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ACCOUNTING & AUDIT

Virginia Society of CPAs Announces 2020 Distinguished CPA Awards Winners

The Virginia Society of Certified Public Accountants (VSCPA) has announced the winners of the 2020 VSCPA Distinguished CPA Awards. Each year, VSCPA members nominate CPAs in four award categories recognizing professional and personal accomplishments as ...

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The [Virginia Society of Certified Public Accountants](#) (VSCPA) has announced the winners of the 2020 VSCPA Distinguished CPA Awards. Each year, VSCPA members

nominate CPAs in four award categories recognizing professional and personal accomplishments as well as commitment to service, diversity and innovation. Honorees will be celebrated at a special event on Sept. 29 at the VSCPA Learning and Innovation Center.

Outstanding Member Award:

Mike Gracik Jr., CPA, Keiter, Richmond

The VSCPA Outstanding Member Award recognizes a CPA member who has provided outstanding service to the profession through participation in VSCPA activities, civic engagement and charitable activities that promote a positive image of accounting and the CPA profession. Mike Gracik Jr., CPA, is the managing partner of Keiter in Richmond. Mike's clients benefit from his 41 years of experience and tax insights. His consulting clients include closely-held businesses in the real estate, home building, manufacturing, construction, retail and wholesale industries. He also serves many estates, trusts and foundations. Mike has a long history of volunteer leadership at the VSCPA, including serving on the Board of Directors, a Richmond Chapter president and discussion leaders at conferences, Mike sits on the board of the VCU Massey Cancer Center where he has served for over 20 years. In his 43 years of practice he has mentored over 1500 young accounting professionals.

Impact Award:

Louise Reed, CPA, Afloat, Inc., Richmond

The VSCPA Impact Award recognizes a CPA member has made a recent contribution to the advancement of the profession by showing a commitment to one or more of the following: innovation, learning, advocacy or student activities. Louise Reed, CPA, Afloat, Inc. started out at Duke University studying physics and then shifted to accounting, becoming a CPA in 2003. She is the CEO and founder of Afloat, a startup that facilitates the sale and transfer of transferable tax credits using blockchain technology through an online marketplace for transferrable tax credits. She is a member of the VSCPA's Innovation Advisory Council, which oversees the organization's Center for Innovation, and has also served on the VSCPA Political Action Committee Board of Directors.

Ruth Coles Harris Advancing Diversity & Inclusion Award:

Patricia Drolet, CPA, Councilor Buchanan Mitchell, CPAs, Bethesda, Md.

The VSCPA Ruth Coles Harris Advancing Diversity & Inclusion Award recognizes a VSCPA member who champions diversity and inclusion in the field of accounting by implementing organizational initiatives to help ensure a diverse and inclusive workplace environment, champions policies and programs aimed at improving

diversity in the CPA profession, demonstrates leadership and commitment to raising awareness of diversity principles and serves as a role model for current and future CPAs through mentorship, coaching or other types of volunteer work in the community. Patricia Drolet, CPA, an Executive Vice President at Councilor Buchanan Mitchell, CPAs in Bethesda, Md., embodies the spirit of the award and proves her motto; “Women are as smart and as capable as men and it’s about time we all recognize that.” She formed an internal group at her firm to provide a foundation of professional development, networking, educational opportunities and awareness-building for female and minority professionals within the firm.

The VSCPA Top 5 Under 35 Award recognizes emerging CPA leaders under the age of 35 that have notable professional achievement, VSCPA accomplishment on the state or chapter level, community contribution and/or dedication to the CPA profession. The 2020 top 5 under 35:

- **William “Billy” Barber Jr., CPA, PFS, Foundation Companies, LLC, Fredericksburg.** At Foundation Companies, Billy has served as CFO since 2017. He is the President of the VSCPA Battlefield Chapter, a graduate of the VSCPA Leadership Academy and has participated in the Society’s mentoring and CPA Day of Service programs.
- **Brian Benson, CPA, Ernst & Young, Richmond.** Brian has been with Ernst & Young since 2105, currently as assurance manager. He’s been a member of the VSCPA Young Professionals Advisory Council since 2018, currently serving as Chair. He is also a member of the VSCPA Educational Foundation Scholarship Committee.
- **John Reynolds, CPA, Block.one LLC, Blacksburg.** John is a senior accountant and analyst at Block.one. He is an oncoming member of the VSCPA Board of Directors, a member of the VSCPA Young Professionals Advisory Council and is past president of the VSCPA Roanoke Chapter.
- **Lauren Sipple, CPA, CGFM, KPMG, Washington, DC.** Lauren is an audit manager and frequent presenter to rising senior associates at KPMG, where she has worked for more than six years. She chairs the Greater Washington Society of CPAs (GWSCPA) Young and Emerging Accountants Committee.
- **John Waters, CPA, Wall, Einhorn & Chernitzer, P.C., Norfolk.** John has been with Wall, Einhorn & Chernitzer for 11 years, currently as a senior manager. John has been on the VSCPA Educational Foundation Board of Directors since 2017, currently serving as a Vice Chair. He is also a member of the Foundation’s Scholarship Committee and has participated in the VSCPA Leaders’ Institute program.

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