



(From left) **Scot McRoberts, Mary Kelly, Courtney Fleming, and Mark Yardis**, pictured with VSAE's Executive Director, **Rick Elsenman** (center), are this year's VSAE Awards of Excellence recipients, presented at the Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction at the **Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa at Short Pump**.

VSAE's highly anticipated and popular Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction was a grand success. Nearly 300 members and guests enjoyed the festivities at the **Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa at Short Pump**, including a delicious lunch and participation in both the Silent Auction and the Grand Prize live auction, proceeds of which support both VSAE and the local charity, the American Cancer Society's **Relay For Life of Goochland**.

The highly coveted VSAE 2019 Awards of Excellence were presented to four special and deserving individuals who reflect the best in the association industry. Congratulations to the following award recipients.

CEO AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The CEO Award of Excellence is the highest award VSAE can bestow. This award is given annually to an outstanding association professional who has been nominated by their

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Dr. Holsworth to Discuss Virginia Politics



Join VSAE on **Friday, January 3, 2020** at the **Omni Richmond Hotel** to start the year with **"2020 Virginia Political Outlook,"** an insightful review and prediction of the Virginia political landscape by Dr. Robert Holsworth of DecideSmart.

Dr. Holsworth is a local analyst with a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is a retired VCU professor where he taught courses in Virginia politics, American politics, and political theory.

Register at vsae.org.

DON'T MISS IT!

2020 VIRGINIA POLITICAL OUTLOOK

Friday, January 3
Omni Richmond Hotel

Speaker:
Dr. Robert Holsworth
DecideSmart

9:45–10:00 a.m. Registration
10:00 a.m. Presentation

How To Get The Most Out of
Your VSAE Membership

10:00 a.m. Meeting

Stumps & Stars (Legislative Meetup)
For Executive Members Only

11:00–11:45 a.m. Networking
Reception

11:45 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Luncheon
& Speaker

Register at vsae.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

SENIOR STAFF SIG
January 31

Catch Your Limit
1127 W. Main Street

SEMINAR SERIES
WITH LUNCH

February 7
The Jefferson Hotel

SEMINAR SERIES
WITH LUNCH

March 6
Hilton Richmond Downtown

Check out all events at
vsae.org/calendar



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destination dining.



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VSAE BRINGS IN NEW YEAR WITH NEW LEADERSHIP



Starting January 1, 2020, **Sonnica Montemayor, CAE**, the current Deputy Executive Director of VSAE, will become the Executive Director, and **Zach Eisenman**, currently an Account Manager, will become the Deputy Executive Director. **Rick Eisenman** will continue to be involved supporting them and VSAE by facilitating productive and growing relationships between VSAE and its industry partners. Mr. Eisenman noted during his announcement at the Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction, "It's been an honor and a pleasure to serve as VSAE's Executive Director for over 21 years. Please know I am leaving you in good hands with Sonnia and Zach."

BYLAWS CHANGE

On November 14, 2019, VSAE's Board of Directors voted to change the bylaws as it pertains to Lifetime members. The current bylaws (A.1.e., page 1) read as such: "Lifetime membership may be conferred upon those members who have maintained 10 consecutive years of Executive membership in good standing and who have fully retired from all compensated work in the association industry." The Board voted unanimously to change the bylaws to the following: "Lifetime membership may be conferred upon those members who have maintained 10 consecutive years of Executive membership in good standing and who have fully retired from all compensated work."

Leadership reflections



Durent "D" Walton, Jr., CAE
VSAE President

As Thanksgiving gives way to the joyous holiday season, we find ourselves at the end of yet another year. While December is a time for celebration with colleagues, friends, and family, it also marks the last-minute push towards yearly business goals and objectives as we all collectively skid towards New Year's Eve. Your own experience no doubt matches that of VSAE, as volunteers and staff members diligently wind down 2019 while simultaneously gearing up for 2020.

