



Harold L. Martin Sr. Engineering Research & Innovation Complex, N.C. A&T State University.

## Music lovers from around the globe flock to High Point, John Coltrane's hometown

**T**housands of people soon will converge on High Point for an event that has helped spread the city's fame around the nation and the world ... but it's not the High Point Market. That comes a few weeks later.

This signature event is The John Coltrane International Jazz and Blues Festival, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year. The festival takes place Labor Day weekend, September 3-4, at Oak Hollow Festival Park.

as well as Europe and South Africa. The festival, Williams says, has matured to the point where repeat visitors buy tickets before the artist line-up is announced. The festival's vibe is that strong.



Festival producer Joe Williams and the John Coltrane statue in downtown High Point.

Joe Williams has produced the festival for the non-profit Friends of John Coltrane since its inception. Among the featured artists this year are vocalist Patti LaBelle, trumpet master Chris Botti, pianist Keiko Matsui, and drummer Poo-gie Bell.

Music lovers last year came from around the United States,

The reason, Williams explains, is that the festival has become known for the unexpected, those magic onstage moments that can't be predicted.

Sometimes it's when the crowd is introduced to an unfamiliar artist. Williams saw that happen when vocalist Gregory Porter took the stage in 2016. Williams signed Porter even though he wasn't a headline act at the time. "I'm a vocal guy," he says. "This guy doesn't just sing. He sings from the heart."

Williams was hopeful others would agree with his assessment of Porter. Any doubts he had were erased as soon as the singer took the stage.

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Saxophonist John Coltrane in 1963.

## Coltrane remains giant influence in jazz a half-century after death

**J**ohn Coltrane, acknowledged as "among the most influential and acclaimed figures in the history of jazz," was born in 1926.

When he was an infant, his family moved from Hamlet to High Point. The home where he was raised by his mother after his father's death still stands on Underhill Street.

Coltrane learned to play saxophone and graduated from William Penn High School in 1943. He and his mother moved to Philadelphia, where he continued to study music. His talent

earned him a slot in a Navy band while serving 1945-46.

Coltrane returned to Philadelphia and plunged into the evolving jazz scene. He was "fanatical about practicing" and soon played with leading figures including Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis.

Coltrane's albums include "Giant Steps" (1960) and "A Love Supreme" (1964). The latter, a four-part suite, "is an ode to his faith in and love for God."

John Coltrane died of liver cancer on July 17, 1967. He was 40 years old.

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Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.



### Going for Ghassan's

Ghassan's food truck dished up lunchtime fare at GMA's Meet & Eat June 24 at GMA headquarters, sponsored by Truliant. Members had their choice of two sandwiches, then gathered to dine and network in GMA's Community Room. More photos, page 7.

# Five trends to capitalize on now to remain a successful leader

BY MERIDITH ELLIOTT POWELL

If the last couple of years have taught us nothing else, it's that our lives, businesses, health, and customers can change in a moment's notice. So it's important to ask yourself: Am I ready as a leader? Am I prepared?

The only guarantee you have is that more change is coming. We are now halfway through 2022, and look how much has shifted. We have war in Europe, rising interest rates, and surging gas prices. Supply chain challenges are worsening, and yes, COVID is still with us.

As a leader, your role is more vital than ever. Your customers need you; your company needs you, and your team needs you to help them navigate it all. Your best shot at success and long-term growth for your organization is to get really comfortable and really good at leading through uncertainty.

Here are five leadership trends to watch, and five strategies to capitalize on them.

## Assertive Hiring

A person would have to live on a deserted island to have not felt the impact of the Great Resignation. In 2021, more than 41 million employees voluntarily left their jobs. Even though many have found new opportunities, Gallup opinion researchers recently reported that one in five employees are searching for their next role.

How to find, develop and retain talent has changed. Luckily, the strategy you need to implement has already been created. Look to your

sales team. Pay attention to how they win new customers. Learn from their target market, their pipeline, their prospecting techniques, their nurturing sequences, the time they invest in relationship building, and most of all, how assertive they are.



Powell

Use those same strategies in your approach to hiring talent, and you will win this war.

