



Sheila Guillette-Moore
757.865.5885
Sheila, a business analyst with the Chamber's SBDC, received the Financial Services Champion Award from the Small Business Association (SBA). She will receive the award at the SBA's Small Business Awards on May 8 in Richmond. The Financial Services Champion Award is presented annually in each state to individuals who guide small businesses through efforts in extending accounting or financial services.



Tommie Pochard
757.664.2574
tpochard@hrccva.com
Congratulations, Tommie, for being named Account Executive of the Quarter. Tommie is a Senior Account Executive and has been with the Chamber for over three years.



Diane Raihle
757.664.2521
draihle@hrccva.com
Diane has joined the Chamber as an Account Executive. She and her family, Hampton Roads residents since 2001, enjoy being active in community organizations, initiatives, and sports.



Sandy Sekeet
757.664.2520
srcintern@hrccva.com
Sandy joins the Chamber as the Development & Marketing Assistant and will be helping with the 2009 Sustainable Resources Campaign.

Welcome New Members
For the most current member directory, visit HamptonRoadsChamber.com

January

A. Reddix & Associates
C&C Inc.
Cash Flow Network LLC
Comfort Systems of Virginia, Inc.
E.I. Designs Abstract Art
Imagine Events
Encompass Personnel Services, Inc.
Enterprise Rent-A-Car
First Command - Robert A. Nelson
Fish Bowl Classic, Inc.
Heidi's Flowers
M.C. Dean, Inc.
Mary Kay - Kristin Osborne
Norfolk Tug Co. Inc.
Padgett Business Services
Phil's Accounting Services
Protine Automotive, Inc.
PuroClean Property Damage Restoration
Ray's Appliance Repair
Resort Realty of the Outer Banks, Inc.
Security Assurance
Servpro of Suffolk/Smithfield/Franklin
Sherman A. Vincent/State Farm Insurance
Showcase Publishing
Signmasters, Inc.

Texas Roadhouse
ZION Security

February

Arco Design Build
Automation Equipment Services Group, Inc. aka AESG
B2B CFO
Body Rejuvenations by Janice
Bright Star Healthcare
Excusebuster
Famous Uncle Al's Hotdogs & Grille
GMON Entertainment Group, Inc.
Hampton Roads Landscaping & Lawn Care
Ida Barbour Early Learning Ctr.
JACOR, Inc.
M.J. Security & Staffing
Norfolk Banana Distributors Inc.
Old Dominion Utility Services
One Hour Heating & Cooling
PC & Network Services, Inc.
Sean Schroeder/The Real Estate-Xchange
Summit Group of Virginia
Tidewater Productions Inc.
World Financial Group



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CONTACT

Through Thick and Thin, Chamber Helping Business Since 1801

Though the country's economy has been in a recession since late 2007 and it is easy to get caught up in a fearful attitude, it is a good idea to take an objective look at things. Realistically, there are opportunities for growth and progress even in these tough times.



The recession is evident in Hampton Roads, with the region's unemployment numbers reaching 7.2 percent in February 2009, according to the Virginia Employment Commission. The region's growth is expected to continue slowing in 2009, according to Old Dominion University's Economic Forecasting Project. Although the unemployment rate continues to grow, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission reports that the main reason for this is that Hampton Roads' labor force is swelling rather than losing actual jobs. Experts also predict that Hampton Roads will add 1,600 jobs in 2009.

Last year, for example, the Chamber hosted more than 14,000 people at 135 events. At these events - from the State of the City Series to Spring Fling, the Chamber provides networking and targeted, affordable ways for you to keep your business visible. Chamber members enjoy exclusive pricing on all Chamber events, and offers free Sync757 membership to employees of Chamber member businesses who are under 40.

The Chamber also provides more than 100 educational programs each year. The Business Education Series covers important topics to help your business grow like marketing, accounting, customer service, technology, and more.

The Chamber's SBDC also continues to help the region's economy, counseling more than 500 small business owners last year, helping to generate \$9.5 million in economic impact, 40 new businesses, and 150 jobs.

Consumer spending increased during the first two months of 2009, and economists say that the recession's hold should weaken more and more as the year progresses.

"The best entrepreneurs are realistic optimists," said Jim Carroll, Executive Director of the Small Business Development Center of Hampton Roads (SBDC). "They don't have their heads buried in the sand and they plan to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them."

