

MICHAEL MORGENTHAL STATEMENT

FOR GANYC PRESIDENT 2026



My name is Michael Morgenthal, and I am running for re-election as GANYC president.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as GANYC president for the past two years, and I am extremely proud of the work that I and the board of directors have done during that time. In the past 2 years, GANYC has become more professional and more transparent, and continues to assume a larger role in the tourism industry. None of this was by accident, but rather due to the hard work and dedication of the current board under my leadership. However, the work is not done, and that's why I am running for a second term as GANYC president.

When the current board was inaugurated in 2024, GANYC was in dire financial straits due largely to poor fiscal management by the previous board. The association had almost gone bankrupt, forcing the members of that board to have to pay their dues in advance of the renewal period just to keep the association fiscally afloat. Stabilizing the finances of GANYC became my immediate priority. This has been a tremendous success. Thanks to diligent financial management we ended this fiscal year with a surplus in excess of \$30,000, a remarkable turnaround from just 2 years ago when we finished the year with a surplus of about \$11,000, and four years ago when we barely had any surplus to speak of.

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What this means is we are now positioned to utilize those funds to make GANYC an even better association than it is today. The budget for this fiscal year includes money for members to attend the WFTGA convention, to send GANYC representatives to other industry events to promote the best tour guides in New York City, and for a job fair, among other items. Even as this money is budgeted, if re-elected I will maintain the strict financial discipline that you as our members deserve to keep GANYC robust and solvent. GANYC's primary source of revenue is membership dues, and I always keep in mind that these funds are your money, and that myself and the board are merely stewards to put that money to the best use for our association and our industry.

We are only able to do this thanks to the influx of new members to GANYC, to grow our ranks and our revenues. We have been averaging about 5 new members per month under my presidency, which means we are clearly doing something right. If re-elected I will work to continue attracting new members to GANYC, and to manage our growth in a sustainable way.

GANYC committees are the true lifeblood of our association, but when I became president, I noticed that in many ways, the committees had become a little stale, both in terms of ideas and the members of the committees. I challenged committee chairs to be more transparent with their operations, to publicize when their meetings would take place, and to actively welcome new members to their committees. This has also succeeded, as is evidenced by the roster of candidates

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running for the board this year – a lot of fresh names and faces. I believe I have helped GANYC members – both veterans and newbies – feel like they have more of a stake in our association and I plan to continue to push for new blood and fresh ideas on our committees.

Other accomplishments during my first term in office include:

- Partnering with TripSchool on a wildly successful Job Fair in 2024.
- Launching the NYC400 committee, which has done more than just about any organization in the city to commemorate this anniversary
- Making it easier for new members to learn the industry through the list of best practices and list of tour operators posted to the GANYC website.
- Launching the re-branding committee to set GANYC up for sustained success in the future
- Pushing to have the first certification class in 3+ years which just wrapped up in October 2025
- Eliminating the cumbersome provisional member status to give all GANYC members equal standing
- Inaugurating a new membership category - emeritus status for those GANYC members who have retired but want to stay active in the association
- Representing GANYC at the Student and Youth Travel Association (SYTA) convention in New York. We offered members the chance to have their One Pagers displayed at the GANYC table for a fee and 15 took advantage. We may try to reprise this with future trade shows we attend

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- Strengthening our relationships with with the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) and NYC Tourism + Conventions

GOALS FOR 2026-2027

Now that our finances have stabilized, GANYC needs to be more strategic than ever in everything regarding our association: promoting the association, our members, and the tour guiding industry at large; how we allocate our time and money; how we continue to attract new members; how we interact with our partners; and how we embrace new technology to help tour guides and the association. With this in mind, here are some of my goals for 2026-2027.

