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President's Corner Fall/Winter 2025



Greetings Old Dominion Chapter Members

WOW! I can't believe how the year has flown by! We have had some amazing chapter education sessions so far this year and would love to see everyone at our next monthly chapter meeting. January will be held at Virginia Crossings Hotel & Conference Center, Tapestry Collection by Hilton and on Hotel Revenue Management.

Chapter Member Spotlight – We're excited to start recognizing our amazing members for everything you do—not just for the chapter, but also in your professional and personal lives!

Lorna Battles will be highlighting member achievements on our social media and in our Chapter Newsletter.

So, tell us, have you recently received an award at work? Welcomed a new baby or grandbaby? Maybe even have a pet who's won a prize? Whatever it is, we want to celebrate with *you*!

NEC in Williamsburg – It's hard to believe June is just around the corner—but it'll be here before we know it! The National Education Conference is happening right in our own backyard, and we want to have a strong chapter presence.

If you didn't get a chance to apply for a national scholarship, don't worry, the chapter will be offering scholarships as well!

Keep an eye on your email after the first of the year for the official announcement and application details.

Remember, scholarships are open to both planners and suppliers—so don't miss out!

Education Ideas – It's never too early to start planning next year's education programs! Have you recently seen or heard an amazing speaker? Or do you have valuable experiences you'd like to share with our members?

If so, we'd love to hear from you—please reach out to **Andrew Marks** at education@olddominionsgmp.org with your ideas or suggestions.

In closing, I'd like to wish each of you and your families a wonderful, joyful, and safe holiday season.

Valerie Gardner, CMP, CGMP
President
Old Dominion Chapter

Committee Reports

Hospitality Committee

Maria Harless

JOIN OUR HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE!

Be the friendly face that welcomes attendees at the registration desk! This is a great opportunity to meet new people, network, and make a positive first impression.

We'd love to have you on the team!

Membership Committee

Maria Harless

Remember to keep membership information up to date. If you have a change in your contact information, you can go online at www.sgmp.org and update your information. If your organization has a change in personnel and the membership changes to another person, fill in a membership change form and submit it directly to SGMP.

You can find membership information on Old Dominion's website at www.olddominionsgmp.org under the membership tab, or feel free to contact us at Membership@olddominionsgmp.org.

MEMBERSHIP COUNTS!

Help us achieve and maintain a 50/50 ratio by recruiting new members and renewing your own membership on time!

**Old Dominion Membership Report
As of December 2025**

TOTAL CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP: 67

Total Planners	38
Total Suppliers	23
Retired	6
Current Ratio	56.71%

You can easily renew your membership online at www.sgmp.org by logging in the Members Only section.

Quarterly Review of Chapter Budget

Our chapter's budget is doing well overall. The chapter's budget is on track for meeting projected income and expenses for this fiscal year.

Expenses and income year to date are as follows:

- Funds made Year to Date = \$1,359.23
- Projected income = \$12,150
- Fundraisers forecasted to meet projected income are
 - 50/50
 - CVB basket silent auction
 - March Conference Registration and sponsorships
- The chapter has already made \$3,500 in sponsorship funds
- Expenses Year to Date = \$2,470.33

Quarterly Treasurer's Report

September = \$10,577.15

October = \$10,844.27

November = \$11,328.74

Charlottesville Albemarle CVB

c/o Teresa Lamb

P.O. Box 178

Charlottesville, VA 22902

Communications Committee

Angela McGrath, CGMP

Are you looking to be involved with the Old Dominion Chapter? Do you have social media skills

Consider joining the Communications Committee!

Contact Angela McGrath for volunteer opportunities.

Fundraising Committee

Jo Slack, CGMP, CTIS

Congratulations Pam Spratley!

Pam was the winner of December's 50/50 drawing!

The other half of the funds will go towards education scholarships!



