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JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2026

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2025

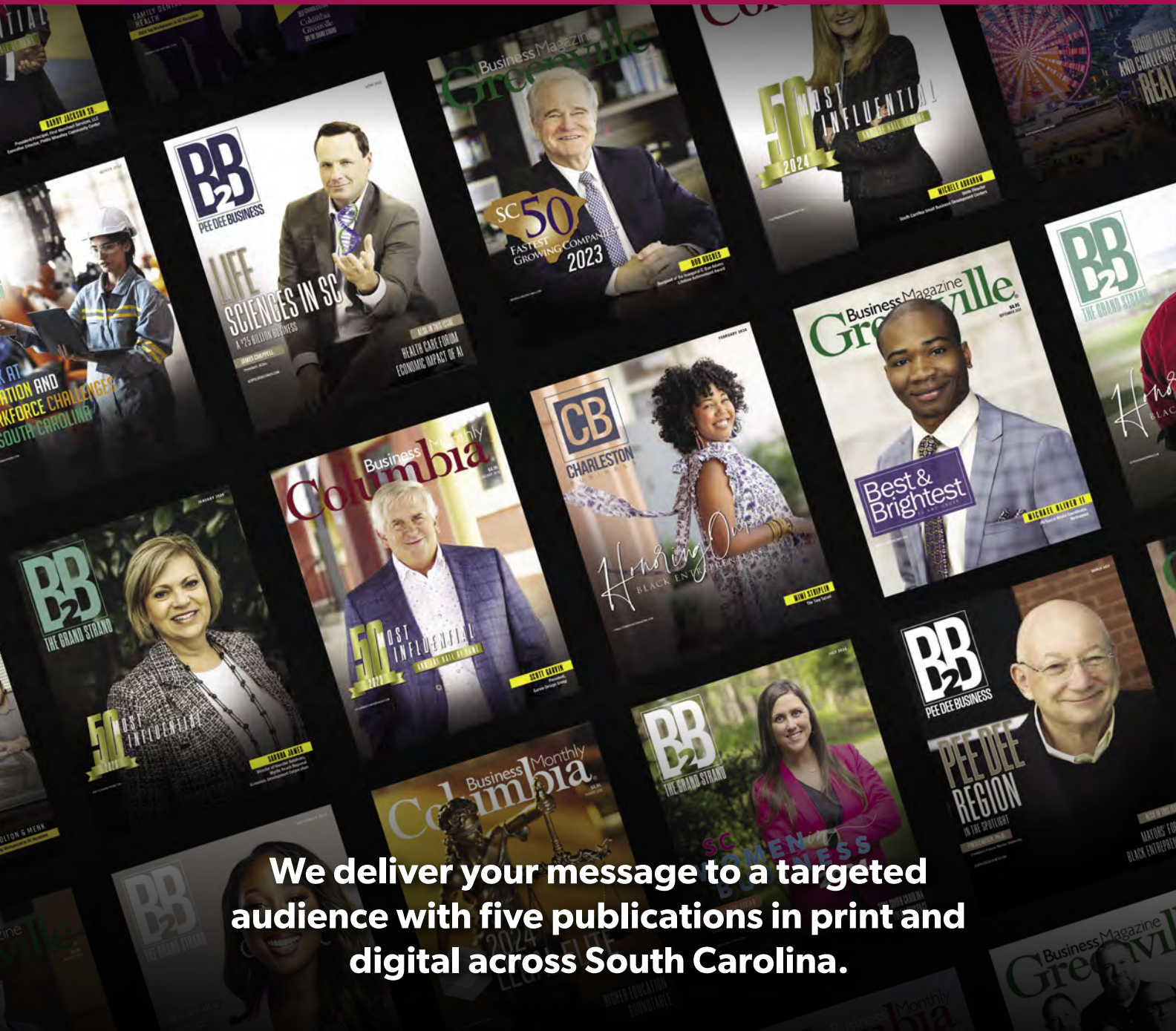
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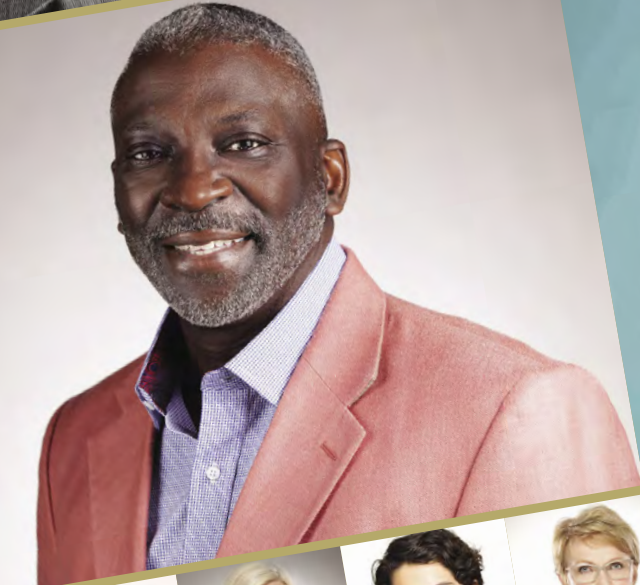
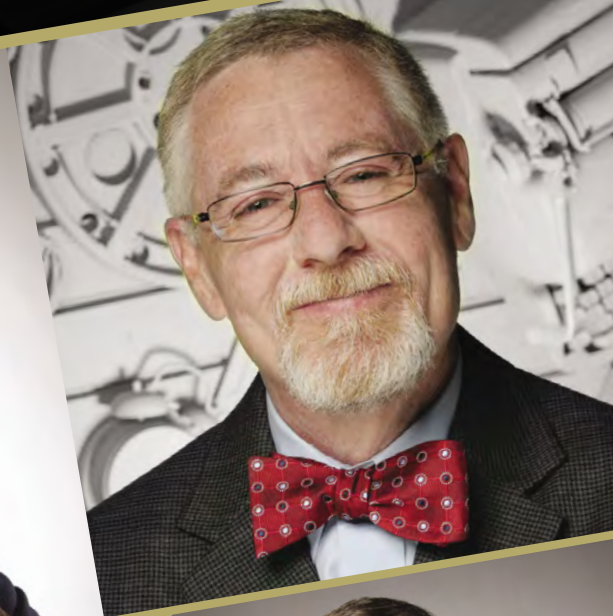
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# MONTHLY MUSINGS ON THE FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD, SNAP BENEFITS, SOCKTOBER CAMPAIGN



Photo by Avery Fryman

## BY DAVID DYKES

### Editor

*Greenville Business Magazine, Columbia Business Monthly, Charleston Business Magazine, B2B: Pee Dee Business, and B2B: The Grand Strand*

### Federal Reserve Board Announces Reappointment of Reserve Bank Presidents, First Vice Presidents

Following a comprehensive review by the boards of directors of the regional Reserve Banks, and the unanimous concurrence of Federal Reserve Board members, the Federal Reserve announced the reappointment of Federal Reserve Bank presidents and first vice presidents.

By law, all Reserve Bank presidents and first vice presidents serve five-year terms, with each of the current terms expiring on Feb. 28, 2026.

In December 2024, the board of directors of each Reserve Bank, representing a wide range of business and community leaders across each district, started a process to assess their president and first vice president across several performance dimensions. Those factors included:

- The president's active engagement with the local business, financial, and nonprofit communities within the district;
- Their effectiveness as the chief executive officer of the Reserve Bank, including developing and implementing the Bank's strategy and leading its staff; and
- Their leadership contributions to the Federal Reserve System as a whole, notably in supporting coordinated System functions and activities.

First vice presidents were largely evaluated in their role as the chief operating officer of each Reserve Bank, with a focus on their management of both local Reserve Bank operations and Federal Reserve System initiatives.

In preparing its overall assessment of each president and first vice president, each board of directors solicited input from a range of parties, including civic and industry leaders in each district.

As a final step in the process, the Federal Reserve Board considered the evaluation by the board of directors.

The new five-year term begins on March 1, 2026.

*A list of presidents and first vice presidents, by Federal Reserve district, includes:*

**Boston:** Susan M. Collins, president; and Karen A. Pennell, first vice president.

**New York:** John C. Williams, president; and Sushmita Shukla, first vice president.

**Philadelphia:** Anna Paulson, president; and Jeanne R. Rentzelas, first vice president.

**Cleveland:** Beth M. Hammack, president; and Mark S. Meder, first vice president.

**Richmond (the Fed district that includes South Carolina):** Thomas I. Barkin, president; and Becky C. Bareford, first vice president.

**Atlanta:** Cheryl L. Venable, first vice president.

**Chicago:** Austan D. Goolsbee, president.

**St. Louis:** Alberto Musalem, president; and François G. Henriquez, II, first vice president.

**Minneapolis:** Neel T. Kashkari, president; and Ron J. Feldman, first vice president.

**Kansas City:** Jeffrey R. Schmid, president; Kimberly N. Robbins, first vice president.

**Dallas:** Lorie K. Logan, president; and Robert L. Triplett, III, first vice president.

**San Francisco:** Mary C. Daly, president; and Sarah E. Devany, first vice president.

Raphael W. Bostic previously announced his retirement as president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta at the end of his current term, and Shonda S. Clay had previously been approved as first vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago for a term starting March 1, 2026, following the retirement of Ellen Bromagen from that role.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond is one of the 12 independent regional Reserve Banks that make up the operating arm of the central bank of the United States, also known as the Federal Reserve.

Guided by the Fed's dual mandate — maximum employment and stable prices — it works to strengthen the economy and the communities it serves by advancing the nation's monetary, financial and payments systems.

The Fifth Federal Reserve District in Richmond, Va., includes North and South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Washington, D.C., and most of West Virginia.

### 10+ Million Households With Adults 50+ Participate in SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's largest antihunger program, helping more than 10 million households with adults ages 50-plus meet their basic food needs, according to the AARP.

AARP says SNAP reduces food insecurity and poverty and is linked to better health outcomes

among older adults.

And according to Olivia Dean and Ari Houser of the AARP Public Policy Institute:

In Fiscal Year 2023, 10.3 million SNAP households — almost half the 21.4 million total SNAP households — included at least one adult age 50 or older.

Adults ages 60 and older make up a growing share of SNAP participants, increasing from 12 percent of participants in fiscal year 2016 to nearly 20 percent in Fiscal Year 2023.

Sixty-seven percent of older SNAP participants live alone.

Nearly half — 44 percent — of SNAP participants ages 50 to 59 have a disability.

SNAP households with adults ages 50 and older received an average benefit of \$212 per month in fiscal year 2023, not including emergency allotments, or \$266 with emergency allotments included.

Regular SNAP benefits lifted 2.2 million households with adults ages 50 and older out of poverty in fiscal year 2023, and SNAP plus emergency allotments lifted nearly 2.8 million households with older

adults out of poverty.

Dean says the program provides eligible individuals and families with a modest monthly benefit to purchase groceries at stores and farmers markets.

And Dean says under current rules, the federal government covers the cost of SNAP benefits, and states share in the administrative costs.

In December, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins approved South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster's waiver to exclude the purchase of candy, energy drinks, soft drinks, and sweetened beverages from the list of eligible foods under SNAP, also known as food stamps.

“By encouraging families to purchase healthy, nutritious food – and not junk food – we ensure federal taxpayer dollars are used to their maximum benefit and keep South Carolina at the forefront of the effort to Make America Healthy Again,” McMaster said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, South Carolina has one of the highest adult obesity rates in the United States, with approximately 36 percent of adults in the state classified as obese.

In addition, a recent report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that 38 percent of children in South Carolina between the ages of 10 and 17 were considered obese.

**Compass One Healthcare Donates Over 300,000 Pairs of Socks During 2025 Socktober Campaign**

“Socktober” continues to be a celebrated and engaging campaign for Compass One Healthcare associates across the country.

In 2025, Compass One Healthcare once again exceeded its donation goals by collecting and donating more than 300,000 pairs of socks to local charities across the United States.

Officials say socks are one of the most requested items in shelters, as many unsheltered people rarely have the opportunity to remove their shoes or wash their clothing, making clean socks a critical yet often overlooked necessity.

*Several health systems and communities demonstrate support, including:*

Atrium Healthcare associates in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama collected more than 14,000 pairs of socks to be donated to various organizations and local shelters across the four states.



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- Must be a for-profit company.
- Must be locally owned and headquartered in South Carolina (wholly owned subsidiaries qualify).
- Must have had sales or revenue of at least \$3,000,000 in 2025 and been in operation for three full fiscal years.
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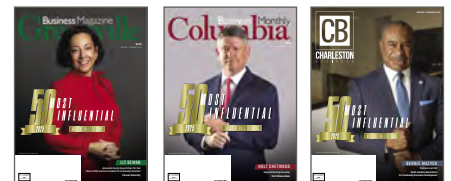
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By David Dykes

### Editorial Corrections from December 2025 Issue:

In the Best in Business recognitions in the December issue, the category of Best Executive was partially obscured. John Tripoli of Northwestern Mutual was the Gold winner in that category.

And Amy Randall's listing was incorrect. It should read: "Amy Randall Photography delivers dynamic branding, lifestyle, and event imagery for corporate and nonprofit clients. You don't need to be photogenic — you just need a photographer who knows how to bring out your spark. Clients turn to Amy when they want visuals that elevate their brand and tell their story with heart."



### ON THE COVERS:

- Greenville:** Liz Seman / Photo by Amy Randall Photography
- Columbia:** Holt Chetwood / Photo by Tim Ford of Power Suit Portraits
- Charleston:** Bernie Mazyck / Photo by Simply Sunny Photography
- Grand Strand:** Thomas Bouchette / Photo Courtesy The Citizens Bank
- Pee Dee:** Josh Harris / Photo Courtesy John Harrelson



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The company’s growth is supported by a strong internal culture centered on collaboration, continuous learning, and professional development. With offices recently established in Charleston, Columbia, and New Jersey, Bachner fosters connection across teams through transparent communication and shared values. “Our family-oriented atmosphere keeps employees engaged,” Pospischil notes. “Innovation and work-life balance ensure our teams remain motivated and supported.”

Operational excellence remains a defining element of Bachner’s success. The company utilizes advanced management systems, including Sage Intacct and Miter, and maintains ISO 9001 and 14001 certifications for quality and environmental management. These standards enable efficient, data-driven operations and reinforce Bachner’s reputation for precision and accountability.

Looking ahead, Bachner Electro USA plans continued expansion along the East Coast, guided by its commitment to sustainable growth and technological advancement. As Pospischil explains, “Our goal is not just to grow bigger, but to grow better.”

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**SPOTLIGHT**

## AIA Greenville Chapter Awards Judson Mill 2025 Honor Award in Adaptive Reuse/Historic Preservation

*Photo courtesy of Judson Mill*

**AIA Greenville selected Judson Mill** for the prestigious 2025 Honor Award in Adaptive Reuse/Historic Preservation in recognition of professional excellence in design and construction. The chapter presented the award at a ceremony on the Judson Mill District campus Nov. 6. Impressed by the remarkable transformation of the 800,000-square-foot historic mill reborn through thoughtful design and adaptive reuse, the jury said the 10-year project, comprising four phases and 30 individual renovations, demonstrated both vision and technical expertise.

## Clemson's Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business Launches Master of Science in Finance Program

Clemson University's Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business has introduced a new Master of Science in Finance (MSF) program, which is now accepting applications. The launch follows formal accreditation approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges on Oct. 31. The MSF is a 10-month, 32-credit, in-person graduate program designed for students seeking advanced preparation for careers in corporate finance, investment management, real estate analysis, corporate banking, and related fields.

### ▶ PHYSICAL THERAPY

#### **ARCHITECH SPORTS & PHYSICAL THERAPY OPENS AT NORTH HILLS SHOPPING CENTER**

Architech Sports & Physical Therapy has opened its first Greenville clinic at North Hills Shopping Center on the city's Eastside. The 3,266-square-foot facility features a 25-yard turf lane, state-of-the-art diagnostic technology, and dedicated areas for rehabilitation, recovery, and performance training. Clients have access to manual therapy, dry needling, movement screenings, and personalized training programs designed for athletes and active individuals of all levels. The new location marks the company's 15th facility across the Carolinas, offering athletic performance therapy and sports performance training.

### ▶ PUBLIC SERVICE

#### **HABITAT GREENVILLE LAUNCHES UNIQUE WOMEN'S BUILD**

Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County has launched its annual Women's Build program with a new approach: peer-to-peer fundraising. Michelle Seaver, United Community president for Greenville, Spartanburg, and Cherokee counties, and Kylie Felker, president of Foster Victor Financial Advisors, are two of the 10 team leaders for the project, which has a mission to raise \$160,000 to build a Habitat home in the coming year. Each team is expected to raise \$16,000 toward their project goal.

### ▶ MANUFACTURING

#### **HORTON INVESTING \$15 MILLION IN MANUFACTURING FACILITY**

Horton, a cooling solutions manufacturer, announced it is expanding its operations in Oconee County. The

company is investing \$15 million in its Westminster facility. The company operates 15 facilities and has a presence in 70 countries. Horton plans to add 100,000 square feet to its facility, located at 301 Oconee Business Parkway in Westminster, doubling the manufacturing area and allowing the company to increase its production of cooling fans and fan clutches.

### ▶ CYBERSECURITY

#### **GOV. MCMASTER ANNOUNCES CENTER FOR CYBERSECURITY AT SCRA**

Gov. Henry McMaster on Dec. 3, 2025, announced the creation of the new Center for Cybersecurity at the South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA). The center will lead the implementation of South Carolina's statewide cybersecurity strategic plan. The plan was developed from a multi-year, comprehensive study completed in 2024 that evaluated the state's cybersecurity needs, assets, and challenges. Starting in January, the Center for Cybersecurity will implement and evaluate 20 key cybersecurity initiatives.

### ▶ AVIATION

#### **GSP OPENS NEW PARKING GARAGE AND CONSOLIDATED RENTAL CAR FACILITY**

Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport (GSP) celebrated the opening of Parking Garage C and the consolidated rental car facility. The \$97 million project opened in time for a busy holiday travel season, completing a record-setting 2025. GSP recognized its project partners for their contributions. LS3P led the design for Garage C and the consolidated rental car facility. Brasfield and Gorrie served as construction manager and oversaw the successful delivery of the project.

## Publix Super Markets is Coming to the BullStreet District

*Photo Courtesy of Publix Super Markets*



**SPOTLIGHT**

**The BullStreet District**, known as the region's largest urban redevelopment project, has announced that national supermarket retailer Publix Super Markets will open its next downtown Columbia, South Carolina location in the BullStreet District. Located next to REI Co-Op, at Bull Street and Colonial Drive, the new store will enhance walkable access to groceries and everyday essentials for thousands of people who live, work, and visit downtown Columbia. Groundbreaking for the new Publix is slated for summer 2026.

## AGY Expands Aiken County Operations



*(Photo Courtesy of AGY)*

AGY, a manufacturer of specialty glass fibers, announced it is expanding its operations in Aiken County. The company's \$12.1 million investment will create 80 jobs, according to Gov. Henry McMaster's office. AGY is a leading innovator and manufacturer of specialty glass fiber reinforcements, enabling high-performance composite solutions for aviation, defense, electronics, architecture and telecommunications applications that are integral to civilian life and critical to the national security supply chain. Operations are expected to be online in the first quarter of 2026. The state's Coordinating Council for Economic Development awarded a \$200,000 Set-Aside grant to Aiken County to assist with the costs of building renovations.

## REAL ESTATE

### **ALL COUNTY PROPERTY MANAGEMENT FRANCHISE CORP. EXPANDS TO COLUMBIA, S.C. WITH NEW FRANCHISEE KENNETH LEE AND THE LAUNCH OF ALL COUNTY SPECIALISTS PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

All County Property Management Franchise Corp. has announced the opening of its newest franchise office, All County Specialists Property Management, serving Columbia and the greater Midlands region. The location is led by entrepreneur Kenneth Lee, who brings a commitment to elevating residential property management standards in the area. All County Specialists Property Management will provide a suite of services, including tenant placement, rent collection, maintenance coordination, and full management solutions for single-family homes, condos, and small multifamily properties.

## CONSTRUCTION

### **MASHBURN CONSTRUCTION COMPLETES MULTIPLE MUSC PROJECTS IN ORANGEBURG**

Mashburn Construction completed three transformative projects for the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Within the MUSC Orangeburg Medical Arts Building, Mashburn is nearing completion on an interior upfit of the second floor in partnership with Lillibridge Healthcare Services. Mashburn also partnered with MUHA and Stantec on the renovation of the hospital's 2,500-square-foot Sterile Processing Department (SPD). At MUSC Health Orangeburg, designed by Array Architects, the 6,000-square-foot Empath Unit also underwent an overhaul of expanded services.

## MANUFACTURING

### **SODECIA AAPICO JOINT VENTURE SELECTS ORANGEBURG COUNTY TO ESTABLISH ITS FIRST SOUTH CAROLINA OPERATION**

A SODECIA AAPICO joint venture announced it selected Orangeburg County to establish the company's first South Carolina operation to support Scout Motors. The company's \$120 million investment will create up to 392 jobs, according to Gov. Henry McMaster's office. Officials said SODECIA and AAPICO – both family-owned, global automotive manufacturers – are combining the companies' core strengths and innovative capabilities to manufacture advanced ladder frames.

## JOB CREATION

### **NEW STUDY FINDS RESTART OF V.C. SUMMER PROJECT WILL SUPPORT 10,000 SOUTH CAROLINA JOBS**

Westinghouse Electric Company released an independent report from PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC (PwC) detailing the economic impact of completing the two partially built AP1000 advanced modular reactors at V.C. Summer Nuclear Station in Jenkinsville, South Carolina. The study found that the construction phase of the V.C. Summer project can create more than \$7.3 billion of gross domestic product (GDP) for the state, while supporting 7,300 high-paying South Carolina jobs annually. Once operational, the two AP1000 units at V.C. Summer would create an additional \$1.6 billion of annual South Carolina GDP and support more than 2,700 jobs in the state annually over an 80-year lifetime.


**SPOTLIGHT**

## Citadel President to Retire

*Photo Courtesy of The Citadel*

**The Citadel President** Gen. Glenn Walters, USMC (Ret.), '79, announced Dec. 1, 2025, that the spring semester will be his last at The Citadel as he prepares to retire at the end of June 2026. The Citadel Board of Visitors will immediately begin a search for the next Citadel president. Walters first came to The Citadel in the fall of 1975. The Arlington, Virginia, native and son of a CIA officer was a member of Charlie Company. He graduated in 1979 and joined the Marine Corps. He served in positions of increasing responsibility, culminating as the Assistant Commandant of the US Marine Corps. In 2018, The Citadel Board of Visitors selected Walters as the 20th president, succeeding Lt. Gen. John Rosa, USAF (Ret.), '73.

## Exchange Ratio Adjusted for Commerce Bancshares, Inc.'s Pending Acquisition of FineMark Holdings, Inc.

Commerce Bancshares, Inc. (NASDAQ: CBSH) and FineMark Holdings, Inc. (OTCQX: FNBT) announced that the exchange ratio for the pending acquisition of FineMark Holdings, Inc. has been adjusted to 0.7245 shares of Commerce stock for each share of FineMark stock. The original exchange ratio has been adjusted from 0.690 shares of Commerce stock for each share of FineMark stock to reflect the 5 percent stock dividend declared on Oct. 31, 2025, by Commerce and were payable on Dec. 16, 2025, to CBSH shareholders of record as of Dec. 2, 2025.

### ▶ REAL ESTATE

#### **MIDDLEBURG SECURES \$39.1 MILLION REFINANCE FOR NORTH CHARLESTON WORKFORCE HOUSING COMMUNITY**

Middleburg, a leading developer and operator of rental housing throughout core Southern markets, has closed a \$39.1 million refinance of Vesta Creeks Run, a workforce and affordable housing community located at 4640 Forest Hills Drive in North Charleston, South Carolina. Newmark arranged the Freddie Mac financing on behalf of Middleburg.

Vesta Creeks Run is part of Middleburg's Vesta brand, the firm's workforce and affordable housing platform serving residents across the Southeast. The property is 97 percent occupied.

### ▶ CONSULTING EXPANSION

#### **MODUS21, LLC EXPANDS CHARLESTON COUNTY OPERATIONS**

Modus21, LLC, a business technology consulting firm, announced it is expanding its operations in Charleston County. The company's \$1.1 million investment will create 80 jobs, according to Gov. Henry McMaster's office. Founded in 2004, Modus21 is a small business headquartered in Charleston providing technology consulting services to commercial and defense customers. Located at 1362 McMillan Ave. in North Charleston, Modus21 is expanding its existing corporate facilities and equipment to support new job creation and its Cloud Innovation Lab (CIL).

### ▶ THERAPEUTIC MERGER

#### **INNOVA THERAPEUTICS ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION OF ENCI THERAPEUTICS**

Innova Therapeutics, a Charleston-based biopharmaceutical company, has announced that it has completed the acquisition of Enci Therapeutics. The acquisition includes Enci Therapeutics' main cancer therapeutic program, IVT-8086. The specific terms of the agreement and financial details regarding the acquisition between Innova Therapeutics and Enci Therapeutics have not been disclosed. IVT-8086 is a first-in-class, humanized monoclonal antibody (mAb) developed as a cancer therapeutic that targets and antagonizes the Secreted Frizzled-Related Protein 2 (SFRP2) pathway.

### ▶ STOCK BUYBACK

#### **BLACKBAUD ANNOUNCES REAUTHORIZED, EXPANDED AND REPLENISHED \$1 BILLION STOCK REPURCHASE PROGRAM, INCREASED STOCK REPURCHASE EXPECTATIONS FOR 2025**

Charleston, South Carolina-based Blackbaud (NASDAQ: BLKB) announced its board of directors has reauthorized, expanded and replenished the company's existing stock repurchase program, raising the total capacity from \$800 million to \$1 billion available for repurchases of the company's common stock. Under the program, the company may repurchase shares of its common stock in the open market, through private transactions, or otherwise. As of Dec. 1, 2025, the remaining amount available to purchase stock under the company's repurchase program was \$1 billion.



## Stars, Stripes and Seaside Spirit: Celebrate America 250 in Myrtle Beach

*Photo Courtesy of CCU Athletics*

**Visit Myrtle Beach** is gearing up to celebrate a major national milestone as America celebrates 250 years, offering a moment to recognize the journey that brought the country to where it is today and the possibilities ahead. Suggested ways to mark America 250 along the Grand Strand include:

- Viewing sites tied to the Battle of Bear Bluff and the historic communities around Galivants Ferry offer a glimpse into the region's Revolutionary War landscape and Francis Marion's campaigns.
- Visiting Freewoods Farm in Myrtle Beach's Burgess community, the nation's only African American living-history farm of its kind.
- Watch living-history re-enactments, such as the Revolutionary-era demonstrations offered during halftime at Coastal Carolina University football games.

## Ocean Craft Marine Selects Horry County for U.S. Manufacturing Headquarters

**Asis Boats USA (d/b/a Ocean Craft Marine), a rigid inflatable boat manufacturer, announced it selected Horry County to establish the company's U.S. manufacturing headquarters. The \$10.8 million investment will create 93 jobs, according to the South Carolina Department of Commerce. Headquartered in Dubai, Asis Boats specializes in the manufacture of advanced rigid inflatable boats, amphibious platforms, and aluminum military craft. Ocean Craft Marine's new operation, located in the Bucksport Marine Park in Conway, will serve as its American headquarters for boat manufacturing.**

### ▶ HEALTH CARE

#### **GRAND STRAND HEALTH NAMES NEW CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

Grand Strand Health has welcomed Jay Pettus as chief financial officer for the health system. Pettus has more than 20 years of healthcare accounting and finance experience, all with HCA Healthcare. Most recently, he served as chief financial officer of HCA Florida Orange Park Hospital. In his time at Orange Park, he contributed to improvements in throughput, led financial reporting functions, and oversaw the deployment of over \$20 million in capital improvements.

### ▶ ONLINE ORDERING

#### **AMAZON EXPANDS SAME-DAY DELIVERY SERVICE IN MYRTLE BEACH TO INCLUDE GROCERIES**

As of Dec. 10, 2025, Amazon has fulfilled its promise to bring same-day delivery service for both products and groceries to Myrtle Beach. The new North Myrtle Beach facility, opened in November 2024, will now allow shoppers to buy "everything from produce and baked goods to quality meats and dairy alongside their everyday purchases." Officials with Amazon say the company has expanded its perishable options, now offering more favorites from Whole Foods Market. Prime members receive free same-day delivery on orders over \$25 in most areas. Non-Prime members must pay a flat fee of \$12.99 per order.

### ▶ AIR TRAVEL

#### **BREEZE AIRWAYS ADDS NEW NONSTOP FLIGHTS TO MYRTLE BEACH**

Breeze Airways will begin new nonstop flights between Long Island MacArthur Airport and Myrtle Beach beginning May 6, 2026. Breeze will serve the route two times weekly on its Airbus A220 aircraft with NICE, NICER and NICEST seating. With their addition of nonstops from ISP to Myrtle Beach, SC in May 2026, Breeze will have nine ISP nonstop destinations, growing its ISP average daily departures and seats since 2022 by over 425 percent and over 516 percent respectively.

### ▶ HISTORIC MARKER

#### **LATEST HORRY COUNTY HISTORIC MARKER UNVEILED IN GREEN SEA**

On Nov. 12, 2025, the Horry County Historic Preservation Commission unveiled the Green Sea Historic Marker at the corner of Green Sea Road and Mitchell Sea Road. The community dates back to 1784 when a man named William Norton received a land grant for 200 acres, including the area where the marker is located. Over time, the community went by several additional names before finally sharing "Green Sea" with the larger township. This marker is part of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History's official historic marker program.



## Hundreds Gather for 40th Annual McLeod Hospice Tree Lighting

*Photo Courtesy of McLeod Health*

**McLeod Hospice celebrated** its 40th Annual “A Light for Someone You Love” Tree Lighting Ceremony, presented by Signature Wealth Strategies, Dec. 4, at McLeod Regional Medical Center. Hundreds attended the event which raised more than \$149,000 to support programs and services provided by McLeod Hospice. During the ceremony, the family of Kaye Floyd-Parris, representing all the families served this year by McLeod Hospice, lit the trees. The Masterworks Choir also performed a new annual tradition song, “All Will Be Well” by Terre Johnson, a song commissioned specifically in honor of the 40th McLeod Hospice Tree Lighting. Crystal Orphan, administrator of McLeod Hospice and Palliative Care, presented the Spirit of Hospice award to M.B. Godbold during the event. Godbold was the 25th recipient of the award.

## Interim HealthCare Expands in South Carolina with Successful Palmetto State Health Care Entrepreneur

**Interim HealthCare Inc., a leading network of home health and staffing services that span the care continuum, announced a major expansion in South Carolina, backed by Gary Cooper, a longtime South Carolina health care entrepreneur and co-founder of Palmetto Infusion Services. Alongside his son and business partner Clemons Cooper, they will oversee operations across Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Florence, Kershaw, Lee, Marlboro, Sumter, and Williamsburg counties. Officials said the new franchise is expected to open in the spring of 2026.**

### ▶ PEOPLE

#### **FLORENCE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP WELCOMES NEW PROJECT MANAGER JOSH MCDANIEL**

Florence County Economic Development Partnership (FCEDP) announced the addition of Josh McDaniel as its new project manager. A native of Florence, he is a graduate of Francis Marion University, holding dual degrees in economics and supply chain management. McDaniel most recently completed the North Eastern Strategic Alliance’s (NESA) apprenticeship program. In his new role, he will be responsible for supporting business recruitment and retention, assisting with product development, and conducting research.

### ▶ MANUFACTURING AWARD

#### **OTIS NAMED AMONG AMERICA’S MOST RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES FOR 4TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

Otis (NYSE: OTIS), a leading company for elevator and escalator manufacturing, installation and service, has been named among America’s Most Responsible Companies 2026 by Newsweek. This is the fourth consecutive year Otis has been included in the list, which recognizes U.S. companies for their commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability. Companies were evaluated on more than 30 key performance indicators as well as the results of an independent survey of approximately 18,000 U.S. residents. Otis’s main U.S. manufacturing facility is in Florence County, South Carolina.

### ▶ MERGER

#### **VANCO AND ACS TECHNOLOGIES UNITE TO DELIVER MORE CONNECTED SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR CHURCHES**

Vanco, a leader in secure digital payments and online giving for faith communities, schools, and nonprofits, and ACS Technologies (ACST), the Florence-headquartered church management software and service provider, have officially merged. Vanco and ACST have worked as partners for over a decade, and their combined reach now serves more than 40,000 churches and ministries. Vanco’s faith organization will operate under the ACS Technologies name, and its payments capabilities will be woven into ACST’s leading platforms — including Realm and MinistryPlatform — so churches experience a more seamless, connected workflow.

### ▶ MICROGRANTS

#### **DUKE ENERGY FOUNDATION PROVIDES \$125,000 IN GRANTS TO SOUTH CAROLINA NONPROFITS TO PREPARE HOMES FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY UPGRADES**

Duke Energy and Duke Energy Foundation awarded a total of \$125,000 in microgrants to South Carolina nonprofits to help bolster existing programs that help make the necessary repairs that enable households to become eligible for energy efficiency improvements and long-term cost savings. Qualified nonprofit organizations that prepare income challenged households for participation in energy efficiency and weatherization initiatives applied for grants up to \$20,000 through a request for proposals process launched in September. Awardees in Pee Dee included the City of Florence (\$10,000), Helping Florence Flourish (\$10,000), and the United Way of Hartsville (\$20,000).



# Excellence In Nonprofit

2026 AWARDS

**Do you know a nonprofit, a team, or an individual whose dedication deserves to be celebrated?**

**In the March issue**, we will shine a spotlight on the nonprofits and individuals who make a real difference — the organizations whose leadership, vision, and hard work drive meaningful change in our communities.

**The Excellence in Nonprofit Award honors those who go above and beyond:**

Innovating to find better solutions • Leading with heart and integrity  
Delivering impactful programs that change lives • Demonstrating fiscal responsibility and sustainability  
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**Celebrate Impact.  
Honor Excellence.**



**SCAN TO NOMINATE BY JAN. 30TH**

**By nominating, you help raise up the changemakers who are often working quietly, but making tremendous impact.**

Winners will be featured in Integrated Media Publishing's five business magazines across the state, reaching a broad audience of philanthropists, community leaders, and peers.

# BELOW THE LINE

USC UPSTATE CHANCELLOR **BENNIE L. HARRIS** SPEAKS WITH  
SOUTH CAROLINA LT. GOV. **PAMELA EVETTE**



*South Carolina Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette ITH Chancellor Bennie L. Harris, Ph.D.  
Photos by Myles Alston*

**Welcome to Below the Line**, a monthly question-and-answer column in which Chancellor Bennie L. Harris, Ph.D., of the University of South Carolina Upstate interviews a leader about change, technology, education, and leadership. This month, Dr. Harris spoke with South Carolina Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette. (This interview has been edited for content, clarity, and length.)

**Harris:** Let's start at the beginning. You were born in Ohio, the granddaughter of Polish immigrants, and your parents instilled in you the values of hard work and civic involvement. How did those early family years influence and inform your leadership and your ideas today?

**Evette:** Most of my calling to serve came from my grandparents. My grandmother lived with us while I was growing up. She left Poland at 15 and sailed here seeking the American dream.

**Harris:** That took a lot of courage.

**Evette:** Today, you would never let your 15-year-old cross an ocean, but she did. She had an amazing passion for this country. It was not her birthplace, but she felt honored to be here. She told us that if we could ever serve and make this country better, we should always take the opportunity.

My dad always wanted to be an entrepreneur, but times were tough. He had immigrant parents, grew up during the Depression, and was afraid to risk the stability he had. He had a good job with health insurance, and he was putting his kids through school, so why rock the boat? But he always wished for more. He encouraged us to pursue whatever we wanted and not be the roadblock to our own futures.

He told us three things: work hard, do good, and aim higher. I put

that on my challenge coin when I ran for lieutenant governor because it motivated me. My grandparents and parents were a solid foundation, and my dad's unfulfilled desire to become an entrepreneur gave me the push I needed to step out and build something.

**Harris:** After earning an accounting degree at Cleveland State University and starting your career in finance, you moved to Travelers Rest, South Carolina. What drew you there, and how did relocating influence your personal and professional growth?

**Evette:** My husband brought me here. We were in the same industry. I traveled to this area for clients, and he introduced me to South Carolina. I loved the weather, the people, everything. When I started my business, the Southeast was growing quickly, so even though I planned to start in Ohio, the growth here made South Carolina the natural home base. I was glad because it was where I wanted to be.

My leadership today comes from what I learned in business. You always have to think five, 10, 15 years ahead. If you are not looking 10 years ahead, you are looking in the rearview mirror. That shaped how I view the state. In my payroll and HR company, we shifted from being payroll-heavy to being a technology company by the time we did our M&A. It showed me the advantages of investing in technology to give clients easier access to information.

That experience drives how I view government. If we harness technology and AI, we can save an incredible amount of taxpayer money.

**Harris:** You've raised your family on a horse farm in Travelers Rest. How has that lifestyle shaped how you balance work, community, and family? What lessons has it taught you about leadership, resilience, and community?



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**Evette:** It was a dream. We had little kids and a growing business. Somehow everything fell into place. We had property and built our offices in front of our horse barn. Employees loved it, and our horses were spoiled with treats.

Being close to home let me stay involved with my kids. When I speak to women thinking about starting businesses, their biggest fear is balancing family and work. I tell them that controlling your own schedule is a game-changer. My kids knew we had a business, but I was still the room mom and could go on field trips.

My kids joke that I do not know work-life balance, but I built a calendar that made sure I was intentional about being present for them.

**Harris:** Sometimes labels like work-life balance create fear. You end up working against the label rather than seeing the glass as half-full. It is like students who become afraid of math; once they believe it is hard, it becomes harder.

**Evette:** Absolutely.

**Harris:** You built Quality Business Solutions from the ground up and transformed it into a high-growth company recognized among the nation's fastest-growing women-led businesses. What leadership principles from your entrepreneurial journey have most influenced your approach as lieutenant governor?

**Evette:** Being present. I was always present at work and built strong relationships with clients. That separated QBS from competitors. We met people where they were and tried to offer something different.

As lieutenant governor, I have spent seven

years traveling the state, listening to people, hearing what works and what needs improvement.



**I thought (Gov. McMaster) wanted me for a board or commission, and my husband said to say no because our schedules were full. But the governor told me he wanted a businessperson with a fresh set of eyes. That resonated with me. Being the first Republican woman lieutenant governor and the first elected jointly brought a huge sense of responsibility. I wanted to set a high bar and be a good example for my children and for young people.**

**Harris:** I do not know many lieutenant governors by name, but I know yours because you are the most present lieutenant governor I have seen. You speak in classes here at USC Upstate, come to talent forums, and add value everywhere you go. Thank you.

**Evette:** Thank you.

**Harris:** You made history as South Carolina's first Republican woman to serve as lieutenant governor and the first to be elected jointly with the governor. How has that unique path shaped your priorities and the way you serve?

**Evette:** I got to know the governor during the presidential election because we both supported President Trump. When he became the first governor allowed to pick his running mate, he called me. I thought he wanted me for a board or commission, and my husband said to say no because our schedules were full. But the governor told me he wanted a businessperson with a fresh set of eyes. That resonated with me. Being the first Republican woman lieutenant governor and the first elected jointly brought a huge sense of responsibility. I wanted to set a high bar and be a good example for my children and for young people.

A month into my term, a father brought his young daughter, Fern, to meet me. He said he brought her because she asked if any ladies worked in the Capitol. That moment hit me hard. Young eyes are watching.

It reminded me that I must lead with grace and remember that elected officials represent everyone, not only those who voted for them. You can run with a party label, but when you serve, you serve everyone.

**Harris:** As a former business leader, you have championed small businesses and public-private partnerships. What do you see as South Carolina's greatest strength in supporting small business innovation and growth?

**Evette:** I think our greatest strength is our colleges, technical colleges, and community colleges. When businesses from around the country and the globe talk to us, they talk about workforce.

We have the ability to create an amazing workforce, which is why the governor and I pushed for more people with secondary degrees and certifications. That is how we developed the WIN scholarships, which have impacted 121,000 South Carolinians.

I would love to see a day when every high school student graduates college-ready, military-ready, or work-ready. We need to expand certifications in K-12 for students who do not yet see themselves in college. We have many jobs to fill, and we want to keep students engaged by giving them a pathway.

We need to view learning as lifelong. When I was young, you picked a career and expected to retire in that career. That is not how life works anymore. Technology is changing fast, and careers are changing with it. You have to go in understanding that.



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# FOR GREENVILLE ENTREPRENEUR WALLACE CHEVES, ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE IS ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

BY DAVID CARAVIELLO

PHOTOS BY KINGS AND QUEENS PRODUCTIONS



The walls are riddled with graffiti, doors hang askew or are missing altogether, and weeds sprout up through cracks in the pavement. The old outlet mall off Interstate 95 in Santee once attracted shoppers to stores like Corning and Van Heusen, but as of late 2025 it was a husk of its former self. Bare plywood shows in areas where siding has been stripped off, windows have been broken out, and a portion of the roof has collapsed.

The entire place exudes dilapidation and neglect. But when Wallace Cheves sees it, he views opportunity.

"It's our time to take advantage of a ripe market with the I-95 traffic," Cheves said. "You have so many out-of-state passersby, that you could create kind of a toll booth-type casino, meaning it would be a stopover between New York and Miami. That's why Walt Disney looked at Santee and thought it was the perfect location to build the original Disney World."

While the Disney story may be apocryphal — writer Paul Bowers struggled to find any real evidence of a Santee Magic Kingdom when he delved into the topic in 2023 — that section of I-95 in Orangeburg County did see an average of nearly 40,000 cars per day in 2024, according to SCDOT. Cheves, a Greenville entrepreneur, bought the old

Santee outlet mall with an eye toward transforming the property into a \$1 billion casino and resort complex that would create 3,000 direct jobs, attract over 4 million annual visitors, and generate \$75 million in annual tax revenue.

Of course, there's one rather heavy lift that has to happen first — South Carolina law would have to change to allow casino gaming, this in one of the most virulent anti-gambling states in the nation. But then again, Cheves has always seen opportunity where others see challenge. This is, after all, the same businessman who cleared the way for the Catawba Nation of Rock Hill to develop a tribal casino across the state line in North Carolina. It's the same mover and shaker who brought a one-named world soccer superstar into the Greenville Triumph ownership group, before becoming chairman of the franchise's parent company himself.

"He's smart enough to take what he's doing and see the next steps, always moving forward and upward," said Phil Hughes, founder of the Greenville-based development company Hughes Investments, which donated the land on which the Triumph is building its new 6,000-seat stadium in Mauldin. "He continues to see the opportunities, and continues to maximize them."

