

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew R. Adamich

Lt. Col. Andrew R. Adamich serves as the commander of the 176th Medical Group, 176th Wing, Joint-Base Elmendorf Richardson, Alaska. The 176th Medical Group provides medical policies, plans, and programs affecting more than 1,400 Alaskan Air National Guard members in support of in-state and worldwide deployments. Directly commissioned into the Air Force through the health professions scholarship program while attending Pacific University College of Optometry, he entered active-duty service, later joining the National Guard. Upon request, Lt. Col. Adamich served as the Air National Guard Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) branch chief, leading at an operational level at the National Guard Bureau and organizing and facilitating military readiness training. He fielded infrastructure support and services requests from 54 sovereign states and territories, matching community projects with military unit training requirements. To date, he has supported 66 IRT missions, 25 of which delivered services to all eight states in the Delta Regional Authority. In 2021, Lt. Col. Adamich was selected as IRT Program Manager of the Year. Andrew and Ingrid, his wife, have four sons, three currently active-duty military.

Arlisa Armstrong

Arlisa Armstrong has spent nearly three decades working in rural development. A native of Haywood County, Tennessee, Arlisa has worked with local leaders in every West Tennessee county and understands the integral role of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development in promoting growth and prosperity for rural communities. Arlisa has served in various roles in Tennessee and served as area director for West Tennessee from 2010 to 2021. In this position, Arlisa served as a key member of the state director's staff and fully participated in the planning, development, and implementation of rural development and rural assistance programs. She led rural development initiatives throughout a 12-county servicing area by formulating objectives and allocating the necessary resources available to effectively implement residential, business, commercial, and profit/non-profit loan and grant-making authorities for direct and guaranteed lending programs available from the USDA. From January 2020 through August 2021, Ms. Armstrong served as the USDA area director of the Tennessee Pilot Program, based in Nashville, Tennessee. In this role, she led the effort to support state office program directors and area directors and implemented portfolio management and servicing for the Community Programs Division. This included implementing the Community Facility Deferral Process to assist borrowers impacted by COVID-19, providing updates, and participating in meetings with the national director of community facility portfolio management. Ms. Armstrong has been passionate about serving rural communities in Tennessee and has made it her goal to help bring prosperity and opportunity to those areas. As state director, she will use her leadership and experience to extend USDA Rural Development Programs to address COVID-19 relief for our communities, ensure that all underserved areas are aware of resources available, and initiate investment solutions to assist communities that are impacted by disasters in their areas. Arlisa earned her degree in business administration from Middle Tennessee State University. She previously served as a member of the Federal Reserve Bank Community

Development Advisory Board. In 2014, she became a member of the WestStar Tennessee Leadership Program. She serves on the WestStar Haywood County Alumni Committee and African Leadership Conference Committee. She is a graduate of the Delta Regional Institute Leadership class of 2011 and a graduate of the Haywood County Tennessee Leadership class of 2006. She is also a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Lily Ballengee

Lily Ballengee has worked for the U.S. Department of Transportation for nearly eight years on a wide range of transportation topics. Currently supporting the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) Initiative in the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, she works to address disparities in rural transportation infrastructure to ensure rural communities have equitable access to national transportation goals of safety, mobility, and economic competitiveness. She has a bachelor's degree from West Virginia University and a master's in public policy from American University.

Jasmine Bell

Jasmine Bell currently serves as a grants advisory consultant at ENN CLOUD Technologies Corporation. She has built an extensive knowledgebase building and customizing grant software for clients in the public, federal, and non-profit sectors. Her work supports the redesign of client business processes, drives increase in productivity, and delivers overall improvements to client experiences through applied technology solutions. Her dynamic skill set also extends into being a creative consultant and digital designer who can optimize organizations' digital presence for maximum client engagement while prioritizing the customer experience. Jasmine has a proven track record of producing measurable results wherever she works.

Sherra Bennett

Sherra Bennett (she/her/hers) is a daughter of the Delta region, born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. She firmly believes that intentional, equitable practices that challenge the status quo with the future in mind will create sustainable transformation. She is a social worker, community organizer, servant leader, and difference maker at her very core, and it is that foundation that drives her commitment to public service and the greater good. She is a two-time graduate of the University of Michigan, earning both a B.A. in communications and a master's degree in social work. Her communications background, combined with the ethical framework of social work, creates the catalyst that propels her to advocate and serve as a voice and vessel against injustice. Before joining the WRF team, her mission-focused career allowed her to serve nonprofit organizations, engage in social justice research, and work across the United States, Africa, Germany, Italy, and The Netherlands. Sherra has served as a nonprofit founder, executive director, director of operations, program director, and principal consultant for human service organizations. Her impact-led career started as a field organizer with President Barack Obama's campaign, and she credits this opportunity as what propelled her community-centered career focus. At the foundation, Sherra leads the movement building and leadership development portfolio to address and evolve the voices at the table concerning the future of Arkansas.

Ryan Biles

Ryan Biles is a practicing architect and the founder of Kudzu Collective, a Delta-based design practice specializing in the adaptive reuse of historic properties in rural communities throughout the region. Ryan and his wife Natalie, an interior designer and founder of Shine Interior Design Studio, are raising three sons in their hometown of Lonoke, Arkansas, where he served as a city council member from 2018-2022. With over two decades of design experience, Ryan established Kudzu Collective in historic downtown Lonoke with the belief that “as architects and designers, we have an obligation to leverage our creative skills to reawaken latent potential forgotten places.” Ryan is president of the board of directors for Thrive, Inc., a nonprofit graphic design, branding consultancy, and placemaking firm based in Helena, Arkansas, and is a 2022 graduate of the Delta Leadership Institute.

Vickey Bonney

Vickey Bonney is the community development and rapid response lead specialist, covering Eastern Missouri and including multiple workforce regions. Creating and maintaining strong professional relationships with employers and community leaders has been a priority for Vickey, as well as creating connections for job seekers and employers to partners and resources that allow her to better serve Missourians. Vickey takes pride in supporting her team and sharing her experiences to benefit others. Vickey began her career in workforce development in December 2015 with MERSGoodwill, working as an employment specialist within the Park Hills Job Center. November 2016 provided an opportunity to move to a position with the State's Office of Workforce Development, where, as the business services representative, she began working to increase employer engagement within her assigned region. Vickey was an integral part of creating the innovative Park Hills Job Center Jobs Team in 2016 and remains a member of the team today. Vickey was one of two team members to create and implement industry-specific hiring events. She was a member of the original team that created a collaboration with Mineral Area College to provide an Annual Spring Hiring Event, which is now in its 7th year. This collaboration has resulted in multiple collaborative events and strong business relationships, providing increased services to Missourians. Vickey's creativity and drive have helped create a strong social media presence for the job centers, including the creation and implementation of multiple programs like “Employer Spotlight” and “In the Know” segments, sharing valuable information for employers and job seekers alike. Prior to joining Missouri's workforce development team, Vickey worked in the private sector as a business owner, creating her business from the ground up. Throughout her career, Vickey has worked in multiple industries, giving her a unique perspective on the needs facing our employers. Vickey is a proud U. S. Navy Veteran and continues to support her community as a board member of the St. Francois County Community Partnership. She volunteers her time to assist with community events and is an active member in multiple Chambers of Commerce.

