



# VEDA 2024 Spring Conference

## Wednesday, March 13, 2024 – Friday, March 15, 2024

### Speaker/Moderator Profiles



**Candace Spence**  
**Economic Development Director**  
**Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development**  
**VEDA Spring Conference Co-Chair**

Candace Spence, Economic Development Director at the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development, advances regional economic development initiatives for eight counties and the City of Charlottesville. A Charlottesville native and UVA graduate, Candace began her career with the National Governors Association in Washington, DC, supporting chairs: Gov. Bill Clinton (AR), Gov. John Sununu (NH) and Gov. Gerald Baliles (VA). Candace raised her 3 children in Fredericksburg, VA, while working part-time in project management roles. Candace returned to Charlottesville in 2012 where she managed software development projects at Silverchair Information Systems and S&P Global with clients such as McGraw-Hill, American Medical Association, and Oxford University Press. Candace joined the Central Virginia Partnership in 2019.



**Alan Yost**  
**Director of Economic Development & Tourism**  
**Greene County**  
**VEDA Spring Conference Co-Chair**

Alan Yost is the Director of Economic Development and Tourism for the County of Greene and has held this position for the past ten years. Prior to economic development, Alan served as a principal as both at a public school and at a regional Catholic school. He began his career teaching high school business and cooperative education classes, giving him a strong foundation in workforce development. He holds a BS in Business and MEd in Public Administration. He is passionate about promoting quality of life to prospective businesses and tourists in his community where he has lived and actively volunteered for more than thirty years. Alan is an avid cyclist and takes full advantage of the other great outdoor activities living at the foot of Shenandoah National Park.



**Chris Engel, CEcD**  
**Director of Economic Development**  
**City of Charlottesville**

Mr. Engel has a bachelor's degree in geography from Mary Washington College and a master's degree in planning from Virginia Commonwealth University. He is also a graduate of the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma and is a member of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) where he is a certified economic developer (CEcD). Chris is a graduate of Virginia's statewide leadership program; LEAD Virginia, as well as Leadership Charlottesville and the Senior Executive Institute for leaders in local government. An active civic leader, his current leadership roles include board positions with the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development, the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau and Venture Central. He has also been a Junior Achievement instructor and Comfort Zone Camp volunteer.

Chris has been instrumental in the development and implementation of Charlottesville's comprehensive economic development program, including the award-winning GO Programs for workforce development, the

Made in Charlottesville initiative, and the establishment of the Parking Enterprise Fund. He is a past recipient of the CBIC Leadership Award for his work chairing the Tech Tour, an innovative talent development initiative that connects students to career opportunities in the technology sector.

Prior to his current position in economic development, Chris worked for the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce and as a cartographer and GIS Analyst for private sector firms in Maryland and Pennsylvania.



**Juandiego Wade**  
**Mayor**  
**City of Charlottesville**

Juandiego Wade serves as Mayor of the city of Charlottesville, Virginia serving from January 2025 through December 2025 as mayor. He previously served as vice mayor from January 2022 through December 2023. His priority goal as mayor is to bring people together to address critical issues in the community.

Mayor Wade is a member of the United Way of Greater Charlottesville; Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; 100 Black Men of Central Virginia; Cultivate Charlottesville; and serves as a Deacon for Olivet Presbyterian Church. His Council memberships include Charlottesville

Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau Board (CACVB); Jefferson Area Board for Aging Board of Directors (JABA); Minority Business Commission; School Capital Projects; Virginia Career Works – Piedmont; and Virginia First Cities.

He received a BA degree in Urban Planning from Norfolk State University and a Master degree in Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia.



**Toi Hunter**  
**Vice President, Business Retention & Expansion**  
**Hampton Roads Alliance**  
**VEDA Program Chair**

Toi Hunter joined the Hampton Roads Alliance in November 2020 as the Vice President of Business Retention & Expansion. In this role, Toi leads the development and implementation of a regional business retention and expansion (BRE) strategy. Toi has nearly a decade of economic development experience at the local and state levels.