## Change Engagement

A year ago, COVID was your biggest challenge; now you have so much more uncertainty to deal with. As a leader you must move your team from fearing uncertainty and change to embracing it.

People hate change for many reasons, but the most significant is that it feels like change is being done to them. They're waiting for the marketplace to change, for their companies to change, and for their lives to change. They're wondering when that change is going to hit, and how bad it will be. In other words, they feel out of control.

Leaders have the ability to change that. You can engage employees in the change process and give them some control over what is happening. You can actually condition your team for change.

The more you discuss change, ask your team what changes they see coming, and ask what needs doing to get ready, then the more empowered they will be. Stop thinking of the process as change management; think of it as change engagement.

## BUSINESS GROWTH

## Values Driven

One of a leader's biggest challenges is making decisions when you have no idea what the future holds. How do you make a decision when there is so much uncertainty? What happens if the supply chain does not improve? What if you cannot find enough labor? How will gas prices and rising inflation impact your customers?

Outside forces are likely to have more impact on your company's success than what you do internally. You need a strategy to make decisions that will ensure your business can weather the storms.

That strategy's foundation is your values. Core values are your north star, your clear direction of how to make decisions in the face of great challenges. Clarify your core values, then use them like a litmus test for every decision – decisions such as who to hire, which projects to take on, which customers to work with and, most importantly, which leaders you promote. Trust your values, and they will carry you through.

## Customer-Centric

Contrary to popular belief, an unsteady economy is one of the best times to prepare for growth and prosperity. An uncertain economy is not the time to pull back; it is the time to push forward. In the face of uncertainty, your customers need you more than ever.

How an enterprise grows in changing economic times is different than how it grows in more steady times. Instead of focusing on attracting new business, focus on understanding existing customers.

Why? Because you cannot attract new business successfully until you understand the challenges faced by existing customers.

The key to growth lies in listening to your customers. If you engage them and become customer-centric, they will tell you exactly what their challenges are. They will point out the path to growth and success.

## Proactive Productivity

This is no time to pride yourself on being busy. It's more important to be productive, and you and your team need to understand the difference.

Spend time reflecting on the team's performance, and engage them in the process. Ask them what is working, what is growing the business, what is effective.

Then ask what is not working, what needs to change, and what needs to be abandoned.

Lastly, what do you need to do that can make you more effective? To succeed in uncertainty, take charge and be proactively productive.

These are challenging times, making the role of a leader so much more significant. Your team needs you, your customers need you, your company needs you.

Be mindful of these trends and put these strategies in place. Then watch as mastering uncertainty becomes your competitive advantage.

*Meridith Elliott Powell is an author, sales strategist and leadership expert. She has been a featured speaker in GMA's Workplace Workshop series.*



President & CEO	G. Mark Prince
Vice President	Michelle Bolick
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Operations/Special Events Coordinator	Monzi Jimenez
Membership Development	Sharon Smith
Administrative Assistant	Melinda Thomas

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Publication Coordinator – Michelle Bolick  
Phone (336) 378-6350

225 Commerce Place, Greensboro, N.C. 27401  
www.mygma.org

The Guilford Merchants Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1906. The Association is a business membership organization focused on supporting member companies with educational programming, lead generation activities, marketing opportunities, and overall enrichment while serving as a catalyst for community growth and prosperity.



## Free Day Friday

Stephanie Seagraves and Debbie Brower of Debbie Brower CPA, PLLC, were among GMA members who turned out for a recent GMA-sponsored Free Day Friday at Smoothie King in Greensboro.



**Name:** Holly E. Dickson  
**Hometown:** Eden  
**Residence:** Eden  
**Age:** 27  
**Business:** Modern Woodmen  
**Role:** Financial Representative



around my age, and we're all kind of going after the same thing. But we also need our downtime and friends. The Risers lunches have been great for that. I'll definitely be a long-time GMA member.

**Personal:**

I like to ride horses if I have spare time. I also work at a ministry in Rockingham County for women who are recovering from addictions. It's kind of a way for me to really explore my passions. I love helping people. That's where my heart is at.

