



Join your VSAE colleagues for Virginia's annual premier event for association executives, professional meeting planners, and others who are involved with holding meetings or events. Interact with representatives from meeting venues and service providers throughout the Commonwealth and beyond in the Exhibit Hall. Enjoy the insights of high-caliber content leaders on a variety of issues affecting the association industry. All while networking with your association peers!

Back by popular demand, the **Solutions Zone** is a dedicated area in the exhibit hall for attendees to learn about products and services that support membership, non-dues revenue, learning, communications, marketing, and events. Visit the Solutions Zone and discover how your organization can be upgraded and placed on a path of increased member engagement and non-dues revenue.

See pages 4 and 5 for all the details!

Why Members Leave and the Strategies to Bring Them Back

During these past few decades, how we build community and achieve a state of belonging has changed.

Think about it. We're living in an era of disruption marked by the unprecedented speed of change, including advancements in technology, economic fluctuations, globalization, and demographic shifts. Everything about the way we live, work, and do business has evolved in a relatively short period of time.

As a result, approaches to community-building and membership strategy evolved. (Or at least, they should have.)

In 2011, I wrote *The End of Membership As We Know It: Building the Fortune-Flipping, Must-Have Association of the Next Century*, which explored the many social disruptions influencing changes in our tried-and-true membership models.

I've since realized it isn't just the models that need to change. It's thinking about community-building in entirely new ways. It's less about the what or how of membership and more about the who and why. The latter part is what's missing. Without it, associations can launch many new programs or

continued on page 6 >

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21
Seminar Series

"Leveraging Generative AI to Revolutionize Association Work"
Offices of Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America, Inc.
Reston, VA

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
Webinar

Drawn Together

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
Webinar

Strengthen Your Facilitation Skills and Enhance Your Impact

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30
Community Service
Walk to End It

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4–
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5
Fall Conference & Expo
Hilton Richmond Downtown
& Greater Richmond
Convention Center

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11
Webinar
Do You Even Know Me?

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2
Seminar with Lunch
The Westin Richmond Hotel

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1
**Awards Luncheon
& Silent Auction**
Hilton Richmond Hotel
& Spa at Short Pump

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Dover Hall
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Glue Up
Hampton Convention & Visitors Bureau
Hilton Virginia Beach
The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
Massanutten Resort
Minuteman Press – Glen Allen
Norfolk Waterside Marriott
Visit Loudoun

PATRON

DoubleTree by Hilton Williamsburg
Great Wolf Lodge
The Greenbrier
GrowthZone
Hilton Richmond Downtown
Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa Short Pump
Independence Golf Club
Lynchburg Office of Economic
Development & Tourism
Newport News Tourism
Novi AMS
Omni Charlottesville Hotel
Omni Richmond Hotel
Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk
Waterfront Hotel
Sheraton Norfolk Waterside
The Virginian Hotel
Visit Richmond VA

Leadership reflections



Stewart Hinckley
VSAE President

“...take a step back
and truly think about
your association
and why people are
involved.”

Summer



Beach plum. Salt air. Seagulls and cormorants.
Outboard motor. Cold water. Lobster salad.
Pink champagne.

These are the sights, sounds, smells, and
tastes that I'm experiencing in Maine as I
write this message. Each summer, I'm very
fortunate to be able to spend a few weeks on
the water and recharge during my “working
vacation.” Although these three weeks fly by,
I guess it's a good thing when I must think
twice about what day of the week it is. Don't
ask me what the date is, as I won't be able to
tell you without looking at my phone.

Over the years, I've experimented with
working vacations and have found them to
be somewhat problematic. Your staff doesn't
know when you're working and when to leave
you alone. Your clients don't understand why
there is a short delay in responding to their
questions (I decided there wasn't a good out
of office message to describe my working
vacation, so I don't post one). Finally, your
family isn't pleased with you working during
vacation, especially when you must be on
conference calls.

Anyway, the point is that I hope each of you
has that special place that you visit during the
summer to relax and decompress. If not, then
just finding that down time at home without
the pressure of work is so important for our
health and well-being.

Annual meeting. Board meeting. Registration.
Budgets. Membership. Meeting planning.

These words don't sound nearly as pleasing
but are soon to be what my brain will be
wrapped around in just a few days as my
summer vacation comes to a bitter end. In
fact, by the time this article is published, I
will be in the thick of it.