Previously, Toi worked as Business Manager for Business Retention and Expansion for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership assigned to the Eastern Virginia region. At the beginning of her five-year tenure with the Commonwealth, Toi managed the Virginia Jobs Investment Program incentive through identifying expanding companies and supporting their growth through workforce development funding and consultative services. As a BRE Manager Toi focused on collecting corporate intelligence from the region's major employers and analyzing their feedback to identify potential expansions, diagnosis growth challenges and discover areas of public policy which may be influenced by collective response from the business community.

Prior to serving at the state level, Toi was a Business Development Manager for the City of Portsmouth, VA. She also has a background in finance by working in the banking industry for approximately four years directly after graduating from Virginia Tech with a Bachelor of Science in Business. Toi also holds a Master of Public Administration from Virginia Tech. Toi; her husband and two children reside in Chesapeake.



**Dr. David Doré**  
**Chancellor**  
**Virginia Community College System**

David Doré became Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) on April 1, 2023. Dr. Doré is the tenth person to lead the system, which was founded in 1966. In his position, Dr. Doré provides day-to-day leadership for a system serving more than 200,000 degree-seeking and workforce-career training students annually. He oversees 23 independently accredited community colleges across 40 locations in every corner of Virginia.

Like so many community college students, Dr. Doré is a first-generation college student. His decades-long career has been guided by a fundamental belief that every learner can be successful. His commitment to

serving diverse and underrepresented populations to foster inclusive learning communities, supporting open access, student success, and economic mobility is both palpable and unwavering.

A self-described student advocate, Dr. Doré is laser-focused on recruiting the “New Majority of learners” — those twenty-five and older who face limited job prospects because they lack post-high school credentials. Before taking the reins at the Virginia Community College System, Dr. Doré served as President of Campuses and Executive Vice Chancellor at Pima Community College. There, he led the college’s five campuses and workforce development initiatives.

Dr. Doré has also served in higher education leadership positions in Tempe, Arizona and San Francisco, California.

Doré earned his Doctor of Education degree at Pepperdine University; master’s degrees at Georgetown University, Boston College, and Santa Clara University; an advanced degree in Philosophy from Gonzaga University; and his bachelor’s degree from Gannon University.

Named a Presidential Fellow of the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program in 2017, Dr. Doré is active in community leadership and is a staunch proponent of community college education at the state and national levels.



**Meghan Welch**  
**Assistant Vice President, Knowledge Work**  
**Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

Meghan Welch is the Assistant Vice President, Knowledge Work and Director, Sector Excellence at VEDP. Her team focuses on growing Virginia’s business and financial services, software and cybersecurity, and aerospace and defense innovation ecosystems. Prior to joining VEDP, Meghan managed domestic and international economic development in multiple gubernatorial administrations for the Secretariats of Commerce and Trade and Agriculture and Forestry. She received the 2020 Rising Star Award from the Virginia Economic Developers Association, 2021 Economic Development 40 Under 40 Award from

DCI and Jorgenson Consulting, and 2023 North America’s Top 50 Economic Developers from Consultant Connect recognizing her collaborative approach to economic development. Originally from Bristol, Virginia, Meghan holds BAs in Political Science and International Affairs from the University of Mary Washington and an MBA with a concentration in Business Analytics from William & Mary.



**Sneha Atwal**  
**Vice President, Manufacturing Division**  
**Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

Sneha Atwal serves as Vice President of the Manufacturing Division at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, where she provides primary staff leadership for developing and implementing strategies to promote employment growth within the Advanced Materials, Food Processing & Manufacturing, and Biopharmaceuticals industries in Virginia.

Prior to joining VEDP, Atwal served as Global Head of Regulatory Strategy & Emerging Issues with Celanese, a global chemical manufacturer. She has extensive experience in the chemical and plastics manufacturing industries, having also served in regulatory and compliance roles with Evonik, ChemTreat, and Nomaco. In addition to her extensive industry experience, Atwal brings valuable public sector experience to the role from her eight years as Environmental, Health and Safety Director with Wake County Public Schools, the largest public school district in North Carolina.

Atwal holds a B.S. degree in Chemical Engineering from Virginia Tech.



**Eric Jehu**  
**Vice President, Transportation & Logistics**  
**Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

Eric Jehu serves as Vice President of Logistics at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, where he provides primary staff leadership for developing and implementing strategies to promote employment growth within the logistics industry in Virginia.

