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President's Corner Summer 2025



Greetings Old Dominion Chapter Members

I'm incredibly excited to begin my tenure as President of the SGMP Old Dominion Chapter. A little about me: I've worked as a meeting planner and manager for the National Center for State Courts since 1998—yes, that's quite some time! But when you truly love what you do, even the craziest days are worth it.

I live in Gloucester County and commute to Williamsburg (that's a story for another time!). I'm married, have two grown sons, one wonderful daughter-in-law, and two beloved dogs. Our family also includes three granddogs and two grandcats, all of whom keep things lively.

I've been a proud member of SGMP Old Dominion since 2011 and joined the board in 2021, thanks to the encouragement of Marilee Tretina. I'm honored to now serve as Chapter President and look forward to what we'll accomplish together.

We recently had a fantastic board retreat and are excited to bring our goals to life this Chapter year. We'll be sharing our chapter goals with everyone at the September meeting, so be sure to join us!

To kick off the 2025–2026 Chapter Year, our first meeting will be held at the **Embassy Suites by Hilton** on 2925 Emerywood Parkway, Richmond, VA

We heard your feedback at the chapter conference! Our first session will be:

“From Observation to Action: Discover Your Role in Our Chapter.”

We'll conduct the board meeting in a unique “fishbowl” format—giving you a transparent view of how your board works and how you can get involved.

**Valerie Gardner, 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 August 2025

TOTAL CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP: 63

Total Planners	30
Total Suppliers	26
Retired	7
Current Ratio	48.00%

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

WANTED

SGMP Members – Planners & Suppliers!

Help Us Grow Our Gang of Amazing People!

**Bring a NEW guest to any SGMP meeting this September, October, November, or
December
and you'll earn TWO (2) RAFFLE TICKETS for each guest who attends!**

🗳 More Guests = More Chances to WIN!

💰 50/50 Drawing in December!

**Boost your odds to score some FUN MONEY – the more guests you bring, the better
your chances!**

Quarterly Treasurer's Report

April = \$14,446.22

May = \$12,348.07

June = \$11,955.37

**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? Do you like to write?

Consider joining the Communications Committee!

Contact Angela McGrath for volunteer opportunities.

Fundraising Committee

Jo Slack, CGMP, CTIS

At the September meeting, we will be distributing BIG 50/50 tickets for members to sell. The winning ticket will be drawn at our December meeting.

Remember for every book of tickets you sell, you'll receive an extra ticket as a thank you.

Last year's winner took home over \$500! We greatly appreciate your support and participation.

SGMP NEC 2025: A Celebration of Learning, Leadership, and Legacy in St. Louis

Michelle D. Hawkins, CGMP

The Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP) brought its signature energy and excellence to **St. Louis, Missouri**, for the **2025 National Education Conference (NEC)** held **May 6–8, 2025**, at the historic **St. Louis Union Station Hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton**. This year's conference, set against the backdrop of architectural grandeur and adaptive reuse, delivered a dynamic blend of professional development, innovative workshops, and community celebration.

Welcome to the Gateway City

The conference kicked off with a **vibrant aquatic-themed Welcome Reception**, generously sponsored by **Explore St. Louis** and the **St. Louis Union Station Hotel**. Attendees were immersed in the unique ambiance of the venue, complete with integrated attractions that showcased the best of St. Louis hospitality.

Inspiring Keynotes and Breakthrough Workshops

The learning began with **Opening Keynote Speaker Sharon Gai**, who challenged attendees to embrace the power of artificial intelligence in her talk, *"Leading the AI Revolution."* The conference closed on an equally high note with **Adam White**, whose motivational message, *"Made for Greatness: The 7 Habits That Unlock the Greatness Within,"* left the audience inspired to lead with purpose.

Throughout the week, a diverse lineup of workshops empowered attendees to sharpen their skills:

- **2025 Event Trends** with **Will Curran** tackled everything from sustainability and DEI to AI and modern marketing shifts.
- **Communication is Key, It's Your Superpower** led by **Cindy Saylor** reminded professionals to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the power of intentional communication—personally and professionally.
- **Chester Santos**, also known as the *International Man of Memory*, taught participants how to strengthen their memory using visualization techniques and cognitive exercises that enhance retention and clarity.

