

# VOL. 32, NO. 1, FEBRUARY 2019

# GMA's new chair is all about making Triad connections

**B** ringing people together and building community are priorities for Darlene Leonard, a partner in the accounting firm of Smith Leonard PLLC.

She jokes that her hobby is serving on the boards of business and economic development groups serving High Point, Greensboro, and the Piedmont Triad.

"What I truly believe is that we've got to work together," says Leonard, chair of the GMA and FirstPoint board of directors for 2019.

She succeeds Bart Lassiter, president of City Transfer and Storage of High Point.

Smith Leonard was formed in 2007 when Leonard and three partners bought the High Point-Greensboro office of national accounting firm BDO Seidman (now BDO USA).

Since then, the firm has grown from 28 people to more than 60 and expanded with offices in Lexington and Winston-Salem.

"Most importantly," she says, "we kept the same clients. We had 100 percent re-



Darlene Leonard at Smith Leonard. Colorful maps of employees' hometowns decorate the walls.

tention. We have deep roots in the Triad."

Smith Leonard retains an affiliation with BDO, she says, which allows the firm to draw upon that firm's national and international expertise when necessary.

"We tend to serve more complicated companies," she explains. When the team encounters a technical issue, she says, "we can reach out to BDO for their assistance." Leonard once focused primarily on audit issues at the firm. "I have other partners who do the tax," she says. Now she devotes most of her time to transaction advisory services, such as mergers and acquisitions.

That part of the firm's practice has boomed with the economic recovery that followed the Great Recession. "It's been a very active M&A world," she says. Her day job, as she calls it, "has been crazy and fun." Her "afternoon and evening jobs" include serving on numerous community boards.

In addition to the board of GMA/FirstPoint, Leonard serves on the boards of:

- Greensboro Chamber of Commerce.
- Business High Point Chamber of Commerce.
- High Point Economic Development Corporation.
- Piedmont Triad Partnership.

Serving with these organizations, she says, allows her to help "bridge the gaps."

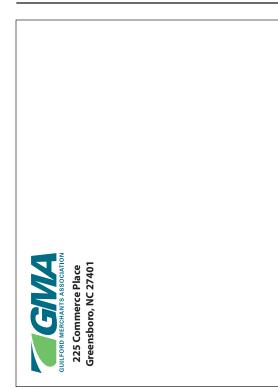
High Point and Greensboro are working well together on economic development goals, she says. The Piedmont Triad Partnership pulls in interests from Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

"Ideally, that's where we need to be, to have all three Triad communities truly working together. We all win if one community wins.

"Part of my mission to be on these boards is to continue to foster cooperation and collaboration," she says.

GMA, she says, plays a big role in building community across the Triad with its many programs and by quietly supporting numerous non-profit agencies.

"The biggest challenge we have," she says, "is continuing to get the word out" about GMA's many benefits, including employee development. To gain from GMA, she says, all a member must do "is show up."





Risers leaders ...... 2



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Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.

### **Annual Dinner to feature Henry Winkler**

enry Winkler, who played the beloved character of Arthur Fonzarelli ("The Fonz") for 10 years on "Happy Days," will be the guest speaker for GMA's 113th Annual Dinner.

The event takes place February 28 at the Greensboro Sheraton Hotel/Koury Convention Center.

GMA members may purchase individual tickets (\$80) and corporate tables (\$900) at mygma.org.

Winkler followed his Emmynominated role as The Fonz with a career as a successful television producer and author of books for children and

Continues on page 2

# Risers leadership to business community: We're here for your young professionals

**G** reer Bigham and Betsy Seaton are evangelists of a sort. As the leaders of Risers, they are out to tell the story of GMA's networking group for young professionals.

Their goal is to spread the word through the Piedmont Triad business community and especially to those businesses that already are GMA members. And the story is this:

• Risers helps build the workplace skills of young professionals.

• Risers helps young professionals strengthen their roots in the Piedmont Triad.

• Risers is fun, and most of all, Risers is free. Any young professional working for a GMA member business may take part in Risers pro-



Besty Seaton, vice chair, and Greer Bigham, chair of Risers.



grams at no extra charge.

