



Virginia Association for the
Education of Young Children

VAAEYC E-Newsletter

Serving Virginia's Early Childhood Educators and Children

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From the President

Greetings!

We are gearing up for my favorite time of the year - the VAAEYC Annual Conference! We really hope that you are able to join us in-person this year. We will be in Richmond, Virginia from March 9-11. Your VAAEYC conference committee has been hard at work to



ensure that you will have another great experience with your colleagues and friends! I will also be attending the Southern Early Childhood Association annual conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee from March 2-4. Attending conferences inspires me to do more for myself, my school, and for early childhood educators that I meet.

At the end of this month, we will have representatives from VAAEYC attending the NAEYC Public Policy Forum to help advocate for young children in the Commonwealth. On another note, I had the pleasure of meeting a student group from Radford University during a Professional Development meeting this month. They have been working on a study to assess the needs and barriers of teachers and directors in this field. They hope that conducting this study will help elevate our field and bring even more attention to the work we do and the role we play in the lives of children.

Last, I want to let you know how wonderful VAAEYC is as an organization. As volunteers, I want to recognize the countless hours the team contributes. Each person in our group is truly invested in the work for the Commonwealth. When we get together via zoom and even times when we meet in-person, we get to know each other better each time. It becomes a family reunion... we even have food! I invite you to take a bold step and join one of our working groups and see for yourself how wonderful being active with VAAEYC is!

Joyce Oandasan
VAAEYC President



Advocacy and Public Policy

The VAAEYC Public Policy Team is busy getting ready for the [NAEYC Public Policy Forum](#) next week. This annual event brings together early childhood educators and advocates from all over the country for a few days of training, collaboration, and information sharing before meeting on Capitol Hill with legislators from their districts to ensure that our voices are heard, so that legislation important to educators and children is supported.



Early Childhood Education and child care is a critical component of any thriving community. In Virginia, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care. But as each of you in the field know, the profession is facing many challenges, including low wages for teachers and providers, a lack of affordable options for families, and a shortage of qualified teachers and caregivers.

So, what can **you** do to help? You can help by increasing public awareness of the importance of quality early childhood education and child care by sharing information with families and policymakers about the benefits of quality child care. **How?**

- 1) Stay informed on legislative priorities for 2023. Follow [Voices for Virginia's Children HERE](#). Priorities for 2023 include:
 - a. Stabilize the child care sector with adequate funding to increase to mixed-delivery grants to public/private early education settings and increase parent choice through the child care subsidy program.
 - b. Making the COVID-era changes to eligibility for the child care subsidy program permanent, including higher income eligibility, allowing for eligibility during job search and reducing/eliminating parent co-pays.
 - c. Improve access for young children with special educational and health care needs to access a wide range of fully resourced child care options.
- 2) Follow active legislation through Voices for Virginia's Children's [Bill Tracker Here](#). This wonderful website notes all current legislation, actions taken, and if it is supported by Voices. Be sure to closely follow legislation regarding funding of early childhood education and care.
- 3) If there is active legislation that needs support, or that you oppose – make sure your voice is heard. Contact your representatives by phone, email, or good old postal mail. The [Who's My Legislator tool found here](#) makes it easy to find out who you need to contact. Even a short message goes a long way.
- 4) [Invest in your professional development](#). Well-trained and educated teachers and providers are better equipped to provide high-quality care to children. Be sure to share this information with your families so they know your dedication to providing the highest quality education and care for their children.





VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Have your voice amplified.

You are invited to send a video to VAAEYC to be included in a presentation at the Public Policy session at the 2023 VAAEYC Annual Conference.

See below for more information.
Deadline: March 1, 2023

You are invited to submit a video for VAAEYC's "Voices from the Field" Project

VAAEYC wants to help amplify your voice. We are working on preparing a video with recordings from all of our educator and advocates working in the field to be introduced at the VAAEYC Annual Conference Public Policy session. You are invited to participate as this recording will also be used to share with legislators to hear concerns from educators in the field.

No need to rehearse, practice, or script your videos. These videos are meant to be grounded in the real experiences VAAEYC members face.

