



Join fellow VSAE members on **Thursday, June 1**, as we kick off the summer with a Seminar with Lunch on the beautiful University of Richmond campus.

Blake Carleton, author of *The Hard Choice Habits*, will be presenting, “Hard Choice Habits—A New Way to Consider Decision Making.” Any level of achievement is directly correlated with the total number of hard decisions a person is willing to make. The Hard Choice Habits is a belief that the highest levels of growth, prosperity, and advancement are earned through an accumulation of hard choices.

After attending this session, participants will be able to explain why it is so hard to make good decisions on a regular basis, understand how to build their decision muscle, and identify the foundational decision choice that can be used for every decision.

A virtual format is also available. Register at vsae.org/calendar.

What Does It Feel Like To Be A Leader?

by VSAE Member Whitney Meyerhoeffer, MPA, CAE

Lately I have been reflecting about what it feels like to be a leader. We attend sessions at conferences, learn leadership methodologies in courses and webinars, and read about past leaders, but what does it feel like to lead? If I follow the steps and am guided by my training and the books I’ve read, what will that feel like to me? I think back to when I was younger and the leaders that I looked up to. I saw those leaders as having integrity, knowing the path (or at least knew better than me how to choose a path), and as kind compassionate people willing to guide me. As I move up in my career, and learn just exactly how much about the world I don’t know, I continue to reflect on the leaders in my life and wonder how they must have felt. Did the leaders that I admire and want to be like feel as happy and confident as I perceived? Did those same leaders feel insecure and vulnerable at times and I didn’t notice?

With curiosity, I sat down and wrote what leadership feels like to me and then asked around to see what others thought leadership felt like.

For me, leadership feels like many things. At times I feel overwhelmed and vulnerable. Other times I feel grateful and enthusiastic. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable and brave, but at the same time insecure and curious. At other times I feel one way in an interaction and entirely different in another.

continued on page 8 >

NEXT EVENT

SEMINAR WITH LUNCH

Jepson Alumni Center
University of Richmond

9:30 - 11:00 am

Seminar

Hard Choice Habits—A New Way to Consider Decision Making

11:00 - 11:45 am

Reception

11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Luncheon

REGISTER AT
VSAE.ORG/CALENDAR

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY, JUNE 8
NOVA Seminar Series
National Society of
Professional Engineers
Alexandria, VA

TUESDAY, JULY 11
AMC Summit
Hotel Madison & Shenandoah
Valley Conference Center

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3–
FRIDAY, AUGUST 4
SIG-a-Palooza
Virtual

VIEW UPCOMING EVENTS AT
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Leadership reflections



Stewart Hinckley
VSAE President

Our Members are the Heart and Soul of VSAE

As I begin my service as VSAE President, I would like to begin by thanking **Steven Williams** for his outstanding leadership as President this past year. Steven is one of the most thoughtful, even-keeled leaders I've met, and I have my work cut out trying to fill his shoes. I would also like to thank **Denise Creasman, Maureen Dingus, Sarah Mattes Marshall, and Lisa Noon** for their service on the VSAE Board of Directors. They are terrific leaders who have given years of service to VSAE and its members, and it has been extremely rewarding to serve with them on the board. And congratulations to the incoming VSAE board; it is my honor to serve alongside each of you.

When asked what I want to achieve during my term as President, my answer is first and foremost "membership." Time and again, I'm reminded that our members are the heart and soul of what makes VSAE so special. We know from our own associations that the value of membership goes beyond the member directory, newsletter, and events. As we were all reminded during the pandemic, it's so important to remain connected with one other. I'm a big believer in the power of engagement, which I've seen firsthand work well in some of the medical societies that my company manages.

Certainly, getting involved in committees, task forces and SIGs are the more conventional ways for members to engage, but there are so many other ways. Having members serve as presenters for an education program, contributing an article or member profile article to the newsletter, serving as a facilitator for a breakout or roundtable are also popular. At one of our medical meetings, we enlist early career physicians and trainees to help with digital posters and computers. Another successful strategy is securing social media ambassadors. These folks get assigned certain sessions to tweet about and these engagement jobs then help drive the association's presence at meetings.