Though our organization is always keen to look towards the future, I also wanted to take a moment to reflect on the past year—as 2019 was yet another banner year for VSAE. In addition to the monthly Seminar Series meetings which continue to offer our members a unique blend of education and fellowship, our events this year have continued to meet the high bar we have set for ourselves. In May we met in the mountains as the Annual Conference returned to the Omni Homestead. The jam-packed summer months offered even more opportunities for growth and the sharing of best practices, at events such as the AMC Retreat, the Meeting Planner Summit, and SIG-a-Palooza. This

"2019 was yet another banner year for VSAE."

fall our CEO & Senior Staff Retreat and Fall Conference offered additional opportunities for networking, socializing, and continued learning. Most recently, we met in Richmond for an event that has become an annual favorite of the membership, the Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction. (Learn more about the success of that event on pages 1, 6, and 7.) 2019 also marked the graduation of the first-ever class of Association Leadership Virginia (ALV). Having witnessed firsthand the genuine bond among the first ALV class, my fellow board members and I could not be more excited to see the support for a second ALV class take form under the tutelage of Tom and Melissa Laughon from "Catch Your Limit."

To our membership and the all-important volunteers within our ranks, thanks for your passion, your energy, and most importantly your time. To our staff, thanks for your guidance, your preparation, and your dedication to making our events wonderful experiences for all involved. To our associate members, partners, sponsors, and event hosts, your generosity and support cannot be understated.

Here's to a successful 2019 and cheers as we turn the page to 2020!



Two-Room
Suites

Complimentary
Breakfast

Evening
Reception



Our Embassy Suites by Hilton Hampton Hotel & Convention Center provides premium accommodations in Hampton, Virginia. Situated at the Intersection of I-64 and I-664 in Hampton, and close to both the Norfolk International Airport and the Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport, our hotel provides easy access to excellent Virginia attractions. We are the quality choice for your next event.

Contact Erin Eissens to start planning!

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Erin.Eissens@AtriumHospitality.com

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Denise Creasman
Renaissance Portsmouth-
Norfolk Waterfront Hotel



James Gelfand
Kingsmill Resort
& Golf Club



Sally Noona, CMP
Virginia Beach Convention
& Visitors Bureau



Skyler Dowell
Lansdowne Resort & Spa

VSAE Partners are Associate members who are actively engaged and financially committed to supporting VSAE and all its programs and services. It is with their support that VSAE is able to keep membership dues low, programs affordable, and services aligned to the needs of members. These Partners have committed to a level of support for 2020 through advertising, sponsorship, and scholarship.

The 2020 Partners are committed to helping VSAE realize its strategic goals of strengthening your association community and delivering value to members. When looking for industry services for your association, VSAE encourages you to reach out to these partners first to see how they can deliver more value to your association and its members.

If you are interested in becoming a Partner, there are still advertising and sponsorship opportunities available to make your mark on the society for Virginia's association professionals. For more information, visit vsae.org/2020-partner-program.

BENEFACTOR

Greater Richmond Convention Center
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Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel
VisitNorfolk

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Hilton Richmond Downtown
Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa at Short Pump
Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront
Richmond Marriott Downtown
MemberClicks
Natural Bridge Historic Hotel & Conference Center
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Exhibits, Inc.
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Lynchburg Office of Economic Development & Tourism
Richmond Marriott Short Pump
Omni Charlottesville Hotel
Omni Richmond Hotel
Richmond Region Tourism
The Tides Inn
The Virginian Hotel
Widespread Risk Advisors/AP Group and BeneFinder



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peers in recognition of their leadership and achievement, not just to their own association or VSAE, but to the entire association industry.

Scot McRoberts, MPA, IOM
Executive Director
VA Council of CEOs

Scot has led the growth of the Virginia Council of CEOs from 25 initial members to more than 240 today. Utilizing a disciplined best practice model for the Council's peer roundtables and a dogged focus on its core purpose of connecting CEOs for the purpose of sharing experiences, the Council provides a safe haven for CEOs and business owners in Richmond and Charlottesville.

ASSOCIATION STAFF AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The Association Staff Award of Excellence annually recognizes an association staff professional for their contributions to their association and VSAE. Criteria for this award include high integrity, professionalism, peer recognition, a record of success in association management, and consistent leadership and service to VSAE.

Courtney Fleming
Senior Vice President of Education
& Training / Communications
VA Bankers Association

Courtney is passionate about providing interesting perspectives from outside



the industry to help VBA members grow personally and professionally. Courtney is energized by finding new and exciting ways to promote the banking industry and highlight the multitude of ways banks give back to the customers and communities they serve.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The Associate Member Award of Excellence recognizes an Associate member who is distinguished through professionalism and customer service.

Mary Kelly, CMP
Senior Sales Manager
Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront

Mary has had the opportunity to work in different roles and open four hotels in Virginia Beach and Norfolk. She opened the Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront, Hilton Garden Inn, Hilton Norfolk The Main and now the Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront. She has received her Certified Meeting Planner designation and won the National Tourism Award for the City of Virginia Beach.

