



2025 SoDak State SHRM Conference Schedule

Wednesday, April 30th

Mayor Jason Salamun | *Welcome* | 1:00pm-1:15pm



Jason Salamun draws from a wide range of leadership experiences including being a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, serving as a vice president at Black Hills Federal Credit Union, and serving as executive pastor at Fountain Springs Church. In June of 2023, he was elected mayor of Rapid City, South Dakota.

Joshua Routh - *A Complaint Free World* | *Keynote* | 1:15pm-2:45pm

How to turn complainers into collaborators - In this engaging, inspiring and humorous presentation, you'll discover how to recognize the motivation behind complaints and, most importantly, how to redirect these negative complaints into positive collaboration.



Speaker Bio: Joshua Routh is an internationally recognized speaker, entertainer, and founder of Circus Kaput, a top variety arts talent agency. With a dynamic background in magic, comedy, acrobatics, juggling and sword swallowing, he masterfully blends his performance skills with leadership insights to engage audiences. Joshua's talks focus on fostering genuine connections, enhancing team collaboration, and creating positive workplace environments. Drawing on his experiences as a former circus acrobat and forest firefighter, he emphasizes trust, communication, and teamwork.

National SHRM Update with Heather Merrick | 2:45pm-3:00pm

Heather Merrick - *Effective Talent Acquisition and Onboarding* | *Breakout* | 3:30pm-4:30pm



Talent acquisition significantly influences the employee life cycle and shapes the overall employer brand. Beginning with recruitment, it sets the tone for an employee's journey within the organization. Effective talent acquisition ensures the right fit for roles, fostering engagement and productivity from the start. Seamless onboarding, a crucial phase directly impacted by talent acquisition, introduces new hires to company culture and values, affecting retention and job satisfaction.

Speaker Bio: Heather is the Members & Community Director for SHRM's North Central Region. An empathetic and strategic creator of connections between people and between organizations, Heather has over 15 years of experience in HR related roles with a strong background in talent acquisition, organizational & workforce development, employee engagement, HR policy development, & HR strategy. Finding great people for companies, building and optimizing teams, and creating healthy work cultures is her passion, and she is committed to making the community she lives in a better place for everyone.

Jennifer Frank – *Workplace Investigations* | *Breakout* | 3:30pm-4:30pm (repeated Thu. at 1:30pm)

In this informative session, Jennifer will describe the investigation process and the different stages, focusing on the best practices for each. She will tackle some of the tricky, yet important aspects of investigations, such as when to use an outside investigator, how to make credibility determinations, how to break the common "he said/she said" scenario and drawing themes and findings/conclusions.



Speaker Bio: Jennifer Suich Frank, Esq., AWI-CH, SHRM-SCP is an employment lawyer with the law firm of Lynn, Jackson, Shultz & Lebrun, in Rapid City, SD. Jennifer has been an attorney for 27 years and was previously employed in several positions in human resources. Jennifer advises businesses and human resources professionals on a variety of employment issues, including discrimination, FMLA, ADA/disability, wage & hour, hiring/firing/discipline, and non-compete issues. She also counsels and drafts non-compete agreements and employment contracts, including executive employment agreements, severance/separation agreements, as well as reviews, revises and drafts employment handbooks, policies and procedures. Jennifer has been active in Black Hills Society for Human Resource Management (BH SHRM), having served as its Certification Director for three years (2016-2018), BH SHRM President-Elect (2019), BH SHRM President in 2020 and BH SHRM Past President (2021 - 2023). Jennifer obtained her SHRM-SCP certification in 2019. Jennifer enjoys family time with her husband and her teenage son, visiting her young adult daughter in Colorado, hiking, gardening, cooking, and reading great beach novels!



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Sandra Ogunremi – Successful Strategies for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging | Breakout | 3:30pm-4:30pm



The field of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) continues to evolve and organizations are still learning how to fully embrace it. Human Resource professionals need to be very mindful of the conflicts that can arise when leaders and employees say or do things that could negatively impact the image of their organization. Navigating the DEIB space should be done carefully and in a well thought out manner. In order to be successful, it is imperative we have effective strategies within our organizations while ensuring ongoing educational opportunities are in place.