"We're both really passionate about expanding this group, because it's opened so many doors for us," says Bigham, a business development associate with Graham Personnel Services. She chairs the group for young professionals age 39 and under.

Seaton, director of community engagement for the Children's Home Society of North Carolina, is

vice chair.

The duo met at a Risers function and instantly bonded when they realized each had the same pink Kate Spade business card holder. Risers' emphasis on professional de-

velopment sets the group apart from other organizations for young professionals, Bigham says.

The education component is provided at free Lunch & Learn sessions at GMA headquarters. Topics range from goal setting to business etiquette and effective leadership.

"At the Lunch & Learns, we want to help young professionals build their resumés," Seaton says.

The social opportunities are also unique. Risers regularly meet for lunch, which creates an opportunity for sharing and networking during the business day. (Attendees pay their own checks.)

Other social events take place after business hours and may include visits to brewpubs or Boxcar, a downtown Greensboro arcade and bar.

Each Risers event is an opportunity to bond with others who are interested in building community as well as building their careers.

There are now around 100 young professionals enrolled in Risers, and the leaders expect that number to grow significantly in 2019.

"I think we're going to be a force to be reckoned with," Seaton says.

GMA Risers Information: 336-378-6350 tinyurl.com/ybop8ctk



December 2018: A Risers Lunch & Learn event at GMA headquarters.



President & CEO Vice President of Operations Operations/Special Events Coordinator Operations/Special Events Coordinator Operations/Special Events Coordinator Membership Development G. Mark Prince Michelle Bolick Holly Smith Lisa Daas Audrey Lambert Sharon Smith

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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.

### Winkler to highlight Annual Dinner on Feb. 28

Continued from page 1 adults. He has appeared in a number of television series in recent years, including "Parks and Recreation" and "Arrested Development."

Winkler was executive producer and appeared in the NBC reality series, "Better Late Than Never," with co-stars Terry Bradshaw, William Shatner, and George Foreman. He now stars in the HBO comedy "Barry" and recently won an Emmy Award for that role.

Winkler and coauthor Lin

Oliver wrote a series of children's novels inspired by his lifelong struggle with dyslexia, a learning disability.

He's also the author of "I Never Met an Idiot on the River," a collection of essays and photos from fly fishing trips in Montana.

Great Britain and France presented Winkler with their highest civilian honors for his efforts on behalf of children and the arts.



The Greensboro Swarm table at the 2018 Annual Dinner.



JJ Joubran, owner of Joubran Commercial Properties, has been active in GMA for a decade.

# Commercial real estate pro exercises GMA connections to grow his business

JJJ Joubran calls himself "a small operator" in the commercial real estate industry. Yet he successfully competes in the vibrant Piedmont Triad real estate market and provides services for his clients far beyond North Carolina.

His GMA connections, he says, are a major reason that he's able to hold his own in a highly competitive industry.

Joubran, a Michigan native, followed in his sister's footsteps to attend UNCG. A part-time job introduced him to commercial real estate, and he liked what he saw.

Joubran earned his North Carolina commercial real estate broker's license at age 19.

He became familiar with GMA while working for a member firm in commercial real estate. When he started his own business in 2011, he maintained his membership SUCCESS

and joined the C.A.N. networking group, which meets on Friday morning at GMA.

Networking has been crucial to his success, he says. "Most of the people I

work with, I'm referred to," he explains.

A networking contact led to Joubran brokering 40,000 square feet of warehouse space following the tornado that struck Greensboro in April 2018.

The tornado destroyed a firm's warehouse, Joubran says. An executive at the business told a friend of his immediate need for warehouse space, and he was quickly referred to Joubran.

Joubran helps his clients buy, sell, and lease space for offices, retail businesses, industrial sites, and warehouses.

He may work for the property owner or represent the entity needing space.

Recently, he says, he helped negotiate a lease that saved his client \$50,000 over the term of the lease.

One never knows when a contact made through networking will pay off, he says.

One client held on to Joubran's business card for a decade before he called.

"It might have taken 10 years," Joubran says, "but he called me. He didn't think of anyone else."