Engagement is a big theme this month, beginning with the Annual Conference, May 7-9 in Hampton. On behalf of the VSAE board, thank you to everyone at the **Embassy Suites, Hampton Roads Convention Center, and Hampton CVB** for such a great event. The week following the Annual Conference the new VSAE board will have its annual retreat, with our focus on volunteer engagement. I look forward to reporting to you on the retreat outcomes and hearing your thoughts.

Building on our strategic plan and with your support, I'm hopeful we will continue to expand our membership across all reaches of the Commonwealth. It's also important we take the time to explore opportunities for improving VSAE value for our Partners. Without their financial and in-kind support, VSAE would not exist as it does today.

In conclusion, I am grateful to my wife and two daughters who have supported my journey in the association management business for over 30 years. I've certainly missed my share of dance recitals due to business travel, and so I have a deep appreciation for what all of you go through everyday balancing work with your families and personal time. Particularly for those of you beginning your career journey, I will say without a doubt that VSAE will be worth your time for your leadership development. It begins with just showing up!

Last, and certainly not least, I would like to thank the entire staff at Eisenman & Associates for their terrific support and guidance of our society. They are the glue that holds us together.

I hope that you will contact me directly if there is anything that VSAE can do to make your membership more meaningful. My email is stewart@societyhq.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

VSAE 2023 Annual Conference: *A Swashbuckling Good Time!*

Hampton CVB, Embassy Suites Hampton Convention Center, and the Hampton Roads Convention Center hosted VSAE's 2023 Annual Conference, on May 7-9, where long-time members, new members, and guests enjoyed a few days of education, networking, and fun. Many attendees kicked off the event on a beautiful Sunday afternoon with golf at The Woodlands, a tour of the Fort Monroe National Monument, or a scenic harbor tour aboard the Ocean Eagle.

The first evening began with the New Member/First-Time Attendee Mixer, with an increase in both new members and first-time attendees this year. The Opening Reception in the atrium of the Hampton Roads Convention Center provided a great opportunity for old and new friends to connect.

Monday began a rousing opening keynote featuring Gregory Offner, Jr., who entertained attendees with his piano playing (and leading them in sing-a-longs) with his piano bar secrets for helping organizations inspire their people, amplifying teamwork and collaboration, and building organizations of fulfilled, high-performing people.

Monday's morning breakout session topics included building governance excellence, membership onboarding, and tips and tools for powering productivity. Monday's luncheon saw the installation of VSAE's 2023-2024 Board of Directors and **Stewart Hinckley**, as President. In his remarks, President Hinckley shared his journey as a VSAE member and the lessons he learned—the best way to get the most from VSAE membership is by “showing up” and getting involved. He encouraged members to be active within VSAE to find opportunities to volunteer. Monday's luncheon also featured the graduation ceremony for the 2022-2023 class of VSAE's Association Leadership Virginia (ALV). Congratulations to our ALV grads!

Monday afternoon continued with breakout sessions on ethics for association professionals, leadership through changing

norms and leveraging your network. Following the sessions, members engaged in Shared Interest Group (SIG) discussions. Monday evening attendees got a head start on Hampton's infamous Blackbeard Pirate Festival by participating in some pirate-themed events at the conference. Everyone got a chance to don pirate hats and eye patches at a Pirate Parley, which proved to be a swashbuckling good time!

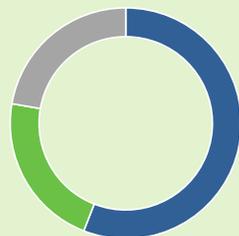
The pirate theme continued Tuesday morning as attendees “walked the plank” with **Hampton CVB's Lori Leib**. It was a great way to start the day with a leisurely walk, while learning interesting facts about Hampton along the way. Tuesday concluded with a panel discussion on meeting event contracts, followed by the closing keynote, a high-energy, entertaining, and thought-provoking presentation by James Robilotta on the value of curiosity for creating and sustaining community.

Our thanks to:

- **Powell Kohne Associates** for providing the keynote presenters for this year's Annual Conference.
- **The Embassy Suites Hampton Convention Center, the Hampton Roads Convention Center, and Hampton CVB** for being wonderful partners and hosts for the event and welcoming VSAE to Hampton.
- VSAE's Community Service Committee for coordinating with Stop & Pop Youth Sports Charities and the attendees who supported this charity's greenhouse project by donating much-needed items.