Cheves has been doing that for a long time, since his days selling bubble gum and cinnamon sticks on the playground as a youth. The son of an elementary school teacher and a project manager at Fluor Daniel, "I was a kid who was always hustling," Cheves recalled. "I just always had a strong work ethic, always had some irons in the fire." To earn money for a bicycle he coveted, Cheves as a third-grader swept floors and cleaned parts at a machine shop down the road from his house, earning 70 cents an hour.

"My parents allowed me to explore, allowed me to work, allowed me to fail," he said. "They weren't overly burdensome on me, and they let me do a lot of things on my own. Looking back, I think that created a great foundation."

While Cheves' family moved around with his father's job at Fluor, they ultimately resettled in Greenville in the mid-1980s — just as the textile industry in the Upstate was beginning to collapse, and before downtown had been transformed into the thriving retail and nightlife hub it would become. "Downtown, when I was in high school, it was a place you would never go," Cheves recalled. "I didn't know that Greenville would be a place that I wanted to move back to and raise a family one day."

And yet that's exactly what it became —

and just what Cheves did. While his gaming endeavors have taken him around the country and around the world, Cheves has always maintained a strong bond with his hometown, where he and his wife Sloan have raised their four children. He became active in philanthropic circles and business ventures, and took on more public roles like the chairmanship of the Triumph, which will enter a new era with its first matches at GE Verona Park in 2026.

Before all of that, though, Cheves went to college at Wofford in nearby Spartanburg — where he became captivated by something that would help dictate the course of his career.

### **'My proudest moment'**

In the late 1990s, video poker machines were nearly as ubiquitous in South Carolina as palmetto trees. Bars, convenience stores, and other establishments would have rows of video terminals that circumvented state law by not paying out winnings themselves — cash prizes would instead be handed over by an attendant. By 1999, there were 37,000 video poker machines in South Carolina generating \$3 billion in annual revenue, according to reports from the time.

Clearly, it didn't last — a 1999 ruling by the South Carolina Supreme Court struck down a planned referendum on video gambling, and banned the machines themselves. It was the largest rollback of legal gambling in U.S. history, a professor at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas told the Los Angeles Times. By June of 2000, all of the video terminals were gone. But they had been around long enough for Cheves to notice their allure.

"As a college student at Wofford, you would see video gaming when you were filling up with gas somewhere, going into a convenience store," Cheves said. "I saw it more so in the restaurants or the bar areas where people were gathered around, having a cocktail, laughing, maybe having one hand on the machine. Couples would play it together, people were having fun and celebrating their wins. It looked like it was part of an atmosphere. That literally caught my eye when I was 19 or 20. I liked technology, I saw the devices around town, and I thought this was something I wanted to pursue."

The laws in South Carolina, though, made it tough to pursue that line of work at home. After a stint at Collins Entertainment — which at the height of the video poker boom owned about one of every six machines in the state — Cheves began to expand his horizons. He worked on gaming projects in other states, dabbled in real estate, lived for a time in England and Brazil, even tried to garner support for riverboat gambling on the South Carolina coast. But it would be another opportunity in the Carolinas that would present his biggest breakthrough on the gambling front.

The Catawba tribe has lived for thousands of years along the river of the same name, and its modern-day tribal lands are located in York County. The lone Native American nation located in South Carolina to be recognized by the federal government, the Catawba claims about 3,000 members today. But due to a 1993 settlement that exempted the Catawba from the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, they were unable to get in on the gambling boom that's brought revenue to so many other federally recognized tribes throughout the country.

The Catawba worked for over a decade to change that, finding themselves rebuffed by both South and North Carolina. What followed was a saga involving the Catawba, their ancient rivals the Cherokee, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, Cheves, and allegations of donations being used to apply political pressure. According to a 2022 story in Roll Call, the U.S. Department of the Interior granted the Catawba's request to build a casino complex off Interstate 85 in Kings Mountain, North Carolina, reversing an earlier denial. The Cherokee, who operate two Harrah's-branded casinos in western North Carolina, sued to stop it.

But Graham — with the backing of Democratic rival Sen. Charles Schumer of New York — tacked on an amendment to a defense funding bill granting the South Carolina-based Catawba permission to build a casino in the Old North State, nullifying the Cherokee suit. "The Catawba Nation has been treated unfairly by the federal government, and the legislation that was passed rights that wrong," a Graham spokesperson told Roll Call at the time.

The Cherokee leveled accusations squarely at Cheves, whose Sky Boat Gaming was formed in 2009 to help the Catawba pursuing gaming opportunities, and who has long been known as a well-connected political donor. Cherokee chief Richard Sneed railed against "political contributions and questionable lobbying campaigns conducted by Mr. Cheves" in a complaint before the defense funding bill rendered his lawsuit moot.

To Hughes, facing down such condemnation is part of the price of doing business. "People who do things in business seem to always draw criticism," he said, "and the people who do nothing don't draw criticism. Which would you rather be?"

And ultimately, the Catawba campaign was successful — after opening a temporary facility, the tribe broke ground on its \$700 million permanent casino and resort in late June of 2024. By that time, though, Cheves was no longer associated with the project; the tribe had reached a settlement to buy out his stake after regulatory issues surrounding Sky Boat's ownership of surrounding parcels threatened to drag the project to a halt.

Looking back now, Cheves said he has only

fond memories. "They hired me back in 2009 to do the impossible, and it's probably my proudest business moment. So I'm full of glee. I'm happy about it," he said.

"It's unfortunate how we had to part ways. But I'm now developing over 600 acres that surround the tribal casino, and that ripple effect is going to continue to grow. It's going to look like we're building a mini-city around a casino. Every business has its challenges. You always have to pivot, you do different things. But I'm extremely proud of what we did for the Catawba. And there are a lot of Catawba citizens who are very grateful and thankful for what we did."

### **Brazil to Greenville**

It was a curious pairing — the businessman from the Upstate of South Carolina and the Brazilian-born soccer star regarded as one of the greatest players in the history of the sport. But Cheves had become familiar with Ronaldinho while working in Brazil in the early 2000s, at a time when the attacking midfielder was lighting up the scoreboard for heavyweights like Paris-St. Germain and Barcelona. And Cheves knew what an association with such a legend could bring to his minor league team back in Greenville.

"I just thought we could do something special here and unite the community," Cheves said. "I've always been a believer that the front door of every community could be sports. And I thought if we had an out-of-this-world superstar like Ronaldinho involved in our club, with all of his firsthand soccer knowledge, it would just be the icing on the cake for what was possible in Greenville."

Cheves reached out to contacts in Brazil, and secured a meeting with Ronaldinho in Miami in late 2023 to pitch the retired soccer star on Greenville. But still, it all seemed outlandish — Ronaldinho, winner of both the World Cup and the Champions League, buying into a South Carolina team in a minor league two rungs below Major League soccer? At least it did until October of 2024, when Ronaldinho formerly joined the Triumph's ownership group.

Five months later, a smiling Ronaldinho — given name Ronaldo de Assis Moreira — stepped out of a van and greeted a cheering crowd in Mauldin for the groundbreaking of the Triumph's new stadium. Afterward, fans took turns sitting in the chair that Ronaldinho had occupied.

"It was not a hard sell," Cheves said. "He and his partners did their due diligence, got to know downtown Greenville and the area where we're doing the stadium, and they fell in love with the community. So it was not a hard sell at all. In fact, they got excited about it when they learned how big the Latin community is in the Upstate of South Carolina. It was a very symbiotic thing that happened."

Cheves hopes Ronaldinho will be back in Greenville for the Triumph's first match in its new stadium, and added that the Brazilian's business venture Grupo Ronaldinho "works on this project every day." Going forward they'll surely be working with Cheves, who joined the Triumph's ownership group in July of 2024 and became chairman in September of 2025. The Triumph's parent company is Greenville Pro Soccer, which also operates the Greenville Liberty women's team.

Cheves said he had been active in shaping the Triumph's future before founder Joe Erwin stepped down as chairman of the ownership group. Now in the top spot, "I am planning on being extremely active, because we're in such a crucial stage with this 6,000-seat stadium," Cheves added. "We only have one shot to do it, and we're going to do it right."

It's perhaps no coincidence that Ronaldinho's involvement and the stadium groundbreaking, both potentially transformative events in the future of professional soccer in Greenville, occurred with Cheves in an ownership role. On the stadium in particular, "Wallace played a central role, along with several other key players, in making this happen," Hughes said.

"The toughest part of developments is the work no one sees. Because when the shovel goes in the ground, a developer's work is largely over. It's very complex to sit in a business setting and imagine everything that may happen in a multiuse stadium for decades and decades into the future. The three main parties ended up being the city of Mauldin and Wallace's team and our team, and it would not be under construction if it were not for each team playing a magnificent role in caring about this community."

Cheves' presence in Greenville, though, goes well beyond pro soccer. His Cheves Capital group invests in everything from real estate to tech startups to beverage companies. Cheves mentors young entrepreneurs, serves on numerous boards, and led a capital campaign to renovate the neonatal intensive care unit at Prisma Health in Greenville after his youngest son received treatment there.

"It was very scary time for us, but we were blown away with the staff and the doctors," Cheves said. "It was a very emotional time, but it was also encouraging to know that we had that world-class, top treatment here down the street in Greenville, South Carolina. The only negative part was there were some facility conditions that were subpar, because hospitals age and things happen. We were asked to co-chair of a fundraising committee to rebuild the NICU At Prisma, and we were happy to be a part of that."

One aspect that attracted him to the Triumph and Liberty, Cheves said, was an associated nonprofit that works to help underprivileged youth through Furman Uni-

versity and the YMCA. He's spearheaded the clubs' outreach efforts in areas such as youth soccer and special needs programs. Cheves and his wife Sloan have also become active in a program at their church, St. Paul's Anglican, that each weekend feeds 80 to 90 kids in need.

"I am probably the last person who wants to put their name on something," Cheves said. "I want to lead by example, and I hope that my kids and their friends and other young entrepreneurs can see there's a good balance — if you do well, you give back and you give back more."

#### **Santee stepping stone**

Back in Santee, the old outlet mall with its graffiti-strewn walls and busted-out windows won't be standing for much longer. As of late 2025, Cheves was getting permits lined up to have the facility torn down. He's formed an entity called Santee Development Corporation that he hopes will one day transform this corner of Orangeburg County into a glittering casino complex with a hotel, spa, restaurants, and retail spaces.

"I know how challenging things can be when it comes to anything new in South Carolina," Cheves said. "We tend to really overthink anything that could be deemed as progressive. But you look in the Southeast and see how much gaming has grown. You've seen how popular our lottery has been. You see how popular sports betting has been, how big tribal gaming has become in North Carolina. We're surrounded by competitors."

Indeed, 43 U.S. states now allow some sort of commercial or tribal casino gambling, according to the American Gaming Association, while 38 allow retail or online sports betting. Nationwide, the industry supports 1.8 million jobs and generates \$328.6 billion in economic impact. In North Carolina, the three tribal casinos have generated \$262 million in tax and tribal revenue, according to the AGA, while the 11 legal online sports betting operators have added another \$105.1 million.

"We're losing a lot of money," Cheves said. "It's a sad thing, but sometimes South Carolina is slow to adapt. I think there are a lot of people who didn't like the way that video gaming was handled in the 1980s and '90s, which is very thoughtful. There are things about it that I didn't like, either. But there's a thoughtful way to do it where you have one facility that's protected, it becomes a destination, it's not in your face. You actually have to want to go there and show state ID that you're 21 or older. I think that would be the proper stepping stone."

A lot has to happen first — including a change in South Carolina law. Toward that end, House Bill 4176, called the "I-95 Economic and Education Stimulus Act," was introduced in March of 2025. The bill would

establish a gaming commission in South Carolina that could award casino licenses in counties containing a section of I-95, with a 15 percent tax placed on revenues. Three percent of collected tax would go to the eligible county, the latest version of the bill reads, with the rest going into the state's general fund.

Unsurprisingly, the idea of a South Carolina casino has drawn the ire of some religious leaders in the state. "It is a moment of moral reckoning," Palmetto Family Council president Steve Petit testified before the House Ways and Means Committee in April of 2025. "These are systems that feast on desperation. They promise hope, but they deliver harm." And yet despite the loss of one of its chief backers — Rep. Chris Murphy of Dorchester County, who resigned from the State House in August of 2025 — the bill has received bipartisan support, with both Republicans and Democrats listed as sponsors.

The bill passed the House Ways and Means Committee in April, and "we are hopeful that we will have a vote early in 2026," Cheves said. If the measure passes the full Legislature and is signed by the governor — again, huge ifs — the process would then become open-bid, with Santee Development Corporation potentially vying for a casino license with the support of leaders in Orangeburg County.

"We're working very closely with the county to prove to them that we believe we have the best location, we believe we have the best design, we believe we have the best team to implement this, to create the most jobs, to create the most economic benefit for the county and to create the highest benefit dollar-wise for the state," Cheves said. "And we're asking the state and the county and the local government for zero dollars in tax abatements, zero incentives. We're coming in out of our pocket to create this opportunity, and that will be our pitch to the county."

If it happens, it would mark a sea change in arguably the most strident anti-gambling state in the union, one of just four — along with Georgia, Utah, and Hawaii — with no legal gambling at all, excluding lotteries. But as always, Cheves sees opportunity amid the challenge. "I'm bullish on it," he said. Given his history with the Catawba and Ronaldinho, it's easy to see why.

"The biggest mountain I was ever part of moving was what we did in Kings Mountain with the Catawba. That was an amazing feat. But if we can pull this off in South Carolina, I would say that that would be 2.0, for sure," he added. "But I'll tell you, from the polling that we've done, there's been a shift. There's not the stigma there used to be around gaming back in the 1980s and '90s. It's becoming more accepted. It's what people see every day. The lottery is now accepting debit cards, everything is becoming digital. And we believe that now is the time."

# TOBACCO FIELDS TO GRAPE ARBORS: THE STORY OF HYMAN VINEYARDS

BY TYRISHA IRWIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEA SMILES PHOTOGRAPHY



In Florence, South Carolina, there lies a hidden gem known as Hyman Vineyards. Rhonda Hyman, co-owner of Hyman Vineyards shared her story, offering insights into the evolution of her and her husband Greg Hyman's journey. It is a journey that began 15 years ago when they pivoted from growing tobacco to nurturing grapevines.

The vineyard's inception began with a desire for change. After witnessing the decline of tobacco farming, Greg Hyman sought new opportunities for their land. With the encouragement of a close friend who had a passion for viticulture, the Hymans began the journey into winemaking. "We were good friends with Robert D.B.," she reminisced. "He suggested we start the vineyard, and here we are."

Their transition from tobacco to grapes was steeped and marked by a learning curve. However, the Hymans, specifically Greg, "always had a fascination with innovation." The couple embraced the idea of natural farming, moving away from chemicals, and focusing on practices beneficial for both the grapes and environment.

Rhonda described how word-of-mouth advertising has been the backbone of their business. "If I'm good to my customers, they come back," she shared, noting that many patrons return each year – sometimes from out of state – to visit the vineyard and the Hymans at the Pee Dee Farmer's Market. This genuine commitment to quality and maintaining happy customers has fostered a spirit of their community to feel welcomed and valued.

However, recent challenges – particularly staffing shortages – have forced the couple to step back from hosting weddings and tastings. "We don't have the manpower," she shared, highlighting a struggle that many small business owners face today.

Despite the challenges, the Hymans remain optimistic. Greg has visions of expanding their operations to include educational classes on beekeeping and horticulture, driven by their shared passion for health and natural living. "Our goal has always been health," she stated. "Muscadine grapes are incredibly beneficial; they're loaded with resveratrol, good for the heart and circulatory system."

The Hymans have also recognized the value of sharing knowledge and experiences with others. They aspire to educate their community about the health benefits of natural ingredients, hoping to inspire future generations of entrepreneurs in the agriculture space. "Just love what you're doing, and everything will come. Don't go in it for the money," she advised aspiring agricultural entrepreneurs, reflecting on their journey.

While their story started in agriculture, it transcends beyond crops; it's about relationships. The Hymans' joy lies not in profits but in the people they meet. "It's the lives you touch every day. We love people and talking to them."

The couple's contrasting personalities also play a significant role in their dynamic. While Greg embraces change and experimentation, Rhonda finds comfort in the routines and joys of life. Their partnership symbolizes the essence of entrepreneurship with a splash of hard work, passion and emotional fulfillment.

As they navigate the challenges of today's agricultural landscape, one thing remains: their commitment to health, nature, and the love for viticulture will inspire others to share in their journey.

*The best way is to stop by the Pee Dee Farmers Market or visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HymanVineyardsFlorence>.*

# INNOVATIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT: THE VISION OF ECO ACTIVATORS



BY TYRISHA IRWIN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEA SMILES PHOTOGRAPHY



In a rapidly changing world where technology and environmental needs intersect, Eco-Activators dba Waste Lens, founded by Danielle Alexander, is redefining what's possible in the waste management sector. Led by a founder with a background in chemical engineering and product innovation, the company is at the forefront of building a zero-waste future through cutting-edge, AI-powered digital infrastructure.

Alexander's commitment to sustainability began in Florida where a deep connection to nature and a curiosity about how human behavior shapes our environment sparked a passion. Growing up near beaches, she developed a fascination with the relationship between humans and the environment. That curiosity crystallized during a transformative trip to Greece, where the contrast between ancient endurance and modern disposability became clear. "It hit me that we could lose our planet's treasures," she recalls — a moment that sparked her drive to tackle the global waste crisis through technology.

With the emergence of AI and vision technologies, Waste Lens leverages vision AI and agent-led automations to route waste away from landfills and into circular and commerce markets. Rather than relying on traditional recycling education or manual sorting, the platform meets residents where they are: users simply snap a photo of an item, and Waste Lens provides instant, actionable guidance — automating the process and eliminating confusion. "We are trying to meet people where they are in their busy lives, making it easy for them to participate in sustainability efforts," Alexander explained. Waste Lens is designing for today's digital-first world so anyone can participate and see results regardless of their views on sustainability.

The platform's focus goes beyond recycling, targeting the infrastructure gaps that cities face with food waste and non-EoL (end-of-life) items like textiles, goods, and electronics. Waste Lens partners with waste, recycling and circular economy partners to ensure these items are routed into the right circular or commerce channels — creating new value streams while reducing landfill volume and municipal costs. By automating behavior at the critical "last mile," Waste Lens transforms waste from a cost center into an economic engine. People can simply take a photo of the waste items and the app's analysis will provide clear recycling or disposal instructions tailored to local regulations of the user.

What sets Waste Lens apart is its last-mile partner network and agentic AI architecture, designed to automate and scale real-world use cases. By operating at the intersection of technology, commerce, and the circular economy, Waste Lens unlocks behavior change mechanisms and access to diversion pathways that simply weren't possible a year ago. This pioneering approach is attracting interest from both municipal leaders and investors who understand last-mile orchestration as the answer to modern cities' waste problems.

"Recycling has polarized everyone," she said, stressing the importance of addressing behavior. By creating a "done for you" experience, Eco Activators aims to eliminate the barriers preventing residents from engaging in sustainable practices. The goal is to create services where individuals feel supported rather than shamed into taking action.

Currently piloting with the City of Myrtle Beach, Waste Lens will expand into other cities in early 2026 for beta phase. They are launching through the Carolinas, before expanding across the Southeast, then nationwide and globally. Their go-to-market strategy emphasizes both scalability and community well-being — "We're developing a repeatable, scalable playbook so that we can compress time to value for each new city."

The essence of Waste Lens lies in its commitment to the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profit. Each aspect of the organization's operations is designed to support the local community, from engaging residents to collaborating with local businesses and nonprofits. By blending AI technology with a partner network, Waste Lens is reshaping how communities keep non-EoL items out of landfills and maximizing the idea that one person's trash is another person's treasure. The Waste Lens team isn't just addressing the waste crisis of today, they're laying the digital infrastructure for a more sustainable and circular future.

*For anyone interested in learning more about or partnering with Eco Activators, connect with them online via <https://ecoactivators.com/>. Stay tuned for their upcoming initiatives and ribbon-cutting event in February, where they will showcase their efforts along with their vision for sustainable living.*

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The newest AI-native circular commerce innovation from the team at Waste Lens.




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# SÈCHEY:

## CHARLESTON'S TRAILBLAZING NON-ALCOHOLIC BOTTLE SHOP AND TASTING SALON

BY TYRISHA IRWIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIENNA AND CO



**Founded in 2021 by Emily Heintz**, Sèchey has quickly become Charleston's premier destination for sophisticated alcohol-free beverages. Part bottle shop, part tasting salon, Sèchey is redefining how adults socialize by offering a thoughtfully crafted selection of premium non-alcoholic wines, beers, spirits, and adaptogen-infused functional drinks. The beautifully designed space and online store cater to the "sober curious," the alcohol-flexible, and the fully sober – anyone who wants to enjoy elevated, adult beverages without the alcohol.

Heintz's own mindful-drinking journey inspired the concept. After noticing a glaring lack of high-quality non-alcoholic options in Charleston – a city famous for its drinking culture – she set out to change that. "I wanted to increase availability, convenience, and the education piece – specifically, it is the awareness of alternatives," she said. At Sèchey, "You're part of the party, but you don't have a headache and don't want to take a nap at 3 o'clock," she said.

Starting small from her home, Heintz built the brand with limited resources while entering an entirely new category. "The biggest challenges were bootstrapping in an emerging market and convincing a heavy-drinking town that alcohol-free could be exciting," she recalled. Hearing "no" repeatedly only fueled her determination. Today, she knows that her products speak for themselves.

What sets Sèchey apart is their commitment to curating the best they can in non-alcoholic and functional beverages while creating a "judgment-free space for exploration," Heintz expressed. "We're leading a cultural shift toward alcohol flexibility with premium, beautifully packaged alternatives that celebrate choice without compromise," she shared.

Mentorship has been instrumental in Sèchey's growth. Strategic angel investors like Alison Savaya and local Charleston leaders like Mickey Bakst are among those who have offered invaluable guidance, helping the company expand intentionally on both national and local levels.

Looking ahead, Heintz envisions Sèchey as a global brand within the next five to 10 years, with deeper retail partnerships, presence in national markets and new locations like Charlotte, Chicago, and Miami. The company already gives back by donating products to community fundraisers, staying rooted in the Charleston spirit that launched it.

For aspiring entrepreneurs, Heintz's advice is refreshingly direct: "No one knows what they're doing. Start and don't give up. Really believe in what you're doing, keep pivoting, and keep trying. Businesses fail not because of ideas, but because people give up."

Visit <https://www.sechey.com/> or stop by the Charleston tasting salon to experience it for yourself.

# BOOK SERIES AIMS TO EMPOWER YOUNG MINDS TO DEVELOP STRENGTH, LEADERSHIP, CONFIDENCE



BY TYRISHA IRWIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM FORD OF POWER SUIT PHOTOGRAPHY

In a society where boys often face societal pressures to conform to traditional ideals of masculinity, Theresa Long (dba: Theresa Tammygirlll) is making waves with her heartfelt message in her new children's book series, "Dear Little Boy," "Dear Little Girl," and "Abuelita y Yo." As a mother of five sons, Long's mission is clear: instilling love and self-worth in young boys and girls before they encounter life's challenges.

Long's journey began with her observations as a mother. As her sons grew older, she noticed how crucial it was for them to understand their worth amidst a world rife with bullying, police brutality, and societal expectations as young men, but also as Afro-Latino children. "I want to teach them how to be centered in God, so nothing else can sway them," she explained, emphasizing the importance of instilling a strong sense of self from a young age.

Her dedication to her sons inspired her to write "Dear Little Boy." Initially faced with doubt after losing her first manuscript, Long found encouragement in her mother's advice. "Just do it again. It may be different, it may be better," her mother told her. And with that, she reignited her passion and crafted a book that resonates with the hearts of many parents who want their children to know they are loved and valued.

Long's own upbringing as a child of a single mother shaped her perspective on emotional intelligence. She recalls how traditional expectations often left little room for vulnerability in boys, stating, "Boys can't cry. Boys can't feel." This realization fuels her desire to break these generational curses. Through her books, she aims to foster emotional expression in boys while encouraging them to embrace their unique identities.

Drawing from her experiences as a mother, she understands the importance of breaking free from the constraints of outdated beliefs. "Now, as a mom, I can't do what happened to me," she reflected, hoping to cultivate a new generation that feels secure in expressing emotions, from anger to sadness without stigmatized labels.

Long's books provide tailored messages to resonate with both boys and girls. "With the boys, it's about strength and leadership; with the girls, it's about confidence and self-acceptance," she explained. Through

thoughtful storytelling, she addresses the unique challenges faced by each of the two, emphasizing the value of emotional connections and spiritual wellness.

This dual approach allows children to understand that they can be both strong and loving. Children don't have to choose one or the other. "You can be a provider. You can be tough, but you can also be loved, kind and gentle," she asserted, inviting young readers to embrace all facets of their personalities.

Looking ahead, Long envisions her books becoming a lasting legacy within her family. "This is something my sons will be able to share with their children and grandchildren when I'm gone," she said. She draws inspiration from her grandmother's impactful legacy, hoping to create a ripple effect that empowers future generations. "I want to shift something in my family and other families," demonstrating her commitment to making a difference.

Even as she embarks on this exciting journey, Long is mindful of the challenges she faces as a new author, confronting fears of self-doubt and potential rejection. Yet, she remains steadfast in her belief that her words will resonate and inspire: "Just do it. If someone relates to me, if someone understands, it will touch someone." Her newest addition, "Abuelita y Yo" is dedicated to her sons and sheds light on their experiences.

Theresa Long's "Theresa Tammygirlll" dedication to empowering young boys and girls through her books reflects her commitment to breaking down barriers and encouraging emotional expression by transforming parenting narratives and helping to cultivate a new generation of confident and compassionate individuals. Apart from her work, she gives back to her community as a notary public/signing agent and aids in feeding 40+ homeless people with home cooked meals every Friday.

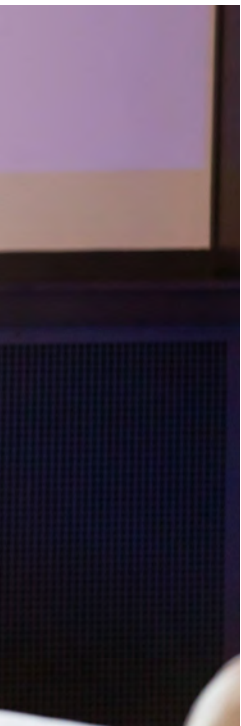
*For those interested in her work and the impactful messages contained within her pages, Theresa invites you to explore her journey at her website, [Theresatammygirlll.com](http://Theresatammygirlll.com). Through her writing, she is not only aiming to change lives but also create a legacy of love and empowerment that will endure for years to come.*

# BRIDGING GENERATIONS FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS: THE STORY OF GENERATIONAL PERFORMANCE SOLUTIONS



*BY TYRISHA IRWIN*

*PHOTO PROVIDED BY GENERATIONAL PERFORMANCE SOLUTIONS*



**Generational Performance Solutions**, based in Greenville, South Carolina, is owned and operated by Kamber Parker Bowden. The company helps organizations drive performance by bridging generational gaps in the workplace. Through keynotes, workshops, programs, and workforce planning, they teach teams how to communicate, develop, and grow together. Their signature Talent Impact Process – now used by more than 750 organizations worldwide – provides leaders with simple tools to improve retention, strengthen culture, and align everyone toward shared goals.

What began as a personal blog and a series of probing questions about why young professionals were leaving their first or second jobs evolved into a thriving business. “When I was in college, I was always intrigued by young professionals,” Bowden said. “After 10 months at my job, I realized it wasn’t the place for me. So I started asking my peers and friends who were also leaving their first jobs why it was happening.” At the end of her coffee meet-up with a colleague in Chattanooga, she knew there was “something” she wanted to do, but didn’t expect for it to turn into Generational Performance Solutions (previously known as YoPro Know).

Originally from Maryland, Bowden attended Furman University as a double major in communications and political science with dreams to be a news anchor and recalls a time when she wanted to be a news anchor, like Katie Couric or a talk show host like Oprah. As fate would have it, she is now channeling that passion into her podcast, where she interviews guests on generational dynamics.

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 marked a pivotal shift. Bowden transitioned into the nonprofit sector in Greenville – a city she’d always planned to return to – and almost overnight, her business opportunities exploded. A handful of early clients “opened the doors” for her. “There were a few Greenville business leaders who really took a chance on me,” she said. Her now husband, who was her boyfriend at the time, is a financial adviser and helped her create a financial plan. Combined with her growing client base and connections to influential regional leaders, this support was transformative. Her network is built on long-lasting relationships, including key figures like Lindsey McMillion-Stemann – which fueled hundreds if not thousands of connections. Today, those ties extend to national and international organizations, amplifying her reach.

Since 2018, Bowden’s team has conducted over 15,000 interviews with both young and seasoned professionals, yielding deep insights into how people work, communicate, and lead across generations. This research forms the bedrock of Generational Performance Solutions’ tools, training, and resources, empowering clients to make data-driven decisions that boost performance, retention, and team dynamics.

The company continues to expand its content, finding innovative ways to deliver generational strategies to leaders, decision makers, and organizations across North America. In September, Bowden launched her book, “The Generational Advantage: How to Lead, Communication, and Drive Performance Across Generations,” which debuted at No. 1 on Amazon’s new release list for Human Resources and Personnel Management. She attributes much of her success to several key factors:

- Getting involved with the community early in her professional career opened doors and introduced her to the right circles.
- Asking questions whether through her blog, podcast or client work. Her curiosity led to powerful conversations and unexpected opportunities.
- Seeking mentorship from woman-owned business owners, who profoundly shaped her personal and professional growth.
- Surrounding herself with team members, partners, and vendors who challenge her, teaching her the value of true collaboration.
- Embracing a growth mindset by letting go of perfectionism to adapt to the realities of business ownership.

Looking ahead, Bowden envisions Generational Performance Solutions scaling internationally. Having already worked in three counties, she aims to “reach as many organizations as possible” in the next five years. In a decade, she hopes to see “100,000 companies utilizing the process we’ve built.”

Women are launching businesses at record rates – ranging from tech companies to local service providers – representing 1 in 3 high-growth entrepreneurs globally. In the United States alone, there are 14 million women-owned businesses generating \$2.1 trillion annually, according to Founder Reports. While gender hasn’t been a major hurdle for Bowden, her age was. “Early in my 20s, I worried about what people thought and felt that when I walked into rooms, they were shocked that I was some ‘young girl’ rather than an experienced professional,” she said.

The advice she’d give aspiring entrepreneurs is to be prepared for the road ahead. “Be prepared for the ups and downs with the emotional rollercoaster of owning your business,” she said.

*To connect with Generational Performance Solutions, view their website using this link: <https://genperformance.com/>*

# 2026

## SOUTH CAROLINA

# HIGHER EDUCATION

## GUIDE

**Education in South Carolina** is more than a pathway to a diploma or degree — it is a driving force behind the state's economic vitality, workforce readiness, and quality of life. From early childhood learning and K–12 education to technical colleges, universities, and lifelong learning opportunities, South Carolina's education ecosystem is evolving to meet the needs of a rapidly changing economy. As industries expand, new employers relocate, and innovation accelerates across the state, education and training institutions are playing a critical role in preparing students and professionals for high-demand careers while strengthening communities in every region.

This Education Guide is designed to provide a comprehensive look at the people, programs, and partnerships shaping learning in South Carolina today. It highlights the schools, colleges, universities, and training providers that are equipping students with the skills employers need — from advanced manufacturing and health care to technology, logistics, and entrepreneurship. It also explores how educators and administrators are responding to challenges such as workforce shortages, affordability, access, and the growing importance of credential-based and experiential learning.

Across the Palmetto State, collaboration is a defining theme. Public and private institutions are working closely with businesses, economic development organizations, and local governments to align curricula with real-world demands. At the same time, investments in facilities, technology, and faculty are helping ensure students are prepared not only for today's jobs, but for the careers of tomorrow. Innovation in online learning, apprenticeships, dual enrollment, and industry-recognized certifications is expanding access and creating multiple pathways to success.

Whether you are a student planning your next step, a parent navigating educational options, an employer seeking talent, or a policymaker focused on the future of South Carolina's workforce, this guide offers insight into the opportunities and momentum shaping education across the state. Together, these efforts underscore a shared commitment to learning as the foundation for long-term growth and prosperity in South Carolina.

The list was provided by South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. All state lottery scholarships are also administered through the CHE: they maintain the regulations, disburse the funding to institutions and also oversee the scholarships appeals process if it elevates past the institution.

See the scholarship page here:



Thanks to our SC Universities and Colleges for the partnered content on the following pages.

## South Carolina Higher Education Guide

### RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Clemson University	Dr. James P. Clements, President	105 Sikes Hall	Clemson, SC 29634	864-656-3413
USC Columbia	Dr. Michael Amiridis, President	1244 Blossom Street	Columbia, SC 29208	803-777-7000
Medical University of South Carolina	Dr. David J. Cole, President	179 Ashley Ave. Colcock Hall, PO Box 250001	Charleston, SC 29425	843-792-2211

### COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONS

The Citadel	Gen. Glenn M. Walters, President	171 Moultrie St.	Charleston, SC 29409	843 953-5012
Coastal Carolina University	Dr. James J. Winebrake	P.O. Box 261954	Conway, SC 29528-6054	843-349-2005
College of Charleston	Dr. Andrew T. Hsu, President	66 George St.	Charleston, SC 29424	843-953-5500
Francis Marion University	Dr. Luther F. Carter, President	P.O. Box 100547	Florence, SC 29501-0547	Phone: 843-661-1210
Lander University	Dr. Richard Cosentino, President	320 Stanley Ave.	Greenwood, SC 29649-2099	864-388-8300
South Carolina State University	Col. Alexander Conyers, President		Orangeburg, SC 29117	803-536-7000
USC Aiken	Dr. Daniel Heimmermann, Chancellor	471 University Pkwy.	Aiken, SC 29801	803-648-6851
USC Beaufort	Dr. Al M. Panu, Chancellor	One University Blvd.	Bluffton, SC 29909	843-208-8242
USC Upstate	Dr. Bennie L. Harris, Chancellor	800 University Way	Spartanburg, SC 29303	864-503-5000
Winthrop University	Dr. Edward Serna, President	114 Tillman Hall	Rock Hill, SC 29733	803-323-2211

### USC TWO-YEAR REGIONAL CAMPUSES

USC Lancaster	Dr. Courtney Catledge, Dean	476 Hubbard Dr.	Charleston, SC 29409	843-953-5012
USC Salkehatchie	Dr. April Cone, Dean	P.O. Box 617	Allendale, SC 29810	803-584-3446
USC Sumter	Dr. Michael Sonntag, Dean	200 Miller Rd.	Sumter, SC 29150-2498	803-775-8727 - (USCS)
USC Union	Dr. Randy Lowell, Dean	P.O. Drawer 729	Union, SC 29379	864-429-8728 - (USCU), or 1-800-768-5566
USC Palmetto College	Dr. Susan Elkins, Chancellor	1420 Pendleton Street, Suite 339	Columbia, SC 29208	803-777-7695

### PUBLIC TECHNICAL COLLEGES

State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education (SBTCE)	Dr. Tim Hardee	111 Executive Center Dr.	Columbia, SC 29210	803-896-5280
Aiken Technical College	Dr. Forest Mahan, President	Aiken-Augusta Highway 1, PO Drawer 696	Aiken, SC 29802-0696	803-593-9231
Central Carolina Technical College	Dr. Kevin Pollock, President	506 North Guignard Dr.	Sumter, SC 29150-2499	803-778-1961
Denmark Technical College	Dr. Willie Todd, President	P.O. Box 327 (Solomon Blatt Blvd.)	Denmark, SC 29042-0327	803-793-5100
Florence-Darlington Technical College	Dr. Jermaine Ford, President	P.O. Box 100548 (Hwy. 52 North)	Florence, SC 29501-0548	843-661-8324
Greenville Technical College	Dr. Keith Miller, President	P.O. Box 5616, Station B (291 By-Pass)	Greenville, SC 29606-5616	864-250-8000
Horry-Georgetown Technical College	Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, President	P.O. Box 261966 (Hwy. 501 East)	Conway, SC 29528-6066	843-347-3186
Midlands Technical College	Dr. Greg Little, President	P.O. Box 2408	Columbia, SC 29202-2408	803-738-7600
Northeastern Technical College	Dr. Kyle Wagner, President	P.O. Drawer 1007, (Hwy. 9)	Cheraw, SC 29150-1007	843-921-6900
Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College	Dr. Walter Tobin, President	3250 St. Matthews Rd. (Hwy. 601)	Orangeburg, SC 29118	803-536-0311
Piedmont Technical College	Dr. Hope Rivers, President	P.O. Drawer 1467 (Emerald Rd.)	Greenwood, SC 29648-1467	864-941-8324 - (TECH)

### PUBLIC TECHNICAL COLLEGES (continued)

Spartanburg Community College	Dr. Michael Mikota, President	P.O. Drawer 4386 (Frontage Rd.)	Spartanburg, SC 29305-4386	864-592-4600
Technical College of the Lowcountry	Dr. Richard Gough, President	P.O. Box 1288 (921 S. Ribaut Rd.)	Beaufort, SC 29901-1288	843-525-8324 - (TECH)
Tri-County Technical College	Dr. Galen DeHay, President	P.O. Box 587 (Highway 76)	Pendleton, SC 29670-0587	864-646-8361
Trident Technical College	Dr. Vicky Wood, President	P.O. Box 118067 (7118 Rivers Ave.)	Charleston, SC 29423-8067	843-574-6421
Williamsburg Technical College	Dr. Patricia A. Lee, President	601 MLK Jr. Ave.	Kingstree, SC 29556-4197	843-355-4110
York Technical College	Dr. Stacey Moore, President	452 S. Anderson Rd.	Rock Hill, SC 29730-3395	803-327-8000

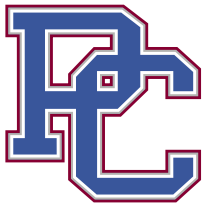
### INDEPENDENT SENIOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Allen University	Dr. Ernest C. McNealey, President	1530 Harden St	Columbia, SC 29204	803-376-5700
Anderson University	Dr. Evans Whitaker, President	316 Blvd.	Anderson, SC 29621	864-231-2000
Benedict College	Dr. Roslyn C. Artis, President	1600 Harden St.	Columbia, SC 29204	803-705-4681
Bob Jones University	Dr. Bruce McAllister	1700 Wade Hampton Blvd.	Greenville, SC 29614	864-242-5100
Charleston Southern University	Dr. B. Keith Faulkner	9200 University Blvd	North Charleston, SC 29406	843-863-7502
Clafflin University	Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack	400 Magnolia St.	Orangeburg, SC 29115	803-535-5491
Clinton College	Dr. Lester A. McCorn, President	1029 Crawford Road	Rock Hill, SC 29730	803-327-7402
Coker University	Dr. Natalie Harder	300 East College Avenue	Hartsville, SC 29550	843-383-8000
Columbia International University	Dr. William H. Jones, President	7435 Monticello Rd., P.O. Box 3122	Columbia, SC 29230-3122	803-754-4100 - or 1-800-777-2227
Columbia College	Dr. John H. Dozier, President	1301 Columbia College Dr.	Columbia, SC 29203	803-786-3871 - or 1-800-277-1301
Converse University	Dr. Boone Hopkins	580 East Main St.	Spartanburg, SC 29302	843-596-9050
Erskine College	Dr. Steven C. Adamson	210 South Main St	Due West, SC 29639	864-379-8833
Furman University	Dr. Elizabeth Davis, President	3300 Poinsett Hwy.	Greenville, SC 29613	864-294-2100
Limestone University	Dr. Nathan B. Copeland, President	1115 College Dr.	Gaffney, SC 29340	864-489-7151
Morris College	Dr. Said Sewell	100 W. College St.	Sumter, SC 29150-3599	803-934-3221
Newberry College	Dr. Maurice Scherrens, President	2100 College Street	Newberry, SC 29108	803-321-5102
North Greenville University	Dr. Gene Fant, Jr., President	7801 N. Tigerville Rd	Tigerville, SC 29688	864-977-7018
Presbyterian College	Dr. Anita Olson, President	503 South Broad St.	Clinton, SC 29325	864-833-2820 - or 1-800-476-7272
Southern Methodist College	Dr. David M Battle, President	541 Broughton St., P.O. Box 1027	Orangeburg, SC 29115	803-534-7826
Southern Wesleyan University	Dr. William D. Barker	907 Wesleyan Dr., P. O. Box 1020	Central, SC 29630	864-644-5011
Spartanburg Methodist College	Mr. Scott Cochran, President	1750 Powell Mill Rd	Spartanburg, SC 29301	864-587-4230
Voorhees University	Dr. Ronnie Hopkins	1897 Voorhees Rd	Denmark, SC 29042	803-780-1234
Wofford College	Dr. Nayef Samhat	429 North Church St.	Spartanburg, SC 29303-3663	864-597-4010

List provided by South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

# PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

www.presby.edu



## PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

### INSTITUTION TYPE

Private nonprofit

### ACCREDITATION STATUS

Regionally accredited

### STUDENT-FACULTY RATIO

12:1

### YEAR FOUNDED

1880

### MISSION STATEMENT

The compelling purpose of Presbyterian College, as a church-related college, is to develop within the framework of Christian faith the mental, physical, moral, and spiritual capacities of each student in preparation for a lifetime of personal and vocational fulfillment and responsible contribution to our democratic society and the world community.

### VALUE PROPOSITION / INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Presbyterian College develops the whole person—mind, heart, and spirit—through a transformational education rooted in service, purpose, and community. PC is founded on a legacy of serving others and challenges students to reach their highest potential. Rigorous academics, meaningful connections, and hands-on experiences prepare PC students to lead with confidence and compassion.

### DEGREES AND ACADEMICS OFFERED

• Bachelor's • Master's • Doctoral • Certificates

### POPULAR MAJORS / PROGRAMS (TOP 5)

• Business Administration • Biology • Pre-Med  
• Psychology • Dual-Degree Engineering

### ATHLETICS AFFILIATION / DIVISION

NCAA Division I

### VARSITY SPORTS OFFERED

• Acrobatics & Tumbling (Women's)  
• Baseball (Men's)  
• Basketball (Men's and Women's)  
• Competitive Cheer (Women's)  
• Cross Country (Men's and Women's)  
• Football (Men's)  
• Golf (Men's and Women's)  
• Lacrosse (Women's)  
• Soccer (Men's and Women's)  
• Softball (Women's)  
• Tennis (Men's and Women's)  
• Volleyball (Women's)  
• Wrestling (Men's and Women's)

## FROM SCHOLAR-ATHLETE TO *Fulbright Winner*

Sam Hauff '25, an English major and standout Blue Hose athlete, earned a prestigious Fulbright Award after graduating from PC. As a Fulbright Scholar, she teaches and fosters cultural exchange in Bulgaria, drawing on her scholarship, leadership, and storytelling roots to connect across borders. Her journey reflects the global opportunities a PC education can unlock.