CAREER SERVICE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The Career Service Award of Excellence is presented to an individual outside of or retired from the field of association management who, through hard work, pleasing personality, and dedication, has provided exceptional service to their association community over the years.

Mark Yardis
Vice President of Operations
Shamin Hotels

Mark's passion lies in serving others—guests, valued associates, and the ownership of Shamin Hotels. A hotelier for 40 years, he believes in customers for life by anticipating guest needs and consistently delivering memorable personalized experiences. Mark has helped choreograph the expansion from 16 hotels to 59 of their owned franchised hotels and liaised with the brand teams at Marriott, Hilton, and IHG to ensure the hotels performed at high levels.

Congratulations to all of this year's award recipients!

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VSAE COMMUNITY SERVICE

On Saturday, December 7, volunteers from the Richmond Area Bicycle Association (RABA) Foundation distributed 477 brand new bikes with helmets to the City of Richmond Christmas Mother and ten surrounding counties.

This distribution effort was the culmination of a yearlong campaign. **Andrew Mann**, RABA Foundation President, raised over \$3,000 at the VSAE Fall Conference. Special thanks to **Rick Eisenman** for \$1,000 in matching funds and to **Monty Dise** from **Asset Protection Group** for matching Rick's donation!

On Saturday, November 2, a crew of volunteers assembled all the bikes. A shout out to **Tracie Grady** from **Exhibits, Inc.** for joining us for the excellent bike build.

Special thanks also goes to **Linné Dilorio** from the **Greater Richmond Convention Center** and her troop of Girl Scouts who made all of the angels that were attached to the bikes.

On Monday, December 2, **Ruggles Service Corporation** had their own bike build. **Andrew Mann**, Ruggles Association Manager, took a check from Ruggles as well as individual donations from his teammates, and bought more bikes for children, which the Ruggles team then assembled.

All of the bikes delivered to Powhatan County Christmas Mother by **Teri Allanson** of **Ruggles Service Corporation** had an angel in memory of **Danny Mitchell**, former VSAE board member and Award of Excellence recipient, who supported Bikes for Kids every year.

Thanks to the time and effort of these VSAE and Ruggles associates, 477 kids across the Richmond area are going to wake up Christmas morning to a new bike with a helmet sitting next to the Christmas tree!



> continued from page 5

RELAY FOR LIFE OF GOOCHLAND

In addition to bidding on a variety of over 130 silent auction items, resulting in a generous donation to this year's charity, attendees participated in both a Grand Prize Live Auction and a 50/50 raffle.

This year's amazing grand prize live auction item, a "Tropical Get-Away to Hawaii" was donated by Associate member **Dominique Holt** with the **Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua**. The prize included four nights at The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua, two nights at the Wailea Beach Resort, Maverick Helicopters Tour for two with a landing in the Hana Rainforest, and two tickets to the Drums of the Pacific Lu'au at Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa. The live auction was conducted by Andy Austin and Anne Grindstaff of Grindstaff Auctions. There were some intense moments between a couple of determined bidders, but our own VSAE President, D. Walton was the lucky winner. He will enjoy six oceanview nights in beautiful Maui. Aloha, D!

Attendees purchased 1 raffle ticket for \$5, 3 raffle tickets for \$10, or 10 raffle tickets for \$20 for a chance to win 50% of the proceeds from the raffle ticket sales. Congratulations to the 50/50 raffle winner, **Denise Creasman**, who won \$505. The other half will benefit VSAE educational activities and the American Cancer Society's **Relay For Life of Goochland**. Denise took it one step further and donated half of her winnings to **Jill's Blankets**, an organization started by VSAE Past President **Mike Ward**, that makes and delivers fleece blankets to those undergoing chemotherapy. Congratulations, Denise, and thank you for your generosity of paying it forward!

FEED MORE: CENTRAL VIRGINIA FOOD BANK

A total of 207 pounds of canned and packaged goods were donated by attendees at the event. The food will go to Feed More and will be prepared and distributed to neighbors in need.

Thank you to all who participated in the 2019 Awards Luncheon and Silent Auction and showed their pride in VSAE!

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THE COUNTDOWN TO RENEWAL SEASON IS ON. ARE YOU READY?

Associations typically operate on one of two membership dues cycles. Either everyone renews on the same date each year, or individual members renew on their join-date anniversary.

