PASAE CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE 2026

March 19 – 20, 2026

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions, Pocono Manor, PA

Learn. Collaborate. Thrive.

Join Us at PASAE's 2026 Connections Conference!

Step into a conference experience designed to elevate your professional journey. PASAE's Connections Conference brings together forward-thinking sessions, innovative ideas, and practical tools to help you excel in an increasingly dynamic association landscape.

Discover new strategies that you can implement. Explore the trends shaping our industry. Gain insights that challenge your thinking, broaden your perspective, and strengthen your impact.

Reconnect with colleagues from across Pennsylvania and meet new peers who understand the day-in and day-out of our industry. Share challenges, exchange knowledge, and build relationships that support you long after the conference ends.

Visit our exhibit hall to engage with business suppliers who fuel association success. From destinations to technology to services, these industry partners are here to help you enhance member experiences and streamline your work.

And, of course, have a great time! Celebrate successes, enjoy meaningful conversations, and be reminded why our community and our work matter. We look forward to seeing you at Connections!

PASAE CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE 2026

The PASAE Connections Conference offers up to 8 CAE and CMP credits toward your professional development requirements.

Conference Schedule

(Schedule is subject to change.)

Thursday, March 19, 2026

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	**Registration and Continental Breakfast**
9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	**Welcome**
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	***Opening General Session (1 CE)***

The Silent Skill of Great Leaders
Jevon Gondwe, Founder, Influential Skills

Do you wish your team would come to you with solutions instead of problems or have you ever found yourself jumping into solution mode for your team before asking questions?

Active listening is the skill many think they have, but don't. It's not just about nodding your head and making eye contact, it's about being intentional with the questions we're asking to build connection, show that we genuinely care, and drive real action and change.

In this interactive session, you'll learn how to become a more effective leader by mastering the art of active listening and asking powerful questions. Discover how to shift your focus from giving directions to truly understanding your team's perspectives, empowering them to solve problems and contribute their best work. This one session will revolutionize how you lead others.

11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	**Break**
11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	***General Session (1 CE)***

AI OH MY: Building an Ethical and Financially Viable AI Policy That Won't Get You Sued
Dan Farkas, Professor, Ohio State University

Whether you work for a large or small association, a comprehensive policy for using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is essential. Irresponsible AI use will spark a crisis for your members. However, responsible AI use will help you, your members and their communication teams perform year-round work to mitigate problems and identify growth opportunities. This session connects those dots. Attendees will learn how AI can be used to increase efficiency, which gives your team more time to be human. They will leave with a customized plan to use when it's time to head back to the office.

12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. **Lunch With Exhibitors**

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **Team Building Session**

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. **Break**

3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. ***Concurrent Sessions (1 CE)***

Shoestring Media: Tools and Tricks That Cost Less Than Your Morning Coffee
Dan Farkas, Professor, Ohio State University

Dan Farkas has earned national recognition working with groups that have budgets of $0.00. This session will help attendees learn how to use existing resources to help with event creation, media relations, and social media management with little to no budget. Dan will also review ways to create efficiency, so the plan won't fall behind the next time a diversion arises.

OR

OKRs for Associations: Aligning Mission With Measurable Impact
Mike Burns, Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer, StratSimple

In this session, Mike Burns will introduce the concept of Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) and how they can revolutionize goal setting and performance tracking in associations. Learn how to create, implement, and manage OKRs to drive mission-focused results and increase organizational effectiveness.

4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. **Break**

4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. ***Closing General Session (1 CE)***

The Membership Growth Formula: Proven Strategies to Engage, Retain, and Drive Revenue
Chris Vaughan, Ph.D., Sequence Consulting

Membership growth and retention are critical for the success of any association, but the strategies to achieve them have changed. In this session, Chris Vaughan, Ph.D., Chief Strategy Officer and Co-founder of Sequence Consulting, will uncover the science and strategy behind successful member engagement. Drawing from years of experience and real-world examples, Chris will highlight three key "gotchas" that often reveal hidden gaps in an association's strategy: failing to measure engagement, underinvesting in engagement resources, and poor communication of your value to members. Using case studies from prominent associations like the American Medical Association, he'll demonstrate how addressing these issues can lead to stronger engagement, improved retention, and increased revenue and value.

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. **Reception With Exhibitors**

Join us for a networking reception with our exhibitors, including hotels and companies offering products and services to the association industry. Explore venues, discover new solutions, and connect with industry professionals.
Includes heavy hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar.