To read Sam's full story and the stories of other PC students and graduates, visit [www.presby.edu/bluehose](http://www.presby.edu/bluehose)



# COKER UNIVERSITY

www.coker.edu



**C O K E R**  
UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTION TYPE

Private nonprofit

## ACCREDITATION STATUS

Nationally accredited

## ACADEMICS OFFERED

- Bachelor's,
- Masters,
- Doctoral,
- Certificates

## NUMBER OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

40

## DEGREES AND ACADEMICS OFFERED

- Bachelor's
- Masters
- Doctoral
- Certificates

## FOUNDING DATE

August 15th, 1908

## PRESIDENT

Dr. Natalie J. Harder

## MISSION STATEMENT

Coker University is a student-centered, comprehensive university. It is dedicated to providing every student an academic curriculum based upon a uniformly excellent liberal arts core that enhances the structured development of key personal skills.

The University's goal is to graduate students with the ability to think analytically and creatively, and to write and speak effectively.

Experiences both in and out of the classroom are focused on active student involvement and the practical application of academic knowledge that lead to lifelong learning. Coker measures its success by the personal and professional accomplishments enjoyed by all members of the academic community.

## VALUE PROPOSITION / INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Coker University is a student-focused, private liberal arts college located in Hartsville, South Carolina. Coker combines round table, discussion-based learning with hands-on experiences to promote active participation in and out of the classroom. Our engaging, close-knit community prepares students with the confidence and skills they need to reach their personal best, in college and beyond.

## POPULAR MAJORS / PROGRAMS:

Business, Nursing, Physical Education & Sport Studies-Exercise Science, Biology, Psychology

## FACULTY

Our faculty are also leaders in their fields, subject matter experts and fully invested in their students. More than 95 percent of all full-time faculty hold a doctorate or terminal degree in their field. With a student-to-faculty ratio of 12:1, you won't need to compete for mentorship, academic support, or getting involved in research early at Coker.

## ACADEMICS AND CAREER PREPARATION

Coker provides a unique college experience with tailored course offerings to fit your focus. Our signature round table learning brings students and professors together in small groups for discussions that encourage critical thinking, teamwork, and the type of problem solving required by today's leaders. The traditional undergraduate program offers nearly 60 areas of study, including new allied health programs—or you can design your own major.

## COUNSELING, HEALTH, AND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

The wellbeing of our campus community is our highest priority. Operated in partnership with Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center, the Center for Health & Wellness provides convenient access to healthcare professionals, prescription services, select over-the-counter medications, first aid, immunizations, lab work, and mental health professionals, including psychiatrists.

At the Center for Health and Wellness, Coker provides a licensed Mental Health & Accommodations Counselor to help with a wide variety of situations and conditions, including homesickness, inability to concentrate, depression, sleep disturbances, and much more. Additionally, Coker University has partnered with MUSC TelePsych to provide students access to licensed mental health professionals, including psychiatrists.

## ATHLETICS AFFILIATION / DIVISION:

NCAA Division II

## ATHLETIC FACILITIES

The Coker Cobras offer student athletes the opportunity to lead in 24 NCAA Division II intercollegiate sports as a member of the South Atlantic Conference. Our campus includes a 22-acre complex for outdoor sports, and the state-of-the-art DeLoach Center features a 1,908-seat gymnasium, an auxiliary gym, interactive classrooms, a student-athlete only weight room, campus fitness center, athletic offices, and more.



**COKER**  
UNIVERSITY

# Go Where You Can **Grow**

**Discover your potential** at Coker University.

To learn more, visit [Coker.edu](http://Coker.edu)

300 E. College Avenue | Hartsville, SC 29550 | [COKER.EDU](http://COKER.EDU)

# VCOM-CAROLINAS INSTITUTION

www.vcom.edu



Edward Via College of  
Osteopathic Medicine

**CAROLINAS**

#### INSTITUTION TYPE

Private nonprofit

#### ACCREDITATION STATUS

Nationally accredited

#### FOUNDING DATE

January 1st, 2010

#### MISSION STATEMENT

MISSION of the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) is to prepare globally minded, community-focused osteopathic physicians to meet the needs of rural and medically underserved populations and advance research to improve human health.

#### VALUE PROPOSITION / INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

VCOM is distinct in its mission-driven focus on training compassionate, community-focused osteopathic physicians who are prepared to address critical healthcare shortages, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas. VCOM's educational model combines rigorous osteopathic medical training with a holistic emphasis on primary care, preventive medicine, and patient-centered practice — grounded in the osteopathic philosophy of whole-person health. Unlike many medical schools, VCOM intentionally recruits students from small towns and underserved regions — a strategy that increases the likelihood that graduates will return to serve similar communities in the Southeastern United States and beyond. A significant percentage of VCOM students come from communities under 30,000 in population, and many alumni practice in primary care and in target Appalachian, Delta, and rural regions where access to quality healthcare is limited.

#### ACADEMICS DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS OFFERED

- Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine
- Master of Health Science in Anesthesia

#### NOTABLE FACULTY/RESEARCH

VCOM fosters a vibrant, multidisciplinary research culture that supports faculty, residents, and students across all four campuses. Faculty researchers at VCOM are engaged in a range of biomedical, clinical, educational, and community health projects that align closely with the College's mission to improve human health — particularly in rural and underserved populations.

#### ACTIVE RESEARCH AREAS / STRENGTHS

VCOM's institutional research strategy emphasizes collaboration, real-world impact, and osteopathic relevance. Key areas of ongoing focus include:

- Biomedical & Clinical Research
- Disease mechanisms in cancer, inflammation, and neurobiology
- Biomarker development and therapeutic evaluation
- Precision medicine approaches with genetic and cellular targets
- Public Health & Prevention
- Behavioral health and wellness interventions
- Community-based research in rural and underserved regions
- Telemedicine effectiveness and access in specialty care
- Osteopathic-Oriented Research
- Studies on osteopathic manipulative medicine (OMM) and its effects on physiology and recovery
- Research on musculoskeletal healing and injury mechanisms
- Educational & Simulation Research
- Development and evaluation of novel clinical training tools and curricula
- App-based and simulation-related strategies to enhance medical education

# The Medical School

that's making a difference for our community

# EVERY DAY



Edward Via College of  
Osteopathic Medicine

CAROLINAS

At the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) in Spartanburg, South Carolina, our mission is to train future physicians who are community-focused and ready to make a difference—starting right here at home.

Whether volunteering at health fairs, providing care aboard our mobile medical units, or engaging in local outreach, VCOM students embody compassion and care, serving their community throughout their training.

Learn more at  
[www.vcom.edu](http://www.vcom.edu)



# CONVERSE UNIVERSITY

www.converse.edu



## INSTITUTION TYPE

Private nonprofit

## ACCREDITATION STATUS

Nationally accredited

## Degrees and Credentials Offered

Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral

## FOUNDING DATE

January 1st, 1889

## MISSION STATEMENT

Converse University empowers students to become transformative leaders who see clearly, decide wisely, and act justly.

## VALUE PROPOSITION / INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Converse University prides itself on embracing a culture of belonging and collaboration that ignites creativity, innovation, and transformation. Supporting our mission are seven core values that guide Converse's commitment to creativity and the development of wise leaders.

These enduring beliefs serve as the compass for Converse. They transcend time, extend across the institution and guide our actions and decisions.

**EXCELLENCE** drives us to achieve the best in all that we pursue; to develop competence, confidence and courage to realize full potential in mind, body and spirit.

**INTEGRITY** calls us to cultivate and exercise honor, character and vision in daily decisions and actions; to act honestly and justly when confronted with ethical dilemmas and life's challenges.

**EXPLORATION** compels us to think critically and creatively in the acquisition of knowledge and skills; to discover and enrich scholarship and research, disciplines, methods and vocations through hands-on learning and leadership and through discovery, discourse and debate.

**DIVERSITY** inspires us to embrace the different perspectives, experiences, cultures, backgrounds, talents and contributions that comprise a global society; to enhance and expand inclusivity as we build a stronger multi-dimensional community.

**RESPECT** leads us to value self and others, recognizing the legitimacy of individuality in belief, expression and perspective; to exercise civility, mindfulness and responsibility in words and actions.

**COMMUNITY** motivates us to develop a dynamic network of relationships through a balance of work and play that nurtures the abilities of each member in order to establish a better whole; to mentor, collaborate and communicate as engaged citizens who effect positive change.

**PROGRESS** challenges us to think strategically toward the future by employing creativity, adaptability, ingenuity and innovation; to advance and transform the world around us.



Converse is a small university, but our impact on South Carolina has been mighty for more than 130 years.

Designed specifically for today's working professionals, our graduate programs offer targeted solutions for employers and a launchpad for tomorrow's leaders.

Who will help prepare you to take on the future?

**WE WILL. Together.**

## LEARN MORE:

Graduate Admissions  
graduate@converse.edu  
864.596.9040  
converse.edu/graduate

# CONVERSE

# TRI-COUNTY TECHNICAL COLLEGE

www.tctc.edu



### INSTITUTION TYPE

Community/Technical College

### ACCREDITATION STATUS

Regionally accredited

### FOUNDING DATE

April 4th, 1962

### MISSION STATEMENT

Tri-County Technical College provides students an exceptional and affordable learning experience that improves their quality of life. The College advances economic development in the tri-county region by preparing a highly skilled workforce.

### VALUE PROPOSITION / INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Tri-County Technical College, a public two-year community and technical college serving Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties in South Carolina, boasts the highest student success, transfer, and graduation rates among two-year colleges in the S.C. Technical College System and ranks in the top 1% nationally for successful student transfers to four-year colleges and universities. Nationally, TCTC's performance falls in the 90th percentile for student success and transfer, and Pell grant recipients who attend TCTC and later transfer to Clemson have the highest bachelor's degree completion rate in the nation. One year after graduation TCTC enrolls the third-most S.C. high school students of any college in South Carolina — behind only the University of South Carolina and Clemson University.

### POPULAR MAJORS / PROGRAMS (TOP 5)

Associate Degree Nursing, Licensed Practical Nursing, University Transfer, Mechatronics, Welding, Computer Information Technology

### UNIQUE OR SIGNATURE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Bridge to Clemson is an invitation-only program that blends the traditional academic experience at TCTC with the social and cultural experiences of being a Clemson University student. Designed for recent high school graduates who narrowly missed admission to Clemson because of limited space and high demand.

The TCTC Dual Enrollment Academy is a first-of-its kind program that provides qualified high school students a guaranteed path to earn a degree from Clemson University.

The I-BEST program is designed to increase TCTC's focus on unemployed and underemployed populations. It is a one-semester program that allows students to explore careers in manufacturing, health care or a stand-alone course for college and career exploration opportunities. The program offers opportunities to earn college credit and national (industry-recognized) skill certifications. There is no cost for the program.



## BOOST YOUR BUSINESS WITH TRI-COUNTY TECHNICAL COLLEGE

TCTC offers customized, innovative and timely solutions to the Upstate region's workforce needs.

Partner with us to drive innovation and growth. Invest in your current and future workforce today!

Visit [tctc.edu/industryviewbook](http://tctc.edu/industryviewbook) to learn more.



# 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL

2025

STATEWIDE

**Integrated Media Publishing** is pleased to present our inaugural list of the State-wide 50 Most Influential People. While all of these individuals have made an impact in their home regions, their work also is felt in myriad ways throughout the rapidly growing Palmetto State. These 50 men and women were chosen through extensive staff research as well as community nominations. You have seen some of them on regional lists in years past, but we're happy to honor them this year for their work all around South Carolina.

Many of them work in state government, but this list also includes people in the energy, finance, nonprofit, aeronautics, and retail arenas.

**We're always there for you.  
Please be there for us.**



**Heartbeat  
of SC**

**SCHA**

SC HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

**SCHA proudly congratulates our hospital leaders  
- champions of care and the heartbeat of SC!**

**Brian Argo**  
Conway Medical Center

**Bruce Bailey**  
Tidelands Health

**Jason Bernd**  
Novant Health

**Joseph Deleon**  
Roper St. Francis Healthcare

**Jay Hinesley**  
MUSC Health Florence

**Donna Isgett**  
McLeod Health

**Anthony Jackson**  
Prisma Health

**Kirk Jenkins**  
Lexington Health

**Thornton Kirby**  
SC Hospital Association

**Tony Kouskolekas**  
Pelham Medical Center

**Ryan Lee**  
Novant Health

**Mark Sims**  
Grand Strand Regional Medical Center

**Sara Ballard**

Executive Director  
South Carolina Women in Leadership



Sara Ballard is a founder of South Carolina Women in Leadership and, before being appointed executive director of the statewide multi-partisan nonprofit, she served as COO since

2018. Ballard is also the principal marketing consultant to Columbia Eye and Columbia Eye Surgery Center (2012-present), as well as a campaign manager for Kasie Whitener for her US Senate 2026 run. She has more than 20 years of experience in fundraising, event management, operations, marketing, advertising, public relations, and communications for local and national nonprofits and corporations including Boys & Girls Club, American Heart Association, Famously Hot New Year, SC Oncology Cares Foundation, Pawmetto Lifeline, Dickerson Children's Advocacy Center, Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands, and Historic Camden Foundation.

Photo provided

**Jason Bernd**

Senior Vice President and President of the South Carolina Region  
Novant Health



Jason Bernd serves as senior vice president and president of the South Carolina region for Novant Health. Bernd, who joined Novant Health in 2006, has most recently served

as president and chief operating officer of Novant Health Matthews Medical Center. He also served as president and chief operating officer of Novant Health Charlotte Orthopedic Hospital for five years, and before that held leadership roles in financial planning and analysis, heart and vascular care, cancer services, and the Novant Health Medical Group. Bernd earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Virginia and a master's degree in business administration from Stanford University. He currently serves on the board of trustees for the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra and the boards of Discovery Place, Wingate University, and the Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Photo Courtesy of Novant Health

**Mike Baumbach**

Executive Vice President | South Carolina Business Unit Leader  
BE&K Building Group



Mike Baumbach brings more than 40 years of construction industry experience to his leadership role at BE&K Building Group. He first joined the company in 2004 as op-

erations director and today serves as executive vice president and business unit leader for the Greenville office. In his current role, Baumbach provides strategic guidance and leadership for BE&K's aviation and aerospace and industrial and manufacturing markets. He also serves as project director for Boeing South Carolina's Site Expansion Program, a \$1+ billion infrastructure program expected to create more than 1,000 new jobs in the state over the next five years. During his tenure with BE&K, Baumbach has played a key role in supporting the growth of many leading South Carolina businesses. He is also committed to giving back through volunteer work and local charitable initiatives.

Photo courtesy of Brian Erkens, Reel Video & Stills

**Rich Bradshaw**

President and Chief Banking Officer  
United Community



Richard Bradshaw is the president and chief banking officer for United Community, holding more than 35 years of experience in the banking industry. Prior to this

position, he served as head of SBA Programs at TD Bank. He is also a retired member of the board of directors and executive committee for the National Association of Government Guaranteed Lenders. His career includes service as a retired commander from the U.S. Naval Reserve Intelligence Program and five years of active duty as a captain in the U.S. Air Force. Bradshaw previously served as president of the board of directors for the Greenville Symphony Orchestra, Greenville Literacy Association, and recently retired from the board of the Greenville Community Foundation.

Photo Courtesy of Amy Randall

**Cynthia M. Bennett**

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer  
South Carolina Chamber of Commerce



Cynthia M. Bennett serves as executive vice president and COO of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce. Bennett has over 25 years of experience collaborating with schools and

businesses to improve students' academic achievement and encourage post-secondary education in order to have an educated workforce in South Carolina. She is a skilled communicator and collaborator, fostering strong relationships across the Palmetto State. Bennett graduated from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She also serves as the executive of the SC Chamber Education and Workforce Foundation. The programs include the HBCU STEM Program, SC Business Week, and Economic Engagement. When Bennett is not in the office, she can be found spending time with her husband, James Bennett, and their two sons, J. Anthony and Houston.

Photo provided

**Ethel Bunch**

Founder and CEO  
Global to Local LLC



Ethel Bunch is founder and CEO of Global to Local, LLC, a strategic advisory firm working with private-sector, utility, state, and federal leaders to position South Carolina

as the national proving ground for energy dominance, national security, and global competitiveness. Through Global to Local Bunch launched the Palmetto Nuclear Coalition — formed in 2025 with founding partners Google, Nucor, Milliken & Company, and DC BLOX. PNC unites major energy users, manufacturers, and technology leaders behind the expansion of nuclear power as the most affordable and secure foundation for South Carolina's long-term economic competitiveness. Bunch also founded Sustain South Carolina, an economic development organization focused on strengthening the state's business environment. Her leadership produced the Roadmap to Sustain South Carolina with Ernst & Young. Growing demand from industry leaders for clear, actionable energy strategy led to the creation of Global to Local.

Photo courtesy of NP Strategy



For four decades, AFL has connected customers with innovative technologies, exceptional products and high-quality services. Guided by our commitment to being Community Centered and Customer Focused, we strive to make a positive impact in the communities where our associates live and work while delivering the solutions our customers depend on.

We celebrate **Grant Burns, Executive VP and General Counsel**, for being recognized as one of **South Carolina's 50 Most Influential**.

Congratulations, **Grant!**

We Are AFL.



# CONGRATULATIONS, SCOTT WOODS



Scott Woods is a tireless advocate for credit unions, our communities, and our employees and was awarded the Order of the Palmetto in recognition of a lifetime of achievement and service. Under his leadership, South Carolina Federal Credit Union has grown to more than 150,000 members, exceeded \$2.6 billion in assets, expanded to serve the entire state, been named a Best Place to Work, and so much more. Scott embodies the credit union philosophy of “people helping people” in all he does, and we are beyond grateful to have him as our leader and our advocate.



**SOUTH CAROLINA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION®**

[scfederal.org](http://scfederal.org)

Insured by NCUA

**Scott Woods**  
President & CEO

**Grant Burns**

EVP and General Counsel  
AFL



Grant Burns serves on the board of directors of America Fujikura Ltd. (AFL) and is the company's executive vice president and general counsel. In this capacity,

Burns oversees all legal matters including corporate governance, intellectual property, litigation, internal audit, international trade, and compliance, as well as government affairs. Additionally, he is involved in the strategic, legal, and compliance activities of several other Fujikura group companies. Before joining AFL in 2012, Burns was in private practice for over 20 years. A member of the South Carolina Bar and the Virginia State Bar, Burns has been admitted to practice in numerous federal district courts, appellate courts, and the United States Supreme Court. He is chair of the board of directors of the South Carolina Manufacturers and Commerce – South Carolina's Chamber.

Photo courtesy of AFL

**Tally Parham Casey**

Chair and CEO  
Wyche, P.A.



Tally Parham Casey is chair of Wyche's Executive Committee and a litigator with 25 years of experience. A former F-16 fighter pilot, Tally serves her clients with a

blend of tenacity, shrewdness, and creativity. Repeatedly recognized as one of the Top 25 lawyers in South Carolina, she focuses on complex matters in commercial, health care and securities litigation, products liability, insurance, and aerospace law. She has represented clients in corporate defense and white-collar criminal matters, internal investigations, and appeals before the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. Casey was the first female fighter pilot in the South Carolina Air National Guard and is a veteran of three combat tours over Iraq. She was the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor in 2022.

Photo courtesy of David Bonner at Bonfire Visuals

**James Chappell**

President and CEO  
SCbio



Since becoming president and CEO of SCbio in 2021, James Chappell has built a statewide coalition of partners united in elevating South Carolina as a premier

hub for scientific research, advanced biomanufacturing, and patient care. South Carolina has become a magnet for CDMOs, digital health innovators and early-stage companies. SCbio is shaping policy, workforce development and investment strategies to fuel that momentum, helping the state build a ground-up playbook for life sciences growth. Chappell works directly with stakeholders and investors to position South Carolina as a destination for pharmaceutical operations. He forged a key alliance with MassBio to create SCbioDrive, which draws startups from around the world and reinforces the state's emergence as a rising force in the national life sciences ecosystem.

Photo courtesy of SCbio

**Carlos Evans**

Chairman  
Salem Capital

Carlos Evans serves as the co-managing partner, president, and CEO of the family investment holding company Salem Capital LLC. Evans joined First Union National Bank in 2000 as the wholesale banking executive for the commercial segment prior to its merger with Wachovia Corporation in 2001. From 2006 until Wachovia's merger with Wells Fargo in 2009, Evans was the Wholesale Banking executive and an EVP for the Wachovia General Banking Group. He is chairman of the board of Highwoods Properties, chairman emeritus of the board of the Spoleto Festival USA, and past chairman of the board of the Medical University of South Carolina Foundation. He also serves on the boards of Johnson Management, National Coatings and Supplies, Warren Oil Company, and American Welding & Gas. Evans is the author of "Ally of the Entrepreneur: The Rise of Banking in the South and the Fall of Wachovia."

**Adrienne Fairwell**

President and CEO  
South Carolina Educational Television and SC Public Radio



With more than two decades of leadership in public media, fundraising, and statewide communications, Adrienne Fairwell has built a career focused on strengthening institutions and expanding

their service to the people they represent. As president and CEO of South Carolina ETV and SC Public Radio, she is driving a forward-looking strategy that expands local news capacity, enhances transparency services for government and public affairs, and modernizes how public media informs and educates our communities. Fairwell serves as chair of the National Educational Telecommunications Association, vice chair of America's Public Television Stations, and is a member of PBS's Digital Advisory Committee. Locally, she serves on the University of South Carolina's College of Information and Communications Dean's Leadership Council and on the State's Coordinating Council for Workforce Development.

Photo courtesy of Rebecca Hatcher

**Audrey Frey**

Senior Managing Director and Market Leader,  
South Carolina  
CBRE



Audrey Frey serves as senior managing director and market leader for CBRE's South Carolina business, overseeing operations and driving strategic growth across Greenville, Charleston,

and Columbia. She leads all Advisory Service lines – including leasing, sales, debt and structured finance, valuation, and property management – with a focus on delivering exceptional outcomes for clients and teams. With more than 25 years of experience in commercial real estate, Frey is passionate about mentoring and developing the next generation of professionals. Her long-term goal is to strengthen South Carolina's position as a thriving hub for business and talent while fostering an inclusive, collaborative culture. Frey embraces opportunities to give back, saying she believes that strong communities are built through engagement and support. She actively participates in local initiatives and champions professional growth for others.

Photo courtesy of Jack Robert Photography



Municipal Association  
of South Carolina

Congratulations to  
**Executive Director  
Todd Glover**

for being recognized  
as one of the most  
influential people  
of the year.

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#CitiesMeanBusiness

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# CONGRATULATIONS, DIXON AND MICHELLE!

CHARLESTON

# 50

**MOST INFLUENTIAL  
HALL OF FAME**

**Dixon Woodward**

State President for SC  
and Coastal GA



GREENVILLE

# 50

**MOST INFLUENTIAL**

**Michelle Seaver**

Market President for  
Greenville, Spartanburg,  
and Cherokee Counties



**Dolly Garfield**

Chief Executive Officer  
South Carolina Education Lottery



Dolly Garfield has been with the South Carolina Education Lottery for nine years and serves as the chief executive officer. Previously, Garfield was the agency's general

counsel. Prior to entering the lottery industry, she was a career prosecutor for the Fifth Judicial Circuit in Columbia for nearly 20 years, prosecuting mostly violent crimes, including several high-profile murders. She was awarded the John R. Justice Community Leadership Award by the South Carolina Commission on Prosecution Coordination. She is a 2024 recipient of the University of South Carolina School of Law Gold Compleat Lawyer Award. She serves as a board member of South Carolina's Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel, her local neighborhood council, and formerly on various committees with the Junior League of Columbia.

James Quantz Jr.

**Mark Hammond**

Secretary of State  
State of South Carolina



Mark Hammond was elected to the post of South Carolina secretary of state in 2002, and he has won re-election five times since then. Prior to his election, Hammond

worked as a criminal investigator assisting prosecutors for the 7th Circuit Solicitor's Office, and from 1997 to 2002, he worked as clerk of court for Spartanburg County. His accomplishments as secretary of state include initiating reforms targeting charity and telemarketing abuses and launching Give Smart SC, a free app that allows donors to look up charities registered to solicit in South Carolina. Hammond is an ex-officio member of the South Carolina Consumer Affairs Commission and Legislative Council and serves on the Newberry College board of trustees.

Sam Holland

**Claire Gibbons**

Executive Director  
Power:Ed

Claire Gibbons has been executive director of Power:Ed, the philanthropy arm of South Carolina Student Loan, since 2022. She oversees all outreach, grant, and partnership operations and says that her goal is to build a statewide network of collaborative partners aligned in making a transformative impact on South Carolina students' lives and career opportunities. Before joining Power:Ed, Gibbons spent 11 years at Charleston Regional Development Alliance, where she was director of global marketing and communications. She earned bachelor's degrees from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a master's from George Washington University.

**Todd Glover**

Executive Director  
Municipal Association of South Carolina



Todd Glover joined the Municipal Association of South Carolina as executive director in 2019. Prior to joining the association, Glover served in local government for

25 years in capacities as city administrator and assistant county administrator. He began his career with the Lower Savannah Council of Governments. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of South Carolina Aiken where he was later recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus and graduated "With Distinction" from Augusta University with a master's degree in public administration. He also holds the Credentialed Manager designation from ICMA. He is now focusing the Municipal Association's resources, training, and social media to bringing civility back to public discourse and the association's board has adopted civility as a key component of the association's strategic plan.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Amberg

**Sara Hazzard**

President and CEO  
South Carolina Manufacturers and Commerce



Sara Hazzard is president and chief executive officer of the South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance (SCMA). She will serve as the president and CEO of the South Carolina Manufacturers and Commerce effective Jan. 1, 2026.

Hazzard, a well-known advocate and voice for the state's 6,000 manufacturers and their more than 300,000 employees, was appointed to SCMA's top leadership role after spearheading SCMA government relations for more than a decade. A member of the Presbyterian College Board of Trustees, Hazzard previously served on the boards of the South Carolina Economic Developers Association, Sustain SC, and the Palmetto Center for Women, which she also chaired. Gov. Henry McMaster appointed Hazzard to the statewide taskforce that responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. Hazzard is also Port Ambassador for the South Carolina Ports Authority.

Travis Bell

**Rich Heimann**

State Director of AI  
State of South Carolina



Rich Heimann is the inaugural director of artificial intelligence for the State of South Carolina and the author of several books, including "AI Revealed," "Doing AI," and the

forthcoming "Sutskever's List" (Manning Publications). He previously served as chief AI officer at SilverSky and Cybraics, and as a Technical Fellow and Chief Data Scientist at L-3 National Security Solutions. A member of George Mason University's AI in Government Council, he holds patents in cybersecurity threat analysis and has been an adjunct faculty member at George Mason University and the University of Maryland.

Photo courtesy of Jared Wolfe

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TO ALL OF THE 2025  
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**CB** CHARLESTON  
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**FutureScholar**  
South Carolina's 529 College Savings Plan

## Caps off to you, Treasurer Loftis!

Congratulations to State Treasurer Curtis Loftis for being named one of **Columbia Business Monthly's 50 Most Influential!** Thanks to his dedication, Future Scholar has become one of the nation's premier 529 college savings plans and makes it easy for South Carolina families to save for college.



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**Krista Hinson**

Executive Director  
South Carolina Retail Association



As executive director of the South Carolina Retail Association, Krista Hinson is a leading voice for South Carolina's business community and a driving force behind policies that

strengthen one the state's most foundational industries. She was selected to lead the Retail Association in December 2022, recognized by the board as bringing "the perfect combination of association and government relations experience" to the role. Since assuming leadership, Hinson has strategically positioned the retail industry as an indispensable driver of South Carolina's economy and workforce. She is a leading advocate at the State House on issues ranging from organized retail crime prevention to regulatory modernization and economic development policy. She is a graduate of the Leadership South Carolina program and was recently selected by her peers to serve on the Council of State Retail Associations board.

Photo provided

**Bill Kirkland**

Interim President/CEO  
SCRA



Appointed by Gov. Henry McMaster in February 2025 as chair of the South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA) board of trustees, Bill Kirkland also serves as SCRA's interim

president and CEO. Kirkland previously served as the managing partner at, as well as founded, the 1818 Consulting Group. Additional prior roles include executive director of the Office of Economic Engagement at the University of South Carolina, chairman of the board for the USC-Columbia Technology Incubator, and co-founder/president/CEO of Collexis Holdings, Inc. Additionally, Kirkland spent two decades in global senior leadership positions at both IBM and Pfizer. He is a graduate of the University of South Carolina and also served in the United States Coast Guard.

Photo provided

**Douglas Kim**

Intellectual Property Attorney  
Kim and Lahey Law Firm, LLC



Douglas Kim began his career as a software engineer before attending law school and entering intellectual property. Combining technical fluency with legal

experience, Kim provides legal strategies with a business-oriented approach to help clients with a solid legal strategy to support their business goals. He provides legal solutions to clients ranging from early ventures to multinational corporations, helping them protect inventions (patents), brands (trademarks), creative works (copyrights), software, AI, websites, and trade secrets ("the secret sauce"). His integration of IP creation, enforcement, and licensing support and enhance his client's business goals. Kim's experience spans many client types and industries, including advanced materials, consumer products, artificial intelligence, software, data privacy and security, manufacturing, and product packaging. He has assisted in securing some of the earliest blockchain and AI patents in South Carolina.

Photo courtesy of David Junker, Muse 10 Photography

**John W. Kittredge**

Chief Justice  
South Carolina Supreme Court



John W. Kittredge was elected to the South Carolina Supreme Court in 2008, ascending to chief justice in 2024. A native of Greenville, Kittredge began his legal

career as a law clerk to the Honorable William W. Wilkins Jr., and he later practiced in the law firm of Wilkins, Nelson, and Kittredge. He was elected to the South Carolina family court bench in 1991, the circuit court bench in 1996, and the Court of Appeals in 2003. He has served on the Governor's Juvenile Justice Task Force, the City of Greenville Civil Service Commission, Greenville County Crime Stoppers, and the Child Evangelism Fellowship board of directors.

Photo courtesy of South Carolina Judicial Branch

**Thornton Kirby**

President and CEO  
South Carolina Hospital Association



Before joining SCHA, Thornton Kirby practiced law as a health care attorney and worked as a hospital executive. He also served as executive secretary to the board

of trustees for Clemson University. This unique combination of experiences has combined to make him a well-respected thought leader on state and federal health care policy issues. Kirby also has extensive experience with governing boards. He has served on more than 50 boards, leading 10 of them as chairman. His board service includes nine years of service on the board of Joint Commission International, including two years as chair. He studied government at the University of Virginia, and he earned his law degree at the University of South Carolina. Kirby is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Photo courtesy of Renee McManus

**Nick Kremydas**

Chief Executive Officer  
South Carolina Association of REALTORS



Nick Kremydas is chief executive officer of the South Carolina REALTORS (SCR), the state's largest professional trade association, representing almost 30,000 real estate

professionals. As CEO, he drives the strategic vision, legal compliance, and governmental advocacy for the organization. With over three decades of dedication to South Carolina real estate, including extensive experience as general counsel, Kremydas is recognized as a leading authority on state and national industry issues. His work centers on protecting private property rights, ensuring affordable homeownership, and raising the ethical bar for agents across the state. Kremydas is a passionate champion for the Realtor value proposition, translating complex regulatory challenges and market trends into actionable insights for members. His core philosophy is simple: empower every Realtor with the competence and support needed to build a successful career and serve South Carolina's communities.

Collin M. Smith Portrait Photo

## Harry M. Lightsey III

Secretary of Commerce  
South Carolina Department of Commerce



Harry M. Lightsey III was appointed by Gov. Henry McMaster to serve as Secretary of Commerce in June 2021. Since his confirmation, Lightsey has led the agency's globally

competitive recruitment strategy – leveraged through the “Launch to Legacy” brand – for South Carolina’s evolving target industries, resulting in multiple years of historic economic development performance. Under Lightsey’s leadership, the state has secured some of the largest projects in South Carolina history, including Scout Motors’ \$2 billion investment in Richland County. He championed the establishment and federal designation for the Nexus for Advanced Resilient Energy, elevating South Carolina’s position in advanced energy and mobility innovation. He has served as president of BellSouth Telecommunications for South Carolina prior to the company’s merger with AT&T, afterward becoming president for AT&T’s Southeast region. He most recently served as a principal with Hawksbill Advisors.

Photo courtesy of Travis Bell Photography

## Curtis Loftis

State Treasurer  
State of South Carolina



Curtis Loftis is now in his fourth term as state treasurer for South Carolina. He was first elected in 2010, and in his role, he is responsible for managing, investing,

and retaining custody of more than \$75 billion in public funds, ensuring that South Carolina maintains its highly coveted credit ratings. He also serves as administrator of the state’s Unclaimed Property Program, Future Scholar 529 College Savings Plan, and Palmetto ABLE Savings Program. Loftis serves as chairman of the State Board of Financial Institutions, vice chairman of the State Fiscal Accountability Authority, vice chairman of the South Carolina Education Authority, and vice chairman of the South Carolina Tobacco Authority.

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**Deepening partnerships** to support economic development, community engagement and public service.

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**Sarah Lyles**

Executive Director  
PalmettoPride



Since 2006, PalmettoPride has helped more than 797,404 volunteers remove 91,846,724 pounds of litter from South Carolina roads and natural areas. Sarah

Lyles, who has served as executive director since 2013, said she believes in empowering people to create the changes they want to see in their own communities. By giving individuals ownership, support, and a clear reason to get involved, she helps them build cleaner, safer, and healthier places to live. Lyles views litter prevention as just one piece of a much larger puzzle — an entry point that leads to stronger neighborhoods and greater economic development opportunities.

Photo courtesy of Forrest Clonts

**Michael Mizeur**

President/CEO  
BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina



Michael Mizeur serves as the president and CEO of BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina. In 2022, Mizeur was appointed to serve in the role of chief executive officer

of BlueCross. As CEO, he is responsible for all operating areas including the BlueCross BlueShield Commercial Health Division, Government Contracting Division which operates as the Celerian group of companies, and all other corporate subsidiaries. This includes more than 20 companies involved in health insurance services and a philanthropic foundation that funds programs to improve health care and access to health care for South Carolinians. Mizeur began his career at BlueCross in 1998 after seven years with Ernst & Young. He served in a variety of senior leadership roles at BlueCross including chief financial officer for 10 years and most recently president and chief operating officer. Mizeur also has a BBA from Western Michigan University and an MBA from Duke University.

Rick Smoak

**Micah Mallace**

President and CEO  
South Carolina Ports Authority



Micah Mallace became president and CEO of SC Ports on Oct. 6, 2025, and is the seventh leader in the history of the organization. He returns to SC Ports after serving

as president of Harbor Logistics, a third-party logistics company specializing in port drayage, warehousing, and transload operations. Under his leadership, Harbor navigated the post-pandemic freight recession through operational turnaround, geographic expansion, and strategic acquisitions. Previously at SC Ports, Mallace served as chief commercial officer. He started with the SC Ports in 2011 and held a range of commercial and economic development roles. Mallace played a pivotal role in attracting and executing major projects, including Samsung's plant in Newberry, Gallo Winery's facility in Fort Lawn, and Walmart's Ridgeville distribution center. Earlier in his career, he gained commercial real estate experience with Riverstone Residential and resort management with Vail Resorts.

Photo courtesy of English Hurteau

**Nick Nicholson**

Managing Director and Shareholder  
Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd, P.A.



Nick Nicholson has served as the managing director of Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd, P.A. since 2013. He practices in the areas of procurement and government contracts,

local government law and construction law. His clients include municipal and county governments, state agencies, higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations, business owners, and contractors. In 2019, Nicholson received the "Compleat Lawyer" award from the University of South Carolina School of Law Alumni Council. This award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the legal profession and exemplify the highest standards of professional competence, ethics and integrity. Nicholson has previously served on the boards of the S.C. Chamber of Commerce, Public Charter School Alliance of South Carolina, and Meyer Center for Special Children. He is a graduate of Leadership South Carolina and Leadership Greenville.

Photo courtesy of Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd P.A.

**Bill Medich**

Group President | South Carolina  
SouthState Bank



Bill Medich, Banking Group president at SouthState Bank, is responsible for the bank's operations in South Carolina. A graduate of the Graduate School of Banking at

LSU and the University of South Carolina, he joined SouthState 19 years ago. Medich serves his community as a member of the Palmetto Business Forum, SouthArts board member, and chair emeritus of the Spoleto Festival USA. He is also past board chair of the Coastal Community Foundation, the Gibbes Museum of Art, and the College of Charleston Foundation. Additionally, Medich is a Liberty Fellow, class of 2007.

Photo provided by SouthState.

**Mark Nix**

Executive Director  
South Carolina Home Builders Association



As executive director of the SC Homebuilders Association, Mark Nix has made advocacy of property rights and home attainability the hallmarks of his calling. In the

face of numerous unprecedented adversities, including pandemic shutdowns, an economic recession, and natural disasters, Nix's guidance ensured that the residential housing industry continued to flourish and grow. His spirit, ingenuity, and determination have changed the face of housing for the better — making South Carolina one of the strongest markets in the country.

Photo provided

## Cristina Paredes

Executive Director  
SC NEXUS



Cristina Paredes is executive director of SC Nexus, South Carolina's TechHub for Advanced Resilient Energy. SC Nexus leads technology-driven economic development,

advancing energy innovation to build a resilient energy value chain that enhances national security and global competitiveness. Under Paredes' leadership, SC Nexus drives lab-to-market solutions, attracting cutting-edge companies and research to South Carolina. With 20 years of experience spanning economic development, community development, and strategic leadership, she is a leader in advancing innovation and resilience. She has built a strong record of forging partnerships, securing funding, and shaping policies that accelerate technology deployment and economic growth. Paredes has successfully guided major initiatives — from regional innovation labs to advanced manufacturing facilities — and her results-driven leadership has earned her multiple awards, including recognition as one of North America's Top 50 Economic Developers.

Photo courtesy of Sarah Gray

## Thomas Rhodes

Partner  
Rhodes Companies



Thomas Rhodes is a fourth-generation South Carolina entrepreneur and partner at Rhodes Companies, a diversified holding company with operations across

the United States. He serves as a commissioner of the South Carolina Department of Transportation, representing the entire state. Rhodes also served as chairman of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, where he was the youngest chair in the organization's history. During his tenure, he led the successful merger with the South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance, creating South Carolina Manufacturers and Commerce (SCMC), the unified voice for business and industry across the state. His leadership spans both the public and private sectors, with current and past board service including the Clemson University Board of Visitors, Midlands Business Leadership Group, the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA), and the Salvation Army of the Midlands.

Photo courtesy of Joshua Aaron Photography

## Tim Pearson

President  
Duke Energy South Carolina



Tim Pearson is president of Duke Energy's utility operations in South Carolina, which serves approximately 855,600 electric retail customers and 168,800 natural gas

customers. He is responsible for the financial performance of Duke Energy's regulated utilities in the state, as well as leading state and local regulatory and government relations, and community affairs. He also has responsibility for advancing the company's legislative and regulatory initiatives related to its electric operations. Prior to assuming his current position in November 2024, Pearson first served as a valuable part of the Duke Energy team as an adviser and consultant before joining the company full time as vice president of government affairs in 2023. In that expanded role, he was integral in advancing the conversation around energy policy in South Carolina.

Photo courtesy of Duke Energy

## Erinn Rowe

CEO  
Harvest Hope Food Bank



Erinn Rowe has been CEO of Harvest Hope Food Bank since 2021. She joined Harvest Hope's board of directors in 2015, and was board chair when the sit-

ting CEO died in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Under her leadership, HHFB scaled its disaster response during that difficult time. A former banking executive, Rowe has guided the organization through extraordinary growth. Annual food distribution has increased by more than 50 percent, providing more than 25 million meals to neighbors across 20 counties. Programs like the Backpack Child Feeding initiative now serve more than 47,000 weekend meal kits per year to children who would otherwise go hungry. She has expanded Mobile Markets to reach mobility-limited and rural communities. She's also spearheaded transformative partnerships, like the Daily Harvest Kitchen at Transitions Homeless Center, which now serves over 600 hot meals a day.

Photo provided

## L. Jeffrey Perez, Ph.D.

President and Executive Director  
South Carolina Commission on  
Higher Education



L. Jeffrey Perez, Ph.D., joined the Commission on Higher Education as president and executive director in July 2024. Perez has 25 years of dynamic higher education

leadership in three states, including 16 years in South Carolina. Prior to the CHE, Perez was president and CEO of South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, where he oversaw advocacy, fundraising, and campus support initiatives on behalf of SCICU's 21 member institutions and 36,000 students. In his time at SCICU, Perez provided robust management of the organization, strengthening its capacity to serve the member institutions while enhancing its financial position. He previously served as Winthrop University's vice president for university relations. He serves on the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce's Education and Workforce Development Committee and is a Furman University Riley Fellow.

Photo courtesy of the SC Commission on Higher Education

## Gary Siegfried

Executive Director  
South Carolina Aeronautics Commission



Gary Siegfried serves as executive director of the South Carolina Aeronautics Commission (SCAC), where he leads statewide efforts to enhance airport safety, strengthen airport

infrastructure, expand aviation education, and provide air transportation support for state officials. Since joining SCAC in 2016, Siegfried has advanced through several leadership roles, playing a central part in improving the state's airport network. He oversees the statewide airport capital improvement plan, guides policy development, and ensures that airport projects align with state and federal standards and funding programs. His work has driven statewide initiatives including economic impact analyses, and systemwide maintenance and safety programs. Before entering public service, Siegfried served as facilities manager for the Augusta Regional Airport and managed aviation engineering projects for Mead & Hunt, Inc., a nationwide airport engineering and planning consultant.

Photo courtesy of Dale Estrada

**Leslie Skardon**

CEO  
Sustain SC



Leslie Skardon is CEO of Sustain SC, a nonprofit organization connecting sectors across South Carolina to optimize the use of our natural resources in a way that is sustain-

able for both the economy and the environment. Prior to joining Sustain SC, she built and executed strategies to drive business growth for Fortune 500 companies, governments, nonprofits, and institutions. As a strategic communications and public affairs professional, she specializes in advising purpose-driven clients to uncover strategies to meet business goals while positively impacting their communities. Skardon was recently elected to Charleston City Council to represent District 12, was appointed by Gov. McMaster to the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission, and serves on the City of Charleston Commission on Women. She founded the nonprofit Charleston Civil Rights and Civics.

Photo courtesy of Erin O'Connor

**David Summer**

Partner  
Parker Poe



David Summer has devoted his career to helping health care clients solve problems and seize opportunities. He is proud of the relationships he has built with hospital

executives and other providers in South Carolina and across the country. Summer knows firsthand about the challenges that hospitals and their boards face in operating their facilities in a complex regulatory environment. His experience as a past business owner and hospital board member, combined with his extensive legal career, enables him to serve as a trusted adviser and help clients navigate day-to-day compliance. He has served on Parker Poe's board of directors for over a decade. He is a past president of the Rotary Club of Five Points and a past member of the board of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce.

