

From: Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce <info@vpcc.org>
Sent: Wednesday, December 11, 2024 8:00 AM
To: Bellamy, Mark <bellamy@yorkcounty.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] This Month in The Catalyst: The State of the Chamber

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A Message from the President

Like many of you, the Chamber staff is speeding toward a well-deserved holiday break. In the past seven days we have hosted two of the Chamber's largest events of the year. The Hampton State of the City was held at the Hampton Roads Convention Center and was attended by nearly 700 people – the largest crowd ever. Outgoing Mayor, Donnie Tuck, gave a very comprehensive presentation on the state of the city that he has led since 2016. His humble servant leadership will be missed as he moves on and passes the reins to his Vice Mayor, Jimmy Gray. Mr. Gray is well prepared for the job with 44 years of local government experience, including eight years on the Hampton City Council, a stint as Assistant City Manager and six years as the Hampton Fire Chief. Best wishes to Mayor Tuck, and welcome to Mayor-elect Gray!

On December 10th, we hosted our Annual Meeting, at which we report on the State of the Chamber, elect new directors and officers and say farewell to departing Board Members.

Welcome to our new Board members:

- **Ms. Belinda Donavant**, [Canon Virginia](#)
- **Ms. Brooke Dunkum**, [Riverside Health System](#)
- **Ms. DaShana Kemp-Garnett**, [HII - Newport News Shipbuilding](#)
- **Ms. Rebecca Kleinhample**, [Virginia Living Museum](#)
- **Mr. Tom Kramer**, [Christopher Newport University](#)

- **Mr. Casey Roberts**, [Versability Resources](#)

Welcome to our new Executive Committee members:

- **Mr. Tom Kramer**, [Christopher Newport University](#)
- **Ms. Mallory Tuttle**, [Virginia Tech Newport News Center](#)

Farewell to the following **Board members** who are departing after two terms of committed service to the Board and their community:

- **Mr. Mark Duncan**, [Riverside Health System](#)
- **Dr. Latitia McCane**, [The Apprentice School](#)
- **Mr. Keith Roots**, [Christopher Newport University](#)

The Virginia Peninsula Chamber would like to say ***Fair Winds and Following Seas*** to these great community leaders who have retired or announced their retirement in 2024. Thanks for all you have done to make our Peninsula a great place to live, work and play.

- **Jennifer Boykin** – [Newport News Shipbuilding](#)
- **Bill Downey** – [Riverside Health System](#)
- **Karen Dutro** – [Network Peninsula](#)
- **Barry Duval** – [Virginia State Chamber](#)
- **Robert Duvall** – [Virginia Natural Gas](#)
- **Bill Goggins** – [Clancy and Theys](#)
- **Janet Green** – [Habitat for Humanity](#)
- **Billy Hobbs Jr** – [Hampton City Council](#)
- **Karen Joyner** – [Virginia Peninsula Foodbank](#)
- **Steve Kast** – [United Way Virginia Peninsula](#)
- **Mike Monteith** – [Peninsula Community Foundation](#)

- **Glenn Oder** – [Fort Monroe Foundation](#)
- **Donnie Tuck** – [Mayor, Hampton](#)
- **Karen Wilds** – [NN Redevelopment and Housing Authority](#)
- **Alan Witt** – [CNU Luter School of Business](#)
- **Pat Woodbury** – [Newport News City Council](#)

That's all for now. Here's hoping that you all have a peaceful and blessed holiday season. Our jobs give us structure and purpose in life, but our families and friends are what give us meaning. Please take a breather and enjoy your holidays. Can't wait to see you all in 2025!

Bob McKenna
President/CEO,
[Virginia Peninsula Chamber](#)

This year, at our **Annual Meeting**, we proudly presented awards in three distinct categories: **Small Business of the Year**, **Non-Profit Business of the Year**, and **Chamber Ambassador of the Year**. These awards are a celebration of the heart and soul of our Chamber—the innovative and industrious spirit of our small businesses, the transformative work of our non-profit organizations, and the unsung dedication of our Chamber Ambassadors.

Small Business of the Year

Tommy Garner Air Conditioning and Heating

[Tommy Garner Air Conditioning and Heating](#) exemplifies excellence in their industry by providing clients with unparalleled service. Their pride in their work, team, and community shines throughout their organization. Customers consistently praise their expert knowledge, efficiency, and unmatched customer service. Beyond their professional work, Tommy Garner is deeply committed to service through volunteerism, fundraising, and sponsorships. Their efforts benefit organizations such as The Boys and Girls Club of the Virginia Peninsula, the Virginia Living Museum, and Christopher Newport University. Whether it's enhancing accessibility for an employee's disabled friend or supporting local causes, they continually go above and beyond to make a positive impact.

