



Southern California Vocal Association

August 2026

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bethany Encina

Happy New School Year, from your new SCVA President. I am so grateful to step into this role in my 10th year serving this board. When 2016-2018 President Karen Garrett invited me to join the SCVA Board as Membership Chair, I could never envision the ways our world and our profession would change in the time before I would assume this role. My life – and yours, I imagine – look completely different. But one thing has remained constant through all of the challenges of the past ten years... SCVA is still an organization I believe in.

I am so proud of and grateful for the countless music educators – volunteers! – who have stepped onto this board and made an impact on our community of music makers for the past 87 years. Thousands of excellent musical experiences, inspirational sessions, votes of confidence, and friendships – none of which would have existed without the generous work of so many past and present board members. I am humbled to be allowed to serve alongside them.

As we move into a bright, shiny new school year, I want to warmly thank our outgoing board members for their leadership – Tammi Alderman, Kenneth Haro, Daniel Alvarez, Drew Lewis, Sarah Flores and Marco Rodriguez, and to welcome our new Festivals Team – Connie Tu, Greta Davis and Jacqueline Reef! I'm thrilled at the thought of what our team can accomplish over the next two years together.

I want to encourage all of our SCVA members to lean into your professional relationships this year. There is so much excellent music, so many inspiring conversations, and so much GOODNESS to be had when you're engaging with your fellow educators. Take advantage of what SCVA has to offer in terms of building your supportive community, and see what happens!

See you at the Fall InService!

Bethany Encina
President

Michael Ushino
Past President
High School Honor Choir I

Carolyn Kelley
Treasurer

Bekka Knauer
Secretary

Dora Ridgeway
Membership

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High School Honor Choir II

Monica Benson
Vocal Solo Competition

Jacqueline Reef
Festivals I

Greta Davis
Festivals II

Connie Tu
Festival Adjudication

Sammy Salvador
Jr High Honor Choir

Brandon Harris
Show Choir

Kaitlin Pi
Jazz Festival

Kristen Walton
Social Media

SCVA Fall In-Service 2026

Introducing Our Keynote Speaker!



Dr. Gene Peterson

Dr. Gene Peterson is the Artistic Director for Perform International/Perform America, casting the mission and vision for performance events and tours in the United States and throughout the world.

Dr. Peterson is an internationally recognized choral conductor and clinician, whose prior appointments include Director of Choral & Vocal Studies and Professor of Music at the Collinsworth School of Performing Arts at California Baptist University in Riverside, California, Director of Choral Studies at Bethel University (Minnesota) and Associate Director of Choral Activities at the University of Tennessee. Dr. Peterson has also served conductor for secondary school, church, and community choirs around the United States. Ensembles under his leadership have performed in venues throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, including the Sistine Chapel, the Sydney Opera House, Chicago Symphony Hall, and Carnegie Hall.

Due to his reputation in the international choral community, Dr. Peterson is in high demand as a lecturer, choral clinician and adjudicator for local, regional, and international choral festivals, symposiums and workshops, has conducted numerous honor choirs and all-state choirs, and served as a guest conductor for choral concerts and festivals around the world. He specifically has been honored to contribute to the choral community in Asia as a clinician and jury member for Andrea O. Veneracion International Choral Festival, Bali International Choral Festival, Ken Steven International Choral Festival, Malaysian Choral Eisteddfod, and Singapore International Choral Festival. He has also guest conducted in Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore.

Date: **Friday, September 25, 2026**

Location: **Fullerton Free Church**

\$80 Early Registration/\$90 Late Registration/\$20 Student Registration

Note: Early Registration Ends **September 18, 2026**

Register today at www.scvachoral.org!

New! Conducting Masterclass Session

By popular demand, we will have a **Conducting Master Class** session at the **SCVA Fall In-Service!**

Prospective conductors will submit a **video audition** of a conducting performance:

Recording must be 10 minutes or less

Video must be taken with the camera facing the conductor

Recording can be from a rehearsal or performance

Consideration given to conductors with varying experience levels in the field.

Deadline by **September 1**/Notification by **September 7**



SCVA Fall-Inservice

SEPTEMBER
25

EVENT SCHEDULE



A Day of Learning for Choral Music Educators
& Collegiate Music Education Majors.

Registration & Coffee

8:30 AM

Check in and share a coffee with a colleague!