In the 2019 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report from Marketing General Incorporated, about half of associations surveyed (48 percent) said they operate on calendar renewals. And Callie Walker, senior inbound marketing specialist at MemberClicks, says peak renewal season usually takes place between December and the end of January.

“It’s a very busy period, between the holidays and end-of-year deadlines,” Walker says. “If you can have the renewal process automated, it can help save your staff a ton of time and make the member engagement feel personalized and urgent.”

Regardless of which dues cycle your association uses, Walker suggests giving members at least three months’ notice to ensure renewals. And she recommends the following three tactics to boost your association’s retention rate.

Use compelling subject lines. If you use an end-of-year renewal cycle, you’re probably already alerting members by email. Are you paying attention to writing short and urgent call-to-action subject lines? “Don’t be afraid to showcase some personality in the subject line,” Walker says. “It helps grab attention and make an impression. Also, you can include a specific date or important deadline to make the email stand out.” She also suggests A/B testing multiple headlines to determine



“If you can have the renewal process automated, it can help save your staff a ton of time and make the member engagement feel personalized and urgent.”

which call-to-action message works best with members.

Focus on ROI. It helps to remind members why their membership is so valuable. A bit of personalization can go a long way toward showing return on the membership investment for individual members. “It’s a really compelling argument if you can show [individual] members what they’ve taken advantage of in the past year,” whether in terms of engagement or savings, Walker says.

If you can’t do this with your current membership software or database system, she says you can make the same ROI pitch in more general terms by demonstrating big wins—whether it was a legislative achievement or record high attendance at the annual meeting, demonstrating the value of your education offerings.

Consider grace periods and reinstatement incentives. Of course, not all members will act in time—particularly if your renewal deadline is during the busy end-of-year rush when so many other things are competing for your members’ attention. That’s why a grace period can help keep retention strong. “It’s a good idea to have that grace period just in case someone forgets to renew,” Walker says.

She suggests keeping members who do lapse on certain email and newsletter communications, as well as extending a reinstatement incentive. “You still want to remain in contact. Maybe send that person content or invite them to an event as a nonmember,” Walker says. “You may even send them a special discount if they rejoin. It’s targeted and extra incentive to renew.”

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SIG UPDATE



The Communications/Marketing SIG had a very productive meeting discussing effective email marketing techniques at the offices of the Independent Insurance Agents of Virginia last month.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Ebner is a senior editor for *Associations Now*. He covers membership, leadership, and governance issues. He can be reached at tebner@asaecenter.org.

INCREASED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT STARTS WITH A STRONG CALL-TO-ACTION

When drafting emails or updating copy on your membership website, the goal—nine times out of ten—is to get your members to take action.

Maybe you want them to register for an event. Or to renew their membership. Or to serve on a committee. Whatever it is, the key to getting them to act is to include a compelling call-to-action (CTA).

What makes a CTA strong? Below are a few tips to keep in mind when drafting yours:

1 Keep it short and simple. When it comes to CTAs, less is definitely more. You want it to be crystal clear what you want the reader to do.

You also want the CTA to be scannable. (Most people scan website pages and emails, after all.) The shorter your CTA, the more comprehensible it will be when scanning. But you also need to...

2 Make it stand out. Speaking of your CTAs being scannable, it's crucial that yours stand out - whether in an email or on your website. To get your CTA to stand out, try putting it in a different color, making it larger/bolder, and/or surrounding it with white space. You want all eyes on that CTA...and quickly too!



3 Mention the benefit (the real appeal). Sometimes, companies and organizations will simply state what they want the reader to do. "Join today!" "Register now!" "Get the free report!" And there's certainly nothing wrong with that. But from time to time, to keep things fresh and prompt action, try including the real benefit in the CTA.

For example, will downloading the report give them insights that will ultimately save them time at work? If so, a compelling CTA might be, "Save time with these industry insights!"