Speaker Bio: Dr. Sandra Ogunremi, DHA is the Vice President of Patient Relations and Belonging for Monument Health. In her role, she oversees Patient Relations, Belonging initiatives, Spiritual Care Services, Patient Experiences, Guest Services, Volunteer Services and Valet Services. She has been with Monument Health since 2008. Her successful work led to Monument Health Rapid City Hospital being recognized as one of three healthcare systems to earn the 2023 Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care (EOC) Award. Additionally, Monument Health received the 2024 Diversity and Inclusion award presented by Elevate Rapid City. Ogunremi earned a Doctorate in Health Administration from Central Michigan University (CMU) in 2009. She has a Master of Science in Administration from CMU and a Bachelor of Pharmacy degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. She is a Certified in Diversity Management with the American Hospital Association's Institute for Diversity and Health Equity. She is a Cornell Certified Diversity Practitioner and holds several other certifications that enable her to deliver her best.

Christy Westerman, Marsh McLennan Agency – Benefit Trends | Breakout | 3:30pm-4:30pm

Taking a look at 2025 trends in benefits and how to create a long-term strategy. Will touch on ERISA and fiduciary responsibilities and communicating the value of your organization's benefits to your employees.



Speaker Bio: Christy partners with clients to build strategic benefit plans that reflect their corporate mission, vision, and budget. She has a wealth of knowledge and expertise in benefit plan design and is passionate about helping her clients develop an overall benefit strategy aligned with their unique needs. With nearly 18 years of experience as a consultant, Christy takes great pride in the trust and loyalty her clients place in her and her team. Her dedication and work ethic has made her a multi-year recipient of the Wellmark BCBS Promise Award. Christy is also dedicated to her community, donating to various non-profits throughout the year and especially during the holiday season. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her family camping, hiking, boating, and having evening bonfires with friends. Christy is the proud mother of three beautiful daughters who she says are by far her greatest accomplishment.

Movie Night at the Elks - Movie starting at 7:00pm

Thursday, May 1st



Theresa Fesinstine - The Transformative Potential of AI in HR | Keynote | 8:30am-9:30am

This session will provide an introduction to the transformative potential of AI for HR professionals focusing on practical applications such as recruitment, talent management, employee engagement, and more. This will set the stage for the interactive workshop to follow.

Theresa Fesinstine - Hands-On AI Applications in HR | 9:45am-11:15am

In this interactive session, Theresa will guide HR professionals through the essentials of AI adoption, focusing on practical applications, strategic integration, and the pivotal role of HR in leading this transformation. Attendees will gain valuable insights into leveraging AI to enhance employee engagement, streamline operations, and foster a people-first culture.

**** To make the most of the special AI Lab session, please bring a laptop or iPad. We'll be diving into hands-on activities where you'll have the opportunity to explore and interact with AI tools in real time.**

Speaker Bio: Theresa Fesinstine, Founder of peoplepower.ai, brings over 25 years of HR leadership experience and is a recognized thought leader in AI. Her mission is to demystify AI for HR professionals, ensuring it becomes accessible and actionable. Theresa's engaging speaking style and innovative ideas have captivated audiences globally, earning her accolades such as PYN 50 over 50 Women in Tech and the Dextego AI Award for AI Thought Leadership.



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Thursday, May 1st

Employment Law Panel | 11:45am-1:15pm

Chris Hoyme, Attorney with Jackson Lewis P.C., Carla Kushman, Attorney with City of Rapid City, Julie Johnson, Registered lobbyist and SoDak SHRM Legal Representative and Marcia Hultman, Department Secretary with the Department of Labor and Regulation will provide a panel discussion on trending employment law topics.



Speaker Bios:

Christopher E. Hoyme is a principal in the Omaha, Nebraska, office of Jackson Lewis P.C. Chris represents management nationwide in all facets of employment litigation. He has successfully defended employers across the country in over 40 federal and state courts, as well as before numerous federal and state administrative agencies across the country. Chris looks for practical solutions for clients facing litigation.