Introductions & Welcome

8:55 AM

Official Welcome to all!

Keynote

9:00 AM

Sustaining the Song: Global Perspectives on Balance for Choral
Community, Leadership and Life (Dr. Gene Peterson)

Interest Sessions

10:00 AM

- Building Strong Treble Ensembles (Kristen Walton)
- Games & Improv: Building your Jazz/Contemporary A cappella Ensemble's Musicianship and Teamwork (Christine Mocha)
- Toolbox for Fun in Elementary Music (Kim Nason)

Conducting Masterclass

11:00 AM

Dr. Gene Peterson works with pre-selected conductors for the learning of all!

Lunch & SCVA General Mtg

12:15 PM

Share a meal and learn more about SCVA!

Round Table Discussion

1:30 PM

Table talks with burning topics important in our field.

Reading Session

2:00 PM

Music from around the world and tried-and-true winners for your
choirs! (Dr. Gene Peterson)

Wrap Up

3:00 PM

Give Away Drawing & Thank You's!

Fullerton Free Church

2801 N Brea Blvd, Fullerton, CA 92835

SCVA High School Honor Choir

Meet Your Honor Choir Conductors!

Get Excited!!



Dr. Jeffrey Benson
SSAA Honor Choir



Lori Marie Rios
SATB Honor Choir



Sydney Guillaume
TTBB Honor Choir

AUDITIONS

Auditions: **September 19 & 26, 2026**

Audition Locations: **Posted on www.scvachoral.org!**

Online Application & Application Fee Due by **September 5, 2026**

Honor Choir Weekend: **November 5-7, 2026**

Honor Choir Weekend Location: **University of Redlands &
Redlands High School**

Register at www.scvachoral.org today!

Your Students CAN Audition for Honor Choir: How you can help them...

Bethany Encina, president

It's no secret among students and close colleagues that I love Honor Choir. I often tell my students that if I'd had the opportunity to participate in SCVA Honor Choir as a High Schooler, I would have known what I wanted to do professionally much sooner. If your students aren't auditioning for Honor Choir, they're missing a wonderful opportunity to interact with the larger choral community, create relationships with potential future colleagues and learn from world-class conductors (and then bring that newfound knowledge and passion home to share with your other singers!).

Below are recommendations and some of my favorite strategies for helping my students prepare for Honor Choir auditions. They're simple enough to incorporate into daily rehearsals, and my students invariably know what to expect in auditions as a result - lessening the fear of the unknown.

- **Practical/Music Theory Portion:** It takes 45 seconds - 2 minutes to incorporate these skills into your daily warmups, and doing the full routine in a different key every day grows your singers' muscle memory working with solfege. It's a great habit to build at the end of warmups: Major Scale, Major Triad, Minor Triad (built on DO), Chromatic scale. Easy.
- **Solo Portion:** Teaching your students an art song in unison (and even performing it in concert) is not a waste of ensemble time! Some of them will never experience this genre anywhere else. And at the end of their time with you, they could have 1-4 audition pieces prepared for college auditions!
 - Here are some of my favorites to hear and teach (just strictly from the 24 Italian Art Songs & Arias, though of course there are endless possibilities from the wider repertoire): *Nel cor piu non mi sento*; *Per la gloria d'adorarvi*; *Nina* (great for teaching minor tonality); *O del mio dolce ardor*.
 - Some of my least favorites (just my own personal opinion, not reflective of quality): *Amarilli, mia bella*; *Sebben crudele* (these two are SO long and repetitive). And I have a love-hate relationship with good, old *Caro mio ben*. As much as we may be sick of hearing it, *Caro mio ben* has some great qualities, and newbies to art music seem to love it!
 - Masterclass - Having a structured time in class for students to try out their audition piece in front of the group and get positive feedback from their peers (and constructive criticism from you) is invaluable to everyone in the room and a great way to create some variety in your rehearsal routine.

Your Students CAN Audition for Honor Choir, cont...

