



# YOUR association PRESS

September/October 2024



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! See pages 5 and 6 for details.

## Are You Asking The Right Questions?

Join us on Thursday, November 7 at **The Westin Richmond** for the November Seminar with Lunch as we delve into the strategic thinking process with **John Dentico, Founder/Principal of LeadSimm, LLC**. In this learn-by-doing familiarization, attendees will engage in a Micro Strategic Thinking Exercise using the TSWG method, leveraging their experience and knowledge to develop an initial plan to increase association membership.

This in-person only seminar includes a networking reception and lunch. 1.5 CAE hours.

Register at [vsae.org/calendar](http://vsae.org/calendar). Online registration closes on Thursday, October 31 at noon.

### Strategic Thinking: An Exploration for the Right Questions

by John Dentico, Ed.D., Founder/Principal, LeadSimm, LLC

Are associations or any organization ready for what comes next? Is it possible for an association or any organization to forecast the future with a 60-70 percent reliability? Does an association require the services of a person whose proficiency rivals that of Caesar's soothsayer, or is the knowledge required present in the talent already onboard? Is it possible to shift an organization's leadership focus from reacting to the next crisis to one of proactive, anticipatory thinking and acting? While the debate rages on about AI's power, its ethical use in the workplace and its capability

to predict future events, we cannot forget two proven forecasting tools that provide reliable results. Those tools are simulations and strategic thinking.

Simulations remain a powerful prediction and foresight development tool, provided their construction uses a scenario based on the observed trends of today "joined at the hip" with the anticipated realistic challenges an organization envisions might lie ahead. On the other hand, strategic thinking, a

*continued on page 7 >*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 & THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26**  
**Fall Conference & Expo**  
Greater Richmond Convention Center and Hilton Richmond Downtown

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3**  
**Venturing Into Uncharted Waters: How to Innovate and Embrace Risk to Ensure Your Association Thrives in the Future**  
Virtual

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10**  
**AI In Events Workshop**  
National Society of Professional Engineers, Alexandria

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15**  
**Webinar: Demystifying Decision Makers**

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7**  
**Seminar With Lunch: The Strategic Thinking Process: Are You Asking the Right Questions?**  
The Westin Richmond

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15**  
**AMC SIG Meeting**  
Virtual

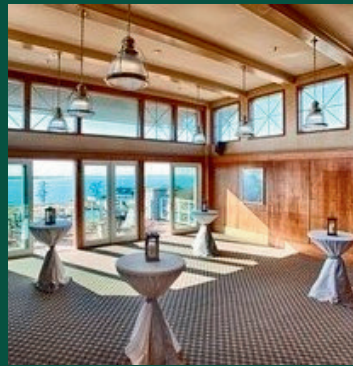
**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6**  
**Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction**  
Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa-Short Pump

**VIEW UPCOMING EVENTS AT [VSAE.ORG/CALENDAR](http://VSAE.ORG/CALENDAR)**



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Omni Richmond Hotel  
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Waterfront Hotel  
TowneBank  
The Virginian Hotel  
Visit Richmond VA

# Leadership reflections



Shannon McCabe, CAE  
VSAE President

“I’m incredibly proud of the collective energy...”

As the cool and crisp air of fall approaches, I find myself filled with gratitude and excitement for what lies ahead for VSAE. One of the greatest highlights of my term so far has been the incredible progress



that led to the Board’s adoption of a new strategic plan, highlighted in the following pages. I’m incredibly proud of the collective energy and thought that has gone into crafting this forward-looking plan and share specific appreciation to the strategic plan workgroup for their dedicated and insightful efforts.

This strategic plan is more than just a roadmap for the future. It reflects the values, aspirations, and insights of our members, and is the result of deep collaboration and critical reflection. We’ve not only built on our past achievements but have also taken a hard look at the trends and challenges facing the industry. We’ve not only evaluated how our society’s programs and services are supporting VSAE’s current membership but have also considered what’s necessary for VSAE to remain relevant for the new and incoming generations of association professionals.

