



# welcome

The official newsletter of SMPS South Florida: We are on a mission to engage, inspire, and empower A/E/C professionals for leadership and life-long learning.

Our purpose is to promote the professional and educational advancement of marketing professional services and business activities on behalf of professional services firms, foster an understanding of the skills and techniques employed in such activities, and to exchange information.

## IN THIS ISSUE

**Letter from the President**  
by: Melissa Bailes

2

**When Building Healthcare Starts at Home**  
by: Griffin Pharr

3

**Thought Leadership Without Being THAT Guy**  
by: Kristen Lawlor

5

**The Value of Intellectual Curiosity**  
by: Rachel Stevens

7

**Upcoming Events**

8

**Destination Success: SERC 2025**

9

**Virtual Educational Events**

10

**New & Renewed Members**

11

SMPS South Florida Coffee Talks Boca Raton





# LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

**Melissa Bailes**

**Senior Pursuit Manager**

Hedrick Brothers Construction

✉ [mbailes@hedrickbrothers.com](mailto:mbailes@hedrickbrothers.com)

🌐 [www.hedrickbrothers.com](http://www.hedrickbrothers.com)



Dear SMPS South Florida Members,

I hope this letter finds you all thriving as we embrace the exciting opportunities 2025 has in store for our chapter and industry. I encourage each of you to take advantage of the many opportunities ahead!

First, I wish the best of luck to all those preparing for the upcoming CPSM exam. Earning the Certified Professional Services Marketer (CPSM) designation is a testament to your expertise and commitment to professional growth. If you're currently studying, remember that SMPS offers many resources to support you on this journey, including study groups and webinars. We are cheering you on!

In the coming months, we have a fantastic lineup of events designed to help you connect, learn, and grow. From networking mixers to educational workshops, these events provide invaluable opportunities to expand your skill set and deepen your relationships within the A/E/C community. Be sure to check our website and follow us on social media to stay up-to-date on all upcoming programs.

Another exciting event on the horizon is the Southeastern Regional Conference (SERC), taking place in May in beautiful West Palm Beach—the first time ever in South Florida! This annual conference brings together some of the best minds in A/E/C marketing and business development, offering an incredible lineup of speakers, breakout sessions, and networking opportunities. Even more exciting, our very own Chapter Advisor, Bonni Funt, is chairing this year's event! If you haven't attended before, this is a must for anyone looking to gain fresh insights and expand their professional network. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more details!

As always, thank you for your dedication to our chapter and profession. Your engagement is what makes SMPS South Florida such a strong and dynamic community. I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events and celebrating your successes throughout the year.

Melissa Bailes  
SMPS South Florida Chapter President

**CONTACT**  
[mbailes@hedrickbrothers.com](mailto:mbailes@hedrickbrothers.com)  
561.284.2584





SUFFOLK

**Griffin Pharr**  
National Director, Operations Performance  
Suffolk Construction  
[linkedin.com/in/griffinpharr](https://www.linkedin.com/in/griffinpharr)

# WHEN BUILDING HEALTHCARE STARTS AT HOME

**Healthcare construction is growing more complex and sophisticated. Fortunately, I've got a couple of aces that help our teams prioritize safety, minimize disruptions and ensure operations run smoothly – even after we've turned over the building.**

As a builder, I'm always thinking about who uses our facilities once they're complete. When it comes to hospitals and health centers, that perspective hits a little closer to home – literally. My wife, Jennifer Pharr, is a medical fellow in Tampa (and quite a star, if I can say so, as she just won Fellow of the Year). So, while I navigate the complexities of building Florida's sophisticated healing environments, I keep her and her fellow clinicians, nurses and hospital staff top of mind. I've heard from the source what's important when she's doing her job, and I've found that the latest construction technologies are helping us deliver just what she and her colleagues need.

When planning our projects, we want to make sure we prioritize the experience of the doctors, nurses, patients and families who will inhabit the facilities we build. One piece of that process is always starting with a digital model of the building, since we can discover and address issues before they arise in the field and minimize our disruptions in active hospitals. For healthcare, we implemented a digital bonus for seamless building maintenance after we turn over the facility: an asset tagging system that marries the model to everything the hospital's maintenance staff needs to know about the equipment in place. We deliver the model and the corresponding asset information as part of the building turnover. Staff can go into the model, find a piece of equipment, and pull up the specifications about the product's data, shop drawings, warranty, maintenance schedule and performance. Each piece of equipment has a physical QR code on it as well for easy information access. As climate resiliency becomes even more crucial here in Florida, having this information helps hospitals conduct proper maintenance and stay ahead of weather extremes – such as heat and humidity – that can wreak havoc on operating rooms, labs and pharmacies.

