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# VACCE ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL CHAMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS

**GORDONSVILLE, VA –** The Virginia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (VACCE) has named the **Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce & Tourism** and **ChamberRVA** as recipients of the inaugural **2026 VACCE Chamber of the Year Awards**. The chambers were recognized during the association's Awards Dinner held August 27 in Gordonsville.

Created in 2026, the **VACCE Chamber of the Year Award** recognizes Chambers of Commerce in Virginia that demonstrate outstanding leadership, innovation and measurable impact in serving their members and advancing the economic vitality of their regions. Chambers were evaluated on mission and impact, innovation in service, community leadership, member value, advocacy impact and statewide contribution.

Awards were presented in two membership categories: Under 500 Members and Over 500 Members.

## Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce & Tourism – Under 500 Members

The Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce & Tourism was named the 2026 VACCE Chamber of the Year for chambers with fewer than 500 members after experiencing one of the strongest years in the organization's history.

The Chamber welcomed 51 new members in 2025 – the highest annual total in its history – and 92 new businesses over the past two years, while increasing member retention by 9 percent. It also hosted more than 75 programs and events during the year, providing an average of more than six opportunities each month for businesses to connect, learn and grow.

Innovation has been central to the Chamber's recent success. New and expanded initiatives include Merchant Meetups, a revitalized Young Professionals program, Lunch & Learns, Business After Hours and Chamber Chats, along with expanded digital marketing and member visibility efforts. The Chamber also saw an 81 percent increase in active website users, while three major outdoor adventure events generated more than $348,000 in direct economic impact for the local community.

Beyond these measurable results, the Alleghany Highlands Chamber has intentionally evolved from a traditional Chamber of Commerce into one of its region's trusted community leadership organizations. Serving Alleghany County, the City of Covington, the Town of Clifton Forge and the Town of Iron Gate, the Chamber regularly brings together businesses, local governments, educational institutions, nonprofits and community partners to address regional priorities and advance the economic vitality of the Alleghany Highlands.

**ChamberRVA – Over 500 Members**

ChamberRVA was named the 2026 VACCE Chamber of the Year for chambers with more than 500 members in recognition of its systems-level approach to regional leadership, workforce development, economic mobility and collaboration.

Over the past several years, ChamberRVA has focused on addressing one of the Richmond region's most significant challenges – not a lack of programs or investment, but a lack of alignment. Rather than simply creating additional programs, the Chamber has worked to build the civic infrastructure needed to bring employers, educators, workforce organizations, philanthropy and government together around shared regional priorities.

Among its signature initiatives is Mission Tomorrow, the state's largest career exploration fair, which connects approximately 12,000 eighth-grade students annually with more than 100 employers. ChamberRVA has also developed employer-led Next Generation Sector Partnerships, with partnerships established in Construction and Health Care and additional efforts underway in Information Technology and Advanced Manufacturing.

The Chamber's regional leadership also includes its InterCity Visit, which brings together nearly 200 regional leaders, as well as regional summits, policy forums and collaborative initiatives addressing housing, transportation, education and economic competitiveness.

The Alleghany Highlands Chamber and ChamberRVA demonstrate two very different—but equally powerful—examples of chamber excellence. Both organizations are delivering measurable value for their members while serving as trusted conveners and leaders in their regions. We are proud to recognize them as our inaugural VACCE Chambers of the Year!

*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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