Before joining VEDP in September 2023, Jehu was the Vice President of Business Development for Ardent Global Logistics based out of Virginia Beach. Prior to that, Jehu worked at Expeditors International, a top 10 global third-party logistics (3PL) company, for over seventeen years. He started in the Norfolk and Richmond region as a district sales executive and held progressive roles in ocean services, order management, and business development. He achieved his customs brokerage license in 2011 and was the Ocean Import Manager for Atlanta's cornerstone operation, serving Georgia, Alabama, and parts of Tennessee. In his 18 years of experience working in the logistics industry, Jehu has displayed a unique ability to create holistic supply chain solutions by proactively collaborating with clients, leveraging strategic infrastructure and transportation markets, and developing cross-functional relationships.

Eric's education includes an appointment to the United States Naval Academy and the University of South Carolina.



**Ted Sniffin**  
**Vice President, Knowledge Work**  
**Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

Ted Sniffin serves as the Vice President of Knowledge Work at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, where he leads a team that focuses on sector expertise, lead generation, and ecosystem building activities in the Business Services, Financial Services, Software & Cybersecurity, and the Aerospace & Defense Innovation industries.

Prior to joining VEDP in 2023, Sniffin took on a role with Amazon Web Services as Managing Director of Global Business Development, where he led global business development for the Worldwide Public Sector Business. Sniffin is a 22-year veteran of the global consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton, where he advanced from Associate to Partner level. In his last role with the firm, Ted was tapped by executive leadership to transform the corporate business development function. As Executive Vice President, Sniffin led a team that set market strategy and provided market intelligence, business development, capture, and proposal leadership for the firm's largest growth priorities.

His education includes a B.A. in English from George Mason University and a M.S. in Corporate Finance from John Hopkins University.



**Linda Hutson Green**  
**Vice President of Economic Development, Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR)**  
**Executive Director, Southern Virginia Regional Alliance (SVRA)**  
**VEDA President**

Linda Hutson Green, Vice President of Economic Development at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) and the Executive Director for the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance (SVRA) brings the region a wealth of federal, state and local experience at public and private sectors levels. Green leverages the hosting resources of IALR to assist a dynamic group of local economic developers in marketing the region. Over the past six years, they facilitated the creation of 28 new industries and 31 expansions, generating over 5,300 new jobs and \$1.5 billion in capital investment in Southern Virginia.

Green's diverse background includes roles as District Director for U.S. Congressman Robert Hurt; Director for Manufacturing, Federal Funding and Entrepreneurship for the Center for Innovative Technology (Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation); Executive Director for the Virginia Research and Technology Advisory Commission; President of the Dan River Business Development Center; and Quality Engineer for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.



Green presently serves as the President of the Virginia Economic Developers Association, was appointed by Governor Glenn Youngkin to the Commonwealth Transportation Board in 2023 and serves on the board of Averett University. A Certified Quality Engineer, Linda holds a Master's in Business Administration from Duke University and is a graduate of Averett University and Danville Community College.

Recognized in 2023 by Virginia Business with Virginia's Women Business Leaders; Green has also been recognized by Senators John Warner and Chuck Robb for Contributions to the Virginia Senate Productivity Award; for US Congressional Best Practices for Viet Nam Veteran Recognition with Congressman Robert Hurt; and a personal victory - set records for fund-raising in 2014 for Duke Cancer Center. While these are high points of many assignments, Green takes great pride in continuing education and civic involvement.



**Robert T. Bohannon**  
**Director of Government Affairs**  
**Hunton Andrews Kurth**  
**VEDA Legislative Liaison**

Robb has nearly 20 years of experience representing companies and trade associations in the health care, entertainment, transportation, environmental, and high tech industries in federal and state politics.

Throughout his career, Robb has worked on legislative and regulatory matters across the country related to health and wellness, economic development, First Amendment protections, e-commerce, retail, and privacy. He has substantial experience working with governors and state attorneys general offices, building consensus on political and legislative issues, as well as securing support for amicus briefs.

In Virginia, he has represented a myriad of clients before the Virginia General Assembly since 2014, with a particular emphasis on transportation (including funding, railroads, and construction), environmental, entertainment, retail, and local government issues.