Suffolk's healthcare teams also pilot cutting-edge solutions from built world startups thanks to our connection with Suffolk Technologies, our venture capital platform funding the next generation of these companies. WINT Water Intelligence, a Suffolk Technologies portfolio company that detects and stops leaks at the source using artificial intelligence, has been incredibly helpful in our health care projects. WINT's intelligent real-time monitoring identifies sources of water leaks, preventing damage, reducing consumption and cutting the resulting carbon emissions. Those measures pay dividends both during construction and once the building is operational.

Finally, safety is our top priority on every jobsite, and we take extra precautions when we're working in active health care environments. We want to maintain the best care experience possible – not only for the patients, but for their visitors and care providers as well. Our goal on an active campus is to make our work invisible, so everyone can focus on what it takes to heal. To be proactive and achieve those safety goals, we're leveraging data, predictive analytics and artificial intelligence, identifying in real time where risk exists on these jobsites and how we can eliminate that risk. Suffolk's model collects safety observations from projects all over the country, then uses the observation photos and data to teach our artificial intelligence system how to recognize patterns and predict hazards. What we get from this process: robust, visualized data that provides awareness and makes it possible to act before incidents can happen. Just as doctors and nurses have daily huddles and timeouts to emphasize patient and provider safety, we conduct morning meetings and safety standdowns to analyze this data and do the same.

Over the next decade, Florida expects to see significant demand in health care due to the state's rapidly growing population and aging demographics. As Florida's needs grow, doctors like Jennifer will need facilities to meet the demand and provide the expected level of care.

# WHEN BUILDING HEALTHCARE STARTS AT HOME

That's the biggest reason we're investing in these technologies and leveraging Suffolk experts like Vice President of Operations [Rod Nobregg](#) for specialized AHCA policies and procedures. Rod has 15 years of experience building health care projects in Florida, so he's well-versed in the AHCA process as he leads our sector work throughout the region.

At the end of the day, Florida is home to us, so we care deeply about advancing the mission of healing environments. In the communities where we build, we're finding ways to support organizations like [Lee Health Foundation](#) as they help create a healthier Sunshine State, along with helping families at [Golisano Children's Hospital](#) and the [Make-A-Wish Foundation](#). We're looking forward to our upcoming [Clay Shoot Fundraiser](#), where 100 percent of the proceeds will go toward building [Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida's](#) new surgery center.

Throughout my work in the health care sector at Suffolk, it's been inspiring for me to see firsthand how dedicated our Floridian clinicians are and how innovation is leading the way to better outcomes. I'm committed to doing all I can to set them up for success.



The Suffolk Construction Estero team participating in Lee Health Foundation's Pedal for a Purpose, an event that Suffolk sponsored and raised \$34,000 for treatment, medication assistance, prosthetics, social work services and much more at Lee Health Regional Cancer Center.



Kristen Lawlor  
Chief Marketing Officer  
Jezerinac Group  
klawlor@jezerinacgroup.com

# HOW TO BE A

## *thought leader*

**WITHOUT BEING  
THAT GUY**

Ah, LinkedIn—the land of humblebrags, motivational posts, and the occasional “I’d like to add you to my professional network” message from someone you don’t remember meeting or just like your teenage daughter, someone collecting followers because that’s a fast-pass into the cool kids club.

But here’s the thing: If you want to win more work in the A/E/C industry, you need to be visible. Clients, partners, and industry peers aren’t just Googling your firm; they’re checking LinkedIn to see what you (yes, you) have to say.

And if you’re only posting job anniversaries and the occasional “Happy Holidays” graphic, well... let’s just say, there’s room for improvement.

So, how do you build credibility, engage your audience, and grow your network, without becoming the LinkedIn equivalent of an infomercial? Here’s how to do it online and in person without making people roll their eyes. I get enough of that from my 14 year old son who claims I embarrass him by basically just existing (although I’m not too embarrassing to foot the bill for that e-Bike he’s been eyeing, apparently).