Brandi Bradley

Brandi Bradley is the director of government relations for Ullico, Inc., an insurance and investment firm focused on promoting financial security and stability for American workers. She previously served as a field representative for Laborers' Local 773, a staff

assistant to U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, U.S. Congressman William Enyart, and U.S. Congressman Jerry F. Costello (ret.), in the 12th District of Illinois. Brandi currently sits on the Delta Regional Authority as the Illinois Designee appointed by Governor JB Pritzker. She represents labor on the Southern Illinois Workforce Board and the Southern 14 Workforce Investment Board, Inc. Brandi is a member of the Delta Leadership Network Class of 2015, attended the Leadership for the 21st Century Delta Leadership Institute at the Harvard Kennedy School, a graduate of the Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership Training Academy Class of 2014, holds an MBA from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and served two terms on the Marion Unit 2 School Board. She is originally from Murphysboro, Illinois, and co-founded a non-profit called the Friends of Murphysboro, which is focused on the improvement of Riverside Park and the surrounding neighborhood. Through the Friends of Murphysboro, she has been able to assist in building the first public dog park in Southern Illinois, created the largest craft beer festival in southern Illinois, the Big Muddy Monster Brew Fest, and many other projects, including a Remembrance Walkway for Veterans. She also was instrumental in organizing the eLaunch Williamson County Program, a county-wide program that brought students from Williamson County together to get hands-on entrepreneurial experience and build their network within the community. Brandi resides in Marion, Illinois, with her three daughters, Madison, Caroline, and Ella.

Shad Burner

Shad Burner is a principal with the KBS Group, LLP, based in Missouri. He has extensive experience in economic, community, and business development. Burner served on the leadership team of the Missouri Department of Economic Development as the director of Federal Initiatives. He was responsible for building a team of 20 to oversee the development of nine new grant programs that deployed more than \$500 million of Missouri's American Rescue Plan Act funds. His team awarded more than 650 grants focused on areas such as community revitalization, workforce development, tourism asset development, small business support, broadband expansion, nonprofit support, and more. Burner was appointed by Governor Mike Parson to serve as the Missouri Designee to the Delta Regional Authority and served as the director's designee on the Missouri Technology Corporation Board of Directors. He is a Certified Economic Developer, a 2020 Delta Leadership Institute graduate, and a 2021 graduate of the Missouri Leadership Academy.

Matthew Campbell

Matthew Campbell is a native of Jackson, Mississippi. He received his B.A. and M.A. in political science from Mississippi State University. Matthew currently serves as the strategic partnerships program manager for Delta Regional Authority. His work involves managing the agency's stakeholder relations and capacity-building programs. He previously worked at the Mississippi NAACP and has also helped lead several stakeholder community engagement initiatives across the State of Mississippi. He has shared his work in statewide publications such as the Clarion Ledger and on national platforms. He currently lives in Jackson with his wife Akita Campbell.

Dr. Thomas Carew

Prior to joining the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Dr. Thomas Carew served as the executive vice president of membership and advocacy for Fahe in Central Appalachia. While at Fahe, Tom was the principal author of the 502 Direct Packaging Demonstration with USDA. Through his leadership, Fahe's membership grew from 44, to include more than 55 affordable housing nonprofits. Tom helped lead the expansion of Fahe housing programs into Alabama and Maryland. Tom was the founding executive director of Frontier Housing, a nonprofit, affordable housing developer based in Morehead, Kentucky. He is also the recipient of the Dorothy Williams Lifetime Achievement Award from the Kentucky Housing Corporation – the highest award given in the Commonwealth for nonprofit housing producers. In 2010, Carew received the Cochran Collings Award from the Housing Assistance Council for service to rural America.

Brooxie Carlton

Brooxie Carlton serves as the assistant commissioner of rural and community development for the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. In this position, Carlton oversees federal grant funding from the Delta Regional Authority, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Community Development Block Grant program. She works with the Broadband Accessibility, Tennessee Main Street, ThreeStar, and SelectTN programs. Carlton has been involved in the administration of nearly 4,000 grants totaling more than \$1.3 billion, including more than \$800 million in federal funding.

Alex Clegg

Alex Clegg is a rural transportation specialist at the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). He works as part of the ROUTES Initiative, which serves as the front door for DOT's rural technical assistance, resources, and engagement. He has also worked in the Build America Bureau at DOT. Prior to joining DOT, he worked in transportation funding policy with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Tim Climer

Tim T. Climer is the manager of programs and services at the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) in the capital city of Jackson, beginning his tenure in the fall of 2020. Born in Ripley, Tennessee, he grew up in Southaven, Mississippi, and has degrees from both the University of Mississippi (UM) and the University of Southern Mississippi. He has led four county-wide economic development organizations in over 20 years in the field, three in North Mississippi and one in West Tennessee. He also worked in workforce development roles at both UM and Mississippi's North Central PDD. Tim's start in economic development was as the founding manager of a three-unit regional system of rural business incubators in North Mississippi hosted by UM. He was also the controller for two manufacturers, a mortgage banker, and a marketing representative and internal auditor for Atmos Energy, a natural gas distribution company in Mississippi.

Jasmine Brown DeRouselle

Jasmine Brown DeRouselle is the senior vice president of policy at GNO, Inc. She is primarily responsible for leading GNO, Inc.'s policy initiatives and governmental relations, both at the state and federal levels. Jasmine also provides oversight to a number of GNO,

Inc.'s programmatic initiatives, with a specific focus on economic mobility, coastal restoration and resilience, and the music business. Previously, as public policy manager, she founded and executed several initiatives, including but not limited to the HBCU Startup Internship Program, which was designed to increase the pipeline of Black startup founders in the GNO region. Prior to joining GNO, Inc., she was a commercial litigator at a civil defense firm in the GNO region. She has also worked as a Consultant for Deloitte and Touche, LLP in Los Angeles, California, where she conducted corporate audits and compliance exercises for Fortune 500 corporations. Additionally, she has worked for the National Urban League (New York, NY), JP Morgan Private Bank (New Orleans, LA), and Elvin Ross Studios (Los Angeles, CA). She earned a J.D. from Louisiana State University and is a cum laude graduate of Loyola University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Stacey Duvic

Stacey Duvic joined Louisiana Economic Development (LED) in 2017 as the director of community competitiveness. For 14 years prior to joining LED, she was the community developer for the City of Hammond and then executive director of economic development for Tangipahoa Parish. Stacey grew up in Tangipahoa Parish and graduated from Southeastern Louisiana University in 1991, earning a bachelor's degree in marketing. She has also completed training through the Community Development Institute in Conway, Arkansas, where she received the Professional Community and Economic Development certification in 2010. In addition, she holds the Certified Louisiana Economic Developer certification through the Louisiana Industrial Development Association (LIDEA) and the Master Economic Development Practitioner certification through AEDL. Stacey completed the Delta Leadership Institute training, a community development program of the Delta Regional Authority, and is currently working toward her master's degree in economic development at the University of Southern Mississippi. She has served on committees for multiple Chambers of Commerce, was a board member of the Greater Hammond Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Northshore Technical and Community College Advisory Board, a past president of the Southeastern Louisiana University Alumni Association, currently sits on the Southeastern College of Business Advisory Board and is a board member of LIDEA. She is also a graduate and past board member of Leadership Tangipahoa.

Joel Evans

Joel Evans is the president & CEO of Delta Area Economic Opportunity Corporation, a private, not-for-profit community action agency serving some of Missouri's most impoverished counties with programs designed to alleviate the effects of poverty. He completed undergraduate and graduate work at Southeast Missouri State University as well as graduate work at the University of Applied Science in Schmalkalden, Germany. Joel participated in Delta Regional Authority's Delta Leadership Institute in 2009-2010 and, later, the Executive Development Series at Harvard. Joel is past president of the Missouri Community Action Network's board of directors, the Missouri Community Action Executive Directors Association, and the Region 7 Association of Community Action. He is treasurer of the CAPLAW Board of Directors, a member of the Regional Planning Commission Board, and treasurer of Missouri Delta Medical Center's Board. He is active with scouting, where he serves as district committee chair, a member of the

Greater St. Louis Area Council Board of Directors, and a recipient of the Whitney Young Jr. Service Award in 2018 for service to the impoverished youth. Joel and his team have coordinated community resources for six Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) medical missions. Joel has presented at IRT Joint Training Workshops and ANG IRT training. He serves on the IRT Community Assembly and was named IRT Champion of the Year in 2020 and Patriot Employee in 2023 by the Department of Defense. Joel and his wife Amy have three boys (all Eagle Scouts); Cristian is a senior at Mississippi State University, Hayes is a Freshman at Mizzou, and Jack is a senior in high school.

