*

*Scared, worried, unsure of what's to come.*

*Tough though.*

*Fighting, fighting.*

*Until one day she just couldn't anymore.*

*She wished to be in a place where she didn't have to fight for*

*Every inch.*

***And her wish was granted.***

Before she died at the young age of 14, she enlisted neighbors, community leaders, and her parents to rally behind building a camp that would be a respite for other children facing serious medical illness just like her who were facing a serious medical illness.

The 232-acre plot of land in Eustis, Florida on which the camp is now located had been willed to Florida Hospital by a former patient of who in turn donated it to *The Boggy Creek Gang*- the actual name of the non-profit organization that runs the camp. The camp serves children ages 7 – 16 who have been diagnosed with a serious illness. As a year-round retreat, since 1996 the camp has provided over 90,000 campers with a serious illness and their families a FREE, life-changing camp experience.

For those of you who want to learn more about the camp and its deep history, go to [boggycreek.org](http://boggycreek.org) and be ready to smile and laugh. Also, view "The Healer" on Netflix for a very enjoyable family movie inspired by the Hole In The Wall Camps.

The BIG question next on the minds of our Chapter's leaders at that time was how best to fund our new Charity. They decided to host a golf tournament in conjunction with our General Meeting / Spring Social on June 13, 2003- our 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Golf Tournament benefiting The Boggy Creek Gang was born. It was held at Mystic Dunes Golf Club – The Wyndham Palms Resort in Kissimmee, Florida. The Committee Chairs were none other than Rod Bitterling and David Branson.

The proceeds of that first tournament given to the Camp were \$11,000!!!

To be continued.....

## **PRESENTING: YOUR 2025-2026**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

From top left to right: Jose Santos, Daniel Morris, Brittni Rosen, Angelika Balkarran, Amanda Masilunis, Glen Carr.

From bottom left to right: Gayle Edwards, Michael Dryden, Dennis Villegas, Randy Anderson, Justin





## HFTP President's Letter: 42-Year Member and Ready to Lead Us on Our Collective Journey



Written by James Bina

As I commence my position as 2025–26 HFTP Global President, I would like to first express that I am truly humbled and honored to serve in this role. When I first became involved with HFTP 42 years ago, I was inspired by the passion and commitment of its members, and I never imagined that this journey would lead me to this opportunity.

As many know, my path in this industry has been shaped by the opportunities and connections that HFTP provides. It is an organization that doesn't just advance careers, it builds people. And I would not be here today without the guidance of so many who invested their time and wisdom in me. Their positive impact has been significant and because of this, I would like to recognize these individuals.

First, to my first hospitality mentors Steve and Marilyn Ward who challenged me to aim higher and showed me what true leadership looks like. Steve was the general manager at Wilson World Hotel, in Kissimmee, Fla. and he is the one who encouraged me to join HFTP, which at the time was IAHA. Steve and Marilyn, a husband-and-wife management team, were instrumental in teaching me the basics of hospitality management. They also demonstrated these important essentials: enjoy your work, work hard, be dedicated, and above all, have fun.

Much of my career has been with Rosen Hotels and Resorts – 34 years – and I would like to recognize my Rosen colleagues, what a journey of support and camaraderie this has given me. It is an absolute pleasure to work with such a dedicated team of professionals.

I particularly want to recognize Frank Santos, HFTP Past President and President and CEO of Rosen Hotels and Resorts, who has been a mentor, coworker, fellow HFTP member, friend, and community leader. His guidance, confidence in me, and leadership have prepared me for this very moment.

Also, a very special mention of Harris Rosen who, after decades with this amazing company, not only shaped me as a professional, but most of all as a person.

And thank you to my colleagues on the HFTP Global Board and the councils and committees who I have served with and whose collaboration and support are invaluable. I especially want to recognize my predecessors on the Executive Committee, Stephanie Anderson and Justin Taillon.

For over 70 years, HFTP has been at the forefront of innovation in hospitality finance and technology. We have built a legacy by empowering professionals, connecting a global community, and providing the cutting-edge resources and education our industry needs.

As we look to the future, the hospitality landscape is evolving faster than ever. My focus as your president will be guided by the HFTP 2025–2030 Strategic Plan which clearly defines a new vision statement, mission statement, strategic goals, and objectives that will guide the association's priorities and initiatives over the next five years.

After a busy September and October when HFTP Global leaders prepare for the upcoming fiscal year, I am looking forward to another productive year for HFTP. One initiative of note is our newly-appointed Bylaws Taskforce. Led by Global Past President Michael Levie, the group has been asked to review our association's bylaws and prepare recommendations to modernize the governing statutes.



## **HFTP Mid-Florida and You**

### **Leadership**

Your chapter provides you a vehicle to grow in your personal and professional life through serving on chapter committees and the Board of Directors. Learn how to run a small business and lead the greatest HFTP chapter in the Universe. You will learn public speaking skills and gain confidence in your expertise. You can get the opportunity to develop and execute chapter programs developing valuable leadership skills.

### **Scholarship**

Your chapter provides the HFTP CHAE and CHTP reviews and the testing for those two HFTP certifications in accounting and technology. We need you to help yourself and get certified. This should be a normal progression in your professional career. Your Chapter also provides Continuing Professional Education seminars at the General Meetings and Mini-Education events.

### **Participation**

Your chapter provides a chance for you to give back to your community by assisting at the chapter golf event to benefit the kids at Camp Boggy Creek. Don't shy away, the chapter needs your time and talent. It also gives you the unique opportunity for chapter leadership at these events, being part of the solution.

### **Service**

Your chapter provides the avenue for you to give of yourself in serving your fellow members and your community. We encourage you to get involved in your Mid-Florida HFTP Chapter. We need places to hold the monthly general membership meetings. We need our members to support the chapter events by supplying prizes and helping make these events successful. We need speakers for the General Meetings and the Mini-Educational.



**Hotels are Us.  
Credit Cards are Us.  
Nuff said.**

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866.377.2649**



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## **Save the Date**

2026 HFTP Florida Regional Conference

August 12 - August 14, 2026

More details to be announced soon.

Connect with industry leaders and gain valuable insights  
into the latest trends in hospitality finance and  
technology.





**\*\*UPCOMING MEETING\*\***



**Tuesday, 2/24/26**

**Embassy Suites by Hilton**

**Orlando Lake Buena Vista South**

**Menu**

*Cash bar during Networking Hour w/ Hors d'oeuvres*

*Caesar Salad*

*Filet of Beef Tenderloin and Shrimp*

*Mango Cheesecake*