- **Content Marketing on LinkedIn:** Say something worth reading. Your LinkedIn profile isn’t a digital trophy case, it’s a chance to share insights, start conversations, and show potential clients why they should work with you. But before you post, ask yourself: Would I want to read this? If the answer is no, try again. And don’t be afraid to let your readers know WHO you are! I can’t tell you the number of times I have bumped elbows with someone that has read a more personalized update on my LinkedIn and commented on our home renovation projects (remind me in 10 years how miserable that is when I get sick of my new cabinets) or get asked about my family vacation to north Georgia (Hiawassee, by the way? Chef’s kiss).
- **Ditch the corporate-speak.** No one wants to read, “We are a solutions-driven, client-focused firm leveraging synergies to enhance multi-disciplinary collaboration;” sorry, I fell asleep.

- **Tell a story.** Did you learn something interesting on a project? Have a funny, but insightful industry moment? Share it! People remember stories, not statistics. Read that again, **STORIES NOT STATISTICS.**
- **Give your audience something to take away.** Think: What would make someone save this post for later? Pro tips, lessons learned, and “things I wish I knew five years ago” are gold. Bonus points if you make people laugh; A/E/C can be serious, but you don’t have to be. And if all else fails? Just post a great project photo with a solid pun. “Steel-ing the show” never gets old. Who doesn’t love a good dad joke. And clearly, I’ve been around structural engineers a little too long.

### THE ART OF IN-PERSON NETWORKING: DON’T JUST COLLECT BUSINESS CARDS

We’ve all been there; an industry event where someone talks **at** you for 15 minutes, shoves their business card in your hand, and disappears into the crowd. I know you are picturing that face in your head right now... we have all been burned and walked away from a conversation or two with a proverbial ‘what the hell was that’ look on our face.

Let’s be better than that, shall we? It’s simple.

- **Just show up.** The best way to grow your network is to actually be where the people are: SMPS events, industry conferences, and happy hours (yes, those count).
- **Ask good questions.** Instead of, “So, what do you do?” try, “What’s the most interesting project you’ve worked on lately?” People love talking about themselves, give them the floor.
- **Offer value.** Know someone who could help with a project? Connect them. Have a great resource? Share it. Caught wind of a cool, upcoming project? Spill the beans (unless that NDA has your tongue tied, of course). People remember the ones who help, not just the ones who talk.
- **And most importantly—follow up!** Send a quick LinkedIn message or email the next day. A simple “Great meeting you, let’s grab coffee soon” can turn a handshake into a real connection.

# HOW TO BE A

*thought leader*

WITHOUT BEING  
THAT GUY

## THE THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SWEET SPOT: CONNECTING LINKEDIN & REAL LIFE

**Want to be really effective? Bridge the gap between online and in-person networking.**

- Post about the events you attend. Tag people, share key takeaways, and keep the conversation going.
- Engage with your network. Comment on posts, congratulate people on promotions, and celebrate their wins.
- Turn LinkedIn connections into real relationships. If you've been engaging with someone's content for months, why not grab coffee and talk business?

The best thought leaders aren't just names on a screen; they're the ones people recognize at events and actually want to talk to.

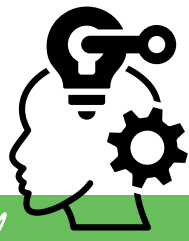
## FINAL THOUGHT: BE SOMEONE PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR FROM

Thought leadership isn't about proving you're the smartest person in the room; it's about being helpful, insightful, and just a little bit human. Let's face it, the A/E/C industry can appear to be full of a lot of robots. I bet you can name a few.

So, go forth! Share your knowledge. Build real connections. Maybe even crack a joke along the way. And if all else fails? Just post a great project shot with a pun. Trust me, it works every time.



## THE VALUE OF



# intellectual curiosity

SUFFOLK

Rachel Stevens, CPSM  
Vice President, National Pursuit Marketing  
Suffolk Construction  
rstevens@suffolk.com

Do you aspire to be a more influential marketer? A better proposal specialist? A strategic contributor? No matter where you are in your career, there is one piece of advice that can help: **keep asking questions**. Not only does curiosity open the door to learning, but it provides an avenue for us to demonstrate engagement, intellect, and empathy. It helps us navigate the unknown and adapt in the face of change. And since most marketers in the A/E/C industry don't come from a technical background, it's a valuable tactic for career advancement. Here are just a few ways that curiosity is in your court.