How to participate:

Using your phone, record a 45-second or less, video of yourself answering one or more of the following questions:

- **Why does early childhood education matter?**
- **What do you see is the most critical issue facing early childhood education?**
- **What do you think will be a long-term challenge that will need addressing in the future.**

That's it! Then send us the recording in one of two ways:

Option 1: Upload directly to [Google Drive HERE](#)

Option 2: Email to conference@vaaeyc.org

Equity and Anti-Racism Circle

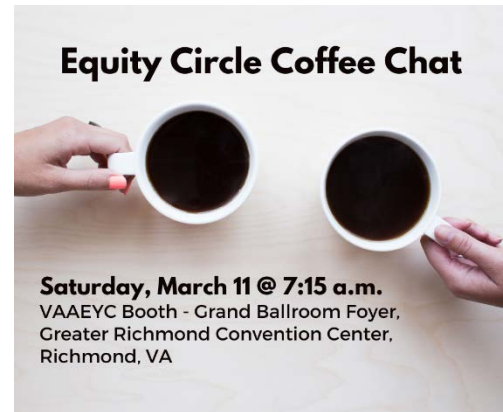
The Equity Circle continues to discuss topics brought to the table by circle members and is exploring how to craft field trips to significant historical locations in Virginia. This Black History Month, we honor the contributions and accomplishments of African Americans throughout history and today. At VAAEYC we acknowledge that while we specifically honor our Black icons, peers, and colleagues this month, we must uplift and celebrate our Black community every day.

Check out this article posted on Edutopia about [Connecting Black History to Joy](#), to share some history with your students that goes beyond highlighting the usual recognized historical figures. For example, do you know about Dr. Patricia Bath who pioneered a device and technique for cataract surgery?

Unconscious/Implicit Bias

Everyone has biases. But are we aware of them? Here are some good articles and resources to reflect on as you consider your own.

- [What is Unconscious Bias?](#) - Video from Lean In
- [What To Know About Unconscious Bias And How You Can Combat It](#) - Article on Glam website, author A.R. Hopkins
- [Understanding implicit bias, and why it affects kids](#) - Children's Mercy Kansas City, Contributing Authors: Elizabeth J. Willen, PhD – Child Psychology, Carla Allan PhD – Clinical Psychologist
- [Bias Starts as Early as Preschool, but Can Be Unlearned](#) - Edutopia, author Amanda Armstrong



Leading for Equity

The National Equity Project has created a thought-provoking Leading for Equity Framework to consider as you train and develop as leaders. [Take a look at it here.](#)

Membership



Get Ready for the Week of the Young Child | April 1 - 7, 2023

Join this fun-filled week celebrating early learning, young children, their teachers, families, and communities. The purpose of the Week of the Young Child® is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those needs.

Celebrate with a different theme each day!

- **Kick off Saturday**
- **Music Monday**
- **Tasty Tuesday**
- **Work Together Wednesday**
- **Artsy Thursday**
- **Family Friday**

[Check out the ideas here for how to join the celebration in your programs!](#)



vaaeyc Membership

Current **vaaeyc** Membership
Numbers as of February 20, 2023

- NAEYC 878
- SECA 78
- **vaaeyc** Life Members 5

Total VAAEYC Membership: 961

Need to renew? [You can easily renew by CLICKING HERE.](#)

Don't forget to keep your membership current and make sure your contact information is current too! If you aren't sure, we can check for you send a note to us [HERE.](#)



Beth Anderson
Membership & Communication Circle Lead

Thank You to all of the 67th Annual Conference Sponsors!



Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts is a program of Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts.



2023 vaaeyc Annual Conference

March 9-11
Richmond, VA



We are very excited about our VAAEYC 67th annual conference March 9-11 in Richmond, VA. If you have not already signed up for what we anticipate will be a fantastic event, there is still time so we encourage you to do so today! Our theme this year is “Reigniting Your Spark” and we have planned every aspect of the conference with that in mind. As educators we need ways to spark joy for ourselves and our students throughout the day, while continuing to support their learning in the best ways possible. There are amazing keynote speakers and authors including Rae Pica, Jacky Howell, Mary Anderson, Chazz Lewis, and Marianna Llanos that will certainly energize and renew your spirit. Surrounded by children’s art in our gallery, not only will you be able to be inspired by the masterpieces of children, you will also have the opportunity to find the joy of art as you have the opportunity to create for yourself at the Friday evening event. We also have a full exhibit hall with a variety of vendors and sponsors for you to explore. There will be prizes and giveaways throughout the event so you will want to stop in frequently. In addition to over 90 workshops for you to attend throughout the three days, we encourage you to meet and talk with other fellow educators. The fellowship and camaraderie make events memorable and a great way to reignite your spark. We look forward to seeing you!