Michael Fallahkhair

Michael Fallahkhair is the deputy associate administrator for the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) in the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In this role, Mr. Fallahkhair helps to lead the work of FORHP, which is charged with advising the Secretary of HHS on rural health issues and improving the delivery of rural health care. Mr. Fallahkhair previously served as the executive officer in the HHS Immediate Office of the Secretary and as principal advisor in FORHP. Mr. Fallahkhair has past work experience in the Office of Budget of the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at HHS and the Office of Management and Budget. Mr. Fallahkhair has an undergraduate degree in neurobiology and physiology from the University of Maryland at College Park and a master's in public health with a concentration in health policy from George Washington University.

Jill Floyd

A native Arkansan, Jill Floyd has over two decades of operations, project management, and executive leadership experience across the manufacturing, construction, and nonprofit sectors. Floyd began her career in manufacturing with a subsidiary of Cummins Engine as a manufacturing project manager before quickly transitioning into leadership as a plant operations manager. She later joined Ford Motor Company in Supplier Quality before moving into Procurement, where she managed a global portfolio of automotive parts. After founding a financial literacy nonprofit and working with small business owners, a chance encounter led her into commercial construction, where she spent a decade in project management and community and client engagement. In those roles, she was responsible for managing construction projects in the municipal and higher education arenas, as well as developing relationships with potential clients and increasing contracting opportunities for MWBE subcontractors. Jill joined USDA Rural Development in May 2023. Jill's passion is helping underrepresented groups, especially girls and women, achieve economic self-sufficiency through entrepreneurship and STEM education. Jill received a B.S. in chemical engineering from the University of Oklahoma and an MBA/M.S. in engineering and quality and manufacturing management from Penn State University.

Ray Fulmer

R. "Ray" Fulmer III is the chairman of the Osceola Port Authority, as well as being the city lead accounts receivable, community development, and grants management for the City of Osceola, Arkansas. Mr. Fulmer has two graduate degrees and has been a professor in the University of Arkansas system for 16 years. He spent the decade prior to his current position in the entrepreneurial sector, running an array of startup enterprises, including a

soccer club in the West Memphis area and an insurance brokerage, and for five years, he ran an animal feed business in Western Kenya. Mr. Fulmer's passion is now exploring the factors that lead to communities thriving or not thriving from economic development.

Russ Gardner

John Russell "Russ" Garner is a community facilitator with Communities Unlimited, Inc., a Community Development Financial Institution and Rural Development Hub serving the rural South. A member of the Community Sustainability Team, Russ is currently working on a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC) in three Mississippi Delta communities, where he works closely with USDA's new Rural Partners Network. Russ is active in his community, working on different initiatives. One of his goals is to assist in building a vibrant local food system in his county. Some of Russ' other interests include developing leadership capacity in underserved communities, small downtown revitalization, community resilience, and helping to foster a Rural Renaissance across our region. Russ resides on the family farm outside of Brooksville, Mississippi.

Dr. Trina N. George

Filled with a passion to serve her community, Dr. George has spent much of her career providing assistance to her fellow Mississippians and individuals nationwide. Her career includes decades of service working to develop rural communities and increase economic development opportunities in Mississippi. She began her career in public service in the nonprofit industry, working with youth programs, healthcare projects, and GED programs for adults and youths statewide. She was employed as a field representative, district office coordinator, and special projects/community outreach and development coordinator in the Office of Congressman Bennie G. Thompson (MS-02). The latter experience allowed her to directly engage and support the surrounding communities of Western Mississippi, assisting constituents with rural housing, water and wastewater, and infrastructure needs. Her hands-on experience collaborating with federal, state, and local governments to develop rural communities prepared her for the historic appointment as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA) State Director for Mississippi in 2009; she became the first woman and the first African-American woman to be appointed to this position. As a part of the Obama Administration, this awesome opportunity enabled Dr. George to continue her service to the people of Mississippi, administering programs that resulted in the distribution of over \$5 billion in federal loan and grant funds to rural communities in Mississippi. Through her many years of service, Dr. Trina George has proven herself a valuable leader, an important asset, and a crucial partner for the State of Mississippi. She has received recognition and accolades from various organizations, including the Organization of Professional Employees, USDA (OPEDA), for her leadership, initiative, ideas, and energy toward furthering the Secretary of Agriculture's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity and Cultural Transformation Initiatives. Her StrikeForce concept and program were used as a model throughout the nation. She also received statewide recognition from the *Mississippi Business Journal* as one of the 50 Leading Businesswomen in Mississippi. In addition to her dedication to public service, Dr. George has served as a president of the Parent Teacher Association, AmeriCorps volunteer, lifetime member of the Girl Scouts of America, and an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. She is the proud

parent of three children, all of whom are serving their country in the Armed Forces. Dr. George earned her Ph.D. from Walden University in public policy and administration. She holds a master's degree from Mississippi State University and a bachelor's degree from Mississippi Valley State University. She also has a specialized certification in Creating Collaborative Solutions: Innovations in Governance from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Executive Education, and a Professional Certificate in Management and Leadership from the NeighborWorks Training Institute of America in Washington, DC.

Nivory Gordon

Nivory Gordon has over 34 years of service with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development. He started his career as a co-op student in 1987 while attending Alabama A&M University in Huntsville, Alabama. Gordon obtained a B.S. in agricultural education in 1989 and an M.S. in agricultural management in 1992. During his tenure with the Agency, he has illustrated respect for others, a productive work environment, and leadership with integrity. Gordon held the following positions over the years with the USDA: assistant county supervisor 1989-1991; construction analyst 1991-1995; rural development specialist 1995-2002; area specialist 2002-2013; area director 2013-2021. Gordon has positively impacted the lives of many rural Alabamians over the years. Based on his extensive experience, leadership, and aggressive work ethic, his goal will be to operationalize the Agency's mission. Gordon is a native of Wilcox County, Alabama, where he resides with his spouse Rachel. Nivory III and Bryant Arthur are his adult sons. He currently operates the family farm (beef cattle and quarter horses) in Furman, Alabama. Gordon serves on the Deacon Board of First-Born Church of Ackerville; Wilcox County Cattleman Association Board of Directors; Delta Leadership Institute 2015-2016 graduate; National Cutting Horse Association Membership; Selma Dallas County Alabama A&M Alumni Chapter president and various other community organizations.

Kenna Graham

Keena Graham was born and raised in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She received her bachelor's degree in history from the University of Alabama and her master's degree in public history from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. However, her career with the National Park Service started over 20 years ago at Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial in the middle of Arlington National Cemetery. From there, she has worked on the National Mall, the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail, the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve, the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, and the Russell Cave National Monument. She has worked on special projects at other Civil War and Civil Rights sites, as well as helping to commemorate the Trail of Tears and the 50th Anniversary of the March from Selma to Montgomery. She spent four years working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in New Jersey. She has also conducted public history research projects in France and in Germany. Today, she is the first permanent superintendent of the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument in Jackson, Mississippi, and she is very happy to be back in the southeast, where she can keep a close eye on the progress of the Alabama Blackbelt National Heritage Area project.

Tamika Green

Tamika Green is currently one of the community development and rapid response specialists, covering Eastern Missouri and including multiple Workforce Regions. Tamika

began her career with the State of Missouri in 2018 as an eligibility specialist for the Department of Social Services. In her role, she helped Missouri citizens secure food, medical, financial, and nutritional assistance so they could live safe, healthy, and productive lives. She later moved on to the Missouri Job Centers as a benefit program specialist under the Department of Higher Education/Workforce Development, working as an employment specialist within the Sikeston Job Center. February 2023 provided an opportunity to move to her current position as a community development and rapid response specialist. She began working to help employers meet their workforce needs by providing reemployment services and guidance to those affected by staff reductions, layoffs and/or worksite closures. Tamika also uses her voice in other ways, serving her local church as a worship leader, participating in outreach events, and working with the youth. She currently resides in Jackson, Missouri.