Photo courtesy of Parker Poe

**Jesse Smith**

Executive Director  
S.C. Jobs-Economic Development Authority



Jesse Smith leads the Jobs & Economic Development Authority as it promotes and develops the business and economic welfare of South Carolina by assisting in

financing public and private projects. With more than 22 years in the financial services industry, Smith began his career in banking. He worked mostly as a commercial banker with First Citizens, expanding the commercial portfolio and providing long- and short-term financial solutions. He enjoys being involved with community organizations such as the Business Development Corporation, Columbia College Foundation, and Columbia Museum of Art. He is also a board member of The Palmetto Club, Southern Bank, and InvestSC.

Photo provided

**Ashely Teasdel**

Deputy Secretary of Commerce  
South Carolina Department of Commerce



Ashely Teasdel has served as Deputy Secretary of Commerce since November 2021, working alongside Secretary Harry Lightsey to steer South Carolina's globally com-

petitive recruitment strategy and help secure some of the state's most significant economic development wins on record. She also drives key programmatic priorities, including the state's "Launch to Legacy" competitiveness framework, public-private collaboration to advance South Carolina's energy leadership through the federally designated SC NEXUS tech hub, and expanded global diplomacy efforts to strengthen research and trade partnerships. Previously, Teasdel served as director of S.C. Commerce's Business Services division, which focuses on small business development and existing industry support. Teasdel was instrumental leading the agency's Covid-19 response efforts. Prior to joining SC Commerce in 2015, Teasdel spent almost a decade in the banking sector, focusing on small business advisory support and development within South Carolina.

Photo courtesy of SC Department of Commerce

**William H. "Bill" Stern**

Chair of SC Ports, CEO Stern Group  
Board of Directors, Ameris Bank



South Carolina Ports Authority (SCPA) Board Chairman William H. "Bill" Stern is president and CEO of Stern Group, a commercial real estate and investment company

which owns and manages real estate throughout the Southeastern United States. Stern has been with the firm for over 35 years, and during that time he has also dedicated a great deal of time to public and community service. Stern was awarded the Order of the Palmetto, the state's highest civilian honor, in 1999. In addition to serving on the SCPA board since 2001, including 10 years as chairman, Stern serves on the Ameris Bank and Ameris Bancorp Corporate board of directors. He is active in the work of his synagogue, a member of the SC Coordinating Council for Economic Development, and United Jewish Welfare Federation. Stern studied business at the University of Miami and the University of South Carolina.

Photo provided

**David Tigges**

Partner Strategic Growth  
Burr Forman



David Tigges is Burr Forman's partner in charge of strategic growth and sits in the firm's Administrative, Government, and Regulatory practice group. Tigges

previously was the CEO of McNair Law Firm for approximately 10 years. McNair eliminated debt and significantly increased profits during that decade. The firm combined with Burr Forman in 2019. After the firms combined, Tigges was in charge of the integration process and cost reduction efforts. He also served on the executive committee for five years, and he leads the governmental relations practice group. During this time period, he successfully recruited 25 partners and opened offices in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Tigges said the combination has exceeded expectations.

Tiffany Broom

## J. Richards “Rick” Todd

President and CEO  
South Carolina Trucking Association



J. Richards “Rick” Todd has spent the past 46 years with the South Carolina Trucking Association. He began his career as assistant general manager and was named

CEO in 1988. In this role, Todd has lobbied for the trucking industry, leading initiatives that brought reform to the industry and improved tax conditions. He also helped spearhead the creation of the State Transport Police and Motor Carrier Services. Todd is also a graduate of the University of South Carolina.

Photo provided

## Hugh Weathers

Commissioner of Agriculture  
State of South Carolina



Hugh Weathers has served as South Carolina’s agriculture commissioner since 2004. Weathers, a native of Bowman, is a fourth-generation farmer and a partner in his family’s farming operation. A graduate of University of South Carolina, Weathers worked in banking with C&S Bank earlier in his career. During his time as agriculture commissioner, Weathers oversaw the implementation of the Certified South Carolina and Fresh on the Menu branding programs. He also created the Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship, which has awarded over \$1 million to 91 agricultural entrepreneurs, funded several industry-driven research projects, and led dozens of business workshops throughout the state.

Halie Brazier

## David Torris

Market President  
Fifth Third Bank, National Association



David Torris serves as market president for Western North Carolina, South Carolina, and Coastal Georgia at Fifth Third Bank, National Association. In this role,

he leads regional strategy, business development, and community engagement, ensuring that clients across commercial, consumer, and wealth segments receive tailored financial solutions. Since joining Fifth Third in 2024, Torris has been instrumental in expanding the bank’s footprint and strengthening relationships in high-growth markets throughout the Southeast. With nearly 40 years of banking experience and more than three decades as a South Carolina resident, he brings deep expertise in financial management and leadership. He is a member of the Euphoria Greenville board and has served on the boards of Artisphere and Clemson’s College of Business and Behavioral Sciences.

Eric Glenn Photography

## Alan Wilson

Attorney General  
State of South Carolina



Alan Wilson was elected to the post of South Carolina’s 51st attorney general in 2010 and is now serving his fourth term in the position. He oversees an office of almost 300

employees and about 90 attorneys who manage nearly 8,000 active cases. A graduate of Francis Marion University and the USC School of Law, Wilson previously served as state assistant attorney general. During his tenure as AG, Wilson has helped lead a 26-state challenge to the federal health care mandate and helped to establish a Human Trafficking Task Force. He is a veteran of the Iraq War, where he earned the Combat Action Badge.

Photo provided

## Jeff Uphues

Chief Executive Officer  
DC BLOX



Jeff Uphues is CEO of DC BLOX, which designs, builds, and operates secure, interconnected data centers throughout the Southeast, including centers in Greenville and

Myrtle Beach. Uphues has been with DC BLOX since March 2017, and has worked in the information technology industry for three decades. He has held leadership roles with numerous companies, including Liquid Web, Cbeyond, and ACSI Network Technologies. Uphues holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Texas at Arlington and a graduate degree from Harvard Business School.

Brian Erkens

## Scott Woods

President and CEO  
South Carolina Federal Credit Union



Scott Woods is president and CEO of South Carolina Federal Credit Union, a role he has held for more than 20 years. Before joining South Carolina Federal, he was a senior

financial institution auditor with KPMG Peat Marwick, CPAs, the chief financial officer of S.C. Telco Federal Credit Union, and the chief financial officer of SRP Federal Credit Union. He has degrees from College of Charleston and Auburn University, and holds Certified Public Accountant and Certified Internal Auditor certificates. In addition to his professional leadership roles, Woods has served as chairman of the board of directors for the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, Charleston Southern University, and the Lowcountry SC Chapter of the American Red Cross. Woods is an active member of his church and a passionate supporter of Susan G. Komen, Water Mission, and One80 Place.

Photo courtesy of Tumbleston Photography Studios

SC Business Magazine Greenville Business Monthly Columbia CB CHARLESTON BUSINESS BB THE GRAND STRAND BB PEE DEE BUSINESS

# WOMEN *in* BUSINESS

## 2026

**SC Women in Business** is a statewide initiative that acknowledges professional women and their impact on the business and community landscapes across the Palmetto State.

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# 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL

2025

AND THE HALL OF FAME

Business Magazine  
Greenville

**Greenville Business Magazine** celebrates another year of honoring our region's most influential people. The 50 men and women on this list were chosen through many hours of staff research along with nominations from the community. These individuals have made important contributions to transforming the Upstate into the vibrant, fast-growing community that it has become in recent years. The honorees on this list are celebrated for their work in the fields of law, finance, health care, nonprofits, and more. We're especially impressed with the contributions they've made over the past 12 months.

We're also celebrating our 12th year of selecting entrants to our Hall of Fame. This year, we're adding six new members, people whose names have graced the list many times, but whose tireless work to make the Upstate a better place continues.

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*Photo by Greenville Headshots*

## **Meghan Barp**

**President and CEO**  
**United Way of Greenville County**

**Meghan Barp has worked with** United Way of Greenville County since 2018. As president and CEO, she and her team work across many sectors to help struggling families in Greenville County find pathways to opportunity and success. Barp has a long history with nonprofit work and philanthropy. Before coming to Greenville, she spent nine years with Greater Twin Cities United Way in Minnesota. She often speaks to national and local audiences on philanthropy, volunteerism, and social impact, and consults with corporations and organizations looking to deepen their community engagement. Barp has received many accolades for her work and leadership. In 2022 she was awarded distinguished alumna of the University of Nebraska Kearney, and in 2024, she was also honored as one of South Carolina's Top Women in Business. Barp received the Buck Mickel Leadership Award in 2022 for her visionary leadership on key community issues and, in 2024, was awarded the Visionary Leadership Award by the Community Foundation of Greenville. Her community service includes a previous term on the Peace Center board, and she now serves on the boards of the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, Greenville Technical College Area Commission, and the International Women's Forum Carolinas, where she is president-elect. "My secret to success is humility and curiosity," Barp says. "Being willing to learn from mistakes, ask hard questions, and recognize that success is always shared is key."



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**

# *A Legacy* of Influence

Named one of Greenville's 50 Most Influential and welcomed into the Hall of Fame, **Stephen Edgerton** joins a tradition of leadership long established at Caine. His recognition follows in the footsteps of **Brad Halter, Caine Halter, and Mark Masaschi** who have been recognized previously.

We are proud to see this honor reflect not just individual achievement, but the collective leadership and impact that has shaped Caine's role in our community for generations.

*Congratulations to all of this year's Most Influential honorees.*





*Photo by Amy Randall Photography*

## **Mike Baur**

**Chair and Chief Executive Officer  
ScanSource, Inc.**

**Mike Baur co-founded ScanSource Inc.** in 1992 in Greenville, and he now serves as chair and chief executive officer of the Greenville-headquartered company. Baur says he was led by an entrepreneurial spirit and a commitment to filling a need in the technology space to founding the company, which has grown into a \$3 billion, Fortune 1000, publicly traded company with 2,100 employees in North America and Brazil. An Anderson native and Clemson University grad, Baur served as ScanSource president from its inception in 1992 until 2000, when he was named chief executive officer. He joined the board of directors in 1995 and has been board chair since February 2019. Giving back has long been important to Baur, who established the employee-led ScanSource Charitable Foundation early in the company's history. He's also passionate about the community and wants to protect and cultivate the region, and to that end has served on the Upstate Forever board of directors since 2014. Baur has served on Clemson University's President's Advisory Board since 2021 and now serves on the Advisory Board of Bish's RV, an RV/camping dealership company. He previously served on the Peace Center board of trustees. His proudest accomplishment, Baur said, is ScanSource's summer internship program, which is "highly sought after and extremely well-orchestrated by our People and Culture team. Designed to attract talented rising seniors from local universities, the program identifies candidates who can make a meaningful impact after graduation. We aspire to fill our talent pool the following year with as many individuals from our summer cohort as possible."



**HALL OF FAME  
INDUCTEE**

# Paul Clark

**Managing Director**  
**VentureSouth**

**As managing director of VentureSouth**, Paul Clark has helped more than 120 companies across the Southeast grow their businesses. VentureSouth is a network of angel investors in the Carolinas, and its members have invested nearly \$100 million in companies in the region. At VentureSouth, Clark works to create new angel groups, and he identifies and evaluates investment opportunities, and he also works with entrepreneurs to develop their businesses and attract growth capital. He also serves as general partner of the eight VentureSouth Angel Funds that co-invest alongside the active angel groups. Before moving to Greenville, Clark was a principal at the New York- and London-based PC Partners, a leading large-cap private equity firm with over \$25 billion under management. He began his career at NMRothschild & Sons, the City of London investment bank, where he specialized in mergers and acquisitions advisory and capital raising services to health care companies in Europe. Clark earned a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Durham in the U.K. and a master's degree in medieval history from Fordham University in New York. When asked about the secret to his success, Clark said, "90 percent of success is showing up." His goal for the next three years is "to make VentureSouth part of the premier platform for investing in alternative assets in the South."



*Photo by Amy Randall Photography*



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**



## Stephen Edgerton

**CEO/Principal**  
**The Caine Companies**

**Stephen Edgerton** has been with the Caine Companies, which includes KDS Caine, Coldwell Banker Caine, and Caine Hayes Insurance, for more than 15 years, moving up from his initial role as chief operating officer. Over the years, Edgerton has helped the company evolve its extensive footprint, which includes brokerage services, development services, property management, and consulting services. The company is also behind the extensive County Square redevelopment project near downtown Greenville. Edgerton, who holds an MBA from the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University, serves as secretary on the Artisphere board of directors. He also serves on the boards of the Metro Greenville YMCA Foundation and United Way of Greenville County. He is chairman-elect of the Coldwell Banker Multi-Office Brokerage Peer Group and a member of the Young Presidents Organization. Philanthropy has long been important to Edgerton, who leads his company's Caine Cares program, which provides financial support for causes in the community in the areas of arts, health, wellbeing, and animal welfare. Edgerton is also a longtime volunteer with Meals on Wheels, where he has delivered meals on the same route for more than 16 years.

*Photo by Amy Randall Photography*



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**

# Robert W. "Bob" Morris

**President**  
 Community Foundation of Greenville

**Bob Morris began his career** in banking before making the transition to philanthropy. He has been president of the Community Foundation of Greenville since 1999, and during his time there, the foundation has distributed more than \$200 million in grants in Greenville County. In addition to his previous work in banking, Morris also holds a law degree, and he serves as a member of the Fiduciary and Estate Planning Section of the North Carolina Bar. Giving back is important to Morris, who in 2020 led efforts to raise \$900,000 for investment with the Greenville Housing Fund. He's been heavily involved in the Upstate community over the years, serving on the board of Artisphere and working with such organizations as OnTrack Greenville, Greater Good Greenville, Greenville Partnership for Philanthropy, and Greenville Women Giving. He has been a Paul Harris Fellow and is a member of the Veterans Support Committee of the Greenville Rotary Club. Morris says that helping to establish Greenville Women Giving and OnTrack Greenville are among his proudest professional accomplishments. Asked about his goals for the next three years, Morris said, "In addition to increasing the impact and scope of the Community Foundation, my board of directors and I are taking the steps to ensure the next president has the financial resources, board expertise, and professional expertise to succeed well into the next 25 years."



*Photo by Greenville Headshots*



**HALL OF FAME  
 INDUCTEE**



*Photo by Amy Randall Photography*

## **Liz Seman**

**Greenville County Council Chair Pro Tem,  
Chief of Staff and Vice President for  
Community Relations  
Furman University**

**Liz Seman has enjoyed** a varied career since moving to Greenville in 1999. At present, she is chief of staff and vice president for community relations at Furman University, as well as chair pro tem of Greenville County Council. But she has also worked for the American Red Cross, Hands On Greenville, and Meals on Wheels in recent years. A native of Chicago, Seman was first elected to Greenville County Council in 2008, representing District 24, and since then she has led efforts to livestream all council meetings and add electronic voting for roll-call votes. She serves on the Roads, Infrastructure, and Public Works Committee, as well as the Communications and Governmental Affairs Committee. Seman serves on the executive committees of the Upstate South Carolina Alliance and VisitGreenvilleSC, and on the boards of Greenville Women Giving, the Hispanic Alliance, Artisphere, and Greenville Symphony Orchestra. In 2023, Seman received the Ruth Nicholson Award from the Community Foundation of Greenville, given for significant volunteer contributions to the Upstate, whether it's through the Community Foundation or through other volunteer work. She says that the strength of South Carolina, and Greenville County in particular, is "our people! I would also say our strength is our ability to execute strong public-private partnerships."



**HALL OF FAME  
INDUCTEE**

**PREVIOUS HALL OF FAME  
 INDUCTEES**

This year's Hall Of Fame inductees will join a prestigious group who, over the years, have consistently proven to be among the Most Influential in Greenville.

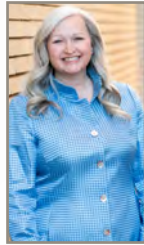
**2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES**



**JODY  
 BRYSON**



**MATTHEW  
 CALDWELL**



**JESSICA  
 DONAN**



**ALAN  
 ETHRIDGE**



**SEAN  
 HARTNESS**



**RANDY  
 JACKSON SR.**



**MARK  
 O'HALLA**



**BETH  
 PAUL**

**2023**

**WILLIAM W. BROWN  
 MATT DUNBAR  
 JONATHAN "JON" GOOD  
 S. RICHARD HAGINS  
 BOB STEGNER  
 BRUCE WHITE**

**2022**

**MARY DUCKETT  
 HENRY HOROWITZ  
 DEBORAH MCKETTY  
 DAVID WISE**

**2021**

**PAMELA EVETTE  
 MARK FARRIS  
 REV. J.M. FLEMMING  
 LYNN HARTON  
 CARLOS PHILLIPS  
 DJ RAMA  
 DR. NIKA WHITE**

**2020**

**JAMES P. CLEMENTS  
 ELIZABETH DAVIS  
 JOHN LUMMUS  
 E. SMYTH MCKISSICK III  
 ADELA MENDOZA  
 CHRIS STONE**

**2019**

**DEBBIE BELL  
 HENRY C. HARRISON  
 DAVID LOMINACK  
 STEPHEN P. NAVARRO**

**2018**

**DAN ADAMS  
 MERL CODE  
 RICK DAVIS  
 SAM KONDUROS  
 PETER LAROCQUE  
 STEWART SPINKS  
 STEVE TOWNES  
 VIVIAN WONG**

**2017**

**CRAIG BROWN  
 DAVID N. EDWARDS, JR., A.A.E  
 BUTCH KIRVEN  
 RAY LATTIMORE  
 DR. KEITH MILLER  
 MIKE RIORDAN**

**2016**

**CHANDRA DILLARD  
 GEORGE FLETCHER  
 VELDA HUGHES  
 JIL LITTLEJOHN  
 MEGAN RIEGEL  
 DR. BOB TAYLOR**

**2015**

**JOE ERWIN  
 LILLIAN BROCK FLEMMING  
 XANTHENE NORRIS  
 RICHARD W. "DICK" RILEY  
 CARL SOBOCINSKI  
 JOHN WARNER**

**2014**

**BOB HUGHES  
 PHIL HUGHES  
 MINOR MICKEL SHAW  
 KNOX WHITE  
 NANCY WHITWORTH  
 DAVID WILKINS**

**2012**

**DANNY JOYNER  
 W. BURKE ROYSTER, PH.D.  
 ART SEAVER**

**Cedric Adderley**

**President**  
**South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities**



Cedric Adderley became the fourth president of the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities (SCGSAH), located in Greenville, in

2015. Adderley is a musician and composer who holds a master's degree in music composition and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree. He began his educational career as a public school teacher in junior high and high school, then moved on to the higher education world before joining SCGSAH. A trumpeter and vocalist, Adderley has had his musical compositions performed by the South Carolina Philharmonic, Rutgers Philharmonia, and the Bulgarian National Radio Symphony.

Christina Vandiver

**Bruce Benson**

**SVP-Retail Market Manager- Western Carolinas Region**  
**TD Bank**



Bruce Benson has more than 24 years of experience in the retail banking industry, including 15 years with TD Bank. Throughout his career, he has built a reputation

for leading high-performing teams. Benson joined TD Bank in 2011 as a store manager and quickly advanced into leadership roles. In 2012, he was promoted to team lead, and soon after became regional market manager for Western North Carolina. Following the merger of the Legacy Upstate SC and Legacy WNC markets, Bruce helped shape the newly formed Western Carolinas region, which now encompasses 25 stores. He serves as co-lead for the Carolinas chapter of the Black Employee Network and previously held co-lead roles for Minorities in Leadership and Latinos in Leadership.

Photo Provided

**Gail Awan, Ph.D.**

**President and CEO**  
**Urban League of the Upstate**



Gail Wilson Awan, Ph.D., has served as president and CEO of the Urban League of the Upstate since 2021, advancing equity, opportunity, and quality of life across a

10-county region. Under her leadership, ULUS has strengthened its impact through major initiatives such as the McClaren Institute for Health & Quality of Life and the Jane Edna Hunter Empowerment Center in Anderson. She also launched the ULUS Entrepreneurship and Career Development Center (ECDC) in Spartanburg, which houses Studio 9.22, a film and television workforce program. Awan is the 2025 recipient of the Carol Burdette Leadership Award. She serves on several boards, including the South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service, the Polk County Film Initiative, and the National Association of Nonprofit Organizations & Executives. A Schott Foundation Fellow, she is the author of two books.

Photo Courtesy of Chris Kelly, KB Photography

**Stacy Brandon**

**President**  
**Bank of America Upstate SC Market**



Stacy Brandon is Bank of America's Upstate South Carolina president. As market president, Brandon is responsible for connecting clients, teammates, and

communities to the full power of the franchise, driving integration across the bank's eight lines of business. She oversees the bank's efforts to grow market share by fostering local connections and identifying opportunities to grow and deepen client relationships. Outside of work, she has served on the boards of the South Carolina Bankers Association, the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, Emmanuel's Hammer, and the Upcountry History Museum.

Photo Provided

**Bruce Bannister**

**Partner, Bannister, Wyatt & Stalvey, LLC**  
**Member, South Carolina House of Representatives**



Bruce Bannister is a partner at Bannister, Wyatt & Stalvey, LLC, where he focuses on family law, real estate law, and eminent domain. He has served in the South Carolina House

of Representatives since 2005 and currently chairs the House Ways and Means Committee and the Criminal Law Subcommittee. From 2012 to 2016, he was majority leader for the South Carolina House Republican Caucus. Bannister earned his undergraduate degree from Davidson College and his Juris Doctor from the University of South Carolina School of Law. He has served on the boards of the Peace Center, the Children's Museum of the Upstate, and A Child's Haven.

Photo Provided

**Thomas R. "Tom" Britt Jr.**

**President**  
**Bank of Travelers Rest**



Thomas R. "Tom" Britt Jr. has been president of the Bank of Travelers Rest since 2015, but he started his career with the bank in 1992. A Greenville native, Britt

is a graduate of University of South Carolina-Spartanburg, and has professional training through the RMA Commercial Lending School at East Carolina University, USC Banker's School, and the Mary Brewer Institute of Insurance. He serves on the Greenville Technical College Area Commission. Britt's other community service includes stints on the Cherrydale Area Council, the Appalachian Development Corporation, and as former chair of March of Dimes Walk-Spartanburg.

Photo Courtesy of Bank of Travelers Rest

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**Matthew Cabe**

President and CEO  
Michelin North America, Inc.



Matthew Cabe is responsible for coordinating all activities of Michelin in North America, Inc., which includes approximately 23,500 employees across Canada and the

United States. This also includes responsibility for all key customer-facing functions of Michelin North. Concurrent with this Michelin appointment, Cabe also sits on the U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association (USTMA) board. Cabe joined Michelin in 2005, and has held various leadership roles in engineering, manufacturing, marketing, and other commercial functions in North America and at the global level. From 2021 to 2024, Cabe served as senior vice president of the Michelin Group's automotive regional brands business line based in Budapest, Hungary. From 2017 to 2021, he served in a number of marketing leadership positions for the North American passenger car and light truck business.

Photo Provided

**Wallace Cheves**

Principal  
Cheves Capital



Wallace Cheves has a long history as a businessman and entrepreneur in the Upstate. A graduate of Wofford College, Cheves first discovered an interest

in property development during a senior year internship with a real estate developer. His career has included a stint with The Marchant Company and as an advocate to change the laws related to gambling in North and South Carolina. He helped to secure approval for the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians to open Two Kings Casino in Kings Mountain, North Carolina, in 2021. Cheves is co-owner of the Greenville Triumph and Greenville Liberty pro soccer teams.

Kings and Queens Productions

**Carey Ann Campbell**

CEO  
Southern Tide



Carey Ann Campbell is the chief executive officer of Southern Tide, the Greenville-based coastal lifestyle brand known for blending classic style with Southern charm.

A passionate brand builder and people-first leader, Campbell has led Southern Tide through a period of remarkable growth and cultural relevance, driven by her belief that strong brands begin with strong teams and authentic purpose. Beyond her role at Southern Tide, she is a dedicated advocate for community and education. She serves as an adviser to the Junior League of Greenville and sits on the boards of the University of South Carolina's Retail and Hospitality Program, the Metropolitan Arts Council, and the Greenville Sports Foundation. She is also the president-elect of the College of Charleston Upstate Alumni Association.

Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth Hendrix

**Mike Coggin**

Division President, SC Upstate  
SouthState Bank



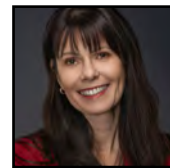
Mike Coggin has been with SouthState Bank for almost 24 years, joining the financial institution after several years as a relationship manager with Bank of America. Coggin

holds an undergraduate degree and MBA from Clemson University. He serves as board secretary for the Center for Developmental Services, is a member of the MBA Executive Board of Clemson University, and has served on the executive committee of CommunityWorks.

Photo Courtesy of Chris Keane, SouthState Bank

**Fernanda Ceva**

Executive Director  
European American Chamber of Commerce – Carolinas



Fernanda Ceva has served as executive director of the European American Chamber of Commerce – Carolinas, a nonprofit organization committed to driving trade and investment

between Europe and the U.S., since 2023. A native of Brazil, Ceva is an attorney licensed to practice in Germany, Portugal, and Brazil, who has worked in the areas of financial, taxes, and project management. She served as a 2024-2025 Port Ambassador for the South Carolina Ports Authority and as a member of the Greenville Chamber board of advisors.

Casa Cavalli Portrait Studio

**Halsey Cook**

President and CEO  
Milliken & Company



Halsey Cook has been president and CEO of Spartanburg-based Milliken & Company since 2018. Cook has spent more than three decades in manufacturing and

distribution, including serving as president and CEO of Sonepar USA, a global distributor of electrical products. At Milliken, Cook leads a company of 8,000 associates in 70 plants and offices, with customers in 135 countries. Cook, who is independent director of Georgia-based Southwire Company, serves on the boards of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Alliance to End Plastic Waste, National Association of Manufacturers, and Palmetto Business Forum.

Oliver Baker



For four decades, AFL has connected customers with innovative technologies, exceptional products and high-quality services. Guided by our commitment to being Community Centered and Customer Focused, we strive to make a positive impact in the communities where our associates live and work while delivering the solutions our customers depend on.

We celebrate our **President and CEO Jaxon Lang**, for once again being recognized as one of **Greenville's 50 Most Influential**.

**Congratulations, Jaxon!**

We Are AFL.



A publicly traded company with more than **600 employees in South Carolina** alone. Building leaders, driving innovation and serving our community for more than 30 years.

ScanSource proudly celebrates **Mike Baur** Co-Founder, Chairman, and CEO on his induction into **Greenville Business Magazine's Most Influential Hall of Fame.**



## Congratulations, Bruce!

Bannister, Wyatt, & Stalvey is fortunate to have a committed and confident leader in our firm. We are grateful for your civil servitude and the lasting impact you have made on the surrounding community. Congratulations on being named to Greenville Business Magazine's 2025 List of 50 most influential individuals.



info@bannisterwyatt.com | bannisterandwyatt.com  
864.298.0084 | 24 Cleveland St, Ste. 100, Greenville, SC 29601

**Mark Cooter**

Partner, Tax Services | Real Estate,  
 Construction & Hospitality Industry Leader  
 Cherry Bekaert



Mark Cooter is a partner at Cherry Bekaert and leads the firm's Real Estate, Construction & Hospitality Industry Group. Beyond his professional role, Cooter is a driving

force in Greenville's nonprofit and educational initiatives. He has served on boards for the Community Foundation of Greenville, Camperdown Academy, Neighborhood Cancer Connection of Greenville County, March of Dimes Real Estate Awards, Hospice House of Greenville, and Greenville Literacy Association among others, using his financial expertise to strengthen these organizations in various leadership awards. As an officer of the Community Foundation's board, he helped expand its ability to accept gifts of real estate and business interests through Donor Advised Funds, enabling the foundation to increase contributions from donors and increase grants to local nonprofits.

Photo Provided

**Ashley Cuttino**

Greenville Managing Shareholder  
 Ogletree Deakins



Ashley Cuttino is the Office Managing Shareholder of Ogletree Deakins' Greenville office and a go-to trial lawyer for complex employment disputes. She has tried

and won jury trials in multiple jurisdictions and advises employers on high-stakes issues ranging from EEOC charges and harassment claims to employee theft and complex business disputes. She helped lead the firm's nationwide Covid-19 Litigation Practice Group and is involved in providing multistate compliance advice and counsel. Her work has earned consistent recognition, including The Best Lawyers in America and Thomson Reuters Stand-out Lawyer honors. Cuttino is former chair of Ogletree's Women's Initiative and a past president of the South Carolina Women Lawyers Association. She has also served on Clemson University's Board of Visitors. She is also general counsel for the Greenville Chamber of Commerce.

Photo Provided

**Mark Cothran**

CEO  
 Cothran Properties



Mark Cothran founded Cothran Properties in 1986 and in 2012, added Cothran Homes to the portfolio. Cothran Properties' portfolio includes the development of Southern

First Bank's Greenville headquarters and Woodruff Road Professional Park. A Greenville native and graduate of University of South Carolina, Cothran worked at Coldwell Banker Commercial and U.S. Shelter Corporation before striking out on his own. He serves as a board member and organizer of Southern First Bank and on the NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association National Business Parks Forum and Tax and Legislative Committee.

Photo Provided

**Heath Dillard**

President and CEO  
 VisitGreenvilleSC



Under Heath Dillard's leadership as president and CEO of VisitGreenvilleSC, Greenville's visitor economy has reached record levels, generating a \$2.5 billion economic

impact in 2024 and more than \$200 million in state and local tax revenues while supporting thousands of jobs and hundreds of small businesses. In FY25, VisitGreenvilleSC's sales, marketing, and communications efforts generated \$605 million in economic impact in Greenville County and helped propel the destination onto the national stage, with recognition from Condé Nast Traveler's Best Small Cities list, Travel + Leisure's World's Best Cities rankings, hosting the inaugural MICHELIN Guide American South ceremony, and serving as a feature destination on "Top Chef" Season 23, airing in 2026.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Robert Photography

**Chad Cousins**

CEO  
 McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture



Chad Cousins is the CEO of McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture (MPS), a nationally recognized and award-winning architecture, planning, and advisory services firm

founded in the Upstate. During Cousins' leadership with MPS and its partners, the firm has grown to include 450+ team members across 11 integrated studios. Cousins is chairman of the Greenville Tech Foundation, serves on the community advisory board of United Community Bank, and is a CEO-member of the AIA's Large Firm Roundtable. He facilitated the introduction of an Urban Land Institute National Advisory Panel to Greenville Technical College, the Foundation and Area Commission. He previously served as a founder and the board chair of Greenville Classical Academy and the Greater Greenville Youth Tennis Association.

Photo Courtesy of McMillan Pazdan Smith

**Tom Dillard**

Founder  
 Luxe Brands Collective



Tom Dillard is the founder and president of Dillard-Jones Builders, a luxury custom homebuilding firm serving South Carolina and Western North Carolina. A Clemson

University mechanical engineering graduate, Dillard founded the company in 2003 with a clear vision to elevate residential construction through craftsmanship, integrity, and thoughtful design. The firm is known for its all-inclusive Design-Build-Dwell-Maintain process. Recognizing the opportunity to create something more integrated, Dillard established Luxe Brands Collective, intentionally building and scaling a portfolio of complementary businesses spanning architecture, interior design, construction, outdoor living, and long-term home care.

Photo Provided

Congratulations to  
**Traci Newkirk**

*President and Founder*

for being honored among

**Greenville's 50  
Most Influential**  
in 2025



*Congrats, Pat!*

**Pat Michaels**

President/CEO  
Goodwill Industries of  
Upstate/Midlands SC



**Congratulations to Reyna Thompson on being named one of Greenville Business Magazine's 50 Most Influential.**

Driven by innovation and grounded in community, TD SYNEX is one of the world's leading technology distributors, and we're proud to call Greenville home. We help drive technology forward for partners across North America while fueling growth and opportunity here in the Upstate.

As President of North America, Reyna plays a key role in leading this impact and supporting TD SYNEX *Share the Magic*, which has raised \$26 million for Upstate charities since 2011.



**Robert Engelhorn, Ph.D.**

**President and Chief Executive Officer  
BMW Manufacturing Co., LLC**



Robert Engelhorn, Ph.D., became the eighth president of BMW Manufacturing in 2021, and has been with the company since 2011. His previous positions with the company

included leading the technology and production divisions for the Dadong and Tiexi BMW plants, and as director for BMW Group Plant Munich. The Upstate BMW plant employs more than 11,000 people and manufactures more than 1,500 vehicles per day. Engelhorn serves on the boards of Autos Drive America and the German American Chambers of Commerce.

Fred Rollison Photography

**Bennie L. Harris, Ph.D.**

**Chancellor  
USC Upstate**



Bennie L. Harris, Ph.D., became the fifth chancellor of the University of South Carolina Upstate in 2021, after serving in administrative roles at Washington

State University and University of Alabama at Birmingham, among others. Since taking the helm at USC Upstate, Harris has developed the college's Leadership Academy and significantly grown the school's fund-raising income. His community service has included terms on the boards of Ten at the Top, Spartanburg Academic Movement, OneSpartanburg, and United Way of the Piedmont, and he was elected president of the Big South Conference for the 2025-'26 and 2026-'27 academic years.

Victor Coker Photography

**Hesha Gamble**

**Assistant County Administrator  
Greenville County**



A Charleston native, Hesha Gamble began her professional career in January 2002 as the Traffic Engineer for the County of Greenville, later serving as county engineer, responsible for overseeing the engineering and maintenance of all county roads. In 2022, she assumed her current role as the Assistant County Administrator for Public Works, Planning & Development. In this position, she oversees multiple departments with over 250 employees. Gamble is an active member of several professional organizations, including NSPE, APWA, ITE and ICMA. She is the past president of the Upstate Branch of the American Public Works Association (APWA) and the SC Section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). Gamble also serves as athletic director at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Simpsonville.

Photo Provided

**Cal Hurst**

**President  
Southern First Bank**



With 20 years of banking experience throughout South Carolina, Cal Hurst has served as president of Southern First Bank since 2022. Hurst has served as chair of the

Greenville Chamber Board, serves on the board and volunteers with United Way, and is a past chairman of United Way's Greenville County Campaign. He also serves at First Presbyterian Church and Furman University. Hurst is the proud son of public educators, brother of two fine men, father of two extraordinary children, and husband to the most wonderful woman he has ever met. He believes deeply in the power of relationships, trustworthiness, and hard work; three things for which he says there are no substitutes or shortcuts.

Photo Provided

**Jimmy Gulledge**

**South Carolina Area Executive  
First Citizens Bank**



Jimmy Gulledge is the South Carolina area executive for First Citizens Bank. He is responsible for the Upstate region, which includes Greenville and Spartanburg as well

as Kershaw, Lancaster, Rock Hill, Fort Mill, Great Falls, Chester, and York. Gulledge, who has more than 30 years of experience in banking, holds a bachelor's degree from Clemson University. Gulledge serves on the board of trustees of the South Carolina ETV Endowment and has served on the boards of United Way of Greenville County, YMCA Camp Greenville, and Meals on Wheels of Greenville County.

Photo Provided

**Kyle Keene**

**Founder and Principal  
Keene Development Group**



Kyle Keene and Keene Development Group work to provide elevated, tangible products that will be staples of Greenville. To do this, Keene says his job is to assemble the

most talented team possible that shares the same vision for these projects. The project sites that are unmatched in their location to all the things that make Greenville such a great city to reside in also contribute to this. Delivering the products that Keene Development Group is developing fulfills a previously unidentified sector of the real estate market that is becoming increasingly sought-after. Keene's long-term goals are to expand the reach of the firm's developments across the Southeast region, bring the vision to multiple asset classes and market sectors, and to eventually vertically integrate, having every step of the development process under one roof.

Photo Provided

You make things better. That's worth celebrating.



**Bruce Benson**  
Retail Market Manager  
Western Carolinas



**Mike Farmer**  
Regional Vice President  
Midlands



**Scott Sharp**  
Regional Vice President  
Coastal

You see the need, you take action, you give hope.  
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**Congratulations to Chad Cousins** for being recognized as one of **Greenville's 50 Most Influential People.**



Greenville Tech Center for Health & Life Sciences



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**Tony Kouskolekas**

President  
Pelham Medical Center



Tony Kouskolekas is president of Pelham Medical Center, part of Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System, which he joined in 2012. He leads a 57-bed acute care hospital

offering advanced diagnostics, surgery, emergency services, and comprehensive inpatient and outpatient care. The campus includes a multidisciplinary medical office building and a Gibbs Cancer Center facility providing hematology-oncology services, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and CyberKnife technology. Previously, he spent several years with Atrium Health in Charlotte, working in strategic development and later serving as vice president of operations for CMC-University, a 130-bed hospital. Highly active in the community, he has served on numerous boards, including the Greenville Chamber, Greer Middle College, Lions Club, and Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and has been recognized among Greenville's 50 Most Influential and Greer's 12 That Make a Difference.

Photo Provided

**Ryan Lee**

President, Greenville Market  
Novant Health



As Novant Health has expanded its footprint into Upstate South Carolina, Ryan Lee has helped to lead that growth, serving as the health system's Greenville market

president. Lee, who earned his undergraduate degree from Clemson University and a Master's in Health Administration from The Medical University of South Carolina, came to Greenville from Hardeeville, where he was president of Novant Health Coastal Carolina Medical Center. Before joining Novant Health in 2022, he was chief operating officer of HCA Healthcare: LewisGale Medical Center in Roanoke, Virginia. Lee is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Photo Courtesy of Novant Health

**Jaxon Lang**

President and CEO  
AFL



Jaxon Lang joined AFL as chief operating officer in January 2023 and was appointed president and CEO in June 2023, leading AFL's global operations across products,

services and solutions. Guided by a "customer-first" vision, he focuses on exceeding customer expectations by strengthening core business operations and advancing product innovation. Before AFL, Lang served as president and CEO of FiberRise Communications, an engineering solutions provider specializing in electric grid modernization and utility-grade broadband services. Prior to FiberRise, he held senior leadership roles at CommScope, where he led the \$2.8B Connectivity Solutions segment as senior vice president. A recognized inventor, he holds patents in telecommunications and network equipment design that have contributed to industry standards. He has also served as a member of the Telecommunications Industry Association and Quest Forum.

Photo Courtesy of AFL Marketing Department

**Dr. Phyllis MacGilvray**

Dean  
University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville



Dr. Phyllis MacGilvray, M.D., FAAFP serves as the dean of the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville (USCSOMG) since July

2024. Additionally, she is a clinical professor in the Department of Family Medicine and serves as a Prisma Health Family Medicine physician. MacGilvray is the first medical school dean in the country board certified in lifestyle medicine, which focuses on the use of evidence-based lifestyle interventions to prevent, treat and reverse chronic diseases. In her previous role, MacGilvray served as the senior associate dean for academic affairs at USCSOMG, overseeing all aspects of undergraduate medical education, admissions, faculty affairs, student affairs, and the school's new Primary Care Accelerated Track (PCAT) program. A native South Carolinian, she maintained a full-scope family medicine practice with obstetrics for over 20 years.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Robert Photography

**Shannon Lavrin**

City Manager  
City of Greenville



Shannon Lavrin serves as the city manager for the City of Greenville, overseeing a \$291 million budget and nearly 1,000 employees. With more than 20 years of municipal

planning and administration experience, she is the city's chief executive, responsible for carrying out City Council priorities and managing day-to-day operations. Lavrin is the first woman and first urban planner to serve as Greenville's city manager. She played a key role in developing GVL2040, Greenville's comprehensive plan centered on affordable housing, open space and mobility, and led the creation of the Greenville Development Code to align land-use policy with that vision. Her leadership extends to major civic projects, including the Honor Tower at Unity Park and the redevelopment of Mayberry Park.

Photo Courtesy of Chelsey Ashford

**Peter Marsh**

Founder  
Flywheel Coworking



Peter Marsh is a founding partner of Flywheel, LLC, which designs and operates coworking innovation spaces in partnership with premier educational institutions and local

community partners. Flywheel operates flagship locations in Greenville, South Carolina, and Winston-Salem and Concord, North Carolina. Marsh also is a founding director of the Flywheel Foundation, which promotes healthy entrepreneurship ecosystems through events, program partnerships, a learning management system, and early-stage investment programming. The foundation accelerates organic economic development through diverse pathways for inception- and growth-stage startups by partnering with an expanding network of nonprofits, economic development organizations, corporations, and investors. The foundation is committed to working with organizations that put entrepreneurs first, knowing that a resilient and inclusive economy benefits all.

Photo Courtesy of Seth Wingate

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**C. William “Billy” McGee**

Chief Executive Officer  
Gallivan White Boyd



C. William “Billy” McGee, CEO and partner in Gallivan White Boyd’s Greenville office, has more than three decades of experience in the legal

profession. His practice areas include business and commercial litigation, products liability, toxic and mass torts, drug and medical devices, trucking litigation, and professional negligence litigation. He earned his undergraduate and law degrees from University of South Carolina, and he is a graduate of Leadership Greenville Class 34. McGee serves on the Community Works Carolina board of directors. He is a member of the Defense Research Institute and the South Carolina Defense Trial Attorneys’ Association.

Jeremy Fleming

**Kerry Murphy**

President/CEO  
Artisphere



Kerry Murphy has led Artisphere since 2007, overseeing Greenville’s nationally acclaimed three-day arts festival that draws more than 80,000 attendees annually and

generated a \$16.1 million economic impact in 2025. Under her leadership, artist participation, sales, and organizational growth have soared, earning Artisphere national recognition as the No. 2 Fine Art Festival by Art Fair Sourcebook and the No. 1 Best Arts Festival in USATODAY’s 10Best in 2024. Her career includes serving as executive director of Carolina Ballet Theatre, sponsorship consultant for Southern Hospitality Group, and director of Premium Seat Services and Corporate Partnerships for the BI-LO Center (now Bon Secours Wellness Arena). Murphy has held board roles with Fall for Greenville, the Downtown Business Association, The Children’s Museum of the Upstate, and the Leadership Greenville Forum.

Photo Courtesy of Reel Video & Stills

**Patrick Michaels**

President and CEO  
Goodwill Industries of Upstate/Midlands SC



In his 32 years with Goodwill, Patrick “Pat” Michaels has had the opportunity to see the “Power of Work” first-hand for thousands

of people throughout the United States. He is motivated by seeing people build skills, progress toward their goals, and increase their self-esteem, while achieving financial independence for themselves and their families through employment. Michaels served four years with the United States Army, after which he joined Goodwill as the director of Goodwill Industries of the Yakima Valley in Washington. He accepted his current position as CEO of Goodwill Industries of Upstate/Midlands South Carolina in 2007. He is a member of the Greenville County Workforce Development Board and the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce Review Committee.

