

Congratulations to the Award of Excellence Recipients!



Award of Excellence recipients Steve Yeakel, Carter Lyons, and Randy Cummins, with VSAE Executive Director, Terry Monroe.

On Friday, December 3, over 160 members and guests of the VSAE community came together in-person to enjoy the holiday season at the **2021 Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction** held at the **Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa/Short Pump**.

After an outstanding surf and turf lunch, the highly distinguished VSAE Awards of Excellence were presented to three special and deserving individuals who reflect the best in the association industry. Congratulations to the following recipients:

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Dr. Holsworth to Discuss Virginia's Political Outlook

Join your VSAE colleagues on Friday, January 7 at the **Richmond Marriott Downtown** for an informative discussion from one of Virginia's most recognized political prognosticators.

For the twenty-fifth year, **Dr. Robert Holsworth** of DecideSmart, will present his political insights on the recent gubernatorial election and the upcoming General Assembly, and how they will change the political landscape in not only the Commonwealth, but also in your association and industry.

In addition to speaking at the luncheon, Dr. Holsworth will participate in a panel discussion with VSAE members **Kyle Shreve**, Executive Director of the **VA Agribusiness Council** and **Ellen Davenport, Ph.D., CAE**, Assistant Vice Chancellor of **VA Community College System**.

Dr. Holsworth is a local analyst and retired VCU professor where he taught courses in Virginia politics, American politics, and political theory.

Register at vsae.org/calendar.

DON'T MISS IT!

2022 VIRGINIA POLITICAL OUTLOOK

Friday, January 7

Marriott Richmond Downtown

SCHEDULE

9:30 a.m.

Registration Opens

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Panel Discussion

11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Networking Reception

11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Luncheon and Speaker

REGISTER AT
VSAE.ORG/CALENDAR

UPCOMING EVENTS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4
Seminar Series with Lunch
Omni Richmond Hotel

FRIDAY, MARCH 4
Seminar Series (virtual)

MARCH 10
NOVA Seminar Series
Location TBD

THURSDAY, MARCH 24–
FRIDAY, MARCH 25
Meeting Planner Summit
Renaissance Portsmouth–
Norfolk Waterfront Hotel

FRIDAY, APRIL 1
Seminar Series with Lunch
Hilton Richmond Downtown

VIEW UPCOMING EVENTS AT
VSAE.ORG/CALENDAR

President's Club



Meagan Shroyer
Cavalier Resort



Joe Barrow
Colonial Williamsburg Hotels



Jeff Fork
Embassy Suites by Hilton
Hampton Roads



Michelle Catalla, CMP
Hilton Norfolk The Main



Megan Kidd
Independence Golf Course



Randy Cummins
James River
Audio Visual Services



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Skyler Dowell
Lansdowne



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Thank You, 2022 Partners!

VSAE Partners are Associate members actively engaged and financially committed to supporting VSAE and all its programs and services. These Partners have committed to a level of support for 2022 through their advertising, sponsorship, and scholarship.

The 2022 Partners are committed to helping VSAE realize its strategic goals of strengthening our 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 value to your association and its members. See page 7 for a list of the 2021 Partners who supported VSAE through another challenging year.

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. Visit vsae.org/partner-program for more information.

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Newport News Tourism
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Omni Richmond Hotel
Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk Waterfront Hotel
Richmond Region Tourism
The Virginian Hotel
Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge

INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE



The Spring CAE Study Group begins Tuesday, February 22 and runs for 9 weeks, ending in time for the exam in May. This is a group facilitated by current CAEs. Candidates who fully participated in a VSAE Study Group have had excellent pass rates. The study group is free for VSAE members, but registration is required.

For more information and to register, visit vsae.org/cae-information. If you have any questions, please contact **Terry Monroe**, Executive Director, at terry@vsae.org or (804) 249-2234.

2022 calendar of events

Visit vsae.org/calendar for all of the 2022 educational and networking opportunities.