Non-Profit Business of the Year

Habitat for Humanity Peninsula and Greater Williamsburg

[Habitat for Humanity](#) provides impactful leadership and action by addressing one of the most critical challenges in our community: affordable housing. Recently, they made headlines for constructing three 3D-printed homes in our region. They also operate three retail locations, employ over 100 people, advocate for housing policy changes in Richmond, and run repair programs in Hampton and Newport News. Under the guidance of Janet Green, their long-time CEO, Habitat has transformed countless lives. Janet, who was recently honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award, will be retiring at the end of the year, leaving a remarkable legacy.

Chamber Ambassador of the Year

Mr. Tyler Neese

Our Chamber Ambassadors are the first point of contact for new members, assist at events, and represent the Chamber with enthusiasm and

professionalism. They embody the Chamber's mission and vision while fostering meaningful connections. Tyler Neese exemplifies these qualities and more. Organized, committed, personable, and wise beyond his years, Tyler has become an invaluable asset to our Chamber. We are honored to call him both a friend and an ambassador.

We, as a Chamber and community, extend our deepest gratitude to these remarkable individuals and organizations for their outstanding contributions. **Congratulations to this year's awardees!** Your dedication inspires us all.

Photography by [Heather Hughes Photography](#)

In 2024, we had a brand-new strategic plan, developed by our [Board of Directors](#), to guide us and to hold us accountable for specific outcomes. As part of the process, we identified three main lines of effort that defined the work that we do and the value that we intend to bring to our members and our community. We had significant success in each of these areas: **Leadership Development, Collaboration and Advocacy**. Our efforts were outlined by the plan and guided by the following Board committees: **Governance, Membership, Leadership, Business Education, Public Policy, Finance, Marketing and Military Affairs**. Here are just some quick data points that help to demonstrate our success in a tangible way:

- We welcomed **143 new member businesses**
- Our **retention rate** was **88%**
- We held **119 events** and had over **10,000 registered guests**
- We celebrated the **40th Anniversary of our LEAD Peninsula** program and graduated 45 participants

- We introduced two new significant “State of” events, the **State of the Federal Labs** and the **State of the Military**
- We hosted three more **Rising Tide events**
- We created and introduced an Advanced Leadership Development course, **LEAD Higher**, in partnership with **Christopher Newport University**
- We re-imagined, restructured and renamed our Bi-weekly Newsletter, now called ***The Catalyst*** (you’re reading it right now)
- We expanded our **Public Policy Advocacy** efforts at the local, state and federal levels

So much more to tell, but not enough room here. If you’d like to know more, check out our **Annual Report** below. Or stop by for an autographed copy and a cup of coffee!

Keith Roots

VPC Executive Committee

Keith Roots is the *Senior Associate Vice President for University Advancement* at [*Christopher Newport University*](#). He oversees gift planning, scholarships, and endowment fundraising. He has 30 years of experience in higher education, having served in admissions, central administration, fund raising, and college access roles at [*Longwood University*](#) and the [*University of Virginia*](#). He is an Eagle Scout, member of the [*Oyster Point Rotary Club*](#) in Newport News, church

deacon, board member of the [Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce](#), and trustee of the Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity Endowment.

Keith has a bachelor of arts degree in government from the University of Virginia, and a master's in educational psychology from the [University of Texas at Austin](#).

He is married to his best friend, Ashleigh, and they have five children.

Latitia McCane

VPC Board of Directors

Latitia D. McCane is *Director of Education* for [The Apprentice School at Newport News Shipbuilding](#), a division of Huntington Ingalls Industries, located in Newport News, Va. Named to this position in 2018, McCane is responsible for overall leadership, vision and strategic direction of craft training, academic delivery, student services, accreditation and recruitment for a student body of 800 in addition to staff and faculty. The school, founded in 1919, has produced more than 10,000 graduates with four to eight year apprentice program certificates.

McCane earned doctoral degrees in urban higher education administration and education administration from [Jackson State University](#) and Lacrosse University. She holds graduate and undergraduate degrees in organic chemistry and chemistry from the [University of Alabama](#) and [Texas Southern University](#). McCane is a member of the [CIVIC Leadership Institute's](#) Class of 2019 in Norfolk, Va. She is active in the community and serves on the board of directors

for the [Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce](#) and [New Horizons Foundation](#).

Virginia's Innovative Peninsula

By Bob McKenna, Virginia Peninsula Chamber

An Innovation District is a designated area within a region that fosters collaboration between businesses, research institutions, and startups to drive innovation, technology, and economic development. The economic benefits of becoming an Innovation District include attracting investment, creating high-quality jobs, boosting local entrepreneurship, and accelerating economic growth through the commercialization of new technologies and the development of talent. This synergy promotes sustained economic resilience and competitiveness on a global scale. Our Peninsula includes a robust array of assets that can serve as a solid foundation for an Innovation District.