Photo Courtesy of Goodwill Industries of Upstate - Midlands SC

**Traci Newkirk**

President/Founder  
Intellectual Capitol and Human Potential Advisors



Traci Newkirk is a seasoned entrepreneur, culture architect, and leadership strategist with more than two decades of experience helping

people and organizations reach their potential. As co-founder of Intellectual Capitol, Inc., she helped grow a respected IT staffing firm. In 2021, she launched Human Potential Advisors, a firm focused on partnering with executives, teams, and boards to align strengths, boost engagement, and create thriving cultures. Newkirk served as chair of the Greenville Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, championing leadership and business growth across the Upstate. Newkirk is launching “Take the Lead,” a management training program, and developing a nonprofit board training initiative to help boards and staff work in partnership for greater community impact.

Photo Courtesy of Stacy Gardin Photography

**Larry Miller**

President  
Greenville Technical College



Larry Miller, Ph.D., took office as the third president of Greenville Technical College on July 1, 2025. With over 25 years of experience in academia, Miller is known

for innovative thinking, investigative research, and forming strategic partnerships with industry leaders to drive student outcomes. Previously the college’s chief academic officer, Miller has created tangible results at GTC including recognition by Newsweek as No. 1 in South Carolina for online education, a Workforce Development Innovations Award from the Society of Manufacturing Engineering, the only South Carolina college invited to participate in the Aspen Institute’s Unlocking Opportunity network, and inclusion in a Gates-Foundation initiative that improves outcomes for all students.

Photo Courtesy of Sabina Cavalli

**Kevin Nolan**

President and Chief Executive Officer  
GE Appliances



Kevin Nolan has spent more than three decades with GE Appliances, including 10 years as the company’s chief technology officer. Nolan, a native of Stamford,

Connecticut, holds more than 30 patents. He co-founded FirstBuild, a global co-creation community that is working to change the way home appliances are conceived, designed, and manufactured. Nolan was inducted into the University of Connecticut Academy of Distinguished Engineers in 2019, and he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Louisville in 2022.

Photo Courtesy of GE Appliances

**John L. Otten**

Chief Executive Officer  
Elliott Davis Advisory, LLC



John L. Otten became CEO of Elliott Davis in July 2025 after more than a quarter-century with the company. He has served as the firm's tax practice leader and industry

group leader, among other roles. Otten holds an undergraduate degree from Presbyterian College and a Master's of Accountancy with tax Specialization from University of Georgia Terry College of Business. His community involvement includes serving on boards and committees for the Children's Museum of the Upstate, United Way, and Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County.

Photo courtesy of Elliott Davis

**Krish Patel**

Founder/CEO  
KVP Inc.



Krish Patel is a longtime entrepreneur who began his successful journey in business during college, developing a business plan while a student at USC Upstate and opening

his first Verizon Wireless store soon after graduating in 2008. He eventually grew his franchise to 50 stores. Over the years, he has opened yoga studios, CrossFit gyms, and sandwich shops. His current venture, KVP Inc., is a diversified private equity and real estate development firm. Outside of work, Patel has served on the Urban League of the Upstate board, the advisory board for United Community, and the City of Greenville Board of Appeals.

Alaina Rose

**Neetu Patel**

Vice President of Operations  
Sycamore Investment Group



As vice president of operations for Sycamore Investments Group, Neetu Patel oversees the South Carolina Hotels daily and long-term operations of five hotels and two that

will open in May 2026. Patel worked for the Red Cross at its national headquarters from 2006 to 2009, and then returned to Greenville and joined Sycamore to help open a hotel in the ICAR Campus. His work with Sycamore has led to numerous Hotel Industry awards both nationally and locally. Patel serves as board chairman of Bon Secours Wellness Arena, Investment Committee Chair for Greenville Tech Foundation, and is a recent Graduate of Liberty Fellowship. He also has served on the boards of Euphoria and Furman's Riley Institute.

Photo Courtesy of Jeremy Fleming

**Keith Poole**

President and Chief Operating Officer  
Trehel



Keith Poole has served as Trehel's president and chief operating officer since 2020, after previously holding the COO role for more than a decade. He helps guide

the company's operations, supporting teams, shaping strategy, and working to ensure Trehel meets its goals while maintaining a healthy, people-focused culture. Poole cares about creating a positive culture for employees, their families, partners, clients, and the community. He has been involved with several local organizations over the years, including the Greenville Tech Foundation, the Greenville Chamber, Guardian ad Litem for the SC Department of Children's Advocacy, Mentor Upstate, Celebrate Recovery, and the PBF.D.

Photo Courtesy of Trehel

**Michelle Seaver**

President, Greenville, Spartanburg & Cherokee Counties  
United Community



Michelle Seaver serves as president of United Community in Greenville, Spartanburg and Cherokee counties. In this position, she directs the bank's strategic growth in these markets. Seaver

is credited with spearheading United's entrance into South Carolina as she was responsible for opening its first South Carolina branch. Years later, she once again led growth efforts for United when it acquired Palmetto Bank by integrating all the branch locations and laying the foundation for the bank in the Upstate. Seaver serves as board chair for Artisphere and is chair of the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, and serves on the boards of Prisma Health, SC Jobs and Economic Development Authority, Greenville Tech Foundation, and the University of South Carolina Alumni Association. Seaver is a graduate of Leadership Greenville Class 24. She was named one of Greenville's Most Influential in 2024, 2023 and 2013, GSA's 2020 Women of Influence, Greenville's Best and Brightest in 2007 and was one of the YMCA Dream Achievers in 2006.

Photo Courtesy of United Community

**Allen Smith**

President and CEO  
OneSpartanburg Inc.



Allen Smith has worked with OneSpartanburg, the consolidated economic development, tourism, and business group, since 2014, a role he stepped into after spending

four years as president and CEO of Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce. He spearheads the OneSpartanburg Vision Plan 2.0, which launched in 2022 and aims to boost the community through initiatives in 15 areas, including manufacturing and logistics, high-growth startups, college and career connections, and small and minority-owned businesses. Smith is a graduate of East Carolina University.

Photo Provided

**Steve Spinks**

CEO  
The Spinx Company



Steve Spinks serves as the CEO of The Spinx Company where his main responsibilities include overseeing all areas of Spinx, Ace Energy, and Spinx Transportation by directing the executive leadership team. Prior to being named CEO, Steve served The Spinx Company as president, chief financial officer, controller, director of transportation, director of construction, price analyst, territory manager and store manager. He has served as chairman of the SC Convenience & Petroleum Marketers Association, the S.C. Chamber of Commerce, Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America, and the Greenville Chamber of Commerce. Spinks supports the Children's Museum of the Upstate, Community Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, Spinks Family Foundation, Meals on Wheels, and OneLife.

Photo Courtesy of Spinx

**Reyna Thompson**

President, North America  
TD SYNEX



Reyna Thompson is the President of North America at TD SYNEX, where she leads and manages the global company's operations across North America. With 30 years

of IT distribution experience, Thompson joined TD SYNEX in 2002 as associate vice president of Solutions Marketing for the Technology Solutions Division and has held a variety of positions in sales and vendor management. Previously, she served as executive vice president of Vendor Management for North America within TD SYNEX's Advanced Solutions Group which focused on cloud, security, data/AI, and data center solutions. Under her leadership, TD SYNEX became an industry leader through its strength in line card, specialization, service, and a robust global footprint. Thompson was recognized as a Power 100 Woman in the Channel by industry magazine CRN.

Photo Courtesy of Marc Edwards Photographs

**James Stephens**

Airport Director  
Greenville Downtown Airport



Since 2022, James Stephens has led the largest general aviation airport in South Carolina. GMU ranks as the third-busiest airport in the state overall, including commercial

airports, and is home to more based aircraft than any other airport in South Carolina. Stephens began his professional aviation career in Greenville and held roles across multiple sectors of the industry. His experiences include work as an aircraft mechanic, serving as an airport manager in Tennessee, aircraft sales and marketing for a private aviation management company in Greenville, and as the executive director of the South Carolina Aeronautics Commission. He serves as chairman of the South Carolina Aviation Association, a board member of VisitGreenvilleSC, and an advisory contributor to Greenville County Schools' CTE Innovation Center for workforce development.

Photo Courtesy of Doug Jordan

**Debbie Varner**

CEO  
Recruiting Solutions



Debbie Varner is the CEO and chairman of Recruiting Solutions, which was founded in 1992 as a local, independent, family-owned staffing and recruiting agency in

Greenville and has since expanded nationwide. Varner is active in several professional and community organizations and previously served as President of the South Carolina Staffing Association. Varner is a member of the Greenville Chamber and the Greenville Area Development Corporation (GADC), and she has served on the South Carolina Agency Salary Head Commission since 2014. She also spent several years serving the United Way of Greenville Campaign Cabinet. In 2018, she was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Greenville Society for Human Resource Management.

Amy Randall

**Max Stewart**

President and CEO  
Greenville Area Development Corporation



Max Stewart is president and CEO of the Greenville Area Development Corporation, the lead economic development organization for Greenville County. Under

Stewart's leadership, the GADC focuses on data-driven decision-making and developing the ecosystems needed to attract and retain targeted industry sectors such as corporate headquarters, research and development, and technical service companies. He embraces open communication and transparency with stakeholders and the community at large by actively engaging and participating with various civic and business-minded organizations and leaders in the Greenville community.

Jack Robert Photography

**Gage Weekes**

President and CEO  
Hollingsworth Funds



Gage Weekes is passionate about making the most of Greenville's remarkable growth to benefit everyone by strengthening the pathways that propel

people forward. As president and CEO, he is responsible for aligning all of Hollingsworth Funds' assets in pursuit of a Greenville where equitable opportunities exist for all to advance and thrive. He's spent two decades advocating for meaningful community impact in the field of philanthropy, coming to Hollingsworth Funds in 2013 from Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. His long-term ambition centers on increasing economic mobility in Greenville and to improve education-to-career pipelines, access to affordable housing, reliable transportation, and living-wage employment. He is a Liberty Fellow and serves on the boards of OnTrack Greenville and the Greenville Chamber of Commerce.

Photo Provided

**Eric Weissmann**

Executive Director  
NextGEN



Eric Weissmann is executive director of NextGEN, the Greenville organization that connects innovative entrepreneurs to support,

education, and growth opportunities. Weissmann, who joined NextGEN in 2021, has extensive experience as an entrepreneur and in the marketing world. He was on the founding team of Cintrifuse, a Cincinnati-based entrepreneur ecosystem that worked to attract and retain startups. Weissmann also worked in corporate roles at Fifth Third Bank and Disney. He is a graduate of The Ohio State University.

Photo Provided

**Josh Woodward**

President and CEO  
Lima One Capital



Josh Woodward has been with Lima One Capital, which provides lending for real estate investors, since 2013. He

began his time there as treasurer and moved into the role of president and CEO in 2024. Woodward holds an undergraduate degree from Clemson University and an MBA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Kenan-Flagler Business School. Before joining Lima One Capital, he worked for Bank of America and Georgia Bank & Trust Company.

Photo Courtesy of Lima One Capital

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Congratulations Holt Chetwood, Jimmy Gulledge and Justin Roof for being named among SC Magazine's 50 Most Influential. We appreciate your dedication and contributions to First Citizens and the communities we serve.



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# 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL

Business Monthly  
Columbia

2025

AND THE HALL OF FAME

**Columbia Business Monthly** celebrates another year of honoring the state capital region's most influential people. The selection of the 50 men and women on this list is the result of many hours of staff research as well as nominations from the community. These individuals have made important contributions to the Midlands through their work in the fields of hospitality, government, health care, nonprofits, education, and more. We're honoring them particularly for the work they've done in the past 12 months.

We're also celebrating our ninth year of selecting entrants to our Hall of Fame. This year, we're adding eight new members, people who have made the 50 Most Influential list many times in years past and who continued to make a difference in their respective communities this year.

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# LEADING BY EXAMPLE

**Extraordinary people with powerful ideas are a driving force at Aflac.**

Aflac congratulates Senior Vice President of Group Voluntary Benefits Division Bob Ruff for being recognized as a 2025 Most Influential of the Midlands by Columbia Business Monthly for his outstanding achievements in business, advocacy and philanthropy. His innovative and passionate leadership creates inspiration every day.

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*Photo by Power Suit Portraits*

## **M. Malissa Burnette**

**Founding Attorney**  
**Burnette Shutt & McDaniel, PA**

**M. Malissa Burnette** has been fighting for individuals' rights throughout her career. As an attorney, she has been deeply involved in cases that focus on women's rights and the rights of same-sex couples. She says that when she joined forces with Nekki Shutt and Kathleen McDaniel to found the law firm that bears their names, "it was with a goal of creating a firm that would move law forward." Over the course of her career, Burnette has taken part in a number of landmark cases, with outcomes that allowed women to attend state-supported military academies, granted same-sex couples the right to legally marry, and allowed girls to play contact sports in South Carolina. She's also challenged the state's strict reproductive-health laws. Burnette has been a state Supreme Court-certified employment law specialist for decades, representing clients in cases where their civil rights and careers were on the line, and she's been heavily involved in pro bono work. Asked how Columbia's role as state capital has influenced her work this year, Burnette said, "I must remain keenly aware of pending legislation that may affect my clients or my family and feel a duty to participate in the legislative process as much as possible."



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**

# Holt Chetwood

**Regional Business Executive**  
**First Citizens Bank**

**Holt Chetwood has worked** in the banking industry for nearly 30 years, the last five at First Citizens Bank.

In his current role as regional business executive, Chetwood supports retail, business and commercial banking across South Carolina. Prior to his joining

First Citizens, Chetwood was Midlands market president at Wells Fargo. A graduate of Clemson University, Chetwood is an executive board member of the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce, and in 2025, he helped lead the chamber's work around its Midlands Business Accelerator and Leadership Columbia programs. He also serves on the boards of Columbia Urban League and Central South Carolina

Alliance, and he's a past board member of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities. In 2012, Chetwood received the Outstanding Young Banker award from the South Carolina Banker's Association, and in 2014, he received the United Way of the Midlands' Alyce Kemp DeWitt Award, given for outstanding long-term service to the organization and the community. Asked about his favorite staycation, Chetwood said, "attending Basic Combat Training graduation on Hilton Field at Fort Jackson is an awesome experience. Seeing soldiers who have volunteered to serve our country celebrate this milestone with their families gave me a greater appreciation of their commitment and sacrifice."



*Photo by Power Suit Portraits*



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**



*Photo by Jeff Amberg Photography*

## **Cheryl R. Holland**

**Founder**  
**Abacus Planning Group**

**Cheryl Holland founded** Abacus Planning Group in 1998 and has grown the company into a wealth planning and investment management firm that manages more than \$2 billion on behalf of its clients. Holland, a graduate of Bryn Mawr College, is chair of the Clemson University Foundation and Together Women Rise, and she serves on the boards of the United Way of the Midlands, Midlands Technical Foundation, and Special Olympics of South Carolina. She also has served on the Bryn Mawr College Board of Trustees and the American Red Cross Tiffany Circle for the South Carolina Midlands. Holland said her long-term goals “synch with her service to the Midlands and her clients and is Abacus’s vision to create, live in and celebrate abundance with Abacus clients, our community, and the Abacus team.” Asked about a Midlands partnership she helped to drive during 2025, Holland said, “As co-chair of the United Way’s extraordinarily successful \$20 million campaign to impact generational change in the Midlands, I learned that the Midlands is capable of coming together for visionary success. I am now chair of the United Way Revenue Committee seeking ways to broaden our partners in delivering on this promise for a thriving Columbia.”



# HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

# Mark Hood

**President and CEO**  
**Hood Construction**

**Mark Hood has spent more than** four decades in the construction industry, and the company he founded in 1986 has completed projects in many arenas, from education to health care, hospitality to industrial. A graduate of The Citadel, Hood focuses on strategic analysis of the methods and means of the construction and project management process in each project his company undertakes. One important part of Hood's management strategy is a laser focus on safety, with regular safety meetings, in-house training, and more. As a result, the company has received zero OSHA citations in the past five years. The company received the Carolinas AGC Presidential Award for Zero Lost Time Incidents. Hood takes an active role in community service, taking on leadership roles for Camp Cole, Hammond School, SCISA board of directors, the Oliver Gospel Mission, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He has taken on many roles with the Carolinas AGVC, including as executive board chairman, executive board treasurer, Mechanical Contractors Joint Cooperative Committee member, and chairman of the Building Services Division. He was inducted into the 2022 Hall of Fame. He and his wife Susan have two children and five grandchildren.



*Photo by Power Suit Portraits*



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**



## Robert Hughes III

**President**  
Hughes Development Corporation

**Robert Hughes III has worked with** the family-owned Hughes Development Corporation since 2012, stepping into the role of president in 2016. Hughes Development Corporation has played an important role in developing downtown Greenville, including Greenville ONE, RiverPlace, and Poinsett Plaza. Hughes himself was a key player in the redevelopment of Columbia's 181-acre BullStreet District, which blends office space, retail shops, dining establishments, and apartment living spaces. He holds an undergraduate degree from Duke University and an MBA from Columbia University. Before joining Hughes Development Corporation, he was an assistant vice president at Lehman Brothers. Hughes has served on the boards of Artisphere, the Upstate Heart Ball, the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, South Carolina's Institute of Medicine & Public Health, ISCS's Government Relations & Public Policy Committee, and the Palmetto Business Forum. He is a graduate of Leadership Greenville Class 40 and the 2020 Class of Aspen Institute's Liberty Fellowship. He and his wife Scottie live in Greenville with their two children.

*Photo by Power Suit Portraits*



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**

# Ray E. Jones

**Partner**  
**Parker Poe**

**Ray Jones has spent** most of his career at Parker Poe, joining the law firm in 1999 and ascending to the roles of partner and Columbia Office Development Partner. In these roles, Jones provides advice and counsel to clients in matters related to public finance, local taxation, financing of affordable housing, and economic development. Clients include cities, counties, school districts, hospitals, financial institutions, corporations, and public housing authorities. Jones, who holds an MBA from the Darla Moore School of Business and his Juris Doctor from University of South Carolina School of Law, has worked on billions of dollars' worth of transactions across the Southeast. He has served on the boards of the South Carolina Economic Developers Association and First Community Bank and as board chair of the Baptist Foundation of South Carolina, Saluda Shoals Foundation, and March of Dimes South Carolina Chapter. Asked about a Midlands partnership he helped to drive during 2025, Jones answered, "The Columbia Area Development Partnership (CADP) began operations on July 1, 2025. The CADP is the fulfillment of Richland County's long-term vision to modernize our region's approach to economic development and engage the private sector. We were part of the team that established the CADP and we continue to work with the CADP Board, which is comprised of representatives from the private sector, local government and higher education."



*Photo by Power Suit Portraits*



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**



## David Lockwood

**Executive Vice President  
and Chief Operating Officer  
Colliers**

**David Lockwood**, who is executive vice president and COO for Colliers in South Carolina, has been with the company for 39 years. He oversees the operations and brokerage platform for the company's four South Carolina offices. A graduate of Clemson University, Lockwood is deeply involved in organizations related to real estate as well as civic and charitable causes. He has worked with the Society of Industrial and Office REALTORS (SIOR), the world's leading society for industrial and office brokers, for the past 30 years, and in 2024 was the organization's global president. He also spent nine years on the South Carolina Real Estate Commission. Lockwood is previous president of the Central Carolina REALTORS Association and the South Carolina REALTORS Association. He served on the Clemson Board of Visitors, where he chaired the Student Engagement Committee, and was chair of the Clemson University Student Advisory Board. In addition, Lockwood has been chairman of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, City Center Partnership, and Sandhills School board of directors. He received 2025 Distinguished Service Awards from Clemson University and the South Carolina REALTORS Association. Asked about South Carolina's greatest asset, Lockwood responded, "The culture of its people from the mountains to the coast."

*Photo by Power Suit Portraits*



**HALL OF FAME  
INDUCTEE**

# James T. McLawhorn Jr.

**President and CEO**  
Columbia Urban League

**James T. McLawhorn Jr.** has spent his career working for civil rights, community relations, and social justice. McLawhorn has been president and CEO of the Columbia Urban League since 1979. The Columbia Urban League's programs are varied and include Saving Our Children, designed to help children break the cycle of juvenile justice involvement; Project Ready, which works to enhance academic success and social skills development for students; and the College Internship Program, which provides college students with the opportunity to gain work experience. McLawhorn was a chief organizer of the King Day at the Dome march and rally held on Jan. 17, 2000, one of the largest civil rights demonstrations in state history, which was held to protest the flying of the Confederate flag atop the South Carolina State House. A recipient of South Carolina's Order of the Palmetto, McLawhorn founded the National Black Family Summit in 1985. He also received the Whitney M. Young Jr. Race Relations Award from the National Urban League. He also has served on the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission. McLawhorn helped to launch "The State of Black South Carolina: An Action Agenda for the Future," a periodic report on the most pressing issues affecting African Americans in the Palmetto State.



*Photo by Power Suit Portraits*



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**

**PREVIOUS HALL OF FAME  
 INDUCTEES**

This year's Hall Of Fame inductees will join a prestigious group who, over the years, have consistently proven to be among the Most Influential in Columbia.

**2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES**



**MICHELE  
 ABRAHAM**



**TERRANCE  
 FORD**



**W. KELLER  
 KISSAM**



**JIM  
 LEHMAN**



**BRENDA C.  
 MURPHY**



**THOMAS K.  
 STRINGFELLOW**

**2023**

**CHARLIE BANKS  
 SHARON BRYANT  
 SCOTT GARVIN  
 LEIGHTON LORD  
 SUSIE SHANNON**

**2022**

**ROSLYN CLARK ARTIS,  
 J.D., ED.D.  
 TOD AUSBERGER  
 MIKE CRAPPS  
 JOHN FOLSOM  
 TIM HARDEE, ED.D.  
 VIRGIL MILLER**

**2021**

**TAMEIKA ISAAC DEVINE  
 C.W. "CHUCK" GARNETT  
 HENRY MCMASTER  
 DAWN STALEY  
 KIM A. WILKERSON**

**2020**

**DONALD W. BEATTY  
 CARL BLACKSTONE  
 PETER BREWS  
 MELANIE HUGGINS  
 PAMELA LACKEY**

**2019**

**FRED DELK  
 ROBERT R. HILL, JR.  
 ROBERT MATTHEW KEN-  
 NELL  
 TED PITTS  
 RONALD L. RHAMES**

**2018**

**TIM ARNOLD  
 MIKE BRIGGS  
 JAMES E. CLYBURN  
 LOU KENNEDY  
 STEVE MACDOUGALL  
 DAVID PANKAU  
 JANE S. SOSEBEE  
 TOMMY SUGGS  
 TERESA WILSON**

**2017**

**CHARLES BEAMAN  
 STEVE BENJAMIN  
 MIKE BRENAN  
 DR. HARRIS PASTIDES  
 JOANN TURNQUIST**



**COLA**  
Columbia Office of Leadership & Advancement

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**RYAN COLEMAN**

**Columbia's 50 Most Influential People**

Congratulations on being recognized as one of **Columbia Business Monthly's 50 Most Influential People in the Midlands**

**50** INTEGRATED MEDIA PUBLISHING

**Most Influential People Award**



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Business Magazine **Greenville** Business Monthly **Columbia** **CB** CHARLESTON BUSINESS

**BB** THE GRAND STRAND **BB** PEE DEE BUSINESS



11:27

Inbox

The Business Narrative

Today's Top Article

**EQT Private Equity to Acquire South Carolina-based Zeus**

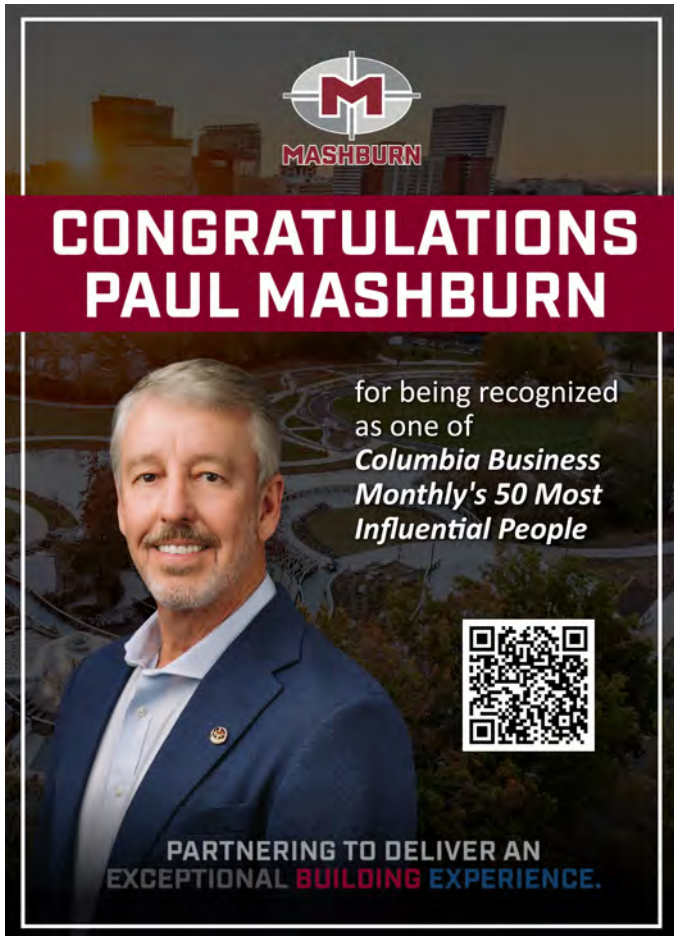
The EQT X fund and Orangeburg, S.C.-based Zeus Company, Inc., jointly announced they have entered into an agreement for EQT to acquire Zeus from the Tourville family.

Financial terms weren't disclosed.

Founded in 1966, Zeus is a pioneer in the design.

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**MASHBURN**

**CONGRATULATIONS PAUL MASHBURN**

for being recognized as one of **Columbia Business Monthly's 50 Most Influential People**



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## Michael Amiridis

President  
University of South Carolina



Michael Amiridis became the 30th president of the University of South Carolina in 2022. Since his arrival, USC has seen record growth in applications for

admission, enrollment, external research grants and fundraising dollars, with significant donor investments that led to the naming of three USC colleges. Amiridis earned a Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1991. As a researcher, he has published 110 peer-reviewed articles in archival journals and received over \$22 million in external funding. He was elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2012 and a fellow of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers in 2015. Prior to becoming president, Amiridis spent more than two decades at USC, where he held several positions, including dean of the College of Engineering and Computing.

Photo Courtesy of University of South Carolina

## Peyton Bryant

Managing Partner  
Trinity Partners



Peyton Bryant serves as managing partner and broker-in-charge for Trinity Partners' Columbia, South Carolina, office. Bryant is responsible for the firm's day to day operations, recruiting, and attracting new business

to the firm's brokerage and property management divisions. He has been consistently recognized for his professional accomplishments and contributions to the community, including Heathwood Hall Episcopal School's Anne T. Weston Distinguished Alumni Award (2018) and Columbia Business Monthly's Best and Brightest 35 and Under (2020). He graduated from the Columbia Chamber's Leadership Columbia program in 2014. Bryant serves on the boards of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce (chair-elect), United Way of the Midlands, Midlands Technical College Foundation, Heathwood Hall Episcopal School, South Carolina Chapter of CCIM (Certified Commercial Investment Member), and the Midlands Housing Trust Fund.

Photo Courtesy of Mike Carroll

## Allen Amsler

CEO  
McCrorry Construction



Allen Amsler believes in taking advantage of every opportunity to learn from teammates and colleagues. That commitment has served him well as he has led McCrorry

Construction for 20 years. After graduating from the University of Florida, he joined Columbia-based McCrorry in 1987 and became president and CEO in 2003. Since then, McCrorry has experienced unprecedented growth in general contracting and commercial construction, operating in 13 states. Under Amsler's leadership, McCrorry expanded its services, market sectors and geographic presence. He moved into his current role as CEO in 2020.

Photo by Lucas Brown

## Frank Cason

President  
Cason Development



With more than two decades of experience in commercial real estate, Frank Cason has led projects up and down the East Coast. He founded Cason Development in

2015 and has since delivered projects for many national retailers, and multiple local projects that earned historic preservation awards and features in publications like Garden & Gun and Food & Wine. Cason is driven by a belief that Columbia's potential is far greater than its current horizon. He and his team build strategic partnerships with a focus on creative collaboration, intentional design and long-term value. Equally committed to investing in people, Cason leads a team devoted to long-term excellence and personal, professional, and spiritual growth. An active member of First Presbyterian Church, Cason has served in numerous leadership roles, including elder, deacon, and chair of the property and media committees.

Photo Courtesy of Lucas Brown, Kickstand Studios

## Peter Brown

Managing Partner  
Colite International and Colite Technologies



Peter Brown is founder, owner, and managing partner of Colite International, a global manufacturer of retail and corporate identity signage, and Colite Technologies,

a sustainable energy company specializing in lighting, solar, EV, and other sustainable power generation systems. Brown serves on the Columbia City Council, representing District 4, and is chairman of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee. He is a member of the board of directors of the University of Georgia Terry School of Business, Entrepreneur Program and MUSC Children's Hospital Advisory Board, and is a former board member of the Human Gathering and the former chair of South Carolina Jobs Economic Development Authority and Invest SC.

Photo Provided

## Sally Caver

Partner  
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough



Sally Caver serves as managing partner of Nelson Mullins' Columbia office and concentrates her practice in the areas of complex commercial contract negotiations,

mergers and acquisitions, and general corporate matters. Caver has extensive experience representing manufacturers in the automotive industry, including drafting and negotiating supply agreements, strategic commercial agreements, joint ventures, and other contracts. She also advises clients with respect to franchise and distribution matters, including developing marketing representation policies and programs and other strategic legal issues.

Brian Mitchell



Congratulations to  
**Doug Quackenbush**  
 President | AIA, LEED AP

for being named one of  
 Columbia Business Monthly's  
 50 Most Influential People!

QUACKENBUSH ARCHITECTS + PLANNERS

**Parker Poe**  
 Attorneys & Counselors at Law

**Congratulations to Ray Jones and David Summer for being honored among the 50 Most Influential of 2025**



**Ray Jones**  
 Partner  
 Columbia Business Monthly's  
 50 Most Influential Hall of Fame



**David Summer**  
 Partner, Board of Directors  
 South Carolina's  
 50 Most Influential

Ray Jones • 1221 Main Street, Suite 1100 • Columbia, SC 29201

## Tushar Chikhliker

Shareholder  
Maynard Nexsen PC



As leader of Maynard Nexsen's Economic Development Practice Group, Tushar Chikhliker is regarded as one of the Southeast's leading economic development

attorneys. He advises domestic and international companies across a wide array of industry sectors including manufacturing, life sciences, data centers, headquarters, agribusiness, alternative energy, and large-scale mixed-use projects. His practice focuses on the negotiation and documentation of high impact economic development incentives, as well as related state and local tax, and real estate matters. His strategic counsel has made him a trusted partner for companies executing some of the most significant projects in the region's history. Chikhliker serves on several influential regional and statewide boards focused on growing and diversifying the economic development opportunities for all South Carolinians.

Photo Courtesy of Rick Smoak

## John Dozier

President  
Columbia College



John H. Dozier leads Columbia College as its 21st president, a role he began in July 2024. He is guiding the institution through a period of renewed growth, deeper

community partnerships, and mission clarity. His work centers on preparing students for meaningful lives of impact, strengthening the college's financial and academic standing, and advancing the college's role as a catalyst for well-being. Dozier previously served in senior leadership roles at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of South Carolina, and City Colleges of Chicago, where he advanced major initiatives in student success, community engagement, diversity and inclusion, and organizational transformation. He has served on the boards of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, MIT Press, the American Heart Association Boston Affiliate, Central Carolina Community Foundation, and EdVenture.

Photo Courtesy of Columbia College

## Ryan Coleman

Economic Development Director  
City of Columbia Office of Economic Development



Ryan Coleman is the economic development director for the City of Columbia and has worked for the city since 2006. He and his team work to transform Columbia into a world-class city

through the recruitment of new business and investment, providing support for existing local businesses, assisting the growth and development of startups, and providing marketing and promotion for businesses. Economic Development staff are focused on growing Columbia's base of talent, technology, and equitable opportunities for the city's businesses and residents. Coleman has been accredited since January of 2012 as a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). He is also a two-time board member of the South Carolina Economic Developers Association (SCEDA) and helps manage the Local Developers Committee.

Jonathan Hawley

## Robert Dozier

President and CEO  
Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union



Robert Dozier is president and CEO of Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union, a \$1.4 billion financial institution serving the Midlands since 1936. A Columbia native and

University of South Carolina graduate, he has over 35 years of experience in financial services and mortgage banking. Appointed by the Bush Administration, Dozier served as director, vice chairman, and chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, a \$155 billion wholesale bank serving more than 850 institutions. He later became the bank's executive vice president and chief business officer, leading key strategic and business initiatives for nearly a decade. Dozier was elected to the Richland School District 2 Board at age 20, serving as chairman, and has served on the boards of USC, Midlands Technical College, Palmetto Health Foundation, and the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce.

Photo Courtesy of Stee Garman Photography

## Steve Cook

Partner and Chief Operating Officer  
The Foundry Group



Steve Cook is a partner and the chief operating officer of The Foundry Group, an emerging hospitality company based in Columbia, South Carolina, with a growing footprint

across the Southeast. A veteran restaurateur, Cook has owned Saluda's Restaurant since 2006 and has also owned and operated several other restaurant concepts over the course of his career, shaping a diverse range of dining experiences throughout the region. He was inducted into the Columbia Restaurant Hall of Fame and was named South Carolina Restaurateur of the Year in 2024. Beyond his work in the industry, Cook serves on the executive board of the South Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association and is a commissioner on the City of Columbia Planning Commission.

Photo Provided

## Michael Edens

Senior Vice President –  
Columbia Market President  
First Reliance Bank



A 1998 Wofford College graduate, Michael Edens has been serving the Midlands for over 25 years in banking. He graduated from the South Carolina Bankers School

in 2004 and the LSU Graduate School of Banking in 2006, and he received the South Carolina Bankers Association's Outstanding Young Banker of the Year in 2008, the highest recognition given by the SCBA. Edens' community service includes stints on the Historic Columbia Foundation board, the National Football Foundation and College Football Hall of Fame Midland Chapter Board, and the South Carolina Bankers Association Young Bankers Board. He was 2025 chair of the Leukemia Lymphoma Society Light the Night event.

Photo Courtesy of First Reliance Bank



2025 COLUMBIA BUSINESS MONTHLY  
50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE HONOREE

## DR. GREG LITTLE PRESIDENT

Thank you for your visionary leadership and dedication to advancing education, economic development, and workforce training in our region.



**CONGRATULATIONS GREG!**



## Congratulations, Mark!

President and CEO, Hood Construction

The entire team at Hood Construction is proud to have a leader like Mark at our organization. Congratulations on being named to *Columbia Business Monthly's* 2025 List of Midlands 50 Most Influential & Hall of Fame!



Congratulations,

## David Lockwood,

on being named to the *50 Most Influential People - Hall of Fame* by Columbia Business Monthly.



David Lockwood, CRE CCIM SIOR  
Executive Vice President & COO  
South Carolina

## PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

We honor our President & CEO, Ted Nissen, and Board Member, Ray Jones, servant leaders who believe it's a responsibility and indeed a privilege to serve the communities in which we live and work.

We are grateful for their example of serving well.



First Community Bank

HERE. *for you.*

MEMBER FDIC

## Deepal Eliatamby

President  
Alliance Consulting Engineers Inc.



Deepal S. Eliatamby, P.E., SCCED is founder and president of Alliance Consulting Engineers, Inc., a professional engineering firm with offices in Bluffton, Charleston,

Columbia, and Greenville, South Carolina, and Charlotte, North Carolina. During the past 22 years, Alliance Consulting Engineers, Inc. has completed over 2,550 projects in multiple states including several notable projects for Adidas, Amazon, BMW Manufacturing, and Husqvarna. These and other projects represent over \$47 billion in capital investment and 36,000 jobs. A graduate of the University of South Carolina, Eliatamby holds bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering and has over 36 years of experience in a wide variety of engineering projects including industrial park master planning and development and municipal water and wastewater system improvements.

Photo Provided

## Rick Farmer

Director  
Newberry County Economic Development



Rick Farmer is the director of Newberry County Economic Development, a position he had held since 2015. Working directly for the county administrator, Farmer is responsible for

coordinating all economic development activities for Newberry County, including new project recruitment, existing industry programming, product development, and marketing. A South Carolina Certified Economic Developer, Farmer has led several local economic development efforts since moving to Newberry County, including the successful landings of many new projects, such as MM Technics, Samsung, KRA, Daeyoung Electronics, and Falcon Boats. Farmer has been involved in the S.C. Economic Developers Association (SCEDA) since the beginning of his career. In 2018, Farmer received the statewide SCEDA Local Developer Award for his work promoting the economic development interests of Newberry County.

Photo Courtesy of Rick Farmer

## Bret Estridge

President  
M.B. Kahn



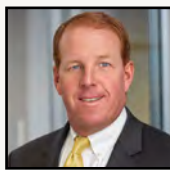
Bret Estridge has served as president of M. B. Kahn Construction, LLC, since Jan. 1, 2025. Previously serving as executive vice president, Estridge has successfully man-

aged well over \$2 billion in high-profile construction projects throughout his 22-year career. In this new role, he leverages his extensive experience to advance the company's strategic direction, enhance client relationships, optimize operational performance, and drive financial success. He holds a degree in construction management with a minor in business administration from East Carolina University. Estridge is a graduate of Leadership Charlotte Class 36 and maintains several industry credentials, including the LEED Accredited Professional and a GC License from the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies. He is also an active member of NAIOP, the Commercial Real Estate Development Association.

Photo Courtesy of David Chisholm

## Read Folline

Managing Director  
Folline King Group, Merrill Lynch  
Wealth Management



For Read Folline, "every day is an opportunity for growth — be passionate, stay focused and be intentional with the personal relationships you develop along the way."

Folline says he feels fortunate to have called Merrill Lynch home for the past 22 years. He has been able to build a cohesive team to support clients' needs. Folline says his community commitment is an extension of his passions and desire to make a difference. He has served Hammond School, the USC Board of Visitors, and Trinity Cathedral in various posts.

Photo by Rick Smoak

## Mike Farmer

Regional Vice President  
TD Bank



Mike Farmer, a Columbia native, has been a banker since 1989, working in Texas and South Carolina. He joined TD Bank in 2019, where he serves as regional vice president,

managing commercial bank operations for TD throughout central South Carolina. Farmer earned a degree in business administration from the University of South Carolina, double majoring in finance and marketing. He's active in the community, having served on the Columbia Chamber board and The Cooperative Ministry board, where he is former chair. He's also a member of the Midlands Business Leadership Group.

Photo Courtesy of Pete Salter

## Jason Giulietti

President and CEO  
Central South Carolina Alliance



Jason J. Giulietti is president and CEO of the Central South Carolina Alliance, bringing over 20 years of experience in economic development to his role. His leader-

ship has significantly impacted the economic landscape of South Carolina, the fastest-growing state in the U.S. Since taking on his current role, Giulietti has pioneered collaborative efforts among all eight regional economic development organizations in the state, leading to enhanced partnerships between private and public sectors. He previously served as president and CEO of the Greater San Marcos Partnership, where he spearheaded a five-year strategic plan that exceeded expectations, attracting over \$5 billion in new capital investments and generating more than 7,500 new jobs. His past roles also include time in Connecticut leading dynamic teams focused on attracting international companies as well as engaging local and domestic companies.

Photo Courtesy of Joshua Aaron Photography



# Best & Brightest

35 AND UNDER

2026

SCAN TO NOMINATE TODAY



Business Magazine **Greenville** Business Monthly **Columbia**

**BB** PEE DEE BUSINESS

**CB** CHARLESTON BUSINESS

**BB** THE GRAND STRAND

## Mark Goddard

Shareholder  
Turner Padgett Graham and Laney



Mark Goddard is a shareholder at Turner Padgett and a member of the firm's executive committee, where he helps guide firmwide business development and growth strategies. Recognized among The Best Lawyers in America and named 2024 "Lawyer of the Year" for Probate Litigation, Goddard is widely regarded as one of South Carolina's leading business litigators. His nearly two decades of experience include representing clients in complex commercial and financial disputes and achieving landmark results — such as a South Carolina Supreme Court decision that established new law on LLC members' and creditors' rights. Beyond his practice, Goddard is deeply committed to strengthening South Carolina's business community. He founded Turner Padgett's Palmetto Propeller program, which provides pro bono legal services to help local entrepreneurs succeed, including partnerships supporting minority and underserved small businesses.

Photo Courtesy of Josh Aaron Photography

## Anthony Jackson

Senior Vice President Service Line Institutes and Chief Community Officer  
Prisma Health



As senior vice president of service line operations and system chief community officer for Prisma Health, Anthony Jackson leads enterprise clinical service line strategy, external affairs, community engagement, and accountable community initiatives. With more than 30 years of leadership experience, he is recognized for building high-performing teams, advancing patient care, and championing health equity. Since joining Prisma Health, Jackson has served in several key roles, including CEO of Baptist and Parkridge Hospitals, vice president of Accountable Communities, and interim market president and CEO of the Midlands market. His career also includes senior executive roles at Roper St. Francis Healthcare and 25 years with HealthSouth Corporation. His board service includes stints with Columbia Urban League, South Carolina Hospital Association, Alliance for a Healthier South Carolina, Main Street District, and RiseUpRichland.

Photo Courtesy of Field Brabham

## Jeff Griffin

Owner and President  
W.O. Blackstone & Co., Inc.



Jeff Griffin went to work with Blackstone at the end of 2012 and now serves as owner and president, achieving his lifelong dream of owning a business. Construction

is a tough business with a high level of risk, and Griffin says the company is blessed to have a tremendous team of highly motivated professionals who are committed to getting the job done and all credit goes to them. Griffin serves as board chair for the Midlands Technical College Foundation, which provides education and training for people across the Midlands who are working the jobs that are the true fabric of the community.

Photo Courtesy of Sandy Andrews Photographer

## Karen Jenkins

President and CEO  
KRJ Consulting



Karen R. Jenkins is the president and CEO of KRJ Consulting, LLC, an organizational growth and human capital consulting firm focused on transforming people,

strengthening cultures, and building leadership capacity. With over 38 years of experience, including serving as a vice president at NetBank, Jenkins is a nationally recognized speaker, author, certified coach, and leadership consultant. She founded KRJ Consulting in 2008, and in 2020, the company landed at No. 546 on the Inc. 5000 list. Jenkins wrote the book "Nobody Told Me! The Path to Financial Empowerment" in 2010. She made history as the first African American woman to chair the Columbia Chamber of Commerce in its 121-year history. She also serves on the executive board of the SC Chamber of Commerce, where she chairs the Small Business Committee.