Friday, March 20, 2026

8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Continental Breakfast and Opening General Session (1 CE)

CEO, Marketing and Communications, Meeting Planner and Supplier, and Membership Roundtables

Join fellow association professionals for an interactive roundtable designed to spark open dialogue and peer-to-peer learning. Together, we'll explore key topics in meeting planning, membership, communications and marketing, and the day-to-day challenges of executive leadership. Bring your insights, exchange best practices, and discover practical ideas you can take back to your organization. This collaborative session ensures every voice is heard and every perspective adds value.

9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Break

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions (1 CE)

What Our Associations and Wham! Have in Common
Steve Neidlinger, CAE, Pennsylvania Academy of General Dentistry

Our associations are built for rock stars. But not everyone can afford to be George Michael. There's bound to be some Andrew Ridgelys in there too. This thought exercise will encourage association attendees to weigh the benefits they offer to members. Consideration will be given to members that can only afford to be marginally involved, whether it be due to professional or family responsibilities, distance, or will, and those that can afford to use the benefits of membership to their fullest.

OR

Stock Up Your Event Toolbox – 20 Years of Tips & Tricks!
Leigh-Ann Reitze, Manager, Events and Community Relations, Office of the President, UPMC in Central Pa.

Does your event toolbox need a tune up? This session is your one stop shop for making conferences, meetings, presentations, and events fun and engaging! The key to dazzling productions over duds is preparation! Join Leigh-Ann to learn how to fine tune your methods, message, and execution to make them memorable. By working the right way in advance of any event, you can relax and enjoy the moment. Attendees will gain insight into often overlooked details that make a difference in fostering engagement and leave a lasting impression. Let's sharpen your tools!

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions (1 CE)

Hot Mess to Success – Five Traits of Highly Effective Boards and Committees
David Falchek, CAE, IOM, CMP, Executive Director, Serving Seniors, Inc.

Building a high-performing board or committee takes time, intention, and collaboration. Discover how to foster a strong governance culture by clarifying roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Learn how a well-structured board and its committees, supported by thoughtful management practices, can enhance engagement, streamline decision-making, and transform good intentions into impactful leadership and oversight.

OR

I Said No: Boundaries, Leadership, and Real Talk With Dr. Jen Fry
Dr. Jen Fry, Founder of JenFryTalks and Author of I Said No

Association work comes with big missions, expectations, and asks. The March PASAE book club selection, *I Said No*, by Dr. Jen Fry discusses how boundaries, communication, and conflict literacy strengthen leaders and associations. Expect real stories, practical tools, and honest discussion about the moments when "No" becomes strategic — brought to life with Jen's signature blend of humor, candor, and immediately usable insight. Join the author live at Connections 2025 for an in-person discussion with the author. *Dr. Jen Fry will soon offer a special discount on the digital edition of her book. Stay tuned for details!*

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Box Lunch Pickup and Break
Grab your lunch and head into the Closing General Session.

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Closing General Session (1 CE)

Beyond Survival Mode: Building the Antifragile Association
Elisa Pratt, MA, CAE, CVF, CEO & Chief Strategist, Brewer Pratt Solutions

Most associations have mastered resilience — bouncing back from disruption. But what if that's setting the bar too low? In this closing session, self-described "association antagonist" Elisa Pratt challenges the conventional wisdom that stability equals success. Drawing from 25+ years of executive experience and hundreds of strategic planning engagements, she'll demonstrate how associations can evolve from fragile (breaking under pressure) to antifragile (thriving on pressure). Participants will explore how to design systems that strengthen through stress and strategies that evolve through disruption. This isn't about weathering the next storm — it's about harnessing the wind.

Speakers

Mike Burns



Mike Burns is a technology executive and strategic planning expert with over 20 years of leadership experience in digital innovation and organizational performance. As co-founder and CEO of StratSimple, Mike helps associations and nonprofits simplify strategic planning through an AI-powered platform that makes community-listening, goal setting, and execution more effective. Before founding StratSimple, Mike served as Chief Information Officer of a $1B privately-held company, leading major digital transformation and operational improvement initiatives. He brings a decade of hands-on experience coaching organizations in Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) and driving results through transparency and accountability. With a B.S. in Computer Science and an MBA in Management Information Systems, Mike brings a unique blend of technical knowledge and business strategy to his work with a focus on making complex concepts accessible and actionable for diverse audiences.

Dan Farkas



"Professional Wearer of Many Hats" isn't something you can put on a LinkedIn profile, but it may be the best way to describe Dan Farkas. Dan is a Professor of Strategic Communication at Ohio University, where he teaches research, strategy, content creation, measurement, and analytics courses. He's also a business owner when not chasing late homework or his two kids. His latest venture is Pass PR, which minds the gap between employer needs and employee capacity.

