



**Hello SYTA Community,**

Everything for 2026 Annual Conference is coming together, each piece building the most incredible Conference experience yet! As new education, evening events, and more are announced, be sure to keep an eye on these newsletters to stay up to date. We'd hate for you to miss out!

We're especially excited to invite you to start Conference off with a bang with the [Conference Committee Reception](#), the perfect way to welcome everyone to Pittsburgh, reconnect with peers, and set the tone for an engaging conference ahead. Read more updates down below and stay tuned as we continue to reveal exciting new initiatives in the coming weeks!

**REGISTER FOR CONFERENCE**

**JOIN IN**

## **A Few Ways to Get Involved**

Sign-ups, registrations, and a few items worth your attention before you head to Pittsburgh.



**Run/Walk/Slumber**



**Under the Stars**



**FAM Tours**

Sponsored by TCS,  
Royal, Polynesian  
Adventures

Sponsored by  
Explore Branson

Presented by Visit  
PITTSBURGH &  
Discover  
Philadelphia

## Volunteer to Assist SYTA Staff and Leadership!

All attendees are invited to volunteer at the 2026 SYTA Annual Conference. Volunteering at the conference is a great way to get involved and meet new people while we are all together onsite! You don't need to be a seasoned attendee; in fact volunteering as a first-timer will help you meet people faster! Check out the link below for the various volunteer opportunities and their descriptions, and to sign up! If you are working toward earning your **Certified Student Travel Professional (CSTP)**, volunteering will help you earn your requirements.

[SIGN UP](#)

**PROUDLY SPONSORED BY VISIT SAVANNAH**

## Don't Miss the Welcome Reception at Shorty's Pins x Pints!

**August 20 | 6:00 – 8:00 PM**  
**Shorty's Pins X Pints | Good Times Bar**

Kick off the conference with a lively Welcome Reception hosted by the Conference Committee and proudly sponsored by **Visit Savannah**.

Join fellow attendees for an energetic evening designed for connection and fun in a social, interactive setting featuring games, great drinks, and plenty of networking opportunities. Please note that dinner is not included as part of the event, and transportation to and from the venue is also the responsibility of attendees.

We ask that if you plan on attending, please complete the interest form here so we can capture an accurate headcount.

[INTEREST FORM](#)

## Thought Leader Sessions

**GROW · LEARN · IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS**

This year's Annual Conference features an exceptional lineup of education sessions led by industry thought leaders. In each Conference eNews, we'll be

highlighting sessions you won't want to miss, but there isn't time to attend every one so be sure to find the sessions that speak most to you and add it to your schedule!



**THOUGHT LEADERS**

**From Vague Prompts to Useful Results: Practical AI Skills for Travel Professionals**

**PATRICK FITZGERALD | KATIE SPRINGER |  
[PITTSBURGH CULTURAL TRUST](#)**

AI tools are becoming common in the workplace, but many professionals still struggle to get consistent, reliable results. This session focuses on practical techniques for using AI effectively in real work scenarios. Attendees will learn structured prompting methods that improve clarity, accuracy, and usefulness of AI outputs, along with strategies for reducing errors and improving reliability. Through real-world examples and hands-on exercises tailored to the travel industry, participants will leave with repeatable prompt frameworks they can use effectively within their organizations.



**THOUGHT LEADERS**

**The Legal Realities of Managing Your People, Customers, and Travel Partners**

**JEFF MENT | [THE MENT LAW GROUP](#)**

Running a successful travel business demands that you fully understand the legal complexities of dealing with your people, customers and travel partners. This interactive, exciting session will help you be better prepared for all three!

View these sessions, along with others, on the [Education webpage](#), and keep an eye out for future session spotlights in upcoming Conference eNews updates. Plus, don't forget, educational sessions will be taking place Friday through Monday at Annual Conference.

**SEE THE FULL EDUCATION LINEUP**



The [Run/Walk/Slumber](#) is back—and registration is open! Proceeds benefit the [SYTA Youth Foundation](#), so every step, stride, or even “slumber in bed” helps support an incredible cause.

Whether you’re planning to walk, run, or take part from the comfort of your bed, there’s a place for everyone!

We'll kick off at The Westin Pittsburgh at 6:00 AM on Sunday, August 23. This year’s route showcases a beautiful course through downtown Pittsburgh, featuring scenic riverfront views and iconic bridge walks that highlight the best of the city.

Don’t miss your chance to be part of this impactful, fun conference experience! And thank you to our fundraiser sponsor; [TCS](#), [Royal](#), [Polynesian Adventures!](#)

[ADD TO YOUR REGISTRATION](#)

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## The Power Lounge sponsored by Visit Richmond VA

Have you met the team at [Visit Richmond VA](#)? If not, you’re missing one of the most engaged and collaborative destination partners in the student travel industry. Led by [Toni Bastian, TMP, Director of Accessibility & Tourism Sales](#), Visit Richmond VA is committed to helping tour operators create meaningful, seamless, and memorable experiences for student groups visiting the Richmond region.

