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[Home](#) > [News](#)> [Local](#)

Chapter ready to take advantage of growing research, support sites



MEGAN LOVETT—THE DAILY PROGRESS

New board members for the Central Virginia chapter of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association are sworn in at the group's inaugural meeting at the Best Western Charlottesville Airport Inn & Suites, just north of the Greene County line on U.S. 29.

By [Bryan McKenzie](#)
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An international nonprofit association that supports military units, consultants and private contractors working in intelligence and communications installed officers in its new Central Virginia chapter Thursday.

The Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association swore in 10 officials from companies working in the industry at its first monthly luncheon, held at the Best Western Charlottesville Airport Inn & Suites on U.S. 29, just north of the Greene County line.

The board includes representatives from the Albemarle County-based National Ground Intelligence Center, SRC Inc., Battelle Inc., Wagaman Associates, Charlottesville Systems Engineering, Culpeper-based Uriah Group and Richmond-based SAIC Inc.

AFCEA officials said forming the local chapter became more important as the number of companies and researchers in the area from Culpeper to Lynchburg and Harrisonburg to Fort Lee has grown.

“Adrian Felts [of Battelle] and I started talking about all of this over a cup of coffee and we somehow got on the topic of AFCEA and that seemed like the thing to do,” said Gordon Meriwether, of Uriah Group. “We contacted others and the response was amazing. Everyone you see on this board worked hard to make this possible.”

Among the motivations for creating the chapter were the presence of NGIC, the relocation of the Defense Intelligence Agency and the construction of the Joint Use Intelligence Analysis Facility at Rivanna Station. Related operations in the area include information technology company Terremark’s Culpeper data center and other contractors and consultants in Culpeper.

The AFCEA allows military personnel, contractors, small businesses and university researchers to discuss issues and developments in global security, intelligence gathering and information technology and to support and protect troops on the ground.

It also provides scholarships for college students interested in science, technology, electronics and math and works with K-12 students to promote science and math.

“There’s a lot of activity going on around the world and that makes us more relevant as an organization,” Kent Schneider, president and CEO of AFCEA International, told the local chapter before swearing in the board members. “It’s good to see so many organizations here, including small businesses and [the University of Virginia]. We sometimes forget that academia is an important part of this community.”

Terremark officials discussed the company’s cloud computing technology, which provides a virtual network of servers and software allowing government agencies and companies to contract computing services rather than spend capital outlay budgets buying equipment. The company’s computers carry several government Web sites, including the site for the White House.

The chapter was officially chartered in March, but talks between industry members began late in 2009.

Board members for the local chapter are Meriwether, president; Felts, executive vice president; Tim McLaughlin, of NGIC, treasurer; Dean Strong, of Culpeper-based Strong Consulting, vice president of communications; Carole Freas, of SAIC, secretary; Deb Harvey, SRC, of vice president for industry affairs; Neil Casola, of Charlottesville Systems Engineering, chairman of the small business committee; Major Mike Jones, of NGIC, vice president for government affairs; Richard Wagaman, of Wagaman Associates, vice president of programs; and Dave Alley, of Battelle, vice president of Young AFCEANS, for members under the age of 40.

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