2022 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 "Mbr Center—My VSAE" on the menu bar, then click on "My Profile."
3. Click "Your Organization"
4. Click "Invoices."
5. Pay online via credit card or print and mail with a check.

QUESTIONS?

Write Tami at tami@vsae.org.

Leadership reflections



Maureen Dingus, CAE
VSAE President

One thing that brings me joy is yoga. I'm not stretchy or graceful or even very focused, but I love dedicating time to settle into my mind and body. The lessons I've learned on the mat can be applied to so many parts of my life, including leadership. Things like being attentive, focused and balanced. Here are some of the lessons I've learned while on my yoga mat.

Focus on your core

Yoga builds stability and strength, not just flexibility. Focused attention on core muscles creates a foundation for growth. A lot of people think "six-pack" when talking about the core. However, some of the most important core muscles are deep, small, and underutilized. Do you know what the core of your organization is? Do you know how to activate your core? It might be time to reassess your strengths and refocus on your core.

Find your own tune

Most people imagine music played in a yoga studio to be very atmospheric, maybe with chanting and chimes. My favorite yogi could not be more different. Yes, she incorporates "traditional" music, but she also creates playlists that show her unique energy, humor, and love of music. The first time I went to one of her classes, I thought "Woah, I didn't know you could do that in yoga." Of course, you can. Why not? Finding your unique voice will cut through a lot of mundane, boring static. Don't be afraid to step outside of the expected and be different.

Practice, not perfect

Yoga is never about the pursuit of perfection. As leaders, we are always changing and growing. Instead of being critical about the lack of personal perfection, we need to be open to unlearning, relearning and practicing new skills, attitudes and behaviors.

Find your edge

When entering a pose, sometimes instructors will tell you to find your edge. Then they caution that if you feel burning, tingling or shooting pain, you need to back off. This isn't about being

Leadership Lessons from the Mat

Namaste (**naa** • muh • stay) is a common greeting in India and in yoga classes. Roughly translated, it means "The light in me honors the light in you."



soft. You still need to push yourself, but you also need to know when to stop. Keep the pressure on, but don't hurt yourself and damage future efforts. Helping others find their edge is key as well. Are you giving good feedback and providing challenging opportunities for your colleagues?

Create a collective experience

Yoga can happen anywhere. It's always a treat to be able to practice solo at home. However, for me, the experience of sharing space, energy and intention with others is very special. In our remote/hybrid work world, it's even more important to think about our collective experience and remember the power of being physically present.

Honor the light

Namaste is a common greeting in India and in yoga classes. Roughly translated, it means "The light in me honors the light in you." It also can be translated to mean "The best in me honors the best in you." Imagine if we approached each interaction with our co-workers, members, politicians, and vendors with a simple internal acknowledgement that we each have a light that deserves honor and respect.

Namaste, my friends.



> Awards, continued from page 1

Steve Yeakel, CAE, President & CEO, **Virginia Association of Community Banks**, was the recipient of the **CEO Award of Excellence**, given to an outstanding association professional in recognition of their leadership and achievement, not just to their own association or VSAE, but to the entire association industry.

"I am deeply appreciative of this award and committed to living out the honor that you have so graciously bestowed upon me," said Steve.

Carter Lyons, CAE, Director of Communications, **Associated General Contractors of Virginia**, was the recipient of the **Association Staff Award of Excellence**, which 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.

"We are built on relationships, and that is what I love the most about what we do everyday and I am so very, very thankful to be a part of it," said Carter.

Randy Cummins, Chief Operating Officer/Co-Founder, **James River Audio Visual Services**, was the recipient of the **Associate Member Award of Excellence**, presented to VSAE member suppliers or vendors who have distinguished themselves through their leadership, professionalism, and customer service.

"VSAE has been very important to us, and we have learned a lot together, especially over the past 18 months," said Randy.

This year's online Silent Auction featured over 85 items, including getaways at top destinations across Virginia and the Southeast, wine and beer packages, specialty goodie baskets, golf outings, outdoor adventures, professional services, books, tools, and much more.