4 Switch it up. You likely have CTAs scattered all throughout your membership website AND in just about every email you send... and that's normal! But to prevent your CTAs from getting stale (in other words, less exciting

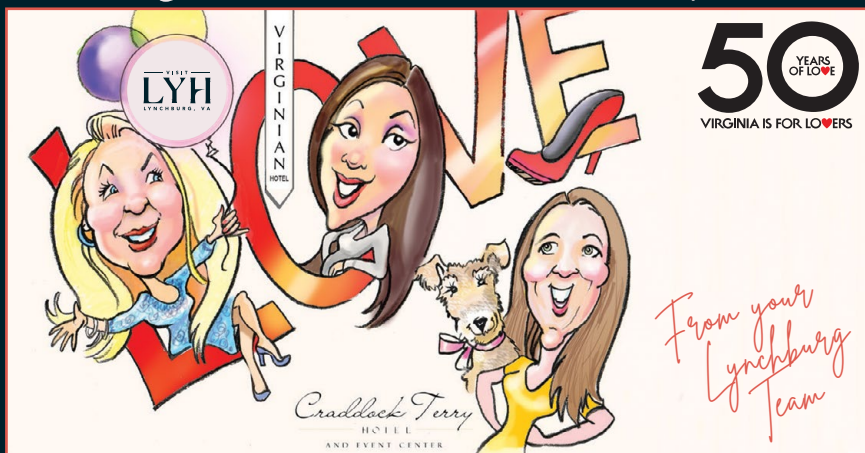
and less compelling), try switching up your verbiage from time to time.

For example, when trying to get someone to join your association, you might switch between, "Join today," "Become a member," "Grow with us," and "Join the [Industry Name] community!"

At the very least, by switching up your approach, you're increasing the likelihood that at least one of your messages will resonate with readers.

5 Repeat. We mentioned how when it comes to CTA copy, less is more. (The shorter, the better.) But when it comes to CTA frequency, more is more. (Repetition is a good thing, especially when you switch up the verbiage of your CTAs.) When sending your renewal reminder emails, don't just have one "Renew here" button at the bottom. Have a link at the top (within your copy) AND a button at the bottom. You never know at what point upon seeing and reading your message that someone is going to be compelled to act, so give them opportunities along the way.

Wishing You a Fun-Filled Holiday Season!



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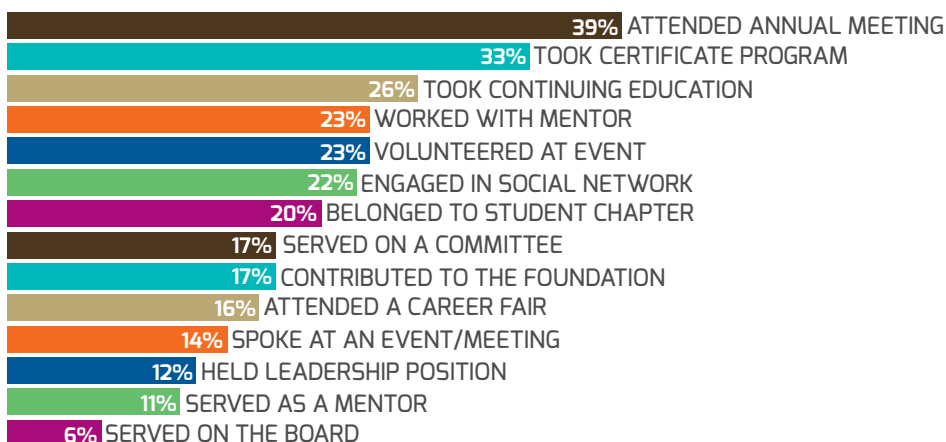
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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WHAT MAKES MEMBERS STICK AROUND?

Community Brands, a leading provider of cloud-based software solutions for associations, nonprofits, schools, and faith-based organizations, surveyed more than 1,000 members of professional membership organizations to better understand member preferences of benefits and what activities drive engagement. Learn more about their Member Engagement and Loyalty Study at communitybrands.com.

HOW MEMBERS ENGAGE WITH ORGANIZATIONS



KEY BENEFITS TO DRIVE RENEWAL AND RETENTION



CURRENT STATE OF MEMBER LOYALTY



are satisfied with their organization.



feel connected to their professional membership organization.



are likely to renew.



VSAE has released its

2020 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Visit vsae.org for all of the 2020 educational and networking opportunities.



2020 Membership Renewal is Available Online

PAYMENT MUST BE MADE BY JANUARY 31 TO REMAIN ACTIVE.

1. Log into vsae.org with your member credentials.
2. Click "Member Center" on the menu bar.
3. Click "Your Organization" under "My Profile."
4. Click "Invoices."
5. Pay online via credit card or print and mail with a check.

QUESTIONS?

Write Tami at tami@vsae.org.

AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH



The **Blackburn Inn** in downtown Staunton is currently under construction with a new Spa and Conference Center opening in early fall of 2020. The Blackburn Spa and Conference Center will offer 9500 square feet of flexible meeting space and full service catering in a renovated historic building next to the hotel.