I also want to take a moment to reflect on the recent CEO & Senior Staff Retreat, which was a fantastic experience at the picturesque Massanutten Resort & Serenity Inn, and facilitated by the ever-inspirational Lowell Applebaum. The retreat was a wonderful blend of learning, collaboration, and reflection, providing all of us with the space to step back from the daily grind and think strategically about the future of our associations. I came away energized by the insightful conversations and the shared passion of my fellow association leaders.

The retreat was a reminder of how important it is to create these opportunities for VSAE members—spaces where we can connect, recharge, and envision new possibilities for our respective organizations. (See photo above.)

Looking ahead to the fall, this season, my favorite of the year, represents an important time of transition. As the leaves change, VSAE is evolving as an organization, implementing the strategic initiatives we’ve outlined and preparing for a busy season of programs and events that will further engage and enrich our community. This season is a particularly transformative one for me personally as it coincides with my own move across the state to be closer to family and professionally as I transition my organization, the Association of Consulting Foresters, away from a physical office and to a fully virtual environment. Despite the challenges of change, I am energized by the possibilities ahead and look forward to navigating all of these transitions with the support of this great community.

In closing, I encourage all of you to stay connected and involved in the months ahead. Whether you’re participating in SIGs, volunteering on a committee, or attending the Fall Conference or another of VSAE’s upcoming events, your engagement is what makes this society a vibrant and dynamic organization. It’s through these interactions that we grow stronger as professionals and as a community. Here’s to another successful season!

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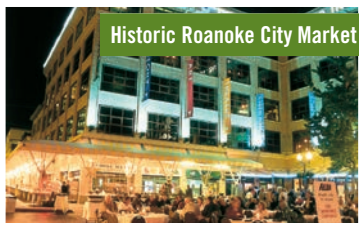
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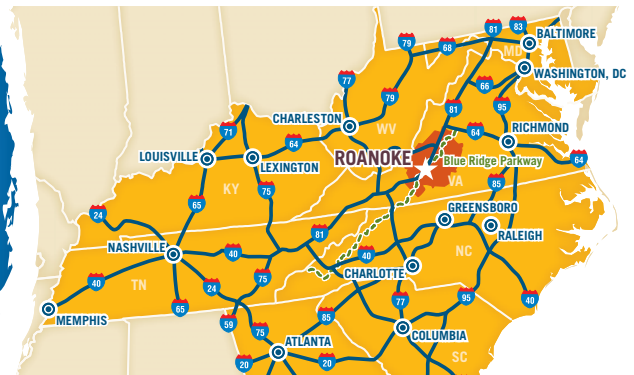
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# AGENDA

## WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 at the HILTON RICHMOND DOWNTOWN

2:00 pm Registration Opens

2:30–5:00 pm **Practical Applications of AI in Association Management** *Erin Fuller, FASAE, CAE*



Association management processes are often carried out manually, while performance is measured using strategic outcomes. However, AI can help make daily tasks more efficient. In this session, you will learn about real-life examples of how AI can be used in marketing, strategic planning, content creation, data analysis, and educational program development.

You will leave with a better understanding of the impact of AI on association operations and resource allocation, and how to integrate AI into your operations and strategic planning. You'll also learn ways to use AI in research, member persona development, and environmental scanning.

5:00–6:30 pm Networking Reception

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 at the GREATER RICHMOND CONVENTION CENTER

8:00 am Registration Opens

8:00–9:00 am Breakfast

8:45–9:00 am Welcome & Opening Remarks

9:00–10:00 am **KEYNOTE: Culture Change Made Easy** *Jamie Notter* Courtesy of PK Speakers Bureau, LLC



We all want an exceptional workplace culture that delivers better results and higher employee engagement. Companies with weak or average cultures struggle to attract and retain top talent. But culture change seems daunting—it feels time-consuming, risky, and difficult to manage. The real problem, however, is that we're not seeing the invisible patterns inside our culture that make culture change so hard. You can create a stronger, more resilient culture by uncovering your patterns and solving the problems they create—all in a matter of months, not years. When you learn how to accelerate your culture change, you will achieve new levels of success you didn't think were possible.

