

# YOUR ASSociation PRESS

# **APRIL 2016**

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# **PLANNING AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE:** INSIGHTS FROM LEADING MEETING PLANNERS

Recently, the *Association Press* interviewed three of VSAE's meeting planner members about planning for a big conference, a task nearly every association must undertake on an annual basis. These three association leaders shared their insights, tips, and lessons learned from their experiences. The three members interviewed were **Mia Galiajasevic**, **CGTP**, Account Manager, Catapult; **Jan Morehead**, **CAE**, Director of Administration & Member Services, Va Transportation Construction Alliance; and VSAE's own **Tracie Grady**, Vice President of Operations & Meetings, Eisenman & Associates, Inc.



Mia Galiajasevic, CGTP

Jan Morehead, CAE



Tracie Grady CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

# NEXT EVENT

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE

May 1–3, 2016 Westfields Marriott Washington Dulles

- Saturday, April 30
- Welcome Reception (Executives & Sponsors only.)

## Sunday, May 1

- Pre-conference activities
- The Winery at Bull Run
  Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum
- Golf at Westfields Golf Club
- Opening Reception
- Dine Around Reston Town Center
- Welcome Party

## Monday, May 2

- 5K Fun Run
- Breakfast and Opening Keynote
- Morning Breakout Sessions
- Lunch and Board Installation
- Afternoon Breakout Sessions
- SIG Meetings
- Reception, Dinner, & Entertainment

## Tuesday, May 3

Closing Session Keynote

Register at vsae.org/annual

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Volunteer at the Hanover Habitat for Humanity May 19 and 20 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Location TBD

Monthly Luncheon & Seminar June 3 Four Points by Sheraton Richmond

Check out all events at vsae.org/upcoming-events.



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# **MEET YOUR INCOMING ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT**



Barbara Homiller, MBA, CAE Senior Vice President Better Business Bureau Serving Central Virginia

What drew you to the association industry? I stumbled upon it. I had a friend who was (and is) CEO of the BBB and he needed a part-time membership staffer. My youngest was leaving for college so I took the job in October with every intention of working only until Christmas; and I never looked back.

How would you describe your leadership style? I believe in servant leadership. Not enough people understand that as a leader, the greatest opportunity is to serve those who depend on you. I am currently blessed with a team of young people who are extremely talented. It is a joy to offer guidance on a daily basis to help them find their direction in the organization and in the business world.

What are your top goals for VSAE during your tenure as President? We are embarking on a new strategic plan. My goal is that in September we will emerge with a plan developed from the input of all our members so we can execute the goals with full engagement. VSAE is my preferred professional organization and I would like to know that our members feel the same. VSAE should be the source for association execs whether they are looking for education, collaborative opportunities, or advice. Where can we find you when you are not working? In the summer, swimming in the pool or working in the yard. In the winter, studying Spanish and reading. In the kitchen baking good bread all year round.

What advice would you give your younger self? Don't give up your day job. I stayed home to raise kids and it was a blessing. However, re-entering the work force was not easy and, at times, humbling. I am grateful for the opportunity I was given at BBB.

What are your top three tips for Association **Executives?** Opportunity is all around—embrace it. Mentor your younger staff—one of them will replace you and you want them to be good. Never stop learning.

What was the last great piece of advice you received? I was very excited about starting an MBA program until the first evening when I wondered why I was doing this to myself. Two years of night classes after a day of work seemed staggering. My husband said, "Just put one foot in front of the other and it'll be done before you know it." It was and I'm glad I did it. Thanks, Jerry. I still remember those words when we find a project is a little trickier than we expected.

Who have been mentors and/or role models in your life/career? My husband, my boss, and Duane Shockley who served as the director of our foundation for a number of years. He gave me a lot of advice about navigating the workplace and about resolving HR issues with compassion, clarity, and achieving organizational goals.

What sports/teams do you root for? Well, I'm an Atlanta girl, so the Falcons and Braves. If they aren't competing with Atlanta, I am interested in the progress of the Redskins and Nationals.

**What's on your music playlist?** If it's rock, I like it.

What is your 10-year outlook for the association industry? Lots of opportunity as long as we are open to changing what we look like. We'll have to let go of ego and territorialism to continue to serve. Years ago, in a membership seminar, it was pointed out that we are the special interest groups. We are the voices of the people speaking to those who govern us. That need to have a voice will never go away, I hope. But how we convey our message, how we speak for our constituents, and even who our constituents are will continue to change. Those who can be flexible will flourish.

If you could portray an actor/actress in one movie, who would it be? I'd want to portray either Judi Dench or Maggie Smith. They both are so skilled at their craft and so professional. Amazing women. Probably should add Betty White to that list—still working, I love it.