In addition to the Silent Auction, two items were auctioned live at the luncheon by a lively and entertaining auctioneer, Ernie Rogers of Blacktie Benefit Auctions. Congratulations to **Jolene Boatwright** for winning the "Explore Charleston, South Carolina" package and to **Wilmer Stoneman** for winning the "Hawks Cay Resort in the Florida Keys" package.

A portion of both the silent and live auction proceeds benefit this year's charity, chosen by the Community Service Committee, the **Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Virginia (LLSV)**. Katie Bolton of LLSV shared with attendees the great work of their organization and thanked VSAE for its contribution to their efforts.

Attendees purchased tickets for a chance to win 50% of the proceeds from the raffle ticket sales. Congratulations to the 50/50 raffle winner, **Glenn Lehman**. Glenn is the Director of Sales with the Teneo Hospitality Group in Lewisburg, West Virginia and is not



a VSAE member. However, he has agreed to use his \$575 winnings to purchase a VSAE membership for 2022! The other half of the raffle proceeds will benefit VSAE educational activities and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Virginia.

We appreciate all of those who donated the whopping 153 pounds of canned and packaged goods that were collected during the event. The food will go to Feed More and will be prepared and distributed to neighbors in need.

Thanks to everyone who made this year's Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction such a great success, including the Silent Auction Task Force, the Community Services Committee, the Awards Committee, Eisenman & Associates staff, the Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa/Short Pump, and of course, our donors and bidders!

Why "Empathetic Leaders" Sometimes Aren't

Empathy is a virtue in the C-suite. But listening also means being prepared to act on what you've heard.

Leaders are routinely called upon to be more empathetic, especially these days. But what do we mean by empathy in the workplace, exactly?

It's a little more nuanced than it's often depicted. But before getting into that, it's worth showing why the matter is so urgent. The Empathy in Business Survey released last month by Ernst & Young (EY) Consulting delivers a handful of striking data points. More than half of the sample of full- and part-time American workers (54 percent) left a job because "their boss wasn't empathetic to their struggles at work." Moreover, 79 percent of respondents said that empathetic leadership played an important role in reducing turnover, and 88 percent said it increases loyalty.

All of which prompted EY executive Steve Payne to say in a statement that the survey shows that "empathy is not only a nice-to-have, but the glue and accelerant for business transformation."

But again—what does "empathetic leadership" look like? The EY survey demonstrates less of a consensus on this point. Respondents spoke about qualities like fairness, openness, and handling difficult conversations, but no one quality was important to a majority of respondents. Moreover, those qualities are very much open to interpretation. An employee on the winning end of a promotion may be eager to talk about a leader's "fairness," but the decision may not seem so fair to others. Difficult conversations, almost by definition, are divisive; it's unlikely that everybody will be heard in equal measure, despite a leader's best efforts.

No question, CEOs see the importance in putting in that best effort, in the face of labor

"If all your listening sessions pivot to discussions about job performance, what, exactly, is being listened to?"

shortages amid the Great Resignation. A recent roundup of CEO comments at *Inc.* about how best to lead is revealing in how much communication and listening are privileged. LogMeIn CEO Bill Wagner's comments are typical of the sentiment: "I host listening sessions and regularly survey employees to check in with their remote-centric experience, mental health, and how we are living our values... We have evolved our culture to focus on what means the most to our employees, both in and out of work."

This is good, as far as it goes. But listening is one thing, and what's done with what you heard is another. A smart, critical piece in *Time* magazine from July shed some light on the idea that workplace empathy is too often used as just another means to get employees into compliance, creating an environment where organizations "implore workers to be honest and vulnerable about their needs, then implicitly or explicitly punish them for it." Is it helpful to encourage employees to speak out about mental health, the article suggests, if the company health plan then fails to provide the kind of services employees seek? And if all those ballyhooed listening sessions have a funny way of pivoting to discussions about improving job performance, what, exactly, is being listened to?