Belinda Ryberg
Conference Circle Lead

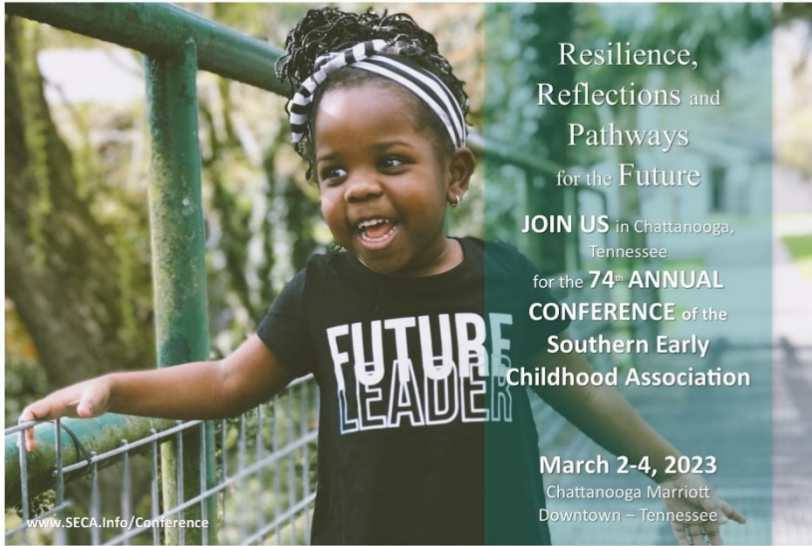
[Conference Schedule](#)

[There is still time to register!](#)
[CLICK HERE for more information.](#)

Conference Highlights

- Morning Warm Ups presented each day by Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artists!
- Inspiring Keynotes from wonderful Early Childhood Education Legends!
- Exhibit Hall with vendors, games, and concessions.
- Friday Evening “Art Gallery” event highlighting Children’s Art with food, “make and takes,” and more!
- The company of hundreds of fellow early childhood educators!

SECA Corner



The SECA Conference is fast approaching and we are looking forward to seeing everyone at the Conference in Chattanooga Tennessee!

If you missed SECA President Judy Whitesell at the SECA Conference, then come meet her at our VAAEYC Conference March 9 – 11, in Richmond, VA. SECA will be sharing the VAAEYC Booth!

Not a member of SECA? Join the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) and enjoy the latest issues of Dimensions of Early Childhood. SECA is a regional association that represents the unique needs of it's Southern States.

- SECA has two types of membership:
- SECA/VAAEYC -\$34
 - SECA/VAAEYC Student - \$25

For more information on SECA contact them at info@seca.info Visit SECA [online HERE](#) You can also find SECA on [Facebook HERE](#)



VAAEYC SECA Representative
Cindy Brown



SECA President Judy Whitesell (Right) and SECA President-Elect Crystal Campbell (Left) at the SCECA-SC affiliate conference!

Professional Development



At our last VAAEYC Professional Development Circle meeting I asked the question, “**what is missing from your toolbox?**” Our members listed a variety of different things that allowed us to ponder ways that we can support our VAAEYC colleagues. I want to take this opportunity to ask you, “**what is missing from your toolbox?**” I hope you will take a moment to reflect and **respond here**. Your responses will help shape the types of professional development resources our circle curates.

We also invite you to join the Professional Development Circle at the VAAEYC Annual Conference for our next in person meeting on Friday, March 10.