Culture expert Jamie Notter will discuss eight primary culture patterns that keep many organizations stuck with ineffective cultures that hold them back. Using real-world case studies, an extensive analysis of culture assessment data, and a decade of culture change work in the trenches, he'll offer concrete strategies for solving age-old problems related to innovation, information sharing, agility, and silos. He'll also share a framework for rapid culture change that has been used successfully in a variety of industries, and they debunk several popular myths about what culture is and how to change it.

10:15–11:30 am **MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



**Being Indispensable: Driving Association Success** *Jim Roman*

Do you have the engaged members you need? Members are the lifeblood of an association. Without them, you have no revenue, no volunteers or leaders, and no ability to achieve your vision and mission. In this talk, Strategic Business Coach Jim Roman reveals the 5 key areas your association must master to gain, engage and retain the kind of active, invested members you need: Communicating your vision and mission to your members, prospects and community; achieving organizational stability and structure; uncovering the needs and wants of your members; increasing your member engagement; and achieving a return on relationships. Spoiler alert: Master these five areas, and you also develop the next generation of leaders your association needs! Join Jim to learn tools and techniques you can implement today to Be Indispensable to your members so that they can thrive—and your association can, too.



**Purposeful Abandonment and Inspired Innovation: Delivering an Exceptional Strategic Plan**

*Andrew Chamberlain, FSAM, FRSA, MLoL and Elisa Pratt, MA, CAE, CVF*

One of the Board's central roles is to ensure a winning strategy for its association, but it is common for Directors to question "how are we going to be strategic?". Admitting they are unsure of the process takes courage, but it is completely reasonable. After all, why should they instinctively know how to plan strategically for a nonprofit membership body? This immersive session will stimulate discussion, educate and inspire, provoke debate, and inform fresh approaches to volunteer leadership development and provide insights into how to engage your board in strategic foresight and action-oriented planning. We'll explore the strategic challenges and opportunities faced by boards and agree the skill sets and characteristics necessary to lead and be successful in the strategic planning process. The interactive structure will include small team exercises and discussion, and the group design of custom planning methodologies.



11:00–11:45 am Business Solution Appointments

11:45 am–2:15 pm Expo in Exhibit Hall

*continued on page 6 >*

# ON-SITE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE



# AGENDA (continued)

12:15–1:30 pm Attendee Lunch in Exhibit Hall

2:15–3:30 pm **AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



**Unlocking Your Creative Thinking to Design Experiential Events** *Julie Austin*

Today, event planners are looking for creative ways to innovate the traditional event experience. Treating attendees like influencers, creating a sense of FOMO, upscaling attendee wellness. . . it can seem all too daunting. But the secret to innovation is teaching your brain how to think outside the box! This session will explore inspiration from inventors, cross-industry innovation strategies, and event innovation stories from past to present. Join Julie Austin, award winning author and innovation speaker, in this interactive speech to learn how to maximize experiential events with creative thinking strategies.



**The Power of Impact in Partnership Engagement** *Andrew Chamberlain, FSAM, FRSA, MIOl and Elisa Pratt, MA, CAE, CVF*

Partnerships are critical for professional associations - but the frameworks have evolved, requiring more collaborative efforts that break down silos, lead to meaningful shared outcomes and create lasting social impact. While the rules for partnerships have changed, our processes have not. Many organization leaders are asking themselves the same question: "What needs to change about the way we leverage partnerships to make them more meaningful, gain resources, and engage and retain our membership community?" Participants will learn a new framework for how partnerships can grow longer-term, more collaborative relationships that will strengthen your organization and membership; learn the social impact trends that are in uencing stakeholder engagement and decision-making in organizations; and learn how collaborative partnerships, a strong strategic plan and a forward-thinking vision are essential for fueling social impact and achieving strategic goals.



## EXHIBITORS

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Visit Richmond VA  
Visit SoSi  
Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge  
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& Visitors Bureau

## SOLUTIONS ZONE

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.

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complementary process to strategic planning, relies on a blue sky, deep dive, and divergent thinking synthesis of the perceived threats and risks centered on the organization's galvanizing mission or purpose statement. Henry Mintzberg, a luminary in the field of organizational development, once wrote, "The intent of strategic thinking is not to solve problems, but to suspend problem-solving and poke holes in these problems, to ensure we have a strategic issue—the right issue and the real issue." (Mintzberg, 1994)

The fact remains that strategic thinking is much like the redheaded stepchild of organizational dynamics. We know we need to pay attention to it, but often, we turn a blind eye to its direction. One reason why this occurs is that strategic thinking has, for a long time, lacked a formal process and has been guided by a more amorphous visioning process requiring participants to rely on an imaginative projection of the future. In contrast, strategic planning relies on a proven process known as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to reach its outputs or conclusions.