We look forward to everyone joining at next year's annual conference, May 5-7, 2024 at **Hilton Norfolk The Main** as we celebrate VSAE's 75th Anniversary.

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Registration is Open for AMC Summit

Registration is now open for the AMC Summit, held on July 11 at **Hotel Madison & Shenandoah Valley Conference Center**.

The AMC Summit is a one-day event designed for AMC owners, principals, senior leaders, and other staff focused on improving their AMC. This retreat will give participants the tools to implement a comprehensive business development strategy to increase value to their clients. This summit is only open to AMC owners and their staff, and sponsors. Registration fee includes all educational sessions and lunch.

AGENDA

Monday, July 10

5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Meet 'n Greet (for those arriving early)

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Optional Dinner

Tuesday, July 11

8:30 - 9:00 a.m.

Registration/Check-in

9:00 - 9:05 a.m.

Welcome & Opening Remarks

9:05 - 10:20 a.m.

SESSION 1:

Getting and Keeping the Right People on the Bus

Mary Connor, CAE, President, SMG Consulting, LLC and Fred Stringfellow, CAE, President, Stringfellow Management Group

10:35 - 11:50 a.m.

SESSION 2:

Leveraging Social Selling for AMCs

Erin Fuller, FASAE, CAE, Chief Strategy Officer, MCI USA

11:50 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.

Networking Lunch

1:00 - 2:15 p.m.

SESSION 3:

Streamlining and Automating Operations

Alison Cockrell, CAE, Principal, Director of Operations, Custom Management Group

2:30 - 3:45 p.m.

SESSION 4:

Making It Work or Moving On

Stewart Hinckley, President and CEO, Ruggles Service Corporation

3:45 - 3:55 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Register at
vsae.org/amcsummit

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vsae.org/fall

Three Ways to Revive Online Community Engagement

If your online member community has been in a lull, enlisting member volunteers, seeding expertise-driven questions on the platform, and encouraging staff across all departments to participate can help drum up more engagement.

Online communities provide opportunities for members to connect, collaborate, and learn from one another. But are your members getting the most out of the forum?

To bring more voices to the platform, take a step back to determine what members want to learn more about and how the online community can serve as a space to provide that knowledge and support.

“We need to think about what need this community is solving for our members and how we can help them see it as the place to go to meet that need,” said Lauren Kelly, director of membership and community at the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). “You want to make it easy, clear, and appealing to dive into the community and participate.”

Kelly shared ways that associations can revitalize online community engagement.

Recruit Volunteers

Enlisting member volunteers who are already active on the platform can help give drive engagement for the online community.

“Engaging active members reinforces their own enthusiasm for the community and will help drive engagement,” Kelly said. “These members already understand the process. They know how to ask questions, provide answers, and help other members. They are a good resource of expertise.”

Once a week, ISTE emails these member volunteers with a list of discussions in the online community that have little to no responses.

“We tell volunteers that these posts could use some extra attention,” Kelly said. “If the topics fit their area of interest, we ask if they would submit a reply, and they usually do.”



These volunteers engage in a way that is both focused and natural because the conversation already aligns with their interests and expertise. Natural discussion will encourage other members to jump in and join the conversation.

Behind the Scenes

Though staff contributions to online communities varies by association, it can help increase engagement by focusing on member interests.

In its monthly newsletter, ISTE staff include a wrap-up of popular discussions from its member community, which serves as a reminder about interesting topics and conversations that members can check out and contribute to.

“We’re showing them that there are great conversations happening in the community about topics that are relevant and exciting,” Kelly said. “It’s an easy way to encourage them to log in, read about what their peers are saying, contribute their own ideas, or ask questions.”

She also recommends encouraging staff from all departments to post to the online community.

“It helps make your organization feel more personal and community focused,” she said. “And as other departments contribute, they’re more likely to tell members they work

with about the platform, which in turn drives more people to the online community.”

Asking Questions

When developing guidelines around what staff can post to the online community, Kelly suggests encouraging them to post simple seed questions to get conversations off the ground. Good discussion starters are typically those with a simple question in the subject line, not too much additional context in the post, and a low barrier to entry.