Local Chapter News

September 2025 Chapter Meeting

From Observation to Action: Discover Your Role in Our Chapter

Cheryl Knight, Richmond Marriott Downtown

As the end of Summer is approaching, new beginnings are happening at our SGMP Old Dominion Chapter. The September meeting offered a unique learning approach with a "fishbowl" observation of a live board meeting showcasing our new 2025/2026-chapter leadership. New and old chapter members were given the chance to gain knowledge of how the Board conducts their meeting, and what key decisions and topics the Board is working on in support of the chapter. At the conclusion of their meeting, there was a round robin exchange, where the various Board members/committee chairs stopped at each table to give an elevator speech to share the purpose of their committee, and to solicit members to join their committee. Overall, a great kickstart to a new chapter year!



Congratulations to Jeremiah Dillon!

He was awarded Old Dominion Chapter's **Planner of the Year** in June 2025 and was able to accept his award at our September meeting. Presented by outgoing President, Angela McGrath.



October 1, 2025

Old Dominion Chapter Meeting

Amy Overstreet, Visit Virginia Beach

Mapping Your Goals

A Whole-Brain Approach to Professional Success

Karen A. Meister, Training Facilitator

VCU The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute

Our October meeting introduced **Brian Mayne's Goal Mapping**, a simple seven-step process that combines logic and creativity to establish your goals. Participants learned how to define clear goals, set priorities, visualize success, identify their "why," and create action steps with support systems in place.

By utilizing your "right brain" logic and "left brain" creativity, you can combine structured planning with creative visualization to help clarify what you want, set priorities, and stay motivated.

For those who want to continue the process, Goal Maps can also be created online for free at **GoalMapping.com** making it easy to keep refining and refreshing your personal success roadmap.



Community Outreach Committee

Pam Spratley

Extending Care Through the Season

Celebrate the Spirit: This Christmas season, our chapter is embraced the joy of giving by supporting C2Adopt with a Teen Gift Card Drive. By providing gift cards, we empower teens in foster care to choose items that reflect their personalities, interests, and everyday needs — ensuring they feel seen and celebrated during the holidays.

Broaden the Impact: Our commitment doesn't end with Christmas. In the coming months, we will also support Ronald McDonald House, an organization that provides comfort and care to families with children receiving medical treatment. Together, we'll assemble grab and go bags and family meal kits, offering nourishment and convenience to families navigating challenging times.

Our Chapter's Role:

- Contributing gift cards for teens in foster care through C2Adopt at the December meeting.
- Volunteer time and resources to prepare meal kits and grab and go bags for Ronald McDonald House families beginning in January.
- Share updates and stories that highlight the impact of our collective efforts monthly.

Closing: These initiatives reflect the heart of our chapter: equity, compassion, and community. By joining together, we can make the holiday season brighter and continue to extend care into the new year.

Membership – Don't forget the National Campaign for membership drive.

[Step Up to the Plate Challenge: *Membership Pennant Race*](#)

From July 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026, SGMP will run a national membership campaign awarding both individuals and chapters for recruiting members to SGMP. SGMP is the only society dedicated to the specific needs of government meeting planners, and we want to reward our members for spreading the word!

November 5, 2025

Old Dominion Chapter Meeting

Amy Overstreet, Visit Virginia Beach

Emergency Preparedness Jeopardy with Suzi Silverstein

Our recent educational session brought an engaging twist to a critical topic as attendees played a lively round of **Emergency Preparedness Jeopardy** led by Suzi Silverstein. The game-style format made learning both interactive and memorable, while still delivering essential information every meeting professional should know. Participants answered questions from key preparedness categories including **Personal Preparedness, Weather or Not, Pre-Incident Planning, Meeting Planner Tasks, and Emergency Operations Plans.**

Suzi also highlighted important tips on overall emergency readiness—such as building emergency kits and knowing where to access reliable resources like **Ready.gov.**

Additional discussion touched on real-world scenarios, including active-shooter drills and natural events like derechos, underscoring the importance of having well-rounded plans in place.

The session was a fun and informative reminder that preparedness isn't just a best practice—it's an essential part of safeguarding our attendees, colleagues, and communities.



Professional Development

National SGMP Webinars Are Ready to Watch On-Demand

Missed the previous webinars?

