

2023

ESPORTS NEXT

Insight into the Industry

Luminaries Discuss the Impact of Esports

A roundtable discussion with tourism leaders on the value of esports

11 University Esports Facilities and Programs

Dedicated facilities and programs help push the esports industry forward

Establishing a Future for Esports

Diving into the past and present to provide a glimpse into the future

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ESPORTS TRADE ASSOCIATION



Amber Lawthers, MCC
2022 Mario Kart
National Champion



Mechdyne Corporation
Esports Concept

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Marshalltown is an emerging esports hotbed conveniently located in central Iowa. Marshalltown is a community of 28,000 people where esports play a big role throughout the community.

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- Marshalltown Community College (MCC) is the only accredited Esports Management degree in Iowa. MCC also boasts the 2022 Mario Kart National Champion, Amber Lawthers, and is a frequent top finisher nationally.

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League of Legends LCS Spring Finals held at PNC Arena.

Photo courtesy of Greater Raleigh CVB

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Welcome to EsportsNext 2023



I am so excited to extend a warm welcome to everyone on behalf of the Esports Trade Association and EsportsNext. As the Events Chair of EsportsNext and a dedicated member of the Esports Trade Association, I am honored to introduce the limited-edition *EsportsNext Magazine*!

EsportsNext Magazine is dedicated to providing valuable insights, perspectives and resources on the dynamic and ever-evolving esports industry. Our goal is to showcase the incredible talent and innovation within our community while offering a platform for industry leaders like yourself to share your unique perspectives and expertise.

In this inaugural edition of *EsportsNext*, we have curated a collection of highlights from around the industry, capturing key moments, significant developments and stories that define the esports landscape. From the rise of competitive gaming to the latest trends and technological advancements, our magazine serves as a comprehensive guide for anyone seeking to dive deeper into the world of esports. We invite you to explore the pages of EsportsNext and discover the vast potential of this rapidly growing industry.

Additionally, I am thrilled to extend a personal invitation to you to enjoy EsportsNext 2023, our annual B2B conference. We are honored to host an event that celebrates the achievements of the industry, fostering networking opportunities and providing a platform for collaboration and innovation. We hope you enjoy the opportunity to connect with industry leaders, forge new partnerships and gain invaluable knowledge that will shape the future of esports.

Thank you for celebrating our shared passion for this dynamic and ever-evolving field.

Cheers,

Lindsay Poss
Events Chair,
EsportsNext



iStock.com/EKKAPHAN CHIMPALEE

2023 EDITION

ESPORTSNEXT

Insight into the Industry

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EsportsNext Magazine is published annually by Premier Travel Media Inc. 621 Plainfield Road, Suite 406, Willowbrook, IL 60527. This publication is distributed free of charge to producers, directors, location scouts and others involved in the film production industry.

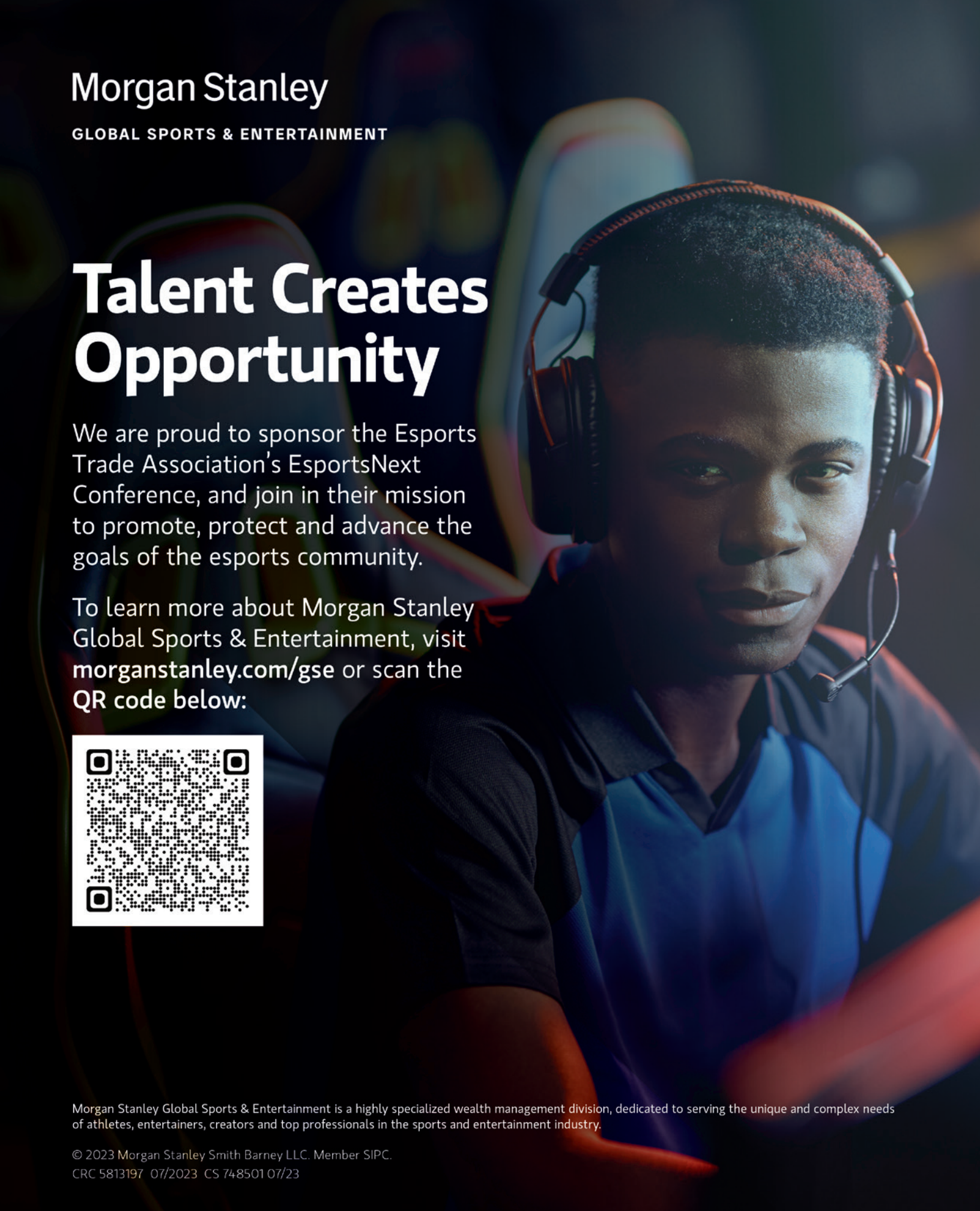
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Send Address Change to:
Premier Travel Media
621 Plainfield Road, Suite 406
Willowbrook, IL 60527

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Cover photo courtesy of istock.com/janiecbros



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CRC 5813197 07/2023 CS 748501 07/23

LUMINARIES DISCUSS THE IMPACT OF ESPORTS

A roundtable discussion with tourism leaders on the value of esports



Convention and visitors bureaus (CVB) and their respective sports commissions across the globe play critical roles for their unique destination's marketing and development for tourism—be it for business or pleasure. These not-for-profit organizations are the first step to organizing and promoting events, whether that be a convention or an esports tournament.