Joubran recently moved into a spacious office on State Street. "Business is good," he says. "I've just had my best year ever." Joubran Commercial Properties 609 State St., Suite 101

Greensboro, N.C. 27405 joubrancommercial.com (336) 270-9775

# Tap into Digital Marketing Institute programs to keep yourself up to date

**G** oogle. Facebook. Twitter. Instagram. Everyone has access to all of these marketing powerhouses. But using them smartly – that's another story.

GMA's Digital Marketing Institute is a forum for digital marketing experts to share their knowledge with GMA members.

Six events are scheduled at GMA headquarters in downtown Greensboro. All are held at midday, and lunch is provided. Best of all, they're free.

The 2019 series began January 23 with a program on Google Analytics. Tom Veltri of SEO Rocket discussed how to make sense of the data collected on your company website by Google metrics.

#### March 20

Video is a powerful internet marketing tool – if you know how to use it. Kristen Daukas of Atlantic Webworks will provide an overview of the basic tools necessary to create compelling video for your website. Come ready to learn 10 tips for beginners and take away ideas for 10 video topics. **May 22** 

Sean Brown of SEO Rocket will point out the differences and advantages of Google Ads vs. Google Ads Express. July 24

Program and presenter to be announced. Stay tuned! September 25

Adrienne Jandler of Atlantic Webworks will offer ideas on how to create powerful website content, how to optimize it for search engine optimization, and how to integrate website, social media, and email marketing efforts. **November 20** 

Program and presenter to be announced.



#### **Representing GMA**

GMA President & CEO Mark Prince, Rep. John Faircloth of the North Carolina General Assembly, and 2018 Board Chair Bart Lassiter took part in the High Point Holiday Parade, held in November.



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# **David Parrish**

Greensboro City Manager

avid Parrish, a native of Greensboro and graduate of Northeast High School, served as assistant city manager from 2013 to March 2018. He was named city manager in June 2018.

**Q**. What led you to choose a career in government administration?

• I did not grow up thinking about this career option or even as a young adult. I worked in nonprofits and really just wanted to make a difference in the community and serve. I soon learned, however, that one of the best ways to be involved and make a difference is actually in local government. Local governments are involved in so many facets of our lives. Once I got a taste, I have not looked back.

**Q.** When you were growing up, what public figures did you admire most?

**A** I admired my dad. He is a pastor and growing up as a preacher's kid was an interesting way to grow up. I watched him as a servant leader, and it modeled the way for my career and many life choices. He interacted

## EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

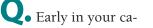
with a variety of people and was always outgoing, generous with his time, kind, funny, and never met a stranger.

**Q**• What was the best decision you made in the course of pursuing your career?

A. When I decided to pursue a position as a town manager at a small town. Being in a small organization presented challenges. Just like being in a small business, you had to learn to be a jack-of-all-trades. This was a period of great growth for me as it pushed me out of my comfort zone.

**Q**• What was your favorite course in college?

A. I actually really enjoyed biology and the sciences. That doesn't fit with my current position, but I enjoyed them. While I was in undergrad I had thoughts of pursuing a medical career, so I took a variety of science courses.





David Parrish, in his office at the Melvin Municipal Office Building, in downtown Greensboro.

**A** • Steve Fleming is someone I worked with at Well Spring and still admire today. I figured anyone who passes out doughnuts to his staff must be a good leader.

Later in my career it was the late Lyle Lacy. As deputy city manager in Danville, Va., he gave me my start in local government. He was a great man who taught me a lot about leadership and management and had a great impact on my life and career.

reer, who were your men-

tors?

I often think of Lyle and how he would handle situations.

**U**• What's the best thing about being Greensboro's city manager?

A. It is a lot of responsibility but it is equally rewarding. Serving in the city I grew up in is an honor. I feel this is the best place to live and raise a family. We have a wonderful staff that I get to work with on a daily basis. It is humbling to be a small part of shaping this great community. And my kids really think it is cool.

**Q**• How do you start your day?

**A**• I try to start my day with a moment of quiet study and reflection. After that, I get the honor of helping make breakfasts and lunches for my wonderful kids!

When I get to work, I try to review my calendar, emails and make a list of things to do for the day.