So, as you wind down your summer, you're
perhaps getting the kids off to school or college.
You might be gearing up for a busy fall meeting
season and with the change of seasons, there
comes some needed temperature relief. Soon
the leaves will be turning and believe it or not
the holidays will be upon us.

Our summer 2023 memories will be just that.
As I'm working on my next budget, I'll be
wondering what happened. Why did it go
by so fast? I'm already looking forward to
next summer in Maine, and I have almost
a full year to dream about it. As you know,
vacations have that secondary benefit, which
is that you get to look forward to them.

I look forward to connecting with my VSAE
family and sharing summer stories in the
weeks ahead at the CEO and Senior Staff
Retreat and the Fall Conference and Expo.
For now, I'm going to refill my plate and
glass. Under a cool breeze, the seagulls are
feasting on crabs, and the tide is coming in.
There is peace.



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Wednesday, October 4
Hilton Richmond Downtown

2:00 p.m.
Registration Opens

2:30 – 5:00 p.m.
WORKSHOP
Why Members Leave and the Strategies Proven to Bring Them Back (2.5 CAE)
Sarah Sladek

5:00 – 6:30 p.m.
Networking Reception

Thursday, October 5
Greater Richmond Convention Center

8:00 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.
Registration Open

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.
Networking Breakfast
8:45 – 9:00 am
Welcome and Opening Remarks
9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
KEYNOTE PRESENTATION (1.0 CAE)
What To Do About Too Much To Do
*Jones Loflin**

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Learn more and register at vsae.org/fall



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6
CAE
Credits

10:15 – 11:30 a.m.
MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS (CHOOSE ONE) (1.25 CAE)

How to Thrive in Times of Change
*Jones Loflin**
No Analyst, No Problem!
Bailey Kasten, CAE
Meagan Roloff, CAE

Managing The Mayhem: A Meeting Planner's Perspective
Moderator: Tiffany Brown
Panelists: Devon Possanza, CMP
Tarah Warner, MBA, FMP
Suzanne Welsh-Agnew

11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Expo in Exhibit Hall
12:15 – 1:30 p.m.
Attendee Lunch in Exhibit Hall

2:00 – 3:15 p.m.
AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS (CHOOSE ONE) (1.25 CAE)

Creating Inclusive Employee Lifecycle, Hiring, and Onboarding Processes for Your Association
Dawn Tedesco

Cultivating Authentic Relationships with Sponsors
Chris Beaman, CAE
Lucas McCann

Thank You

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Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel
Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge

Exhibitors

American AV	Greater Richmond Convention Center	Novi AMS
Association Briefings	Greenbrier, The	Omni Charlottesville Hotel
Blackburn Inn and Conference Center, The	GrowthZone	Omni Homestead Resort, The
Breezio	Hampton Convention & Visitor Bureau	Omni Richmond Hotel
Busch Gardens	Higher Logic	Personify
Caesars Virginia	Highlander, The	Powell Kohne Associates, LLC
Cavalier Resort	Hilton McLean	Prop Fuel
Charleston Area Conv. & Visitors Bureau	Hilton Norfolk The Main	Quirk Hotels
Charlottesville Albemarle CVB	Hilton Richmond Downtown	Results Direct I RD Mobile
Chesapeake Conference Center	Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront	Richmond Marriott Downtown
Chesapeake Convention & Visitors Bureau	Holiday Inn & Suites-North Beach	Ritz-Carlton, Tysons Corner, The
City Cruises Norfolk	Holiday Inn Tanglewood	Sanderling Resort
City of Fredericksburg	Hotel 24 South	Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel
City of Harrisonburg Tourism & Visitor Svs	Hotel Madison & Shenandoah Valley Conference Center	Sheraton Virginia Beach Oceanfront
Colonial Williamsburg Resorts	Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center Curio Collection by Hilton, The	Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau
Craddock Terry, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel	Hyatt Regency Reston	Virginia Crossings, Tapestry Collection by Hilton
Delta by Marriott Virginia Beach Bayfront Stes	Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center, The	Virginian Hotel, The
Delta Hotels by Marriott Richmond Downtown	Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation	Visit Fairfax
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Dover Hall Experiences	Kingsmill Resort	Visit Richmond VA
Drury Plaza Richmond	Lansdowne Resort	Visit SoSi
Fairfax Marriott at Fair Oaks	Massanutten Resort	Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge
Founders Inn and Spa, Tapestry Collection by Hilton, The	Mountain Lake Lodge	Visit Williamsburg
Fredericksburg Convention Center	Newport News Marriott at City Center	VisitNorfolk
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Based on availability and group must book by end of 2023, and actualize by June 30, 2024. New and future bookings only. Cannot be combined with any other offers or discounts. Subject to change without notice. Blackout dates apply. Other restrictions apply.