Photo Courtesy of Tim Ford Power Suit Portraits

## John Griggs III

Market President South Carolina  
Central Region  
Synovus



John C. Griggs III began his career with Synovus Bank after earning his bachelor's in business administration from the University of South Carolina. He is also a graduate

of the S.C. Bankers School and the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University. Griggs is chair-elect for Prisma Health Midlands Foundation Board and immediate past chair of the Columbia Chamber board. Previously, he served as chair for the City Center Partnership, the Prisma Health Children's Hospital board, and the S.C. Bankers School. He is a member of the LSU School of Banking board.

Photo Provided

## Kirk Jenkins

CEO  
Lexington Health



Kirk Jenkins, a native of West Columbia and graduate of Brookland-Cayce High School, received a master's degree in business administration from Clemson University

in 2003 and a bachelor's degree in business administration from The Citadel in 2000. He is also a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives. Prior to joining Lexington Health, Jenkins was a health care administrator in the United States Air Force from 2004 to 2013. Jenkins joined Lexington Health in 2013 and became responsible for the physician network in 2015. In just 10 years, Lexington Health increased the number of employed physicians and advanced practice providers from 387 to 718. Additionally, Jenkins guided the development of several market-leading clinical service lines, including heart and vascular, orthopaedics, oncology, urology, and general surgery.

Photo Provided

**R. Montague Laffitte**

South Carolina Central Division President  
South State Bank



R. Montague Laffitte III is an executive vice president at South State Bank, a role he has held since 2016. His current role is the division president for the Central Region of

South Carolina. This role includes oversight of the commercial banking operations for all the bank branches throughout the Midlands and the Pee Dee Region. It also includes the South State Bank branches in the Orangeburg and Low-country markets. He serves on the executive committee for the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce, where he recently completed his term of chairman, and on the board of directors for the Certified Development Corporation. Laffitte is a member of Executives Association of Greater Columbia and serves on the South Carolina Historical Society Board.

Brian Dressler

**Gregory Little**

President  
Midlands Tech



Gregory D. Little, Ed.D., became the seventh president of Midlands Technical College (MTC) in Columbia, South Carolina, on July 1, 2024. Little began his career

as a seventh-grade language arts teacher in Durham, North Carolina. He later became an English instructor with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and also served in leadership roles as Lexington County School District One Superintendent, vice president of Strategic Partnerships and Innovation for the South Carolina Technical College System, and most recently as the interim president and CEO for the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. Little serves on numerous boards of directors, including the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, Columbia Chamber of Commerce, Columbia Urban League, CentralSC Alliance, and the Central Midlands Council of Governments. Little is an ex officio member of the MTC Foundation Board. He and his wife Julie live in Lexington County and have two daughters.

Photo Provided

**Spann Laffitte**

Vice President of Employee Benefits  
Companion Life Insurance Company



Spann Laffitte is vice president of employee benefits at Companion Life Insurance Company where he leads sales, underwriting and administrative support teams

to advance strategic product initiatives and long-term growth. He joined Companion Life in 2022 as assistant vice president and head of employee benefit sales and assumed his current role in 2024. Laffitte is a 2018 Liberty Fellow and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network. A graduate of the University of South Carolina, he serves on the board of Salute from the Shore, an organization honoring military service members and veterans.

Photo provided

**Hazel Livingston**

Mayor  
Town of Lexington



The first female mayor of the Town of Lexington, Hazel Livingston served for 27 years on town council. Her passion for parks and green spaces led to the redevelopment

of Lexington's Virginia Hylton Park. Early in her council service, Livingston played a pivotal role in shaping the town's sign ordinance, enhancing Lexington's charm and appeal. She founded the Youth Ambassador Program to cultivate young leaders. Livingston works in sales and customer relations with Green Earth Services Inc. She is a member of the Lexington Chamber and Visitors Center Women's Leadership Council.

Photo Courtesy of Michael Tolbert

**Gretchen Lambert**

Vice President  
Studio 2LR, Inc.



Gretchen Lambert, who is vice president of Studio 2LR Inc., a Columbia-based architecture firm, earned her Bachelor of Architecture from Virginia Tech in 1994.

During her time in Columbia, Lambert has been active as a member or serving on the boards of organizations such as the Virginia Tech Alumni Association Columbia Chapter, Congaree Vista Guild, Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW), Columbia Empowerment Zone, CRC (Columbia Running Club), Women Presidents Association Columbia Chapter, and the City of Columbia Climate Protection Action Committee.

Photo Courtesy of Kickstand Studio

**Jesica Mackey**

Chairwoman, Richland County Council  
Vice President, NP Strategy



Elected in 2020, Jesica Mackey serves as chairwoman of Richland County Council representing District 9 in northeast Columbia. Following through on her commitment

to residents to develop a path forward for success in Richland County, Mackey led efforts to establish the county's Strategic Planning Ad Hoc committee to develop a strategic plan and goals for the county. Most recent successes of the committee include the development of a public dashboard to provide transparency on county goals and objectives, the creation of CADP; a public private partnership to address economic development and a new County website. Mackey also serves on the boards of South Carolina First Steps, EdVenture Children's Museum, and Columbia Museum of Art and as co-chair of the Columbia Area Development Partnership board of directors.

Photo Courtesy of Rick Smoak

## Paul Mashburn

CEO  
Mashburn Construction Company



Paul Mashburn said that from childhood, he knew he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps at Mashburn Construction. He began working in the field as a laborer during

the summer while he was in high school and continued throughout college. Mashburn said he's especially proud of his affiliation with Clemson University's Construction Science and Management program, which reinforced the values of hard work and dedication he learned early in life. Mashburn says he's especially proud of taking the helm at Mashburn and further strengthening the culture. At Mashburn, the company mission is to "Partner to Deliver an Exceptional Building Experience," which helps to achieve the vision: "To be the Builder of Choice, the Builder of People, and the Builder of Better Communities."

Photo Courtesy of Mashburn Construction Company

## William "Billy" Newsome

Owner  
Newsome Law, P.A.



Billy Newsome, founder and principal of Newsome Law in Columbia, is an estate planning attorney whose expertise in trusts, estates, taxation, and nonprofit compliance has

safeguarded legacies for high-net-worth individuals and organizations across South Carolina for over three decades. Newsome is certified as a Specialist in Estate Planning and Probate Law by the South Carolina Supreme Court and a Fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel. He has litigated complex fiduciary disputes, crafted multimillion-dollar succession plans, and guided tax-exempt entities through regulatory challenges. He is an adjunct professor at USC Law and was chair of the South Carolina Bar's Probate, Estate Planning and Trust Section Council in 2023 and 2024. His accolades include Best Lawyers in America "Lawyer of the Year" for Trusts and Estates (2015).

Forrest Clonts

## Merritt McNeely

CEO  
Flock and Rally



After joining Flock and Rally in 2018 as vice president of marketing, Merritt McNeely contributed a wealth of expertise in marketing and organizational

leadership, enabling the firm to grow its client base to serve larger clients with broader audiences and more complex needs. She was promoted to executive vice president in June 2020, ultimately assuming the position of CEO in 2022. She has achieved remarkable success through strategic restructuring of the organization, with a focus on empowerment of staff, a collaborative attitude toward client service and a passion for serving the community. She served as executive director of the Five Points Association from 2005 to 2013, where she accomplished groundbreaking projects for the neighborhood, including becoming the youngest and first female chair of the annual St. Pat's in Five Points festival.

Photo Courtesy of Sean Rayford

## J. Ted Nissen

President and CEO  
First Community Bank



J. Ted Nissen is a founding member of the First Community Bank's executive leadership team and has more than 40 years of experience in the banking industry.

He works with the executive leadership team in setting the strategic direction for the bank. He has led the commercial and retail banking teams through several market expansions. He serves as treasurer and a board member of the South Carolina Bankers Association (SCBA) and is past chair of the SCBA Community Bankers Division. He is on the executive committee of the Business Development Corporation (BDC) and past chair of the SSBCI and SBA 7a Loan Committee. Additionally, he serves on the Lexington County Health District Board.

Photo Courtesy of George Fulton Productions

## Georgia Mjartan

President and CEO  
Central Carolina Community Foundation



Georgia Mjartan is president and CEO of Central Carolina Community Foundation, partnering with donors to support nonprofits, equip students, and inspire giving

across the Midlands. With more than \$275 million in assets, Central Carolina Community Foundation awarded a record-breaking \$27.8 million in grants to nonprofits during Mjartan's first year leading the organization. Mjartan was named a "Southerner of the Year" by Southern Living and was awarded an Aspen Institute Ascend Fellowship. Prior to joining the foundation, Mjartan was state director for South Carolina First Steps, the state's early childhood agency, where she led the statewide expansion of PreK, more than doubled the reach of the organization, and created a first-in-the-nation technology solution which transforms the way families access and apply for public programs.

Photo Courtesy of Jabari Clyburn

## Doug Quackenbush

President  
Quackenbush Architects + Planners



Doug Quackenbush is the founding principal of Quackenbush Architects + Planners, an interdisciplinary design firm located in Columbia, South Carolina. Quackenbush

has completed over 400 projects in his 40-year career, focusing primarily on the design of educational and workplace environments. He and his firm have received over 50 design awards for their work. He is a member of the Society of College and University Planners (SCUP), a regional governor representing South Carolina for the Association for Learning Environments (A4LE), and a past president of the South Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Quackenbush serves on the board for the 701 Center for Contemporary Art and the Penland School of Craft in Penland, North Carolina.

Photo Courtesy of Kickstand Studio

## Vaughn Reynolds

Columbia Market President  
Bank of America



Vaughn Reynolds is the Columbia Market president for Bank of America. Having joined Bank of America in 2011, Reynolds leads financial advisors and their teams in the

delivery of comprehensive wealth management advice to individuals, companies and institutions. He has worked as a central member of the Columbia market leadership team for the last three years, most recently serving in the role of market integration executive. Prior to Bank of America, Reynolds was a corporate attorney specializing in structured finance and capital markets transactions. Reynolds demonstrates a strong commitment to employee engagement by serving as the executive sponsor of Hispanic/Latino Organization for Leadership and Advancement (HOLA) South Carolina and a mentor with Black Professional Group (BPG) South Carolina. He is also actively engaged in nonprofit organizations and currently serves on the board of Midlands Technical College Foundation and volunteers with Harvest Hope Food Bank. Reynolds lives in Columbia with his wife and two children.

Photo Provided

## Jeff Ruble

President and CEO  
Columbia Area Development Partnership



Jeff Ruble is director of economic development for Richland County, where he leads an office responsible for recruiting and growing business and industry for the

area including Columbia, South Carolina's state capital. Ruble has served at regional and statewide economic development groups for 30 years attracting businesses to South Carolina. He is nationally accredited and has completed post-graduate work at the University of South Florida, Georgia Tech, the University of Oklahoma, the University of South Carolina and Harvard University. Ruble served as president of the South Carolina Economic Developers Association, and serves on the boards of Accelerate SC, I-77 Economic Development Alliance, and the Columbia USC Incubator. He's also a member of the International Economic Development Council and the Southern Economic Development Council.

Photo Courtesy of CADP

## Daniel Rickenmann

Mayor  
City of Columbia



Daniel Rickenmann is the 71st mayor of Columbia, South Carolina. He has a passion for improving the quality of life for all in the Palmetto State's Capital City. Since becoming

mayor in 2022, Rickenmann has worked to expand housing options, strengthen public safety, increase community cleanliness and pride, and improve the city's customer service operations. He is a strong advocate for the city's parks and green spaces, advocating to create new opportunities for outdoor recreation and promote environmental sustainability – especially on the city's riverfront. Before his election to the office of mayor, Rickenmann was an entrepreneur, opening the restaurant Birds on a Wire shortly after college graduation, and he is the co-founder of Kentucky-based Forbidden Bourbon.

Photo Courtesy of City of Columbia Public Relations

## Bob Ruff

Senior Vice President,  
Group Voluntary Benefits  
Aflac



Bob Ruff has served as senior vice president of the Group Voluntary Benefits Division at Aflac since March 2022. Ruff joined Aflac in August 2018 as senior vice president of Growth

Solutions. He has more than 17 years of leadership experience in the employee benefits industry and has received numerous accolades. Ruff is currently a member of the Midlands Business Leadership Group (MBLG) while also serving on multiple boards including Edventure, South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, and the Central Carolina Community Foundation. In 2025, Ruff was selected to participate in The Riley Institute, a prestigious leadership program of Furman University. Ruff holds a Bachelor of Science from Virginia Tech and also holds a Master of Business Administration from Clemson University. Ruff resides in Lexington with his wife Chelsey and their four children, Austin (10), Devyn (10), Liam (7) and Chase (5).

Jeremy Fleming

## Paul Riddle

Senior Vice President of Human Resources  
and Quality  
Southeastern Freight Lines

Paul Riddle currently serves as senior vice president of Human Resources and Quality for Southeastern Freight Lines, Inc. in Lexington, South Carolina. Riddle has served in multiple leadership roles during his 31-year career with Southeastern and leads the company's strategic planning process. He serves as an executive board member for the South Carolina Trucking Association and board member for the Freewheelers Association and North America Transportation Employee Relations Association. He is dedicated to his church home, First Presbyterian Church, where he has served as elder for the past 15 years. He and his wife, Shawna, live in Ballentine, South Carolina and have three children, Margaret, Ben and Genevieve.

## Mark Scriven

Shareholder  
Elliott Davis, LLC

Shareholder  
Elliott Davis Advisory, LLC



Mark Scriven is a current shareholder with Elliott Davis, LLC. His experience includes both SEC registrants and private institutions. He has also provided various consult-

ing solutions including financial due diligence services, private equity valuation services, initial public offerings, and debt/equity offerings. He is a firm specialist in both current expected credit losses (CECL) and SOX/FDICIA internal control audits. In addition, Scriven is part of multiple organizations, including the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the South Carolina Association of Certified Public Accountants, the South Carolina Bankers Association, Independent Banks of South Carolina, the Georgia Bankers Association, the Florida Bankers Association, and the Pennsylvania Association of Community Bankers, as well as the United Way Young Leaders Society, Leadership Columbia, and is on the board of directors for The Cooperative Ministry.

Photo Provided

**John Starmack**

CEO  
TM Floyd & Company



John Starmack worked for Big 6 consulting firms leading enterprise IT consulting initiatives, including the planning and implementation of the South Carolina courts

modernization efforts that began in 2000. In 2013, he joined TM Floyd & Company and in 2020 became the CEO. As CEO, he has led the company on an unprecedented growth journey in terms of new clients, client longevity, community involvement, recognition, and teamwork. From its headquarters in Columbia, South Carolina, TM Floyd & Company proudly serves clients across the United States with the goal of earning and building long-term trust with employees and clients to achieve more together.

Photo Courtesy of Geoff Rhodes

**Rohit Verma**

Dean, Darla Moore School of Business  
University of South Carolina



In 2023, Rohit Verma was named dean and USC Educational Foundation Distinguished Professor at the Darla Moore School of Business. Before coming to USC, Verma served as

founding provost and chief academic officer for VinUniversity in Hanoi, Vietnam, established in collaboration with Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania. Earlier, he held leadership roles at Cornell's S.C. Johnson College of Business and the University of Utah, as well as teaching at DePaul University. His awards include Fellow of the Production and Operations Management Society and Decision Sciences Institute.

Photo Provided

**Bobby Stepp**

General Counsel  
Robinson Gray Stepp & Laffitte, LLC



Bobby Stepp is a current member of the Robinson Gray Stepp & Laffitte, LLC firm. He received the Trial and Appellate Advocacy Award from the South Carolina Bar in 2014,

and was honored with the Richland County Bar Association's Matthew J. Perry, Jr. Civility Award in 2022. In addition, Stepp is affiliated with numerous institutions, including the Richland County Bar Association, the American College of Trial Lawyers, the American Board of Trial Advocates, the Federal Bar Association, the South Carolina Defense Trial Attorneys' Association, the John Belton O'Neall Inn of Court, the Litigation Counsel of America, the Trial Law Institute, and the Diversity Law Institute. Stepp is also a Barrister of the Order of Veritas, as well as an Advocate of the Order of Certus. His public service includes work on the Robinson Gray 20 Years Strong Service Project, and he is the former president of the board of directors for South Carolina Philharmonic.

Photo provided

**Mark Williams**

Founder and President  
Strategic Development Group Inc.



Mark Williams is founder and president of Strategic Development Group, Inc., an internationally recognized consulting firm specializing in manufacturing and office

facility site selection and negotiation for mid- to large- size U.S. and multinational corporations in automotive, steel, chemical, distribution, and life science sectors. Prior to founding Strategic Development Group in 1999, Williams served as chief development officer for the South Carolina Department of Commerce, where he worked with two governors directing South Carolina's domestic and global business recruitment activities, including the operation of Commerce's international offices in Frankfurt and Tokyo. He recently published the second edition of his popular book "Site Selection and Economic Development."

Photo Courtesy of Strategic Development Group, Inc.

**Jay Swearingen**

Managing Shareholder  
Bauknight Pietras & Stormer, PA



Jay Swearingen has worked with BPS for 31 years, and he became managing shareholder in 2024. Swearingen says he's very proud of the firm, the people who

work there, and the dynamic clients they serve. He serves on the boards of directors of local not-for-profits, including South Carolina United FC and Richland Baseball, Inc., and he has coached local youth sports teams.

Photo Provided

**Oliver Wollinsky**

Chief Production Officer  
Scout Motors



Oliver Wollinsky is the chief production officer at Scout Motors, where he directs the company's manufacturing strategy and operations. In this role, Wollinsky will over-

see the completion, launch and ramp-up of the new Scout Motors Production Center now under construction in Blythewood, South Carolina, and lead manufacturing of the company's SUVs and trucks, with initial production targeted to begin in 2027. An automotive production expert with more than 25 years of experience in the industry, Wollinsky first joined Scout Motors as vice president of production in 2024. Before joining Scout Motors, he served as plant manager for SAIC Volkswagen.

Katie Wilson

**Jonathan W. Yarborough**

Director of Government Affairs and Economic Development  
 Dominion Energy



Jonathan W. Yarborough is the director of Government Affairs and Economic Development for Dominion Energy South Carolina. Yarborough works directly with the South Carolina General Assembly, the Governor's Office, and key state agencies. He helped create the Energy Security Act of 2025 by providing education and detailed testimony for the General Assembly. Before joining Dominion Energy in 2015, Yarborough worked in legislative and intergovernmental affairs for the S.C. Department of Commerce and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. He was also a congressional liaison for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a senior advisor to the assistant secretary for Fossil Energy at the Department of Energy in Washington, D.C. After serving in the U.S. Army, Yarborough graduated from Clemson University and the University of South Carolina School of Law. He has served on various boards including the S.C. Manufacturing Alliance and Southern Carolina Economic Development Alliance.

Photo Courtesy of Dominion Energy

**Chris Zimmer**

Market President  
 Truist



Chris Zimmer is market president for the Midlands and Upstate South Carolina Truist Financial Corporation. He is responsible for the management and optimization of all banking functions in the market. This includes the administration of loan portfolio, deposit acquisitions, development of existing clients, acquisition of new clients, delivery of fee-based revenue services, and integration of retail and commercial lines of business. With more than 19 years banking experience, Zimmer was named to the market president position for the Columbia market in 2020. Zimmer serves on the executive committee of the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce, Darla Moore School of Business Board of Advisors, Midlands Technical College Foundation Board, United Way of the Midlands Board of Directors, and is a member of the Midlands Business Leadership Group.

Photo Provided

**A well-deserved honor for two well-respected leaders.**

We're proud to congratulate John Griggs and Rachel Whitley for their selection to the **2025 Most Influential** list.

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**John Griggs**  
 Region Executive  
 Midlands and Grand Strand



**Rachel Whitley**  
 Commercial Banker  
 Grand Strand

# 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL

2025

AND THE HALL OF FAME



**Charleston Business Magazine** celebrates another year of honoring the region's most influential people. The distinctive coastal region known as the Lowcountry is one of South Carolina's fastest-growing areas. The 50 men and women on this list were chosen through research from our staff and nominations from the Lowcountry community. These individuals have done important work in the fields of banking, education, construction, government, the arts, and more. Many are making the list for the first time, spotlighting important work they've done over the past 12 months.

We're also celebrating our sixth year of selecting entrants to our Hall of Fame. This year, we're adding five new members, people who are no strangers to the 50 Most Influential People list. They have been spotlighted many times in years past, and they continue to make a lasting impact in the region.

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**Congratulations to our very own Kevin Phillips** on being recognized as one of Charleston Business Magazine's 50 Most Influential. We are proud of Kevin and his continued leadership, as well as our firm's commitment to exceptional client service and making a positive impact in communities across South Carolina.



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## Charleston's 50 Most Influential People

### TRUDY H. ROBERTSON

*Business, Litigation & Healthcare*

Nationally and regionally recognized, Trudy Robertson is a member of the firm's Management Committee and co-head of the Charleston office. She represents clients across a wide range of business, governmental, banking, regulatory, healthcare, and commercial litigation matters.



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&  
HUTTON**





*Photo by Simply Sunny Photography*

## Faith Rivers James

**Executive Director**  
Coastal Conservation League

**Faith Rivers James** has served as executive director of the Coastal Conservation League since 2022. James, a native of Mount Pleasant, has said that she feels a deep connection to the landscape of the region, and has long worked to preserve it. A graduate of Dartmouth College and Harvard Law School, James spent much of her career as an attorney, practicing at Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld and serving as counsel and senior policy adviser to the Majority Leader in the U.S. House of Representatives. Later, she was executive director of the South Carolina Bar Foundation. During her time there, James worked in partnership with the Coastal Community Foundation to launch the Heirs' Property Preservation Project. Eventually, James moved into the education field, teaching at Vermont Law School, where she focused on property and environmental issues, and at Elon University School of Law, where she was associate dean of experiential learning and leadership. James returned to the Lowcountry in 2018, serving as the assistant provost for leadership and chair of the Department of Leadership Studies at The Citadel. Four years later, she was able to put her love for conservation and preservation of rural landscapes and natural resources into action in her work with the Coastal Conservation League.



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**

# Tonya M. Matthews, Ph.D.

**President and CEO  
International African  
American Museum**

**Tonya M. Matthews, Ph.D.**, helped open the International African American Museum in Charleston in 2023, and under her leadership, the museum has welcomed more than 500,000 visitors. The museum sits on Gadsden’s Wharf, where more than 100,000 enslaved Africans first set foot in North America, has been designated a UNESCO Site of Remembrance. Matthews, who was an engineer and a poet before joining the museum in 2021, is the founder of the STEMInista Project, a national movement designed to empower girls in STEM. She holds an undergraduate degree from Duke University and a Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University, and she serves on the board of advisers for the MI STEM Advisory Council. Asked what’s next for you in shaping Charleston’s future in 2025 and beyond, Matthews said, “In the years ahead, I am deeply committed to advancing Charleston as an international epicenter for genealogy, memory-keeping, and descendant-family discovery. As we like to say around here: ‘All roads lead to South Carolina.’ So we will soon be launching IAAM Homecoming/IAAM Coming Home, a new annual gathering designed to welcome descendants, locals, and visitors ‘back to the water’ to explore their roots, celebrate culture, and deepen their understanding of how personal history shapes community identity. The uniting thing about genealogy is that we all have ancestors. Together, these initiatives will position Charleston — and IAAM — as a place where people come to find themselves, their stories, and each other.”



*Photo Courtesy of Trenise Elmore*

**50<sup>th</sup> MOST  
INFLUENTIAL**  
2025 **AND THE HALL OF FAME**

**HALL OF FAME  
INDUCTEE**



*Photo by Simply Sunny Photography*

# Bernie Mazyck

**President and CEO**  
**South Carolina Association for  
Community Economic Development**

**Bernie Mazyck** is the founding president and CEO of the South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development (SCACED), the statewide trade association that aims to improve the quality of life for all South Carolinians by advancing innovative, sustainable solutions in low-wealth communities. Mazyck has helped the organization drive statewide progress in housing and job creation, generating more than \$400 million in economic impact. In practical terms, that means that more than 2,500 families purchased their first homes, and economic development organizations created more than 6,000 jobs. Under Mazyck's leadership, SCACED also helped to secure the South Carolina Community Development Act. Mazyck serves on the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond board (Charlotte branch) and previously was vice president of community development for the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce. He also has chaired the board of the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations. He holds an undergraduate degree from Charleston Southern University and a Master of Divinity degree from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. Mazyck was awarded the Order of the Silver Crescent in 2004 and the Order of the Palmetto in 2014. In 2024, he was recognized as Charleston Southern University's Distinguished Alumnus of the Year.



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**

# Sunju Patel

**Co-Founder and Managing Member**  
TMGOC Ventures

**Sunju Patel is the** co-founder and managing member of TMGOC Ventures, which came to life in 2023 and has a \$1 billion portfolio of investments, including partnerships with hotel brands such as Ritz-Carlton and Curio Collection by Hilton. Prior to starting TMGOC, Patel co-founded The Montford Group, a real estate investment and development firm, in 2017. At The Montford Group, Patel helped to expand its robust real estate portfolio to include office, retail and hotel across the Southeast including new hotel developments with premier partners Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt. A graduate of College of Charleston, Patel is a member of the College of Charleston School of Business board of governors, and he serves on the Accommodation Tax Committee for the city of Charleston. Asked to name a partnership or initiative he's proud to have been part of during 2025, Patel said, "In 2025, I'm most proud of the continued growth of TMGOC's hospitality portfolio. Partnering with communities and investors to deliver projects that balance entrepreneurial vision with institutional discipline has been deeply rewarding. One initiative that stands out is our expansion into Charleston, where we've been able to create developments that not only generate strong returns but also enhance the cultural and social fabric of the city."



*Photo provided*



**HALL OF FAME**  
**INDUCTEE**



*Photo by Simply Sunny Photography*

## Dixon Woodward

**State President – South Carolina /  
Coastal Georgia**

**United Community**

**Dixon Woodward** has been United Community's state president for South Carolina and Coastal Georgia since 2019, but he has more than 20 years of experience in the world of banking. He began his career with TD Bank and then moved on to Carolina First Bank before joining United Community in 2015. In his current role, Woodward is responsible for retail and commercial teams in South Carolina for the Greenville-headquartered bank. He holds degrees from University of South Carolina, South Carolina Banker's School, and Louisiana State University Graduate School of Banking. He also was a Riley Institute Diversity Fellow. Woodward has served on the boards of the College of Charleston Foundation, the Charleston Regional Development Alliance, South Carolina Arts Commission Foundation, and the South Carolina Aquarium. He is a former co-chair of the American Red Cross Clara Barton Society. He also has been involved in volunteering and philanthropy with such organizations as Trident United Way and American Cancer Society. Asked about what's next for him in shaping Charleston's future in 2025 and beyond, Woodward said, "Continue United Community's support of our clients and the economic prosperity of Charleston business community while investing time and resource in the many wonderful initiatives that are so vital to our community."



**HALL OF FAME  
INDUCTEE**

# 50<sup>TH</sup> MOST INFLUENTIAL

2025

AND THE HALL OF FAME

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## PREVIOUS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

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**TOMMY BAKER  
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DR. DAVID COLE  
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MIKE GIANONI  
DAVID GINN  
BEN NAVARRO**

### 2021

**ERNEST ANDRADE  
BRYAN DERREBERRY  
ROBERT QUINN  
DARIUS RUCKER  
DOT SCOTT  
JOHN TECKLENBURG**

### 2020

**JIM NEWSOME III  
JOSEPH P. RILEY JR.  
TIM SCOTT  
MARY THORNLEY  
ANITA ZUCKER**

**Thomas Anderson Jr.**

Market Executive – South Carolina  
Wells Fargo



Thomas Anderson is the Wells Fargo Commercial Banking market executive for South Carolina. Anderson has been with the bank since 1999 where he previously served as

the regional vice president for Middle Market Banking for Eastern SC. Prior to that he was a senior relationship manager in both business banking and middle market banking. Anderson is also a member of the Wells Fargo Commercial Banking Inclusion & Opportunity Council. Anderson currently serves as a board member with the Charleston Metro Chamber on their executive committee, the Palmetto Business Forum, the SC Chamber, as a board member and treasurer of the Mother Emanuel Memorial Foundation, as a board member and treasurer of The Citadel Real Estate Foundation, as a board member of the Carolina Youth Development Center and as an adjunct professor at The Citadel's School of Business.

Photo Courtesy of Wells Fargo

**Matt Brewer**

President/CEO  
Choate Construction



As president and CEO of Choate Construction, Matt Brewer oversees the development and implementation of the firm's long-term strategic plan. While delivering

over \$2.2 billion in annual revenue, Brewer guides Choate's employee-owners in fostering impactful relationships with industry partners. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Brewer served as chairman of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce board in 2024 and still serves on the board. He has served as chairman of both the Regional Policy Committee and Business Advocacy Committee. He is a graduate of Leadership Charleston.

Photo by Jimmy Cledaras

**Thomas Anderson**

Division President  
SouthState



Thomas Anderson currently serves as the Coastal Division president for SouthState Bank, serving both the Charleston region and the Grand Strand corridor. After

graduating from the University of the South, Sewanee, Anderson began his banking career in 2007 with SouthState Bank's management training program in Columbia, South Carolina. After two years of commercial credit roles, he was relocated to Charleston where he helped to grow SouthState's commercial banking team. Anderson has been very engaged with the community and currently serves on the executive committee of the South Carolina Community Loan Fund as immediate past chair, the board of the Charleston Regional Development Alliance, and the Charleston CEO Council. He's previously served on boards for Operation Home, the South Carolina Bankers Association, and Windwood Farm, and is a graduate of South Carolina Bankers School and Leadership Charleston.

Photo provided

**Wendy Brewer**

Partner, Private Wealth Financial Adviser  
Roseate Group of Wells Fargo



Wendy M. Brewer is an adviser and partner at Roseate Group of Wells Fargo Advisors, which is one of only 100 practices nationwide on the 2024 Forbes Top Wealth Man-

agement Teams: Private Wealth ranking. Brewer also is on the 2024 and 2025 Forbes Best-in-State Wealth Advisors and Forbes Top Women Wealth Advisors Best-in-State lists. Having begun her career path in 2001, Brewer is a non-practicing certified public accountant and has the Personal Financial Specialist designation from American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. She also earned the Certified Divorce Financial Analyst and Chartered Special Needs Consultant designations.

Photo by Marie Rodriguez

**David Botzis**

Tax Partner  
Forvis Mazars

David Botzis has been a tax partner with Forvis Mazars since 2022, when the company was still known as Forvis. The company specializes in audit, accountancy, advisory, tax, and legal services. Botzis previously was a partner at Dixon Hughes Goodman LLP. Botzis is an alum of University of South Carolina and the Darla Moore School of Business. He served on the 2025 executive committee for the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce and has served on the boards of Trident United Way and the Barrier Island Free Medical Clinic.

**George Bullwinkel**

Shareholder and Board Member  
Maynard Nexsen



George J.F. Bullwinkel III practices in the areas of real estate acquisition and development, commercial real estate, and administrative law, including permitting, zon-

ing and land sales registrations; development agreements; and economic development. Bullwinkel represents clients in securing economic development incentives, large tract rezoning approval and infrastructure agreements with various agencies, counties and municipalities of the State of South Carolina, primarily in Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester and Jasper counties. He has been involved in several large, notable real estate development projects for WestRock Land Development (Nexton, Summers Corner, Spring Grove, and Magnolia – a partnership between WestRock and Magnolia ARC, LLC); Gramling Brothers (Cane Bay, Reverie on the Ashley); and Newland Communities (Nexton). Before joining the firm, Bullwinkel spent five months in Northern Ireland in 2004 as a project manager with Larne Enterprise Development Co., working on various economic development projects.

Photo Courtesy of Rick Smoak

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Congratulations,  
**Markus Kastenholz,**  
on being named on of the *50 Most Influential People* by Charleston Business Magazine.



**Markus Kastenholz, CCIM CPA**  
Managing Director | Charleston  
Land and Capital Markets

## Reginald Burgess

Mayor  
City of North Charleston



Reginald L. "Reggie" Burgess, a native of North Charleston's historical Union Heights and Liberty Hill neighborhoods, joined the North Charleston Police Department in 1989.

By 2018, he reached the pinnacle of his police career as the chief of police for North Charleston. On Jan. 2, 2024, he was inaugurated as the mayor of North Charleston. A graduate of Claflin University, Burgess was a 2025 board liaison to the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce.

Photo Provided

## Wes Carter

President  
Atlantic Packaging



Wes Carter is the third-generation leader of Atlantic Packaging, the largest privately held industrial packaging company in North America, with locations in

Summerville and Greenville. As president of Atlantic Packaging, Carter is also the driving force behind A New Earth Project, the company's sustainability initiative, which works with brands to transition away from environmentally problematic packaging and help rid the world's oceans, lakes, and rivers of plastic pollution. He serves on the boards of directors for The Conservation Alliance, WildAid, Keep America Beautiful, and the South Carolina Conservation Bank, as well as the California SB-54 Packaging Producer Responsibility Advisory board, the Lowcountry Land Trust board, and the UNC-Chapel Hill board of visitors.

Photo Provided

## James Byrd

Regional Director – External Affairs  
AT&T



James "Jay" Byrd, a 20-year veteran of AT&T, was appointed regional director of external affairs for AT&T South Carolina in 2023. Prior to joining the External and Legisla-

tive Affairs organization, Byrd served in AT&T's Construction and Engineering organization, where he coordinated with internal teams and local municipalities to deploy advanced broadband services and other products throughout the Lowcountry. Originally from Little Mountain, South Carolina, Byrd holds a bachelor's degree from The Citadel. Byrd is actively involved in the community, serving on boards of organizations such as Charleston Regional Development Alliance, Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, and Southern Carolina Development Alliance. He is also a member of the South Carolina Digital Resource Alliance.

Photo Courtesy of James Byrd

## William Cogswell, Jr.

Mayor  
City of Charleston



William Cogswell Jr. is the mayor of Charleston, South Carolina. Prior to becoming mayor, he served as state representative for South Carolina's 110th District, where he

was born and raised. Cogswell has owned his own real estate business for 20 years. He specializes in complex historic and environmentally contaminated rehabilitation projects and has received numerous local, regional, and national awards for these projects. His company's projects include the Cigar Factory, the GARCO Mill, and the Old Navy Base in North Charleston. Cogswell is a committed conservationist, having served on numerous boards such as the Historic Charleston Foundation, Coastal Conservation League, the Peninsula Advocacy Commission, and the Library Society.

Photo Provided

## Willis Cantey

CEO  
Cantey Tech Consulting



Willis Cantey founded Cantey Tech Consulting in 2007 after working for Blackbaud and for InfoRocket Inc. Cantey has said the company's focus is on creating and

instilling trust with clients. He is also the CEO of Cantey EDU, a technology support and logistics company supporting standardized academic assessments in 17 states. He holds degrees from the University of the South at Sewanee and the Masters of International Business Program at University of South Carolina. Cantey has served as chairman of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce and on the boards of South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities and the Historic Charleston Foundation.

Photo Provided

## Tony Deering

CEO  
R2P Innovations



Prior to moving to Charleston in 2006, Tony Deering served as an officer in an elite army unit in South Africa. He has worked alongside some of the world's

pre-eminent scientists in the field of blast and ballistics. On arrival in the United States, Deering supported the MRAP vehicle program that ultimately saved the lives of many thousands of service members during the Global War on Terror. For the last 18 years he has played a key role in providing critical structures to the Department of Defense, and he is the current sitting representative of the Submarine Industrial Base Council for the South Eastern United States. Twelve years ago, Deering founded R2P Innovations with the single-minded mission to save the lives of school children in the case of an armed assault on campus. R2P produces the world's most advanced bulletproof doors and was recently recognized as the No. 5 fastest growing company in the United States and the No. 1 fastest growing company in South Carolina.

Photo Courtesy of Joseph W. Nienstedt

## Joseph DeLeon

President/CEO  
Roper St. Francis Healthcare



Joseph DeLeon is president and CEO of Roper St. Francis Healthcare (RSFH), a leading Low-country health system. With over 30 years of senior leadership experience, he is known for operational excellence, financial stewardship, and expanding access to high-quality care. Since joining RSFH in 2024, he has advanced major initiatives to broaden clinical services, enhanced trauma capabilities, and added pediatric programs for the growing Charleston region. DeLeon oversees 6,800 teammates, a 350-provider medical group, and an effective ACO. He is directing \$1.7 billion in expansion projects, including the new Roper Hospital, which is expected to add 600 health care jobs, generate 3,600 construction jobs, and drive a \$2.5 billion economic impact. Previously, he led Texas Health Harris Methodist hospitals and began his career in the U.S. Air Force Medical Service Corps.

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Photo Provided

## Robert Faith

Founder/Chairman/CEO  
Greystar



Robert Faith is founder, chairman, and CEO of Greystar, a leader in investment, development, and management of high-quality rental housing properties. He

founded the company in 1993. Under Faith's leadership, Greystar has grown from a manager of 9,000 units in the United States through the acquisition of the company's predecessor Greystone to managing and operating more \$320 billion of real estate in 250 markets. From 2002-2006, he served as the South Carolina Secretary of Commerce. He also founded Homegate Hospitality LLC and Starwood Capital Group.

Photo Provided

## Dan Doyle

President/Chief Operating Officer  
The Beach Company



Dan Doyle joined The Beach Company in 2004, with the role of expanding the company's multi-family residential real estate portfolio throughout the Southeast. Today, as

president and COO, Doyle is responsible for the company's overall growth and operations. He has more than 30 years of real estate industry experience, with the majority spent in the multi-family development and operating sectors. Doyle holds both undergraduate and graduate degrees from The University of Michigan. His community involvement includes serving on the board of directors of the Charleston Regional Development Alliance, Operation Home, and past board member of the Charleston Metro Chamber. Doyle is a frequent speaker at regional and national real estate industry events and is an active member of the Urban Land Institute.

Photo Courtesy of Alice Keeney Photography

## B. Keith Faulkner

President  
Charleston Southern University



B. Keith Faulkner was appointed the fourth president of Charleston Southern University in 2023. Before joining the university, he served as president and dean of

Appalachian School of Law in Virginia and as dean of Liberty University School of Law and the Lundy-Fetterman School of Business at Campbell University. Faulkner served in the U.S. Navy as a nuclear power plant operator and technician. His responsibilities included work on the USS Billfish, a fast-attack nuclear-powered submarine. Faulkner holds degrees from Campbell University and Baylor University School of Law.

Photo Provided

## David Echols

President/General Manager  
Charleston RiverDogs



David Echols has guided the RiverDogs through some of their most successful seasons since being named general manager in 2004. He led the staff in hosting the

highly successful 2004 and 2012 South Atlantic League All-Star games, and has twice earned SAL General Manager of the Year honors. Under his guidance, the RiverDogs have been named recipients of MiLB national awards for excellence in promotions, marketing, and sustained excellence. And, in 2016, the RiverDogs won the inaugural Patriot Award. He's a member of the Rotary Club of Charleston, the Executive Association of Greater Charleston, and the boards of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce and Trident Technical College. Echols was a founding member and vice president of the Palmetto Military Support Group, and currently serves as an Air Mobility Command Civic Leader.

Photo Courtesy of The RiverDogs

## Brent Gibadlo

Senior Vice President  
Brookfield Residential



Brent Gibadlo leads Brookfield's Land and Housing operations across the South Carolina and Charlotte, North Carolina, markets, with primary responsibility

for Nexton — the award-winning, 5,000-acre mixed-use community in the Lowcountry. Nexton was recently named Best Master-Planned Community of 2025 by Builder Magazine's Choice Design Awards, a national recognition that reflects its commitment to innovation, wellness, design, diversity, and lifelong learning. A graduate of the College of Charleston, Gibadlo went on to earn an MBA from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business. He is an active member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), serving on the Community Development Council. He is a past chairman of the College of Charleston School of Professional Studies Advisory board and has served on the boards of the Charleston Metro Chamber, Charleston Regional Development Alliance, and Kids On Point.

Photo Provided

**Tim Grow**

Shareholder  
Elliott Davis



As leader of the firm's Consulting practice, Tim Grow focuses on providing comprehensive assurance and management consulting services to a diverse customer

base in the real estate, manufacturing, construction, and governmental industry sectors. With more than 20 years of experience, he currently serves customers as part of the firm's construction and manufacturing and distribution specialty groups. Grow is also actively involved in the community through a variety of nonprofit boards of directors such as Trident United Way, East Cooper Community Outreach, and Charleston Regional Development Alliance.

Photo Provided

**Will Herring**

CEO  
Hunter Quinn Homes



Will Herring received his B.S. degree from the College of Charleston, a construction management degree from Trident, and his Master in Business from The Citadel. Before

launching Hunter Quinn Homes, Herring had previously served in numerous leadership roles for both large regional and public home-builders. He is a licensed contractor and real estate broker, an accredited South Carolina Master Builder, certified CGB, CMP, CSP, and CGP by the National Associations of Home Builders, and is LEED GA certified by the US Green Building Council. He serves on the board of directors for the Charleston Homes Builders Association and as its president in 2018. A Carolina native, when not building homes, Herring enjoys spending time with his family and enjoying the outdoors, fishing, and enjoying the beautiful South Carolina waterways.

Photo Provided

**Mena Hanna**

General Director/CEO  
Spoleto Festival USA



Mena Mark Hanna, Ph.D., is general director and CEO of Spoleto Festival USA, America's premier performing arts festival, based in Charleston, South Carolina. During his

tenure, Spoleto has presented world premieres in theater, orchestral and chamber music, and opera, including "Omar," winner of the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for Music. Before joining Spoleto in 2021, Hanna served as founding dean and professor of musicology and composition at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin, where he created and curated the institution's annual festival, The Edward W. Said Days. He has served as a trustee of Gingko in London and on the board of directors of the Mahler Foundation. Currently, Hanna serves on the advisory board of The Time in Children's Arts Initiative in New York and is a Liberty Fellow of the Aspen Global Leadership Network at the Aspen Institute.

Photo Courtesy of Peter Frank Edwards

**Helen Hill**

President/CEO  
Explore Charleston



Helen Hill leads Explore Charleston, also known as the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Under Hill's leadership, Explore Charleston has developed

industry-leading programs that have assisted the Charleston area in becoming one of the most acclaimed destinations in the country. In 2025, Hill was named to the executive board of the U.S. Travel Association. Hill was awarded with the Order of the Palmetto, the state's highest civilian honor, and in 2023, she received the Joseph P. Riley Leadership Award from the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce. In 2019, Hill was elected the first female board chair of the Charleston County Aviation Authority.

Photo Provided

**Alfonso Hernandez**

Executive, Market Director-Banking  
JP Morgan Chase & Co.