**Q.** What are you reading (in your off hours)?

A. I am reading "Tom Sawyer" to my kids. It is fun to read it out loud and get into character.

**Q.** What's your favorite pastime or hobby?

A. I enjoy running, playing golf, and coaching youth sports.

**Q**. Finish this sentence: It would surprise people to know that I ...

A. I got my Certified Nursing Assistant degree and worked as a nurse's aide at Wesley Long while in college.

Also, I ran a 200-mile relay race from Raleigh to Atlantic Beach. I did not run the full 200 miles, of course! It was a 12-person team.

# Helping members achieve success motivates GMA's Michelle Bolick

ew things happen at GMA without input or oversight from Michelle Bolick.

Members attending events such as

a Workplace Workshop expect to see her greeting attendees as they arrive and starting each program with welcoming announcements.

Members who serve on GMA committees know her as an attentive facilitator who helps manage initiatives and keeps GMA activities focused on ever-higher levels of member service.

Bart Lassiter, 2018 GMA board chair, says "Michelle is the glue that holds it all together. She's a very valuable part of the team.'

> A native of Granite Falls who earned a degree in mass communications and public relations from UNCG,

Bolick has been with GMA for 21 vears.

marketing firm and for the Greensboro Convention & Visitors Bureau before joining GMA as operations

manager. Her most recent promotion, to vice president of operations, came in 2015.

Mark Prince, GMA president and

CEO, says Bolick "gives it her all. Her loyalty, dedication and strong work ethic make her an Bolick

asset to the business community." Bolick says she

has enjoyed getting to know the hundreds of people who have come through the organization during her tenure. Job mobility, as individuals move from one employer to another, is responsible for most turnover, she says.

"I love serving members," she says. "I love when they are successful. My favorite thing is seeing them reap the benefits of what GMA offers."

Lane Schiffman, who served as GMA chair during its centennial year, calls Bolick "the backbone of the organization. She's also one of the warmest, most consistently nice people I know."



She worked for a Piedmont Triad



| Name:      | Abby Schmucker   |
|------------|--|
| Age:       | 25   |
| Hometown:  | Somerset, Pa.  |
| Residence: | Greensboro   |
| Education: | B.A.,<br>Communications<br>Media and English,<br>Indiana University of<br>Pennsylvania |
| Business:  | Quaintance-Weaver,<br>Inc.   |
| Role:      | Sales manager,<br>O. Henry and<br>Proximity Hotels                                     |

#### Services:

I'm responsible for corporate group blocks — 10 or more rooms – in outside sales. I'm constantly trying to build relationships and bring people into the area to stay with us.

A lot of my responsibility is knowing who's coming into the area, keeping up with what's going on in Greensboro, and bringing that back to our team to figure out what we can do to bring



Abby Schmucker, sales manager, in the lobby of Greensboro's Proximity Hotel.

those guests and give them an experience here. My in-office responsibilities include making sure they are taken care of while they're here. The best part of it is that I get to learn about Greensboro while I'm doing it.

#### On Risers:

Risers is a more intimate sub-group of GMA. It's nice to be able to touch base with other people who are starting out, to bounce ideas around and find out what's going on in the area. I've made some really great contacts. It's been helpful professionally and career-wise.

#### On GMA:

Quaintance-Weaver really encourages us to go to GMA events. Because I am new to Greensboro, I really like the After Work Network and Noontime Network events. They're really helpful to meet people that you otherwise wouldn't. Everybody's so friendly.

#### **Personal:**

Now that I've made a base of friends, I'm exploring the area a lot. I like to go to new restaurants and fun breweries around town. I like hiking and finding different trails around Greensboro.

# GMA's 2018 board rings out the year with a farewell holiday event



embers of GMA's 2018 board of directors gathered for the last time for a holiday function at the O. Henry Hotel. In the foreground are (left to right) Bart Lassiter (chairman), City Transfer and Storage; Darlene Leonard, Smith Leonard PLLC; Abby Donnelly, The Leadership & Legacy Group; Rhonda Joyce, American National Bank; Steve Swetoha, Greensboro Swarm. Background (from left): Mark Prince, GMA /FirstPoint, Inc.; Ross Cox, ActionCOACH; Chief Wayne Scott, Greensboro Police Department; Alison Huber, Sprint; Tom Conley, High Point Market Authority; Tim Templeton, Marsh & McLennan; Ford Bowers, BB&T; Richard Beard, Schulman & Beard Commercial Real Estate; Nathan Duggins, Tuggle Duggins P.A.; John Thomas, IDeACOM of Central NC, Inc.