Looking forward to connecting,

Kim Thomason
Professional Development Circle Lead



Chapters & Local Groups



Apple Valley | Counties Served: Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, Warren

Central | Counties Served: Albemarle, Buckingham, Cumberland, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, and Orange

Greater Lynchburg | Counties Served: Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, Charlotte, Halifax, Pittsylvania, Prince Edward

New River Valley | Counties Served: Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Wythe

Piedmont | Counties Served: Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, Henry, Patrick, Roanoke

Prince William | Counties Served: Caroline, Culpeper, Fauquier, King George, Prince William, Rappahannock, Stafford, Spotsylvania

Richmond | Counties Served: Amelia, Brunswick, Chesterfield, Charles City, Dinwiddie, Greenville, Henrico, Hanover, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, New Kent, Nottoway, Powhatan, Prince George

Southeastern | Counties Served: Accomack, Chesapeake, Isle of Wight, Northampton, Southhampton, Suffolk, Surry, Sussex, Virginia Beach

Valley | Counties Served: Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham

Chapter Updates

Apple Valley

Chapter Leadership:

- Jennifer Strickler, President
- Dr. Stacey Park, Vice President

We are so excited to be with everyone again at the VAAEYC Annual Conference in Richmond! Our chapter board members will be present and busy representing the best our region offers in Early Childhood Education. Come by and visit us at the membership booth, join some of the many workshops offered by quality professionals from our area, find our Apple Valley Chapter display board, and enjoy networking with all the fantastic educators and friends of VAAEYC!

Then join us for a meeting Wednesday, March 29 at Water Street Cafe in Old Town Winchester at 5pm to discuss plans for preparing our annual mini conference at Laurel Ridge Community College. It will be a fun dinner out to reflect upon our experiences in Richmond and moving forward supporting great early childhood activities within our region!

We are happy to share the information below about a great opportunity within Ready Region 5 Blue Ridge North:

Blue Ridge Community College ECE Program and Smart Beginnings Greater Harrisonburg are sponsoring the Shenandoah Valley ECE Directors' Symposium. This event has been developed to give directors, owners, and family day home owners in the Ready Region 5 Blue Ridge North the opportunity to engage in professional development relevant to their positions, opportunities for networking, and the chance to recharge. This event is free and lunch will be provided. It is being held at Blue Ridge Community College in Weyers Cave, Virginia on March 23 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Invitations with details and a link to register will be sent out soon. Please contact Dr. Stacey Park, ECE Program Coordinator Blue Ridge Community College, at 540-453-2330 or parks@brcc.edu for more information.

[Contact the Apple Valley Chapter here](#)

Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children

Central

Chapter Leadership:

- Shannon Banks, President
- Jennifer Fry, Treasurer

[Contact the Central Chapter Here](#)
[Central Chapter Website Here](#)

The Central Virginia Chapter hosted the VAAEYC Board and local educators at a great social evening at Three Notch'd Brewery in January.

Stay tuned for more events to connect with your peers!

Greater Lynchburg

Chapter Leadership:

- Anthony Andrews, Co-President
- Jessica Webb, Co-President

[Contact the Greater Lynchburg Chapter Here](#)
[Greater Lynchburg Chapter of VAAEYC Facebook Group](#)

New River Valley

Chapter Leadership:

- Emily Perkins, President
- Caroline Hornburg, Vice President

[New River Valley AEYC Facebook Page](#)

Piedmont

Chapter Leadership:

- Leslie Floyd, Co-President
- Jessica Griffith, Co-President

[Contact the Piedmont Chapter Here](#)

Prince William

Chapter Leadership:

- Belinda Ryberg, Co-President
- Sarah Maynard, Co-President

[Contact the Prince William Chapter Here](#)

Richmond

Chapter Leadership:

- Alex Strabley, Co-President
- Margina Grow, Co-President

[Richmond Chapter Facebook Page Here](#)

The Richmond Chapter is excited to offer this ***FREE* Director's Training on Wednesday, February 22, 2023 in Richmond, VA!**

We have scheduled for Janet Carter, Parent Coach, to talk to Directors and Admin about *working and connecting with Millennial parents/families!* In addition to this training, we will have a “Lunch & Learn” networking opportunity for local early childhood directors to get together to discuss day-to-day life in the early childhood field! **Check out the link to [register today!](#)**

Southeastern

Chapter Leadership:

- Beth Anderson, Co-President
- Cindy Brown, Co-President

[Southeastern Chapter Facebook Page Here](#)

The Southeastern Chapter is excited that spring is just around the corner! We welcome not only the sunshine, flowers, and warmer temperatures, but also more opportunities for professional development, networking, and advocacy.