- **Tonal Memory Portion:** Focus is key. If my students think the first few examples are very easy and they “check out,” they invariably mess up the remaining examples. I recommend audiating during the first playing and then humming during the second. I also encourage my students to sing back on a syllable beginning with a voiced consonant such as “Na” or “La” which seems to give them a little bit of connection to what they’ve just hummed.
- **Sight Reading Portion:** There is so much to say and so many strategies I’ve seen for this portion, but I’ll limit to the 3 most common thoughts I have while adjudicating:
 - Practice the example *out loud* during the practice time. Sing loudly and confidently and get used to hearing your voice in the room. Very advanced students (or those with perfect pitch) are often successful practicing fully via audiation, but everyone else could really use the practice of feeling their voice fully resonate and owning the sound of it before the “real thing.”
 - Teach your students to establish the tonality in their head and voice using tonal patterns. I am a proponent of Gordon Music Learning Theory, which relies heavily on this type of teaching for music literacy. The establishing pattern I use the most is Sol - La - Sol - Fa - Me - Re - Ti - Do, but I often will also use the full set of patterns: D-M-S, S-M-D, R-T-R, S-F-R-T, S-D.
 - During the practice time, when you get to the difficult part of the example (...it’s measure 3, always.) and can’t figure out the solfege, don’t go back to the beginning and start over! This happens so often and wastes so much time! Stop where you are, find Do, and count up or down to the trouble pitch. Worst case scenario, skip over it and finish practicing the end of the example, but don’t start over!!
- **Adjudicate!** I’ve been adjudicating honor choir auditions for 10 years, and I see the same pitfalls and successful audition strategies over and over again. Serving as an adjudicator has not only helped me feel that I’m serving our choral community, but has taught me how to help my students better. I highly recommend signing up to adjudicate and/or host auditions when the time comes!

Festivals

2026 Wrap Up and Looking Forward to 2027

Congratulations to our SCVA community on a fantastic 2026 festival season!

Going into the 26-27 school year, we welcome a new Festival VP team:

Jacqueline Reeffer, VP I

Greta Davis, VP II

Connie Tu, VP of Adjudication

I'd like to extend some special thanks to the 25-26 Festival VP team--Kenneth Haro, Trevor Torres, and Daniel Alvarez--as well as the SCVA Board, adjudicators, and festival hosts. Last year, our festivals reached 11,648 students across Southern California! This would not be possible without those who volunteer their time, effort, and energy to run, organize, and improve our festivals. As the incoming VP I, I am very grateful for the groundwork that has already been laid and I am excited to serve our community of teachers and singers in a meaningful way.

2026 Ratings Summary

Performances

Superior Ratings - 199 (60%)

Excellent Ratings - 116 (35%)

Good Ratings - 2 (1%)

Participant Ratings - 0 (0%)

No Show - 12 (4%)

Sight Reading

Superior Ratings - 88 (71%)

Excellent Ratings - 26 (21%)

Good Ratings - 5 (4%)

Participant Ratings - 1 (1%)

No Show - 4 (3%)

Upcoming Deadlines for 26-27

Festival Host Registration is Open: July 1-Oct 1

Free Group Registration for Hosts: Oct 5-8

Concert Festival Registration Opens: Oct 15

Festival Host Registration is OPEN!

Why host?

- Choose your festival date
- No transportation costs
- One free ensemble registration
- Full adjudication team provided

All you need is a venue, risers, sound shell, and microphones.

https://scvachoral.org/festival_host_login.php

PROSPECTIVE FESTIVAL ADJUDICATORS

SCVA is seeking talented individuals to serve as sight-reading adjudicators, festival adjudicators, and festival clinicians. If you are passionate about serving as an adjudicator, consider joining our team!

We are looking for adjudicators who are able to fulfill the following job description:

1. Provide choral adjudications (written and spoken) to school choirs at all levels in a fast, clear, and encouraging manner.
2. Provide positive, meaningful feedback in all categories of the adjudication form.
3. Make specific and encouraging comments focused on promoting the choir's improvement.
4. Complete adjudications professionally, promptly, and as directed.

Contact Connie Tu at connietu@scvachoral.org if you are interested in applying to adjudicate.



