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# Professional Biography

**April Simpkins, SHRM-CP, PHR**, is a dynamic HR leader with over 30 years of executive-level business strategy experience and multiple Human Resources certifications. April is a former Chief Human Resources Officer of a national organization, a position she held for more than six years. She is the Founder and CEO of **Paragon Strategy Partners**, a leadership development consultancy targeting organizations focused on supporting new and emerging leaders. She is a popular international keynote speaker, having appeared at platforms such as Harvard University Extension School, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Eli Lilly, Coca-Cola, The Citadel, and Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Her dedication to advancing the HR field resulted in her appointment to Winthrop University's HR Advisory Board, where she contributed to developing the HR curriculum for undergraduate and graduate programs.

April's leadership extends beyond her professional duties. She has served as the Board Chair of the York County Regional Chamber and is an active member of the South Carolina Small Business Development Center (SCSBDC) board. She is also a key figure in the energy sector, serving on the Duke Energy Advisory Board in South Carolina. The governor of South Carolina appointed her to the York County Natural Gas board.

April's achievements showcase her business expertise. She was included in the 2022 list of 100 Women to KNOW in America. The Charlotte Business Journal awarded her the Women In Business Achievement Award in 2020, and Mecklenburg Times recognized her as one of Charlotte, North Carolina's 50 Most Influential Women.

A passionate mental health advocate, April serves as an Ambassador for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and a board member of NAMI Piedmont Tri-County. Her commitment to eliminating the stigma of mental illness is deeply personal and profound. After losing her daughter, Cheslie Kryst, to suicide in 2022, April has become an even more outspoken advocate. Cheslie, who struggled with depression, co-authored the New York Times Bestseller with April, titled "By The Time You Read This – The Space Between Cheslie's Smile And Mental Illness - Her Story In Her Own Words." To honor Cheslie's legacy, April established the Cheslie C. Kryst Foundation.

She is also the host of the podcast *As I Was Saying*, in which she explores the intersection of professional life and mental health with candor, insight, and compassion.

April's diverse life includes being a classically trained pianist, avid runner, athlete, mother, wife, and entrepreneur. Her journey, marked by resilience and dedication, inspires those around her.