By taking advantage of member benefits, your membership can pay for itself! As a Chamber member, you can save significantly by using benefits like value-added health insurance, OfficeMax discounts, shipping discounts, and more.

Where does the Chamber come in? As a Chamber member, you have access to practical, everyday benefits to help your business like networking, marketing and visibility for your business, educational and professional development opportunities, and value-added benefits.

With the diversity and resiliency of Hampton Roads businesses, we can weather this storm together. The Chamber is here to help you and your business through thick and thin. After all, we've been doing it for over 200 years. For more information on how the Chamber can help you network, market, learn, or save, contact the Membership Department at 757.664.2504.

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Did you Know?

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Virginia Peninsula Chamber, promotes pro-business policies in local and state government, advocating for a variety of business-related issues on behalf of more than 5,000 businesses representing 500,000 working men and women in Hampton Roads.

Thanks to our Strategic Partners

For more information, contact the membership department at 757.664.2504.

BB&T, Bank of America, Dominion, VNS, SUNTRUST, TOWNE BANK, The Virginian-Pilot, WAL-MART, VIRGINIA

CONTACT

Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce • 420 Bank Street • Norfolk, VA 23510

HAMPTON ROADS Chamber of Commerce
Proud to serve business in America's First Region since 1801

Officers
Robert M. Boyd, Chair • H. Nelson Adcock, Jr., Chair-elect • Nancy Bagranoff, DBA, Treasurer • C. Grigsby Scifres, Esq., Immediate Past Chair • John A. Hornbeck, Jr., CCE, President & CEO

How To Contact Us

Main Number 757.622.2312	Reservation Hotline 757.664.2558	Vice President, Development & Marketing Sarah M. Lampert 757.664.2503 smartin@hrccva.com	Manager, Communications Joel Pearce 757.664.2531 jpearce@hrccva.com
Memberships 757.664.2504			

Visit us at: www.hamptonroadschamber.com Printed by Progressive Graphics, Inc.



More than 70 Chamber volunteers helped to kick off the SRC season at the Official Campaign Kick Off on March 31 at the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame.

In 2009, the Chamber's value is stronger than ever and more businesses are in need of the benefits, programs, and services the Chamber offers. This year's "Campaign of Champions" is a great opportunity to get involved in the Chamber's annual fund drive - the Sustainable Resources Campaign.

Last year, 23 corporate and board teams raised more than \$800,000. Our goal this year is to raise even more, and we can only achieve our goal if we all work together. Team volunteer responsibilities include enlisting new members, generating event and program sponsorships, selling advertising in publications, and more. As of print deadlines, we have raised \$205,361, good for 25 percent of our \$825,000 goal.

Campaign of Champions has Left the Starting Blocks!

We especially want to thank our 2009 SRC leadership volunteers for their guidance. The 2009 leadership team includes: Campaign Chair Dave Durham (SunTrust Bank), David Williams (Fulton Bank), Grig Scifres (Williams Mullen), Jason Kuller (Signs By Tomorrow), John Padgett (McGuire Woods), and Ruthie Goodboe (McGuire Woods).



SRC Chair Dave Durham (right) hangs out with the Wheaties mascot at the Campaign of Champions kickoff

We also want give a special welcome to our new teams this year:

- Canon ITS
- Damuth Trane
- Virginia Business Bank

A warm welcome back to our returning teams:

- the Barter Authority
- BB&T
- Chesapeake Board
- Clark Nexsen
- Dale Carnegie Training of Eastern Virginia
- Fulton Bank
- Gateway Bank & Trust
- GEICO
- GVA Advantis
- Norfolk Board
- Portsmouth Board
- Progressive Graphics
- Regional Board
- Stihl, Inc.
- Suffolk Board
- SunTrust
- Virginia Beach Board
- Virginia Natural Gas
- Wachovia Bank

Look for more Campaign updates in the June and August issues of CONTACT! For more information on the Sustainable Resources Campaign, contact Sarah Martin Lampert at smartin@hrccva.com or 757.664.2503.

Hampton Roads Chamber Chooses New Location

The Chamber is pleased to announce that 500 East Main Street in downtown Norfolk has been selected as the Chamber's new location.



"We were overwhelmed with the positive response we received to our request for proposals," said Chamber

Chair Bob Boyd. "The Chamber leadership had many options to look at, and we are confident that the selected location will be a great fit for the Chamber and our membership."