Alfonso Hernandez began his banking career with Bank of America soon after graduating from Berkeley College with a business management degree. Now, he is the South Carolina market director for JPMorgan Chase & Co., a position he has held since 2017. His career has also included work with Bank of America and Valley National Bank. Hernandez, a second-generation Cuban-American, has said he hopes to make a difference for members of the Latin community, particularly by bringing in more bilingual bankers. In late 2024, Hernandez oversaw the opening of Chase's first Myrtle Beach branch.

**Trent Holland**

Regional President  
Huntington Bank



Trent Holland is regional president of Huntington Bank, a position he moved into in late 2025 after spending two years as the bank's senior managing director. A graduate

of the University of South Carolina, Holland has nearly 18 years of experience in middle market banking and capital markets – with extensive experience in syndicated finance, growth/acquisition financing, asset and cashflow centric lending, tax-exempt financing, and the integration of non-credit services for municipal, founder-owned, and sponsor supported companies and institutions. He has served on the executive council of the Board of Visitors for Charleston Southern University.

Photo Provided

## Merle Johnson

Executive Director  
Charleston County Economic Development



Merle Johnson serves as the Economic Development executive director for Charleston County Economic Development. Johnson, an economic development professional

with 20 years of experience, previously served in multiple leadership roles with Charleston County Economic Development for over seven years. Johnson returned to Charleston County after serving as the executive director of the Orangeburg County Development Commission (OCDC) for the past two years. Prior to his leadership in Orangeburg, Johnson was the director of economic and community development for the City of Greenville. In his previous stint with Charleston County Economic Development, Johnson held key positions including deputy director, director of operations, and director of business development.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Alterman Photography

## Tim Kennedy

President  
Trident Construction



Tim Kennedy joined Trident Construction in 1987 after graduating from Clemson University with a degree in construction science. He has been part of the ownership group

of Trident Construction since 1999. In 2019, Kennedy became president. Through his 36 years of dedication to the construction industry, he has served as project manager and project executive on over 1,000 projects. Kennedy is active on the Charleston Chamber Board, Board of Architectural Review of Summerville, American Heart Association Hard Hats for Hearts Vice Chair and the YMCA Board of Summerville. Previously, Kennedy served as president of the Charleston Contractors Association, the Carolinas AGC Board representative for South Carolina, and on the board of Goodwill Industries.

Chris Smith with Chris and Cami Photography

## Markus Kastenholz

Managing Director  
Colliers



Markus Kastenholz is a managing director at Colliers International's Charleston office. Kastenholz joined Colliers' Charleston office in 2019 as a vice president. He

is a member of the CCIM Institute (Certified Commercial Investment Member) and has been a member of the Professional Standards Board at Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS (CTAR) for 15 years. He previously served as president of both the Commercial Investment Division and the Commercial Multiple Listing Service of CTAR. Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, Kastenholz moved to Naples, Florida to become the CFO for a family office with a commercial real estate portfolio with assets ranging from office parks, to flex industrial, to beachfront resort hotels. He moved to Charleston in 2003, and prior to joining Colliers, Kastenholz was a first vice president with CBRE for 16 years, specializing in land and investment property sales.

Photo Provided

## Natasha Lee

CEO  
Floyd Lee Locums



Natasha Lee, CEO and co-founder of Floyd Lee Locums, passionately upholds her core values dedicated to revolutionizing health care staffing and connecting clinicians

to purposeful work. With extensive locum tenens industry experience, Lee's authentic commitment drives the promise to serve those who serve others. She fosters an inclusive culture for employees, partners, and clients, while her dedication extends to DEI&B, corporate volunteerism (We Serve), and internal employee benefits (We Sustain). Recognized on Staffing Industry Analysts' Global Power 150 Women in Staffing List and awarded Women in Business Award by Charleston Business Magazine, Lee brings expertise from previous C-suite and executive-level roles at national health care staffing firms.

Photo Courtesy of Floyd Lee Locums

## Johannes Kellermann

President/CEO  
Mercedes-Benz Vans, LLC



Johannes Kellermann is the president and CEO of Mercedes-Benz Vans, LLC. With over 15 years of leadership in the automotive industry, Kellerman brings extensive

experience in operations management, efficiency improvement, and digital transformation. He holds a degree in industrial engineering and management from the University of Karlsruhe, with a specialization in automotive engineering, supply chain management, and business administration. Throughout his career at Mercedes-Benz, he has held a range of leadership positions spanning production, consulting, and corporate strategy, with a focus on operational excellence and innovation. Prior to his current role, Kellerman was COO at Mercedes-Benz Plant Ludwigsfelde GmbH in Germany, while in parallel serving as head of operational excellence for the global Mercedes-Benz Van division. Earlier in his career, he worked as a partner at Mercedes-Benz Management Consulting and a Lean Manufacturing Consultant and Trainer.

Photo Provided

## Chris Magaldi

Principal/Regional Director  
Thomas & Hutton



Chris Magaldi is a principal and the Charleston regional director of Thomas & Hutton. He joined Thomas & Hutton in 2012 and was named a shareholder in 2015.

Magaldi was named Charleston Regional Director in 2022. With over 27 years of experience in project development, he has served a key role in projects such as WestEdge, Summers Corner, and Point Hope. He is an active member of American Society of Civil Engineers, Civil Engineering Club of Charleston, SC Economic Developers Association, Charleston Home Builders Association, and the Urban Land Institute. Magaldi currently serves on the Charleston Regional Development Alliance executive board, Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce board, and the MUSC Heart and Vascular Center Advisory board and is a member of the First Tee of Greater Charleston Facilities Committee and chair of the CRDA Organizational Engagement Committee.

Jade McCully

**Marc Marchant**

CEO  
LS3P



As CEO, Marc Marchant focuses on advancing LS3P's vision and strategic initiatives, building relationships, and cultivating a culture of collaborative engagement.

During more than 26 years with LS3P, Marchant has served as Studio Leader, Healthcare Practice Leader, and Office Leader, and he joined LS3P's board of directors in 2014. Marchant is also part of the Trident CEO Council, Clemson board of visitors, and Porter-Gaud School board of trustees. He has previously served on Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, Charleston County board of Zoning Appeals, Clemson Architectural Foundation, Clemson University's Humanities Advancement board, AIA Academy of Architecture for Health, AIA Southeast Atlantic Region Healthcare Conference, and St. John's Lutheran Church Vestry. He was recognized as a Riley Fellow from Furman University's Riley Institute in 2018, a Roper St. Francis Fellow in 2013, and received an AIA SC Presidential Citation in 2013.

Photo Courtesy of LS3P

**Mark Munn**

President  
Bank of America Charleston-Hilton  
Head Island



Mark Munn is a managing director and private client adviser for Bank of America Private Bank in Charleston, South Carolina. With more than three decades of financial services experience,

Munn also puts his skills to work as president for Bank of America, N.A.'s Charleston/Hilton Head market. Actively involved in his community, he serves on the boards of The Gibbes Museum of Art, Spoleto USA, and the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce. Some of his past leadership positions in the community include, The South Carolina Bankers Association, Trident United Way, Leadership South Carolina – Class of 2016, Hilton Head Island Celebrity Golf Tournament, The Sandbox Children's Museum, St. Andrew United Methodist Church, Hilton Head Christian Academy, and Hilton Head Regional Medical Center.

Stan Foxworthy

**Brian Mello**

Broker-in-Charge  
Dunes Properties



After moving to Charleston in 2003, Brian Mello oversaw the renovation of several historic homes which initially piqued his interest in architecture and real estate. He

later married his wife Jessica in the French Huguenot Church in 2005. He has been a proud supporter of a variety of local and national philanthropic organizations including St. Jude Children's Center, Charleston Concert Association, the Dee Norton Child Advocacy Center and the Center for Birds of Prey. Mello has his real estate broker's license, he is a member of the National Association of Realtors, a member of the Charleston Trident Association of Realtors, and the South Carolina Association of Realtors.

Photo Courtesy Photo House

**Samuel Mylrea**

CEO  
Qwick FKA Gigpro



Samuel Mylrea combined his passions for technology and hospitality by paving the way for hospitality businesses to address one of their most pressing challenges – labor. Gigpro

was founded in 2019 and was the No. 1 Fastest Growing Company in South Carolina in 2023. Qwick enables businesses to post shifts for a variety of hospitality roles and receive applications – within minutes – from qualified, vetted, and ready-to-work professionals.

Photo Provided

**Rick Mixson**

Chairman  
Landmark Construction



Rick Mixson has worked at Landmark Construction for nearly 40 years. He served as company president from 2000 until 2025, when he was succeeded by former

COO Anthony Garcia. Mixson has said he values honesty and integrity as fundamental to the company's enduring success. Mixson's long-term goals involve driving Landmark Construction to new heights, embracing innovation and sustainable practices. Beyond projects, he sees the company as a vehicle for positive community impact.

Photo Provided

**Kevin Phillips**

Mayor  
Town of Port Royal



Mayor Kevin Phillips is serving his first term as mayor of the Town of Port Royal, having previously served on Town Council from 2020 to 2023. An attorney by profession

with the Schiller & Hamilton Law Firm, he is committed to using his experience, leadership, and sense of duty to help guide Port Royal's continued growth and strengthen the community that he and his family are proud to call home. Deeply dedicated to public service, Phillips believes that the town has given him far more than he could ever repay, and he approaches his work with a sincere desire to give back in every way he can. Under his leadership, Port Royal continues to advance initiatives in environmental preservation, responsible growth management, and engagement with local residents and small businesses — efforts that reflect the town's values and its vision for a thriving future.

Photo Courtesy of Lisa Staff

## H. Alexander Rich

President/CEO  
Gibbes Museum of Art



H. Alexander Rich, Ph.D. is president and CEO of Charleston's Gibbes Museum of Art. Taking the helm of the Gibbes in summer 2025, Rich oversees the nearly

170-year-old organization's overall management, from its exhibitions and daily operation to its educational programs and artistic and future visions. A native New Yorker, Rich served previously as executive director and chief curator of the Ashley Gibson Barnett Museum of Art, while also chairing the Department of Art History and Museum Studies at Florida Southern College, where he was also a tenured professor of art history. His background includes experience at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Brooklyn Museum.

Photo Courtesy of Ashley Stanol

## William Russell

Principal  
JNR Advisory



Will Russell brings over 30 years of experience in corporate financial management and captive insurance company management. A CPA and a Clemson graduate, he oversees firm operations, prepares tax returns, and conducts audits, reviews, and compilations for diverse clients. His background includes designing treasury systems, alternative financing structures, and cash-flow models, as well as managing more than 30 captive insurance clients with assets exceeding \$500 million. He has led due diligence and acquisition integrations and served in leadership roles with Wachovia's Corporate Client Advisory Board, the Greater Summerville/Dorchester Chamber, and the Charleston Regional Development Alliance. A frequent national and international speaker, Russell is also a past president of the South Carolina Captive Insurance Association and remains active in AICPA and SCCIA.

Photo Courtesy of Jarrard, Nowell & Russell, LLC.

Photo Courtesy of Jarrard, Nowell & Russell, LLC.

## Derek Robbins

President/CEO  
Robbins Construction Group



Derek Robbins is the president of Robbins Construction Group, where he leads the company's strategic vision, client relations, and overall operations. With a strong

background in commercial construction and a commitment to delivering high-quality, client-focused results, Robbins has built RCG into a trusted partner known for integrity, transparency, and performance. Under his leadership, Robbins Construction Group has expanded its capabilities across commercial, industrial, and retail sectors, emphasizing innovation, efficient project delivery, and long-term client partnerships. He is dedicated to cultivating a company culture rooted in teamwork, accountability, and continuous improvement — values that drive RCG's reputation for excellence throughout the Southeast.

Photo Provided

## Scott Sharp

Coastal South Carolina RVP, SVP Commercial and Business Banking  
TD Bank



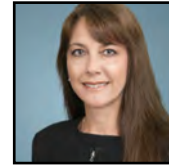
With nearly 30 years in financial services, Scott Sharp has built his career around strengthening communities through responsible banking, strong relationships,

and local investment. Since joining TD Bank in 2009, Sharp has served in several leadership roles across the Lowcountry, and now serves as regional vice president. One of his proudest accomplishments has been helping grow TD's coastal presence while supporting major community projects such as the International African American Museum and the Emanuel Nine Memorial. Sharp's long-term goal is to continue advancing economic growth across South Carolina by empowering small businesses, supporting workforce development, and strengthening partnerships that move communities forward. Giving back has always been at the center of Sharp's life, whether through serving on nonprofit boards, volunteering with Operation Home, mentoring within TD, or helping expand youth lacrosse programs statewide.

Photo Provided

## Trudy Robertson

Attorney  
Moore & Van Allen PLLC



Trudy Robertson serves as co-managing member of Moore & Van Allen PLLC's Charleston office, where she practices as a partner on the Civil Litigation, Health Care,

Business, and Nonprofit Organizations and Charitable Giving teams. She also holds a seat on her firm's Management Committee. In her day-to-day law practice, she handles a wide range of business, fiduciary, banking, health-care, regulatory, and property matters. Robertson also represents municipalities in legal matters affecting town interests and has served as lead attorney for the Town of St. George, South Carolina, since 2015. She serves as a member of the Roper St. Francis Foundation board of directors and also serves as a member of the Pinewood Preparatory School board of trustees, having previously served as its chair and vice-chair, and presently serves as a member of its strategic planning committee.

Photo Courtesy of Moore & Van Allen PLLC

## Chip Shealy

First Vice President  
CBRE Inc.



Chip Shealy is a first vice president within the Office Services team at CBRE. Shealy leverages his unique insight and experience to serve the specialized needs of tenants and owners in Charleston's office market.

As part of the CBRE network, he has access to local office market expertise and market research tools to help clients make strategic and informed decisions. Shealy focuses on leasing, development, acquisition, and disposition of office properties in Charleston and is working with a diverse group of building owners and companies to optimize each client's needs and values. He has been involved in multiple sale and leasing transactions of predominantly office properties in the Charleston area of over 3.25 million square feet and grossing over \$465 million since joining CBRE in 2013.

Todd Surber

## Kevin Sheilley

President/CEO  
Charleston Metro Chamber



Kevin T. Sheilley is the president and CEO of the Charleston Metro Chamber. Sheilley previously served as president and CEO of the Ocala Metro Chamber & Economic

Partnership (CEP) in Ocala, Florida. Under his leadership, the CEP achieved significant milestones, including being recognized as Chamber of the Year by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) in 2020. Sheilley was instrumental in the launch of the Lake Economic Area Development Partnership and previously served as president and CEO of economic development organizations in Kentucky and Tennessee. His dedication to community advancement has been recognized throughout his career. He is a Certified Chamber Executive (CCE) and has received numerous awards, including the Florida Chamber Executive of the Year and the James Coleman East Kentucky Power Local ED of the Year Award.

Photo Provided

## Josh VanScoy

Vice President/Office Leader  
HITT Contracting



Josh VanScoy, vice president and office leader of HITT Contracting's Charleston office, brings more than 30 years of construction experience to his role. A West

Virginia University graduate, he joined HITT in 2002 and has since delivered a wide range of commercial, industrial, military, hospitality, and education projects. VanScoy leads a team of over 50 employees, overseeing daily operations, strategic growth, and project performance from award to closeout, ensuring safety, quality, budget, and client satisfaction. Under his leadership, the Charleston office was named a 2025 Top Workplace and ranked the 11th largest general contractor locally with over \$64.7 million in annual revenue. He is active in CDCA, SAME, ABC Carolinas, Rotary International, and community initiatives including the American Heart Association and the Preservation Society of Charleston.

Photo Courtesy of HITT Contracting

## David Stenström

Former Vice President, Manufacturing  
Americas/Plant Manager  
Volvo Cars Charleston



David Stenström came to Volvo's Charleston plant in January 2021, managing the plant until November 2025, when he moved to Gothenburg, Sweden, to become the

Head of Programs and Quality for Industrial Operations. Prior to his time in Charleston, Stenström served as general manager for the Daqing plant in China, and he has held various management positions in manufacturing and manufacturing engineering. The Volvo Cars Charleston plant employs approximately 1,500 people and produces electric vehicles for the company. Stenström earned a Master of Science degree in Applied Mechanics from Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Photo provided

## Eugene H. Walpole, IV

President/CEO  
The Bank of South Carolina



Eugene H. Walpole IV serves as president and CEO of The Bank of South Carolina. Having joined the bank in 2012, Walpole progressed through the roles of

assistant vice president, vice president, senior vice president, and risk management officer. He became chief financial officer in 2016, executive vice president in 2017, and on Oct. 1, 2023, president and CEO of the bank and company. He also administers the bank's Employee Stock Ownership Plan. A Charleston native, he previously conducted audits, regulatory reviews, and SOX 404 testing for financial institutions. He holds degrees from Presbyterian College, the University of South Carolina, and South Carolina Bankers School, and is a CPA, CFSA, and CRMA. Walpole has served on the Low-country Land Trust Board and serves on boards including the Coastal Conservation Association and the Preservation Society of Charleston.

Photo by Wild Cotton Photography

## H. Richard Sturm

EVP  
Ameris Bank



H. Richard Sturm started his more than 35-year banking career in 1988 with C&S Bank in Columbia, South Carolina. He has spent his career in South Carolina and currently resides at Edisto Beach, keeping offices in both Charleston and Columbia. For the past 19 years he has worked for Ameris Bank and is responsible for banking operations in the states of North and South Carolina. Sturm is also a chairman of the South Carolina Bankers Association, as well as a board member of the Business Development Corporation of SC.

Photo Courtesy of Becky Sturm

Photo Courtesy of Becky Sturm

## Roger Warren

President  
Kiawah Island Golf Resort



Roger Warren, president of Kiawah Island Golf Resort and a member of the PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame, served as the 34th president of The PGA of America

from 2004-2006. At Kiawah, he oversees The Sanctuary hotel, 500 villas and homes, five golf courses, a tennis center, 12 restaurants, and 1,500 employees. The Ocean Course has hosted multiple major championships, including the 2007 Senior PGA and the 2012 and 2021 PGA Championships, and will host again in 2031. Warren joined Kiawah in 2003 as director of golf and became president in 2005. Previously general manager and director of golf at Seven Bridges in Illinois, he rose through the Illinois PGA ranks and was named 1998 Illinois PGA Golf Professional of the Year.

Photo courtesy Kiawah Island Golf Resort

**Melvin Williams**

Vice President / Senior Client Development Manager  
Terracon Consultants, Inc.



Melvin Williams is vice president and senior client development manager at Terracon in Charleston, South Carolina. Williams is the chair of the ACEC Planning Cabinet and

serves on the Transportation Steering Committee and was elected by the College of Fellows to receive the ACEC Community Service Award. He has held many leadership positions with ACEC-SC and is now serving as the affiliate director. Williams has also been elected to serve in leadership roles for many other local, state, regional and national boards and committees. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from South Carolina State University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the Citadel Military College.

Photo provided

**Vicky Wood**

President  
Trident Technical College



Vicky Wood, Ph.D., is the sixth president of Trident Technical College. She is leading the implementation of Career Guided Pathways designed to improve student

success and connect learners with employers throughout their educational journey. Wood is expanding programs and enhancing campus facilities to ensure students have access to cutting-edge labs and learning environments, including the revitalized Berkeley Campus slated for completion in 2026. Before coming to Trident Technical College, Wood served as president of Washington State College of Ohio. She previously held teaching and vice president positions at Marion Technical College. Wood is a first-generation technical college graduate and holds a doctorate in higher education leadership from The University of Toledo, a master's degree from Bowling Green State University, and a bachelor's degree from Ashland University.

Photo Courtesy of Matthew Fortner

**50 MOST INFLUENTIAL**  
2025

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AND THE HALL OF FAME

# 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL

2025

B2B THE GRAND STRAND

**The Grand Strand region is often cited** as one of the Palmetto State's fastest-growing areas. It is populated with movers and shakers in many industries. B2B: The Grand Strand celebrates another year of honoring the region's most influential people. The 50 men and women on this list were selected through extensive staff research and nominations from the community. These individuals have done important work in the fields of hospitality, real estate, banking, health care, education, and more in the stretch of diverse communities along the Atlantic coastline.

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**Brian Argo**

**President/CEO**  
**Conway Medical Center**



Brian Argo has been president and CEO of Conway Medical Center since January 2023, a role he stepped into after serving as executive vice president and chief operating officer.

His previous experience includes serving as chief financial officer of Singing River Health System in Mississippi and vice president and chief revenue officer at Children's Hospital & Medical Center in Omaha. Argo earned a bachelor's degree in business and a Master's of Business Administration from Piedmont University in Georgia.

Photo Provided

**Barbara Jo Blain-Bellamy**

**Mayor**  
**City of Conway**



Barbara Jo Blain-Bellamy has been mayor of Conway since 2016, when she became Conway's first Black mayor. She began serving on Conway's City Council in 1993, and

she worked as the city's deputy administrator in the early 2000s. Blain-Bellamy, who holds an undergraduate degree from Coastal Carolina University and a master's from University of South Carolina, is a member of the South Carolina Bar Association, president of the Horry County League of Cities, and executive board member of the Myrtle Beach Regional Council of Governments. She received an honorary doctorate from Coastal Carolina University in 2018.

Photo by Philip Le Hendrick

**Bruce Bailey**

**President/CEO**  
**Tidelands Health**



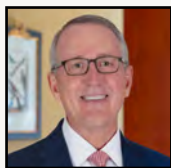
Bruce Bailey serves as president and CEO of Tidelands Health, beginning his career with the organization in 1999 after serving as administrator of Abbeville County Memorial Hospital in Abbeville, South Carolina, for six years. His previous experience also includes administrative responsibility at health facilities in West Virginia, North Carolina, and Virginia.

Additionally, Bailey is chair of the South Carolina Hospital Association's Health Equity Council. He has served as a member of the American Hospital Association's board of trustees and chairman of the association's Regional Policy Board 4. He is an active member and former chairman of the SCHA board of trustees and also serves as chairman of Solvent Networks. Bailey has served as co-chair of the Alliance for a Healthier South Carolina, and is active on the boards of Partnership Grand Strand, Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corp., and Horry County Community Land Trust.

Photo Courtesy of Tim C. Cox

**Laurence S. Bolchoz Jr.**

**President/CEO**  
**Coastal Carolina National Bank**



Laurence S. Bolchoz Jr. joined CCNB in March 2012 and has been a banker for more than 40 years. He is a graduate of Clemson University, the South Carolina Bankers

School, and the ABA Stonier National Graduate School of Banking. He serves on the Community Depository Institutions Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond and as president of the board of directors of the Horry County Community Land Trust. A past chairman of YMCA of Coastal Carolina and past board member of Centrant Community Capital, Bolchoz now serves as chair of the Long Range Planning Committee of the YMCA of Coastal Carolina and on the South Carolina Bankers Association board.

Photo Courtesy of Eugene Utley

**Ryan Betcher**

**Assistant Director of Airports**  
**Horry County Department of Airports**



Ryan Betcher serves as the assistant director of airports for the Horry County Department of Airports (HCDA), where he has helped guide the growth and operations of

the county's aviation system, including Myrtle Beach International Airport, since 2014. He is an Accredited Airport Executive with the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) and contributes to the profession nationally through his service on AAAE's Board of Examiners. Betcher began his aviation career at Burlington International Airport in Vermont after earning dual bachelor's degrees in business administration and economics from the University of Vermont. In 2014, he relocated to Myrtle Beach to join HCDA, later earning his MBA from Coastal Carolina University in 2019.

Photo Courtesy of Ryan Betcher

**Thomas Bouchette**

**President**  
**The Citizens Bank**



Thomas Bouchette has more than 35 years of experience in banking. He became president and COO of The Citizens Bank in 2019 after serving as executive vice president

and chief banking officer. Bouchette began his career as a lending officer with Pee Dee Farm Credit Bank in 1986. Prior to joining The Citizens Bank, Bouchette was South Carolina president and EVP for BNC Bank, regional president and EVP for SCBT, and he held several roles at SCN/Wachovia. He is a graduate of Horry-Georgetown Technical College.

Photo Courtesy The Citizens Bank



# CONGRATULATIONS JOSH KAY



for being recognized  
as one of  
*B2B: The Grand  
Strand's 50 Most  
Influential People*



PARTNERING TO DELIVER AN  
EXCEPTIONAL **BUILDING EXPERIENCE.**



# CONGRATULATIONS *Cheryl Y. Kilday, CDME*

Recognized as one of the  
**Grand Strand's 50 Most Influential People**

Thank you for your outstanding leadership  
and for helping make North Myrtle Beach a  
thriving business community.



SCAN TO  
LEARN MORE



## *Leadership Worth Celebrating*

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce congratulates the **50 Most Influential honorees**. Your work enriches **our community** and **inspires excellence**.

We're proud to have our **CEO, Matt Pivarnik**, and many board members recognized among such **remarkable leaders**.



### Scott Brandon

CEO  
EVOQ Group



Scott Brandon is an entrepreneur, marketer, and community leader with over three decades of innovation across law, advertising, digital marketing, and real estate.

As CEO of The Brandon Agency, he has built a network of firms under EVOQ Group, including TravelBoom Marketing and SaleSurf Growth. A pioneer in digital transformation, Brandon founded Intellistrand and Fuel Interactive, now TravelBoom Marketing, shaping industries from hospitality to e-commerce. His companies have helped brands like Green Giant and Continental Tire grow. Committed to his community, he also holds leadership roles at Brookgreen Gardens, the Myrtle Beach Area Recovery Council, and The Southern Bank.

Photo Provided

### Adam Cates

President / Senior Adviser  
Tradd Commercial of Myrtle Beach



Adam Cates, president of Tradd Commercial of Myrtle Beach, leads a full-service commercial real estate firm specializing in sales, leasing, and land development

across the Myrtle Beach MSA. He has guided the company through major projects that have helped reshape the Grand Strand. A committed community leader, Cates has served as president of the Coastal Carolinas Association of Realtors and South Carolina CCIM, and sits on the board of the Grant Center for Real Estate and Economics at Coastal Carolina University. In 2023, he was inducted into the elite Society of Industrial and Office Realtors. He is also a Cub Scout leader and active member of Coastal Church.

Photo Courtesy of Paula Player Photography

### Rob Clemons

CEO, Carolina Bays Homes  
Host, The Leader Mentality Show



Rob Clemons is an entrepreneur and founder of Carolina Bays Homes, dedicated to helping people through high-quality homebuilding. A Coastal Carolina University

graduate, he became a licensed home builder, real estate broker, and commercial general contractor, and is designated a Certified Master Builder in South Carolina. Clemons has served as president of both the Horry Georgetown and South Carolina Home Builders Associations, chaired the CCAR Education Committee, and sits on the McLeod Health Foundation board. Recognized by Pro Builder Magazine and named SC Builder Member of the Year, he also hosts The Leader Mentality Show. He lives in Murrells Inlet with his wife and two dogs.

Photo Courtesy of Carolina Bay Homes

### Harold “Harry” Cushman

President / CEO  
Dargan Construction Company, LLC



Harold “Harry” Cushman is a Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, native, and is president and CEO of Dargan Construction Company. Cushman has been with the company

since 1982, serving in various roles during his 43 years. He is the licensed South Carolina and North Carolina General Contractor Qualifier for Dargan Construction Services, LLC. He is also a member of the board of directors for Horry-Georgetown Technical College Foundation, MB National LLC, The Conway National Bank, and CNB Corporation. His past roles include director of the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation and a past executive board member of the Pee Dee Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Photo Courtesy of Robert Mills

### Sandy Davis

President / CEO  
Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corp



Sandy Davis, an Horry County native and Coastal Carolina University graduate, has built her career in operations, finance, and economic develop-

ment. After 10 years as controller for Carolina Southern Railroad and part-time professor at Horry-Georgetown Technical College, she joined the Myrtle Beach Regional EDC as director of operations, later becoming project manager, vice president, and now president and CEO. She leads industry recruitment and expansion, supports existing industry, and manages relationships with state and local partners while overseeing all organizational operations. Davis has also completed coursework toward International Economic Developer Certification, and lives in Aynor with her husband and son.

Photo Provided

### Adam Emrick

City Administrator  
City of Conway



For more than a decade, Adam Emrick has led the City of Conway through one of the most dynamic periods of growth and revitalization in its modern history. Under

his leadership, Conway has executed transformative projects including the expansion of the Riverwalk and Town Green, the renaissance of downtown through holiday-driven tourism, and the redevelopment planning for the former Santee Cooper Steamplant site. He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from The Pennsylvania State University and a Juris Doctorate from Georgia State University. He is a graduate of the Local Government Leadership Institute hosted by the Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center at the College of Charleston. Emrick's goal for the next several years is to continue shaping a Conway that honors its heritage while embracing bold ideas — building a city where every resident feels proud to call home.

Photo Courtesy of Carl Kerridge

**Ryan Fabbri**

City Manager  
City of North Myrtle Beach



Ryan Fabbri has been city manager for North Myrtle Beach since September 2024, following his tenure as assistant city manager since February 2023. With over 13 years in

municipal government, including seven years as town administrator for Pawleys Island, he has a proven track record of implementing innovative solutions to address the unique challenges faced by coastal communities. Fabbri earned a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies from Coastal Carolina University and a Master of Public Administration from Clemson University. He is a Certified Floodplain Manager and a graduate of both the Local Government Leadership Institute and its Advanced Leadership Academy.

Photo Courtesy of 963 Film Group

**Eileen Fleming-Patonay**

Regional Workforce Adviser  
SC DEW



Eileen Fleming-Patonay serves as the Waccamaw Regional Workforce Adviser for SCDEW, supporting Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg Counties. She holds a B.S. in busi-

ness with a theater minor from the University of Bridgeport, a Global Career Development Facilitator credential from Coastal Carolina University, and completed the SC Economic Development Institute program in 2015. Deeply involved in community and workforce initiatives, Fleming-Patonay partners with numerous advisory boards, education councils, local nonprofits, and regional committees focused on career readiness, economic development, and youth opportunities. She is also active in Waccamaw WIOA, regional chambers, and multiple professional associations. Fleming-Patonay has earned top state and national honors, including South Carolina and National Career Development Facilitator of the Year, and previously served as president of the South Carolina Career Development Professional Association.

Photo Courtesy of SCDEW

**Sean Flynn**

Regional Director  
Thomas & Hutton



A Myrtle Beach native and licensed engineer with engineering degrees from the University of South Carolina, Sean Flynn has dedicated nearly 30 years to serving communities

with civil engineering. Flynn has served on the boards of the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation, Georgetown Alliance for Economic Development, Georgetown County Water and Sewer District, and the South Carolina Research Authority. He has also contributed his time as a board member to the Lowcountry Chapter of the American Red Cross and served on the board of trustees for his church. Of all his accomplishments, Flynn is most proud of his role as a father.

Photo Courtesy of Cecilia Arango

**Congratulations  
Jimmy Staton**

and thanks for your excellent leadership as President and CEO of Santee Cooper.

**You're helping us  
do something that matters.**



www.santeecooper.com



**Marilyn Murphy Fore, Ph.D.**

President  
Horry-Georgetown Technical College



Marilyn Murphy Fore, Ph.D. was born and raised in Ohio and West Virginia. She arrived in South Carolina to begin her career as an educator in higher education nearly

50 years ago. Fore is the first female president of Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC), a position she's held since April 2017. She was also awarded the Conway Chamber Woman of the Year in 2023, City of Conway's Excellence in Education Award in 2022, and the Order of the Palmetto in 2021.

Photo Courtesy of HGTC

**Natasha Mabry Hanna**

Attorney  
The Law Office of Natasha M. Hanna



Natasha Mabry Hanna came to South Carolina to attend Coastal Carolina University, graduating with a paralegal degree in 1994. Hanna practiced at the law firm of Hearn,

Brittain & Martin, P.A. for eight years until its dissolution in 2010. She opened her own firm in Myrtle Beach in May 2010 where the focus of her practice is on civil litigation, personal injury, workers compensation, and real estate. Hanna has served as an officer and president of the Horry County Bar Association, president of the Coastal American Inn of Court, chair of the board of trustees for Coastal Carolina University and as a commissioner for the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.

Photo Courtesy of Abby Murphy

**Jason Greene**

President / CEO  
Myrtle Beach Downtown Alliance, Inc.



Jason Greene earned a Bachelor of Science degree from University of Southern California in 1995 and completed the Naval ROTC program. He served as an officer in

the United States Marine Corps for 8½ years, deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. In 2014, he transitioned to executive leadership in the nonprofit industry, going on to become the executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Horry County from 2020 until 2023. Greene has served on the Leadership Grand Strand board of regents, New Directions of Horry County, and the City of Myrtle Beach Technology Advisory Group Committee.

Photo Courtesy of Carl Kerridge

**B.W. "Rusty" Helm**

Founding Partner / Broker in Charge  
Keystone Commercial Realty



B.W. "Rusty" Helm is a leading figure in shaping the modern Grand Strand landscape, serving as the broker-in-charge and founding partner at Keystone Commercial Realty.

With over 35 years of industry experience, Helm is recognized as a strategic expert in complex commercial real estate transactions. He is proud to have developed Keystone Commercial Realty alongside an exceptional team of partners he has assembled, establishing the firm as a respected leader in regional commercial real estate. He operates by his guiding philosophy: "A man's accomplishments in life are the cumulative effect of his attention to detail." As a key contributor to the future growth of the Grand Strand, Helm's leadership continues to make a significant impact on the region.

Photo Courtesy of Light Must Shine Productions, LLC

**Jenny Halstead**

Executive Director  
eMYRge, Inc.



Jenny Halstead is a mission-driven leader working to accelerate innovation and economic growth across the Grand Strand. As executive director of eMYRge, she

leads the region's nonprofit Entrepreneur Support Organization, expanding access to mentorship, education, and resources for founders, startups, and remote workers. Her work centers on building strong public-private partnerships, developing local talent, and creating pathways for a more diversified and resilient regional economy. Known for a collaborative and forward-looking approach, Halstead champions the people and ideas shaping Myrtle Beach's next chapter.

Photo Courtesy of Jon Stell

**Radha Herring**

Broker/Owner  
Watermark Real Estate Group



Radha Herring founded the Watermark Real Estate Group in 2007. Watermark is a boutique-style firm that covers the 60-mile Grand Strand coastline.

Herring's role as broker-in-charge includes partnering with attorneys, judges, and courts to assist clients dealing with probate, bankruptcy, and divorce. Among Herring's honors is a 2012 South Carolina Small Business Person of the Year award and also representing the state at the U.S. Small Business Administration's national conference. She is now serving her third term on the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce board and has served as chairman.

Photo Provided

### Marvin Heyd

Broker-in-Charge, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Myrtle Beach Real Estate  
Berkshire Hathaway



Marvin Heyd is broker-in-charge at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Myrtle Beach Real Estate. Heyd previously served on multiple committees and boards and as president of Coastal Carolinas Association of Realtors in years past. His career in real estate began in 1983 after he served his country in the U.S. Marines. He was selected for the Presidential Security Company to guard Presidents Nixon and Ford. Heyd was born and raised in Socastee. He has always remained politically active and served on the Horry County Council for two years. Heyd holds a broker's license that allows him to serve clients in North Carolina as well.

Photo provided

### Mayur Jeram

President  
New Horizon Hospitality



Mayur Jeram, president of New Horizon Hospitality, began his career in the family's hospitality business immediately after college, learning the industry from the ground up. Through dedication and hands-on experience, he rose to lead the company and has since driven significant growth, expanding its portfolio beyond the Grand Strand. Under his leadership, New Horizon Hospitality continues to focus on quality, community engagement, and strategic development. Mayur also serves on the Myrtle Beach Community Appearance board and is an active member of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce.

Photo Provided

### Christy Holder

Chief Executive Officer  
Grand Strand Water & Sewer Authority



Christy Holder joined Grand Strand Water & Sewer Authority 23 years ago, where she currently serves as CEO. She is a member of the WaterSC Working Group, serves on the CCU board of visitors for the Wall College of Business, and is a member of the Coastal Educational Foundation board. She was named CCU's 2018 Outstanding Alumnus of the Year and the 2022 Woman of the Year by the Conway Chamber of Commerce. Holder also serves as the past chairman for the board of directors for the United Way of Horry County, serves as the past board chairman and current secretary for the Conway Medical Center Foundation board, and serves as the secretary for the Conway Medical Center board of trustees.

Photo Provided

### Clifford Jones

Superintendent  
Horry County Schools



Clifford "Cliff" Jones became superintendent of Horry County Schools in February 2025. A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Jones began his education career in 2001 as a high school social studies teacher in Fulton County Schools. He worked his way up through school and district administration there over the next few decades, ending his tenure as chief of staff. Jones holds three master's degrees: a Master of Arts in Modern History from the University of St. Andrews, a Master of Education in Secondary Social Studies from Georgia State University, and a Master of Business Administration from Kennesaw State University.

Photo Provided

### Meredith Holmes

Planning and Zoning Director  
City of Loris



To Meredith Holmes, public service is a family tradition, being a third-generation public servant serving the citizens of the Loris area. Holmes serves as the planning and zoning director for the City of Loris, and has been with the City of Loris since 2022. She also serves as the city's Floodplain Manager and as an active participant in related area task forces. Her main responsibilities include reviewing applications for land development, zoning matters, and serving as the departmental staff for both planning and zoning boards. Outside of work, Holmes enjoys spending time with her husband, Jeremy, and their son, Eli. She also enjoys visiting her grandmother and dad, who retired after serving the Loris area.

Photo Courtesy of Meredith Kay Holmes

### Josh Kay

Vice President  
Mashburn Construction



Josh Kay serves as vice president of Mashburn Construction, where he helps lead strategic growth, client experience, and community-focused development across the Grand Strand. Prior to joining Mashburn, Kay built a career in public and economic development leadership, serving as CEO of the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation, director of Economic Development for Santee Cooper, and as city manager for both Clinton, South Carolina, and Washington, North Carolina. He serves on the boards of the Conway Chamber of Commerce, United Way of Horry County, and Long Bay Theater, and is the current moderator for the deacons at First Presbyterian Church, Myrtle Beach. An alumnus of Presbyterian College, he earned his Bachelor of Science before completing a Master of Public Administration at the University of South Carolina.

Photo Courtesy of MCC

## Cheryl Kilday

President/CEO  
Destination North Myrtle Beach



Cheryl Y. Kilday, CDME, is the president and CEO of Destination North Myrtle Beach, and additionally oversees the NMB Chamber Foundation.

Kilday also serves on the Waccamaw Advisory board through SC DEW, and also sits on the board of the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation. Her commitment to the community extends to volunteer work, such as serving on the North Myrtle Beach Sea Turtle Patrol. She has also led initiatives like the North Myrtle Beach Reusable Campaign and the COVID Recovery Task Force. Highlights of her career include helping pass legislation to establish a public-private partnership for state tourism marketing in Washington State and serving on the board that created The Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area. Kilday has also earned an Emmy Award for a series of history videos — a groundbreaking approach to travel promotion at the time.

Photo provided

## Tim McGhee

Theatre of the Republic Executive /  
Artistic Director  
Theatre of the Republic



Tim McGhee joined the Theatre of the Republic as executive/artistic director in the year 2000, recently celebrating 25 years of service. In 1993, McGhee moved to Myrtle Beach,

South Carolina, and while in Myrtle Beach, he became district manager for a company called Cabin Creek, which involved six gift shops on the east coast. During that time he also became president of the Theatre of the Republic's board of directors. After serving two years, he stepped off the board and became executive director of the theater, and is still going strong at the age of 70. McGhee's goal for 2026 is to open a new theater for the Theatre of the Republic called Century Theatre, a place where new directors can practice their craft, and new playwrights can produce and stage their work.

Photo Courtesy of Darla Gore

## Page Kiniry

President/CEO  
Brookgreen Gardens



Page Kiniry has served as president and CEO of Brookgreen Gardens since 2017. During her tenure, she completed new master and strategic Plans to enhance

Brookgreen's facilities and mission-focused programs, and in 2025 completed a \$25 million capital campaign to support Brookgreen's growth. A graduate of the College of William and Mary and the University of Richmond, her career includes leadership positions in museums and higher education. Kiniry serves as a peer reviewer for the American Alliance of Museums, and on the boards of the National Sculpture Society and the Edwards College of Coastal Carolina University. She and her husband Bill, live in Pawleys Island with Brookgreen's mascot and Scottish Deerhound ambassador, Angus.

Photo Courtesy of Coastal Carolina University

## Ryan Moore

President  
Myrtle Beach Pelicans



Ryan Moore joined the Myrtle Beach Pelicans, the Single A affiliate of the Chicago Cubs, in 2008 as a ticket sales representative. Moore rejoined the Pelicans as

vice president of business operations in 2015 after spending time with teams in Georgia and Florida. A native of Connecticut, Moore was promoted to general manager in 2018, and then to president in 2020. He serves on the board of Habitat for Humanity and is a graduate of Leadership Grand Strand 37.

Photo Provided

## Carlton Lewis

Chief Executive Officer  
HTC



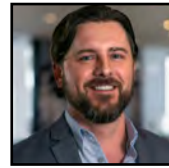
Carlton Lewis, a graduate of Coastal Carolina University and Winthrop University, leads HTC, the largest telecommunications cooperative in the United States. A native

of Aynor, Lewis joined HTC in 1998 and served in several positions prior to being selected as CEO in 2022. Lewis previously served as the Cooperative's chief operating officer and chief financial officer. Lewis is on the board of the Palmetto Broadband Coalition, the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation, Partnership Grand Strand, the Foundation for Rural Service, the Broadband Cooperatives of South Carolina, and Conway Medical Center. In addition, he is an advisory board member for the finance and accounting departments at Coastal Carolina University and a board member of Carolina Trust Federal Credit Union.

Photo Courtesy of HTC

## Patrick Norton

CMO  
Brittain Resorts & Hotels



Patrick Norton serves as chief marketing officer and partner for Brittain Resorts & Hotels, one of the Southeast's premier full-service hospitality management companies.

Beginning his career in 2002 as a reservationist, Norton advanced through multiple leadership roles including director of marketing and vice president of sales and marketing before being named CMO and partner in 2024. A graduate of The Johns Hopkins University Carey Business School with an MBA specializing in digital marketing, he also holds a certificate in Hotel Real Estate Investments and Asset Management from Cornell University. Norton currently serves as chairman of the board for the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, following multiple executive chair positions within the organization including Marketing and Community Engagement. In 2024, he was recognized by Skift as a Rising Star Finalist and named to Hotel Management Magazine's Forty Over 40.

Photo Courtesy of John Muse

**Bhumi Patel**

Attorney  
Burr & Forman LLP



Bhumi Patel represents land developers and business owners in real estate and business transactions, both commercial and residential. Patel also represents

the local school board, a regional water/sewer facility, and higher education commissions in her area. In addition to her real estate work, she has also assisted with the formation of multiple special tax districts in Horry County. Patel has been actively involved in the South Carolina Women Lawyers Association as a board director and president. She also serves on a bank board for a regional bank. She chairs the local YMCA Advisory board and supports and sponsors Habitat for Humanity of Horry County. Patel has also been an active board member in the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation.

