



**Absolute Events by Corrine**



**The Charles Group, Inc.**

Adirondack campfire areas.” It also boasts a state-of-the-art conference center for meetings with a dedicated team of conference services managers that will oversee all aspects of a gathering from delectable catering options to audio-visual enhancement.

**Jacob Javits Center** is the victor for Best Convention Center. With its newly completed top-to-bottom renovation, the Mecca for NYC trade shows and conventions now looks, feels and operates better than ever before. It boasts more than 840,000 square feet of total exhibit space and plays host to some of the largest and most popular conventions in the country.

The **Brooklyn Brewery** is the readers’ choice for Best Winery/Brewery/Distillery with Event Space. The popular Williamsburg locale not only sells great beer, but prides itself on enriching the communities it serves. Founded by James Beard Award-winning brewmaster Garrett Oliver and beer industry commentator Steve Hindy, the brewery serves a collection of top craft beers.

Inside, a 4,000-square-foot space is available for event rentals and corporate meetings for up to 40. Tasting Room buyouts are also available and can accommodate up to 200 guests on Mondays and Tuesdays.

**Rails Steakhouse** in Towaco, New Jersey, is the top pick for Best Restaurant with Private Dining Space. Its private dining rooms and semiprivate rooms can accommodate a wide range of events from business presentations to cocktail parties, to private meetings, receptions and luncheons. “Rails is a stunning restaurant with meticulous attention to detail in every square inch of the 18,000-square-foot space,” says Pat Leone, director of private dining and special events. “The luxe Colorado lodge design is nothing short of exquisite, thanks to sprawling timber, natural stone walls, glass accents, fire and water features, and private outdoor terraces.” Executive chef Francis X. Falivene is a native of New Jersey with more than 30 years of restaurant experience. Rails has six rooms available, including The Library, which accommodates up to 50 in a candlelit staked stone room with a marble floor, cozy tables, leather chairs and a book-

lined wall to help to create the warm, authentic ambiance. “The Rails Wine Cave seats up to 40 and accommodates up to 50 for a cocktail party,” Leone says. “Warm and inviting, the setting in Rails Wine Cave is rustic and casually elegant. The underground wine cave features an intimate lounge, private bar, and custom designed pendant lamps and candles complementing the scene with a warm amber glow throughout.”

In an industry that’s always innovating, the Best New Venue is **The Bank at Manhattan Center**. “The Bank Space offers an intimate atmosphere with floor-to-ceiling windows and original marble details,” says Jessica Rothstein Berman, vice president of sales and marketing. The completely self-contained space features a private entrance, two levels of usable space (25,000-square-foot main floor and 2,000 square feet of flexible ancillary space), audio-visual and production specialists and an in-house team of event professionals. The Manhattan Center team partners with organizations for each event and success comes from its ability to come up with creative solutions to any challenge. “We thrive on the excitement of each event,” Berman says. “The Manhattan Center is as versatile as it is unique, bringing everything together to support your vision of the perfect event.”

**NYC & Company** is your pick for Best CVB or Destination Marketing Organization. The authority for New York City’s five-borough tourism and meetings industry, the company is supported by 1,700 private members that represent hotels, restaurants, attractions, museums, tours and more. “Our team is privileged to sell and promote the continuous evolution and reinvention of one of the world’s premier, global meetings destinations,” says Rachel Peace, communications manager. “The City’s unprecedented and diverse product gives planners plenty of reasons to #MakeItNYC.” NYC & Company is successful thanks to its passionate and service-minded team of knowledgeable staff, including its Convention Development and Destination Services divisions. “Our award-winning organization keeps the industry informed about

the ‘New’ New York City’s developments and product updates, and its global sales team give planners access to tailored insights and assistance, when and where they need it,” Peace says.