We sat down to talk esports with Igor Bakovic, director of sports at DuPage Sports Commission in suburban Chicago; Loren Gold, executive VP at Greater Raleigh CVB; Nick Kleva, director of sports development at Visit South Bend Mishawaka; and Matt Wilson, senior VP of sports & events at Arlington (Texas) Sports Commission. Each of these destinations is renowned for their strong presence in the esports industry. Dive into our roundtable discussion to learn how these CVBs are pushing the industry at a localized level.

MEET THE PANEL



IGOR BAKOVIC
Director of Sports
DuPage Sports Commission



LOREN GOLD
Executive Vice President
Greater Raleigh CVB



NICK KLEVA
STS Director of Sports Development
Visit South Bend Mishawaka



MATT WILSON
Senior VP of Sports & Events
Arlington Sports Commission



Image courtesy of Arlington Sports Commission.

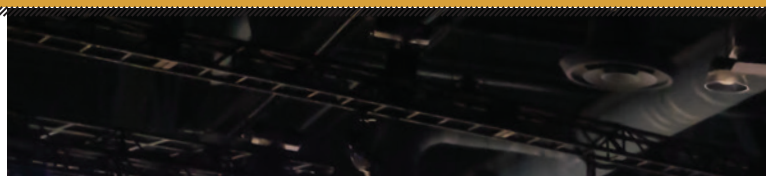
Esports Stadium Arlington is the largest dedicated esports arena in North America.

Esports is still a mystery to many within the tourism industry. Should more CVBs and sports commissions be paying attention to this market?

Loren: Most destinations are acutely aware of what [esports] is and how impactful it can be if embraced and harnessed with purpose. What most CVBs and sports commissions need to be paying for—not just attention to—is funding an esports commission or division to develop a solid esports strategy, getting their stakeholders and venues "esports ready" through education and helping to assist and support youth esports programs.

The days between the larger hosted events are then filled with local and regional esports programs and events from school programs to corporate leagues. This is very similar to the strategy around traditional ball and stick sports. Local and regional partners become a gateway to larger events within their given competition community.

Igor: I find that many sports commissions and CVBs are very curious about the esports industry, but at the same time are also trying to find those similarities on how esports could mirror traditional sports for those that are just getting familiar with the industry. Sports commissions and CVBs focus on a combination of room nights, economic impact, attendance, overall experience, as well as the



community footprint. For some of the smaller esports events, you can have participants competing without physically being together at a venue.

How are destinations like yours improving awareness of esports?

Nick: We were on the front end of this movement with one of the first facilities in the Midwest. I have attended a couple of sports-specific shows to get the word out about Bendix Arena and we have advertised it in multiple publications. The facility also brought on Xfinity as a naming rights sponsor. From all of that, we made a big splash in getting the name out there and in front of the tournament organizers.

Loren: Early investment. A solid strategy. Officially organizing local thought leaders through an organizing committee. Continued commitment and investment from private, public and academic partners. Media and industry relations. Community awareness programs and having esports be a part of a bigger 10-year tourism strategic plan.

Igor: We are consistently looking to bring more esports events to DuPage County. In addition, we are also working with our existing rights holders who have previously hosted esports events at our venues to see how we can assist them with growing their events, making them more efficient or cost effective as well as assisting with various aspects that bring additional value to the overall experience.

Matt: Esports Stadium Arlington is still the largest dedicated esports facility in North America. However, that's not enough. What we have done is host some of the largest and most visible esports events in the world. People are experiencing these



Photo courtesy of DuPage Sports Commission

There's always great competition at Scrims Esports Gaming Center in Lisle, IL.

WITH DEDICATED ESPORTS FACILITIES, WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM AND YOUR CVBS AND SPORTS COMMISSIONS?

Nick: Bendix Arena is located inside a convention center, so they are selling the space just as much as we are. It is unique in the sense that there is room to add-on to the tournament with panels, speakers, recruiting fairs, etc. because there is extra space available. It was a huge investment for the city, so we are collaborating on any events that we can host at the facility.

Matt: Hand-in-hand since day one. The original idea and concept had its beginnings here and we've worked together with Esports Stadium Arlington for the entire existence of the stadium. We're incredibly proud of the work that they have done to bring high-profile events to town, and we work to help make those things happen. Team effort all the way.

Igor: We have a great relationship with Scrims as well as their founders and owners Catherine Sarrett and Joseph Moseley. Within the last two years, the DuPage Sports Commission has collaborated on several events that have been hosted at Scrims. I'm a firm believer that to grow esports at the grassroots level within a community, it's instrumental to have a partner like Scrims. With the various events, weekly programming, esports camps, open play and more, they can bring significant visibility to what the industry is all about.



Photo courtesy of Greater Raleigh CVB

Live action from the Fortnite Champion Series: 2022 Invitational at Raleigh Convention Center.

events live and in person–there is no substitute for that kind of energy and electricity. It's really something to see.

Esports is considered important for youth and young adults for developing social and emotional learning skills. Do any local area schools or colleges work with these esports facilities on events?

Matt: From the start, University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) has had significant involvement with Esports Stadium Arlington. From initial planning, practices and volunteering, UTA has been a great partner. Now we're really seeing great involvement from the local school districts to introduce students to new opportunities.

Nick: We have one local university that has an esports team, Bethel University, which is constantly using the facility for practices and competitions. They also hold high school recruiting events and high school tournaments for exposure. We also have some local high schools that have teams and use the facility in various ways. A lot of education institutions are using esports in their curriculum because of the learning skills associated with it.

Loren: From what we have discovered, we're mostly observing "work-in-progress" initiatives with Greater Raleigh area public high schools and colleges. This means that some schools have established their own independent esports program, while some are trying to understand how to stand one up. Our LOC is currently exploring

ways to fund and deliver guidance to local schools through a "coaching-the-coaches" lens. We believe that educating volunteers, parents and school and community leaders on how to stand up and maintain a sustainable youth esports program is going to be the best long-term strategy for our youth and young adults.

Our local schools and their programs have been able to, at times, serve in voluntary roles with the game publishers and producers when events have come to Raleigh. Our forthcoming esports production and performance center at NC State University will be a major catalyst, not only for the UNC System but for student internships, job training and additional engagement with the private esports sector.



Players and spectators alike experience the intensity of the Six Major Raleigh.

Photo courtesy of Greater Raleigh CVB

Are you aware of any hotels or ballrooms hosting esports events in your area?

Igor: Our Westin Chicago Lombard is host to Frosty Faustings, one of the largest esports events in the Midwest. Earlier this year, approximately 3,500 people attended—the largest one yet—and is going to host in 2024. The event took up every inch of the event space as well as the majority of the 500 guest rooms the hotel offers. There is potential to host additional events with some of our other hotels located in Lisle. Within 10 minutes from Scrims, they pair well with having the ability to host an expo, speaker and educational sessions as well as console game titles. In all, we have several pockets within our county that make it very appealing to host an esports event.

