

Northern Virginia's Data Center Industry Leads the Way in Community Reinvestment and Workforce Development

Representing the heart of the data center industry, 7x24 DC reinvested \$222,600 in 2025 through charitable giving, scholarships, and workforce development.

ASHBURN, VA, UNITED STATES, January 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [7x24 Exchange DC Chapter](#), representing the heart of the world's largest data center hub, announced today that it reinvested \$222,600 into the Northern Virginia community in 2025 through charitable giving, scholarships, workforce development, and veteran and wellness support.



The 7x24 Exchange DC Chapter Board of Directors at the 2025 Chapter Holiday Party

As the region's leading industry continues to grow, the [Chapter's](#) members are leading alongside it, helping students close opportunity gaps, supporting families facing basic needs challenges, and creating clear pathways into high-paying, stable careers in data centers, construction, engineering, and other mission-critical fields.

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*7x24 Exchange DC Chapter
Executive Director Lillian
Rivera*

“Data centers power our digital lives, but it's people who power our industry,” said Lillian Rivera, executive director of the 7x24 Exchange DC Chapter. “This year's impact reflects a shared commitment to reinvesting locally, including supporting students, strengthening families, and building a workforce that is prepared for the future.”

2025 Community Impact at a Glance

In total, the Chapter reinvested \$222.6K, including:

- \$98,000 in Scholarships and Workforce Development, supporting college-bound students, Loudoun County Public Schools graduates, Northern Virginia Community College students, and new career pathways into mission-critical industries
- \$98,600 in Community Support, benefiting local nonprofits, including Boulder Crest Foundation, Loudoun Education Foundation, America's Soup Kitchen, Women Giving Back, House of Mercy, Grafton Schools, Sterling Foundation, Haymakers for Hope, and Crossroads Connection.

“Coming from such a digital industry, we look for high-touch opportunities to give back,” DC Chapter Board President Karen Petersburg said. “Our favorite causes specialize in helping real students afford college, helping families meet immediate needs, and helping our region develop the skilled workforce required to sustain one of the most critical industries in the world.”

Read their full annual impact report here: sqr.co/7x24dc2025/

Investing in Education and Career Pathways

During the year, the Chapter awarded \$50,000 in college scholarships to eight students pursuing degrees in engineering, cybersecurity, construction management, and related fields.



7x24 Exchange DC Chapter Executive Director Lillian Rivera



The 7x24 Exchange DC Chapter provides an educational forum bringing together Information Services/Technology and Facilities/Engineering/Real Estate of organizations to promote better understanding of the design, implementation and management issues involv

An additional \$28,000 was awarded to 14 graduating Loudoun County Public Schools students, and \$20,000 supported students through the NOVA Foundation.

“This industry offers life-changing career opportunities,” Petersburg said. “Workforce development isn’t just a priority; it’s part of our shared responsibility.”

Honoring the Legacy of Brian Brobst

The year was also marked by the loss of Brian Brobst, a founding member of the DC Chapter, longtime board leader, and former treasurer, who passed away in November. Brobst served the Chapter for more than 15 years and was widely known as a mentor, connector, and friend throughout the mission-critical industry.

“Brian believed deeply in people: investing in them, mentoring them, and showing up for them,” Rivera said. “His legacy lives on through the students we support, the careers we help launch, and the community impact we continue in his name.”

In his memory, the Chapter announced the launch of the Brian Brobst Legacy Internship, a paid, immersive summer internship program designed to give students hands-on experience in AI, cloud, and data center operations while connecting them directly with industry mentors and employers.

The 10-week program will offer participating students two rotational placements with leading mission-critical organizations, along with structured mentorship, facility tours, and exposure to real-world engineering and operational environments.

The Chapter is actively recruiting both partner businesses and college students from the region to create a direct pathway for local talent to explore high-demand, high-paying careers in data centers, construction, engineering, and related fields.

Applications for the inaugural summer cohort will open in this spring, and the Chapter is encouraging all students pursuing engineering, IT, and technical degrees to apply. Interested businesses and students should contact board member Stuart Dyer at Stuart.Dyer@cbre.com.

Leadership Recognition

In 2025, Chapter President Karen Petersburg was named Data Center Woman of the Year by DCD Academy, an international honor recognizing leadership, collaboration, and lasting impact within the global data center industry.

The award celebrates Petersburg’s commitment to people-centered leadership, sustainability, and community engagement, values that align closely with the Chapter’s mission to ensure the region’s rapid infrastructure growth is matched by responsible investment in talent and

community.

“This recognition is more than a personal milestone. It reflects what’s possible when we lead with purpose, collaboration, and humanity,” Petersburg said. “Our industry is built on technology, but its true strength lies in people. Every innovation begins with human connection and a shared commitment to creating impact that lasts.”

Board Expansion and Leadership Growth

To support the Chapter’s expanding role across education, workforce development, and community outreach, the 7x24 Exchange DC Chapter also welcomed several new members to its Board of Directors in 2025:

- Phil Baroody, Director of Business Development, Rosendin Electric
- Laura Ware, Business Development Executive, Building Infrastructure Group
- Jeff McWhirt, Senior Reliability Engineer, Digital Realty
- Stuart Dyer, First Vice President, Data Center Solutions, CBRE
- Tiffany Abbott, Director of Pursuits, Rosendin

Together, these leaders bring deep expertise in engineering, reliability, education, business development, and community engagement—strengthening the Chapter’s ability to advance industry collaboration while investing in the next generation of mission-critical professionals.

Looking Ahead

Rooted in Northern Virginia’s Data Center Alley, the 7x24 Exchange DC Chapter continues to serve as a hub for education, collaboration, and reinvestment—ensuring that as the industry grows, the community grows with it.

“Our mission is simple,” Rivera said. “Power what comes next - together.”

About the 7x24 Exchange DC Chapter: The 7×24 Exchange Washington DC Chapter is a not-for-profit organization that provides an educational forum focusing on challenges faced by mission-critical industry professionals. Our Chapter Board of Directors are here to serve the community by facilitating events that are relevant to our industry.

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