Meet the Team —
A Look at Our VFS Staff

By Angelo Collins, VFS Executive Director

With tenures averaging more than 12 years, you are more likely to see a change in the US presidency than a change of VFS Executive Directors. Although it is a rare occurrence, it comes with renewed energy, but the same passion for advancing vertical lift. Rest assured that I will continue to work closely with the incumbent staff to ensure a smooth transition.

I am a fan of the New England Patriots and will use American football analogies to highlight our exceptional team. You can call me Coach Collins for the remainder of this commentary.

At the position of quarterback, we have Mike Hirschberg in the role of Director of Strategy. He is the playmaker, helping us advance down the field, one play at a time. Leveraging his extensive network, Mike will remain a key player at VFS. He will continue to serve as the editor-in-chief of Verteiht magazine, our crown jewel and highly regarded bimonthly publication. Mike will continue to tackle recruitment and retention, including at the individual, educational and corporate levels. Our Annual Forum and Transformative Vertical Flight (TVF) meeting are two of the Society’s major events that Mike will continue to help plan and facilitate. Mike will also help us manage our expanding social media presence, posting relevant content and media. Like Tom Brady, he will be extending his career even after proving himself as a hall of famer, and we thank him for his continued service to VFS!

Julie Gibbs is our captain and serves as a utility player in almost all positions. Day in and day out, Julie selflessly dedicates herself to VFS, even when her behind-the-scenes accomplishments go unsung. As Director of Technical Programs, Julie is the principal liaison between VFS and the technical community, supporting the VFS Technical Director, the Technical Council and all technical meetings. She is also the production manager of the Journal of the AHS and our lead for the Vertical Flight Foundation (VFF) scholarship selections, the Robert L. Lichten Award competition, the Alfred Gessow Best Paper Award and the Student Design Competition.

David Renzi is our kicker, and he never misses. He joined the Society in 2002 and has served for over 21 years as the principal coordinator of the Annual Forum. He is our grizzled veteran that flawlessly runs our biggest show every year. David also conducts all technical exhibit sales and coordinates the exhibit hall floor and sponsorships. He also administers the contracting for Forum activities including convention and hotel services, tours, special events, transportation and entertainment. David is also the advertising contact for Verteiht magazine, the VFS website, the Electric VTOL News newsletter and all Forum-related publications.

Betty Chen is our wide receiver. She is creative and resourceful, and we lean on her when we need to go for a deep ball. When she makes that catch, there's nothing that will stop her from reaching the end zone. As our Academic Coordinator, Betty serves as the VFF scholarship fundraising coordinator and the primary point of contact for students and for chapter development activities, as well as leading the Society’s science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) outreach and content creation. Betty also assists with graphic design, marketing activities and website design.

Randy Johnson is our safety, our last line of defense when it comes to our IT and security. As our in-house IT Director, Randy is responsible for all network and systems administration. He is also the Society’s webmaster, and together with the Director of Membership is responsible for configuration and maintenance of the Society’s membership database.

Our Administrative and IT Assistant, Alka Rathod, is our medical staff. She keeps us healthy, in and out of the office, such as keeping the Society’s website up to date, managing the Vertical Flight Library & Online Store, and providing database support. Alka also keeps us organized and healthy at headquarters, by being a liaison with the property manager, taking care of our office space and bringing in the most delicious homemade samosas and other treats.

And lastly, to our fans, the members of VFS. Rest assured that on any given Sunday, rain or shine, the VFS team will go to battle for you as we advance vertical flight down the field and achieve victories for the benefit of the community.

You can learn more about each member of our all-star lineup at www.vtol.org/staff.

What do you think? Let me know at director@vtol.org.