Chamber members can now access Virginia Benefits Market.

Virginia Benefits
Private exchange is newest member benefit.

Navigating today’s health and benefits landscape can be confusing and frustrating. That’s why the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Chamber, and fellow Chambers across Virginia have partnered with CieloStar, leading a national benefits administration company to launch Virginia Benefits Market—an online marketplace for employee benefits.

“We are excited about Virginia Benefits Market and the opportunity that we as chambers of commerce have to help shape the future of Virginia’s employee benefits market,” said Bryan K. Stephens, President and CEO of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce. “Our members frequently tell us that rising employee benefit costs are a concern. We are hopeful that this new model will help them bend the cost curve.”

Businesses can now visit the online marketplace to compare insurance plans and costs and benefits from different carriers in one easy-to-use, centralized location. Although the platform cannot reduce the cost of insurance premiums, it does simplify and streamline the enrollment process. Businesses and employees alike will enable employees to select from a wide array of voluntary ancillary benefits.

Program Highlights
• Compare insurance plans and rates
• Tailor health benefit programs to fit the needs of the business and employees alike
• Enable employees to select from a wide array of voluntary ancillary benefits
• Enroll and manage plan options through the employee/employee online portal
• Consolidated billing for most benefits

To learn more about this exciting new program, members are encouraged to watch the overview video that can be found on the chamber’s website. Members may also visit www.virginiabenefitsformarket.com or contact their local chamber of commerce membership professional for more information.

CieloStar stands ready to assist, you can chat with them via the market’s website, or call toll-free 1-855-781-7616.

Message from the President & CEO

Bryan K. Stephens

Business doesn’t just happen.

Tao, in the book The Art of War, wrote, “Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory, tactics without strategy is noise before defeat.”

Nothing worries me more than an organization that is busy at being busy. Failure is almost certain without each member of the team knowing exactly what big picture strategy is and the role they play in executing that strategy.

“To be successful, a business must not only have a strategic vision, but the steps it takes to turn that vision into reality.”

Here at the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce we are ensuring that the decisions on the table are well thought through. This includes focus on economic development, workforce development and infrastructure development. At the operational level we define our success by how successful our business is. At the strategic level we envision success with the rebirth of a stronger regional economy rooted in innovation, entrepreneurship and diversifying our industries. A lasting, strong, vibrant economy isn’t balanced on luck or busy work in the absence of planning. It takes thoughtful critical analysis, planning and hard work. As you in business understand, successful businesses do not thrive by winging it. Neither does your Chamber and neither does the economy of our region.

We’ve been working to get the right people engaged in the projects which will further our mission and optimally support our stakeholders. Yes, 2014 was a good year and we’re proud to report we’ve turned the corner operationally. But it’s 2015 where the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce strategy takes shape to be as purposeful and impactful as possible to serve for the business community for the long-term.

As in other editions of CONTACT, you can quickly see the number of purpose-driven events we host each quarter. Our events are but tactical movements, serving a greater regional strategy. In this edition, I wanted our strategy to resonate with you as you assess the value of membership today.

For this purpose, I have developed a “quad chart.” A one-page document which synthesizes our new culture with our vision and focus areas. In it you see the foundation of our corporate culture (our mission, vision and values), and what we intend to achieve for this year as our member clients. As you have certainly seen this past year, we were Chamber on the move, with a focused purpose that has our members’ best interests in mind. More than ever before, the business community saw us taking vocal positions on issues important to members. Just commenting on issues, but shaping those issues and leading the charge to affect positive change on behalf of the business community.

In 2015, our tempo is determined and strong. Among our goals, we will seek U.S. Chamber of Commerce accreditation, in a sense validating our strategy by achieving a coveted bar of excellence. We will also once again execute a profitable AAIU Junior Olympics Games this summer, currently estimated to have an economic impact of $50 million on the region. The Chamber will help implement a unique military and veterans support council, and will undertake research with the goal of diversifying our economy. With our Inter-Regional Visit to the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, the Chamber takes steps to better inform the business community about what offshore energy exploration and development could mean to our region, and how to best position ourselves for success.

We will be communicating to you throughout the year all we have planned for 2015. On our website, you can learn more about what we’ll be developing this year, all with the intent of helping your business succeed, driving the return of our regional economy and improving our residents’ quality of life. If it impacts business, the Chamber will be involved.
Virginia Beach City Council Unanimously Votes to Move Forward on Arena Project

On December 9, Virginia Beach City Council voted unanimously to pass a resolution approving the term sheet for the Virginia Beach Arena that would be built across from the Convention Center near the oceanfront. The term sheet outlined what the City is willing to provide in exchange for United States Management to build the 18,000-seat capacity $200 million facility. USM can move forward with private financing for the project, with construction beginning as early as next fall. The City’s contribution will be $52 million in infrastructure costs plus a sharing of the existing hotel tax as well as revenue generated on the site once the arena opens.

The City of Virginia Beach held a public hearing in the City Council Chamber on December 2 for questions and comments on the proposal. The Chamber’s 2015 Virginia Beach Division Chair Glen Robertson, a partner with Wolcott Rivers Gates, spoke on behalf of the Chamber in support of the arena. Robertson, who served on the city’s arena committee representing the Chamber, highlighted the proven track record of ESG, S.M.G. Worldwide Entertainment, Mortensen and SB Ballard Construction, AECOM and Clark Nexsen Architects and the private sector equity partners that will create and operate the arena.

“W e have to have, from an economic standpoint, a call to leadership. The arena will host events that will increase hotel stays, restaurant and retail business, attract world class entertainment, and add to the quality of life for residents in Virginia Beach and the surrounding Hampton Roads region.”