He believes in a proactive, preventive approach to dealing with employment issues so that clients are placed in the best possible position to avoid lawsuits before they are filed. However, once a client is faced with defending a lawsuit, Chris's approach is to respond quickly and aggressively, making him a formidable opponent in the courtroom.

Julie Johnson is a lawyer from near Aberdeen, registered lobbyist and former Secretary of Labor for South Dakota. HR, workforce and employment law have been a part of her portfolio for her entire career, as has been a role at the SD Legislature. She has represented SoDak SHRM at the SD Legislature for many years.



Marcia Hultman was appointed Cabinet Secretary of the South Dakota

Department of Labor and Regulation by Governor Dennis Daugaard in 2014 and reappointed by Governor Kristi Noem in 2019 and 2023, and now serves under Governor Larry Rhoden. Prior, she had served in various DLR leadership roles for 17 years. Hultman has been involved in the delivery of workforce training, employment, adult education and literacy, and unemployment insurance services, as well as state-specific wage and hour, workers' compensation, and human rights programs. Hultman received a bachelor's degree from Black Hills State University and completed the Council of State Government Henry Toll Leadership program in 2016.

Carla Kushman is Deputy City Attorney for the City of Rapid City. Among other duties, Carla provides legal support for the City's Human Resources Department, and she serves as a member of the City's management team in union negotiations. She has worked for the City since 2012



Jennifer Frank – Workplace Investigations | Breakout | 1:30pm-2:30pm (repeated Wed. at 3:30pm)

In this informative session, Jennifer will describe the investigation process and the different stages, focusing on the best practices for each. She will tackle some of the tricky, yet important aspects of investigations, such as when to use an outside investigator, how to make credibility determinations, how to break the common "he said/she said" scenario and drawing themes and findings/conclusions.

Speaker Bio: Jennifer Suich Frank, Esq., AWI-CH, SHRM-SCP is an employment lawyer with the law firm of Lynn, Jackson, Shultz & Lebrun, in Rapid City, SD. Jennifer has been an attorney for 27 years and was previously employed in several positions in human resources. Jennifer advises businesses and human resources professionals on a variety of employment issues, including discrimination, FMLA, ADA/disability, wage & hour, hiring/firing/discipline, and non-compete issues. She also counsels and drafts non-compete agreements and employment contracts, including executive employment agreements, severance/separation agreements, as well as reviews, revises and drafts employment handbooks, policies and procedures. Jennifer has been active in Black Hills Society for Human Resource Management (BH SHRM), having served as its Certification Director for three years.



(2016-2018), BH SHRM President-Elect (2019), BH SHRM President in 2020 and BH SHRM Past President (2021 - 2023). Jennifer obtained her SHRM-SCP certification in 2019. Jennifer enjoys family time with her husband and her teenage son, visiting her young adult daughter in Colorado, hiking, gardening, cooking, and reading great beach novels!



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Leah Braun – Cultivating Your Culture | *Breakout* | 1:30pm-2:30pm

Culture is the personality of an organization and answers the question, “How do things really get done around here?” The primary learning objectives of this presentation include:

1. Gain a good understanding of a healthy workplace culture.
2. Understand the markers of a toxic culture.
3. Discover methods for beginning a culture-improvement plan.

Speaker Bio: Leah Braun serves as the Assistant Director of Human Resources for the City of Rapid City. Leah’s focus is workplace culture, learning and development, and team relations. Leah has been with the City for 4 years, originally hired as the City Culture Strategist. Leah earned her SHRM-CP certification in 2024. From April 2012 until January 2023, Leah was also the Managing Partner with Nsight Partners. Nsight Partners allies with individuals, businesses and organizations to help them solve problems and achieve results. They accomplish that through coaching, training and consulting...all designed to develop and grow the individual and the organization. Leah retired from the South Dakota National Guard at the rank of Master Sergeant after 22 years of military service, where she began to hone her passion for working with people. Leah has a teaching degree from Black Hills State University and a Master of Science in Administrative Studies with an emphasis in Counseling from University of South Dakota. Leah is a Certified Professional Coach, credentialed through the International Coach Federation. Leah is very active in the community and in several professional groups including serving as the Chair of the Black Hills Military Advisory Coalition and as an Honorary Commander for the 28th Communications Squadron at Ellsworth Air Force Base.