Bryan Greenwood

Bryan Greenwood, associate state director of the Louisiana Small Business Development Center (LSBDC) Network, is responsible for the programmatic and operational activities of the network. Greenwood is an accomplished finance professional with firsthand experience derived from multiple perspectives of the issues and challenges facing businesses, leveraged by an enhanced ability to assess, identify, and construct strategic solutions to a wide array of financial, banking, and business scenarios. Greenwood has 20+ years of experience as a management consultant, strategy advisor, leadership coach, and small business incubation facilitator, advocating on behalf of 500+ entrepreneurs and small businesses throughout the state while also securing access to capital (loans, Angel Investors, and VC's) for startup and existing business' funding. Greenwood has also served on the Louisiana State University (LSU) E.J. Ourso College of Business Entrepreneurship and the Flores MBA Faculty, serving as an adjunct instructor teaching courses in Innovation & Creativity, Business Plan Writing, and Entrepreneurship Finance. Greenwood's prior experience includes C&I Lending and SBA Government Guaranteed Lending with three financial institutions where he focused on small and medium-sized businesses providing loan and treasury service products. Aside from his primary duties, Greenwood performs an extensive amount of public speaking on behalf of the LSBDC Network. He plays an active role in supporting community endeavors, providing services and boosting awareness of what the LSBDC can offer to existing small businesses and startup entrepreneurs. He regularly performs community outreach and public speaking activities and agendas to include lectures in business classes, recruits companies to take part in classroom case projects, organizes training events, and works with economic development groups to promote the startup, growth, and development of small businesses and the commercialization of new products, thereby creating jobs for Louisiana. As such, he recruits companies to participate in case projects, even arranging and managing training events and seminars that promote small business growth and foster the creation of new jobs. Greenwood's community service roles include being a current member of the Louisiana District Export Council and a volunteer youth football coach. Greenwood holds an MBA and a B.S. in finance degrees from LSU.

Thomas Gregory

Thomas Gregory is the executive director of the Mississippi Main Street Association, where he leads the organization's administrative, advocacy, and development efforts. A certified

community planner, Gregory previously worked for the Small Town Center at Mississippi State University and as the chief administrative officer for the City of Greenwood, Mississippi. Gregory received a master's in city and regional planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and both a master's and bachelor's in business administration from Mississippi State University. He is the past president of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Planning Association and a past participant in Leadership Mississippi, the Public Interest Design Institute, and the Sustainable Cities Design Academy. He currently serves as a board member for the Mississippi Heritage Trust and Keep Mississippi Beautiful and as a member of the Greenwood Planning Commission.

Toniqua Hay

Toniqua Hay leads engagement for the rural and remote portfolios in the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations. She previously worked at the International Finance Corporation's (World Bank Group) Sustainable Infrastructure Advisory Office, advancing innovative opportunities for engagement, investment, collaboration, and value creation within the infrastructure and natural resources sectors' private sector. Her background also consists of program design, monitoring transparency, fiscal accountability, service delivery performance, and human resources management with USAID/ Tanzania, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, The Home Depot, and a boutique operations strategy consulting firm where she worked with energy and manufacturing clients. Toniqua is based in Washington, DC, and holds a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in international development and economic policy from Cornell University and a B.S. in management from Georgia Institute of Technology.

Michael Hecht

Michael Hecht is President & CEO of Greater New Orleans, Inc., the economic development agency for Southeast Louisiana. GNO, Inc.'s mission is to create a region with a thriving economy and an excellent quality of life for everyone. Under Michael's leadership, GNO, Inc. has been named the "Top Economic Development Organization in the United States" by the International Economic Development Council. Before coming to GNO, Inc., Michael led the quarter-billion-dollar Katrina Small Business Recovery Program for the state. Previous to coming home to Louisiana, Michael worked for Mayor Michael Bloomberg in New York City, running the post-9/11 small business program. Michael's entrepreneurial experience includes co-founding a conglomerate of restaurant ventures, including "Foreign Cinema," named Restaurant of the Year 2000 in San Francisco. He began his career as a strategic management consultant in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia. Michael holds an MBA from Stanford Graduate School of Business and an undergraduate degree from Yale. Michael has been recognized as "One of the Ten People Who Made a Difference in the South," "One of the 20 Business 'Icons' of the Tricentennial," and "2018 CEO of the Year." With family roots in Louisiana back to the 1830s, Michael now lives in New Orleans with his wife, Marlene, who is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Tulane, and their two teenage sons.

Dr. Rolondo Herts

Dr. Rolondo Herts is a university-community engagement scholar whose interests include stimulating cultural heritage development activity in the Mississippi Delta and throughout the American South. His partnership development expertise has

strengthened university collaborations with the National Park Service, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Humanities Alliance, and various regional and community-based organizations. Dr. Herts holds a doctorate in planning and public policy from Rutgers University, an M.A. in social sciences from The University of Chicago, and a B.A. in English from Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Star Hoskins

Staresha V. Hoskins is a native of Greenville, Mississippi, in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. Staresha studied at Delta State University, where she received her master's degree in community development in 2014. Staresha currently serves as the monitoring & compliance coordinator for the Delta Regional Authority. In this role, Staresha is responsible for evaluating DRA grant recipient's performance and ensuring that all federal awards are implemented promptly in compliance with the federal regulations set forth by the Delta Regional Authority. Staresha has been employed with the Authority since 2014 and has served in various capacities during her tenure at the Authority.

Abe Hudson

Abe Hudson serves as a program officer for the Home Region Program at the Walton Family Foundation. Prior to this role, he was a Mississippi state representative and held positions at Delta State University as a visiting professor and program director for the DEBTS Program. Hudson's educational background includes a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Southern Mississippi, a master's degree in business administration and finance from Mississippi State University, and a doctoral degree in urban and regional planning from Jackson State University. Abe is also an esteemed member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He and his wife, Adrienne, who works as an educational advocate and elementary school principal, reside in Shelby, Mississippi, with their daughter, Abee Miranda, and their beloved dog, Sophie.

Ted James

As Region VI Administrator, Ted James will oversee Small Business Administration (SBA) programs, offices, and operations in the SBA's South-Central region, serving Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Mr. James' passion for leadership is driven by a deeply held desire to impact the lives of others while transforming his community. A native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he was taught at an early age the value of service, the strength of community, the importance of a quality education, and the principles of social justice. Mr. James earned a B.S. degree in accounting from Southern University A & M College and obtained his J.D. with honors from the Southern University Law Center. In November of 2011, Mr. James was elected to serve as State Representative for Louisiana's 101st House District and immediately emerged as a leader in the Legislature. During his three terms in the Louisiana House of Representatives, he served as chairman of the Administration of Criminal Justice Committee and chairman of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus. Outside of the Louisiana State Legislature, Mr. James is an attorney and past director of the Baton Rouge office of the Urban League of Louisiana.