Be that as it may, leaders need to implement strategic thinking practices because, when compared to strategic planning, strategic thinking represents the difference between leadership and management, effectiveness, and efficiency, and transforming and incremental change. Yet it is important to remember that strategic thinking and strategic planning are, in fact, two sides of the same coin—both necessary and complementary to each other.

However, they differ significantly in the foundation and outputs of the processes. Strategic planning seeks to find answers to an already derived set of questions. The questions or goals are usually established by the senior managers and leaders of the organization. Strategic planning begins with the ends in mind, usually characterized as the yearly goals, objectives, or questions that require solutions. Strategic planning focuses on finding the how, when, why, and what of policies and resource allocations that will yield the desired answers.

On the other hand, strategic thinking is designed to ensure the organization is asking itself the right questions as Mintzberg stated,

"poking holes in the problems and finding the right issue,

the real issue." TSWG, a strategic thinking method, starts with no specific goals or ends in mind and uses the organization's overarching mission statement as the springboard for assessing future internal and external threats and risks. With an association's mission statement as the basis, such issues as increasing membership, finding and retaining talent or the use and effects of new technologies can be clearly understood and assessed. One way to visualize the strategic thinking process is to imagine a healthcare scenario where the doctor or nurse practitioner is working to treat an ailment. Strategic planning might result in a treatment designed to alleviate the symptoms, whereas strategic thinking works to understand the underlying problem.

The fact is that if you do strategic planning without first doing strategic thinking, it is much like rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic. No one cares where the drink trolley is on the luxury deck when you have a gaping hole in the boat. You've got a bigger problem that needs focused attention because IT IS the "real problem." The most robust strategic thinking exercises should include a horizontal

and vertical cross-section of the talent resident in the organization. It is one way to ensure that issues and problems that might remain hidden in the recesses of the organization's structure can be surfaced and discussed.

Moreover, involvement by a cross-section of talent provides additional benefits. For years, we have heard the lament about the inability to get people to take ownership of the jobs they do. The simple truth is that if you want people to take ownership, you must make them owners-owners of the future. Additionally, one of the most researched wants of the modern skilled talent pool is to be involved in the organization's decision-making processes. Why? Because, in the end, people want to matter, and they want their work to matter as they seek to gain a level of control and autonomy over their destinies. The structure and practice of strategic thinking drives to the heart of these two critical issues because those involved help define the "right issues, the real issues" as they leverage their influence to put before the senior leaders the hidden threats and risks that are, at times, hidden in plain view.



John Dentico, Ed.D is the founder and Principal of LeadSimm, LLC. He will be presenting at the VSAE November Seminar with Lunch on Thursday, November 7 at The Westin Richmond.



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# VSAE Board Adopts 2024-2026 Strategic Plan

At its September meeting, the VSAE Board of Directors unanimously adopted the association's new strategic plan through 2026. The plan was the outcome of the two-day board retreat in May.

The 2024-2026 strategic plan is a forward-looking blueprint that responds to an ever-evolving landscape and member needs, while re-affirming VSAE's commitment to inclusiveness, professional growth at all levels, and meaningful engagement. It introduces a key new pillar focused on innovating VSAE's business model, reflecting lessons learned from recent challenges and ensuring the association is resilient and adaptable to unexpected events in the future. Finally, the plan introduces new elements to better serve members and address emerging needs.

## STRATEGIC PILLARS

The following pillars form the foundation of the 2024-2026 strategic plan:

### Create an Engaged & Inclusive Community

We strive to create opportunities for meaningful engagement by encouraging participation from all association staff and industry business partners.

### Develop Leaders & Individual Growth

VSAE develops better association leaders for today and the future by fostering a community of peers with space for all to learn and grow.