Bev Morris & Alexis Benne – So Much HR, So Little Time - Why and Can We Fix It? | *Breakout* | 1:30pm-2:30pm (repeated Fri. at 8:30am)

Why is this our reality and can we fix it? Join Bev Morris and Alexis Benne of Athena HR Consulting in an entertaining, interactive session to answer these questions! We will have fun together as we try to solve yet another HR puzzle!

Speaker Bio: Bev is an accomplished Human Resources professional who is enthusiastic about her profession and has enjoyed mentoring HR professionals throughout her career. Throughout her diverse career, which includes leadership roles in finance, technology, and manufacturing & distribution in Illinois, Colorado, and South Dakota, Bev has been instrumental in leading companies in developing and implementing effective business and employment practices, benefits management, workforce management & organizational development, vendor/partner relations & contract negotiations, learning & development, and organizational change. Bev was raised in the Black Hills in a large, close-knit Irish family. She developed her strong work ethic at a young age by working in their family business. She has always found the Black Hills to be a very serene and healing place, which is what drew her back here in 2002. Bev has two grown children, Brett who lives in Rapid City, and Amanda who lives in Sioux Falls. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends, exercising, hiking, playing piano, and reading.



Speaker Bio: Alexis has nearly 20 years working as an HR Professional in a variety of industries as a consultant and within corporate and non-profit settings. With a background in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, she strives to use research methods and data-based recommendations when partnering with organizations. Alexis grew up in a small town in Northeastern Montana where she embraced the connectiveness of a close community. Since moving to Rapid City, she has continued to be connected to her community through her professional networks, close family and friends, and volunteering in her children’s schools and sports organizations. She enjoys traveling with her husband and cheering her kids on in their various activities.



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Dominique Tigert – Mental Health First Aid at Work | *Breakout* | 1:30pm-2:30pm

This presentation is designed to give HR professionals the ability to recognize the potential risk factors and warning signs for a range of mental health problems including depression, anxiety/trauma, psychosis and psychotic disorders, substance use disorders and self-injury. This course also covers how to recognize the signs of a problem and gives tools and vocabulary to help.

Speaker Bio - Dominique was born and raised in Minnesota, but spent 8 years in Modesto California working and pursuing her undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice. After working in juvenile corrections, she took a turn as the Executive Director of two small non-profit 501c3 organizations, one in Wyoming and one in South Dakota, for 18 years. She managed the Strategic Prevention Framework Initiative funding focusing on environmental drug and alcohol prevention for youth. Dominique is a Mental Health First Aid Instructor, teaching in West River South Dakota for the past 9 years. She currently is finishing her MS Degree with South Dakota State University in Clinical Mental Health.

Fun Facts: Dominique is a widow and mother of four children ages 28 to 19 years of age. She loves to spend time with her children and family on the lake or hiking in the Black Hills of South Dakota along with her 2-year-old Labrador Luke Skywalker.



Tracy Palecek – Crisis to Clarity | *Keynote* | 3:00pm-4:30pm

Join us as we learn how to identify factors of resilience in ourselves and others, clarify our values, personal goals, and behaviors that create a life of meaning and purpose. Clarity is the first step toward bringing your most authentic self to your work, your relationships and your life! You will leave with tools and tips to use immediately AND ideas for implementing in the workplace.

Speaker Bio: Tracy Palecek is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Human Services professional who has a passion for helping those who are facing adversity. Tracy has over 25 years of experience working with trauma, poverty and resiliency in those she has served. She has served as a program developer, disaster relief responder, community trainer, mental health therapist and leader. She loves to work within systems to create change and help people find meaning and purpose in their lives. She is the CEO of Palecek Therapy & Consulting and is blessed to spend her time between her therapy practice, public speaking, and consulting in areas of mental wellness, poverty reduction, and interpersonal skill building.