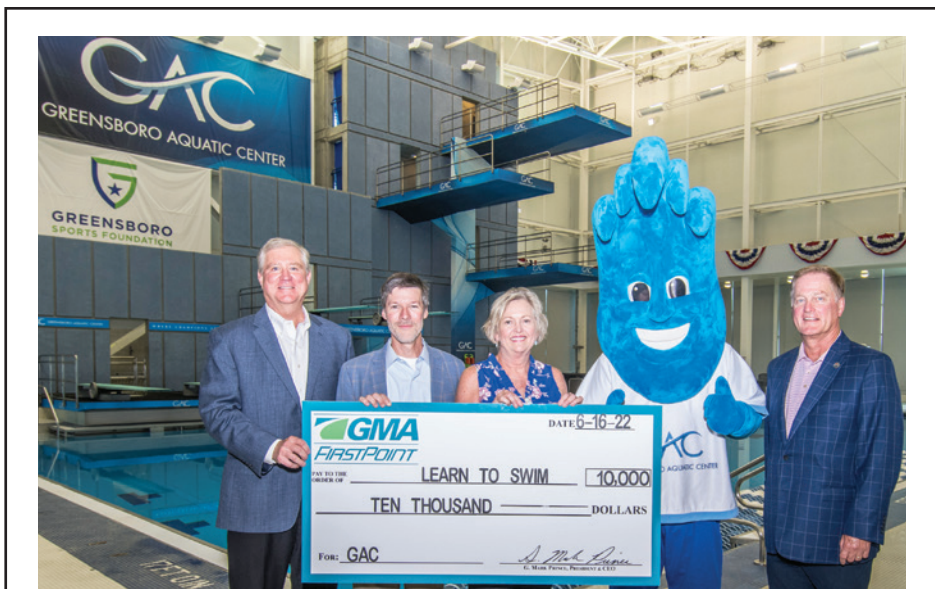
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**Responsibilities:**

I help families with their written financial plan and that starts with the foundation of life insurance, disability insurance, health insurance, long-term care. And then we go into savings. We can do investments in the market. For businesses, we can do employee benefits as well.

**On GMA & Risers:**

It's a great use of my time, from the networking events to the Risers. I've met a lot of friends, too. It's a great place to meet like-minded people



Pictured (from left) are Mark Prince, president & CEO of GMA/FirstPoint; Clarence McDonald, Wells Fargo & GMA/FirstPoint chairman of the board; Susan Braman, Greensboro Aquatic Center; T-Wave, GAC mascot; and Richard Beard, president/CEO of the Greensboro Sports Foundation.

**Donation supports youth swim classes at Aquatic Center**

**G**MA/FirstPoint recently donated \$10,000 to the Greensboro Aquatic Center's Learn to Swim program.

The goal of Learn to Swim is to teach all Guilford County second-graders water safety and swimming.

The program's \$1 million endowment currently supports teaching about one-third of the county's second-graders. The endowment needs to reach \$5

million in order to benefit all second-graders.

The program is funded by grants, sponsorships and donations, with no cost to students or the school system.

"Learning to swim is an important life skill," said Mark Prince, GMA/FirstPoint president and CEO. "Most of the participants would not have access to this type of instruction if not for this program."

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**Sharing his vision**

Greensboro City Manager Taiwo Jaiyeoba shared some of his ideas about shaping Greensboro's future at a recent GMA Center City AM Briefing, held at Elm & Bain event center in downtown Greensboro. The hybrid event had a live audience as well as presenters and attendees online via Zoom.

# Immersion in GMA programs helps transition into new career

## Volunteering and networking quickly build business contacts

It was this time last year when Valen Canoy, after a decade in the property management industry, made a career shift.

The Sofia native landed a staffing account associate position with one of the Triad's leading companies in the staffing and personnel field.

Canoy recalls that it wasn't long after joining Graham Personnel Services when company President Gary Graham recommended she get involved with GMA.

As a longtime GMA member, he knew that the organization provides an array of activities to help people make new contacts and build personal networks across the Triad and across industries.

Through Graham Personnel's corporate membership in GMA, Canoy had access to the full array of benefits available to all employees of member companies. Graham recommended she seek a slot in the Networking Gurus, one of GMA's sponsored networking groups.