Loren: They do and we are. For the most part, these types of properties are being selected for esports and gaming programs that are offering lower-cost production experiences. Think LAN Party and basic expo tables vs. an arena production with indoor pyrotechnics.

How can your destination and those similar utilize old and potentially new tourism-selling techniques to bring planners and organizations on board?

Matt: We are so fortunate to have a facility that not only serves the needs of our esports community, but also is a dynamic host for meetings and events. The audio and visual capabilities are off the charts and it's all turnkey. It gives us another fantastic tool in our belt to attract visitors to Arlington. The really cool part is that we're building all around Esports Stadium Arlington. More to do, more to see.

Loren: Developing a successful and sustainable esports strategy for any destination is a marathon, not a sprint. There is no one-page playbook, as every destination is unique in many ways. A long-term commitment and funding from key stakeholders are essential. External esports destination consultants can help jump start the process and put a destination on the right path. Destinations must think about partnerships first vs. transactional-only results.

Nick: It's all about awareness and education. Many people we talk to don't understand the concept of competitive gaming. Everyone thinks it's solely a social activity to do with friends, but once they realize the motor skills associated with gaming and that students can earn college scholarships, the conversation changes.

ESTABLISHING A FUTURE FOR ESPORTS

Diving into the past and present to provide a glimpse into the future

By Christopher D. Silbernagel

Esports has received plenty of criticism over the years, particularly that it's a passing fad not to be taken seriously and that it leaves negative impressions on younger audiences. However, both arguments are misconceptions, originating all the way back to old stigmas of the gaming industry at a time when consoles and games were still categorized as toys.

Online database Statista reported that the gaming industry as a whole is expected to reach $384.9 billion in 2023, far surpassing the box office film and streaming industry by over $250 billion. Esports on the other hand is estimated at $1.64 billion for these collective 2023 gaming numbers. This may seem like a drop in the ocean, but comparing the projected growth rate of esports to film and streaming through 2027,



Photo courtesy of SEMO

Southeast Missouri State University's esports club is the largest at the school and winners of four championships.

both hover positively at nearly 8.5 percent.

With the popularity and growth of gaming no longer in question, what about how the esports industry affects its audience? According to STEM MINDS, esports uniquely develops visual acuity. Like traditional competitive sports, such as baseball and soccer, esports has also been credited with providing participants a sense of belonging, teamwork and crucial skills and values.

Enter new players

For esports in particular, community may be the most important factor as this industry is renowned for being inclusive. Gamers generally look to find that community online, but over the past decade, dozens of university esports clubs and programs have been reporting record growth thanks to investments into spaces provided to students. Companies taking notes on the industry's ascension at these colleges and online are now partnering with esports events, teams, organizations and even helping to develop collegiate programs.

"Starting in 2019, [SHI International Corp.] began a focus on esports by starting our free-to-enter and scholastic esports tournament, Battle Academy," said Amy Troxell, senior mobility team manager at SHI, a New Jersey-based company helping colleges convert spaces into esports environments. "We also focus on our esports team, which now has 10 supportive members with experience in edtech that have implemented esports, STEM or gaming labs for schools and universities around the globe including Barnsley College in the UK and Post University in Connecticut."





First Strike Finals 2 at Fortress Melbourne

Photo courtesy of Fortress

Organizations like Esports Trade Association (ESTA) also nurture this strong community focus, specifically aiming to continually promote, protect and advance the broader esports community. Establishing local chapters, ESTA urges businesses and gamers alike to explore what's in their city and to become more involved.

"It has always been our goal to provide a network of professionals within the esports ecosystem, and contacts on how one can best step foot into the industry by breaking down the barriers of entry," said Caitlyn Lau, account executive and communications specialist at ESTA. "The most prominent movement towards this goal is with our grassroots formation of local chapters, which establish meetups to discuss all things esports, supporting one another in our events and goals, such as assisting students with esports-related careers, helping parents understand the benefits of esports and more."

Esports partnerships

While 60 percent of esports revenue originates from sponsors and partnerships, many of these are making waves. It's critical that the focus be on long-term goals. This can be seen in different areas of



The Alienware Arena Mezzanine at Fortress Sydney provides great views.

Photo courtesy of Fortress

esports, such as pro teams like T1 and Mercedes-Benz partnering through 2025, as well as publisher launch partnerships and event sponsorships like Chipotle for Street Fighter 6 and the Evolution Championship Series, among others.

Riot Games, famous for their IPs League of Legends and Valorant, are among gaming publishers and developers at the forefront of esports. With these popular titles and their dedicated esports leagues, they've attracted the attention of large conglomerates like Coca-Cola, establishing a partnership to create a new flavor called +XP for League of Legends. This marks the first time that a new flavor has been created in tandem with a gaming company, and is only the beginning of firsts.

Interest and involvement varies, but whether the steps are big or small, it's all critically important for growth. Large companies like Comcast are beginning to settle into a deep esports partnership by attaching their names to everything from teams to arenas and more. Even the most cautious world-renowned brands like Disney are beginning to dip their toes into the industry, partnering up with pro esports and entertainment organizations like FaZe Clan.

Esports tourism is on the rise

The concept of an esports-dedicated facility originated in Seoul, South Korea, with KeSPA opening the first in Yongsan District back in 2005. Since then, Yongsan has become an esports mecca of sorts, and with esports tournaments drawing large viewership numbers across the globe, it's only natural that arena usage in other countries would also begin to evolve.

Based in Santa Ana, California, Esports Arena Orange County was the first dedicated esports facility of its kind in North America, seating up to 1,400 spectators. From the wiring to the flooring, the hands-on approach of co-founders Tyler Endres and Paul Ward pushed for a more authentic space for gamers to belong than gaming cafes, and somewhere to call their own for practices and playing tournaments on a stage.

KeSPA and Endres and Ward opened the floor to dozens of other facilities across the globe to follow, including Esports Stadium Arlington and Fortress' Alienware Arena. For the biggest tournaments, convention centers and some city arenas are being utilized in North America, and in countries like South Korea, large outdoor stadiums like Sangam Stadium, originally built to host the FIFA World Cup, are packing thousands of spectators into the stands.

This has drawn the attention of convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs) and sports commissions, which specialize in improving tourism within their respective destinations. Part of this task is marketing their spaces for events, such as esports tournaments.

"There is an opportunity for esports tourism to become popular among destinations in the future, as several destinations throughout the U.S. are hosting large esports events," said Tammy Dunn, executive director of Snohomish County Sports Commission. "As Snohomish County [Washington] continues to learn more about the esports Industry, there is an opportunity for any destination to host an esports event."

While not all destinations have dedicated esports facilities and may not have the financial means to establish one, there are often other means available to turn the idea into a reality. Most existing facilities are more than capable of including competitive gaming to their multi-use capabilities.