Not pictured: Beryl McEwen, N.C. A&T State University.

## A new GMA member benefit: Deals on tickets for the ACC Women's Tournament

reat basketball returns to 5 Greensboro March 6–10, when the Greensboro Coliseum hosts the 2019 ACC Women's Basketball Tournament.

And great deals are in store for GMA members. Members of GMA and the Greensboro, High Point or Winston-Salem chambers of commerce may purchase a single ticket good for any session – for \$10.

Businesses may purchase blocks of tickets that bring the price down to as low as \$7 per ticket. A ticket may be used for any session, from the Four in our tournament," he says. first round games on March 6 to the championship game on March 10.

This year's tournament promises to offer some of the most exciting basketball in the nation, says Brad Hecker, the ACC's director of operations for the women's basketball tournament.



"We've got half of the 2018 Final "We've got some really good basketball coming."

ACC Fan Fest, with interactive events and fun for youngsters, takes place in the Coliseum Special Events Center March 7–10.

The ACC is appealing to the business community to purchase blocks

of tickets and use them as employee rewards and incentives. The tournament is a great family and business entertainment opportunity, Hecker says.

The tournament also is an economic driver for the community, he notes, bringing in ACC fans from all over.

Even so, the expanded geographic footprint of the ACC has seen diluted attendance in recent years. Tournament attendance peaked at more than 70,000 in 2009. Attendance in recent years has dipped under 60,000.

Attendance needs to rise to keep the tournament in Greensboro for the long term. "It's going to take the community to support the tournament to really cement that," Hecker says. "This is where the business community can put their money where their mouth is."

GMA President & CEO Mark Prince urges the business community to demonstrate its support for the ACC, which is headquartered in Greensboro.

"The ACC is one of our own," he says. "We need to be part of it." It's long overdue for the business community "to engage to promote the tournament."

Packages include 12 "any session" tickets for best available reserved seats, priced at \$84; 30 tickets for \$210; and 100 tickets for \$700.

GMA members who attend the March 7 evening session are invited to the Riding High Harley-Davidson Hospitality Area for free hot dogs and soft drinks between 6 and 8 p.m.

To purchase tickets, contact Whitley Shannon at 336-701-1420, extension 106; or email wshannon@ accchampionships.com.



Scott Hall, FirstPoint; Matt Everhart, Versa Technologies; Dan McGugin, Affirming Truth.



**Spare Time Entertainment** November 13, 2018



Donnie Atz, LBA Haynes Strand; LaToya Neal, Crime Stoppers; Cathi Roberts, Convergence.



Susan Parker, N.C. Zoo Society; Rita Smith, FirstPoint.



John Payne, N.C. Zoo Society; Scott Graham, AXA Advisors.



Karen Grissom, Hampton Inn & Suites Coliseum; Ron Davis, Ron Davis Accounting and Tax Services.



Mark Prince, GMA/FirstPoint; Tim Vangel and Josh Feldman, Greensboro Grasshoppers.



Joann Zollo and Donna Goodwin, Rhino Times.



Kelly Smith, Main Street Staff; Joan Rogers, Compass Insurance.

# Workplace Workshops for 2019: Come to laugh, learn in new locations

**S** ome minor changes are in store for GMA's 2019 Workplace Workshop series.

First: All events this year take place on Wednesdays, so adjust yourself accordingly.

Second: Events will be held in new locations. The March 6 and May 8 events take place at the Sheraton Greens-

#### March 6 / Sheraton Greensboro Hotel Bob Davies on Attitude

It's All Attitude: A User Manual for the Brain

Davies explores what leads to success and how to influence your perceptions to instantly change how you feel and what you do. You'll see how stress and frustration create barriers that hold you back from accomplishing



your goals. By eliminating these factors, changing your perceptions, and taking ownership of your own experiences, you will begin to eliminate obstacles that keep you from tapping into your true potential.