MIDDLE SCHOOL/9TH GRADE
HONOR CHOIR
2026-2027

**AUDITION
HOSTS NEEDED!!**

Dr. Lynn Atkins
Conductor

Important Dates

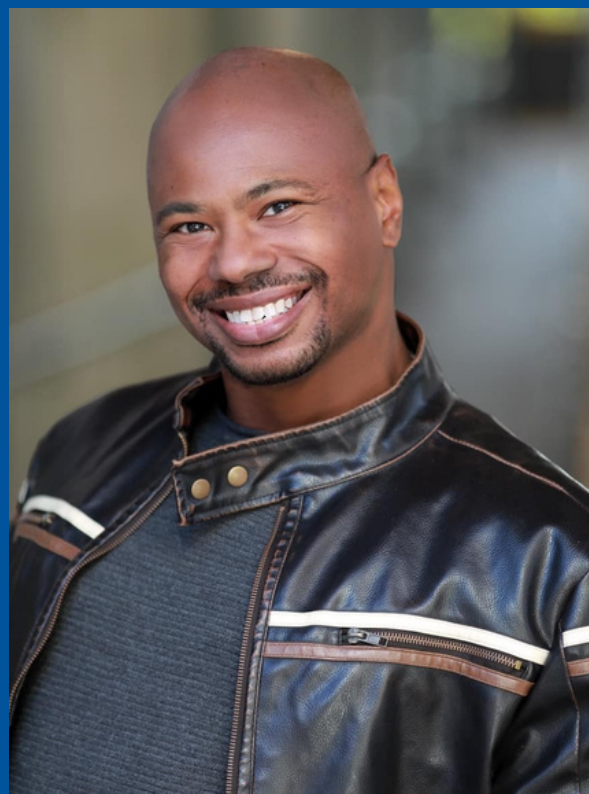
✦ **Saturday January 30th**
Audition Weekend #1

✦ **Saturday February 6th**
Audition Weekend #2

✦ **Saturday March 13th**
Regional Rehearsal
Ramirez Intermediate School
Eastvale

✦ **Saturday May 1st**
Rehearsal Day and Final Concert
Portola High School ~ Irvine

**AUDITION
SIGN UPS OPEN IN
JANUARY!**



**OPEN TO ALL
6TH-9TH
GRADERS!**

SCVA SPRING 2027

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL

VOCAL JAZZ & ACAPPELLA FESTIVAL



FEB 5TH & 6TH

REGISTRATION
FEE

\$275

REGISTER AT

**SCVACHORAL.ORG
/FESTIVALS**

REGISTRATION
OPENS OCT. 15, 2026
SPACE IS LIMITED!

LOCATION

SAUGUS HS

21900 CENTURION
WAY, SANTA CLARITA,
CA 91350

Don't Make Fundraising a Full-Time Job!

by Dora Ridgeway



As choir directors, we often start the school year with a long list of priorities: recruiting singers, planning repertoire, finalizing concert and festival dates, sizing uniforms, emailing home ALREADY about student behavior. Somewhere near the bottom of that list is fundraising for your program.

For many directors, fundraising feels overwhelming. We aren't sure where to start, traditional product sales don't seem worth the effort, and parent participation can be inconsistent. The good news is that successful fundraising doesn't require dozens of volunteers or a complex campaign. In many cases, a few strategic fundraisers can provide the resources your program needs, while minimizing the workload on students, families, and you!

This article explores several practical fundraising approaches that have worked well for choir programs, along with tips for maximizing participation and revenue.

Why Fundraising Feels Difficult

For starters, most of our teacher preparation programs do not give detailed instructions on how to successfully fundraise. Your college professor might not even have experience with that in their career! Finding a good starting place can feel overwhelming, even impossible. The year is in such a rush, and taking the time to plan a detailed fundraiser that might not even work is disheartening. The paperwork associated with fundraising can be frustrating to read and may require chasing down students to sign for it. There might even be bad experiences with your parent groups, either a lack of participation or criticism for asking for money. Fortunately, today's fundraising options are more flexible than ever.

The First Step: Ask

This might feel too simple or obvious, but the best place to start (after making a tentative budget) is asking for the money you need. This can come in the form of district money, site funds, grants, or parent donations.

Discuss your options with your admin team or VAPA coordinator. Prepare a solid explanation of what you plan to do and how it will educationally benefit your students, and see what comes back. You might be surprised!

Another option is to look for grants that are specific to music and education for basic classroom supplies. Want to attend a conference but can't seem to find the budget? Check out NEA's learning and leadership grant. Need new risers? Look through local union grants or music-related professional organizational grants. These grants, while not always a reliable stream of income for your projects, are created explicitly to help you grow your leadership or help out in your classroom.