**Let's start with the obvious – asking questions keeps you sharp.** It supports the idea of lifelong learning which is fundamental to professional and personal growth. Fortunately, in our industry, folks are typically very willing to share their expertise. Take advantage of that but also be respectful of people's time. Perhaps you're in the middle of a meeting and don't understand one of the concepts being discussed. You may feel uncomfortable interrupting the meeting to ask a question, and that's ok. Find someone afterwards that you think would be willing to explain things. And don't assume you're the only person in the room who may not understand something. Our industry loves acronyms and jargon. Chances are, someone else has the same question.

**It shows you're engaged** – and that matters for so many reasons. Managers notice the people who are curious and engaged. It demonstrates that you want to be in the room, and that you're invested in yourself and your organization. It can truly help set you apart from your peers. And when you demonstrate curiosity, it's likely that the people around you will start to feel more comfortable asking their own questions. Like so many things when it comes to company culture, it can have a snowball effect.

It's a meaningful way to contribute, even if you aren't the expert. Let's face it – you won't be the expert in most conversations. And you may not always feel you have something to contribute. But you do! Asking questions demonstrates that you're listening and interested in offering your thoughts. And often times, questions can unexpectedly take the conversation in the right direction.

**Questions are also a powerful tool for people leaders** when it comes to interactions with team members. It's the idea of listening more than you speak, a particularly valuable tactic when providing feedback or coaching a team member. What better way to support a team member than to ask thoughtful questions that allow them to share their thoughts, concerns, and aspirations?

Now that you know the benefits of intellectual curiosity, what's not to love? It can help us build relationships, solve problems, and influence change. It can foster creativity and innovation. And it can drive engagement – within ourselves and with those around us. So, I encourage you to move forward with curiosity and keep asking those questions.

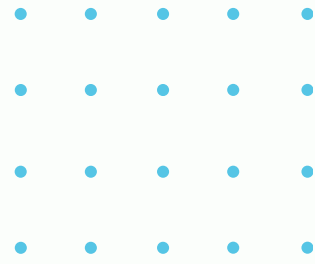
**“The important thing is not to stop questioning.  
Curiosity has its own reason for existing.”**

Albert Einstein

# smps CALENDAR

South Florida

## of events



**MARCH 16** | Polo & Partnerships: A Match to Remember - National Polo Center, Wellington, 2:30pm-5pm



**MARCH 26** | From Inbox to Impact Mastering Email Marketing for Growth and Engagement, Virtual Event, 12pm-1pm



**APRIL 23** | SMPS Education Panel - Future Trends in Educational Facility Design, Alan B. Levan/NSU Broward Center of Innovation, 9am-11:30am



**JUNE 11** | SMPS Healthcare Panel - Driving Value in the Healthcare Built Environment, Double Tree by Hilton Deerfield Beach, 11:30am-1pm



SMPS South Florida reserves the right to modify the schedule of events based on availability of venues, panelists, educators, etc.

For up-to-date information, please see our events page.



[www.smpssouthflorida.com](http://www.smpssouthflorida.com)



SMPS South Florida reserves the right to modify the schedule of events based on availability of venues, panelists, etc.

# Call for Volunteers

As the heartbeat of South Florida’s marketing and business development professionals in the A/E/C sector, SMPS South Florida recognizes the importance of diverse perspectives and expertise in driving innovation and progress. Whether individuals are seasoned professionals or burgeoning talents, eager to make their mark, there's a place for everyone to contribute and grow within our organization. By joining committees or board positions, volunteers have the opportunity to shape the future of the industry, foster meaningful connections, and actively participate in initiatives that elevate the standards of practice and excellence within the A/E/C community and our chapter. Embracing collaboration and collective wisdom, SMPS South Florida invites individuals to **embark on this journey of professional development and community engagement by joining our board or a committee!**

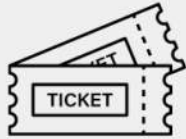
For more information, please contact President, **Melissa Bailes at [mbailes@hedrickbrothers.com](mailto:mbailes@hedrickbrothers.com)**.

# 6 REASONS YOU SHOULD BECOME AN ANNUAL SPONSOR

SMPS South Florida has a database of more than 2,500 people who frequently make buying decisions for the services you provide. From September to June, the chapter offers monthly educational events, professional development seminars and social events customized for seasoned and emerging business development and marketing professionals. These meetings and events give sponsors a premier opportunity to introduce products and/or services to a concentrated market.