As we wrap up February and look ahead, SECOVA just wrapped up our annual Winter Wonderland training event Wednesday, February 15, which featured WOLF TRAP: Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts. With this training our educators

learned how to use books in ways that allow children to further their language and literacy while also promoting gross motor skills. Our wonderful team provided not only in-person support to these early care professionals, but dinner and dessert was also served to help build togetherness and camaraderie. We look forward to giving you an update of this training event complete with pictures in the next issue of the VAAEYC newsletter!

Valley

Chapter Leadership:

- Emily Heatwole, President
- Pat Kennedy, Treasurer

[Contact the Valley Chapter Here](#)

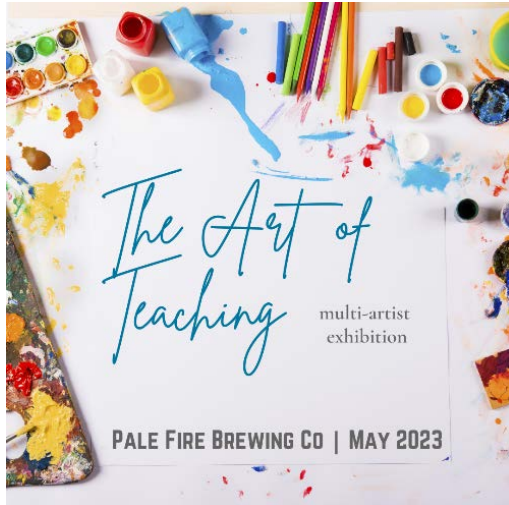
[Follow the Valley Chapter Instagram Here](#)
[@valleychaptervaaeyc](#)

We've been busy! Valley Chapter dove right into



the new year with event planning to create some awesome opportunities for our members and local educators. On Friday, February 24, we are hosting our second Educator Game Night, this time at Sage Bird Ciderworks. School Staff Happy Hour is 4-7pm and a school ID (or proof of employment) gets you 20% off. Sage Bird will have games scattered around the taproom, but the real fun is happening in the North Wing. Join us for an "Apples to Apples" tournament to share some laughs and win some prizes. Each team to get three green cards has a chance to win a prize on the Plinko board. Future game nights are in the works!

Local artist (and former educator) Laura Thompson is hosting a “Cocktails & Collage” art event at Pale Fire Brewing Co. in Harrisonburg on Sunday, March 5 from 2-4:30 pm. In this one-day workshop, learn how to create dynamic collage artworks on paper using a collection of images from old World Book encyclopedias and National Geographic magazines. You will learn cutting



techniques, how to find the “right” kind of images, and how to use the elements & principles of art to create successful compositions, all while sipping on a beverage of your choice (including a variety of Pale Fire’s brand-new cocktails!) 25% of all ticket sales for this event go to our VAAEYC chapter! This will help purchase items off of teacher wish-lists and help fund future educator appreciation events. Thank you, Laura! Ticket information will be linked on our Instagram account or can be found on Laura’s website: <https://www.realcreative.studio/art-classes>.

We’re especially excited about an upcoming art show at Pale Fire Brewing Co. *The Art of Teaching* is a multi-artist exhibition designed to showcase many aspects of education including reminiscing about our own experiences from school, highlighting the daily routines of having school-age

children, sharing unique perspectives of being a classroom teacher, etc. Opening night is First Friday, May 5 from 5-7pm, but the art will be on display for the entire month of May.

While not our event, we want to take a moment to share VA Momentum’s Frazier Quarry 5K, happening on Saturday, April 29 at 9am. This year, 100% of net proceeds from the run will benefit the newly-created Stephanie Van Nortwick Scholarship. Stephanie was an ECE at one of our local elementary schools who died in a car accident last year. More details can be found on their Instagram (@VAmomentum), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/VAMomentum>), or website (<https://vamomentum.com/>).



And finally, save the date for our 3rd annual Educator Appreciation Event: Friday, June 9 from 4-7pm. Held again at Sage Bird Ciderworks in Harrisonburg, we hope to spoil local educators with discounts, giveaways, and fun!