Tamika E. Jenkins

Having traveled the world with her Army Veteran parents, Tamika comes to the Hinds County Economic Development Authority from Mississippi County, Arkansas, with 15 years of economic development experience. She is no stranger to collaborating with people from all levels of society. Her arduous work has assisted in creating jobs, leading workforce development initiatives, establishing partnerships, working with nonprofit organizations, and becoming a key player in collaborating with communities and businesses to develop working relationships and strong partnerships throughout the South. In 2021, Tamika earned her CEcD, an accomplishment she is extremely proud of. During her tenure, she has assisted in the creation of numerous net new jobs and lead workforce development initiatives, including receiving the FIRST ACT Work Ready Certification award for Arkansas. Having a B.S. in materials engineering from Iowa State University and an M.S.M. in project management, her executive skills will start and finish projects. Tamika had the pleasure of working with the White House Rural Impact project created to attack generational poverty. Tamika's accolades include being among the top 10 Northeast Arkansas Women in Business, 2021 AY Intriguing Women, and AR Money and Politics Magazine "2021 Influencers of the Year." In addition, she has completed numerous leadership programs to assist with her educational goals and community involvement. Her goal is to meet the needs of business and community partners that will spur growth within Hinds County, Mississippi.

Glen Johnson

Glen Johnson currently serves as chief transformation officer at ENNCLOUD Technologies Corporation. He has been an industry-recognized speaker, technology leader, business executive, and advisory consultant for nearly three decades. His deep technology experience spans public and private sector organizations, specializing in Global Technology Outsourcing, Technology Strategy and Finance, Cloud Computing, IT Risk Management, FinTech Payment Systems, and Project Management. Formerly, he was the Founder & CEO of an innovative digital music services software company, where he negotiated multiple rounds of angel and venture capital funding, including execution of a favorable exit for investors. He has strong business domain competencies in the following areas: Information Technology, Grants/Non-Profits, and Higher Education.

Sanford Johnson

Sanford Johnson (he/him/his) has been the executive director of Teach Plus Mississippi since 2020 and leads the work of the Mississippi Policy Fellowship and the Mississippi Teacher Network. Mississippi Policy Fellows have been involved in increasing teacher pay, strengthening the state's teacher pipeline, and increasing access to mental health resources. He also manages the Delta Change Agent Network, through which teacher leaders are working with their principals and colleagues to address school-level problems of practice. Prior to joining Teach Plus, Sanford was the deputy director of Mississippi First, an education policy research and advocacy organization. He serves on the board for Teen Health Mississippi, the Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy, and chairs the Clarksdale Municipal Elections Commission. Sanford is also a 2010-11 alum of the Delta Leadership Institute. Sanford holds a B.A. from Auburn University and an M.P.S. from the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service. He lives in Clarksdale with his wife, Amanda, and their two daughters, Lorelei and Ava.

Lee A. Jones

Lee A. Jones serves as the executive director of the Rural Partners Network (RPN). Through RPN, the Biden-Harris Administration is taking action to transform the way the federal government partners with rural communities to spur inclusive, sustainable economic growth. The RPN creates an alliance of federal agencies and civic partners working to expand rural prosperity through job creation, infrastructure development, and community improvement. The RPN is co-led by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Domestic Policy Council at the White House. In his role, Lee provides overall leadership and works closely with federal partners and RPN communities to deliver on the federal government's commitment to rural communities. Lee is originally from the small, rural town of Bastrop, Louisiana. He is a graduate of Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Lee is also a member of the Leadership Louisiana Class of 2012 and a graduate of the Delta Leadership Institute's BEST class...The CLASS of 2018!

Dr. Cynthia Kelley

Dr. Cynthia Kelley began her career as a public school teacher in West Virginia and has worked in higher education for 32 years. In 1991, she became a community college instructor at West Virginia University at Parkersburg. While at Parkersburg, she assisted in the development of the first bachelor's degree program to be offered in a community college in West Virginia. She is a tenured professor of education and, over the years, has served in a variety of leadership positions, including chair, dean, and vice president for academic affairs and student services. Dr. Kelley has served in these roles at West Virginia University at Parkersburg, Kanawha Valley Community and Technical College, and Motlow State Community College. Kelley earned her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction at Ohio University. She has a master's degree from West Virginia University and a bachelor's degree in education from Glenville State College. Dr. Kelley is an ACE Fellow with the class of 2008-2009, and during that time, she represented her class on the Council of Fellows. During the Fellowship, she visited over 25 colleges, including a six-month residency at Owens Community College in Toledo, Ohio, and a five-month residency with the West Virginia Community and Technical College System chancellor. Kelley was also a member of the 2017 Leadership Kentucky class. Dr. Kelley is a board member of the Southern Association of Colleges with Associate Degrees. She also serves as a board member for the United Way of the Coal Field, Hopkins County Economic Development Corporation, and West Kentucky Workforce Investment Board. She currently serves on the Board for the ACE Council of Fellows and the Board of Trustees for the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). In the past, she has been a peer evaluator for the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission, member of the AACC Commission on Academic, Student, and Community Development, president of the National Association for Community College Teacher Education Programs, member of the West Virginia Program Review Board, chair of the West Virginia Teacher Education Advisory Board, and board member for the Appalachian Education Laboratory. Dr. Kelley began her duties as President/CEO at Madisonville Community College on July 1, 2016.

Michael Kennedy

Since 2020, Michael Kennedy has been a Brownfields project officer in the Brownfields and Revitalization Section at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6

Dallas office. He manages Brownfields grants, assists with Targeted Brownfield Assessments, and is the regional coordinator for the Smart Growth Program. Prior to joining the EPA, he was a federal park ranger for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks in Seattle, Washington. Michael graduated from Oregon State University with a B.S. in Natural Resource Management in 2019. He has a passion for environmental stewardship and outdoor recreation.

Alex Lawson, Jr.

Alex Lawson, Jr. currently serves as the senior vice president for strategic initiatives at Hope Credit Union and Hope Enterprise Corporation, where he leads the development and execution of the corporate strategy and has supported the deployment of \$1.3 billion to more than one million people and businesses in under-resourced Deep South communities. Alex also serves as the chairman of the board of commissioners for the Jackson Redevelopment Authority. Alex works with community stakeholders through this role to revitalize and restore underinvested parts of the city, including the historic Black business district - Farish Street.

Ileana Ledet

Ileana Ledet joined the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) within the Department of Commerce in 2022 and serves as the Economic Development Representative for Louisiana. Prior to joining EDA, Louisiana was the senior vice president of policy for Greater New Orleans, Inc. In that role, Ileana led the organization's legislative affairs as well as regional, state, and federal policy activities. From 2012-2018, Ileana served as deputy commissioner of public affairs for the Louisiana Department of Insurance. Previously, she managed communications and stakeholder engagement at the Louisiana Department of Education as the Public Information Director. Before joining the public sector, Ileana worked as a television news producer in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and subsequently as an executive producer in Phoenix. Ileana graduated from The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. Ileana and her husband are now raising their two children in their hometown of New Orleans.

Betsy Dirksen Londrigan

Betsy Dirksen Londrigan is a graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and former director at the University of Illinois Springfield. She brings over 20 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, working with community, regional, and state leaders to effect positive change. She is a lifelong resident of Springfield, Illinois, and is proud that her family members still own and operate the Centennial farm in Central Illinois, where her grandmother was raised. Dirksen Londrigan is committed to working with rural communities to bring investments to every corner of Illinois to support local and regional initiatives to power economic development and grow local economies.

Alison Lorence

Alison Lorence currently serves as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Federal Disaster Recovery Officer (FDRO) for DR-4684 in Alabama, a recovery mission from the January 2023 tornadoes and storms. She previously served as the FDRO for missions in New Jersey, for Hurricane Ida in 2021-2022, and in the U.S. Virgin Islands from

2017-2018, for Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Beginning as a New York local hire after Hurricane Sandy in 2012, Alison was part of the initial stand up of the Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) Group in its first iteration, then called the Federal Disaster Recovery Coordination Group. Alison continued working on recovery for New York and New Jersey through the following years as part of the only steady-state IRC Group in the country for FEMA Region 2, based in the World Trade Center. Previous to establishing her career with FEMA, Alison was a marketing executive with various roles in the New York Special Events Industry. Alison holds a B.S. from Carnegie Mellon University.