Robb supports clients on a variety of measures including drafting legislation, testifying before legislative committees and subcommittees, lobbying state legislators, developing, and implementing legislative strategies, developing, and administering clients' political action committees, and developing and implementing grassroots and grassstops strategies on local, state and national levels.

Relevant Experience: Director, Corporate and Government Affairs, Health Diagnostic Laboratory, Inc., 2013-2014; Director, State Government Affairs, Entertainment Software Association, 2011-2013; Senior Manager, State Government Affairs, Entertainment Software Association, 2008-2011; Assistant Director, State Affairs, American Academy of Dermatology Association, 2006-2008; Manager, State Government Affairs, American Academy of Dermatology Association, 2005-2006; and Specialist, Political and Grassroots Affairs, American Academy of Dermatology Association, 2004.

Memberships include Virginia Economic Developers Association; Board Member, the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation; National Association of State Lobbyists; Lead Virginia, 2017; Bon Secours Grand Rounds for Community Leaders, 2014-2015; and Executive Advisory Board, George Mason University Computer Game Design Programs, 2012-2013.



**Elizabeth Rafferty**  
**Director of Government Affairs**  
**Hunton Andrews Kurth**  
**VEDA Legislative Liaison**

Elizabeth's practice focuses on government affairs; legislative, budgetary and regulatory strategy; and economic development efforts on behalf of businesses, government, and other clients.

She has represented companies and associations in the technology, housing and transportation sectors. She has experience in a number of the major public policy developments including gaming and cannabis and has more than 10 years of experience in the executive branch of state government.

Elizabeth's success has been because of her trusted and respected relationships in state government including several Governor's administrations, agency heads, key staff, and interest groups. She has strong connections

with legislators across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Elizabeth provides insight and understanding into the workings of state legislatures and agencies, including political insight and grassroots and grassroots advocacy support. She works to identify the best approach to address distinct issues and a resulting strategy which enables her to invest in the growth and success of her clients.

Prior to joining Hunton Andrews Kurth, Elizabeth served in various roles, including as director of government relations where she assisted businesses, associations, and individuals before Virginia's legislative and executive branches of government. Elizabeth is also the former policy and legislative director at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), where she was responsible for oversight of the agency's policy initiatives and legislative functions. Elizabeth helped launch GO Virginia, an economic development program designed to grow and diversify the Commonwealth's economy. While at DHCD, she worked as an advisor for community development for the Secretary of Commerce and Trade in the Governor's administration.

Elizabeth is the founder of River City Stars, the only non-profit cheerleading program for athletes with special needs in Central Virginia

**Relevant Experience:** Drafting legislation and policy briefs, testifying before legislative committees and subcommittees; Lobbying state and legislators, developing and implementing legislative strategies; Developing and administering clients' political action committees; and Developing and executing grassroots and grassroots strategies on local, and state levels.

**Memberships:** Member, Hanover Economic Development Authority, June 2020-Present; and Board of Directors, Virginia Clean Cities, May 2019-Present.



**Helen Cauthen**  
**President**  
**Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development**

Helen Cauthen serves as president of the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development, a nonprofit, public/private regional economic development organization with the mission of advancing innovative strategies for regional economic prosperity in eight counties and the City of Charlottesville. The Partnership's work focuses on marketing the region as a premier location for business, building regional collaboration, and attracting and retaining talent. Ms. Cauthen also oversees GO Virginia Region 9 Council, which is housed with the Partnership.

A certified economic developer, Ms. Cauthen was founding president & CEO of Team Volusia Economic Development Corporation in Daytona Beach, Florida, and vice president of the Greensboro Economic Development Alliance in North Carolina. Ms. Cauthen has extensive experience in nonprofit management, including the Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce, The Valley Hospital Foundation in the New York City area, and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association in Washington, D.C.

She is a graduate of the University of Missouri where she majored in business administration. Growing up as an "Air Force brat," she has lived in 12 states plus the District of Columbia – and Central Virginia is her favorite! She and her husband, Jim, have two grown children – Sarah Cauthen McCormick in Honolulu (and grandbaby Abigail) and Will Cauthen in Chicago.



**Jason El Koubi**  
**President & CEO**  
**Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

Jason El Koubi serves as President and CEO at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, where he leads VEDP's overall strategy and operations to encourage, stimulate, and support the development and expansion of the economy of the Commonwealth.