Keep your eyes open for other upcoming events, including a make-and-take training where you would leave with classroom resources. We have hopes for other professional development opportunities focused on adding art to your classrooms, as well as a panel designed to answer some of your most difficult teaching questions related to diversity, inclusion, etc.

Need more information about your local chapter or how to get involved? [Reach out Here!](#)

VAAEYC Member Highlight

Celebrating VAAEYC Member Dinah Arnott

Many of VAAEYC members have dedicated their careers to early childhood education, as there are few other professions that have such a deep and lasting impact on the world. VAAEYC celebrates all of its dedicated members, but would like to highlight a few in each newsletter.

The first celebration is for New River Valley Chapter member, Dinah Arnott. Dinah has been an active educator, advocate, and presenter for her entire career. She exemplifies the best of early childhood educators, committed to high quality learning for young children and advocating for early childhood professionals.

She retired from Virginia Tech in August 2022, but continues to seek out ways to support the early care and education field by advocating for children and continues to support the local VAAEYC chapter as treasurer. She is actively involved in First Steps of the New River Valley and continues to volunteer in early care and learning settings. In the years leading up to her retirement she taught full-time at the Virginia Tech CDCLR, and also served as a mentor for Virginia Quality, and a PCAN presenter through Child Care Aware. She has assisted at many events for Early Childhood Education, including the coordination of table displays and small group discussions at the 2021 Igniting Connections Annual Symposium, and created a processed focused art display for the 2021 annual VAAEYC conference.

Her career began with earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education from Emory & Henry College, Emory, Virginia with graduate work in Early Childhood Education at The Citadel, Georgia College, and Radford University. She was a Pre-K Lead Teacher at the Virginia Tech Child Development Center for Learning & Research in Blacksburg, Virginia. She was a Teacher-Researcher providing developmentally appropriate emergent curriculum investigations embedded in high quality active learning/active play environment in a Reggio-inspired, NAEYC accredited, Level 5 Virginia Quality school for children in 16 families. She is involved with Child Care Aware of Virginia on the Promoting Responsive Relationships Project. She coached supporting two childcare sites modeling current best practice strategies while interacting in site classrooms. Dinah provided support for a Family Literacy Event, Family Pinwheel Event, and Professional Development training on the topics of Executive Functions, Temperament and Fine Motor Development in a four-county area of Southwest Virginia. She was a Classroom teacher in elementary and early childhood classrooms in private schools, public schools and Head Start programs working with children ages 15 months – 9 years. She was a Mentor/Technical Assistant with the Virginia Quality program in numerous childcare centers and family childcare homes in a four-county area of Southwest Virginia focusing on continuous quality improvement while supporting programs with tools and services to achieve high quality learning environments. She has presented at local, state, and national early childhood education conferences on topics including Social Relations & Interactions, Loose Parts, Physics, Superhero Play and Small



Calendar of Events

Richmond Chapter (RECA) Free Director Training

February 22, 2023
Richmond, VA
[Register Here](#)

SECA Annual Conference

March 2 - 4, 2023
Chattanooga, TN
For more information click here.

VAAEYC Annual Conference

March 9 - 11, 2023
Greater Richmond Convention Center
Richmond, VA
For more information click here.

VAAEYC June Board Meeting & Leadership Retreat

June 23, 2023
Round Hill Inn, Orange, VA

To have your event added, let us know at info@vaaeyc.org

Are you a past Board member of VAAEYC? Please plan to attend this reception in conjunction with the Annual Conference! Even if you aren't attending the conference, we hope you'll come by!

If you aren't yet a VAAEYC Leader ... come and learn why being on the Board is important and fun!

Legacy of Leadership

WE WELCOME ALL OF OUR "SEASONED" LEADERS WHO HAVE SERVED ON THE BOARD, A LOCAL CHAPTER, OR ON A CIRCLE TO JOIN COLLEAGUES FOR A FUN-FILLED EVENING FOLLOWING THE ART GALLERY EVENT. WITHOUT YOU, VAAEYC WOULD NOT BE WHAT IT IS TODAY!

FRIDAY **MAR 10** 7:30-9:30PM
2023

RICHMOND MARRIOTT, 500 E BROAD ST
(Stop by the VAAEYC Booth in the Convention Center for the room number.)

Refreshments provided