

The 2025 Community Leadership Retreat is designed to shine a light on the most important opportunities and challenges shaping Florida's Space Coast, with a focus on leadership, innovation, and impact. This year, we're going a step further—infusing technology and the arts into every element of the experience. From immersive sessions on workforce and the space economy to vibrant social events and interactive leadership training, expect a retreat that's not only thought-provoking, but also creative, connected, and future-focused. While there are no breakout sessions this year, we'll be integrating a dynamic technology platform that allows for real-time interaction and data collection throughout every session, helping us capture insights and ideas as they emerge. Most importantly, we'll leave with clear, actionable outcomes that will be tracked and advanced throughout 2026 under the leadership of incoming Board Chair Peter Mannino. Let's spark new ideas, strengthen relationships, and illuminate the path ahead—together.

Thursday, September 18th

06:00 – 08:00pm **Networking Reception**

If you're able to head down to Jupiter on Thursday, join us in the Wyndham Grand's lobby for a casual kickoff gathering before breaking into small group reservations at local restaurants—an opportunity to mix, mingle, and make new friends. Attendees will participate in making a collaborative poem by choosing one word to contribute.

Sponsored by **Viera Builders**

Friday, September 19th

07:45 – 08:30	Breakfast & Registration	Registration Sponsored by Florida Health Care Plans
08:30 – 08:45	Welcome, Introductions, and Sponsor Recognition	Peter Mannino, Chair-Elect
08:45 – 09:00	Board Meeting (Abbreviated)	Natasha Cartagena Spencer, Board Chair
09:00 – 09:15	State of the Chamber and Vision for 2026	Anne Conroy-Baiter, MRC President/CEO
09:15 – 09:30	Surreal Self Portraits	Derek Gores
09:30 – 10:30	Illuminate the Market: What's Now and What's Next	Joseph Curtin, Merrill Chief Investment Office
10:30 – 10:45	Networking Break	Leader Sponsor: Florida Power & Light
10:45 – 11:45	Lighting the Way: Future Ready Florida	Mark Wilson, Florida Chamber
11:45 – 12:45	Luncheon Buffet / Surreal Self Portraits <i>Take a break, grab a plate, and enjoy great food and conversation with fellow attendees or catch up on calls, texts, and emails!</i>	Champion Sponsor: Kelly Ford

12:45 – 01:45	<p>Shining a Light on a Future Ready Workforce</p> <p><i>As Florida's Space Coast continues to grow, so does the demand for a skilled and adaptable workforce. This panel explores the full spectrum of the talent pipeline—from students just beginning to explore careers, to veterans transitioning to civilian life, to professionals seeking new paths. We'll spotlight innovative programs and partnerships that bridge education and employment, including K–12 career exposure, industry-aligned higher education, credentialing, and reskilling initiatives.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator: Matt Susin / Brevard County School Board ○ Dr. Phil Simpson / EFSC VP Academic & Student Affairs ○ Rachell Rutledge / BPS CTE ○ John Nicklow / FIT President ○ Mildred Coyne / EDC 	Panel Discussion
01:45 – 03 :00	<p>Shining a Light on Tourism: Building Tomorrow's Destination</p> <p><i>Tourism is one of the Space Coast's most powerful economic engines—and it's evolving fast. This session begins with a keynote from Carlos Rodriguez, CEO of Driftwood Capital, who will share insights on Florida's tourism landscape, investment trends, and what's next for the hospitality industry. His remarks will set the stage for a dynamic panel discussion featuring voices from large and small businesses. Together, they'll explore what's driving visitation, how attractions, marketing, and small businesses can work together, and what it takes to stay competitive in an increasingly experience-driven economy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator: Leah Blackmore /GM Courtyard Melbourne West ○ Peter Cranis / Space Coast Office of Tourism ○ Pam Rothenberg / South Brevard Tourism Initiative & Tuckaway Shores ○ Therrin Protze / COO Delaware North ○ Carlos Rodriguez / CEO Driftwood Capital 	Keynote and Panel
03:00 – 03:15	Networking Break	
03:15 – 04:30	<p>Shining a Light on Space: Launching Here, Impacting Everywhere</p> <p><i>The Space Coast is no longer just launching rockets—it's launching an economy. From advanced manufacturing and spaceport infrastructure to commercial launches, satellite tech, and deep space ambitions, the world's eyes are on the Space Coast as a global hub for space innovation. This panel brings together industry leaders to explore how the space economy is</i></p>	Panel Discussion



COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP RETREAT

September 18-20, 2025
Wyndham Grand Jupiter
at Harbourside Place

transforming not only the Cape, but our workforce, supply chains, and regional identity. We'll examine the opportunities ahead, the challenges of scaling sustainably, and what it takes to ensure the benefits of the space economy are felt across sectors and communities.

- Moderator: Jim Thomas / Karmen Line
- Rob Long / CEO, Space Florida
- Wes Langston / VP Space Surveillance, L3Harris
- Kevin Lowdermilk / CEO, Vaya Space
- James Hinds / VP Space, Airbus US Space and Defense
- Northrop Grumman Space Division

04:30 – 04:45	Wrap Up	Rick Simonian
04:45 – 06:00	Hotel Check-In	
06:00 – 07:00	Evening to Shine Networking Reception <i>Get the night started in style at our Illuminate-themed Cocktail Reception—an evening designed to mix, mingle, and spark connection under the stars. Join us for drinks and radiant conversation. Dress to dazzle in your best Illumination-inspired party wear—whether that's shimmering metallics, glowing accessories, or a light of your own making. It's your time to shine!</i>	Sponsored by Airbus U.S. Space & Defense
07:00 – 09:00	Illuminate After Dark Gala <i>We'll turn up the glow at Illuminate After Dark—a dazzling night of celebration, connection, and community. Enjoy a delicious seated dinner followed by a high-energy live auction packed with unique experiences and exciting prizes. Capture the moment at our Illumination-themed photo booth, test your luck in the raffle, and dance the night away with beats from our live DJ. Whether you're here to bid, boogie, or just bask in the glow, this is our night to shine.</i>	Sponsored by AT&T

Saturday, September 20th

08:00 – 08:45	Morning Brew & Recovery Breakfast <i>After a night of celebration, join us for a much-needed dose of caffeine, conversation, and comfort food. Designed to ease you into the day—with plenty of coffee, a hearty breakfast spread, and the relaxed company of fellow retreat-goers</i>	
08:40 – 08:45	Welcome Back	Rick Simonian

08 :45-09 :00	The Power of Three Word Experiment	Derek Gores
09:00 – 11:00	<p>Illuminate the Blind Spots: Leadership Lessons from NASA's Darkest Days</p> <p><i>New this year, a Leadership training session that is for YOU! Dr Laura Gallaher will send you back to the Space Coast with actionable tools to apply to your daily life, designed to elevate your self-awareness, increase your leadership effectiveness and ultimately evolve your culture. Following the tragic Space Shuttle Columbia accident, the investigation said NASA's culture was to blame. The smartest people in the world, literal rocket scientists and Nobel prize winners still fell victim to one of the biggest challenges facing humanity: self-deception. NASA hired Dr. Laura Gallaher develop the leaders, raise their self-awareness and create a culture of psychological safety and mission success.</i></p> <p><i>Leave with actionable tools to: Strengthen psychological safety in your organization; navigate uncertainty with greater confidence; and build a culture of openness and authentic communication.</i></p>	Dr Laura Gallaher
11:00 – 11:15	Closing Remarks	Peter Mannino