Felicia Lucky

Felecia Lucky is a leader whose passion and foundation of work are deeply embedded in philanthropy. A graduate of Tuskegee University and University of Alabama, Felecia holds a B.S. in accounting and an MBA. After a career in finance, Felecia returned to Livingston, Alabama, and was passionate about the idea of building a foundation with the people and for the people when she joined the Black Belt Community Foundation (BBCF). BBCF was established to strengthen Alabama's 12 poorest counties, known collectively as the Black Belt. In the last 19 years, BBCF has provided opportunities to the region that have improved the quality of life and has partnered with philanthropic organizations that want to invest in local community-led driven transformation. Some noteworthy partnerships include but are not limited to: W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Head Start for early childhood education, and Alabama State Council of the Arts. With her deep roots in the community, Felecia serves on a variety of committees and boards, including the City of Livingston City Council, Black Belt Commission, Heron Foundation Board, and several others. Felecia lives daily to create change through philanthropic work.

Darci Malam

Darci Malam joined the Delta Regional Authority in May 2021 and is the States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) program manager. Prior to joining DRA, Darci was the economic development specialist /revolving loan fund manager for the South-Central Ozark Council of Governments for over six years. Darci's experience also included banking, having worked for a private bank and Farm Service Agency, conference coordinating/planning, marketing, agricultural analysis/field inspections, and clerical work, and she also co-owned/operated a small-scale sawmill and logging business with her husband. Darci received a B.S. in agricultural business from the College of the Ozarks and an MS. degree in agricultural economics/business from the University of Arkansas. Darci is a Missouri native and currently resides with her husband, Tim, and three children, Brennan, Braxton, and Tinli, in Texas County, Missouri, on their small beef cattle farm.

Lacy McManus

Lacy McManus is the executive director of Future Energy at Greater New Orleans, Inc. (GNO, Inc.), where she advances a diverse coalition of higher education, community college, nonprofit, and industry partners spearheading the renewable energy evolution across South Louisiana. Lacy has re-joined the GNO, Inc. team after nearly three years with Amazon Web Services (AWS). Prior to joining AWS, Lacy served as the vice president for strategic initiatives at GNO, Inc., where she oversaw a portfolio of workforce, education, and environmental programs that enhanced the economic competitiveness of the GNO

region. Her work in Louisiana was launched at the Center for Planning Excellence, where she was strategic initiatives manager. Lacy holds a B.A. in journalism from the University of Georgia, an M.A. in global communications from the American University of Paris, and an MBA from Tulane University. She and her husband Bryan are proud New Orleans residents, raising their three daughters and rescue dog Uptown.

Alyssa Meller

Alyssa Meller joined The Center in December 2013, bringing over ten years of Managed Care Medicaid and Medicare experience. This experience includes care coordination, program development, quality improvement, and collaboration with local and state partners. In addition to overseeing operations at The Center, she directs community work in the Delta region through the Delta Region Community Health Systems Development (DRCHSD) Program. This helps rural healthcare organizations understand the importance of community outreach, engagement, and care coordination and how it is an essential part of the value-based payment models. At The Center, Alyssa oversees program operations related to the organization's mission, including human resources, finances, and technology. She works with the chief executive officer and board of directors to develop The Center's strategic plan and oversees implementation of the strategic plan, budget development, marketing, service line development, and monitoring of the balanced scorecard. Alyssa serves on the board of directors for Minnesota Rural Health Association and Men As Peacemakers. She received an M.A. in management with a concentration in organizational development from The College of St. Scholastica and holds a double major from the University of Wisconsin Superior in psychology and sociology.

Warren Miller

Warren Miller is the senior advisor for the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Disaster Assistance. Prior to the SBA, Mr. Miller served as a key policy advisor to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administrator and vice-chair of equity on the FEMA National Advisory Council, the Biden-Harris presidential campaign's state campaign director for Mississippi, and in the U.S. Congress. As a small business owner, he also led the implementation of E-911 radio communications systems onto the statewide communications network for several municipalities. Since 2005, he has been actively engaged in large-scale disaster responses and recovery, including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ike, Sandy, Irene, and Harvey, numerous tornadoes, winter storms, and major floods, such as the historic Mississippi River flood, as well as participating on National Level Exercises New Madrid Earthquake and National Mass Care Task Force planning. Mr. Miller has also been recognized for his service on various boards and through awards, including the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Board of Directors. He is a life member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and a recipient of the Elder Watson Diggs Award, the fraternity's second-highest national service honor for a member. He is a proud alumnus of the University of Southern Mississippi.

Daniel Musgrave

Daniel Musgrave joined the Delta Regional Authority in February 2023 and is currently the States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) program analyst. Before coming to DRA, Daniel was the community development administrator/project manager at the Northwest Tennessee Development District (NWTDD). Daniel's responsibilities at NWTDD included writing and administering various state and federal grants (CDBG, SDG, EDA, DRA, TDEC ARP), attending bid openings and pre-construction conferences, coordinating with engineers and contractors, interviewing and community outreach to the nine counties served by NWTDD. Daniel grew up in Lewisburg, Tennessee, and is a graduate of the University of Tennessee at Martin. He resides in Martin, Tennessee, with his wife, Tiffany, and three children: Samantha, Luke, and Harper. His interests are music, reading, leather crafting, basketball, and running.

Dwight Norton

Dwight Norton currently works as the interim chief planning & capital projects officer for the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA), where he leads the development of service plans, major initiatives, and capital projects to transform public transport in the region into a world-class service. A New Orleans native and reformed engineer, he returned home in 2007 to work on the rebuilding and reimagining of the city. After a dozen years of consulting on housing, land use, and transportation planning for projects throughout the region and the United States, he worked as the mobility coordinator for the City of New Orleans, a first step to link transportation policies and initiatives to be more effective, equitable and resilient. He led the development of the city's first bike share system and co-led one of the country's largest demonstration projects to temporarily reconfigure a network of streets for safer transportation choices called Connect the Crescent. He recently oversaw the implementation of a complete redesign of the agency's bus routes and is managing the development of the region's first rapid transit corridor. Through insatiable curiosity and love of hometown, he dives into understanding why the city functions the way it does in order to enable change in the built environment that realizes the aspirations of communities.

Clint O'Neal

Clint O'Neal is the executive director of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC). Clint has 16 years of economic development experience and is passionate about making a difference by helping communities win economic development projects and helping companies to be successful in Arkansas. Clint started his economic development career in 2007 as a project manager at AEDC. He served as the vice president of business recruitment for the Missouri Partnership starting in 2011 before moving back to his home state in 2018 to be the deputy director of global business at AEDC. Clint was named executive director by Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders in January 2023. He serves as a member of the board of directors for the Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives, the Arkansas Economic Development Foundation, the Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence, and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. He also serves as Governor Sanders' Designee to the Delta Regional Authority. Clint is a graduate of the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma and is a certified economic developer through the International Economic Development

Council. He holds a master's degree in community and economic development from the University of Central Arkansas. Clint and his wife, Heather, live in Conway with their four children: Chloe, Ellie, Ava, and Caleb.

Courtney Paige

Courtney has more than a decade of experience in public outreach and program coordination. Many of Courtney's projects have been in and around Central Louisiana with the City of Alexandria and the City of Pineville in multiple capacities, such as managing summer day camps for children or planning and implementing special events while volunteering with child-centric organizations. She has worked with multiple dashboards and interfaces, coordinated multiple schedules for statewide appointments, maintained digital marketing campaigns, and communicated with the public through a variety of avenues, including press releases and social media. She possesses a B.A. degree in mass communications & journalism from Ashford University.

Cheyton Pendley

Cheyton Pendley joined the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) as a workforce program analyst in September 2023. In this role, Cheyton oversees the development and administration of various agency programs and partnership initiatives, including the Delta Workforce Grant Program and Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities grant program. Cheyton has over two years of experience in grants management and collaboration with economic development organizations, local development districts, and local/state governments. Before coming to DRA, Cheyton was an infrastructure planner at the Green River Area Development District. Mr. Pendley earned his B.A. in business administration at Lindsey Wilson College.