“You want the question to generate value for others to read, but also something that’s easy for almost anyone to be able to respond to,” Kelly said. “Usually, folks just need to get over that first post barrier to contribute more naturally in the future.”

As these questions drive members to contribute and share knowledge, their posts help other members who use the online community to grow and develop their own learning and professional skills.

“Seeding questions is all about how we can help foster the sharing of expertise,” she said. “Expertise-driven questions can really pull in a community to share ideas and learn from one another.”

About the Author

Hannah Carvalho is Senior Editor at Associations Now.

> **Leader**, continued from page 1

So, I asked around to see what others felt.

One friend, Abner Gonsalves, said it felt like pressure, responsibility, and motivation. He said that there were so many things he could not control, but as a leader he could control the culture. To him, that meant he felt the responsibility of needing to expel bad energy in a team and turn it into good energy so the team can be high performing and motivated to do their part. As a leader, Abner felt the mixed emotions that come with being responsible for how a team performs.

Fellow VSAE member, **Sarah Mattes Marshall** said that she felt the uncomfortable feeling of having to be courageous to do hard things. She referenced a quote from James Robilotta, our final keynote speaker at the conference; “curiosity takes vulnerability and vulnerability takes courage.” She said that as a leader she felt it was important to be able to do hard things such as being focused on the big picture (past, present, and future), and letting go of your ego.

Our fellow member **Cathy Guske** reflected on the leaders in her life. She noted that the best

leaders in her life have been willing to dig in and do the work to collaborate. She said that a good leader can work alongside the team to get things done for the good of the organization. She likened this to the servant leader style.

If we look at the feelings wheel (<https://feelingswheel.com>), we see that feelings of being overwhelmed (or pressure) fall in the category of surprise or being caught off guard. Vulnerable feelings fall into the category of afraid, while uncomfortable is categorized as a feeling of shame and a self-judgement. When we look for courageous, it falls in the category of proud while thankful and enthusiastic are categorized as joyful. Curious feelings are categorized as intrigued or attentive, and compassionate is categorized as loving.

When we take a step back from the wheel and notice where the feelings of being a leader land, it is really all over the place. Interestingly, the fact that the emotions felt as a leader were everywhere made sense to me. Of course, it makes sense that a leader would feel so many different things, a leader is just as human as everyone else. Thinking back to those leaders that I looked up to, I’m sure they must have

felt a wide variety of emotions as well. Around this point is when a shift happened for me. The possibility that the leaders I look up to feel the same emotions I do helped me humanize them, release the pressure I put on myself to be perfect, and made me doubly grateful for the compassion and encouragement I received from them.

In digging into what it feels like to be a leader, I found colleagues with similar emotions to mine and a new appreciation for the leaders I once held on a pedestal. We learn so much about how to be a leader, how to do the hard things, how to make the hard decisions and how to create a culture that thrives. It is comforting and opens up an entirely new collaborative mindset to realize that many of us feel similarly while being a leader.

About the Author

Whitney Meyerhoeffer, MPA, CAE, is Director of Communications, State Chapter Relations and Strategic Planning with the **American Mental Health Counselors Association**.



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Congratulations!

Association Leadership Virginia Class of 2023



Members of the 2023 graduating class of VSAE's Association Leadership Virginia. Pictured from left: Ali DuGuardo, Beth Stockner, Kelli Gaudreau, Jamie Rawls, Lucy Firebaugh, Laiya Rollins, Haley Osborne, Rebecca Butler, Kristen Reid, Samantha Walsh, Katharine Garner, Kelsea Watson, and Priscilla Monti. Not pictured: Eric Hash and Erin Schrad.

Your 2023–2024 Officers and Board of Directors

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Share Your Experience!

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

The following committees and task forces are comprised of member volunteers with the purpose of supporting the programs and activities of VSAE.

Volunteering is a great way to get involved and give back. Learn more and volunteer at vsae.org/volunteer.

ALV TASK FORCE

Chair: Shannon McCabe

Evaluate the feasibility for continuing the current ALV program.

AUDIT

Chair: Shannon McCabe

Works with auditors and recommends approval of the audited financial statements and related management letter to the Board. Monitors the organization's accounting policies and procedures. (Members are the Executive Committee.)

