

Virginia Early Childhood Foundation Taps Susanne Bell as President

Seasoned professional led education initiatives at Danville Regional Foundation

RICHMOND, VA, UNITED STATES, July 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Virginia Early Childhood Foundation](#) (VECF), the statewide public-private entity that serves as the non-partisan steward of Virginia's promise for early childhood success, is very pleased to announce that Susanne R. Bell has been named President of the organization, effective July 1, 2026. She is stepping into this position following the retirement of Kathy Glazer.

In her new leadership role at VECF, Bell will be responsible for building a strategic and sustained focus on the healthy development and school readiness of the Commonwealth's youngest learners, supporting opportunities for all families with young children to thrive.

Most recently, she advised and cultivated education and workforce investments as Program Director and Senior Program Officer for Education & Workforce at Danville Regional Foundation (DRF) in southern Virginia. During her time at DRF, she cultivated and advised \$24.6 million in investment commitments.

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Gary Thomson, VECF Board Chair

A key accomplishment at DRF was significantly strengthening the regional out-of-school time field to support education outcomes and broader economic growth. Bell did this by establishing a multi-month learning experience for afterschool professionals, the Out-of-School Time Leadership Lab, which she created in coordination with a strong advisory committee. Following requests from Leadership Lab graduates, she partnered with United Way of Danville & Pittsylvania County to stand up the Dan River



Region Out-of-School Time Network which connects and supports afterschool providers. She also led the development of the first joint grant between DRF and the Davenport Trust in response to a request from the Center for Early Success to strengthen access to and coordination of early intervention services.

Bell's career spans Capitol Hill, higher education and education policy consulting in earlier positions with the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, First Book, the National Summer Learning Association, Johns Hopkins University, the Division of Policy and Advocacy for the American College of Surgeons.

Philanthropy Southeast named her as a Hull Fellow in the 2023-24 class. The Hull Fellowship is the southeast's premier philanthropic leadership program that helps leaders determine their own approach while also preparing them to address issues facing the field and region in years and decades ahead.

She earned a bachelor's degree from Carson-Newman University and holds a master's degree in public policy from Johns Hopkins University. Currently, she is an MBA candidate at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business.

"As our board reviewed the list of distinguished candidates for the position of president, Susanne quickly rose to the top," said Gary Thomson, VECF board chair. "We were impressed by her collaborative approach to engage a broad range of community stakeholders in creative initiatives to improve education outcomes for children and students throughout her career. Above all, Susanne shares our strong conviction that every child in the Commonwealth deserves the opportunity to thrive. On behalf of our entire team at VECF, we extend congratulations and a very warm welcome to Susanne, as well as our heartfelt thanks to Kathy Glazer for her exemplary service in support of our youngest learners."

"I'm thrilled and grateful for this opportunity to lead VECF, an organization that I have long admired, into its next chapter," said Bell. "I look forward to collaborating alongside the talented staff and the highly committed board of prestigious statewide leaders in our shared mission to build a strong and sustainable early childhood care and education system in Virginia."

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About the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation: VECF creates results-oriented partnerships to ensure that young children are healthy and prepared for school, life and workforce success. To learn more about VECF, visit www.vecf.org.

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