Ira Agricola

Hampton Roads business leaders gathered January 21 for the Chamber’s first quarterly Regional Board of Directors and Trustees meeting of 2015 to discuss important issues affecting the business community, chief among them the means for Virginia to achieve energy independence.

These quarterly meetings allow volunteer leaders from the membership to substantively shape the priorities and positions the Chamber takes as the regional voice of business.

Chris Saxman, Director of the Virginia Energy Forum, briefed the merits of energy exploration and the development of sources of energy that could pump oil and natural gas into the Commonwealth, bringing with it revenue and jobs. Saxman tied exploration to much-needed diversification of the regional economy, as well as the country’s need to achieve energy independence.

“We have to have, from an economic standpoint, a call to leadership. The arena will host events that will increase hotel stays, restaurant and retail business, attract world class entertainment, and add to the quality of life for residents in Virginia Beach and the surrounding Hampton Roads region.”

“The Chamber’s Virginia Beach Division board members have been involved and engaged with this project from its inception. We are grateful for Glen Robertson’s volunteer leadership. The arena will host events that will increase hotel stays, restaurant and retail business, attract world class entertainment, and add to the quality of life for residents in Virginia Beach and the surrounding Hampton Roads region.”

Ira Agricola

Quarterly Regional Board Addresses Economic Diversification

“We have this opportunity, Virginia, to be at the forefront of this energy revolution.”

Saxman believes that energy development when coupled with the other pillars of the regional economic base – Defense, tourism, and the Port – equates to strength in Hampton Roads. A former member of the House of Delegates, Saxman encouraged the board and trustees to take an active role in advancing the issue of exploration.

To that end, the Chamber is sponsoring an inter-regional visit to Louisiana in March that will include Congressman Scott Rigell, an advocate for offshore energy, as a special guest.

“Our region must have all the facts,” said Bryan K. Stephens, President & CEO of the Chamber. “Business leaders, joined by elected officials and educators, will see firsthand what offshore drilling might offer our region,” said Stephens.

“We will assess the opportunities, challenges and risks posed by offshore energy options, and interact with subject matter experts from the gulf coast of Louisiana.”

The next Regional Board of Directors and Trustees will take place Wednesday, April 22.

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Courtney Lynch, author of "Leading From the Front," sold-out audience at the first Professional Women’s Leadership event of the year on February 5th.

The presentation was a unique installment of the series, with Lynch forging the podium for an interactive question-and-answer format as she walked around the audience. Lynch has previously participated in the Chamber’s leadership series and the return engagement was based on audience demand.

“So much about being an effective leader is about being better than your instincts,” said Lynch. “I’m a huge believer in intentional action. I think what separates leaders from those who are still developing their leadership skills is their ability to take intentional action.”

Lynch also believes that for a leader to take intentional action, one must have vision. Leaders also must work on building credibility before offering criticism, working outside your comfort zone, being self aware and taking accountability.

Lynch is a frequent lecturer on the principles of leadership, drawing on her experiences as a Marine. She also uses her time in the private sector, to include a background in sales and practicing law, to demonstrate what she considers some of the counterintuitive elements associated that thwart leadership and success.

“It’s not about how far down you are,” said Lynch, “but how many times you’re willing to get back up. The majority of my success was built in response to failure.”

Working together is also crucial for today’s leaders. She states that leadership isn’t about authority, but in achieving credibility before offering criticism, working outside your comfort zone, being self aware and taking accountability.

Chamber Unveils Unique Leadership Series

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce is proud to initiate a new leadership series in 2015. The Chamber Leadership Series is designed to give attendees the opportunity to interact with important leaders who provide practical knowledge, sharing what helped them rise to the top of their field. Speakers in the series include leaders in business, industry and government.

Governer Terry McAuliffe kicks of the series in March, discussing the impact the 2015 General Assembly will have on Hampton Roads.

Jason Fedman, founder of Wounded Wear, is next in the series, speaking in April. A decorated Navy lieutenant, Fedman will share his personal journey with the Navy Seals, and talk about how to overcome your own challenging obstacles as well as his involvement with WoundedWarriors.

Then in May, Admiral Philip Davidson, Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command will educate the business community on what lies ahead for the U.S. Navy around the globe. He’ll also discuss how that mission will impact Hampton Roads, allowing the business community to better position itself for the years ahead.

For June, the series includes a panel discussion featuring the Hampton Roads leaders who are instrumental in the decision making process in Richmond.

For more information on these events, or to register, visit www.hrc лидерship.com or contact Priscilla Monti at pmonti@hrccva.com.
The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) membership organization.

If you’re interested in becoming a part of this program, call Marianne Collins at 757-664-2504.

SAVE THE DATE IN 2015

Welcome New Members

Join us in welcoming these new Chamber members. More than 125 companies have joined you in membership last quarter. Congratulations to the following businesses that celebrated the following 15 YEARS 20 YEARS 35 YEARS 40 YEARS 45 YEARS

November 2014
Convergence Media Company Direct Auto Insurance Duma Technologies Echelon Services, LLC Expertly Real, Inc.
First Team Honda First Team Subaru First Virginia – Kephsville Park Guard Life Insurance Company of America Hana Light Tower Wealth Strategies Healthlink, LLC IRA Associates Insurance Shopper VA Livingston & Haven Mark & Snap Associates Principal Restorations Solar Services, Inc.
Stanley Steemer Syncro, LLC TideKewater Diagnostic Consultants, LLC Virginia’s Staffing Choice

December 2014
808th Oceana Great Bridge/Hickory Aubrey Fifth State Farm Cooper Harley Injury Lawyers Cruiseplanners Discounter Company First Virginia – Holland Road Fit With Kim, LLC

For more information, or to register for any upcoming networking events, go to events.hamptonroadschamber.com