

## Wheeling Area Chamber Hosts Annual Lunch with Leaders

WHEELING, W.Va., May 17, 2024 — Around 290 people from the Wheeling area gathered at the White Palace at Wheeling Park yesterday, Thursday, May 16, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce's annual Lunch With Leaders.

Following last year's sold-out luncheon featuring keynote speaker Shelly Moore Capito, this year's luncheon welcomed two highly renowned, skilled speakers to the 2024 Lunch with Leaders: Major General Austin "Sparky" Renforth and Mitch Carmichael, the Cabinet Secretary of WV Department of Economic Development. The Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce strives to update and inspire chamber members and the greater community with this annual event.

"This is one of my favorite events," said Wheeling Chamber President Kurt Zende. "It's rewarding to gather everyone from the area to network and listen to world-renowned speakers share their leadership philosophies," he added.

Major General Austin "Sparky" Renforth is a retired United States Marine Corps veteran who served the United States for 40 years. He commanded at every level and held multiple leadership roles, demonstrating a comprehensive background and an expertise in leadership. In addition to his distinguished military career, he obtained a B.S. in mathematics from the U.S. Naval Academy, a M.S. in management from Troy State University, and multiple other educational certifications over the years. Renforth currently serves as a Senior Advisor at Roberts & Ryan.

In his speech, Renforth reflected on his career and the successes and growth that can be found through servant leadership and investing in youth. Additionally, he emphasized how the tight-knit Wheeling community affected his career.

"The skills I've learned in leadership have come from here in Wheeling, West Virginia. I have never wanted to let the people of Wheeling down — when we talk leadership, it comes down to creating an environment where they don't want to let you down," Renforth said.



Mitch Carmichael, a Jackson County native, has been serving as the first Secretary of Economic Development in West Virginia since February 2021. Previously, Carmichael served in the West Virginia House of Delegates for five consecutive terms, and he also served as a senator from 2012 until 2021. During his time in the Senate, Carmichael was unanimously elected as Senate President-Lieutenant Governor and became the first Republican in the past 90 years to serve back-to-back terms in this role in the state of West Virginia.

Carmichael elaborated on the ever-growing potential of West Virginia state. “This is our moment. This is our time that we are poised to ignite the growth in our state. We must be willing to challenge the status-quo, break every barrier, and confront every issue that faces this state and ignite growth through innovation, prosperity, and opportunity,” he said.

The Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce will house their second annual ATHENA Leadership Awards® Luncheon on June 6, 2024. The Wheeling Area Chamber and Ohio Valley communities are encouraged to reserve their seats for this event online at [www.WheelingChamber.com](http://www.WheelingChamber.com). Tickets are \$30 for Chamber Members and \$40 for Non-Members.