Congratulations to **Jennifer Boniface** (now Gray), District Manager with **AGCVA** and **Doug Gray**, Executive Director of **VAHP**. They were married on November 23 in Charleston, SC.

Lauren Martin has been promoted to Director of Marketing Strategy & Operations for **VHHA Foundation**, and **Victoria Koebel** has been named Coordinator of Programs & Events for **VHHA Foundation**. **VHHA Foundation** is the 501c3 non-profit affiliate of the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association**.

HEALTH CARE CORNER



AP Group is proud to announce its new partnership with BeneFinder and its president, Lee Biedrycki. AP Group and BeneFinder are well-positioned to

assist with employee benefits, human capital management, and association-based businesses. We look forward to launching our product offering in 2020! Please contact me with any questions.

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SAVE ON EDUCATION!

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For more information, please visit
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PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

Virginia Beach is more than a top Virginia meeting destination with unbeatable service—it's a game-changer in providing excellent meeting experiences. Where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Chesapeake Bay, this premier destination balances coastal charm and metropolitan flair with meeting experiences that create a distinct vibe for meetings of any size and budget.

AMPLE EVENT SPACE

For larger events, the LEED Gold-certified Virginia Beach Convention Center offers a 150,000 square foot column free exhibit hall, more than 29,000 square feet of meeting space and a 31,000 square foot column free ballroom. Innovative designs throughout the building allow for creative meeting experiences and huge cost savings.

WHAT'S NEW?

From well-known national brands to independent properties, Virginia Beach offers a wide variety of lodging options from resort, downtown to retreat type settings. The coastal city's portfolio has gotten an exciting upgrade as the historic **Cavalier Hotel** opened in 2018 after more than \$80-million in renovations and restorations. The much-anticipated opening of this property, a member of Marriott's Autograph Collection, brings unrivaled luxury and historic charm back to the mid-Atlantic for your next event.

In addition to the Cavalier and on the same campus, the hotel's developers quickly began working on their next big project at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront, a 20-story, 305-room **Marriott Oceanfront Hotel**, opening in the spring of 2020. This new hotel will have over 25,000 square feet of programmable meeting space which will include an 11,000 square foot ballroom and spectacular outdoor space with vistas of the oceanfront. In addition, there will be three restaurants on-site, including a beach bar, a sushi bar, and a rooftop restaurant with ocean views.

Delta by Marriott, Virginia Beach Bayfront Suites, is also opening an all-suites product with 292 rooms along the Chesapeake Bay offering a completely

Virginia Beach CVB



different and appealing vibe. This property is projected to open in mid-2020 and offer over 13,000 square feet of meeting space for event business.

SAVOR THE LOCAL FLAVOR

Virginia Beach takes meeting and eating, very seriously. Delegates can enjoy upscale dining at some of Virginia Beach's AAA Four Diamond Restaurants, including Salacia Prime Seafood and Steaks, Terrapin, and Zoës Steak & Seafood all located near the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. Chef-driven menus at the Virginia Beach Convention Center feature hand-cut herbs and vegetables from its onsite garden beds, providing a unique way to savor the local flavor. After a full schedule of meetings and networking, local craft breweries throughout the city welcome groups to quench



thirsts and enjoy lively conversation. This includes The Tarnished Truth Distillery at the Cavalier, the country's first & only distillery located and operating inside a hotel. For a more cosmopolitan vibe, explore the wide range of upscale dining and entertainment offerings at Town Center, located minutes from the Oceanfront.

To learn more about Virginia Beach's meeting and event offerings, please contact our Destination Experts who can bring your next meeting to life! **VBMeetings.com**.

CONTACT:

Sally Noona, CMP

Interim VP of Convention Sales & Marketing
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SURVEY PRIZE WINNER

Congratulations to **Kathy Rabalais**, Executive Director of **VA Water Environment Association**, who is the November evaluation prize winner. Kathy won an overnight stay with breakfast for two at the **DoubleTree by Hilton Richmond-Midlothian**.

Be sure to submit the evaluations that are emailed after every event you attend. Your feedback is valuable in making VSAE events successful.

WELCOME TO VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE

10% OFF PACKAGE AND DOUBLE HILTON HONOR POINTS FOR BOOKING GROUP OF 100 OR MORE PEOPLE BY MARCH 31, 2020.

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