Presidential Scavenger Hunt downtown followed by dinner and social at The DoubleTree

Friday, May 2nd

Trina Allen – HR Executive Strategies for Success | *Breakout* | 8:30am-9:30am

As HR professionals, our focus has always been people. It is crucial that HR executives in this ever-changing world focus on solid strategies for success. Join this lively, interactive discussion on how to prepare for the future of HR, including topics such as data analytics and business strategy, and learn tips to drive success in today's world. This presentation is for all levels of HR wanting a clearer understanding of what executive level HR leaders focus on and why.

Speaker Bio: Trina currently serves as the Vice President of Human Resources for Monument Health in Western South Dakota. She has almost 25 years of progressive Human Resources experience spanning across several industries, to include call centers, higher education, and healthcare. Her experience includes all facets of HR and her specialization areas are workforce strategy development, talent recruitment, employee relations, and education and professional development. She has been with Monument Health for almost 10 years where she held several roles before becoming the Vice President in 2020 – yes, she was promoted just before the COVID pandemic reached South Dakota. Trina currently serves as Board President for the Workplace Disability Network of the Black Hills and has been a Junior Achievement volunteer for 20 years. Trina holds a Bachelor's degree in Public Relations and Communications from the University of Northern Iowa and a Master's degree in Higher Education from Iowa State University. She has been a certified Professional of Human Resources since 2005 and a certified Senior Professional of Human Resources since 2008.





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Work Well – Living Healthy Works | *Breakout* | 8:30am-9:30am

The workplace is a great place to promote healthy lifestyles. The workplace provides many opportunities for promoting health and emotional well-being. Employers can inspire positive change with workplace wellness programs and policies designed to reduce health risks that contribute to chronic disease. The South Dakota Department of Health will share resources and educational materials that can help build a sustainable wellness program and inspire healthy habits.



Speaker Bio: Enid Weiss is the Worksite Wellness Coordinator (WorkWell) working for Black Hills Special Services on contract with the South Dakota Department of Health and currently resides in Watertown, South Dakota. With a strong focus on preventing, reducing, and managing chronic diseases, Enid collaborates with a variety of local, state, and national partners to provide South Dakota worksites effective and sustainable education and resources. Through workshops, grant funding opportunities, newsletters and other wellness initiatives, Enid strives to make a meaningful impact on the lives of employers and their employees, helping to create healthier worksites.

Speaker Bio: Michelle Haselhorst is the Program Coordinator for the South Dakota Department of Health Diabetes Program. Michelle works collaboratively with healthcare systems, communities, and organizations to implement effective diabetes prevention and management strategies. With her many years of experience of treating and caring for people with diabetes, she is committed to improving the quality of life for the people of South Dakota at risk for or affected by this disease.



Speaker Bio: Kari Senger is the Healthy Brain Program Coordinator, bringing together partners across South Dakota to address Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The program's priorities include improving brain health across the lifespan, increasing dementia awareness, promoting risk reduction strategies, enhancing early detection and diagnosis, and supporting individuals and caregivers affected by dementia. Kari is employed by Black Hills Special Services on contract with the South Dakota Department of Health through the CDC's Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure grant. She resides in Pierre, SD.

Speaker Bio: Lori Martinec is the Administrator for the Department of Health Office of Injury, Violence and Overdose Prevention and manages the Opioid Program as part of her position. This program supports the collection of statewide data for overdose fatalities and suspected overdoses as well as supports prevention activities that provide technical assistance to healthcare providers, overdose prevention education and links to care for individuals with opioid use disorder.



Speaker Bio: Kayla Bolstad, BS, is a Tobacco Prevention Coordinator for the South Dakota Tobacco Control Program. Kayla works with recipients of the Tobacco Youth and Community Education funding. She also travels around western South Dakota working with all ranges of youth doing tobacco prevention and cessation trainings, presentations, and other activities. Kayla enjoys the face-to-face interactions she has in her duties as well as creating partnerships and building relationships with the people she meets through her job duties. While not working, Kayla enjoys spending time with her husband and three bonus daughters. They enjoy being outdoors, going on hikes with their three dogs, camping, and singing around the campfire.