COMMUNICATIONS

One thing that the current board has been working toward is to make our communications both internally and externally more strategic, more comprehensive and more comprehensible. GANYC has a great story to tell, but we don't do a great job of telling it. The way we communicate with our members and our partners is fractured; that is one of the reasons behind the re-branding efforts, but more can be done to make sure that everyone is pulling in the same direction. Whether it is via social media, the GANYC website, newsletters, email blasts or any other medium, GANYC needs to do a better job of communicating. That will be one of my priorities if re-elected.

JOB FAIR

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The board decided that our job fairs should be every other year, so since the last one was in 2024, I plan to lead the efforts to hold another job fair in the fall of 2026. I am the only GANYC member who has ever successfully led a job fair, having put on 3 prior to COVID as well as the 2024 event in partnership with TripCon. I know from speaking to many members that they found work from the 2024 Job Fair event, so I am eager to have GANYC offer our members that opportunity once again.

BECOMING MORE TECHNOLOGY FORWARD

AI is here, and there is no turning back. It is certainly starting to affect the tour guiding industry in ways that would have seemed hard to believe just a couple of years ago. But, we as tour guides and as an association need to lean into AI and other new technologies. Whether that is training members to use AI in their tours and their businesses, or finding ways to utilize AI to make GANYC more efficient and more robust, I plan to make this a priority for the association should I be re-elected.

HELPING MEMBERS NAVIGATE WHAT COULD BE TOUGH TIMES

There is no way to sugar coat it; we are in very perilous times for our country and by proxy our city. Already some of our members have felt the effects of a downturn in tourism, and that could be felt by more members in the coming years. I want to look at ways to help our members in need, who are struggling, and help guides better prepare for what may very well be a volatile tourism market in the next two years.

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ABOUT MICHAEL

I have been a licensed NYC Tour Guide since 2010, and work both as a local guide and an over-the-road tour director (mostly for student tours). I have been honored to represent GANYC at industry events around the world. I have the contacts and the standing in the global tour guiding community to help GANYC grow, and to continue to be one of the leading tourist guides associations in the world. Growing GANYC's brand nationally and internationally ensures that GANYC guides will be the first thought for those seeking great NYC guiding experiences. Professionally, I work as an over-the-road tour director, conduct walking tours, bus tours, museum tours, and food tours, and ran my own company for a time. This means I have walked in most of your shoes, and this makes me uniquely empathetic to the needs of our membership. Not all tour guides are cut from the same cloth, but my diverse experience in the industry grants me a unique perspective to serve all of our members.

OTHER BIOGRAPHICAL INFO:

- Native New Yorker, born and raised in Greenwich Village
- Worked as a journalist/magazine editor prior to becoming a tour guide
- Licensed NYC tour guide since 2010
- GANYC member since 2012
- Served on the GANYC Executive Board for 8 of the past 10 years:
 - 2016-2017: Member at Large

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- 2018-2019: Secretary
- 2020-2021: Vice President
- 2024-2025: President
- Served as chair of Industry Relations Committee from 2017-2021
- GANYC Certified Guide - completed course in February 2020
- Winner of GANYC Apple Award for Outstanding Achievement in NYC Tourism in 2020 for my efforts to fight National Park Service restrictions at the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island
- Created and administered “canceled tour database” during COVID to provide real-time data to government officials and the public to ensure that freelance tour guides were included in unemployment benefits. This helped get tour guides the financial assistance we all needed during the dark days of 2020 and 2021.
- Created and led the Tour Your Own City initiative during COVID, which was designed to market tours to New York-area residents when travel was still severely limited. While this project fell a little short of our ultimate goals, it demonstrated the creativity and out-of-the-box thinking that I will bring to the role of GANYC president.
- Represented GANYC at various industry conventions including WFTGA 2017, 2019 and 2024; NFTGA 2016, 2018 and 2024
- Avid Golfer, Jazz Fan, Whiskey drinker
- Graduate of Bronx High School of Science (1989) and Syracuse University SI Newhouse School of Public Communications (1993)
- Appeared on Japanese TV and Late Show with David Letterman

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Thank you for your time and consideration, and I hope I can count on your vote to serve as the GANYC president in 2026-2027.