NEC 2025 Continued

Learning Outside the Classroom

Beyond the breakout sessions, NEC 2025 featured **Offsite Learning Labs** including Shark Yoga, Energizer Park tours, and behind-the-scenes access at Hilton Curio. Attendees also enjoyed a scenic walk to the Arch, a lively Hilton Party, and the always-popular **Tradeshow**, complete with **Live and Silent Auctions** and rich networking opportunities.

Celebrating Excellence

The conference also celebrated the outstanding achievements of SGMP chapters and members. A special congratulations to the **Old Dominion Chapter**, recipient of multiple honors:

- **Programming of the Year – Excellence**
- **Communications of the Year – Commendations & Newsletter of the Year**
- **Chapter Operations Award – Excellence**
- **Legacy Award 2025 – Wayne Callis**

Where to Next?

As the curtain closed on this unforgettable conference, the energy is already building for **NEC 2026**, set to take place **June 9–11, 2026**. Mark your calendars—we can't wait to gather again!

April 2025 Chapter Meeting

Angela McGrath, The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute

In April, our speaker was Andrew Marks with CVB Lynchburg. He had everyone involved in an interaction game of Jeopardy. Everyone teamed up with fellow chapter members to test their Government Meeting Planning knowledge by focusing on vocabulary terms and core competencies ton SGMP. Everyone had a great time expanding their knowledge of CGMP and for some in the meeting it was a great refresher.

June 2025 Chapter Meeting

Angela McGrath

The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute

The monthly meeting kicked off this past June celebrating a great year for our chapter. June was about awards, State of the Chapter address, board installation, and a bit of fun and relaxation with food, drink, and raffling off board baskets.

We gave our chapter awards as we celebrated our chapter members for their dedication and service to our chapter. Our Chapter Award Winners this year were:

- President's Award: Chris Bunting
- Member's Choice: Andrew Marks & Sandra Brashear
- Planner of the Year: Jeremiah Dillon
- Supplier of the Year: Jo Slack
- Legacy Award: Joyce Fogg

During our meeting Michelle Hawkins gave us a great wonderful and entertaining presentation on her experience and attendance to the National Education Conference that was held this past May in St. Louis. Later there were board installation for new officers.

This year's board for the 2025 – 2027 year are as follows:

- President: Valerie Gardner
- 2nd VP: Andrew Marks
- Secretary: Angela McGrath
- Treasurer: Teresa Lamb
- Supplier Director: Jo Slack
- Planner Director: Pam Spratley
- Supplier Director: Maria Harless
- Immediate Past President: Joyce Fogg

After board installations, there was a fun reception as people purchased raffle tickets and ended the evening out with a raffle drawing for each board basket donated.

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

- September 3, 2025
- October 1, 2025
- November 5, 2025



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.

Hello Chapter members!

The years have flown by! It just seems like yesterday I took on being acting President and then your elected Chapter President. I just wanted to say it has truly been an honor and privilege to serve as your Chapter President for close to 6 years! We truly have a wonderful Chapter with really great members, and I am looking forward to continuing to serve on the Chapter board as Secretary. I'm excited that Valerie Gardner is our new Chapter President! She is amazing and I'm looking forward to this upcoming year with her leading the way.

Best, Angie

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

Watch for details coming soon!!

Are you a government meeting **planner** or industry **supplier** looking to grow your network, sharpen your skills, and make meaningful connections?

Join the **Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP)** – the only national organization dedicated to individuals who plan and support government meetings.

★ Why Join SGMP?

- ✓ Build connections with professionals in your region and nationwide
- ✓ Access exclusive education and certification opportunities
- ✓ Gain insider insights on federal, state, and local meeting regulations
- ✓ Network with trusted suppliers and planners who understand the unique needs of government meetings

Whether you're behind the scenes making it happen, or on the front lines planning every detail – there's a place for you in SGMP!

Chapter Retreat

Each year the chapter board meets during the summer to look at the chapter operations and goals from the previous year and to discuss and strategize for this next upcoming year.

This year the chapter board met on July 7 – 8, 2025 in Williamsburg, VA and the board is excited to be sharing chapter goals for 2025 – 2026 in the September meeting so please be sure to join us!