Katrina Pielli

Katrina Pielli serves as the director of the Office of Engagement in the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED). Pielli has more than 20 years of shaping policy, driving forward ambitious programs, and building partnerships to tackle global energy challenges and address the climate crisis. In her role as the engagement office director in OCED, she ensures robust, meaningful stakeholder engagement and effective communications are at the center of the late-stage capital-intensive technology demonstration projects implemented by OCED. Pielli also served in the DOE Office of Policy, advancing clean energy and supply chain efforts with a focus on the nexus of manufacturing and communities. Most recently, Pielli was an international development and humanitarian energy consultant, where she worked with government leaders, philanthropy, humanitarian agencies, and private sector companies to achieve their energy and climate goals. Prior to that, Pielli held several positions in the U.S. government—at the U.S. Agency for International Development, DOE, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—and worked in the private sector and civil society. A native of rural Idaho, Pielli holds an M.S. in environmental management and policy from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a B.A. in environmental studies and policy from Cornell College.

Marshall Pierite

Marshall Pierite is the founder and owner of The Pierite Group, a Louisiana-based company that provides business advisory services. He is also the co-founder and co-owner of Tribal Solutions Medical, a company dedicated to providing medical resources to rural and native communities. He is also a founding member of Tribal Communications, a company created to connect the digital divide through technology and innovation in Indian Country and rural America. A native Louisianan, Marshall began his career by serving in the U.S. Marine Corps with a military occupational specialty in administration. Following his military service, he worked for the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana as a medical clerk. After receiving progressive promotions within the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana's Health Department, he was promoted to director of the Tunica-Biloxi Social Services Department. While serving in the Social Services Department, Marshall also became a member of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribal Council. For more than 25 years, he held several elected positions on the Council, including secretary-treasurer, vice-chairman, and chairman of the Tribe. Over the course of his time on the Council, he worked on government operations, budgeting, infrastructure development, economic development, community development, and tax policy development. Marshall became well versed in government operations throughout Indian Country, federal regulations, government-to-government negotiations, and relationship building between governmental organizations and private entities. He currently and proudly serves as the chairman of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe. Through this position, he hopes to establish unity and purpose, create wealth and jobs, and provide accessibility and accountability to the members of the Tribe. Concurrent with Marshall's service in Tribal government, he also excelled in several leadership positions in corporate governance. He served as the chief executive officer of MobiLoans, a financial services corporation. Under Marshall's leadership, MobiLoans grew from a small start-up company to a multi-million dollar national financial service institution. As chief executive officer, he oversaw a multi-million dollar portfolio, all while creating workforce development opportunities for the citizens of Louisiana. Due to his outstanding service, Marshall was named chairman of the Board of Directors of MobiLoans, a position he currently holds. Marshall has also served in key positions on a number of boards and committees with private, Tribal, and nonprofit organizations. He has served as chairman and co-chairman of the Board of Carcieri Task Force; board member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce/NAEI; board member of the United South and Eastern Tribes; board member of the National Online Lending Alliance Board; liaison officer to Tunica-Biloxi Economic Development Corporation; mentor to Tunica-Biloxi Youth Council and committee member of the United South and Eastern Tribes Social Services Program. He currently serves as the chairman of the Inter-Tribal Council of Louisiana, board member of the Tunica-Biloxi Economic Development Authority, board member of the Family Justice Center of Louisiana, board member of United Way of Central Louisiana, committee member of Southern Partners Fund, and founding member of the Gulf States American Indian Chamber of Commerce. Recently, Chairman Pierite was selected as the 2022 Tribal Leader of the Year by the Native American Finance Officers Association. He was also selected to serve on the first-ever Tribal Intergovernmental Advisory Committee through the Housing Urban and Development (HUD) federal agency, which was created to strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship between HUD and Tribal Nations. He also serves on the Governor's Task Force for Missing Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Veranisha Thompson Pohlman

Veranisha Thompson Pohlman (she/they) is a New Orleanian, and much like any New Orleanian, she brings “home” wherever she goes. And from that, she brings laughter, CiQ, and human-centered approaches to racial equity work. Veranisha is Louisiana-educated by way of a bachelor's degree (BFA) from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and an MBA (HR/international business) from Louisiana State University at Shreveport. For nearly ten years, she has worked in community-based spaces, honing her passions while working directly for equity in business and wealth economies, community visibility, and inclusionary belonging. In her daily work, she provides technical support to startup founders and entrepreneurs in New Orleans’ communities, historically under-resourced and underserved, leading as the executive director of Fund 17, a nonprofit that provides holistic technical assistance to small businesses in New Orleans. At present, she is actively pursuing interests in developing her knowledge in gardening and cyber security.

Malika Polk-Lee

Malika Polk-Lee has served as the executive director of the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center—which now includes Club Ebony—since 2015. In this role, she ensures local programming excellence while maintaining the exhibits that welcome visitors from all over the world. She is also director of the CVB for Indianola and Sunflower County, Mississippi. She understands that service to the residents of the area is vital and that it helps build a stronger community as well as offering guests a richer experience in the museum and the Mississippi Delta as a whole. Malika holds a B.S. from Mississippi State University and an MBA from Delta State University. She serves as the secretary/treasurer of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area board. Malika is active in the Indianola community through service organizations, including Rotary Club and Alpha Kappa Alpha. She is married to Gerald Lee, and they have one daughter, London.

Greg Richardson

With over two decades as port director, Greg Richardson's engineering background and expertise in port management have propelled the Port of Columbia to a Multimodal Industrial complex, expanding from ten to 400 acres. He has secured \$34.2 million in state and federal funding, including a \$10.5 million FY 2023 RAISE Grant, reflecting his unwavering commitment to regional economic and community development. As a navigator of port management challenges and opportunities, Greg champions innovative solutions, fostering growth, job creation, and economic resilience in the Delta Region. At the Delta Regional Authority 2023 annual conference's Transportation Transformation Session, he will share insights on the Port of Columbia's journey and the positive impact of the FY2023 RAISE Grant on the region's economic development and resiliency.

Sanci Richardson

Sanci Richardson is the founder and lead consultant at The Bridge Consulting Group LLC, a specialized consulting firm dedicated to community and economic development. This comprehensive service firm provides strategic planning and capacity building to nonprofit managers and municipal leaders. In 2009, Richardson established the company with the goal of aiding executives and community organizers in developing winning strategies that promote growth through effective strategic planning and partnerships. The Bridge Consulting Group excels at providing transformative solutions by enabling

communities, philanthropic organizations, government officials, school districts, and educational institutions to access resources within Arkansas and the Mississippi Delta region. Prior to forming The Bridge Consulting Group, Richardson served as a business developer at the Arkansas Economic Development Commission and worked with the Delta Regional Authority, focusing on workforce development programs and HBCU Entrepreneurship initiatives. Currently, Richardson serves as a consultant with the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, offering support to nonprofit organizations such as the Arkansas Black Mayors Association and the South Arkansas Health Council. She is a partner to the Arkansas State Broadband Office with AR Connects, their digital equity planning team. Sancı played a pivotal role in leading outreach efforts in rural and underserved communities. Additionally, she is actively engaged in the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute's collaboration focused on Health Equity in Arkansas. She is a prominent leader in the broad coalition designing strategies for literacy and early childhood initiatives across South Arkansas communities. Sancı also serves as a community manager with Excel by Eight and consults with Forward Arkansas, an education policy nonprofit. Sancı and her husband, Kevin, have made their home in the Central Little Rock area. They are proud parents of six adult children and grandparents to two grandsons and a late granddaughter.