Photo Courtesy of Burr & Forman LLP

**Justin Roof**

Manager of Business Banking  
First Citizens Bank & Trust Co.



Justin Roof serves as a senior vice president and Manager of Business Banking for the SC East Area of First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. Roof has more than 19 years

of experience in the financial services industry and has been in a business and commercial banking role with First Citizens for more than 17 years. Roof has also completed post graduate work at the RMA/ECU Commercial Lending School and the South Carolina Bankers School. He is the immediate past chairman of the board of directors for the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation. He is a past president for the Dunes Golf & Beach Club and was instrumental in creating and implementing their current long-term strategic plan. He recently completed nine years of service as a board member for the Conway Medical Center Foundation. He also serves on the finance committee for First United Methodist Church in Conway.

Photo Courtesy of Anne Roof

**Matt Pivarnik**

CEO  
Myrtle Beach Area Chamber /  
Visit Myrtle Beach



Matt Pivarnik is the chief executive officer of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and Visit Myrtle Beach, which includes Partnership Grand Strand, Leadership

Grand Strand, Keep Myrtle Beach Beautiful, Grand Strand Young Professionals, the Myrtle Beach Regional Sports Alliance, and several other community, destination, and economic development organizations. Pivarnik joined the Myrtle Beach team in May 2025 and brought his passion for transforming communities through destination, community, and economic development. He was recently elected to the Carolinas Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives. He is a Certified Chamber Executive, serves on the American Chamber of Commerce board of directors, and is a member of the US Chamber's Committee of 100. Pivarnik is also the founder of MAKO, a regional organization designed for economic development professionals and chamber executives from Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

Photo Provided

**John Rutenberg**

Senior Vice President/Market President  
Truist



John Rutenberg has been market president for Truist since 2021, and he has worked as a commercial banker for more than two decades. Prior to embarking on

his career in banking, Rutenberg worked as a news producer for CNN in New York and earned a Juris Doctor while working for the New York City Law Department's medical malpractice division. Rutenberg is immediate past chair of the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce and has chaired the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Other community service includes terms on the boards of Partnership Grand Strand and College of Charleston Alumni Association Finance Committee.

Photo provided

**Mary Jo Rogers**

Executive Vice President –  
Chief Lending Officer  
South Atlantic Bank



Mary Jo Rogers is executive vice president and chief lending officer with South Atlantic Bank, headquartered in Myrtle Beach. She is a Commercial Banker and

Certified Financial Planner with thirty-five years of experience. She joined South Atlantic Bank in 2007 as one of the founding employees. Since opening, the bank has grown to more than \$1.8 billion in assets. Mary Jo leads a team of commercial bankers with responsibility for sales and management of the bank's loan, merchant service, and treasury service lines of business. Mary Jo currently serves on the board and is a faculty member of the South Carolina Bankers School, is the founding chairman of the board of New Directions, and a board member of the Myrtle Beach Downtown Alliance. She is past president of the Myrtle Beach Art Museum, Grand Strand Optimist Club, Better Business Bureau, and Kids Voting of Horry County. She was the recipient of the Leadership Grand Strand Ann DeBock leadership award in 2020.

Photo Catherine Capo

**Todd Setzer**

Chief Executive Officer and Partner  
A&I Fire and Water Restoration



Todd Setzer has worked with A&I Fire Water Restoration for 15 years, beginning as director of marketing and moving into his current role as CEO in 2018. The compa-

ny's services include fire and water restoration as well as mold remediation. Setzer, a graduate of Coastal Carolina University, has served on the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, Myrtle Beach High School Booster Club, and the Coastal Carolina Alumni Association. He's also involved in the Chicora Rotary Club and the Grand Strand Sertoma Club.

Aleece Sophia

**Mark Sims**

CEO  
Grand Strand Regional Medical Center



Mark Sims has been chief executive officer of Grand Strand Regional Medical Center since 2013, and he worked for the health system's parent company, HCA, for 20 years prior to assuming the CEO role. He began his career with HCA as director of Food and Nutrition Services. Sims holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Alabama and an MBA from Belmont University. He is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives. He has served on the advisory boards of The Hope Clinic and the American Heart Association.

Photo provided

**Thomas C. "Buddy" Styers**

Executive Director  
Myrtle Beach Air Force Base  
Redevelopment Authority



Col. Thomas C. "Buddy" Styers is the executive director of the Myrtle Beach Air Force Base Redevelopment Authority, which oversaw the redevelopment of the former

Myrtle Beach Air Force Base. Under his leadership, the authority spearheaded The Market Common, a 121-acre mixed-use development featuring more than 380,000 square feet of commercial and retail space and 195 rental apartments. Styers has served as president of the Myrtle Beach Rotary Club and held roles with the Erskine College Alumni Association board, the Presbyterian College board of Visitors and the Partners Economic Development Corp. He also served on the Santee Cooper Customer Advisory Council. In 2024, Styers was awarded the Order of the Palmetto. He served 26 years in the U.S. Air Force, retiring in 1992 with the rank of colonel.

Photo Provided

**Blake Sloan**

Founder and President  
Sloan Realty Group



Blake Sloan, a third-generation real estate professional, founded Sloan Realty Group in 2008 after making a move into the industry at age 18. Sloan Realty Group is deeply invested in the Myrtle Beach community, actively participating in local events and supporting various charitable initiatives. His real estate team is ranked in the Top 1 percent of Realtors worldwide, and he is also the founder and president of the International Association of Real Estate Experts. He's been featured in Forbes Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, Realtor Magazine, and many other national publications.

Photo Courtesy of Scott Lee

**Victoria Tobin**

Executive Director  
Myrtle Beach Area Hospitality Association



Victoria Tobin serves as the executive director of the Myrtle Beach Area Hospitality Association. Over the course of her over 20-year career, Tobin has served as the voice of professional and trade organizations to the press and public. Tobin's past experience includes work with the Greater Nashville Apartment Association, the Forsyth County (Georgia) Chamber of Commerce, the Airline Pilots Association, the National Association for Community Mediation, Women Networking in Electronic Transactions (W.net), the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers, the National Guardianship Association, and the National Association of Texaco & Shell Marketers. A native of Glasgow, Scotland, she is a graduate of Stonehill College in North Easton, Massachusetts, where she studied political science and communication.

Photo Provided

**Jimmy D. Staton**

President/CEO  
Santee Cooper



Santee Cooper President and CEO Jimmy D. Staton is responsible for overseeing all aspects of Santee Cooper's electric and water utility. Before joining Santee Cooper in 2022, Staton was president and CEO of Southern Star Central Gas Pipeline Corporation, a leading transporter of natural gas in the Midwest. Staton, a graduate of Louisiana State University, has served on the boards of The Energy Authority (TEA), Southern Gas Association (SGA), and has been a member of the Large Public Power Council, the Trident CEO Council, and CRDA's Economic Leadership Council.

Photo Courtesy of Paul Zoeller, Santee Cooper

**Jennifer Walters**

President / CEO  
Little River Chamber of Commerce  
& Visitors Center



Jennifer Walters leads the Little River Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center, driving community growth, tourism, and economic development. She has transformed key events, such as the Blue Crab Festival and ShrimpFest, into award-winning successes that fund local beautification and civic projects. An Accredited Chamber Executive and graduate of the U.S. Chamber's Institute for Organization Management, Walters serves on multiple regional boards, including the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation. With past leadership roles at the American Cancer Society, USO, and Eastman Kodak, she is recognized for her strategic vision and commitment to supporting local businesses.

Photo Courtesy of Kathy Strauss

**Rachel Whitley**  
Commercial Market Lead,  
North Myrtle Beach  
Synovus



Rachel Whitley has worked for Synovus for 44 years and currently serves as

the Commercial Market Lead, North Myrtle Beach. Whitley has been recognized as a Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow and has received a S.C. Senate Resolution in Recognition of her dedication and involvement in the local community. Whitley's community involvement and leadership includes her work with the Local Advisory Council for Santee Cooper, the regional board of directors for the Red Cross, her time as a Past Chairman of the North Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce, board member of the Waccamaw Mental Health Banking Advisory board member for the Fortune Academy, Past Chairman of the Eastern SC RMA Group, and as a United Way volunteer.

Photo Provided

**K. Wayne Wicker**  
Chairman/CEO  
South Atlantic Bancshares  
and South Atlantic Bank



K. Wayne Wicker is a veteran banker with more than 32 years of experience

in the Myrtle Beach area and South Carolina. He was a founding director of South Atlantic Bank and South Atlantic Bancshares. A Gulf War veteran and former member of the South Carolina Air National Guard, Wicker has served on the boards of the South Carolina Young Bankers Association, the Citadel Brigadier Foundation, and the Myrtle Beach Area and North Myrtle Beach Chambers of Commerce. He is a graduate of The Citadel and completed the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University and the South Carolina Bankers School.

Photo provided

**James Winebrake**  
President  
Coastal Carolina University

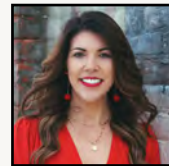


James Winebrake, Ph.D., serves as the fourth president of Coastal Carolina

University. Prior to his time at CCU, Winebrake served as provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Winebrake has held additional leadership roles, including dean of the College of Liberal Arts and chair of the Public Policy Department at Rochester Institute of Technology, as well as faculty appointments at James Madison University. Internationally recognized for his research in environmental and transportation policy, Winebrake has served on multiple committees of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, and on the New York State Energy Planning board.

Photo provided

**Ashley Work**  
Town Manager  
Town of Aynor



As the town manager of Aynor, South Carolina, Ashley Work is passionate

about fostering community growth, engagement, and opportunity. Throughout her tenure, she has helped strengthen the town's connection with local businesses, encouraged resident involvement, and helped to create new traditions that bring her community together — such as Aynor's Trunk-or-Treat and annual Jingle Jam festival. Looking ahead, Work's long-term goal is to continue guiding Aynor toward a thriving and inclusive future while maintaining the small-town charm that makes it special. She firmly believes that giving back to the community means investing time, energy, and care into the people and places that shape who people are.

Photo Courtesy of Dean Johnson

**Jimmy Yahnis**

Vice President and Co-Owner  
The Yahnis Company



Jimmy Yahnis is co-owner of The Yahnis Company, a beverage distributor operating in 12 South Carolina counties in the Grand Strand, Pee Dee, and Sumter regions of

South Carolina. The company sells 4.5 million cases of beer annually, employing about 200 people. Yahnis has served on the board the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation as well as the South Carolina and National Beer Wholesalers associations. He received his undergraduate degree from Davidson College and earned a Master of Arts in real estate from the University of Florida.

Photo provided

**CCNB CENTER**

**CONGRATULATIONS**

*Laurence Bolchoz, on being named one of the Grand Strand's*

**50 MOST INFLUENTIAL**

**Laurence S. Bolchoz, Jr.**  
*President and CEO*

**CCNB**  
COASTAL CAROLINA NATIONAL BANK

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# 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL

2025

B2B PEE DEE BUSINESS

**B2B: Pee Dee Business** is pleased to present our inaugural list of the 50 Most Influential People for the Pee Dee region. The 50 men and women on this list were chosen through many hours of staff research and nominations from the area, named for the historic Native American Pee Dee tribe and dominated by the Great Pee Dee and Little Pee Dee river systems.

The individuals profiled here are making an impact in their community in the fields of energy, education, health care, nonprofit, government, and more.

SPONSORED BY





**CONGRATULATIONS**  
**Pierce Campbell and Mark Goddard on being honored among the 50 Most Influential!**



**C. Pierce Campbell**  
Chief Executive Officer, Florence, SC



**Mark B. Goddard**  
Shareholder, Columbia, SC



**CONGRATULATIONS**



**Ann Lewis, CEO**

**PEE DEE'S 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE**



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**Congratulations to Gregg Robinson**

On being named one of the Pee Dee Business Magazine's 50 Most Influential People — a well-deserved honor!





[www.fcedp.com](http://www.fcedp.com)

**Keon Aldrich**

**Owner/Broker-in-Charge  
Pee Dee Elite Realty**



Keon Aldrich has worked in real estate for the past 20 years, and she is now owner and broker-in-charge at Pee Dee Elite Realty. In January 2025, she was elected president

of South Carolina REALTORS, an organization she previously served as secretary, treasurer, and legislative liaison. Aldrich has served as president of the Board of Realtors for the Pee Dee REALTORS Association and on the boards of Harvest Hope Food Bank, Florence Habitat for Humanity, and Multiple Listing Services.

Photo provided

**Brad Beadles**

**Executive Director  
Florence Regional Airport**



Brad Beadles is a Marine Corps veteran with 15 years in the aviation industry. Beadles, an Accredited Airport Executive (AAE), has built a distinguished career in airport

management and operations, including roles at Marco Island Executive Airport and Evansville Regional Airport. His experience spans areas such as operations, regulatory compliance, staff development, and strategic planning, along with a background as an FAA Part 135 certified helicopter pilot. He is also committed to stronger community involvement by exposing middle and high school students to the benefits of careers in the aviation industry.

Fred Salley

**Kay Andrews**

**President and COO  
PGBA, LLC**



Kay Andrews has worked with PGBA, LLC, a provider of administrative services for government and industry partners, for 40 years, the last six as president and chief operating officer. The company's contracts include

Department of Veterans Affairs Community Care Network (CCN) Regions 1, 2 and 3, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety Claims contract, and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control support services contract. A graduate of Clemson University, Andrews serves on the board of the United Way of Florence County.

Photo provided

**Rick Beasley**

**Chairman/CEO  
Carolina Bank**



Rick Beasley has worked in the banking industry for more than 50 years, and he serves as chairman and CEO of Carolina Bank, which his grandfather founded in

1936. The bank has branches around the Pee Dee, including Darlington, Cheraw, Bennettsville, and Florence. Beasley, who holds degrees from Clemson University and Louisiana State University, was honored by the South Carolina Bankers Association in 2024 for five decades in the industry.

Photo provided

**Lethonia Barnes**

**Mayor  
City of Florence**



Lethonia Barnes was elected mayor of Florence in 2024. Barnes, a graduate of South Carolina State University, is a longtime business owner who for 28 years

owned and operated a beauty salon and barber shop in downtown Florence. As mayor, Barnes champions affordable housing, job creation, public safety, and infrastructure improvements. A member of the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce board of directors, Barnes has also served on the Community Development Committee, Civic Center Commission, and Florence Area Transportation Study Committee.

Fred Salley Photography

**Cameron Campbell**

**President  
United Way of Florence County**



Cameron Campbell joined the United Way of Florence County in March of 2021. She grew up in Florence County, graduated with honors from Francis Marion

University, and went on to earn her MBA. Before joining United Way, she worked for the Florence County Economic Development Partnership. Campbell has also participated in FMU's Nonprofit Leadership Institute, TogetherSC's Carolina Leadership Seminars, and Leadership Florence, among others. She currently serves on the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce board, Duke Energy Regional Advisory board and FMU's School of Business Advisory board, and has previously served on others. Campbell is also a proud member of several groups, including Women in Philanthropy, Women of Commerce, and the Young Professionals of Florence, among others.

Sarah Sweeney

HELP US CELEBRATE THE CHAMPIONS WHO CARE FOR US ALL.



# Healthcare Champions *Awards*

**Honoring Excellence. Celebrating Impact.  
Elevating Healthcare's Finest.**

Across hospitals, clinics, practices, and communities, healthcare heroes work with skill, resilience, and compassion. This is your opportunity to recognize the individuals and organizations who inspire, heal, innovate, and lead.

## INDIVIDUAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

### Compassion in Care Award

For those who embody empathy, kindness, and patient-centered care.

### Frontline Excellence Award

Extraordinary dedication on the healthcare front lines.

### Healing Hands Award

Exceptional skill, precision, and human connection in medical care.

### Guardian of Wellness Award

Community protectors advancing public health and prevention.

### Innovation in Healthcare Award

Recognizing breakthroughs that transform care and elevate outcomes.

### Lifesaver Recognition Award

For lifesaving action, rapid response, and clinical excellence.

### Patient Advocate Award

Honoring fierce advocates who champion patient rights and needs.

### Community Health Champion Award

For those improving the health and wellness of local communities.

### Resilient Caregiver Award

Strength and perseverance in challenging care environments.

### Legacy of Care Award

Long-serving professionals whose careers leave lasting impact.

## PROFESSIONAL & ORGANIZATIONAL AWARDS

### Individual Categories

#### Top Physician (MD, DO)

#### Top Specialty Provider

Dentists/Orthodontists (DDS/DMD), Optometrists (OD), Chiropractors (DC), Pharmacists (Pharm.D), Psychologists (Psy.D/Ph.D), Physical Therapists (DPT)

#### Top Advanced Practice Provider

NP, PA, Assistant Physician, CNS, CRN

#### Top Administrator

#### Top Nurse

#### Top Healthcare Professional

Patient-facing and business team members supporting care not covered elsewhere

### Company Awards

**Top Large Healthcare Organization** (500+ employees)

**Top Mid-Size Healthcare Organization** (100–499 employees)

**Top Small Healthcare Organization** (1–99 employees)

## YOUR VOICE MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

**Nominate the individuals and organizations who elevate healthcare every day. Whether they are on the front lines, behind the scenes, or guiding entire systems, your nomination helps spotlight the stories of dedication that deserve to be told.**



### NOMINATION DEADLINE EXTENDED TO JANUARY 30th.

Final nominee lists published February 1st, 2026.

Winners will be selected based on the highest number of nominations.

The list will be published in the April 2026 issue.

**C. Pierce Campbell**

Chief Executive Officer  
Turner Padgett



As CEO of Turner Padgett, C. Pierce Campbell has strengthened a legacy nearly a century in the making while preparing the firm for the future. Campbell's leadership

extends well beyond the firm. He chairs the McLeod Health Foundation Board of Trustees, leads national initiatives through the ABA's Section of Litigation, and champions Turner Padgett's Palmetto Propeller program, which has provided pro bono legal services to more than 75 South Carolina startups. He is also deeply rooted in his hometown of Florence, having served as past president of the Kiwanis Club of Florence and past chair of the City of Florence's Design Review Board.

Photo courtesy of Turner Padgett

**Mike Cruskie, Ph.D.**

VP/General Manager  
Thermo Fisher Scientific

Mike Cruskie has been vice president and general manager of Thermo Fisher Scientific's Florence location since 2021, but he has more than a quarter-century of experience in contract development and management operations (CDMO). Before joining Thermo Fisher, Cruskie was executive director and general manager at Patheon. He also spent 17 years with IRIX Pharmaceuticals, where he was vice president of business development and supply chain. He holds a bachelor's degree from St. Lawrence University and a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of Florida.

**Fred Carter, Ph.D.**

President  
Francis Marion University



Fred Carter, Ph.D., has served as the president of Francis Marion University since 1999. Previously, he served as the chief of staff to Gov. Mark Sanford, the executive

director of the South Carolina Budget and Control Board, and the senior executive assistant to South Carolina Gov. Carroll Campbell. He earned his MPA and Ph.D. degrees from the University of South Carolina and was recognized as its distinguished graduate alumnus in 2006. Carter served in the U.S. Marine Corps and Reserve for 30 years, retiring as a colonel in 2001. He is also the recipient of the South Carolina Order of the Palmetto and has authored five books.

Betty Suggs

**Daniel Dorsel**

President  
South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics



Daniel Dorsel came full circle when he stepped into the role of president of the South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics in 2021. He was a member of the school's first grad-

uating class in 1990. Dorsel spent seven years as senior vice president for residential before becoming president. He previously served as principal of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic High School in Georgia. Dorsel, who holds degrees from University of South Carolina, Notre Dame, and Virginia Tech, serves on the board of the National Consortium for Specialized STEM Schools.

Photo provided

**Howard Coker**

President and CEO  
Sonoco



Howard Coker has been president and CEO of Sonoco since 2020, but he has held several positions since joining the company 35 years ago, including plant manager

and senior vice president for global paper/industrial converted products. Coker earned his undergraduate degree from Wofford College and his MBA from Wake Forest University. He serves on the Wofford College board of directors, South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, and the American Forest & Paper Association.

Photo courtesy of Sonoco

**Joette Dukes**

Executive Director  
Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments



Joette Dukes is executive director of Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments (PDRCOG). She has 33 years' experience, serving in various capacities in her organization.

From 2011 until 2023, she served as workforce development director. During her tenure in that role, the Pee Dee Area received more than \$52 million in funding for workforce development, provided millions of workforce development services, and served thousands of individuals seeking individualized educational support and career advancement. In January 2024, the board of directors for PDRCOG appointed Dukes as executive director for the agency.

Photo courtesy of The Riley Institute

## Dr. Eddie Floyd

Physician  
Retired



Dr. Eddie Floyd spent his career as a heart surgeon. The Lake City native was born into a family of tobacco farmers who prized education, and Floyd became the fourth

generation of his family to graduate from the University of South Carolina. In 1982, he began serving on the USC Board of Trustees, when he resigned in 2024, he was the university's longest-serving board member. The Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center, named in his honor, opened in 2011, and the Floyd Football Building at USC is named for Floyd and his late wife, Kay.

Photo provided

## Jason Freidenberger

Vice President/General Manager  
Nucor Steel

Jason Freidenberger has been the vice president and general manager of Nucor Steel since 2023. Previously, he rose in position at Vulcraft, a division of Nucor Corp., from design engineer in 2001 up to production manager through to 2015, when he left to serve as general manager of Gulf States Manufacturers from 2015 to 2018. He made his way back to Vulcraft as a general manager from 2018 to 2023, which is when he rose to the role of both general manager and vice president. Freidenberger received his Bachelor's in Civil Engineering from Tri-State University in 2001.

## Jermaine Ford, Ed.D.

President  
Florence-Darlington Technical College



Jermaine Ford, Ed.D., was named president of Florence-Darlington Technical College in 2021, becoming the college's fifth president. He has spent most of his

career in higher education, working at DePaul University and South Louisiana Community College, among others, before joining FDTCC. He created the Reimagining Florence-Darlington Technical College campaign soon after arriving, and the campaign has helped to rebuild the school's organizational infrastructure and increasing visibility and engagement within the community. Ford serves on the National Associate for Community College Entrepreneurship Board, American Association of Community Colleges Commission on Structured Pathways, McLeod Healthcare board, and Florence County Economic Development Partnership board.

Photo provided

## Kyle Gunter

President  
FBI Construction



Kyle Gunter, president of FBI Construction, has been with the company, whose services range from general contracting to construction management, since 2000.

Gunter, a graduate of The Citadel, worked as an engineer for Martin Marietta Materials before joining FBI Construction. He is a graduate of Leadership Florence, and his community involvement includes service on the boards of HopeHealth, House of Hope, Boys and Girls Club of the Pee Dee, and Eastern Carolina Community Foundation. Gunter was named 2023 Florence Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year.

Photo courtesy of Sweet E Photography

## Ron Freed

Production Support Manager  
American Honda Motor Co. Inc.



Ron Freed began his career at Honda SC Manufacturing (SCM) in Timmonsville as a weld production associate in 1998 and currently serves as the Business

Operations Manager for Strategy & Planning in the Mfg. Division of PowerSports & Products at American Honda Motor. Through the years, Freed has been promoted to various management roles in production. He was also appointed to leader roles in the areas of corporate services, administration, business and morale. Freed and his team lead community outreach and workforce development for Honda in the Pee Dee Region of the state. In 2022, he was named South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance (SCMA) Operations Professional of the Year. He currently serves on the board of directors for SCMA, as well as the SCMA Plant Operations and Workforce Committees. Freed is a resident of Sumter. He and his wife Elaine enjoy traveling throughout the United States visiting the National Park System.

## Natalie Harder, Ph.D.

President  
Coker University



Natalie J. Harder, Ph.D., serves as the 17th president of Coker University, beginning her tenure in June 2020 and becoming the first woman to lead the institution in its more

than 115-year history. Before joining Coker University, Harder served as chancellor of South Louisiana Community College, where she guided the institution through a period of significant growth, strengthened academic and workforce programs, and advanced initiatives focused on student success and community impact. Under her leadership, Coker has expanded academic offerings, aligned programs with the needs of students and the workforce, improved financial stability, and strengthened its enrollment strategy.

Photo courtesy of Lochwood Studios

**Josh Harris**

**President  
Darlington Raceway**



Josh Harris has served as the president of Darlington Raceway since Jan. 1, 2024. Prior to his appointment, he served in various capacities at Daytona International

Speedway and the NASCAR Southeast Region, most recently as vice president, where he was responsible for oversight of the Event Experience, Client Services & Guest Services teams. Harris began his NASCAR career in 2012, holding a leadership role at Talladega Superspeedway before transitioning to Daytona International Speedway in 2017 as senior director, Ticketing & Guest Services. Darlington Raceway has supported organizations such as Darlington County Habitat for Humanity, the Lord Cares, House of Hope of the Pee Dee, American Heart Association, and the Terrence Carraway Foundation. Harris previously held positions at IMG, a global sports & entertainment company, as well as several college athletic departments.

Rusty Jones

**Carl Humphries**

**CEO  
HopeHealth Inc.**



Carl Humphries has been CEO of HopeHealth Inc., which provides integrated health services for individuals in Aiken, Clarendon, Florence, Orangeburg, and Williams-

burg counties, since 2000. He began his career as a social worker, spending six years with the Department of Health and Environmental Control. Humphries has managed federal grant programs, including Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS. He is a graduate of Leadership Florence and Leadership South Carolina, and he has served on the Florence Chamber of Commerce board and Florence Rotary Club board.

Grayson Markle

**Robby Hill**

**Founder and CEO  
HillSouth IT Solutions**



Robby Hill is an entrepreneur, civic leader, and technology innovator dedicated to strengthening the Pee Dee region through business growth, modern infrastructure,

and community partnerships. As founder and CEO of HillSouth IT Solutions, he has spent more than two decades helping organizations modernize their technology, improve security, and operate more efficiently. Hill serves as chairman of the Administration and Finance Committee at Florence Regional Airport, where he helps guide long-term planning and economic development initiatives. He is also helping drive the new School of Innovation in Aerospace, scheduled to launch in fall 2026 in partnership with Florence One Schools, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and other vital aeronautical education partners.

Fred Salley

**Donna Isgett**

**President/CEO  
McLeod Health**



Donna Isgett has been president and CEO of McLeod Health since 2021, when she became the first woman to lead the health care organization, which has seven hospitals

in the region. She has been with McLeod Health since 1997, serving in a variety of roles, including chief operating officer and Senior Vice President of Corporate Quality and Safety. Isgett serves on the board of the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA) and has received the Milliken Medal of Quality Award from the South Carolina Quality Forum and the Lewis Blackman Patient Safety Award from the SCHA.

Photo provided by McLeod Health

**Julian “Jay” Hinesley**

**CEO  
MUSC Health Florence**



Julian “Jay” Hinesley has led MUSC Health’s Pee Dee Division since 2021, driving patient care and operational excellence across the Pee Dee region. With a proven

track record in executive health care management, Hinesley previously served as president of Vanderbilt Health’s Wilson County Hospital in Lebanon, Tennessee. A graduate of Presbyterian College and the Medical University of South Carolina, Hinesley began his career at Roper St. Francis Healthcare in Charleston. He earned the W. Stuart Smith Leadership Excellence Award in 2024 for his outstanding contributions to MUSC Health. Hinesley’s vision continues to shape health care in South Carolina, securing his place among the region’s top 50 most influential business leaders.

Kathryn Van Aernum

**Ken Jackson**

**Partner  
PLC Commercial Real Estate**



Ken Jackson, CCIM, a partner at PLC Commercial Real Estate in Florence, is a veteran Realtor and developer. Jackson has led the South Carolina Association of Realtors as president and was named the state’s Realtor of the Year in 2013. Beyond real estate, Jackson has chaired both the City of Florence Planning Commission and the Florence Municipal-County Planning Commission. A driving force behind Downtown Florence’s revitalization, he currently serves as chairman of the Florence Downtown Development Corporation. Jackson has long served on the Francis Marion University Board of Trustees, the SC Commission on Lawyer Conduct, and is a recipient of the Order of the Palmetto.

Photo courtesy of Jake Westerbeck, Pixels Media

### George D. Jebaily

Managing Partner  
Jebaily Law Firm



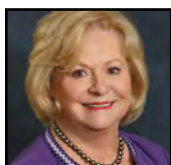
George D. Jebaily, managing partner of Jebaily Law Firm and lead personal injury attorney, has served as an at-large member of Florence City Council since 2014.

Raised in Florence, he holds degrees from the University of South Carolina and returned home in 1984 to join the family firm. Licensed in state and federal courts, he is active in numerous legal associations and serves on the SCAJ Board of Governors. A dedicated community advocate, Jebaily has spoken for EndDD.org since 2012, promoting safer driving. He has led major Downtown Florence redevelopment efforts, chaired the South Carolina Pecan Festival, and served on many civic and arts boards. Jebaily has also long supported youth programs through coaching and school involvement. He lives in Florence with his wife, Debbie, and their two children.

Photo provided

### Jean Leatherman

President  
ERA Leatherman Realty, Inc.



Jean Leatherman is the president and owner of ERA Leatherman Realty, Inc. in Florence, a company she established in 1995. Before venturing into real estate, Leather-

man gained experience as a sales representative for Shelby Williams Industries. In addition to her professional and volunteer work, she holds numerous board positions, including roles with The School Foundation, MUSC Florence Medical Center, and Florence Rotary Club, and is current chairperson for Central UMC Church Council. Supporting her late husband, Sen. Hugh Leatherman's distinguished political career, she played an integral role in his campaigns, contributing to a remarkable 41 years of service in the South Carolina Senate.

Photo provided

### Debbie Jones

Pee Dee Regional Workforce Advisor  
South Carolina Department  
of Employment and Workforce



Debbie Jones serves as the Pee Dee Regional Workforce Advisor, where she leads efforts to connect education, business, and community partners to strengthen South Carolina's workforce pipeline.

She has advanced regional collaborations such as Pee Dee Pathways, STEEL DAYS, and the STEM Zone at the Pecan Festival, which bring students face-to-face with local employers and hands-on career experiences. Originally from Virginia, Jones has proudly called Florence home for more than 20 years. As the mother of three Florence District One graduates, Jones is dedicated to giving back to the Pee Dee.

Sean T. Williams Sr.

### Ann Lewis

Chief Executive Officer  
CareSouth Carolina



Ann Lewis is CEO of CareSouth Carolina, a nonprofit community health care provider that serves 38,000 patients in 10 rural communities. Lewis is chairperson

of the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association. She has served on the Coker College Board of Visitors, Pee Dee Area Health Education Consortium, Darlington County Communities in Schools, and Pee Dee Alzheimer's Association. Lewis received the 2012 John Gilbert Award, which recognizes excellence and leadership in community health, from the National Association of Community Health Centers.

Photo provided

### Joe Koehling

President/CEO  
ACS Technologies



Joe Koehling is president and chief executive officer of ACS Technologies, a company that provides church management software and service solutions. Koehling stepped

into the role in 2020 after serving as CFO and as interim president and CEO. He joined the company in 2018 after a career in financial management, working for such companies as Thomson Learning and Aspen Grove Landscape Group. At ACS, Koehling leads a team of more than 400 people who help to develop and improve the way that the company creates solutions and provides ministry expertise to church and faith-based nonprofits.

Photo provided

### Jill Lewis

Chief Development Officer  
Signature Wealth Strategies



Jill Lewis is chief development officer in Florence for Signature Wealth Strategies, which specializes in financial planning, wellness planning, and risk management. Lewis

began her career as a teacher, and eventually transitioned into human resources, working at ABB and ESAB Welding Company before moving to Florence-Darlington Technical College. She served as vice president of institutional advancement there before moving to Signature Wealth. A graduate of Pennsylvania State University, Lewis serves on several boards in Florence, including First Reliance Bank, United Way, and Florence Symphony.

Photo provided

**Sheryl Love**

**Executive Director  
Florence Darlington Technical College  
Educational Foundation**



Sheryl Love serves as the executive director of the Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC) Educational Foundation, bringing more than 20 years of nonprofit leadership experience to her role. She leads the Foundation's mission to expand educational access, strengthen community partnerships, and secure philanthropic support that empowers students and advances the college's strategic priorities. Love is an active member of the Pee Dee Community, where she has served as president of the Junior League of Florence and the Florence West Rotary. She is also a graduate of Leadership Hartsville and serves as a Chamber Ambassador for the Florence Chamber and the board of the Ron James Youth Tennis Program.

Jared Meyer

**Michael Miller**

**President  
Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce**



Michael Miller spent nearly 40 years in the media business with newspapers and television. He started his career as marketing director of several Thomson/Reuters-owned

newspaper operations and then served for 22 years as publisher for five newspapers with Thomson & Media General newspaper companies. Early in 2014, Miller was recruited to return to Florence as the president of The Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce. He has served on the boards of many community organizations including Duke Energy's State and Regional Advisory Boards, the Florence County Economic Development Partnership, the Florence Regional Airport Authority, the Florence Downtown Development Corporation, the Pee Dee Tourism Commission, and others.

Fred Salley Photography

**Jeff McKay**

**Executive Director  
North Eastern Strategic Alliance**



Jeff McKay, the executive director of the North Eastern Strategic Alliance (NESAs), is a veteran of economic development in the Southeast. Holding both undergraduate and

graduate degrees from Western Carolina University, McKay is a certified economic developer by the International Economic Development Council. In 2005, McKay made the move to South Carolina when he became the executive director of NESAs, where he has made his mark through regional and statewide partnerships. He is affiliated with the South Carolina Developers Association, is the former president of the South Carolina Economic Developers Association, and the former president of the North Carolina Economic Development Association.

Photo courtesy of Andrew Golden

**Murphy Monk**

**President  
Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce**



Murphy Monk has been president of the Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce since January 2019. She previously served as the chamber's membership development

coordinator. Monk, a graduate of Clemson University, worked in marketing and social media before joining the chamber, with stints at Two Cumberland and LeBleu of Charleston and Columbia. She is a past president of the Hartsville Kiwanis Club and has served on the boards of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, Darlington County Economic Development Progress, and the Community Foundation for a Better Hartsville.

Steve Roos

**Zach McKay**

**Executive Director  
Marion County Economic Development  
Commission**



Zach McKay has been executive director of the Marion County Economic Development Commission since 2021. A graduate of The Citadel, where he was a pitcher for the baseball team, McKay

previously served as third vice-chairman of the Florence County Republican Party and as a constituent services representative for South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham. He is a member of the Florence City Council. McKay began his career with Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, first as an intern and then as membership assistant.

Fred Salley Photography

**Johnathan Munn**

**Business Dean  
Francis Marion University**



Johnathan Munn, Ph.D., joined the Francis Marion faculty in 2008. He teaches Principles of Macroeconomics, Principles of Microeconomics, International Economics,

and Intermediate Microeconomics. His research interests include regional economic growth and the spatial distribution of innovation. Munn is the 2008 recipient of the Barry M. Moriarty Graduate Student Award, which is presented by the Southern Regional Science Association to the best paper in the area of Regional Science. Prior to entering academia, Munn worked in the private sector at one of the nation's largest commercial banks. He received his Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina, and his bachelor's degree from Clemson University.

Photo provided

### Scott Olsen

Executive Plant Manager  
GE Healthcare



Scott Olsen has worked for GE Healthcare for more than 18 years, starting as business team leader and moving into his current position as executive plant manager

in 2023. A 2025 report by GE Healthcare noted that the company's South Carolina operations contributed \$6.16 billion in economic output in 2024. A graduate of North Carolina State University, Olsen serves on the Florence County Progress and on the boards of Florence County Economic Development Partnership and the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce.

Photo Provided

### Mike Reichenbach

State Senator  
South Carolina State House



Mike Reichenbach was elected to the South Carolina State Senate in 2022 after the 2021 death of incumbent Sen. Hugh Leatherman. Reichenbach, who represents Florence County District 31, won a full term in the 2024 election. An Ohio native, he is the owner of Mike Reichenbach Ford, Lincoln, Chevy, and VW. He serves on several Senate committees, including Judiciary, Transportation, and Family and Veterans Services. Reichenbach is a graduate of the Liberty Fellowship Class of 2019 and Leadership South Carolina Class of 2020, and he serves on the Duke Energy Advisory Council and the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce board.

Fred Salley Photography

### Gregg Robinson

CEO  
Florence County Economic Development Partnership



Gregg Robinson serves as the chief executive officer of the Florence County Economic Development Partnership (FCEDP), a role where he spearheads strategies for substantial regional economic growth

and job creation. Robinson is a recognized leader in the field, recently honored as the 2025 South Carolina Local Developer of the Year by SCEDA. His career contributions to South Carolina are substantial, having assisted in securing over \$7 billion in new capital investment and more than 6,500 jobs statewide, and directed the FCEDP team to secure over \$1.9 billion in new investment and more than 2,500 jobs for the Florence County community in the last three years alone.

Photo courtesy of FCEDP

### Madie Robinson

Executive Director/CEO  
Pee Dee Healthy Start



Madie Robinson has been with Pee Dee Healthy Start, the organization that works with parents and young children to provide education and connect them with

community resources, for more than 30 years. Robinson, a native of Florence, holds an undergraduate degree from Bennett College in North Carolina and a master's from University South Carolina. She is former project director and senior vice president of United Way of South Carolina and former program director of South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Division of Maternal Health. She is a founding board member of the National Healthy Start Association.

Photo Provided

### Rick Saunders

Founder/CEO  
First Reliance Bank



Rick Saunders has spent his career in the banking world, holding positions with Pee Dee State Bank and Centura Bank before helping to organize First Reliance Bank in 1998.

He is now the bank's chief executive officer. A graduate of the South Carolina Bankers School, Saunders serves on the College of Charleston School of Business Board of Governors and the boards of the South Carolina Business Development Corporation, Florence County Sheriff's Office Foundation, and the board of First Reliance Bank and First Reliance BancShares. He was awarded the Order of the Palmetto in 2019 and was named 2007 Business Man of the Year by the Florence Chamber of Commerce.

Photo by Power Suit Portraits

### William Schofield

President  
Carolina Enterprises Inc.



William Schofield, president of Carolina Enterprises, oversees three companies: two real estate firms and a family-owned supply store. Carolina Enterprises, founded in 1952, owns and manages a number of properties in Florence. Schofield is chairman of Florence County Council, the youngest person to hold that office and the second generation of his family to serve on the council, after his father, who also served as chairman. Schofield previously served on the Florence City Council.

Photo Provided

**Paul Seward**

**Regional Executive  
First Bank**



Robert P. "Paul" Seward is a seasoned sales and marketing professional with 24 years in financial services. He takes pride in providing sound financial guidance and

building trusted relationships to help clients reach their goals. His career includes roles as a retail lender, commercial relationship manager, Market President for BB&T, and now Regional Executive/Senior Vice President for First Bank, overseeing the Pee Dee, Midlands, and Lowcountry regions with more than \$500 million in assets. A dedicated community leader, he serves on the boards of the Florence County Economic Development Partnership, Florence Darlington Technical College, and the Francis Marion University Education Foundation. Paul holds undergraduate and MBA degrees from Francis Marion University and is a Wake Forest School of Banking honor graduate. He and his wife, Debbie, have two children.

Photo provided

**Mindy Taylor**

**Director, Government and  
Community Relations  
Duke Energy**



Mindy Taylor is the director of government and community relations in South Carolina for Duke Energy Progress. Here, Taylor oversees strategy for government and community relations

in a thirteen-county area. During her career, she has served as an area manager for a six-county area in North and South Carolina and also as the community relations manager for a 13-county region in South Carolina. Taylor is a graduate of Leadership South Carolina and currently serves on the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the board of directors for The School Foundation in Florence, and the City of Florence Resilience & Sustainability Advisory Committee.

Rick Smoak

**Stephanie Shaw**

**Economic Development Director  
Darlington County**



Stephanie Shaw is a long-time resident of Hartsville, South Carolina. She is a graduate of Clemson University with a degree in management. After a 10-year stint with Sonoco

Products Company, she found her home at Darlington County with the Administrator's Office. She has been an asset there for six years, as well as serving on the economic development team for five years before being promoted to the director of economic development. Shaw has served as the president of her local YMCA board of directors for several years and gives her time freely by coaching baseball, basketball, and soccer for the past six years.

Steve Roos

**Lonnie Thompson**

**President  
SOPAKCO Inc.**



Lonnie Thompson has been president of SOPAKCO Inc., a world leader in processed foods that was founded to provide rations for Allied troops during World War II, for more

than 20 years. SOPAKCO has expanded its operations several times in recent years, most recently announcing a \$22.8 million expansion to its Bennettsville manufacturing operation. Thompson is a member of the Research & Development Associates for Military Food and Packaging Systems Inc. Hall of Fame.

Photo provided

**Henry and Marion Swink**

**Co-Owners and Co-Presidents  
McCall Farms**



Brothers Henry and Marion Swink are the owners and co-presidents of McCall Farms, one of South Carolina's largest agricultural producers. McCall Farms, based

in Effingham, expanded into manufacturing from strictly farming in 1954 and it has since acquired numerous national brands, including Bruce's Yams, Princella, and Peanut Patch Boiled Peanuts. The Swinks, both Clemson University graduates, were honored by the state of South Carolina in 2019 for their commitment to their community and support of South Carolina farmers.

Photo provided

**Amy Urquhart**

**CEO  
WebsterRogers**



As CEO of Webster-Rogers, one of the region's largest accounting and advisory firms, Amy Urquhart is proud to lead her team in delivering guidance to businesses

across the Pee Dee and beyond. Urquhart has had the privilege of serving in leadership roles within regional organizations, including her work on the McLeod Health board of trustees. Looking ahead, her goal is to continue positioning her firm and region for sustainable success by embracing new technologies, fostering local talent, and supporting industries that fuel economic vitality. Urquhart believes that strong communities don't happen by accident; they're built through a shared belief that when people and businesses succeed together, everyone wins.

Kathy Strauss/ImageWerks

**Linda Weatherford**

President/CEO  
SPC Credit Union



President and chief executive officer of SPC Credit Union in Hartsville, Linda Weatherford has more than 35 years of experience in the credit union arena. She

has said that she's passionate about helping local communities make their way to financial wellness. Weatherford serves as chair of the Byerly Foundation, president-elect of the Hartsville Rotary Club, and a member of the McLeod HOPE Advisory Board. She is the author of the children's book "The Best Dogs Wear Pink," written in honor and memory of people in Weatherford's life who have battled cancer.

Photo Provided

**Kevin Yokim**

County Administrator  
Florence County



Kevin Yokim has been the county administrator for Florence since 2023, a position he moved into after spending 3½ years as assistant city manager for the city of Florence.

Yokim, who has a background in accounting, also spent more than two decades as Florence County's finance director. In 2024, Yokim was named the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce's Public Servant of the Year. He is an ex officio member of the Florence County Economic Development Partnership.

Photo by Fred Salley

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