### Elevate the Community & Profession

VSAE elevates the visibility and influence of association professionals and industry partners, positioning itself as a leader in the

field by showcasing the achievements and innovations of our community.

### Innovate VSAE's Business Model

VSAE is committed to continuous innovation and adaptation by embracing new technologies, developing cutting-edge programs, and exploring creative solutions to meet the evolving needs of our members.

"The 2024-2026 strategic plan is a framework for the future that reflects our commitment to leading with vision and creating opportunities for all members to grow and succeed," shares VSAE President Shannon McCabe. "It is a reflection of our commitment to evolving with the needs of association professionals and positions VSAE to be both resilient and innovative in the face of an ever-changing landscape."

The full strategic plan is available through the VSAE website at [vsaе.org/strategic-plan](https://vsaе.org/strategic-plan).

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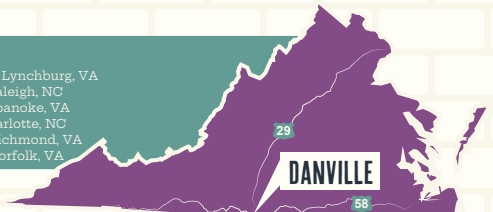
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## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia is the beginning of what is planned to come in late 2024 for Caesars Virginia. Currently nestled in a prime location in Danville, Virginia, Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia is here to provide locals and the surrounding areas with an unmatched gaming experience. As it currently stands, our temporary facility has 40,000 square feet of gaming space for our guests to indulge in some of their favorite gaming options. Open 24 hours, 7 days a week, Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia doors are always open welcoming guests with great hospitality and customer service.

While from the outside it appears to be a tent, once inside of the structure most will find that it is a fully operating casino. With just under 800 slot machines, 33 table games, 36 electronic table games, and 12 sports betting kiosks, Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia is striving to bring the Vegas style gaming and casino experience to the city of Danville. Additionally, we also offer a great dining option at our Three Stacks quick serve restaurant where our guests can enjoy a hot meal. When not in service, as an extension of Three Stacks we recently added a noodle bowl kiosk in our high limit area. With over 400 employees in our temporary facility, we pride ourselves on providing family style service to all our guests.

Since taking its first bet on May 15th of this year, Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia has been performing very well and we are seeing a ton of foot traffic in and out of the facility. Aside from catering to our delighted guests, we are also making many strides and efforts to give back to the local community as we have done and will continue to do. We previously were able to donate \$100,000 each to two local charities. It is through efforts like this that we want the community of Danville to know that Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia stand for more than just gaming and truly care about giving back to the local community and provide unwavering support.

The permanent resort, when open, will include a 320-room hotel and a world-class casino gaming floor with over 1,300 slots, 85 live table games, 24 electronic table games, a WSOP™ poker room and a Caesars Sportsbook. In

## CAESARS VIRGINIA



addition, the resort will feature a full-service spa, pool, high-quality bars and restaurants, a 2,500-seat state-of-the-art live entertainment theater and 40,000 square feet of meeting and convention space. Upon its completion in 2024, Caesars Virginia will attract visitation from new

customers and existing members of the best-in-class Caesars Rewards player loyalty program who reside in the broader Danville region and across the country. Caesars Virginia and Danville Casino are operated by a subsidiary of Caesars Entertainment, Inc. (NASDAQ: CZR).

## CONTACT:

Wendy Baten, Property Sales Manager  
Caesars Virginia

1100 West Main Street, Danville, VA 24541  
batenw@caesars.com | (609) 226-1851

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## LET'S RECAP!

### SEPTEMBER SEMINAR

Jeff Schmid, Director of Meetings and Events with **Ruggles Service Corporation**, gave an overview of Kim Scott's Radical Candor. He strongly encouraged attendees to read Kim Scott's book or watch the TED Talks.

Jeff noted that people who are in upper management and supervisory roles are used to making decisions and aren't always the best about soliciting feedback from colleagues. This is a missed opportunity. Take the time to check in with people and to ask for their feedback. It is courageous for someone to give you feedback. Give them your full attention and listen to it.