Prior to joining VEDP in July 2017 as Executive Vice President, El Koubi was previously President and CEO of One Acadiana, a regional economic development organization based in Lafayette, Louisiana. Under his leadership, the organization developed and successfully launched one of the most successful capital campaigns of its kind in the nation to deliver a new economic development program for the nine-parish region. Previously, El Koubi served as Assistant Secretary of Louisiana Economic Development, where he led initiatives that helped secure projects creating more than 63,000 new jobs along

with more than \$28 billion in new capital investment, while dramatically improving Louisiana's position in virtually every state business climate ranking.

Jason holds a B.S. in Biological Engineering from Louisiana State University and a M.S., Public Policy from the London School of Economics.



**Pace Lochte**  
**AVP for Economic Development**  
**University of Virginia**

Pace Lochte is a higher education leader with over 25 years of service to the University of Virginia (UVA). As Assistant Vice President for Economic Development, Pace partners with the private sector, government, academia, and nonprofits to bring positive change to Virginia by leveraging UVA's unique assets and capabilities.

Pace positions the University as a high-value contributor to public-private partnerships. She is currently leading the University's Affordable Housing Initiative, a hallmark of President Ryan's Good Neighbor program with a goal of supporting the development of 1,000-1,500 affordable housing units over the next ten years.

Prior to coming to UVA, Pace worked in the energy industry and served as a consultant for several privately held firms. She has an undergraduate degree in engineering, a graduate degree in higher ed administration, and an M.B.A. from the Darden School of Business. Pace serves on a number of boards including the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development (currently serving as chair), and the GO Virginia Region 9 Council.



**Wendy Horton, PharmD, MBA, FACHE**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**UVA Health University Medical Center**

Wendy Horton is the CEO of UVA Health University Medical Center. She brings extensive executive experience from nationally recognized academic medical centers. As a passionate advocate for healthcare quality and care redesign, Wendy leverages optimized care processes and new technology to ensure patient-focused healthcare resources are directed where they are most needed, resulting in a sustainable healthcare system.

With over a decade of academic medical center experience and deep clinical and operational expertise, Dr. Horton is adept at meeting emerging challenges at UVA Health and positioning the Medical Center for sustained success. Previously serving as Chief Operating Officer at UVA Medical Center, she successfully optimized clinical operations and spearheaded innovation to address urgent and critical challenges.

Recognized for her strategic acumen, Dr. Horton formulated a transformative roadmap and strategic plan upon assuming the leadership role in 2020. Her initiative led to a notable \$60 million increase in yearly net operating revenue at the medical center. Wendy also prioritizes a strong workforce agenda, particularly focusing on employee compensation and retention. During the COVID-19 staffing crisis that affected healthcare organizations across the nation, she led UVA Health Medical Center in maintaining services for all patients and facilitating growth and expansion for the Health System.

Prior to joining UVA Health, Wendy served as the chief administrative officer of The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and as the vice president of operations at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics.

Dr. Horton holds an MBA in marketing and finance from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Utah, and a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy degree from Oregon State University. Wendy is a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and a fellow with the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE), where she actively mentors newer fellows. In 2023, she was honored as a Top Women Leader in Healthcare by Modern Healthcare publication. Wendy is also passionate about serving in the community and holds several volunteer leadership positions in central Virginia, including serving on the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville.



**Charles J. Bennett**  
**Director of Economic Development**  
**City of Hopewell**

Charles Bennett is currently the Director of Economic Development and Tourism for the City of Hopewell, Virginia. He works to promote the City as a business location for domestic and international companies and organizations and to assist those businesses already located in Hopewell.

Charles previously served as a regional director for project management for Colliers International and CB Richard Ellis of Virginia. He also served as operations manager for Sonitrol of Greater Richmond.

He has certifications in project manager, DCJS ES1, VA DEQ Responsible Land Disturber, Private Pilot SEL, and sheet metal layout and design.