initiatives or tinker with everything from dues to messaging, but the impact will be insignificant. I’ve made three key discoveries since writing *The End of Membership*:

- What drives and influences membership growth remains unexamined and unknown.
- Membership isn’t a strategic or operational priority for most associations.
- Despite being organized as communities of belonging, associations have struggled to be inclusive of young people.

At first glance, this viewpoint might not make any sense. You may ask yourself, “But isn’t our organization already member-centric? Isn’t membership the mission, vision, and raison d’être of all associations?”

And the answer is no. Not likely.

Maybe you haven’t realized it. Maybe the phenomenon hasn’t been identified or labeled. But in nearly every association I’ve studied, closer analysis reveals that membership is not the priority.

This didn’t just happen.

In 2001, I resigned from my role at a membership association and started researching membership engagement. At the time, associations were experiencing their first encounters with noticeable membership decline. It was a relentless trend



Join Sarah Sladek to learn more about these successful membership growth strategies, based on her book, *MemberShift: Why Members Leave Associations and the Strategies Proven to Bring Them Back*, at the VSAE Fall Conference on October 4!

that would continue to plague associations, which eventually spurred my interest in writing *The End of Membership*.

What was happening then is still happening now.

Generation X (1965–1981) was entering the workforce, and they became the first generation known for questioning the value of a membership. They didn’t join associations en masse like preceding generations. When this happened, rather than seeking to understand why, the initial reaction was one of criticism. Gen X became labeled as non-joiners, slackers, and the what’s-in-it-for-me generation.

As an Xer myself, I didn’t appreciate the stereotypes. I’d spent my youth volunteering for associations. I knew my generation could be joiners, but they didn’t want to be because they didn’t feel like they belonged. Raised during a time of increased social change, Xers were seeking new and different membership experiences.

They wanted to align with communities who understood them and were open to change—two concepts membership organizations were struggling to comprehend.

Regrettably, the pattern has continued to repeat itself because associations excel at the what and how parts of membership. They have mastered what to do and how to do it, and all the related processes, practices, and traditions. Where they now struggle is the who and why.

What I’ve learned is, when an organization is so intently focused on the what and how, there’s little room for innovation or empathy, and purpose and people inevitably get pushed to the side. Over time, this has created gaps, disengagement, and decline as associations have strayed further and further away from their missions and members.

Therefore, a new approach to membership is needed—a shift to prioritize the members.

For the past few centuries, membership was a reliable continuity; associations were run a certain way, people joined and actively participated, and traditions were formed and passed down from generation to generation. Focusing on the what and how was beneficial to the building of membership communities. That’s not the case anymore.

Is there any hope for the future of membership?

Yes! But only if associations can remember why their organizations were started in the first place and make a committed effort to create communities of belonging for members representing all ages and career stages. An association’s future success relies solely on its ability to be member-centric. Nothing else matters.

I have spent the past two decades researching societal shifts and their impacts on belonging, community-building, and membership. Most recently, I’ve studied growth strategies and I’m sharing these insights in my new book, *MemberShift: Why Members Leave and the Strategies Proven to Bring Them Back*.

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LET’S RECAP

CEO & Senior Staff Retreat



On September 11-12, thirty-seven association and industry executives convened at **Kingsmill Resort** in Williamsburg for the CEO & Senior Staff Retreat. This year’s retreat theme was “Leading in the Moment,” facilitated by Megan Cruz, CAE and Ankur Ponka, MBA with McKinley Advisors.

Day one began with participants identifying their organization’s “unknowns” – what they know they don’t know, and the implications of these unknowns on organization success. In the afternoon, participants delved into each of the core elements of organizational agility and resilience

and explored internal points of tension that keep organizations from executing on their strategy.

On day two, participants engaged in small table, peer discussions on tough questions identified the day prior. Topics included: leading and following, organization relevancy and viability, re-defining membership, approaching diversity, addressing staff challenges, and strengthening communications.