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Meeting Planners, continued from page 1

# What's the biggest change you've seen in preparing for your annual conference in the last few years? Or what change do you see coming?

**Mia:** Technology is changing the way we work and I believe that in the near future conferences will be planned through mobile strategies only and a perfect example now would be the event apps.

**Jan**: We are no longer in the driver's seat when it comes to negotiating hotel contracts. The meetings industry is recovering well from some slow years, demand is high, and hoteliers are cutting back on concessions.

# How do you utilize volunteers to plan for your annual conference?

**Mia:** One of my conference committees is volunteer-based and responsible for recruiting conference speakers which has freed up my time and allowed me to focus on other aspects of the conference.

**Tracie:** We use volunteers to encourage member attendance, to find content leaders, and occasionally to manage the registration table if staff needs to be elsewhere during the event.

**Jan**: We primarily use volunteers from our leadership committees to develop topics for breakout sessions. They know best what information they need to do their jobs better and advance their organizations in the industry.

# Care to share a meeting planner horror story from one the annual conferences you've planned? How did you handle the situation?

**Tracie:** I've had a couple of people need medical attention at events. Because of that, we now ask for an emergency contact on registration forms and store this information in our membership database for future reference. Especially if your event happens during a weekend, there will be no one at the person's office should you need someone on an attendee's behalf. Since then, thankfully, we have not needed this information.

Jan: At a closing dinner banquet which was outdoors and poolside, the lights went out across the entire complex. The resort staff was completely unprepared to handle the situation. We quickly employed flashlight apps to help attendees finish up their meals and get safely back to their rooms. Lesson learned—always discuss emergency scenarios during the pre-con and discern how well equipped the venue is to handle emergencies.

# What's your favorite budget-friendly trick or hack for planning an annual conference?

**Mia:** I am a good negotiator and dealing with hotel contracts is my favorite thing because it gives me the opportunity to meet the needs of my client at the best price.

**Tracie:** After a recent VSAE Meeting Planner Shared Interest Group session on budgeting, I'm changing my budget worksheets to include a few more multi-sheet formulas to easily figure tax and gratuities on F&B and service charges.



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"I can see where my touches have been made and how the little things mean a lot to happy attendees."

Even if inclusive pricing can be negotiated, on the hotel event orders the original price is listed so double checking their math is necessary.

Jan: I promise I have not been asked nor paid to say this—using Eisenman & Associates, Inc. is key to our ability to produce exceptional events while controlling costs. Their "insider knowledge" has helped us tremendously when negotiating food & beverage and A/V pricing.

# What do you like most about planning your association's annual conference?

**Mia:** I enjoy planning experiences for the attendees, from plenary speaker to food and beverage.

**Tracie:** I like seeing my accomplishments (the details) become a successful event. I rely on a great team to help with different aspects of each event, but someone has to be the ring leader keeping everything together, especially while on-site in the hustle and bustle of it all.

I can see where my touches have been made and how the little things mean a lot to happy attendees.

Jan: I am a very detail-oriented person, so I enjoy the development of the various spreadsheets that control the intricate schedule of tasks leading up to the event. I especially enjoy entering the word "DONE" beside each task.

# Knowing what you know now, what's one piece of advice you'd give your younger self planning the first ever annual conference you planned?

**Tracie**: Never be afraid to ask for help. Having a mentor like Harriet Harris in my early years was unbelievably helpful.

**Mia:** I would advise my younger self to experience a conference as an attendee before planning one. This will give me the opportunity to see what needs an attendee has and do all that I can to meet those needs when beginning to plan.

Jan: Stay calm, no matter what.



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# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

# JULY 11 –12 AMC RETREAT

# **Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel**

VSAE's third annual AMC Retreat is Virginia's only educational conference geared specifically toward association executives who own or work at an association management company (AMC). Hosted by the Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk Waterfront Hotel, this Retreat will provide two days of content on the issues relevant to AMC owners and staff. Topics covered may include the unique staff vs. volunteer roles in an AMC environment, how to find time to focus on growing your AMC while still serving clients, and so much more.

# AUGUST 29–30 MEETING PLANNER SUMMIT Hampton CVB and Embassy Suites Hampton

Join fellow meeting planners for VSAE's second annual Meeting Planner Summit. Hosted by the Hampton CVB and the Embassy Suites Hampton Roads, this two day conference includes content on nearly every aspect of planning an association conference or meeting including balancing time, AV technology, and much more. Equipping you and your team with the tools you need to plan meetings for your members is the focus for this year's event. The conference includes presentations, roundtable discussions, and time to network with fellow attendees.