11 UNIVERSITY ESPORTS FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

Dedicated facilities and programs help push the esports industry forward

Photo courtesy of University of Mary Washington

Collegiate sports and sports clubs have been an integral part of building cognitive skills and sportsmanship. Esports not only foster the same types of growth but also creativity, communication and collaborative skills, among others, along with arguably a stronger sense of inclusion. Esports is truly for everyone, no matter their skill level. Our list of esports facilities is not all encompassing, but rather a glimpse at some of the amazing things universities esports have to offer, ranging from those with established reputations to others just getting their feet wet.

Extended descriptions of facilities are available online.



UMW's brand-new esports arena is housed within the Cedric Rucker University Center.

Illinois Wesleyan University

Bloomington, Illinois

Notably one of the top-ranked esports programs in the United States, it's no surprise IWU also has a top-tier esports facility with dedicated spaces with the students in mind. The Coliseum is the star of the show with six PCs dedicated to top competitive teams in a semi-soundproof environment for tournaments and practices.

Along with the Coliseum, two additional play spaces have 24 PC stations apiece, bringing the total to 54 within the single facility.

iwu.edu/esports

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

Miami University is renowned for its varsity esports team—the first-ever D1 varsity esports program in the United States and recognized by Best Colleges as the top-ranked program of its kind in the country. Along with esports scholarships for players, the University offers a Master of Esports Management program for further career advancements in the field.

The University has three esports facilities across the campus supported by ggCircuit.

redhawks.gg



Northern Illinois University

Northern Illinois University

DeKalb, Illinois

Established in 2018, NIU's esports program has been the University's fastest growing student organization for several years. In March 2022, NIU officially opened its new Esports Arena, located in the University's signature building, Altgeld Hall. NIU Esports Arena has 12 varsity gaming PCs reserved for team members only, as well as 30 gaming PCs for open play by anyone, each with a top-of-the-line gaming chair.

niu.edu/esports

Purdue University Northwest

Hammond, Indiana / Westville, Indiana

PNW has quickly grown since starting its esports program in 2020, opening dedicated arenas at two campus locations in November 2022. While each arena has 30 PCs for play, the Hammond facility is more geared towards competitions. The Westville facility has community in mind, with multiuse for holding meetings, events for park districts, middle schools and high schools, or events for other PNW groups.

pnwathletics.com/sports/esports



Purdue University Northwest



University of Akron

University of Akron

Akron, Ohio

Since 2018, the University of Akron has been home to Akron Esports and its three different gaming facilities on campus. The three facilities total over 6,500 square feet of gaming space with 92 top-of-the-line PCs, console stations, viewing lounges and VR setups. UA's facilities also house eight different varsity teams, over 60 club teams and a total of 2,500 students across its different programs. UA is among the first 50 universities to compete at a varsity level.

uakron.edu/esports



University of California, Irvine

University of California, Irvine

Irvine, California

Opening its doors in 2016, the UCI Esports Arena is the first of its kind on a college campus. Located on the Student Center Terrace, the 3,500-square-foot space has 36 top-of-the-line iBUYPOWER PCs, a broadcast station and a Console & Community Corner where virtual reality is demoed and campus clubs and organizations can host events and meetings.

esports.uci.edu

University of Mary Washington

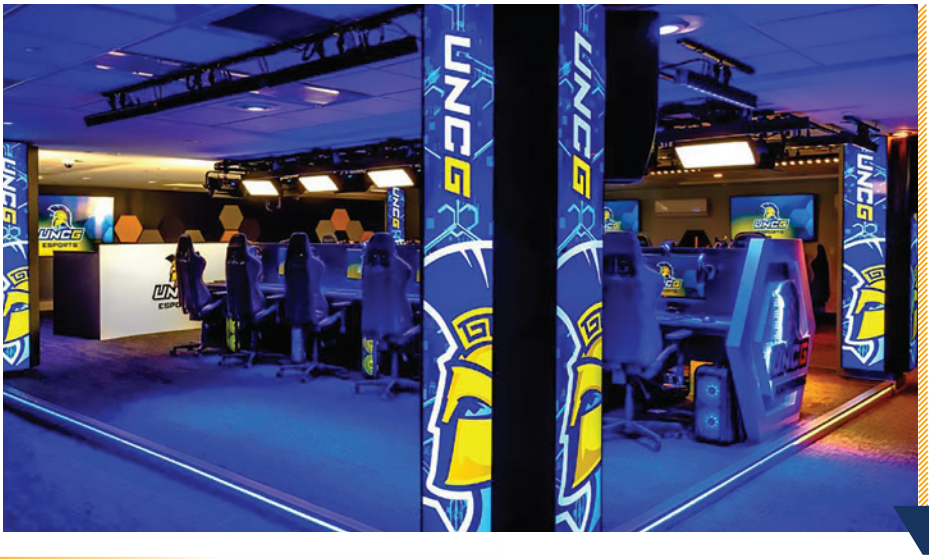
Fredericksburg, Virginia

UMW's brand-new esports arena, housed within the Cedric Rucker University Center, features 10 competitive PCs armed with Intel Core i7 processors and GTX 3070s. A DMX light system surrounds the PCs, giving the experience of playing under in-person tournament conditions, even during practice. The arena also has a dedicated broadcast and content creation station where the student-led broadcast team live streams the competitive teams' matches weekly.

umweagles.com/sports/esports



University of Mary Washington



University of North Carolina Greensboro

University of North Carolina Greensboro

Greensboro, North Carolina

Debuting in the spring of 2022, UNCG's esports arena provides students with 3,600 square feet of space to engage both socially and academically. The arena provides 48 gaming PCs, built with AMD Ryzen 7 3700X CPUs and high-end NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2060 Super GPUs for optimal play and competition. In addition to the high number of PCs, there are also three console stations equipped with multiple titles, as well as an Oculus Quest 2 VR headset.

esports.uncg.edu



University of North Dakota

University of North Dakota

Grand Forks, North Dakota

UND offers a unique atmosphere to support high-level competitive opportunities for players through its newly constructed competition and practice facility. Opened in 2023, UND's esports space provides varsity athletes with a cutting-edge home arena and practice facilities, which includes 42 high-end gaming PCs, a players' lounge, nutrition station and lockers, broadcast room and more.

