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Greetings Old Dominion Chapter Members

What did that groundhog say about winter??? How did Michigan's weather end up in Virginia. I can't be alone when I say it's been a wild winter!

Chapter Meeting Spotlight – Don't forget to reach out to Lorna Battles if you have something has happened in your life that we need to celebrate. We'd love to have your accomplishments shared with the chapter.

April Chapter Meeting – It's game time! Come put your SGMP and CGMP knowledge to the test, you probably know more than you think. We look forward to seeing you in April at The Williamsburg Lodge.

NEC in Williamsburg – Be sure to register for the upcoming National Conference in June! Williamsburg is an easy trip for most of us—especially for me, since it's just down the road from where I work. I can't recommend it enough; attending an NEC is always a fantastic opportunity for both professional development and meaningful networking.

We hope to see everyone at our upcoming chapter meetings. Sending WARM wishes to everyone.

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 March 2026

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.

Chapter Scholarship to the National Education Conference

By Joyce Fogg

The Scholarship Committee awarded seven scholarships to the National Education Conference in Williamsburg in June.

Partial scholarships were awarded to:

Lorna Battles

Sandra Brashear

Wayne Callis

Joyce Fogg

Maria Harless

Jo Slack

Pamela Spratley

Congratulations!

Quarterly Treasurer's Report

December = \$11,586.83

January = \$11,786.22

February = \$14,900.03

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

Thank You...We would like to thank the following for their generous donations that helped make our live auction a success, and a big shout-out to everyone who purchased items:

Sandy Brashear

Renaissance Portsmouth Norfolk

Charlottesville

CVB Virginia Beach CVB

The Founders Inn & Spa

Hampton CVB

We would not be able to offer educational scholarships without all of you. Your support truly makes a difference! We raised \$1,660

December 2025 Monthly Meeting

By Anna Finch

The December SGMP meeting highlighted non-traditional venues amidst the presence of holiday spirit. As I walked into the Henrico Sports and Events Center, an employee greeted me and showed me the way to the meeting room. A nice touch! Especially for someone who's never been to the large facility before.

The focus of this meeting was the use and appeal of non-conventional venues. Liz Herndon and Megan Hazzard co-facilitated a wonderful presentation. I learned about many great venues in the area that I had no idea about. Some of the venues mentioned include: the ACE center, Cultural Arts Center, Richmond Raceway and Eastern Henrico Rec Center. With alternative spaces such as these, come some additional things to consider such as AV, space flexibility, vendor policies, load in logistics, time management, and sensory friendliness.

The three biggest benefits of non-traditional spaces are the ability to elevate engagement, leverage creativity, and maximize community impact. These venues can allow for opportunities not always available at our typical hotel spaces, like the ability to customize the space and be creative and flexible. The Sports and Events center, for example, allows for the use of their jumbotron and custom court decals.

Something that stood out to me was Liz sharing that there has been a post-pandemic shift in event appeal. People now crave authenticity and memorable experiences from events, as we're all a bit more protective of our time and selective about what we attend than we were before the pandemic. This is where non-traditional spaces can help with attendance and event appeal. The opportunity to leverage creativity and elevate engagement is there.

The sports center itself offers a lot more than just athletic facilities. After the meeting, some of us took a tour of the facility and were able to see additional meeting spaces aside from where the SGMP gathering took place.



February 2026

Old Dominion Chapter Meeting

Courageous Conversation

By Wayne Callis, CGMP

Our February education session was titled "Courageous Conversations: Handling Ethical Pressure at Work," the session provided a deep dive into the often-difficult landscape of workplace integrity.

We were honored to host Nancy Calkins, SPHR, Training Facilitator at the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute. Nancy guided us through enlightened strategies for making the right calls when faced with ethical dilemmas.

She offered the group several real-life scenarios, and tools ensuring everyone walked away with strategies they could apply to both their professional and personal lives.

The icing on the cake to a fantastic education session was the return of the chapter's Annual Culinary Auction. Between the high-level learning and the delicious treats, it's safe to say it was a truly SWEET meeting!



Community Outreach Committee

Pam Spratley

The SGMP chapter conference concluded on a powerful note as members came together in service, compassion, and community. One of the highlights of the final day was a heartfelt presentation from **Jackie Lorenzo**, Development Director for the **Ronald McDonald House Charities of Norfolk (RMHC Norfolk)**. Jackie delivered an inspiring talk about the vital work she and her team do to support families with children receiving medical care. Through stories, photos, and real examples of families served, she offered a moving glimpse into the impact RMHC has on parents navigating some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

Her message resonated deeply with attendees, especially as she shared how RMHC provides a true home-away-from-home—warm meals, a comfortable place to stay, and a community of care that surrounds families when they need it most.

In the spirit of giving back, SGMP members rolled up their sleeves and worked together to assemble **over 60 NICU Welcome Bags**. These bags, filled with comfort items and essentials for parents with babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, were a labor of love and a reflection of the chapter's commitment to meaningful outreach.

At the close of the session, the completed NICU bags were presented to Jackie, who accepted them with gratitude on behalf of RMHC Norfolk. The moment captured the heart of the conference: collaboration, compassion, and community impact.

This year's outreach effort not only supported families in need but also strengthened the bonds among members—reminding everyone that when we come together with purpose, we can make a real difference.



Andrew Marks, CGMP

Assistant Director of Tourism, City of Lynchburg

We had such a wonderful time recently at the **Founders Inn & Spa in Virginia Beach, VA!** Under our conference theme, "**Gather and Grow,**" we dove deep into what it means to be a better leader and a more effective communicator in the government meetings industry. If you couldn't make it—or just want a refresher of the gems we picked up—here is a quick look at the highlights from my notes:

Leadership Starts from Within

One of the biggest takeaways was that leadership isn't about a fancy title; it's about **influence**—nothing more, nothing less. Real professional impact is built on a foundation of personal growth. We explored the **5 Levels of Leadership**:

- **Position:** People follow you because they must.
- **Permission:** People follow because they want to because of the relationship.
- **Production:** People follow because of the results you've delivered for the organization.
- **People Development:** People follow because of how you've helped them grow.
- **Pinnacle:** People follow because of who you are and what you represent.

Remember: Momentum happens when you build results *with* people, not just *for* them.

Level Up Your Communication

We talked about how leaders ensure communication flows in every direction: up, down, and across teams. To keep things clear and productive, keep these tips in mind:

- **Listen with Intent:** Hearing is automatic, but true listening is intentional and builds trust.
- **The Power of the Pause:** Avoid assumptions and pause before responding to keep your emotions in check.
- **Connect Before You Correct:** Always aim to build a connection before offering a correction.
- **Clarity is Kindness:** Use the **C-L-A-R-I-T-Y** method: Confirm, Listen, Ask, Restate, Identify, Tell, and Yes.

Stewardship & The "TikTok" Rule

We also got a reality check on **Travel Per Diem Rules**. Why does this matter so much? It's all about stewardship, transparency, and staying off the 6:00 PM news (or worse, viral on TikTok). While local governments aren't always covered by DOA CAPP unless they choose to be, staying audit-ready is a win for everyone.

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

- April 8, 2026
- May 6, 2026
- No Chapter Meeting in June



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.

Attention Suppliers!

In appreciation of our supplier members, registration for April and May chapter meetings will be complimentary. We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting!

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

Thank you to our conference sponsors



virginia beach
LIVE THE LIFE



The 2026 National Education Conference

Williamsburg, VA

June 9-11, 2026

Registration is now open.