## FREE ADMISSION

You will receive free admission to an event of your choice.



## BRAND AWARENESS

Your company logo will be featured in a variety of newsletters, social media posts, email blasts, events, etc.



## NETWORKING

Approximately 50-150 professionals typically attend the luncheon and professional development programs.



## ADVERTISEMENT

Your firm will have an ad in our quarterly newsletter, which is distributed to hundreds of industry professionals.



## RECOGNITION

You will receive recognition at all events, social media posts, and email blurbs



## EXPOSURE

You will have exposure to over 80 members



## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

SMPS South Florida President  
**Melissa Bailes**  
mbailes@hedrickbrothers.com



## Southeastern Regional Conference West Palm Beach, Florida May 19-21, 2025

For the first time ever, South Florida is proud to be the host for the SMPS 2025 Southeastern Regional Conference (SERC)! **Destination South Florida** asks you to buckle up and get ready for an adventure-packed conference filled with keynote speakers, immersive educational classes, breakout sessions plus a host of networking social events that will leave you looking to extend your stay!

From the beauty and opulence of the Palm Beach lifestyle, sophistication of Boca Raton, funky vibes of Delray Beach, the bustling downtown of trendy Fort Lauderdale or the colorful art deco streets of Miami, South Florida has it all! Vibrant cities brimming with culture and nightlife, beautiful beaches and ocean attractions, the best in entertainment, fine dining, top tier sports, nature, shopping, diverse communities... it's what makes living, and working in this market an ever evolving and exciting path.

**Destination South Florida** will surely prove we are so much more beyond the beach!

*More info*

[Visit the SERC Website](#)

## FOR SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

[click here](#)

**DON'T  
MISS OUT!**

# HQ Virtual Education Events

**March 20**  
**2:00pm**  
**VIRTUAL**

## MAXIMIZING ROI: CRAFTING DATA-DRIVEN MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR A/E/C SUCCESS - SMPS HQ

This course will guide AEC professionals in creating data-driven content and marketing strategies that deliver measurable ROI. Participants will learn to set clear marketing objectives, design high-impact content for their target audiences, and implement campaigns that can be continuously optimized through analytics. By examining real-world case studies attendees will be equipped with the tools to maximize their marketing budget and effectively demonstrate value to stakeholders.

<https://onlinelearning.smps.org/products/maximizing-roi-crafting-data-driven-marketing-strategies-for-aec-success>

**April 17**  
**2:00pm**  
**VIRTUAL**

## TURNING FEEDBACK INTO ACTION: PRACTICAL STEPS TO ELEVATE CLIENT EXPERIENCE AND DRIVE RESULTS - SMPS HQ

This webinar explores why prioritizing client feedback is essential and provides actionable steps to create a feedback program that goes beyond typical "satisfaction" surveys. Attendees will learn how to uncover hidden concerns, understand genuine client sentiment, and proactively identify clients who may be at risk. By implementing a robust client feedback system, firms can take deliberate steps to strengthen relationships, elevate the client experience, and drive measurable business outcomes.

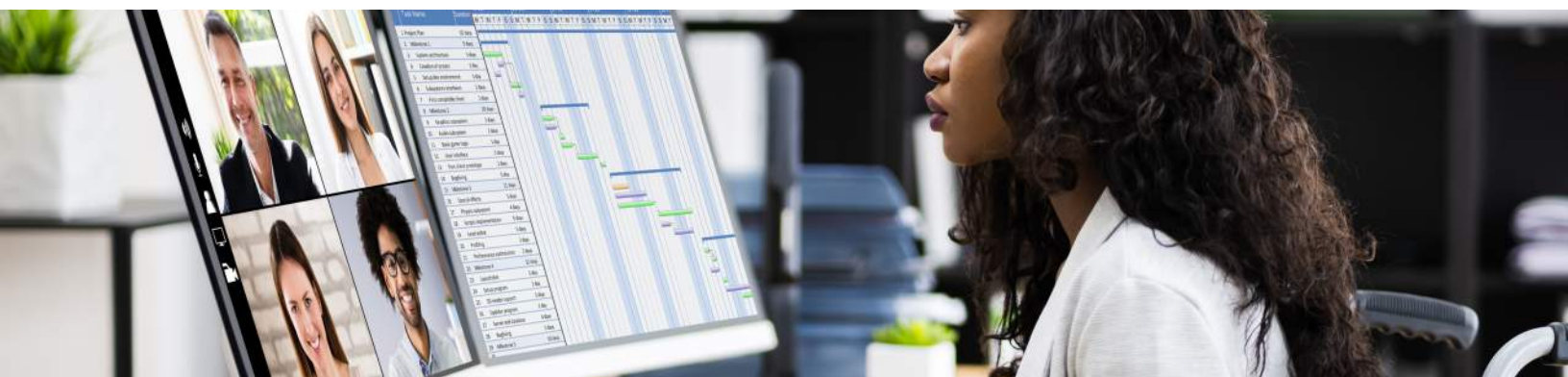
<https://onlinelearning.smps.org/products/turning-feedback-into-action-practical-steps-to-elevate-client-experience-and-drive-results>