The Chamber received 31 responses from property owners and developers within all five Southside Hampton Roads cities, and the 500 East Main Street location was chosen for its competitive business terms, impressive facilities, and flexible amenities.

"This new location represents a significant reduction in our annual operating expenses, which will allow the Chamber to better deploy our resources and staff to meet the needs of our members," explained the Chamber's President and CEO Jack Hornbeck. "The centralization plan will also allow for the Chamber to enhance meeting the needs of our members within their respective community."

The move is expected to happen this fall. With the impending sale of the current regional headquarters to the Hurrah Players, the Chamber will say goodbye to their historic Norfolk building after 35 years of occupancy. The Chamber expects to close on the building on or about June 1.

The Chamber's Chesapeake property at 400 Volvo Parkway near Greenbrier is also on the market. For more information on the sale of the Chesapeake property, contact GVA Advantis' Deborah Stearns at dstearns@gvaadvantis.com or John Wessling at jwessling@gvaadvantis.com.

The Chamber will know more details in the coming weeks and months, and will keep you informed as things continue to develop. For more information on the Chamber's facilities, contact Jack Hornbeck at jhornbeck@hrccva.com.

Expert Voice

There are No Stimulus Grants or Checks

By Jim Carroll

Executive Director of the Small Business Development Center of Hampton Roads & VP of Small Business for the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce

Recently, online users have been exposed to promises of grant money or stimulus checks waiting for them. Both individuals and small business owners should be aware that the new stimulus bill does not include any tax refunds like some saw last spring and summer. There are no stimulus checks, so disregard anything that tells you otherwise.

The new grants these sites claim to disburse simply do not exist. If you follow these bogus ads, you will find pages with fake blogs with fake comments and fake "ads by Google." They use JavaScript to take over your browser or trick you into staying on their page when you try to close it.

They also show people with grant checks, but these are not real. Some sites have a person that will talk to you, telling you that you can get money back in as little as a week and all you need to do is fill out a form and pay a \$1.99 shipping and handling fee for free grant software.

Here is part of a disclaimer from one of the sites: "By clicking 'Submit' I am authorizing [the offering website] to charge my credit or debit card a \$2.78 processing fee for my 7-day membership. After the 7-day trial, if I do not call customer service to cancel, the account I provided here will be charged \$39.95 each month thereafter... I also agree to the 10-day bonus trail to [another company]. To start my trial, there is a one-time activation fee of \$1.95. After that, [the other company] will charge my account \$19.95 each month thereafter... As an additional bonus, I agree to receive a 14-day trial to (yet another company). After this trial period, unless I cancel, [yet another company] will charge my account \$12.95 per month."

So, the \$1.95 shipping charge for the "free" grant software ends up costing \$95.63 for the first month and then \$72.85 each month thereafter.

It is easy to believe that there is "something" out there to help you in what is, most certainly, a difficult time. But please remember the adage, "If it seems too good to be true..."

For more information, contact Jim Carroll at jcarroll@hrccva.com or 757.664.2595.



Small Town & Merchant Program Comes to Hampton Roads

The Hampton Roads Chamber, together with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the Suffolk Department of Economic Development, is pleased to bring the Small Town & Merchant Program (STAMP) to Hampton Roads.

The STAMP seminar will be led by Casey Willson, founder and president of The Willson Company. This program includes workshops, tools, and initiatives tailored to each individual business. Willson will discuss fiscal fitness, customer retention, economic restructuring and recruiting, and more.

You could win one of three one-on-one consultations with Willson to help assist with store-specific issues. Submit a one-page narrative of your business, including recent and ongoing marketing and sales efforts. Please also provide information on what you would like to get out of a business consultation. Submit entries to Suffolk Economic Development, 127 E. Washington St., Ste. 200, Suffolk, VA, 23434 by Monday, April 27, 2009.

The STAMP seminar will be held on Thursday, April 30 at 8 a.m. in Suffolk at the Hilton Garden Inn. There will also be a STAMP program in Portsmouth on May 1. For more information, visit www.hrsbdc.org or call Jessica Kotula at 757.865.3128.

Dealer Discount Retained, Homestead Exemption Prevented

At the start of the Virginia General Assembly session, Governor Kaine recommended budgetary amendments to eliminate all of the state "dealer discounts" which provide reimbursements to certain businesses for costs associated with the collection and remittance of various taxes. Eliminating these dealer discounts would mean a cost to Virginia businesses of \$80.4 million annually.