und.edu/student-life/esports

University of Oregon

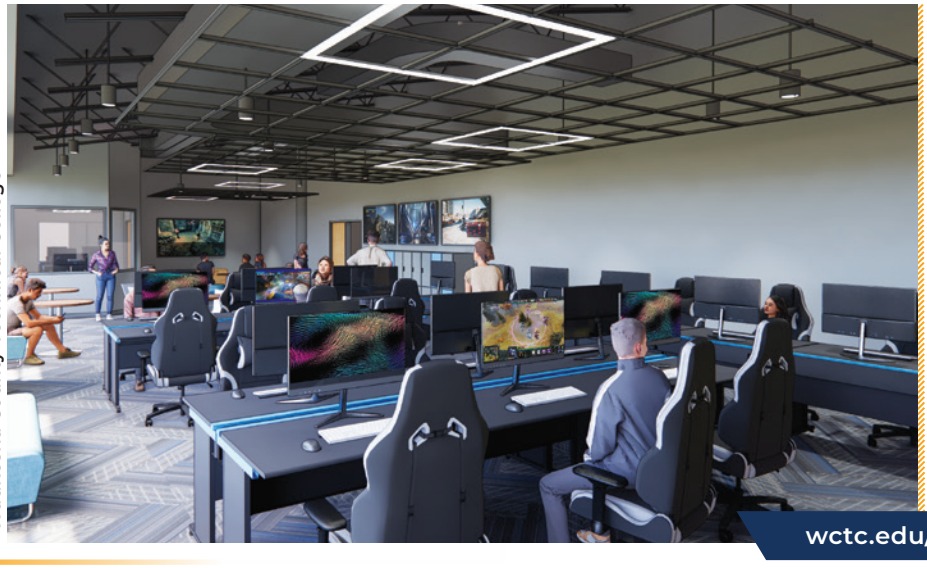
Eugene, Oregon

UO places its esports origins back in 2012 with a League of Legends club, which quickly blossomed into an official campus club in 2017 dedicated to competitive play across multiple titles. Overwhelming interest and participation sparked the program to debut a 12,000-square-foot esports lounge within the Erb Memorial Union building in 2020, offering 25 high-end PCs, PlayStations, Xbox consoles and Nintendo Switches.

emu.uoregon.edu/esports



University of Oregon



Waukesha County Technical College

Waukesha County Technical College

Waukesha, Wisconsin

WCTC may be new to the collegiate esports world but the folks hard at work there are going all in. The college will be opening an 1,800-square-foot esports center, which is in the final stages of construction and scheduled to be completed prior to the start of the 2023-24 academic year.

The center will house sophisticated gaming equipment, including 18 gaming stations, along with one casting station–all utilizing Alienware Aurora R15 PCs.

wctc.edu/campus-life/activities-organizations

2023 ESPORTS TRADE ASSOCIATION

GAMING AND ESPORTS INDUSTRY AWARDS

WITH ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR, THE ESPORTS TRADE ASSOCIATION IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE OUR 2023 AWARD WINNERS. THESE INDUSTRY AWARDS AIM TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND HONOR THE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS, INNOVATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN SHAPING AND ADVANCING THE INDUSTRY.



ESTA HALL OF FAME

CHARLES CONROY

Each year, candidates for induction into the Hall of Fame are carefully selected based on their profound impact and dedication to advancing the industry in one or more areas. Charles Conroy's contributions in leadership at Complexity Gaming, The Switch and Unikrn have had a transformative impact on the esports world, evangelizing both the competitive scene and building the business ecosystem surrounding it. He has continually pushed boundaries, empowered esports athletes and fostered the growth and professionalization of the entire esports ecosystem.

AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR

DANIELLE ROURKE
Chief Technology and Innovation Strategist, Dell Technologies

This award recognizes an individual who has made an incredible impact in promoting and growing ESTA initiatives and membership. Danielle Rourke has served as a passionate advocate, championing the values and mission of ESTA and actively contributing to its overall success.

BEYOND THE GAME

AMY TROXELL
Senior Mobility Team Manager, SHI International Corp.

Demonstrated outstanding achievement as the leading supporting organization for esports technology. We recognize the exceptional efforts and contributions made by Amy Troxell and SHI that have set the highest standards in advancing esports technology, ensuring seamless and innovative experiences for players, teams and fans.

BRAND MAVERICK

RACHEL CHAHAL
Director Amusement/Eatertainment Partnerships, Coca-Cola

JASON RAWLINS
Senior Manager, Entertainment, Coca-Cola

The trailblazing brand that has demonstrated exceptional innovation and creativity in the esports industry. We recognize Rachel Chahal and Jason Rawlins of Coca-Cola for having fearlessly pushed boundaries, challenged conventions and redefined brand engagement within the gaming community.

DATA HERO

BEN PARO
Senior Sales Director of Gaming, Esports & Consumer Tech, YouGov

Provided exceptional analytics and reports, significantly assisting in guiding the esports industry. Ben Paro has played a vital role in leveraging data to enhance strategic decision-making and foster growth within the esports ecosystem.

ESPORTS AGENCY ALL-STAR

ALEXIS BOERGER
Communications Director, The Story Mob

The individual and agency that have displayed outstanding dedication, expertise and innovation in representing and supporting gamers while driving growth and development. Alexis Boerger and The Story Mob have gone above and beyond in providing comprehensive services, strategic guidance and unparalleled advocacy for esports athletes, teams and organizations.

GAME CHANGER

SAM RHODES
Vice President of Design & Innovation, Six Flags

ESTA celebrates the visionaries, innovators and catalysts who have made a lasting and transformative impact on the esports landscape. Sam Rhodes has displayed exceptional leadership, introduced groundbreaking initiatives and contributed significantly to the growth, development and professionalization of esports as a whole.

GAMING IN HEALTHCARE

DEANNA KERNS
Director, Corporate Partnerships, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago / Extra Life Program

Displayed outstanding achievement or innovation in utilizing gaming to support healthcare. Deanna Kerns has harnessed the power of gaming to positively impact patient outcomes, therapeutic interventions, mental health support and wellness initiatives.

MEMBER OF THE YEAR

DEXTER CARR JR.
CEO, Game4Good

The ESTA member who has played a pivotal role in fostering collaboration, driving progress and strengthening the esports industry through their invaluable support. We recognize Dexter Carr Jr. for his commitment, participation and contributions to the success and growth of ESTA.

MOVER AND SHAKER

DR. AMY CZYZ
Co-Founder, CEO, Intent Brands

DR. TOM CZYZ
Co-Founder, CRO/CIO, Intent Brands

Shaking things up by introducing groundbreaking products, solutions or technologies that have propelled the industry. Drs. Amy and Tom Czyz of Intent Brands have demonstrated the ability to rethink the way we approach and experience esports, merging the beverage and video game worlds with Sly™ by improving nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

PIXEL PERFECT AWARD

JASON TIRADO
CEO, Lightware USA

Recipient for product of the year that has elevated the gaming experience to new heights, showcasing meticulous attention to detail, seamless functionality and a deep understanding of the needs and desires of the gaming community. Jason Tirado and Lightware's groundbreaking UBEX is an AV-over-IP device, delivering pixel-accurate 4K60 video in real-time to create the ultimate immersive experience.

RISING STAR AWARD

GINA JOHNSON
Founder, iGameUSA An RPG World Cup

This up-and-coming individual has shown exceptional promise, skill and potential in uplifting the esports industry. Gina Johnson's dedication, performance and contributions have significantly impacted the esports landscape, foreshadowing a bright future in the industry.

SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD

GORDON HINKLE
CEO, College Esports International (CESI)

The individual within the esports industry that has made a significant positive contribution to esports society and community through their actions and initiatives. Gordon Hinkle of CESI has harnessed the power of esports to drive meaningful change, inspire others and make a lasting impact on local communities and beyond.