Next year’s CEO & Senior Staff Retreat will be September 16-17, 2024, at **Massanutten Resort**.



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INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE! Join the Fall CAE Study Group

Registration for the VSAE Fall CAE Study Group opens on Tuesday, July 18 for members interested in studying for the certified association executive (CAE) exam in December.

Nine sessions are held virtually each Tuesday, from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm starting Tuesday, September 26. There will be no study session on November 21. This is a group facilitated by current CAEs. Candidates who fully participated in a VSAE Study Group have had excellent pass rates. The study group is free for VSAE members and \$175 for non-members. Registration is required.

For more information and to register, visit vsae.org/cae-study-groups. If you have any questions, please contact Chrissy Cannaday at chrissy@vsae.org.

The CAE Study Group
is sponsored by



RECOGNIZE YOUR PEERS

Do you know an association executive or Associate member who has gone above and beyond in service to VSAE and your association community? If so, nominate that person for one of the following four **VSAE Awards of Excellence**.

The CEO Award of Excellence

The CEO Award of Excellence is the highest award VSAE can bestow upon one of its Executive members. This award is given to an outstanding chief staff executive who has been nominated by peers in recognition of his or her leadership and achievement.

The Association Staff Award of Excellence

The Association Staff Award of Excellence gives VSAE the opportunity to recognize an outstanding association staff professional for his or her contributions to their association. Criteria for this award include high integrity, professionalism, recognition from peers, a record of success and achievement in association management, and consistent leadership and service to VSAE.

The Associate Member Award of Excellence

The Associate Member Award of Excellence allows the association community to recognize those suppliers and vendors among its membership who have distinguished themselves among their peers through their leadership qualities and professionalism.

The Career Service Award

The Career Service Award is presented to an individual outside of the field of association management who through hard work, pleasing personality, and dedication to his or her job, has provided exceptional service over the years to the association community. Due to the nature of this particular award, nominations may only be submitted by Executive members.

The award nomination period closes on Friday, September 22.

To learn more, go to vsae.org/awards-of-excellence.



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LET'S RECAP

September Seminar



September's seminar and luncheon featured Kimberly Parsons, CEO of Bamboo Consulting. She opened the seminar discussing the fundamental elements for effective teaming: a shared purpose, having the right-fit people on your team, developing effective and efficient engagement practices that promote healthy relationships, and sharing results and impact to achieve together while holding ourselves accountable.

Kimberley followed this diving into five critical hot sports that can jeopardize team performance: misalignment on team purpose; inability to flex team leadership style; unclear roles and responsibilities; ineffective decision making; polite fights; fuzzy agreements and commitments and behaviors leaders can cultivate to overcome each of these hot spots.

SIG-a-Palooza

AMC SIG

The AMC SIG kicked off the 2023 SIG-a-Palooza on Thursday morning, August 3, bringing together many new and returning faces for a great discussion about best practices and challenges of association management companies. Following the recently-held AMC Summit in Harrisonburg on July 11, attendees discussed how they brought back what they learned to their teams and clients. As usual, attendees shared their most recent challenges sparking a robust discussion about adapting to the ever-changing industry. The SIG looks forward to another SIG meeting before the end of the year.

Associate SIG

Several "hot topics" were covered during the Associate Member SIG, including labor/staffing challenges, supply chain concerns, inflation, tradeshow formats, advance deposit policies and group's ability to pay them, meeting and event trends, and who's using AI?

It was a very interactive session and everyone came away with some good practices and ideas.

Government Affairs SIG

The Government Affairs SIG met on August 3rd. The group received a political overview

from Andrew Vehorn with a preview of the 2023 House and Senate elections and the key races that will determine each which party controls each chamber. The presentation was followed by a general discussion about member and elected official engagement best practices, and other potential policies that may emerge in the 2024 General Assembly Session.

Meeting Planner SIG

The Meeting Planner session was devoted to discussing "What's in your Swag Bag?" The group shared the most memorable swag items they have ever received, which included: a pizza cutter, travel flatware in a carrying case, a very pretty nightlight, a phone charger you lay your phone on, gel packs shaped like cows, among other things. We discussed why we do swag at all and how it can be important in getting your name out there, especially when the item is something people will use every day. We discussed what items we have given away at our own events and made a list of the ultimate swag we would give away if pesky budgets weren't in the way. Interestingly, the "no limits" list ended up being more about experiences than items – Concerts, sporting events, going to the spa, sending them on a trip, doing an escape room. While most of us can't afford to give away iPads, Bose speakers or cars (we channeled a little bit of Oprah there), we did come up with some feasible, and hopefully affordable, alternatives.