Lastly, one of the best ways to get money is to ask your parent group. Most families will prefer to work out either a payment plan or to donate to the program rather than selling candy bars at work or in the parking lot at a supermarket.

One idea is to introduce a "Choir Student Package", where the per-student cost is broken down in a description and asked for as a lump sum. For example, your per student costs for festival costs may be \$5.00, the bus to the festival is \$10.00, the choir T-shirt is \$10.00, the buses to and from your end-of-year trip are \$25.00, and the tickets for whatever theme park/workshop/big fun trip you take would be \$150.00. Break this down in a letter or email, and let them know the choir package includes all these experiences for \$200.00. This does sound like a lot, but for many parents, this is cheaper than taking time to invest in something they don't care about. (Also, look up club soccer pricing in your area; \$200 per student for the year is nothing comparatively!)

Parents appreciate knowing what their funds are going to, and being able to directly support their student. Of course, if you run this through your ASB club, or a site donations account, this can also be posted on your district's student store, and sent online to grandparents, aunts and uncles, or anyone else in your student's life to help support them as well.

Online Crowdfunding: The Modern Choir Director's Tool

You have likely heard varying success stories with online crowdfunding; directors either love it or hate it. A few important factors to consider with online crowdfunding are these: How much of your funds do you get to keep, how easy is your platform for you and your community to use, and how much work is going to be required of you? An additional caution: some districts frown upon crowdfunding sites like GoFundMe, so if online crowdfunding is something you are drawn to, check your district policies first. Below are a few online crowdfunding sites that are very popular with California choir directors:

Schoolfundr is an online program that is very-user friendly, gives detailed reports and analytics about your progress, and has one of the best percentages of any online crowdfunding site. Your organization keeps almost all of the donations (minus processing fees), allowing you to open a fundraiser without much effort on your end.

DonorsChoose is a website that is mostly project-based. If you are crowdfunding for new risers, or a new shelving unit, or any material goods, this is a good website to look into. They even have time where parent donations are matched, giving more to your program.

SnapRaise/Vertical Raise are two companies often used by choir directors due to the extreme ease of the programs. There are dedicated employees to manage your fundraiser, and it often doesn't take much effort. The drawback here is the percentages they take off your money, sometimes up to 20%.

Choose the platform that works for you.

Maximizing Food Fundraisers

We've all gone to a Chipotle fundraiser, but at a certain point, you can only eat so many chicken burrito bowls. Using food fundraisers sparingly but effectively will help you utilize these tools to actually earn money for your program. The best food fundraisers are coordinated with a pre-existing event. Send people to dinner after one of your concerts, or back-to-school night, or anything where they are already out of the house. Promote through students and social media, if possible.

Local chains can be your friend. National chains offer anywhere from 5%-30%, but local businesses may give you even more of a kickback, or be willing to donate their time and efforts to your cause. Building strong community partnerships is something that will only benefit your program.

If there is a coffee shop you frequent, consider a friendly conversation with the manager about a coffee pop-up before school starts, close to campus. Bringing in businesses that are close to you and personal only increases student buy-in, and bringing in something unique is always going to draw a crowd.

Work with your administration to create a routine food fundraiser on campus, such as Kona Ice. There are often pre-approved vendors school districts have that are able to come on campus to sell treats and donate a percentage as a fundraiser. Being able to set one of these up weekly and have that as a passive income through the year is a huge help.

Events as Fundraising Opportunities

What is already going well? Most successful inventors don't re-invent what already works; they create something unique to add on and patent it. How can you do the same with your events? Perhaps your pops concert in the spring is heavily attended, and you could be charging a small ticket sales fee. Try to find some businesses who would like to pay for advertising in your printed (or online) programs. Maybe you can have concessions at concerts, or a local vendor serving food who will give you a kickback! Or some of your parents are small business owners and could design merch for the choirs to then sell at your concerts?

Every activity has fundraising potential to it, even social activities. Hold a choir community event, and charge ticket sales for that. Have an October family Halloween movie night, where you serve popcorn that many movie theaters will donate for schools but charge for drinks. Sell Valentine's Day grams to students at lunch, and have your singers serenade recipients. All these are low-cost, high-potential opportunities.