Dan's been called "a recognized thought leader in PR" and "a sought-after speaker who is an exceptional storyteller drawing on his collective experience as a former journalist and current practitioner and instructor." His book, *Strategic Content Marketing: Creating Effective Content in Practice*, is out now. You can also hear him on *The Strategic Communicator Podcast*, part of the Marketing Podcast Network. In a former life, Dan earned more than 20 awards for his work in television news. His work appeared on CNN, MSNBC, and SI.com.

David Falchek, CAE, IOM, CMP



David Falchek, CAE, IOM, CMP is the executive director of Serving Seniors, Inc., a Scranton-based 501(c)(3) which provides patient advocacy, long-term care ombudsman and guardianship services to vulnerable populations in eastern Pennsylvania. He served for six years as executive director of the American Wine Society, a national credentialing educational organization. He currently serves as treasurer of the Scranton Downtown Federal Credit Union and chairman of the City of Scranton Board of Ethics.

David's interest in group dynamics and effective board governance led him to pursue the IOM designation from the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation and a certificate in Leading Remote Teams from the Cornell University executive program. He also holds certificates in nonprofit board consultancy and nonprofit board education through BoardSource. He completed the University of Scranton Kania School of Management Nonprofit Leadership Certification Program in 2017.

He is a Certified Association Executive (CAE) through ASAE and a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) through the Events Industry Council. He has served on ASAE's public policy and small staff advisory boards. Maintaining his focus on governance and ethics, he continues to consult with small nonprofits and associations, helping them advance their missions.

Speakers

Dr. Jen Fry



Dr. Jen Fry (she/her) is a conflict literacy expert, sports geographer, tech founder, TEDx speaker, and international speaker. She owns JenFryTalks, an organizational change firm that sits at the intersection of conflict and culture. She specializes in transforming organizational dynamics by addressing how conflict and culture shape leadership and overall business outcomes.

Jen wants to help you build the skills you need to navigate those hard but essential conversations and come out on top. She received her Ph.D. in Sports Geography from Michigan State University (GO GREEN!). She is also the founder of Coordle, an all-in-one platform that makes youth sports travel easy for teams and helps tourism boards showcase their communities. She just released her first book, *I Said No: How to Have a Backbone and Boundaries Without Being a Jerk*.

Jevon Gondwe



Jevon Gondwe is a dynamic Leadership Transformation Architect, Founder of Influential Skills and designer of the "Building a Culture of Champions" leadership framework for team leaders. His leadership insights have been sought after by major media companies like *Inc. Magazine, Central Penn Business Journal,* and *Training Industry, Inc.* His company is dedicated to training and developing team leaders on personal growth, and the powerful communication skills required to build, inspire, and lead a championship team. His unique approach to leadership communication is forged from over 15 years of battle tested experience, and the invaluable lessons from three college soccer National Championships under two of the NCAA's winningest coaches of all time. This background instilled a mindset of excellence, humility, and servant leadership, which Jevon has shared to inspire over 30,000 professionals in his career.

His core offerings focus on the intersection of personal growth, interpersonal skills, and team leadership, helping leaders boost engagement, retention, and performance, especially for leaders who climbed the ladder on technical ability, but lacked formal leadership training. Jevon doesn't teach theory; he's applied these proven methods across diverse industries to transform leaders into game changers. A proud husband and father, Jevon firmly believes success comes from consistently adding value to others, a philosophy he champions for all leaders.

Steve Neidlinger, CAE



Steve Neidlinger is an association professional with over 25 years of experience in unsuccessfully explaining to strangers what his job is. He has spent the last nine years as Executive Director at the Pennsylvania Academy of General Dentistry, where he has mastered the art of smiling and nodding while being presented with complicated dental concepts. When he's not solving complex problems or creating even more complex ones, Steve enjoys fixing office equipment through his uncanny ability to turn them off and back on again. Steve is here at this conference to share his insights, connect with fellow professionals, and ultimately figure out where the donuts are.

Speakers

Elisa Pratt, MA, CAE, CVF



Elisa Pratt, MA, CAE, CVF, is an association antagonist and expert in strategic nonprofit solutions that increase membership, diversify revenue, and ensure relevance. Prior to the founding of Brewer Pratt Solutions, LLC, she served for nearly 25 years as an impactful association management executive with several national trade and individual membership associations. Known for her candid and hyper-custom approach, Elisa architects innovative engagement solutions, tactical member development campaigns, and operational effectiveness strategies. With a unique background in fundraising and advocacy, membership and stakeholder relations, as well as national and chapter operations, Elisa's diverse expertise makes her a valuable partner and advisor to both national and international non-profit clients.