To give feedback yourself, Jeff said to follow the SBI method: Situation, behavior and impact. Be specific with your feedback. Specify the behavior and when and where the behavior was exhibited. Be specific about how that behavior made you feel. Stop there. Give the person an opportunity to process the feedback and return to you with possible suggested solutions.

### SIG-A-PALOOZA!

#### CEO SIG

Mary Elizabeth "Betsy" Davis, Partner and Co-Chair of the Labor & Employment Section at Whiteford, discussed the complexities of The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Topics included how to determine if an employee is exempt or non-exempt, and which employees are eligible for overtime and when. Employees who were once considered ineligible for overtime pay can now be eligible if they meet certain criteria. Several important changes will take effect this January. The session wrapped up with a Q&A session about how these changes will be impactful to our own organizations. The CEO SIG plans to continue their discussion and review of the FLSA in future conversations.

#### Meeting Planner SIG

The Meeting Planner SIG hosted, "Trade Shows: Thinking Outside the Box." Three wonderful panelists lent their time and expertise: Kim Martin with Virginia Realtors, Denise Kranich with the Medical Society of Virginia Foundation and **Tigre Fortune** with the **Virginia Asphalt Association**. Each of these panelists plan their association's trade show and each show is different in both scale and focus. We discussed how each show has changed over the years the types of sponsorship packages each group offers now. Each panelist talked about how they recruit exhibitors and engage attendees as well as one big lesson they've each learned in all their years of doing trade show planning. It was enlightening and engaging and we are grateful for everyone's participation.

#### Membership Marketing Communications SIG

The Membership Marketing Communication SIG highlighted personalization, automation, and member journey mapping of onboarding campaigns and targeted communication, feedback mechanisms, and value added programming retention strategies.

This session provided valuable insights and actionable steps that can significantly enhance our membership marketing efforts.



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## CONTACT

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Director of Sales

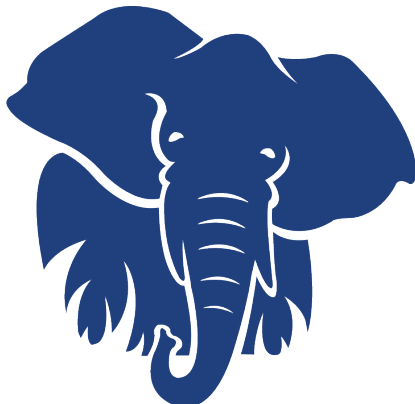
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# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

## EXECUTIVES

Jaime Barnhart, CMP, CAE | Washington Metro Chapter, CAI | Falls Church  
 Veronica Barnes | National Active and Retired Federal Employees | Alexandria  
 Lynne Batshon | Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America | Arlington  
 Sandra Harrington, MPA | Redrocs Consulting | Mineral  
 Richard Lesko | VA Society of CPA'S | Scottsville  
 Susan Motley, CAE | NAMI Central Virginia | Henrico  
 Dana Parsons | Leading Age Virginia | Glen Allen

## ASSOCIATES

Christopher Jones | Authentic Business Services | Midlothian  
 Kayleigh Mills | Hyatt Regency Chesapeake | Cambridge, MD  
 Kadi Rodriguez | Kalahari Resorts & Conventions | Woodford  
 Kelly Noon | Hellebush Consulting | North Chesterfield  
 Katherine O'Donnell, CDME | Visit Richmond VA | Richmond  
 Hannah Mollenhauer | Kimpton The Forum Hotel | Charlottesville  
 Michael Kokolis | The Williamsburg Winery | Williamsburg

## AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH



Corey Connors, formerly the Executive Director of the Virginia Forestry Association, is the new President & CEO of the Virginia Association of Community Banks, following Steve Yaekel's retirement



## 2024-2025 OFFICERS

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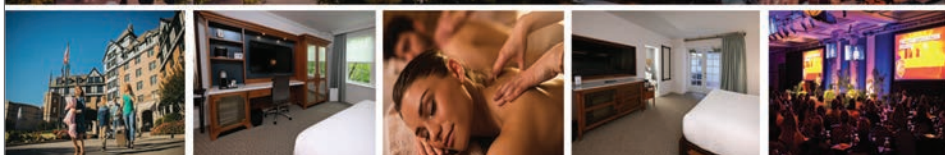
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