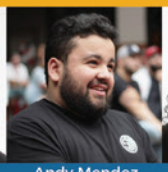
THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PANELISTS AND SPEAKERS


Adam Adamou
OverActive Media


Adam Boothe
PrizePicks

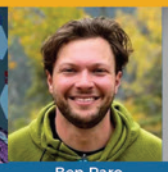

Adam Joshua
Encore

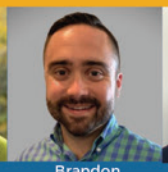

Amila Pathirana
MAS Innovation PVT LTD

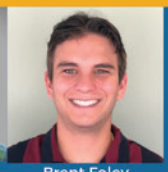

Andy Mendez
Illinois High School Esports Association


April Welch
Illinois Institute of Technology


Ashlyn Sparrow
The University of Chicago


Ben Paro
YouGov


Brandon Brunhammer
AVI-SPL


Brent Foley
DollarZing


Caroline Vani
Encore

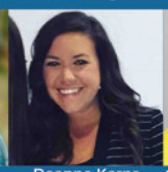

Claire LaBeaux
NASEF


Claire Nance
Activision Blizzard

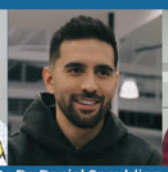

Courtney James
DePaul University


Danielle Johnson
Texas Scholastic Esports Federation


Danielle Rourke

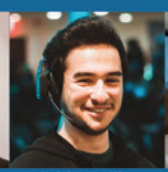

Deanna Kerns
Lurie Children's Hospital


Dexter Carr Jr., MHA
Game4Good

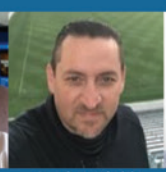

Dr. Daniel Spaulding
Onyx Health and Performance

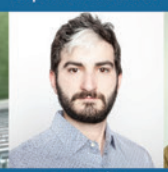

Eliot Oreskovic
US Esports Association

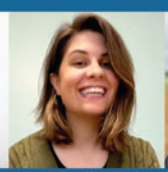

Ethan Bondar
Leger

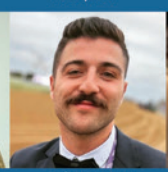

Fabio Sadiku
LANFest


Gary Briggs
LANFest


Gordon Hinkle
College Esports International


Grant Zinn
beastcoast


Jacqueline Lohr
Extra Life


Jake Nowry
SIS Conttent

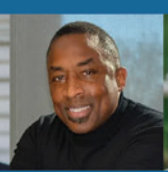

James Hess
ESTA Membership Committee

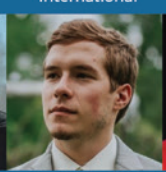

JD Wu
The Switch

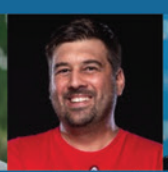

JJ Armstrong
404 Creative


Jill Williamson
Gravis Law PLLC


John Davidson
Davidson Learning Company


John Cash
Cxmmunity


Josh Benzing
404 Creative

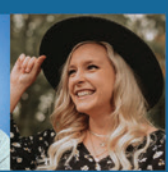

Justin Stefanovic
Misfits Gaming


Katie Briggs
LANFest


Kevin Vela
Vela Wood


Kyle Freedman
WePlay Studios


Kyle Schulz
World Business Chicago


Lindsay Poss
ESTA Event Committee

Marc Almanzor
Make Gaming About Fundraising

Matt Marcou
TryHard Consulting

Matthew Archambault
Riot Games

Megan Van Petten
Esports Trade Association

Melissa Burns
Esport Canada

Michaela Frank
Texas Scholastic Esports Federation

Neil Duffy
eFuse

Nicolas Abelé
SONIX

Noel Naylor
Stockton University

Rick Tett
Glydr

Rohan Bose
Teknos Associates

Ryan Johnson
Cxmmunity

Sari Kitelyn
Full Sail University

Shereen El Domeiri
Domeiri Law

Steven Isaacs
Epics Games

Steven Shaw
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Unleash your potential in the city that's at the heart of it all - Chicago! Step into the vibrant hub of esports where digital arenas meet rich history. Feel the pulse of innovation as Chicago pushes the boundaries of gaming with cutting-edge technology and groundbreaking events. Whether you're a fan, a pro, or a newcomer to the game, Chicago offers a unique blend of esports culture, world-class infrastructure, and Midwestern warmth. Join us. Game on in the Windy City!



WORLD BUSINESS CHICAGO

In the Chicago region, innovation is the rule, not the exception.
Here the future of esports is constantly being redefined.

worldbusinesschicago.com

ESPORTS TRADE ASSOCIATION

MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

SHINING A MUCH-DESERVED SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBERS WITHIN OUR ASSOCIATION

The Esports Trade Association is proud to highlight several of our members for their unique roles in the esports industry. From the innovator leading large entertainment companies into the industry to the leader at a pioneering IT business advancing esports technology and everyone in between, we are truly overcome by the influential members within our association.

LEARN MORE!
Our full member spotlights are available online.



SAM RHODES

Vice President of Design and Innovation, Six Flags

Sam Rhodes has been in the themed entertainment industry for over 30 years, involved in the design and creation of hundreds of roller coasters, rides, attractions, shows and theme parks around the world. Rhodes is the vice president of design and innovation at Six Flags Entertainment, founded in 1963, which is the largest regional theme park company in the world. Six Flags now has 27 properties in North America, including parks in Mexico and Canada.

What do you love most about the esports industry?

I could write a book to define what I love about the esports industry. I love the fact that the esports community is truly open and welcoming to everyone. It's one of the only industries I know where no one is discriminated against. There is a group, team, clan, org, game or community for everyone.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to enter the esports industry?

The biggest advice I could give to someone entering the industry is "research." Study as much as possible and talk to as many people as possible in the industry. As this is a new industry, there are a lot of people who claim to be "experts." Trust me, they are not all experts. I also highly recommend getting involved with ESTA. This organization has been by far the best source of knowledge I have found in this industry.



JACQUELINE V. LOHR

Program Director,
Extra Life Chicago

Jackie Lohr has seven years of experience in the mental health and hospital nonprofit sectors within the Chicago community. She is passionate about bringing communities together to facilitate positive change and healing through connection and stories. Lohr is the program director of Extra Life, a fundraising program of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals®. The Extra Life community fundraises year-round to Change Kids' Health to Change the Future through gaming.

What do you love most about the esports industry?

I love how kind and open everyone is. The esports industry is such a strong community that is accepting of everyone and anyone that wants to learn more or get involved. I just started my job a few months ago and I have met so many lovely and knowledgeable people who have helped me feel supported and included.

Why did you join the Esports Trade Association?

I am looking to network with Chicago-based ESTA members who are passionate about giving back to their local children's hospital through Extra Life Chicago. I am also looking to network with anyone who is open to connecting. I'd love to learn more about the esports industry as a whole and looking to soak up as much information as I can.