- [Jefferson Lab](#) and [NASA Langley Research Center](#) make us a Research and Development Juggernaut.
- We are an Academic Excellence & Workforce Powerhouse.
- We are in the midst of an increased Focus on Entrepreneurship and Innovation.
- We have a significant Industrial component, led by [Newport News Shipbuilding](#) which is the largest industrial employer in the Commonwealth.
- [Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center at Tech Center](#) is designed to be a hub of innovation and partnerships.

- The ongoing transportation infrastructure improvements can facilitate movement of goods and talent – and that’s not even mentioning the great potential of the [NN-Williamsburg airport](#).
- We are home to four significant Military Installations and reps from six branches bring additional strengths.

Together, these assets create a synergistic environment where collaboration can thrive, fostering innovation, attracting talent, and driving economic growth in the district.

By promoting partnerships and leveraging these strengths, the Peninsula has great potential as a vibrant Innovation District.

More to come.

Local Government Update

By Chris Davidson, Government Relations Consultant

The Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce has finalized its 2025 Legislative Priorities, reflecting the collective insights of chamber members, the Public Policy Committee, the Board of Directors, and key community stakeholders. These priorities, which were shaped through three collaborative roundtables and validated during our recent legislative meet-and-greet, set a clear agenda for the upcoming “short” session of the General Assembly, beginning January 8,

2025. Here is a summary of our most important positions, and a copy of our complete 2025 legislative agenda...

On Wednesday, November 13, 2024 the LEAD Peninsula Class of 2025 held their **History, Hospitality, and Tourism Day**. The day began at [Fort Monroe's Visitor and Education Center](#) with a presentation by Acting CEO, John Hutcheson, and a representative from the [National Park Services](#). Following the presentations, Dr. Françoise Bonnell and members of her team gave the group a guided Casemate tour.

The next stop of the day was the [Hampton Virginia Aquaplex](#); where the group received a tour of the facility, led by General Manager, Todd Fizer. Following the tour, Jay Richardson, Senior Group Sales Manager for Sports at the [Hampton Convention and Visitor Bureau](#) gave a presentation on the impacts of Sports Tourism on the Peninsula, region, and beyond. Here the class also heard from Mary Fugere, Director of the Hampton Convention and Visitors Bureau and Hampton Marketing Outreach, on the [Coastal Virginia Tourism Alliance](#) and [VA250](#).

To close the session, the group heard from Rebecca Kleinhample, Executive Director of the [Virginia Living Musuem](#), who shared the unique founding of the Museum and the current exciting growth phase. Katie Begley, Advancement Director, provided the class with a "sneak peek" tour of the new "[Wild Care](#)

[Center](#)" Veterinary Hospital and Nutrition Center. There the group learned about the care of over 900 native species on campus and educational programs that serve over 32,000 students each year. Special guests included Lyn Heller, Senior Director, Living Exhibits and a few "Animal Ambassadors".

A special thank you to our **History, Hospitality, and Tourism Day**

Sponsors:

- Program Day Sponsors: [GuernseyTingle](#) and [Hampton Convention and Visitors Bureau](#)
- Supporting Sponsor: [Fort Monroe Authority](#)

The [LEAD Peninsula Alumni Network \(LPAN\)](#) hosted its **Annual Holiday Party** on Thursday, December 5th at [Tradition Brewing Company](#) in Newport News. The 38 attendees celebrated the holidays by participating in a cookie swap, an ugly sweater contest, and a team trivia competition.

Saladworks believes in fueling the “Originality” of our Team Members, Guests, Business Partners and Communities; giving everyone the opportunity to live their best life. They strive to be Original in everything they do, so they can deliver 'WOW!' Moments for their guests everywhere a Saladworks is

enjoyed. Check out their newest location in City Center at 701 Mariners Row, Suite 110 | Newport News, VA 23606.

To our valued members:

For the first time since 2007, we are implementing a slight increase in annual membership fees - less than 5%. This adjustment reflects rising costs and our commitment to delivering outstanding service and value. **Thank you for your continued support!**

Inspired by a colleague? Motivated by an organization? Want to celebrate the accomplishment of a company? Our community grows stronger when we connect with each other's stories. We'd love to feature those Virginia Peninsula champions you know in an upcoming edition of The Catalyst. Hit the button below to **NOMINATE A CHAMPION**. All you have to do is submit their name and contact information and a little summary of why you think they should be featured and our team will take it from there.

Please join us in welcoming the following new members - our future CHAMPIONS - to the Virginia Peninsula Chamber!

- [Saladworks](#)

- [Crown Jewels Consulting International LLC](#)
- Covan World-Wide Moving
- [Addy's Colors, Inc.](#)
- [Data-Tronix, Inc.](#)
- [USA Custom Made Cabinets and Refinishing LLC](#)
- ASM Global
- [Moore 2 Sign Mobile Notary Service](#)

Contact Us:

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VIRGINIA PENINSULA CHAMBER'S 2024 ANNUAL PARTNERS

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