The Gurus had no other



Valen Canoy is a staffing account associate with Graham Personnel Services.

current members in the personnel industry, and Canoy quickly found herself attending the weekly meetings at GMA headquarters.

"That's where I got my foot in the door," she says of her GMA experience.

A motivated self-starter, Canoy began combing the GMA website and listings of activities to see what else might be helpful to her.

Canoy, who attended Guilford Technical Community College, saw that

**PARTICIPATION = SUCCESS**

GMA has a group specifically for young professionals such as herself. So she added Risers to her GMA event roster.

Canoy says being active in GMA has helped ease her transition into a sales role in a new industry.

"I can say definitely that GMA has helped me with getting new connections

and networking with new people," she says. "I think little connections eventually make big connections, and that's what I'm hoping for."

Canoy has volunteered at After Work Networking events by donning flashing lights and passing out stickers for "the sticker game" that helps people have fun and make connections quickly.

Volunteering, she says, "helped me get my name out there and meet all kinds of different companies. Be-

**'GMA is an awesome organization. In my opinion, it's everything other organizations strive to be.'**

*– Valen Canoy*

ing a volunteer, you get to meet everybody."

Even though she's still a relative newcomer with Graham Personnel and with GMA, Canoy says her involvement with the organization is paying off.

"I've gotten leads," she says. "I've taken advantage of the leads and gotten more business. So it's been really helpful."

Canoy recommends GMA to her contacts and associates throughout the Triad. "I tell them, 'GMA is an awesome organization. In my opinion, it's everything other organizations strive to be.'"

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## Building community, making things is what The Forge is all about



Joe Rotondi, executive director at The Forge, in the woodshop with Britt Tatterson and Steven Diaz.

**T**hink of The Forge as a Petri dish, where ideas germinate, grow and develop into something you can put your hands on. Literally.

The Forge is where Greensboro was introduced to the notion of a makerspace. As the name implies, it's a place where you can make things.

At The Forge you'll find tools ranging from hammers and sewing machines to pottery wheels and lathes, drill presses and 3D printers. Beginners will find tips on how to get started. Would-be entrepreneurs can get advice on protecting intellectual property and launching a business.

It's been almost a decade since a handful of hobbyists started meetups to figure out a way to pool resources and remove some of the roadblocks to pursuing their individual interests.

For instance, it's hard to learn woodworking if you don't have access to a table saw or planer. If you live in an apartment, tinkering with a MIG welder isn't an option. Tools and the space to use them can be expensive.

The Forge, incorporated as a non-profit in 2013, offers makers of all skill levels the resources to turn ideas into tangible things.

Current membership is about 250, says Joe Rotondi, executive director. A basic membership, \$65 a month,

### NEW MEMBER PROFILE

provides 24/7 access to the building and mentors. Discounts may apply for certain individuals.

The Forge quickly outgrew its original quarters on Lewis Street, in a building upfitted by developer Andy Zimmerman. In 2017, it moved down the street to a rambling industrial building where The Avett Brothers had once performed.

Now, Rotondi says, The Forge is exploring yet another move to The Steelhouse, a project being developed by The Nussbaum Center for Entrepreneurship on South Elm-Eugene Street.

The facility is always changing and adapting to accommodate the interests of members, Rotondi says. The ceramics area has expanded from a closet-like room, purely to meet demand.

Similarly, the area with 3D printers and computer-controlled engraving machines continues to grow. A CNC plasma cutter is on the wish list for the metal shop. Foundations, corporations, and individuals often donate gear. Volunteers, such as retired machinists, keep equipment in good repair.

At The Forge, a doll-maker can rub elbows with a metalworker who meets a potter who befriends a computer programmer. Students interact with retirees. Corporate execs mingle with

limited-income folk.

"We like to look at diversity in every sense of the word," Rotondi says. At The Forge, people "with all different perspectives" come together "in a community" where problem solving is on everyone's mind.

The Forge is not simply a hangout for geeks and hobbyists, though they are welcome. The Forge, by design, has become part of the community's economic and workforce development infrastructure.