**May 8**  
**2:00pm**  
**VIRTUAL**

## PROPOSAL DIFFERENTIATION: STANDING OUT IN A SEA OF SAME - SMPS HQ

Without brand differentiation, firms can struggle in competitive environments and experience win rate erosion. And let's face it: A/E/C industries are competitive. As more firms move to internal AI platforms and asset management to streamline the proposal process, they need to remain strategic with their messaging...going beyond commonly used words like quality and collaboration to distinguish their approach from the others.

<https://onlinelearning.smps.org/products/proposal-differentiation-standing-out-in-a-sea-of-same>



# NEW/RENEWED MEMBERS!



- **Anneliese Ziegenbein** - Hartranft Lighting Studios
- **Maria Baronetto** - Moss & Associates, LLC
- **Sara Mitchell** - Moss & Associates, LLC
- **Sierra Greco** - Moss & Associates, LLC
- **Charissa Brannon** - Moss & Associates, LLC
- **Julianne Diaz-Tallon** - NV2A Group
- **Thomas Westberg, Assoc. AIA** - Arquitectonica
- **Carolina Correa** - NV2A Group
- **Carolina Ramirez, Assoc. AIA** - PGAL
- **Christine Corrigan** - Hedrick Brothers Construction Co., Inc.



SMPS is more than a membership organization. It's where like-minded marketers, business developers, and firm leaders go to make a positive impact on their careers and help build business for their firms.

When you join SMPS, you'll:

- Be connected to top-quality education and critical business and career resources.
- Access marketing tools and training to drive more effective results.
- Gain business development resources to generate new growth.
- Benefit from leadership opportunities, training, and skills to build your career and your firm's business.
- Amplify your influence with your marketing team and firm to create more business opportunities.
- Join a community of like-minded peers, over 7,100 strong, engaged in advancing the value of marketing and business development in the A/E/C industries, and in the success of their firms.

For more information, please contact **Renee Kissane** at [Renee.kissane@gmail.com](mailto:Renee.kissane@gmail.com)

you



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



president

**melissa bailes**

Senior Pursuit Manager  
Hedrick Brothers Construction



president elect

**kelly stout**

Business Development Specialist  
DRMP



treasurer

**eva strickland, ei**

Business Manager  
Jezerinac Group



immediate past president

**kristen lawlor**

CMO  
Jezerinac Group



secretary

**karen rachels**

Marketing Coordinator  
Chen Moore and Associates



director of programs

**suzanne moore**

Marketing & BD Specialist  
H2R Corp



director of education

**rachel stevens, cpsm**

Vice President National Pursuits  
Suffolk Construction



director of membership

**renee kissane**

Senior Marketing Coordinator



director of comms

**bri gagliardi**

Business Development Manager  
EXP



chapter advisor

**bonni funt**

Director of Business Development  
TSF Geo



chapter advisor

**bradley jackson**

Director of Marketing and BD  
Engenuity Group



chapter advisor

**juli edwards**

Director of Business Development

SMPS South Florida welcomes you to reach out for event ideas, programming, and suggestions!

We're also always accepting volunteers to help on our committees.

Please reach out to Chapter President, Melissa Bailes, for more information.



# THE AEC NEXUS

A quarterly publication of the latest news, events, and educational opportunities for SMPS South Florida members.



[www.smpssouthflorida.com](http://www.smpssouthflorida.com)



[linkedin.com/company/smps-south-florida](https://linkedin.com/company/smps-south-florida)



[www.instagram.com/SMPSSoFL/](https://www.instagram.com/SMPSSoFL/)



[www.facebook.com/smpssouthflorida](https://www.facebook.com/smpssouthflorida)