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Association offices have day-to-day work to do, and they likely also have internal challenges to address, especially these days. But being an empathetic leader requires keeping both of those issues in balance. The Time story points to the need to think beyond a wellness initiative or a one-off DEI seminar when it comes to empathy; rather, workplaces can strive toward eroding monoculture, training up managers to do their job well, and giving more flexibility to workers.

It's a good thing that leaders talk up empathy more these days—culturally, we're often in short supply of it. But before doing that talking, it's important to know going into your listening session what you're listening for—and how you intend to act on what you've heard.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mark Athitakis, a contributing editor for *Associations Now*, has written on nonprofits, the arts, and leadership for a variety of publications. He is a coauthor of *The Dumbest Moments in Business History* and hopes you never qualify for the sequel.

THINGS TO DO IN '22!

Meeting Planner Summit | March 24–25
Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk Waterfront Hotel

Annual Conference | May 1–3
Lansdowne Resort

AMC Summit | July 12
Omni Charlottesville

CEO & Senior Staff Retreat | September 12–13
The Cavalier

Fall Conference & Expo | October 5–6
Greater Richmond Convention Center and Hilton Richmond Downtown

Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction | December 2
Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa Short Pump



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Participants

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LET'S RECAP

CEO SIG

The CEO SIG had a great conversation in November about plans for the group in 2022. It was decided that members really benefit from open dialogue among CEOs, and feel that just getting together, virtually or in person, is valuable to them. We will be exploring joint meetings with other SIGs, as well as targeted topic discussions to add to our schedule. The very first joint meeting was with the Senior Staff SIG (see recap below).

Meeting Planner SIG

The Meeting Planners had a small but mighty SIG meeting on November 18. Everyone shared their successes and struggles from the Fall 2021 event season. The good news? There were more successes than struggles! Based on everyone's input, we developed a list of potential topics for the 2022 Meeting Planner Summit that will take place March 24-25 at the Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk Waterfront Hotel.

AMC SIG

The AMC SIG met on November 19 over Zoom and had a very productive discussion. Each attendee shared recent challenges they were facing with their AMCs and their association clients. Some topics of discussion included staffing and hiring, meeting and conference coordination, scope creep and client board relations, and COVID fallout. The SIG members are excited to move through the holidays and get back together early in the new year. Members of the AMC SIG, please feel free to contact chairs Daniel Whitehead and Jon Williams with discussion topics you want to see at future meetings, or any other ways the SIG can bring value to its members and their AMC practices.

CEO & Senior Staff SIG (combined)

On December 8, the Senior Staff & CEO SIGs teamed up for "Finding Governance Balance and a New Way Forward," a conversation about the changes we've all faced in the past two years, and specifically the impact of those changes on our governance structures. Led by Mario Stravlo, IOM, CAE, owner of Association Development Services (ADS), we discussed which changes are temporary, while others may be here to stay. This was a great opportunity for those who participated to share our experiences, ask questions of one another, and identify common trends that are emerging across the associations we all serve.



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for the January Issue**
December 22

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AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH



Kelly Ann Gull, CAE, has been promoted to Director of Learning at the **National Society of Professional Engineers**.

Mary Kelly, CMP, is now the Director of Sales & Marketing at the Glass Light Hotel and Gallery, Autograph Collection, in downtown Norfolk.

Scot McRoberts, Executive Director of the **VA Council of CEOs**, was named by *Virginia Business* magazine as one of the "100 People to Meet in 2022" in Virginia. McRoberts was listed in the "Go Getters" category described as "High achievers all, these Virginians are well-rounded leaders in their fields and their communities,

sharing their expertise and moving the needle for growth and progress."

The **VA Society of Certified Public Accountants** is partnering with 12 states to expand its business education to include ethics and considerations around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Their course, *Ethical Considerations in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, is part of a new suite of tailored business ethics offerings for CPAs and finance, accounting, and other business professionals. The course is designed to create a foundation of DEI in the workplace and explore ethics around unconscious bias, decision making, and critical thinking.

Wishing you and yours a
Joyous Holiday Season

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