After extensive debate, budget conferees reached a compromise to retain all dealer discounts, an important ideological victory for Virginia business interests. This compromise raises the threshold from \$5 million in taxable sales to \$12 million or more in taxable sales. For example, beginning on June 20, 2010, a retailer with \$12 million in taxable sales will pay their May sales tax as well as estimated sales tax for the first two weeks of June. In July, they will "true up" their June sales tax, as well as pay an estimated payment for the first two weeks of July. This is expected to generate \$97.8 million in revenue for the Commonwealth.

The Chamber was instrumental in securing other victories during the 2009 General Assembly. The Chamber helped to kill bills which would have revived last year's proposed "homestead exemption" in Virginia, as well as eminent domain bills which also failed to advance. The Chamber also fought the "Trailing Spouse Bill" on the grounds that it would have increased the cost to the unemployment insurance pool in Virginia and created an unfair benefit for some employees.

Thank you for your efforts in helping us maintain Virginia's preeminent business climate. A united business community can make a difference. These successes were made possible because business interest spoke with one voice on these issues.

For more information on the Chamber's legislative priorities and results from the General Assembly, contact Candace Reid, Governmental Affairs Manager, at creid@hrccva.com or 757.664.2572.

The Chamber will be hosting all four of the region's U.S. Congressmen at 12 p.m. on May 27 at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott. They will discuss the economy, defense spending, the federal stimulus package, card check, and more. Visit the Events tab at HamptonRoadsChamber.com for more information.

Former Chamber Chair Elected Chair of the Virginia Chamber

Dorcas Helfant-Browning, former Chair of the Hampton Roads Chamber, has been elected the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. Helfant-Browning was the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Hampton Roads Chamber in 2000 and 2001 and also served as Vice Chair for the Virginia Chamber in 2008.

"This is a great recognition of her commitment to provide leadership to the business community," said Jack Hornbeck, President & CEO of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce. There is no doubt she'll do a great job."

Helfant-Browning has also served as the first-ever woman President of the Virginia Association of Realtors.



Calling Hampton Roads' BEST Small Businesses

Do you know of a small business that is second to none? Help give them their due and nominate them for the Chamber's 2009 Hampton Roads Small Business of the Year award. The Chamber is now accepting nominations for the award until April 30, 2009 at 5 p.m. There is no limit to how many businesses you can nominate. A business must meet these requirements to be considered for the 2009 Hampton Roads Small Business of the Year award: fewer than 250 employees, gross revenues of less than \$10 million in 2008, in business for more than three years. Eligible applicants will be judged on financial performance, business history, staff training and motivation, community involvement, customer service, and business strategies and goals.

We are also accepting nominations for the Top 10 to Watch and Award for Small Business Leadership until April 30, 2009.

Visit HamptonRoadsChamber.com or call 757.622.2312 for nomination forms.

Also, **mark your calendars** now for the 2009 Hampton Roads Small Business of the Year awards luncheon on September 24, 2009, presented by Cox Business and Inside Business.

Trustee Profile



Pilot Direct
Sara Lovell
General Manager
www.pilotdirect.com

Launched in 1999, Pilot Direct was created to serve the database marketing needs of local, regional, and national advertisers. Pilot Direct serves customers with highly customized database management services, direct marketing campaign management, creative design, commercial print services, customer retention programs, targeted prospecting campaigns, variable digital printing, direct mail services, e-mail marketing, and personalized URL campaign development. Pilot Direct has become a prominent full-service database marketing company in Hampton Roads while extending their reach nationally. With award-winning designers and skilled programmers, Pilot Direct is focused on exercising relevant marketing solutions to their customers.

The Game of Business:

Chamber Edition

Share your expertise through the Chamber's Expert Voice feature, or sign up to teach a Business Education Series. Both are great ways to increase your exposure and give back to the business community.

Expert Voice submissions are free, and can be published online and in Chamber publications. Submissions can be on any relevant business-related topic. Email submissions to jpearce@hrccva.com.

The Business Education Series includes three seminars each month to provide peer-to-peer expertise on topics like accounting, human resources, customer services, marketing, information technology, and strategic planning. Contact Shannon McCrickard at smccrickard@hrccva.com for more information on how to become an expert presenter.

