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For Immediate Release

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## **VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EXECUTIVES Announces Inaugural Rising Leader Award Recipient**

Winchester, VA – The Virginia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (VACCE) proudly announced the recipient of its inaugural **Rising Leader Award** during the 2026 VACCE Spring Conference held in Winchester, Virginia.

The VACCE Rising Leader Award was created to recognize an emerging leader in the Chamber of Commerce profession who is already making a meaningful impact within their organization and community. The award honors a chamber professional who demonstrates initiative, leadership potential, and a strong commitment to advancing the mission of their Chamber and strengthening the business environment in their region.

The 2026 recipient of the VACCE Rising Leader Award is **Justin Saunders, Vice President of Membership & Strategic Growth for the Hampton Roads Chamber**.

Since joining the Hampton Roads Chamber four years ago, Saunders has become a key strategist for the organization's growth, overseeing member recruitment and retention while guiding local division boards and their community initiatives. Through his leadership, he has helped cultivate deeper relationships within the business community and develop a more engaged and active membership base.

Saunders is also widely recognized for his leadership beyond the chamber. He serves on several boards, and he continues to shape the chamber profession through his service as a member of the ACCE Board of Directors.

The VACCE Rising Leader Award recognizes chamber professionals who demonstrate professional excellence, leadership potential, measurable impact through their work, and a clear promise to continue strengthening their communities through the chamber profession.

VACCE is proud to recognize Justin Saunders as the first-ever recipient of the VACCE Rising Leader Award and looks forward to the continued impact of his leadership within Virginia's chamber community.

*VACCE is an alliance of Chamber of Commerce professionals from across the state working together to improve the business climate in Virginia while developing ways to enhance the quality of life in the communities they serve. VACCE is the only organization in the state dedicated to the growth and development of Chamber professionals.*

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