

Celebrating the Achievements of SFNet Chapters

BY EILEEN WUBBE

The Secured Finance Network's 20 Chapters are comprised of professionals with great insight and experience. From golf outings to educational events, several Chapters shared their highlights from the past year.

Atlanta

The SFNet Atlanta Chapter focuses on bringing value to its members, sponsors and community. With support from its 36 sponsors, the Chapter is able to offer high-quality networking and educational events all while giving back to the community through financial donations and philanthropic efforts. The Atlanta Chapter's membership has grown over 30% in the last five years, with its emerging leaders membership almost doubling in that same time. The Chapter hosts a diverse calendar of events from networking and education events to baseball and golf outings. It participates in joint events every year with various TMA and SFNet Chapters throughout the Southeast, helping to expand its reach within the Southeast region. SFNet Atlanta is focused on growing its membership among emerging leaders and women. The Atlanta Chapter of Women in Secured Finance will participate in its first Charity Tennis & Pickleball event to support the fight against breast cancer, and they hope for it to be an annual event. In addition, its annual golf tournament raises over \$5,000 for local charities and chapter members volunteer over 50 hours a year for Cure for Childhood Cancer. Understanding the need to encourage the next generation of secured lenders, the Atlanta Chapter is active in the college community, conducting six guest lectures at Kennesaw State University. The Chapter looks to expand this program to other local institutions. The board is dedicated to the continued growth and success of the Atlanta Chapter and bringing value to the next generation of leaders.



The Atlanta Chapter's Emerging Leaders Casino Night at Greenberg Traurig



The Europe Chapter held its inaugural Women in Secured Finance event at Norton Rose Fulbright's London office.

Europe

The SFNet Europe Chapter recently launched its inaugural Women in Secured Finance (WISF) program, marking the beginning of a new initiative for the Chapter's 160 members. The event, which was graciously hosted at Norton Rose Fulbright's London office on August 21, highlighted the Chapter's commitment to fostering growth and connection among its members, nearly a quarter of whom are women.

The kick-off event was a speed networking session that drew nearly 70 participants. Attendees were divided into two groups: those with less networking experience, eager to develop their skills, and those more comfortable with networking, willing to share their expertise. There were multiple five-minute, one-on-

one sessions, allowing for dynamic exchanges, followed by a drinks reception that provided additional networking opportunities.

This event is just the first of many formats planned under the WISF program. Future sessions will focus on key industry updates, personal branding, thought leadership, and, of course, more networking opportunities.

Attendees were also provided with valuable networking tips, such as the importance of preparation—understanding expectations, knowing your business, tailoring your approach to specific events, and effectively introducing yourself. Other tips included the significance of first impressions, starting a conversation using the 30/70 rule, employing the FACE technique, and the importance of following up after an initial meeting.

Plans are already underway for future WISF events, not only in London, but also in other

key industry locations across Europe.

The SFNet Europe WISF program is co-led by Paula Langridge, head of UK Asset-Based Lending at Bank of America, and Alex Dunn, partner at Norton Rose Fulbright. Their leadership is expected to drive the program's success and expand its impact across the continent.

Houston

The Houston Chapter recently held two successful events. The Women in Secured Finance group hosted a "WISF Financial Success Luncheon" on September 12 and the Houston YoPro Committee hosted an "End of Summer Happy Hour" on September 19. Both groups are growing and will continue the momentum in 2025.

Lara Baker, moderator, senior relationship strategist, PNC Private Bank, served as the moderator for the luncheon, and panelists included Austin Thomas, senior counsel, Jackson Walker, LLP and Cori Matthews, ACPRI, national insurance strategist, PNC Private Bank. The happy hour was held at The Toasted Coconut.

The Houston Chapter is pleased to announce Cassandra Mott, partner, BlankRome, as the next Chapter president. Cassandra is Houston's first female Chapter president.

Michigan

The Chapter is delighted that the Secured Finance Network Michigan Chapter has been recognized as one of two SFNet IMPACT Awards - Chapters of the Year! The members of its board are extremely honored to receive this award. As a board, it has worked collaboratively to provide its members and community with the highest level of service and experience, and it has achieved this through the integration of sponsorships, memberships, and programming.

The Chapter Board said, "We would not be able to accomplish this without the continued support of our annual sponsors and members throughout the years. It is our pleasure to recognize all of them and thank them for their support over the years."