# SEPTEMBER 19–20 CEO & SENIOR STAFF RETREAT Kingsmill Resort

This exclusive two day retreat style event for chief staff executives and other senior staff will be held at the Kingsmill Resort in Williamsburg. This year's retreat will include a presentation on national trends in the association industry, a discussion of the membership value proposition, and roundtable discussions among peers of similar associations and non-profits. There will also be content on personal leadership development including how to equip yourself to deliver more value to your association, your staff, and yourself.

# OCTOBER 6 EDUCATIONAL SYMPOSIUM & EXPO Greater Richmond Convention Center

This isn't Fall Marketplace and it's not just a tradeshow. Hosted at the Greater Richmond Convention Center and in partnership with Virginia Business Magazine, this is one of Virginia's premier conferences for association executives and other non-profit leaders. This event includes breakfast with a keynote presentation on the upcoming Presidential election, plus breakouts on a wide variety of topics including meeting planning, digital content marketing, and so much more. The Expo also includes a tradeshow with over 60 exhibitors.

# MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

Want to promote your company to Virginia's association industry? Here's how:

### **Expo Booth Space**

Booths are now on sale for the Expo, Virginia's only tradeshow specifically geared toward association staff and professional meeting planners. More information including the booth contract and other forms are available at vsae.org/Expoinfo or call Tracie at (804) 249-2244 or write her at tracie@vsae.org.

## **Membership Directory**

The Facilities Guide section of VSAE's Membership Directory has become *the* resource for association executives looking for meeting space in Virginia. Printed only once annually, the guide provides a two-page spread on each participating property with meeting space specifications. Executives can use the guide to find the right property for their meeting. Info: brandon@vsae.org.



# Flexible Spending Accounts "FSAs" can create a win-win opportunity for both the employer and the employee. One example is the dependent care payroll deduction option for expenses such as daycare. A married employee filing a joint tax return or a single parent can pre-tax up to \$5,000 of qualified dependent care expenses through an FSA. Pre-taxing the expenses reduces both the employers FICA match, as well as the employees taxable income. Please contact me with any questions.

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# MORE INFORMATION ON THESE EVENTS WILL BE COMING IN EARLY MAY.

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# **PARTNER HIGHLIGHT:**

The Craddock Terry Hotel and Event Center, a luxury riverview experience, centrally located in downtown Lynchburg, is an ideal destination for board retreats and meetings.

This historic turn-of-the-century shoe factory and tobacco warehouse has been transformed into an exquisite boutique hotel, embracing upscale service and shoes.

## AWARD WINNING ACCOMMODATIONS

Voted one of Central Virginia's Best Hotels 5 years running by *Virginia Living*, the 44 guest rooms offer unique architectural elements, such as exposed brick and granite walls, timber beams, and soaring ceilings, alongside chic amenities and whimsical shoe decor.

Guests also receive unique "shoe theme" services. A European continental breakfast is delivered to guest rooms each morning in an old-fashioned wooden shoeshine box. Clients also receive complimentary shoe shine service.

## AWARD WINNING CUISINE

Two on-site dining options are available, both of which have been voted "Best of" by the readers of Virginia Living. Shoemakers American Grille offers upscale dining, featuring steaks, fresh seafood, and prime rib all prepared in an open finishing kitchen.

The impressive bar and lounge is the perfect place to relax with a cocktail or unwind with a glass of wine at the end of your meeting. Shoemakers is also the official caterer for all on-site meetings.

Waterstone Pizza offers a casual dining experience with hand-tossed crust pizzas made to order in a brick oven, market fresh salads, grilled panini, and focaccia sandwiches. Outdoor bar and dining service is also available seasonally with great views of the Blue Ridge Mountains and riverfront.

## PERSONALIZED MEETING SERVICE

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# CRADDOCK TERRY HOTEL AND EVENT CENTER



flexible function space to accommodate 10 to 200. Integrated audiovisual equipment is provided inhouse, along with on-site catering, and elegant décor extras.

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## CONTACT:

Kimberly Wolfe, Director of Sales (434) 455-1523 kim@craddockterryhotel.com Craddock Terry Hotel & Event Center 1312 Commerce Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504



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# AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH

**Brittany H. Alger**. Sales Manager at Great Wolf Lodge in Williamsburg has recently been awarded Great Wolf Resorts Sales and Catering Manager of the Year for 2015. This award goes to the top sales manager for all of the Great Wolf lodges in the nation. **Powell Kohne Associates, LLC** announces that **Maggie Kohne** has recently retired. **Blanche Powell** is handling Maggie's clients. Maggie would like to thank those of you who have worked with her through the years, and she would appreciate hearing from those of you who know her.

# **EVALUATION PRIZE WINNER**

Congratulations to **SHELLEY GRAVATT** of the VA Beer Wholesalers Association, who is our March Monthly Seminar evaluation prize winner. Shelley won an overnight stay for two at the Embassy Suites Richmond.



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