BEN PARO

Senior Sales Director of Gaming,
Esports & Consumer Tech, YouGov

Ben Paro describes himself as equal parts market research, gamer, musician and enterprise sales pro. He started his career in market research and insights 10 years ago on the global strategic insights team at ZenithOptimedia, a Publicis Groupe media agency. Paro is director of gaming, esports & consumer tech with YouGov, a global public opinion and data company that accurately tracks what the world thinks, does and will do through its proprietary community of more than 22 million respondents.

Who inspires you?

Nicole Pike, head of gaming & sports at YouGov. She's as smart as they come and a fantastic leader. She's the reason I first reached out about working at YouGov because of her impeccable reputation coming from Nielsen Sports. I, like many others, consider her a pioneer for her contributions in measurement that first legitimized esports and gaming in the minds of media planners and brand marketers.

What do you love most about the esports industry?

A near-universal willingness to experiment, fail fast and innovate. The esports industry is full of dreamers and entrepreneurs who were born to push the envelope. It's the people that make this industry special and why I'm proud to support the ESTA. Plus, I'm a lifelong gamer! How lucky am I to talk about video games all day and make a living?



DRS. AMY & TOM CZYZ

CEO and CRO/CIO, respectively, and Co-Founders, Intent Brands

***Drs. Amy and Tom have been practicing optometrists for 20+ years. As experts of the visual system, they consult within the video game and esports industry, as well as multinational corporations like Johnson & Johnson, to educate doctors and the gaming community on eye health, fitness, optimizing on-screen performance, and more to elevate the gaming experience. Along with Esports Coach PJ Bannon, they are co-authors of the book* The Comprehensive Guide to Esports Fundamentals: For Coaches and Players.**

What advice would you give to someone who wants to enter the esports industry?

Advice for entering the esports industry is such a good question, and one that I believe is overlooked by many people, particularly companies. My advice is to listen—reach out to all sorts of people in the industry. Find out what makes them tick. Take an interest and learn what they do, and how you can help them in any way. Be an advocate for them and the industry.

Why did you join the Esports Trade Association?

We wanted to meet, listen and learn about the industry as well as network with people and companies to be able to assist and broaden our knowledge and customer base of our company. Our Sly™ Brand was born in gaming, and we want to learn more about gaming and esports.



CAROLINE VANI

Marketing Specialist, Encore Canada, ESTA Toronto Chapter

Caroline Vani is a trained graphic designer and illustrator now working in the world of events, and a lifelong gamer. Her career has always been rooted in gaming and esports, from streaming-related startups and content creator management to game design. She is also one of the founding members of the ESTA Toronto Chapter and the Marketing & Communications Director on their board. Vani is the marketing specialist at Encore Canada, the global leader for event technology and production services.

How do you define industry success?

Success in events is inevitably defined and measured very differently depending on your role. I think between events and esports, there's one thing that is a true indication that my team and I have done something right: when your audience is engaged and having fun. Being in gaming, after all, is being in the business of fun.

What do you love most about the esports industry?

The fans in all their forms. Whether it's the mother-son duo in the crowd, the artists in Artist Alley, the cosplayers, the content creators, early followers of the game or those who have been newly introduced, each brings an important part of the esports culture to life. Of course, there's also nothing like hearing the roar of a crowd reacting to a frame-perfect play while watching your favorite team or game.



MIKE ADDESA

Co-Founder and CTO, EventPipe

Mike Addesa has spent over 25 years in various software development and software development management roles. He has worked in reimbursement and expense management, mobile, music, fintech and insurance. He is a former college hockey player and an avid Boston sports fan. Addesa is the co-founder and CTO of EventPipe—a cloud software company providing a modern approach to event housing management for event producers, housing companies, meeting planners and convention and visitor bureaus.

How do you define industry success?

[EventPipe] defines success by creating products that people love to use and ultimately make their day-to-day jobs easier. Obviously, we are seeking commercial success, but in software engineering, solving problems efficiently and freeing people of menial tasks so they can work on higher-level strategic problems really appeals to us.

Why did you join the Esports Trade Association?

We joined because we see huge potential for growth in this industry. We know a lot of young, intelligent entrepreneurs whom we can aid as they look for different ways to grow revenue in their evolving businesses. The leadership at the Esports Trade Association is very much aligned with our goals to provide a platform and resources to help the people in this market as their businesses grow.



AMY TROXELL

Senior Mobility Team Manager, SHI International Corp., ESTA NJ Chapter

Amy Troxell is the senior mobility team manager at SHI, a woman and minority-owned, award-winning technology partner trusted by over 17,000 organizations to solve their infrastructure, end-user computing, cybersecurity and IT optimization challenges. SHI's approach blends seamless selection, delivery and financing to simplify hard decisions for business leaders and IT procurement for effective, innovative and scalable solutions. Troxell has been a part of SHI International Corp. for 19 years.

What do you love most about the esports industry?

One of the most appealing aspects of the esports industry is the immense passion & dedication shown by players and fans alike. This passion creates a vibrant and inclusive community. Additionally, the constant innovation in esports both in terms of gameplay and tech makes it an exciting industry to be a part of.

Why did you join the Esports Trade Association?

I met MVP (Megan Van Petten) at SHI's first Electrify! esports event with the Illinois Institute of Technology with April Welch. After successfully executing two of the first in-person events that our company was part of just out of the pandemic, we were excited to learn that ESTA had an upcoming EsportNext conference the following week. Our meeting was destined because we are both obsessed with esports, being an advocate for the industry and bettering student outcomes.

ESPORTS TRADE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

4WALL ENTERTAINMENT
Mark Consiglio
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We are a full-service lighting, video, and rigging company servicing all facets of the entertainment industry - from corporate events and theatre to concert touring and television.

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Josh Benzing
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404 Creative is a leading game developer studio specializing in user-generated experiences for players and brands in Fortnite, leveraging UEFN technology.

A

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ALBERTA ESPORTS ASSOCIATION
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The Alberta Esports Association (AESA) is a non-profit organization dedicated towards fostering the growth and development of esports within Alberta, Canada.

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Saint Louis, NV
Social Content Manager

AMPLIFIED PRODUCTION GROUP
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Boise, ID
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Deanna Kerns
dkerns@luriechildrens.org
www.luriechildrens.org
Chicago, IL
Lurie Children's is one of the 170 Children's Miracle Network Hospitals who receive critical funds through Extra Life, a fundraising program with our community of gamers to play games and raise funds that Change Kids' Health to Change the Future.

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The ultimate destination for content creators, APM's vast catalog of incredibly diverse, high-quality production music has been created by our composers to bring your projects to life. Here, you will find every genre, mood, style, nationality, and era of music designed explicitly for the esports industry, igniting excitement and fostering unparalleled engagement within the community.

APRIL WELCH
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A digital enablement solutions provider that designs, integrates, manages, and supports on-site and cloud-based communications and collaboration technologies.

B

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Mishawaka, IN
Inbound Marketing Specialist / Game Business and Esports Student

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Channel and Strategic Alliance Manager

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CESI is a strategic production group (public-private partnership) with the goal of elevating the entire industry of esports and competitive collegiate competition.