To attract and retain sponsors and members, the Chapter's

board is committed to putting its events in the spotlight. The Michigan Chapter promotes the opportunity to participate in networking events, which include an intimate group of 30 to 50 professionals as well as participation in programming panels. In addition to hosting events for members in the Midwest region, which attract attendees from Chicago, Cleveland, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, it also partners with other local professional organizations. The Chapter strives to offer 8 to 10 innovative events every year, with at least two events that address topics relevant to the current market and the needs of

business professionals, to ensure the continued growth of the chapter.

Midwest

The SFNet Midwest Chapter had an exciting 2024, with over 15 events year to date, 200 plus members and 10 active committees all dedicated to promoting industry networking and education among local business professionals. Some of the highlights from this year include its Annual Golf Invitational, held on July 18 at Harborside International Golf Center, with 208 registrations and \$2,171 raised for A House in Austin, a charitable

organization that provides family support for young families on Chicago's west side.

On March 7, 2024, the Chapter held an inaugural DEI Committee coffee networking hour, featuring baked goods from a local minority-owned business.

The Chapter also held several ABL 101 Lunch and Learn sessions encouraging attendance from young professionals. On September 26, 2024, the Chapter hosted a Capital Symposium, held at Sidley Austin LLP, which consisted of two panels: ABL View from the Top, comprising Chicago ABL leadership and an Executive Panel comprised of executives from restructuring, a borrower, and a private equity panelist. The panels were followed by a presentation from Michael Gregory, CFA, Deputy Economist and Head of U.S. Economics, BMO Capital Markets, and a closing Wine Tasting reception sponsored by the Chapter's Women's Committee.

It's been exciting to see so much representation from the secured finance industry including banks, specialty finance companies, consultants, attorneys, and others. In



The Midwest Chapter's Non-Traditional Lending Structures 101 Lunch & Learn was held at Thompson Coburn.

total, over 150 companies have been represented at various events throughout the year. The Chapter is looking forward to continuing its engagement with the secured finance community through the remainder of 2024!

Northern California

The SFNet Northern California Chapter's Annual Golf Tournament, continues to turn out well over 100 players in the commercial finance network, mainly from all over California and other Western states, but also from as far away as the mid-Atlantic and East Coast states. This year's tournament was held June 10 at the Chardonnay Golf Club. There are fun contests for golfers, including the usual putting and drive, but also a "best hole" contest for sponsors, which Armanino LLP has consistently won with their themed full bar set up. Held in Napa, it's an all-around great weekend in wine country.

The Chapter is also proud of starting an annual Fleet Week Watch Party event, which was on a schooner cruise around the Bay two years ago and at the Sausalito Yacht Club in 2023, on their wrap-around deck with 180-degree views

of the Bay with bridge, Alcatraz, Angel Island and the airshow above while a band plays below. This year's event was held October 10 at the Sausalito Yacht Club.

The Chapter has other events during the year, including Holiday and March Madness parties, but the golf tournament and Fleet Week Watch Party are its most unique and popular.

Philadelphia

The Philadelphia SFNet Chapter has been busy hosting quality events in 2024, beginning with its joint 15th Annual Philadelphia Credit & Restructuring Summit at the Union League of Philadelphia with the New York Institute of Credit, the TMA Philadelphia/Wilmington Chapter and the ABF Journal, followed by its annual Masters Networking event, which is a special precursor to the Chapter's popular Annual Golf Outing held each May. This year marked its 29th Annual Golf Outing. The SFNet Philadelphia Chapter also hosted a new educational panel and networking event this fall with two successful Philadelphia-based entrepreneurs, Marguerite Adzick, founder and CEO, Addison Bay and Bryan Quigley, co-

founder and EVP of sales, Stateside Vodka, and will be ending the year with the annual holiday party with TMA Philadelphia/Wilmington. Chapter membership continues to be robust as our event planners structure event pricing on select events to include a chapter membership for the year with a paid registration. Additionally, the Chapter has welcomed two new board members this year and will be adding a third new board member in 2025. The Chapter continues to expand its reach in the lender's and service provider's sectors. 📍

To join a regional SFNet Chapter, visit the chapter page under "Chapters" on SFNet.com and click on the section "Join Our Chapter".

Eileen Wubbe is senior editor of The Secured Lender.



The Northern California's Annual Fleet Week Watch Party Event, held at the Sausalito Yacht Club.