Leigh-Ann Reitze



Leigh-Ann Reitze is the manager of events and community relations with the Office of the President, UPMC in Central Pa., where she manages logistics for nearly 100 marketing and internal events annually. While overseeing community relations, events, and the community-giving process, Leigh-Ann contributes to 450 to 600 events each year.

By nurturing strategic relationships and coordinating event volunteers, Leigh-Ann fosters participation and engagement. Under her leadership, UPMC events run smoothly, and the organization is represented well within the community and with other organizations it supports. She arranges and produces open houses, chamber events, ribbon cuttings, and many other activities, ensuring that attendees are thoroughly engaged. Leigh-Ann is passionate about community outreach, business, and personal philanthropy efforts. She is generous, motivational, and brings genuine enthusiasm to every task, all while encouraging those around her to achieve their best.

Leigh-Ann is enthusiastic in her support of LGBTQ+ initiatives, and she is an advocate for the LGBT Center and the Keystone Business Alliance, which is committed to expanding the economic interests of LGBT and allied businesses through education, advocacy, and partnerships. She's also involved in Wildheart, a nonprofit that is focused on restoring and beautifying Harrisburg's Allison Hill district while empowering residents to break the cycle of poverty. Leigh-Ann received her bachelor's degree from Mansfield University.

Chris Vaughan, Ph.D.



Chris Vaughan, Ph.D., is co-founder and managing partner of Sequence Consulting, where he helps associations grow their membership, revenue, and impact. For more than two decades, he has worked with leading associations to sharpen their strategies, elevate member value, and embrace new opportunities for growth. A former Big Strategy consultant and trained philosopher, Chris brings both rigor and creativity to solving complex challenges. Today, much of his work focuses on helping associations harness the power of AI strategically — moving beyond experimentation to adoption that creates real value for members and the organization. He is a frequent speaker and writer on the future of associations, membership marketing, and growth strategy.





Host Hotel

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions
250 Kalahari Boulevard
Pocono Manor, PA 18349

PASAE has negotiated a discounted room rate for the days of the conference. All rooms in our block are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The negotiated room rate is only available until our block is full or the deadline date is reached. Booking within the official hotel block ensures convenience and supports the event. The reservation deadline is **Thursday, February 19, 2026**.

Room Rate:
Double Queen Sofa Balcony Room: $159 plus taxes and fees

Make Your Reservation

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Register Online at PASAE.org
Registration and Cancellation Deadline: March 12, 2026

Please complete one form per attendee

Cancellations must be made in writing by March 12, 2026 to receive a refund, less a $25 administrative service fee plus any processing fees. No refund requests will be honored after the deadline date.

Attendee Name *(as it should appear on name badge)*: _____

Designation: _____ Title/Position: _____

Business Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____ E-mail: _____

Meal Preference: ☐ Standard ☐ Vegetarian ☐ Pescatarian ☐ Vegan ☐ Gluten-Free

If you require special accommodations to participate in the conference please contact the PASAE office.

Emergency Contact Information

Name of Non-Attending Contact: _____

Relationship to Attendee: _____ Phone: _____

Attendee Registration

Includes all education sessions; Thursday continental breakfast, lunch, reception; Friday continental breakfast and boxed lunch.

REGISTRATION: *(On or before March 12, 2026)*	☐ **$275 PASAE Member**	☐ **$395 Non-member**
LATE REGISTRATION: *(After March 12, 2026)*	☐ **$305 PASAE Member**	☐ **$425 Non-member**

VIP Kalahari Sponsored Meeting Planner Dinner – Wednesday, March 18, 2026

☐ I am a meeting planner or conference location decision maker and would like to attend the VIP Kalahari Sponsored Dinner.
Attendance is subject to availability and will be confirmed closer to the conference.

Payment Information

Total Amount: $ _____ Method of Payment: ☐ Check (payable to PASAE) ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ AmEx

Credit Card Number: _____

Exp. Date: _____ 3-Digit Sec. Code: _____ Signature: _____

Name on Card *(please print)*: _____

Billing Address *(if different from above)*: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Return to: PASAE, 2207 Forest Hills Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17112
Email to admin@pasae.org or fax to: 717-238-9985 | www.pasae.org | 717-614-4270