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Dallas Chapter Student Member

CXCOMMUNITY
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Atlanta, GA
Gaming Cxmmunity Co. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded to provide opportunities to minority youth and students in the fields of esports and gaming.

D

DAVIDSON LEARNING COMPANY (DLC)
John Davidson
John@DLCyouth.com
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DLC provides learnings to brands and agencies to enable them to effectively engage the esports community through business development, partnerships and campaign strategy.

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Chief Energy Officer at Jump Ahead L3C | Esports

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New Jersey Chapter Student Member

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DePaul Esports is a community focused collegiate program with 28 teams and a robust recreational club serving over 1600 students.

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We make sizzle videos that recap advertising.

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We are the grass roots sports book of Puerto Rico. Working with local talent to achieve relationships and projects for community growth in sports & Esports.

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ULTIMATE GAMING CHAMPIONSHIP
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Greater St. Louis, MO
UGC provides esports infrastructure including technology, content creation, broadcasting, tournament operations and live events. UGC's partners include Microsoft, Caesars Entertainment, Riot and more.

UNITED STATES ESPORTS ASSOCIATION
Eliot J. Oreskovic
eliot@esportsus.org
esportsus.org
Cleveland, OH
Nonprofit dedicated to holistically developing the American esports industry through public-private collaborations and novel programming centered upon the advancement of the United States in esports.

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US ESPORTS ALLIANCE
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All-in-one esports | Online + LAN Events | Academic & Athletic Esports | VR Gaming Areans in NJ and PA | A/V Lighting, Staging & Production

V

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Velez & Cipriano, PLLC is a boutique law firm practicing in the areas of Immigration and Naturalization, Business, and Insurance Law

VELOCITY ESPORTS, INC.
Len Wanger
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Chicago, IL
Family entertainment center with esports.

VERSION1 + MINNESOTA RØKKR
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Eagan, MN
Version1 is a multi-property esports and gaming entertainment organization. We are proudly owned by Minnesota Vikings owners the Wilf family and entrepreneur and investor Gary Vaynerchuk. Our teams include Minnesota Røkkr in the Call of Duty League, Version1 in Rocket League and Version1 in VALORANT.

VIRAL VISION ENTERTAINMENT
Tony Goodman
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www.viralvisionentertainment.com
Alpharetta, GA
Sign, train, support, and unleash the next generation of mobile esports players. Our vision is to revolutionize the world of esports by creating a dynamic and immersive experience for gamers and fans alike.

W

WASD GAMING
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wasdgaming.gg
Plano TX
We are an East Coast-based FGC-focused community and production company that plays and hosts tournaments for a variety of fighting games including BBCF, GBVS, GGST, GGXRD, MBTL, UNICLR, and more.

WILLIAM SAVARESE
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www.linkedin.com/in/william-lawrences
Dallas, TX
Creative Producing the Next Platforms for Teams and Brands

WORLD WIDE YOUTH NETWORKS
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wwyn.org
New Britain CT
World Wide Youth Networks uses Esports to create safe digital spaces for youth to feel empowered, advocate for digital equity and receive a quality education.

X

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XP Gaming connects the video game and esports industries at all levels.

Y

YOUGOV
Ben Paro
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business.yougov.com/sectors/gaming-esports
Global. Headquartered in New York City and London.
YouGov offers the most comprehensive suite of insight services for the gaming & esports industry, providing global franchise/title, event, team, and sponsor tracking data.

Z

ZAC TEPE
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www.linkedin.com/in/tepe
Columbus, OH
Production & creative services powerhouse for events of all types, worldwide & industry-agnostic

thank you!





As we embark on this exciting journey with the EsportsNext 2023 conference, we are filled with gratitude and joy for the incredible team and community that have come together to make this event a reality. It truly takes a village, and we want to extend our heartfelt appreciation to each and every one of you who has shown up, taken an interest and graciously committed your time and energy to this remarkable endeavor.

In the fast-paced world of esports, where exhilaration and dazzle abound, it's easy to overlook the tremendous hard work and dedication that lie behind the scenes. This industry is a testament to the passion and dedication of countless individuals who work tirelessly to shape its growth and success.

Without the collaborative efforts of our exceptional team at the Esports Trade Association, our valued sponsors, esteemed speakers and the support of the event locale and host city, none of this would be possible. We are immensely grateful for the unwavering support of our association's committee members, especially the Membership and Events committees, who volunteer their time year-round to make EsportsNext a reality.

We firmly believe that the strength of our community lies in the unity and cooperation of its members. The EsportsNext conference is a celebration of this incredible esports family, and we want to extend our warmest thanks to all of you for being a vital part of this journey. It's through the collective efforts of our dedicated community that we can continue to push the boundaries of what's possible in the esports industry.

As we gather this year at EsportsNext, we hope that you feel the spirit of camaraderie and the shared passion that unites us all. Together, we are building something extraordinary, and it is a privilege to be part of this amazing esports community.

Let us stand strong, united in our vision and commitment to forge a sustainable path for esports.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your unwavering support and dedication. We are honored to stand alongside you as we embrace the limitless potential of esports and the bright future that awaits us.

With warmest regards,

Megan Van Petten,
Founder,
Esports Trade Association

John Davidson,
Chair Emeritus,
Esports Trade Association

ESPORTS PARTNERSHIP

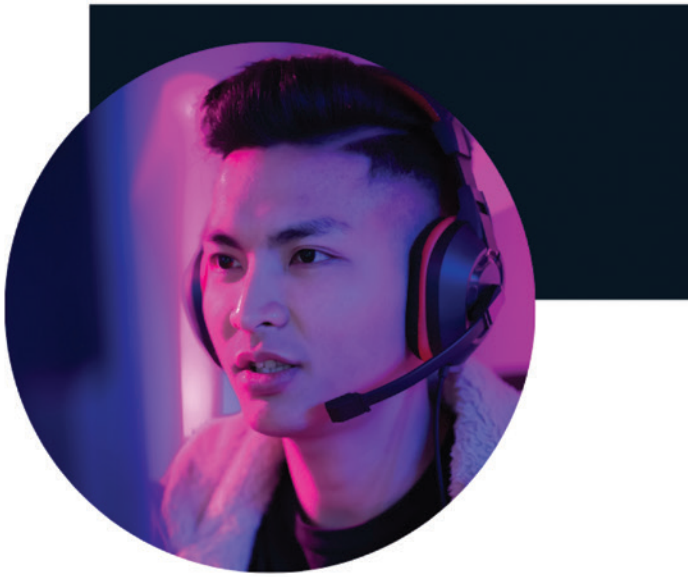
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THE MISSION

Pepelwerk, a dynamic platform designed to facilitate continuous learning and sustainable growth, is proud to seek a partnership with the Esports Trade Association.

Our mission resonates with Esports Trade Association's commitment to unifying and ethically advancing the business interests of the esports industry.

Pepelwerk's sponsorship promises a collaboration dedicated to fostering innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable advancement in the esports industry.





BENEFITS

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