

Contact:

Ryan Trapp, Marketing & Communications
Virginia Restaurant Lodging & Travel Association
ryan@vrlta.org | 804-288-3065 ext. 205

**For Immediate Release
Tuesday, April 24, 2023**

Paul Cooper Appointed Chairman of VRLTA Foundation

Sees opportunity to greatly expand the Foundation's impact working with K-12 students across Virginia.

Richmond, Va. – Today, the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging, and Travel Association Foundation (VRLTAF) announced that Paul Cooper, CEO of Retro Hospitality and member of VRLTA since 2015, has been appointed as its new chairman.

“I am honored to be named Chair of the VRLTA Foundation,” says Cooper. “This opportunity to work with VRLTA and students throughout the Commonwealth as we build a pipeline of future culinary arts and hospitality students is energizing and inspiring.”

In 2011, Paul founded Retro Hospitality - a Richmond-based hotel consulting and management firm. Over the past twelve years, Retro has been involved in numerous historic adaptive reuse projects, creating some of Virginia's most distinguished hotel and culinary destinations. Current projects include Quirk Hotel Richmond, The Blackburn Inn and Conference Center in Staunton, Quirk Hotel Charlottesville, The Dairy Market food hall in Charlottesville, Hotel Petersburg, Hotel Fauna in Bedford, and five additional projects currently under development throughout the Mid-Atlantic.

“We’re thrilled to have someone with Paul’s track record of success steering the Foundation,” says Jim Wilson, Vice President of Workforce and Development for VRLTA. “His background in product development and ___ is invaluable. It’s the start of an exciting chapter for the VRLTAF.”

The VRLTAF is a 501(c)(3) foundation originally established as the VHTA Educational Foundation in 1982. Along with providing scholarship opportunities to high school and college students studying hospitality, one of the Foundation’s missions is to generate excitement among K-12 students about working in the hospitality industry. Cooper has plans to expand that mission and make an even bigger impact across the state.

Along with establishing a pipeline of future culinary arts and hospitality students, Cooper sees the opportunity to develop a new gold standard for culinary programs in Virginia. This includes supporting initiatives like the [Kitchen at Reynolds](#) and the [Richmond Black Restaurant Experience](#), as well as expanding the [Mercy Chefs](#) program throughout the Commonwealth.

“We need to work together as an industry and show today’s youth how to embark on a career in hospitality,” says Cooper. “I’m excited to champion this urgent work, and to advocate for additional resources from the governor’s office and administration, which I know is highly supportive of Virginia Hospitality and Tourism.”

Cooper also serves as a distinguished member of the State Board of Directors for VRLTA and is the former Chairman of the VRLTA’s Shenandoah Valley Chapter. He has also been involved with Mercy Chefs, a faith-based, non-profit disaster and humanitarian relief organization, and won the Ordinary Award for Virginia Hotelier of the Year in 2020.

#

The [Virginia Restaurant Lodging and Travel Association](http://www.vrlta.org) is the unified voice of the restaurant, lodging, travel and hospitality suppliers associations. VRLTA creates value for members by promoting the legislative interests of the industry, networking, educational opportunities, and protecting free enterprise. For more information, visit www.vrlta.org or call 800-552-2225.

[Retro Hospitality](#) is a boutique hospitality firm based in Richmond, Virginia. Specializing in independent hotels and creative food and beverage concepts, Retro provides owners and developers with a wide range of consulting and management services. Retro's team is a collection of diverse and highly experienced hospitality industry experts - each focused on achieving operational success and creating authentic guest experiences.