Log in to the members-only site to watch at your own pace. You may view all SGMP recorded webinars on our video library.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

- January 7, 2026
- February 4, 2026
- March 3-4, 2026



The Certified Government Meeting Professional designation ("CGMP") is designed for planners and suppliers whose work is governed by the rules and regulations of the federal government.

Individuals who have earned their CGMP have obtained the highest designation available that is specifically for government meeting professionals.

From the National SGMP Headquarters

SGMP Event Calendar
(National Headquarters)

Government Connections Magazine



SGMP Mission & Objectives

Our mission is to enhance and promote the knowledge and expertise of government meeting professionals. Our objectives are to improve the quality of, and promote the cost-effectiveness of, government meetings. SGMP was founded in 1981 and is the only national organization in the U.S. dedicated exclusively to government meetings.

Old Dominion Chapter members:

Watch your email for Chapter scholarship applications from the Old Dominion Chapter. We will award scholarships for active members to attend the Chapter's Education conference at the Founders Inn and separate full and partial scholarships to the SGMP National Education Conference in Williamsburg in June 2026.

Chapter Board & Events

June 2025-June 2027
Old Dominion Chapter
Board of Directors

President
Valerie Gardner, CMP, CGMP

Second Vice President
Andrew Marks, CGMP

Secretary
Angela McGrath

Treasurer
Teresa Lamb

Planner Director
Pamela Spratley, CGMP

Supplier Director
Maria Harless

Supplier Director
Jo Slack, CGMP

Immediate Past President
Joyce Fogg

2026 Chapter Education Conference



The Founders Inn Virginia Beach, VA
March 3-4, 2026

The 2026 National Education Conference

Williamsburg, VA

June 9-11, 2026

Registration is now open.

Attending NEC 2025

By Valerie Gardner, CMP, CGMP

Attending NEC offers a strong combination of professional development and high-value networking. The education program is designed to help you grow your career by learning new skills, gaining industry insights, and staying updated on best practices. Beyond the sessions, you'll connect with attendees from across the country—people who understand your challenges, share similar experiences, and can offer fresh perspectives or practical solutions. Below is a brief synopsis of the sessions I attended, highlighting the key takeaways, insights, and personal reflections from each program.

Leading the AI Revolution was the opening session for the conference. The session offered valuable insight into how AI is transforming the world—especially the event-planning industry. The speaker delivered the topic with a light-hearted, engaging style that made the content both informative and enjoyable.

Smarter Meetings: Practical AV and AI Tools for Government Planners - The session contained a large amount of information, and at times it felt overwhelming. While the speaker clearly aimed to share valuable insights, I left feeling more uncertain about the practical benefits of AI and AV tools rather than more informed.

2025 Event Trends – Event trends are constantly evolving, and this session highlighted two major forces shaping the industry today:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** How it can streamline planning, personalize attendee experiences, and support more efficient workflows.
- **Audio-Visual (AV) Innovation:** Ways to integrate modern AV tools to enhance engagement, improve production quality, and create more immersive program elements.

Beating Burnout – Balancing work and everyday life is a challenge many of us face. This session offered helpful insight into why maintaining that balance is essential to avoiding burnout. It was engaging, fun, and energizing—yet it also reminded me that this is an area I continue to struggle with daily.

Mastering Memory for Professional Success & Peak Performance – This was my favorite session. As a meeting planner, keeping track of countless details is a skill that must continually be refined. I appreciated learning a new approach that uses repetition and association—connecting what you already know with what you're trying to learn—to help strengthen memory and improve accuracy.

Made For Greatness: The 7 Habits That Unlock the Greatness Within – The conference closed with dynamic speaker Adam White. The session expanded on the seven habits that can help us uncover strengths we may not realize we possess and offered guidance on how to apply those strengths in practical, everyday situations.

- | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Habit 1 - Take the Lead | Habit 2 - Prepare for Greatness | Habit 3 - Develop Discipline | Habit 4 - Think We, not Me |
| Habit 5 - Focus on Achievement Instead of Activity | Habit 6 - Cultivate Gratitude | Habit 7 - Defy the odds | |