Joel Leonard was an early Forge booster and community development employee who now promotes the makerspace concept nationally.

The Forge, Leonard says, "has exceeded everyone's expectations. It has helped



One of several drill presses in the metal-working room.

all kinds of people, from all walks of life, giving them access to resources they would never have had access to."

Case in point: Fusion3, a Greensboro maker of 3D printing machines, donated an early model to The Forge. Other models followed as the company and 3D printing evolved, allowing members access to the cutting-edge technology.

Over time, Fusion3 has hired around a half-dozen employees who became proficient with 3D printing technology through Forge memberships, says company founder Kate Padgett.

"It's been a phenomenal, wonderful resource for us to mutually reinforce each other," she says.



Leli Sarsoza at work in the textile room at The Forge.

The Forge  
219 W Lewis St., Greensboro  
(336) 252-5331  
[forgegreensboro.org](http://forgegreensboro.org)



## Coltrane festival

Continued from page 1

“He opened his mouth and in 15 seconds, thousands of people went dead silent,” Williams recalls. “He got three standing ovations and became somebody.”

Porter’s Grammy Awards include honors for Jazz Vocal Album, Traditional Pop



Guitarist Larry McCray, photographed in High Point in 2018, returns for the 2022 festival.

Vocal Album, and R&B Album.

Sometimes the unexpected happens when artists pop on stage to perform with a friend. Folks in the audience probably didn’t know that bassist Marcus Miller and saxophonist David Sanborn had worked together before Miller became a major music industry producer. Both were on the bill for separate sets in 2015.

During Sanborn’s set, Williams recalls, “Marcus comes on set. It was spontaneous. Not planned. And it was magical. It was just one of those moments. You could never get it again.”

Williams serves on the board of directors for the festival’s sponsoring organization. Another board member is Patrick Harman,

executive director of the Hayden-Harman Foundation. The duo, assisted by legions of volunteers, juggle the details of managing the festival.

Williams books the artists and handles publicity. Harman, he says, manages the

books and the business side. His goal since the beginning, Williams says, is to make sure artists are treated to High Point hospitality and that the bills are paid. So far, he says,

things have gone according to plan.

The festival has a program that helps nurture young musicians by providing them with instruments. The program has donated musical instruments valued at about \$180,000 to deserving students. Recipients are chosen based on essays.

“You can have all the desire in the world, but if you don’t have a horn, you can’t do anything,” Williams explains.

Access to a musical instrument often brings additional benefits. “It’s been proven,” Williams says, “that a young person involved in music tends to do better in school.”

*Tickets and information: [coletranejazzfest.com](http://coletranejazzfest.com)*



### Abbotswood at Irving Park

May 10, 2022



Robin Flake, Amped, Inc.; Corey Greene, FedEx Freight; Amy Greene, Allstate.



Ross Cox, ActionCOACH; Bodai Williams, Liberty Mutual.



Angelia Espinoza, Segra; Richie City, Tech Authority.



Andi Womack, River Landing; Lisa Allen, O. Henry Magazine; Joan Rogers, Compass Insurance Services; Allison Shore, WordJack Media; Alison Huber, Dynamic Quest.



Selena and Michael Pounds, Aardwolf International.



Patrick Smith, McNeely Pest Control; Bill Simmons, Simmons Office Interiors.



GMA members network on the patio at Abbotswood at Irving Park on May 10.

# GMA night at the Grasshoppers

July 8, 2022



Mark Prince, GMA/FirstPoint President & CEO, prepares to throw the ceremonial first pitch before the game begins.



Nikki Corbett of Precise Creative.



Mark Prince sends the first pitch across home plate.



Employees of GMA member companies, family and friends braved the heat at First National Bank field in downtown Greensboro.



Often the day's most challenging decision: what to order for lunch.



June 24, 2022  
at GMA



Eric Espinoza, Yesica Zuniga, and Valeria Zuluaga of Graham Personnel Services.



Carl Offord of FirstPoint picks up his sandwich.



Alison Schwartz of All Pets Considered.



Mark Podolle of Wireless Ventures.

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