Make a Plan, Stick to It

The most successful choir fundraisers aren't necessarily the biggest or most creative. They're the ones that get done consistently. Start with one or two fundraising methods that fit your community, evaluate the results, and build from there. Fundraising doesn't need to become another performance to direct, or another plate to spin. When approached strategically, it can become a sustainable tool that builds your program and creates more student opportunities. Go forth!



SAVE THE DATE

SCVA SHOW CHOIR SPECTACULAR



MAY | 15TH | 2026

JOHN A. ROWLAND HIGH SCHOOL
2000 OTTERBEIN AVE ROWLAND HEIGHTS CA 91748

Registration opens November 1st!



NEW TEACHER

Virtual MEET-UPS



Join a Community

Meet other first year
or early educators!



Positive Environment

Find solutions to problems
or new ideas for your
classroom!



Make Connections

Connect with
professionals all over
Southern California!

**EVERY FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH,
FROM 2 PM ONWARD!**

ZOOM MEETING ID: 647 657 0911

WEBSITE UPDATE

Mark Freedkin, SCVA Webmaster



Your E-mail Address Matters SCVA

When you registered or renewed your annual SCVA Membership, you specified your work or personal e-mail address, both of which are unique to you. In some cases, you might have multiple e-mail address aliases for your school, but you must always standardize on the one that you used for your SCVA Membership.

When your students register to participate in an SCVA event, they should use the same e-mail address that you used when you created or renewed your Annual SCVA Membership. The system validates your e-mail address and verifies that your SCVA Membership Dues have been paid. Our systems will reject any student applications (such as Honor Choirs or Vocal Solo Competition) that don't use your primary e-mail address.

When that happens, the application is discarded and there is nothing that we can do to recover it. Instead, it is your responsibility to ensure that your singers use **ONLY** your primary e-mail address that is associated with your SCVA membership. In addition, when we have application deadlines, we cannot accept a claim that a student used the wrong e-mail address or if they had some Internet connectivity problems. It is as if they had not submitted any application at all. This is another great reason to teach your students that waiting until the last minute to submit their applications is not a very good idea.

On a related note, when your students use that primary email address for their audition applications, you can view all of the applications for your students by logging in to the Members-Only area of the website. You can also view all of your Festival Registrations on that page once we open the Festival Registration process.

Hints for using PayPal and How to Save Some Money

When using **PayPal** to pay the application or participation fees for multiple students, you can minimize the processing fees by adding the desired item to your Shopping Cart once, then specify a quantity for that one item. You should not add that item to your Shopping Cart multiple times, since that will result in a larger processing fee being added to your total transaction amount.

Similarly, you can use a single PayPal transaction to pay the application fees, registration fees or participation fees for multiple events (such as multiple Festival Registration fees), rather than checking-out after every individual item. Simply add each item to the Shopping Cart, and then click on the "Continue Shopping" button to return to the SCVA website. After you have completed adding all of the items you wish to purchase, you can then proceed to the check-out page to complete the payment for everything, and you can receive a single invoice for all items you purchased.

Comments, Questions, Suggestions or Complants

If you ever need help with anything related to our website, please contact Mark Freedkin at (714) 357-1187 or "mfreedkin@yahoo.com", and we'll be happy to assist you.

Important Dates & Deadlines

Event

SVJC Honor Choir Audition Portal Opens
Master Conducting Class Videos Due
High School Honor Choir Applications Due
Master Conducting Class Notification
SVJC Audition Deadline
High School Honor Choir Auditions
Fall In-Service
Concert Festival Host Registration Closes
Concert Festival Free Group Registration for Hosts
Concert Festival Registration Opens
High School Honor Choir Weekend
SVJC Honor Choir Weekend

Middle School/9th Grade Honor Choir Auditions
Vocal Jazz Festival
Middle School/9th Grade Regional Rehearsal
Middle School/9th Grade Honor Choir Rehearsal/Concert
Show Choir Spectacular

Date

2026

August 17
September 1
September 5
September 7
September 13
September 19 & 26
September 25
October 1
October 5-8
October 16
November 5-7
November 5-7

2027

January 30 & February 6
February 5 & 6
March 13
May 1
May 15

MEMBER

SPOTLIGHT

**Do you know who
should be here?**

Help us highlight your peers and the great work they are doing! Nominate a friend, colleague, or mentor for an SCVA Membership Spotlight so we can celebrate them with you!



SCAN ME