## Services

**The Charles Group, Inc.** was chosen as Best Meeting/Event Planning Company. Carol Davis-Grossman, managing partner of the Fairfield, New Jersey-based company, says one of its hallmarks is whenever it works on an event, no matter what the city, the team makes it very indigenous to the landscape. “We bring in the local culture, but then put our own twist on it,” she says. “For example, we recently did an event in San Antonio, Texas, and rather than do the traditional tumbleweeds and things like that, we did a whole party in neon, with large neon cacti and cowboys. This gave a unique experience for our guests.” Another thing that makes The Charles Group successful is that it’s a company that has an equal balance of creativity and business sense. “We have assembled a team of people who can think on both sides of the brain,” Davis-Grossman says. “We know how to negotiate a contract and get the best deal for our clients. On top of that, we pride ourselves on advising our clients on how best to spend their event dollars.”

**Absolute Events by Corrine** takes home the award for Best Individual Meeting/Event Planner. “The key to success is being very interested and vested in your client’s success,” says Corrine (Statia) Thomas, president/meeting and event specialist for the Jersey City, New Jersey-based company. “That means really listening carefully to what they are asking for, understanding their goals and objectives and delivering on that so they end up satisfied for the work you do for them.” In 2017, the company planned about two dozen events and each was designed to meet each customer’s wants and desires. “I didn’t realize until a few years ago that listening is a skill and not everyone listens in the same way, and that is something I recognize as a skill I have,” she says. “A client recently told me they were

## Winners

### SERVICES

#### BEST MEETING/EVENT PLANNING COMPANY

##### The Charles Group, Inc.

Fairfield, New Jersey  
thecharlesgroup.com | 973.575.1444  
**Runners-up:** Grass Roots Meetings & Events; Fourth Wall Events

#### BEST INDIVIDUAL MEETING/EVENT PLANNER

##### Absolute Events by Corrine

Jersey City, New Jersey  
absoluteeventsbycorrine.com | 201.327.1000  
**Runners-up:** Michelle Marie Adams; Kelly Thwaite, CMP, KM Event Productions

#### BEST FLORAL & EVENT DÉCOR PROVIDER

##### Flowerful Events

Eatontown, New Jersey  
flowerfulevents.com | 800.640.1930  
**Runners-up:** The Charles Group, Inc.; B Floral

#### BEST TRANSPORTATION

##### NYC Signature Limo

New York, New York  
nycsignaturelimo.com | 212.577.1171  
**Runners-up:** Royal Coachman; London Towncars of New York

#### BEST ENTERTAINMENT/PERFORMER

##### Cirque Central

New York, New York  
cirquecentral.com | 347.210.1266  
**Runners-up:** Eclipse Events; Interactive Entertainment Group

#### BEST CHARTER BOAT SERVICE

##### Manhattan Yacht Charters

Fairfield, Connecticut  
manhattanyachtcharters.com | 212.995.5470  
**Runners-up:** Hornblower Cruises & Events; Entertainment Cruises

#### BEST A/V PROVIDER

##### PLS Staging

Cedar Grove, New Jersey  
plsstaging.com | 973.857.7242  
**Runners-up:** PSAV; New England Light & Sound



impressed with how invested I am in the success of their program and that makes them feel good about working with me. They're not just a paycheck to me."

**Flowerful Events**, based in Eatontown, New Jersey, is your winner for Best Floral & Event Décor Provider. "The difference between event companies is what they are able to offer and we do not only a full production of flowers here, but we also do custom furniture, custom props and we can fill any special need," says Michael Heifez, CEO of the 20-year-old company. "Companies like ourselves stand out because customers don't have to shop around; they can find everything in one place." With 10,000 square feet of space for its décor, Flowerful Events can display many of its products so people can get a bet-

ter idea of how things will look at their event. But the event décor provider is more than just a one-stop shop; it also provides exceptional customer service and that's what keeps customers coming back to fill their event needs. "We make sure to always be there for clients," Heifez says. "We take their concerns and needs very seriously and I think that adds to our value."

**NYC Signature Limo** is the top choice for Best Transportation. Dedicating itself to ensuring all transportation needs are met for any special event, the company has over 10 years of experience to back up that promise. Its fleet of vehicles includes sedans, stretch limousines, vans, party buses and coaches.

**Cirque Central** was voted as Best Entertainment/Performer. The New York