15th Annual Cyber Security Summit: Fearlessly Forward Announces 2025 Visionary Leadership Award Honorees

The Cyber Security Summit announced thirteen 2025 Visionary Leadership Award honorees amid growing cybersecurity concerns in Minnesota and beyond.

MINNEAPOLIS, MN, UNITED STATES, August 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 15th Annual Cyber Security Summit Visionary Leadership Awards will be presented Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest

15TH ANNUAL LEADERSHIP EVENT

CYBER SECURITY SUMMIT

Security solutions through collaboration.™

Cyber Security Summit

July came to a hot and humid end but its final Friday brought a chill to Minnesota when City of St. Paul IT systems suddenly froze. CNN broke the latest cyber crisis news as Mayor Melvin Carter recognized the need for additional resources and declared an emergency. Governor Walz activated the Minnesota National Guard Cyber Coordination Center to join FBI and other experts in a comprehensive and strategic threat response activation that will take weeks. And our Visionary Security Program and Oversight Leader honoree saw it coming.

2025 Cyber Security Summit Visionary Leadership Award Honorees

VISIONARY ACADEMIC LEADER >
Domingo Castillo   > Chief Information Security Officer and Adjunct Professor, Miami Dade College

Dr. Castillo is CISO and an adjunct professor at Miami Dade College, where he aligns cybersecurity, risk management, and governance expertise to a hands-on teaching approach that gives students practical skills for high-impact careers. Dr. Castillo led efforts that secured validation from the National Security Agency for the MDC Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity program.

VISIONARY APPLICATION SECURITY LEADER >
Aparna Achanta > Principal Security Lead, IBM

Aparna Achanta has led mission-critical projects for U.S. federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Using NIST and DHS frameworks, Achanta developed a governance model to incorporate zero trust principles and security protocols for cloud and Gen AI applications. Today, these application security solutions protect data for millions of veteran records.

VISIONARY COMMUNITY LEADER >
Nicole Pruden, Network and Security Administrator, East Central Minnesota Educational Cable Cooperative (ECMECC)

Nicole Pruden is a member of the Minnesota Cybersecurity Task Force, where her work has shaped cybersecurity initiatives in Minnesota and beyond. Nicole has led awareness and advocacy campaigns and coordinated multiple tech conferences for school districts statewide, efforts that have strengthened cybersecurity for students and educators.

VISIONARY GLOBAL SECURITY LEADER >
David Mussington, Professor of the Practice, University of Maryland School of Public Policy

David Mussington is a professor at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy where he directs the School's cyber policy initiative, teaches cyber policy and risk management, and contributes to global cyber intel conversations. Mussington is also a senior fellow at Canada's Center for International Governance Innovation. In 2025, Mussington concluded four years as DHS CISA Executive Assistant Director and is at the top of the list where critical infrastructure cybersecurity expertise is needed.

VISIONARY GOVERNANCE, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE LEADER >
Bill Strub > President, Virtual Guardian

Bill Strub anticipated the industry need for a service-oriented GRC model long before it became a mainstream concern. His vision, supported by a deep cybersecurity knowledge that spans programs, tools, people, and strategy, has made Virtual Guardian an enduring presence. Bill routinely uses feedback to architect the scalable governance solutions that support product and service delivery.

VISIONARY IT AUDIT LEADER >
Jodie Monette, CJIS System Agency Information Security Officer, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

Jodie Monette is an engineer, analyst, and systems security expert for the massive FBI CJIS database. She supports Minnesota's local, county, state, and federal agencies to ensure compliance with the ever-changing standards, requirements, rules, orders, policies, and protocols. Monette shares guidance and rule changes and supports FBI audit preparation for hundreds who are responsible for lawful access, dissemination, and disclosure of information.

VISIONARY SECURITY AWARENESS PROGRAM LEADER >
Douglas Dvorak, Lizabeth Lehrkamp, John Bonhage, Special Agents FBI

The FBI InfraGard is an information-sharing partnership program dedicated to critical infrastructure protection. Three FBI Minneapolis Special Agents collectively gave 20 years of service to the Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota chapters: Douglas Dvorak, Lizabeth Lehrkamp (ret.) and John Bonhage (ret.). All worked to promote the program, recruit candidates, vet members, solicit speakers, staff conference booths, distribute intelligence, and create connections. Dvorak tripled membership in three years. Lehrkamp became a regular standing-room only conference speaker. Bonhage retired with the FBI Private Sector Coordinator longevity record (ten years). These three Special Agents set a high bar for awareness programs and demonstrated the power of partnerships.

VISIONARY SECURITY OPERATIONS LEADER >
Mike Rogers > Chief Information Security Officer, Hormel

Mike Rogers' role as CISO covers security, compliance, and risk mitigation. Rogers is a security operations leader whose level of scrutiny and ability to address industry challenges has resulted in stronger security leaders locally and nationally. Rogers serves in advisory roles at Evanta, the CyberRisk Collaborative, the Cyber Security Summit, and Phishapalooza.

VISIONARY SECURITY PROGRAM AND OVERSIGHT LEADER >
Brian Morgan > Cyber Coordination Director, Minnesota National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel Brian Morgan proposed, designed, and obtained legislative approval for the Minnesota National Guard Cyber Coordination Cell in 2023. Morgan developed and implemented a vision, mission, and operational doctrine after finding soldiers with skills to staff it. The unit purchased and configured the first state-owned Cyber Incident Response Kits that equip teams to respond quickly when activated by the Governor.

VISIONARY STUDENT > Michael Nurmela >
Technology Educator, Independent School District 196 (Rosemount High School)

Michael Nurmela graduated with honors and received his Master of Science in Cyber Operations program and the College of Science Outstanding Student award from Metro State University. Nurmela has multiple degrees, extensive military experience, and cybersecurity innovation strengths, making him a triple threat talent.

FOUNDER'S AWARD >
Mike Kearn > VP and Business Information Security Officer, US Bank

Mike Kearn is a cybersecurity expert who has worked for two major banks, led critical conversations, and contributed to conferences including Black Hat, RSA, SecureWorld and the Cyber Security Summit. Kearn has taught cybersecurity, threat intelligence, and risk management principles at multiple colleges and universities.

About the Cyber Security Summit
Join the Cyber Security Summit: Fearlessly Forward to meet these outstanding honorees, hear from experts, connect with CISOs and explore the Public Sector Seminar and Cyber101 Workshop. We are a 25K LinkedIn community of professionals representing business, government, academic and military organizations.

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