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Brett Sesker - Prescription for Savings: Strategies to Take Control of Healthcare Benefit Costs | Breakout | 8:30am-9:30am



Healthcare benefits are a cornerstone of attracting and retaining talent, but rising costs can strain your budget and business. In this session, you'll discover actionable strategies to optimize your healthcare offerings while maintaining quality and employee satisfaction. From analyzing plan design to leveraging cost-saving innovations and fostering transparency with employees, we'll equip you with the tools to take control of healthcare costs without compromising value. Whether you're new to benefits management or a seasoned pro, this session will empower you to make smarter, more sustainable decisions.

Speaker Bio: With over 30 years of experience in employee benefits strategy, Brett Sesker is Executive Vice President and Employee Benefits Practice Leader at HUB International Great Plains. He oversees Health & Welfare, Worksite Marketing, HR Consulting, and Support Services across five states. Brett has a proven track record of delivering innovative, value-driven solutions for organizations with 800 to 10,000 employees. Prior to HUB, he held leadership roles at SecureCare of Iowa and Principal Financial Group. Renowned for his integrity, collaboration, and results-focused approach, Brett is committed to aligning organizational goals with employee well-being and driving business success.

Bev Morris & Alexis Benne – So Much HR, So Little Time - Why and Can We Fix It? | Breakout | 8:30am-9:30am (repeated Thu. at 1:30pm)



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Speaker Bio: Alexis has nearly 20 years working as an HR Professional in a variety of industries as a consultant and within corporate and non-profit settings. With a background in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, she strives to use research methods and data-based recommendations when partnering with organizations. Alexis grew up in a small town in Northeastern Montana where she embraced the connectiveness of a close community. Since moving to Rapid City, she has continued to be connected to her Community through her professional networks, close family and friends, and volunteering in her children's schools and sports organizations. She enjoys traveling with her husband and cheering her kids on in their various activities.





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Rana DeBoer – Elevate Your Leadership, Accelerate Your Impact | Keynote | 9:45am-11:15am



Unlock the full potential of your leadership in today's fast-paced, ever-evolving workplace. In this dynamic talk, you'll discover the key leadership skills needed to drive positive change, build an agile and resilient culture, and to inspire your team to thrive. Learn to lead with deep purpose, navigate complexity, and make a lasting difference in people and teams.

Speaker Bio: Rana is the Chief Vision Officer at Volt Strategy, a dynamic keynote speaker who weaves valuable content, insightful stories and tangible tools into her speaking engagements help people maximize their potential and drive real results. Rana approaches performance through the lens

of leadership, well-being, and culture, providing solutions to a better physical and social environment that enriches people and business. Rana has over 27 years' experience in culture strategy, leadership advising, talent optimization, and organizational performance. She is sought after for her contagious energy that challenges people to reach the next level through intent, influence, and impact ~ 3 ultimate cornerstones of leadership. Rana is more than a speaker, she is a coach to the audience with an empowering, relatable expertise of demonstrated results.

BHSHRM Board Member - Closing Remarks, Prize Drawings, & 2026 Conference Announcement | 11:15am-12:00pm

Black Hills SHRM Board Members:

- Ally Formanen, President | Visit Rapid City
- Ara Baumstarck, President Elect | Black Hills and Badlands Tourism Association
- Tye Kuyper, SHRM-SCP, Certification Chair | Monument Health
- Jason Byars, SHRM-CP, CCP, Treasurer | Monument Health
- Brook Kiecksee, College Relations Chair | City of Box Elder
- Brittney Huschka, SHRM-CP, Communication/Website Chair | The Monument - City of Rapid City
- Julie Penney, Legislative Chair | Western Dakota Technical College
- Kayla Schad, Membership Chair | AFLAC
- Sarah Reiman, SHRM-CP, Newsletter/Publicity Chair | City of Rapid City
- Alexi Kieffer, SHRM-CP, Secretary | Black Hills Works
- Kendra Magelky, SHRM-CP, Social Media Chair | Sentinel Federal Credit Union
- Patricia Hoeke, SHRM-SCP, Past President | H-S Precision

Be sure to stop and visit the vendors and get your vendor bingo cards filled and come play our Foundation Basket Raffle game during breaks!