

History of the ESU

The English-Speaking Union of the United States formally organized in the United States in 1920, two years after the establishment of its counterpart in the British Common-



wealth. The ESU arose from the conviction of its founder, Sir Evelyn Wrench, and a group of like-minded American

and British friends that maintenance of the close personal and national ties forged during World War I was necessary for the preservation of peace. Sir Evelyn firmly believed that given the opportunity to know one another personally, people who shared a common language would soon discover that they also shared similar values, whatever their differences in nationality or background. Its educational mission would be carried out by a host of activities allowing for personal contact between peoples at every level.



The English-Speaking Union
Southwest Virginia Branch
Post Office Box 378
Salem, VA 24153
www.esuus.org/southwestva/

The Branch President's Message

Bob Habermann

A few years ago, my wife and I toured South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana. We had a wonderful time, but the matter which I wish to mention is not the animals or the scenery, but rather the people and the use of the English language.

We learned that there are eleven official languages in South Africa and at least seven unofficial dialects. In Botswana, there are five official languages, and in Zimbabwe, there are eight. But what allows these people to converse with each other is English. In each of these countries, their students must learn English, and much of the business, government, shopping, and entertainment is conducted in English. The English language allows these diverse people to talk to each other and enables us to speak to them.

Today, English is the second most popular language in the world, with an estimated 450 million native speakers. But, it is also the common tongue for many non-English speakers worldwide. Almost a quarter of the globe's population – perhaps 2 billion – can understand English.

The English-Speaking Union aims to unite and empower people of different languages and cultures by building skills and confidence in communication in English. We also explore the richness of the English culture, whether it be literature, art, music, government, or history. With branches in the United States, the United Kingdom, and over 50 countries around the world, the ESU carries out a variety of activities such as debating, public speaking, and student exchange programs. The ESU also runs conferences and seminars and offers scholarships to encourage the effective use of the English language around the globe.

With our Branch's goal of discovering and celebrating the durability and flexibility of the English language, our officers and Board of Directors will continue to provide our members with myriad activities that bring us together.

Please join us.



English-Speaking Union
Southwest Virginia Branch

2025-2026



ESU Mission

The ESU celebrates English as a shared language to foster global understanding and good will by providing educational and cultural opportunities for students, educators, and members.

ESU Vision

The ESU, a nonprofit, non-political organization:

1. Advances global understanding by providing educational opportunities through programs and scholarships for students, educators, and members;
2. Promotes communication and open exchange of ideas among the world's speakers of English;
3. Enriches communities through active involvement of its branch members in outreach programs;
4. Offers financial assistance to students and educators to further academic pursuits in English-related studies; and
5. Develops common bonds through a shared interest in the English language and culture to strengthen friendship among members and those they serve.

ESU Programs 2025-2026

September 21, 2025 4-6 pm

Garden Party Kickoff at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs at 3640 Colonial Avenue. Hors d'oeuvres, wine, and soft drinks will be provided. Guests are most welcome and are free.

November 6, 2025 6-8 pm

Cocktails and dinner at the Shenandoah Club to hear Attorney Eric Monday speak on "The Fincastle Resolutions": the first adopted statement by the American colonists promising resistance to the death to the British crown to preserve political liberties.

December 14, 2025 Noon to 2 pm.

Our annual Holiday Luncheon at the Shenandoah Club. Holiday attire is suggested.

February 19, 2026 3-5 pm.

Afternoon tea and finger foods at the Shenandoah Club to hear Ahoo Salem, Ph.D. from the Blue Ridge Literacy, speak on "Three Journeys to Learning English" as she presents a few of her students to share their journeys to the U.S. and their path to learning English.

March 26, 2026 6-8 pm.

Cocktails and dinner at the Shenandoah Club to hear Jeffrey Vick, a career foreign service officer and currently a political science professor at Roanoke College, speak on "My Love for Language".

April 30, 2026 6-8 pm.

Cocktails and dinner at the Shenandoah Club along with our Annual Meeting, followed by a presentation by Dr. Paul Knox, a University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech and the author of several books, who will talk about "A Social History of London in Two Old Buildings".

SWVA Branch Officers

President	Robert Habermann
Past President	Curtis Steeele
Vice-President Programs	Gates DeHart
Vice-President Membership	Pegram Johnson
Secretary	Anne Tiffany
Treasurer	Conrad Grundlehner

For membership information, please contact:

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Annual Dues are:

\$75 for an individual
or
\$125 for a couple

For more information on the
Southwest Virginia ESU branch
please go to our website at:
www.esuus.org/southwestva/