Whether you are planning a history-focused itinerary, performance tour, educational experience, or customized student program, the Visit Richmond VA team serves as a trusted resource for navigating the region’s diverse attractions, hotel options, dining scene, and logistics support. Be sure to connect with [Matt Robinette, Vice President of Visitor Experience](#), through the [Attendee Hub](#) or onsite during SYTA to learn how Visit Richmond VA can help elevate your future itineraries.

You can also find Visit Richmond VA hosting [The Power Lounge](#), conveniently located near the appointment floor. Designed as a comfortable recharge space for attendees, The Power Lounge offers tour operators and industry partners a

place to relax, charge devices, network with colleagues, and learn more about Virginia's Richmond region's growing opportunities for student and group travel.

**THE SYTA YOUTH FOUNDATION NEEDS YOU!**

## **Help Make The SYTA Youth Foundation's Upcoming Fundraising Auction a Success!**

Help us make this year's **SYTA Youth Foundation Auction** a memorable and successful event! This auction is a meaningful opportunity to support the Foundation and help create life-changing travel opportunities for youth through scholarships and programs. Funds raised through the auction directly contribute to making educational and enriching travel experiences more accessible to students, and donated auction items play a vital role in helping us expand that impact.

We are looking for items for the:

- **Live Auction** | Valued at \$2,500 or greater
- **Silent Auction** | Valued at \$250 or greater
- **Chance Drawing** | Valued at \$100 or greater

Every contribution helps create an exciting auction while directly supporting a great cause.

Interested in donating an item? Contact [info@sytayouthfoundation.org](mailto:info@sytayouthfoundation.org) for more information. And don't wait long to show your support and get your brand in front of attendees—all donations must be submitted by **July 24, 2026**.

**MAKE A DONATION**

**PROUDLY SPONSORED BY BROADWAY IN CHICAGO**

## **Room Blocks Have Been Extended!**

A huge **thank you** to our amazing attendees for completely selling out our three original host hotels! Booking within the room block is a massive help for our event planning. To accommodate the high demand, we have secured two nearby overflow hotels available until **July 29, 2026**:

- [Hampton Inn & Suites Pittsburgh-Downtown](#) | \$219/night
- [Courtyard by Marriott Pittsburgh Downtown](#) | \$219/night

**BOOK ONLINE**

We also want to spotlight our 2026 **Hotel Key Card** sponsor, [Broadway In Chicago](#). Lighting up the Chicago Theatre District for over 26 years, they are the

premier partner for student groups looking to experience world-class theatre across five iconic downtown venues. From legendary long-run engagements to highly anticipated pre-Broadway premieres, they offer the best of Broadway alongside a deep connection to Chicago's diverse and award-winning artistic community.

Be sure to connect with the [Broadway In Chicago](#) team during the conference to learn how their expertise and commitment to creating a welcoming, vibrant community can help you build unforgettable and culturally rich itineraries for your students.

## Partner with us for the 2026 Annual Conference!

A special welcome to our newest sponsors! See the full list and learn more about partnership opportunities.

- [American Bus Association](#)
- [Destination Toronto](#)
- [Discover Puerto Rico](#)
- [Niagara Falls Tourism](#)
- [Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism](#)

## New Sponsorship Catalog

Our new and improved, phase two [Sponsorship Catalog](#) is now available! This update comes complete with a fresh slate of activations including a [Color Lab](#), [AI SketchBots](#), [Golf Simulator](#), [Convention Center Branding](#), and much more. Redesigned with sharper opportunities, more detailed descriptions, and visualizations to help you make your decision.



[VIEW 2026 SPONSORS](#)

[SPONSORSHIP CATALOG](#)

MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

## Pre-Conference Webinars

Want more ways to prepare for Conference? Check out our upcoming and recorded Virtual Education sessions where we discuss everything you need to know!

APR

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WED

### Appointment Webinar

2:00 PM EST | 11:00 AM PST

Learn what to expect during your business appointments and prepare for a successful session.

WATCH

JUNE

17

WED

### Mentor/Mentee Virtual Meet-Up #2

2:00 PM EST | 11:00 AM PST

Join the group of mentors and mentees to get your questions answered and learn the ins and outs of SYTA's Annual Conference!

REGISTER

JULY

23

THURS

### Know Before You Go

2:00 PM EST | 11:00 AM PST

We can't wait to see you for the 2026 Annual Conference! Learn everything you need to know for Pittsburgh.

REGISTER

*If you aren't attending Annual Conference, be sure to keep up with SYTA via your eSYTA news and social for upcoming education and events details!*

HOTEL & TRAVEL

REGISTRATION

SPONSORSHIP

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

SEE YOU IN PITTSBURGH

August 21-24, 2026



Already registered? Share the excitement on social—and don't forget to use your [virtual attendee badge!](#)

#2026SYTA

