



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## SGMP Names 2020 Distinguished Award Winners

Recognizing Achievements in Government Meetings Industry

ALEXANDRIA, VA—July 16, 2020—The Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP), the premier national organization for the government meetings industry, announced **Kathleen Ryan, CGMP**, as the 2020 Sam Gilmer Planner of the Year and **Chris McLaughlin, CGMP** as the 2020 Sam Gilmer Supplier of the Year at its 2020 National Education Conference (NEC) Virtual. Recognized as the government meetings industry's highest distinction, the Sam Gilmer Award celebrates excellence in government meeting planning and the advancement of education and professionalism across the industry. In addition, **Melissa Woodruff, CMP**, was named the 2020 SGMP President's Award honoree by SGMP National Board President Michelle Milligan, MSW, LMSW, CGMP.

Sam Gilmer provided the motivating force, vision and leadership toward the founding of SGMP in 1981. The award is presented in recognition of service over a period of time, especially at the national level, that has significantly contributed to the Society's growth and development and enhanced the professionalism of the industry. SGMP members nominate potential recipients who are then selected by a panel of previous Sam Gilmer Award winners.

### **Sam Gilmer Planner of the Year**

Planner of the Year **Kathleen Ryan, CGMP**, serves on the SGMP National Capital Chapter board of directors and is an award-winning customer engagement team lead for the Eastern region for The Boeing Company. She is a gifted trainer who shares her protocol expertise at the local and national level. In sports terms, Kathleen Ryan is SGMP's "2020 Most Valuable Player," her nominator wrote. "Kathleen's dedication to an often-overlooked portion of the events industry [protocol] not only enhances the education of our members, but it has established SGMP as one of the premier organizations for business etiquette of event professionals and certificate programs."

Ryan has continually served SGMP locally and nationally, encouraging government meeting planners and suppliers in her orbit to keep learning and to advance their knowledge and skills. At the national level, she has served as a Gilmer Institute of Learning (GIL) Education trustee (2012-2014), on the National Membership Committee (2015-2016), on the National GIL Programs/Education Committee (2018-2019) and as a member of an ad-hoc task force to review and update the Protocol section of the Certified Government Meeting Professional (CGMP) Training Manual (2017, 2019).

Ryan has been a regular speaker for SGMP's webinar series and many other SGMP training events. She teaches the Protocol Bootcamps, educational sessions at the National Education Conference, and the protocol and business etiquette sections of CGMP courses. Also, she has delivered training through the SGMP National Capital Chapter for their monthly meetings and Education Day.

## **2020 Distinguished Award Winners (Cont.)**

Ryan is a retired Air Force Officer, a former Chief of Protocol for the Department of the Air Force and former Aide-de-Camp to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She was an Associate of the Protocol School of Washington® where she collaborated on the development of their Protocol Officer Training Course. During her tenure with Harlan Lee & Associates, she conducted protocol training for the Missile Defense and Defense Intelligence Agencies. She is a founding board member and active member of the Protocol & Diplomacy International Protocol Officers Association.

### **Sam Gilmer Supplier of the Year**

Supplier of the Year **Chris McLaughlin, CGMP**, currently serves as the SGMP National Board Treasurer and is a director of global sales for RLH Corporation, where he oversees the government market. His long-term leadership helping SGMP secure sponsorships and oversee its finances and budget, as well as his enthusiasm for sharing what he knows to advance the profession and help fellow colleagues is why he was selected for the award. “Over a very long period of time, Chris has been completely loyal to SGMP in every capacity. He always has been a strong and reliable team-player who other members have learned to count on for support,” wrote his nominator. “He is a proven proactive leader who clearly takes every opportunity to promote SGMP in the most positive manner.”

In addition to his role as National Treasurer, McLaughlin co-leads the National Sponsorship Committee (2017-2021), where he has played a large role in helping SGMP exceed its revenue targets. In 2018 and 2019, he received the SGMP Superheroes Circle Top Supplier Award for his efforts recruiting new members to the Society. He heads the National Finance Committee and works with 19 chapter treasurers to ensure they meet all deadlines and provides guidance and resources they need to be successful. As a member of the SGMP National Capital Chapter, he is a past chapter treasurer (2013-2015) and frequent volunteer. McLaughlin also facilitated two well-attended national webinars on the System for Award Management (SAM) and has presented numerous times at the SGMP National Education Conference, Joint Leadership Session and Joint Leadership Meeting.

McLaughlin has more than 30 years of experience in the hotel industry, specializing in the government market. In February of 2020, McLaughlin was appointed to the Government Passenger Travel Advisory Council (GPTAC) for the National Defense Transportation Association. He was recently selected to serve on the FedRooms and Department of Defense Preferred Hotel Council, which are the two official government lodging programs of the General Services Administration and Department of Defense. He has held previous positions with Radisson Hotel Group, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group and Marriott International and was recognized as Sales Director of the Year for the Radisson Hotel Group for 2018.

### **The President’s Award**

**Melissa Woodruff, CMP**, was presented the 2020 President’s Award by SGMP National President Michelle Milligan, MSW, LMSW, CGMP. A meeting professional with 15 years’ experience, Woodruff serves as the president of the SGMP National Capital Chapter. She received the award for her dedication to advancing and strengthening the SGMP National Capital Chapter, its membership, events and activities. Under her leadership the chapter received national recognition and awards for its communications, chapter operations, programming and membership recruitment efforts. “Before the pandemic, membership attendance at SGMP National Capital Chapter events was up 15 percent with a 60:40 planner-supplier ratio,” shared one chapter board member.

Woodruff set the tone early in the year at the board retreat with an emphasis on communication and planning all events well in advance. As the largest chapter with members living in the DC area and out of state, her focus was on quality programming and paying attention to logistical details. The SGMP National Capital Chapter was one of the first chapters to pivot to virtual when it became clear that a new way of meeting was going to be the order of the day.

Woodruff is a meeting and event planner for DCG Communications and the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs for the U.S. Army. She previously worked at the Association of the U.S. Army, Experient and Destination DC. She started her career in event planning with Marriott International.

## **2020 Distinguished Award Winners (Cont.)**

Ryan, McLaughlin and Woodruff were honored at the Sam Gilmer Awards Celebration during SGMP's 38<sup>th</sup> annual National Education Conference (NEC), held virtually this year. SGMP's award recipients can be found at <http://www.sgmp.org/honors>.

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*The Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP) was founded in 1981 and is the only national organization in the United States dedicated exclusively to individuals who plan and execute government meetings. We deliver our membership value of education, resources and networking to nearly 2,000 members in 19 chapters across the country. Our mission is to enhance and promote the expertise of government meeting professionals. For more information, please visit [www.sgmp.org](http://www.sgmp.org).*