**Dan Roberts**  
**Vice President of Research and Strategy**  
**Virginia Tourism Corporation**

Dan Roberts is the Vice President of Research and Strategy for the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC). In his role, Dan leads VTC's market research, industry analytics, and overall planning and goal setting processes using data to help identify, set, and measure the organization's overall priorities. Prior to joining VTC in early 2021, Dan spent 4 years with Choice Hotels International in Rockville, MD, leading performance analytics for the company's Business Intelligence Group.

Dan first became passionate about the hospitality and tourism industries by consulting with Fortune-500 global hospitality companies in an accounting and audit capacity, which kicked off a long journey through the industry that led him to VTC. His hotel data experience includes industry and competitive analysis, data-driven site selection based on demographics and local points of interest, loyalty program fraud prevention, and overall brand opportunity identification and sizing. Dan has a degree in Economics from American University in Washington, DC.



**Michael McCormack**  
**Manager of Business Development & Client Relations**  
**Henrico Sports & Entertainment Authority**

Michael has worked for Henrico County since 2011 and joined the Henrico Sports & Entertainment Authority in April 2022, having previously worked for Henrico County Recreation and Parks and Henrico County Public Schools. In his current role, Michael works to promote Henrico County as a premier destination to host tournaments and events, while also working with tournament promoters on the operations side. Prior to working in athletics, Michael was an English teacher and football coach at Hermitage High School and Holman

Middle School. He holds a B.A. in English from Hampden-Sydney College as well as a M.Ed. from the Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Sports Leadership.



**Jay Richardson**  
**Senior Sports Group Sales Manager**  
**City of Hampton Convention & Visitor Bureau**

Jay Richardson, Senior Sports Group Sales Manager with the City of Hampton Convention & Visitor Bureau, is a native of the Virginia Peninsula and a sports industry veteran with 30-years of sports management experience and is a member of Sports Events & Tourism Association.

A graduate of Radford University's College of Business and Economics, Jay began his professional career with the Houston Astros Major League Baseball team and spent the next 13 years in minor league baseball front offices, including the Norfolk Tides and Potomac Nationals. He managed sports and grant programs with the National Recreation and Park Association, including partnerships with the U.S. Tennis Association, the NBA, Major League Baseball, USA Football and NFL Youth Football Fund, and U.S. Olympic Committee.



Jay moved into his current position in 2023 after serving as Sports & Event Services Manager since 2021. Jay promotes the coastal City of Hampton as a viable sports tourism and convention destination, working to attract youth, amateur, collegiate, and professional sporting events to the city. Notable facilities in Hampton include the Boo Williams Sportsplex, Hampton Roads Convention Center, and the new Hampton Virginia Aquaplex, a state-of-the-art competitive aquatics facility that opened in 2022. Hampton hosts a wide range of sports events each year including basketball and volleyball tournaments, gymnastics and wrestling competitions, competitive swimming, diving, and aquatics events, and boating and sailing regattas along the city's beaches and waterways.



**Torye Hurst**  
**Director of Sales, Sports, and Services**  
**Loudoun Sports Tourism**

Torye Hurst is in his ninth year at Visit Loudoun currently serving as Director of Sales, Sports & Services. Hurst coordinated with the Visit Loudoun Marketing staff to create Loudoun Sports Tourism as the sports brand of the organization. During his tenure Hurst has recruited many tournaments to Loudoun County including the USSSA C Nationals Fastpitch Championship which was named the 2022 Loudoun County Tourism Event of the Year. In 2023 the US Youth Soccer Eastern Regional was held in Loudoun County attracting 261 Girls and Boys teams booking over 7,100 rooms and generating of \$8 million in estimated economic impact to

the Northern Virginia. The event was named a 2023 Champion of Economic Impact by *Sports Destination Management*. Prior to Visit Loudoun, Hurst served at the National Sports Sales Manager with the Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau which followed a 25-year in college athletics communications.



**Pete Eshelman**  
**Senior Director of Creative Strategies**  
**Roanoke Regional Partnership**

Pete Eshelman is an outdoors guy. He is the director of the Roanoke Regional Partnership's non-profit Roanoke Outside, founded the Blue Ridge Marathon – America's Toughest Road Marathon, and the GO Outside Festival to help build brand recognition for outdoor recreation and increase recognition of the region as a place to live, work, and invest. His work has changed the region's community narrative to one that places a high value on the outdoors. Pete also oversees the Get2knowNoke talent strategies program.