#### May 8 / Sheraton Greensboro Hotel Crystal Washington on Technology Technology Master Class: Boost Efficiency & Sales

We all wish for more hours in the day to service clients, grow revenue, and take care of personal obligations. Inventive professionals understand that utilizing technology–

including social media,

Google, and certain apps-



can increase efficiency while improving performance. In this fun, high-energy program, you will discover how to ride the wave of technology and change to better business outcomes and more rest and relaxation.

#### July 10 / Airport Marriott Kenyon Salo on Team Building The Bucket List Life: Creating, Connecting, and

Helping Successful Teams Win

The first principle of success is to create new experiences that allow you to grow into your dreams. Teams succeed when members have their own experiences to draw from and create the stories that generate connections. In



this high-energy program, Salo will demonstrate the importance of communication, connection, recognition, validation, and the desire to help another human first. boro Hotel/Koury Convention Center. The Airport Marriott will host the last three events.

Otherwise, Workplace Workshops will continue to bring entertaining and motivational speakers to share their insights on a variety of topics with appli-

cation to home life as well as work life.

#### September 4 / Airport Marriott Calvin Stovall on Customer Service Iconic Customer Service

Consistently deliver

ORKPL

WORKSHOPS

Consistently delivering memorable customer service is the pathway to increased market share, profitability and earning the loyalty of customers. Stovall will offer real-life, practical lessons on how

to deliver iconic customer service and how embracing a "customer-centric" philosophy can set your company apart from the competition.

#### November 6 / Airport Marriott Eric Papp on Productivity

What Are We Busy About: Better Thinking vs. More Effort

We can all get buried under competing priorities, increasing workload, constant change, and growing competition. We're mentally exhausted and burned out. But is it necessary? Can we do a better job prioritizing and planning?



Can we say no to the unimportant and focus on what matters? When we focus on "winning the day" and let go of outcomes we can't control, we boost productivity and happiness. This lets us distinguish vital activities from the trivial. Steve Gilliland kicked off the 2019 lineup on January 16 with tips on how to complete life's journey with enthusiasm, setting priorities, and focusing on the present.

Workplace Workshops are a free member benefit, so put these days on your calendar and bring your coworkers to learn, laugh and enjoy.



Prize winner

Jasmin Arroyo of Robinson Construction Service Corp. won a \$50 door prize at December's Workplace Workshop. Below: Workshop speaker Dave Caperton.





New member orientation

GMA staff and volunteers in December welcomed new members with an orientation session at GMA headquarters. Seated (from left) are Judy Thomas, SpringHill Suites; Shawn Straub, ALT HR Partners; Sarah Dove, Truliant; Lis Mulcahy, Truliant; and Kimberly Vaughan, The Original Relocation Guide. Standing (from left) are Mark Prince, GMA/FirstPoint; Mark Podolle, Wireless Ventures; Tom Pullara, Dream Vacations; Brandon Kemps, ALT HR Partners; Alison Huber, Sprint; Kristin Anne Krajewski, RE/MAX of Greensboro; Lindy Fuller, Summit Credit Union; José Sandoval, American National Bank; and Kathy Cates, PIP Triad.

7

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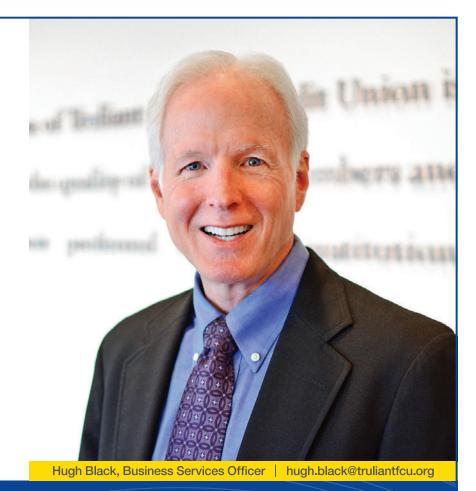
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