AWARDS

Chair: Steve Yeakel

Sets appropriate guidelines for the Virginia Society of Association Executives Award of Excellence, Associate of the Year Award and Career Service Award. Makes selections for those awards. (Members are past recipients of awards.)

CAE COMMITTEE

Chair: TBD

Promotes the Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential and plans study groups. (CAE members only.)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Chair: Katharine Garner

Organizes community service activities and fundraising activities to support charities suggested by the membership.

CONFERENCE TASK FORCE

Chair: TBD

Promotes attendance, assists staff with conference planning and marketing, post-event analysis.

DEI TASK FORCE

Chair: Abby Tammen

Vice Chair: Bruce Whitehurst

Promotes leadership role in diversity equity and inclusion for the association community.

EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONALS

Co-Chairs: Lucy Firebaugh, Laiya Rollins

Promotes involvement within VSAE and career and professional development for emerging leaders.

EXECUTIVE

Chair: Stewart Hinckley

Vice-Chair: Shannon McCabe

Assumes responsibility of the operation of the Society between Board meetings and provides the president and executive vice president with ideas for the successful accomplishment of the Society's goals and objectives.

MEMBERSHIP

Chair: Sarah Mattes Marshall

Promotes membership and assists with member retention. Welcomes new members.

NOMINATING

Chair: Steven Williams

Solicits input from the membership and makes nominations for the officers and directors of the Society.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA (NOVA) TASK FORCE

Chair: Christina Lewellen

Vice Chair: Ann Davison

Promotes VSAE brand and presence in NOVA, focusing on education and networking opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Chair: Karie Walker

Vice Chair: Sonnia Montemayor

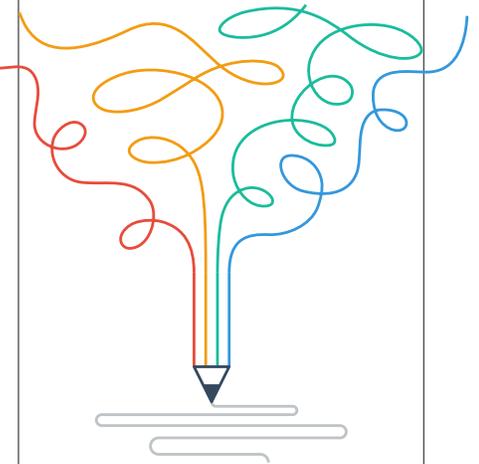
Develops educational content for VSAE events including speakers at Annual Conference, Expo and Monthly Meetings.

SILENT AUCTION TASK FORCE

Chair: Kurt Krause

Vice Chair: Ann Hayes

Promotes Silent Auction primarily through soliciting donations.



VSAE's *Association Press* newsletter welcomes your articles based on an interesting case study, lessons learned, or practical strategies that might be useful to other Virginia association professionals.

Guidelines for writing for the newsletter are simple.

- ✓ Write from your own experience.
- ✓ Include practical, how-to information, and examples.
- ✓ Articles should not exceed 1,100 words.
- ✓ Do not make it a commercial. The newsletter is intended to educate, not to promote specific services.
- ✓ Make it original. Use your own voice and experiences. If you cite the ideas and/or published content of others, be sure to attribute it appropriately.

VSAE reserves the right to edit or publish items based on content and available space.

If you have any questions about submitting an article, please contact Terry Monroe at terry@vsae.org or (804) 249-2234.

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WHAT TO DO

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Head to Peninsula Town Center and treat yourself to a bit of retail therapy or a great dining experience. The nearby Virginia Air and Space Center provides a fascinating look back at the history of flight, and the interactive exhibits make it fun for all ages. Step back in time with a trip to Historical Fort Monroe. This defensive site proved to be of great importance during the Civil War, and today the Casement Museum lets you relive that time in history. Busch Gardens and Colonial Williamsburg are less than a 30-minute drive from the hotel.

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AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH



Justin Beale is now the Vice President of Sales & Marketing at the **Cavalier Resort**.

Candace Cindric is now the Senior Sales Manager at **The Westin Richmond Hotel**.

Meagan Roloff is now the Director of Member Services & Engagement with the **National Association for Gifted Children**.

Abbey Withrow is now the Director of Sales with **Richmond Marriott Downtown**.



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