Senior Staff SIG

Our schedules are full to overflowing and there's important work to be done, so no one has any interest in attending a meeting that could have been an email, or that took place just because "that's when we always meet". The Senior Staff SIG took a look at how to put energy back into our meetings to produce the results we're looking for during the meeting, as well as the momentum to accomplish things once the meeting wraps up. We covered everything from overhauling the agenda to frequency and duration of meetings to planning ahead so all participants can actively contribute to the conversation, and all left the discussion with insights and ideas to try with our own teams and organizations.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Omni Charlottesville Hotel stands among iconic historic landmarks, the bustling University of Virginia campus and the modern energy of vibrant downtown Charlottesville. This historic property is finishing over a \$15 million investment, including renovated guest rooms, public spaces and dining venue, as well as the addition of three new meeting spaces. The project began in May and will be completed in October of 2023 and offer a completely new getaway experience.

The refreshed hotel will host new guest rooms present traditional décor layered with contemporary touches highlight each room as elegant, yet understated wall coverings beautifully complement the custom headboards and decorative accents. Spa-worthy, walk-in showers and white marble vanities elevate the guest bathroom aesthetic.

The new meeting space enhance the experience for all the attendees:

Preston Entrance Hall

Statement seating thoughtfully arranged into four conversation areas create a refined, yet welcoming sense of arrival in The Entrance Hall. Time-honored design elements such as brick columns and archways along with classic wood accents enhance the registration area.

Meeting Rooms: Skyline, Blue Ridge and Rivanna

The hotel's conference space has been revitalized with a nod to Virginia's popular colonial architecture and enhanced audio-visual technology. Three new meeting rooms, also used as a private dining venue, give the hotel nearly 14,000 sq ft of function space.

A culinary experience awaits you...

The Conservatory

Anchoring the downtown mall and the center of our natural light filled atrium, The Conservatory will embrace all the flavors from Virginia. Inspired by the comforts, legacy and bounty of the region – seasonal products and southern flavors are highlighted at our table daily for an all-day dining experience. The atmosphere is breathtaking with lush greenery and the décor is a modern interpretation of Jeffersonian, the perfect setting a distinguished ambiance and rich southern charm

OMNI CHARLOTTESVILLE



Hillock Neighborhood Kitchen

Start your day at our delicious new breakfast buffet, Hillock Neighborhood Kitchen. Located in our atrium, the atmosphere is a mix of modern and traditional furnishings and lush greenery, allowing the area to bask in the morning sunlight. A spot to quickly recharge and refresh, proudly serving Stance Coffee, specialty espresso drinks, pressed juices, grab-and-go items, and local pastries.

Getaway for business, getaway for memories, getaway to getaway, no matter the reason, Omni Charlottesville will create an unforgettable experience. Swim year-round at both indoor

and outdoor pools and stay balanced at the fully equipped fitness center, complete with dry sauna and hot tub. The historic downtown Pedestrian Mall features eight blocks of shopping and dining along brick-lined streets. Explore art galleries and museums, local wineries, and craft breweries. Located in the center of it all and full of historic hospitality.

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The Omni Charlottesville Hotel has been recently renovated and refreshed and include updated meeting spaces to welcome events from small offsite brainstorming sessions to all-hands company conferences. Located in downtown Charlottesville near the University of Virginia, our hotel is in the center of it all and features historic hospitality.

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Durham, NC

Mervin Whea

Glue Up
McLean

AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH



Skyler Dowell of **Lansdowne Resort** and his wife welcomed their second child over Labor Day weekend. Following in her brother's footsteps, Leah decided to make her debut early and everyone is doing well.

MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Bailey Kasten is now the Executive Director of the **VA Recreation and Park Society**.

Dianna Lester is now the Director of Sales at **The Inn at Blackstone**.

Delaney Ogden is now the Director of Education with the **American Institute of Architects - VA**.

Quiana Smack is now the Director of Catering Sales, ARAMARK with the **Greater Richmond Convention Center**.

Tim Stacer, CRME, CMP, is now the Director of Sales & Marketing at the **Hilton Richmond Downtown**



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