Michael Ricks

Michael Ricks joined the Small Business Administration (SBA) in 2004. He served as the district director in Alabama for four years and was appointed as the district director for Louisiana in 2008. Prior to joining the SBA, Mr. Ricks served in the U.S. Army as an infantry officer, a program manager for Advanced Technology and Production Readiness projects for the U.S. Marine Corps in Washington, DC, and as a defense acquisition officer in early Program Concept Development for the Army Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia. As an active duty and reserve infantry officer, Mr. Ricks completed numerous overseas combat and hazardous duty deployments. He was medically retired from active service and is a lifetime member of the Disabled American Veterans. Mr. Ricks is a former small business entrepreneur and operated a consulting company in Florida, which advised on software development, business processes, and information systems technology. Mr. Ricks earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Houston. He also holds a graduate degree in systems engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, as well as an MBA from Troy University in Alabama. Mr. Ricks was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, where much of his extended family still resides.

Deidre Deculus Robert

Deidre Deculus Robert was born and raised in Mamou, Louisiana. She has been immersed in agriculture and rural development her entire life; her mother retired from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and her father served on the Farm Services Agency State Committee. Robert has over two decades of legal, administrative, and executive management experience and is honored to serve as state director of Rural Development in Louisiana. Her legal career began in the Parish Attorney's Office of East Baton Rouge as an assistant city prosecutor. During her 11 years with the city-parish, she advanced to become the first black female section chief. She worked for over six years as an assistant attorney with the Louisiana Department of Justice, where she served as deputy director

of the Public Protection Division, deputy director of the Litigation Division, and special litigation counsel assigned to defend the Louisiana Judiciary. Prior to accepting this presidential appointment, Robert served as the executive counsel for the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. Her responsibilities included managing legislative affairs on the federal, state, and local levels and supervising the innovative procurement, legal, and internal audit sections of the agency, as well as the human resources legal matters of the agency. She collaborated with state and local partners to advance infrastructure needs, including rail, broadband, and bridges throughout the state. Previously, Robert served as general counsel of the Southern University and A&M College System, the only HBCU college system in the country. Robert has focused her passion for service as a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated; the Louisiana Bar Association; the Louisiana Bar Foundation as a fellow and board member; the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society; Junior League of Baton Rouge; Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, and more. She and her husband, James, reside in Glynn, Louisiana, with their two sons. State Director Robert and her team are here to provide investments that will deliver help to small businesses to access new and better markets, grow modern infrastructure, promote a healthy environment and affordable housing, and create equitable access to quality health care, jobs, and capital.

Kathy Saloy

Kathy Cobette Saloy is the senior vice president of community and economic development and market leader for the Louisiana and Mississippi Gulf Coast for Hope Enterprise Corporation (HOPE). She focuses on asset-building strategies and facilitates investments in community infrastructure, including fresh food retailers, charter schools, affordable housing, and other community facilities and infrastructure projects, while connecting communities with HOPE resources and expertise. In the role, she manages, structures, and leads the organization's business development financing and debt associated with specialized sources. Kathy manages and develops community and economic development programs and leads, coaches, and develops a team of commercial loan officers in her market. As market leader, she collaborates with retail and other lines of business to leverage the credit union's full suite of products and services.

Jamie Schmill

Jamie Schmill is a creative systems thinker, strategist, and team builder who has cultivated her expertise in programs and grants management, capacity bridging, and equity-centered learning and evaluation through work across the higher education, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors. Jamie joined the Foundation for Louisiana as vice president (VP) of programs in August 2020. As VP of programs, Jamie works with the foundation's staff, community-based partners, and board in working toward a freer and more just Louisiana. Prior to joining the foundation, Jamie served as a program officer and then as the director of programs at Laureus Sport for Good Foundation. She spent a decade prior to that in higher education, supporting students, faculty, and community partners in navigating equitable partnerships to support recovery in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region following Hurricane Katrina. Jamie holds undergraduate degrees in gender studies and dance, as well as a Master of Liberal Arts in philosophy from Tulane University. She completed a Master of Education in learning and leadership at Vanderbilt

University and is currently a doctoral student studying leadership and social change at Antioch University.

John Spann

John Spann is a proud Mississippian and a graduate of Mississippi State University. He has worked in public history and the humanities for ten years. He became the first curator of education and programming for the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in 2017 and stayed in that role until 2021. Spann is currently the program and outreach officer for the Mississippi Humanities Council (MHC). In this position, he oversees and develops council-conducted programs and manages grants and grantees of the MHC. In addition, he cultivates partnerships with educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and community groups to fulfill the council's mission. He is a member of the Rho Xi Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, where he serves on the executive board as chapter historian, also serves on the Board of Directors for the ACLU, the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra, and the community advisory board for the Mississippi Museum of Art.

Suzanne Snyder

Suzanne Snyder is a public health analyst in the Hospital State Division at the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP). She serves as the program coordinator for the Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program and Delta Health Systems Implementation Program and a project officer for the State Office of Rural Health Program. Suzanne has a varied background in social services and community development, from case management and counseling to program coordination and community assessment. Before joining FORHP, she served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Peru and an AmeriCorps Vista volunteer in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina. She obtained a Master of Social Work from Appalachian State University and obtained a bachelor's in social work from the University of North Carolina, Wilmington.

Karen Stafford

After retiring from a lengthy career in nursing, Karen transitioned to emergency management as a planner in preparedness and response for the state of Maryland and Washington, DC. Wanting to expand her experience in emergency management, she began working in disaster recovery with the Federal Emergency Management Agency through the agency's Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) cadre. Her breadth of experience covering response and recovery has resulted in Karen being called upon to serve as an advisor to Federal Coordinating Officers, Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinators, and Federal Disaster Recovery Officers (FDRO). Taking on a multitude of roles, she has been an acting FDRO, a deputy FDRO, and is a consummate mentor to members of the IRC cadre. Ms. Stafford holds a B.S. in biology from Upsala College, East Orange, New Jersey, and from the University of Maryland Baltimore County Honors College. She holds a B.A. in health administration public policy and a master's in applied sociology and health public policy.

Belinda Stewart

Belinda J. Stewart, FAIA, APTRP, is the founding principal of Belinda Stewart Architects, a woman-owned and led firm in the small town of Eupora, Mississippi. Belinda has always been a citizen architect, persistently searching for ways to assist communities and lead her own. She is the seventh-term mayor of the Village of Walthall. She believes a small town can inspire, family roots can build an ethic that weaves through a profession, and that architecture shows the beauty of history and hope for our future. Over the last 33 years, her firm has provided architectural services for over 500 historic structures, which have received over 100 design and preservation awards.

Ernest D. Strickland

Ernest D. Strickland is the president and CEO of the Black Business Association (BBA) of Memphis. Ernest has led a multitude of successful economic and workforce development projects throughout his career. Strickland comes to the BBA after a stellar 15-year career with the Greater Memphis Chamber. In his role at the Chamber, Ernest served as senior vice president of workforce. He launched Memphis' community-wide workforce development initiative, Upskill 901 - a program aimed at upskilling 10,000 individuals over three years. Other positions included serving as the chamber vice president of international and director of economic development. Strickland also partnered with his musically gifted son to launch SC World, a music management and services firm. Previously, Ernest owned and managed Investors First Realty. In this capacity, his responsibilities included managing cash flow, driving property acquisitions and sales, and serving as property manager for the firm's real estate portfolio. Ernest is passionate about growing the city, and he enjoys investing in his community through civic duties. He previously served as chairman of the W.E.B. DuBois Charter School Consortium, board member of The Consortium MMT, on the board of trustees of New Memphis Institute, chairman of the Downtown Memphis Commission, board member of Memphis World Trade Club, and the board of directors for the Leadership Memphis. Ernest serves on the Greater Memphis Local Workforce Development Board and the Memphis in May International Festival board of directors. Ernest holds a bachelor's degree in professional studies from the University of Memphis and a master's from Bethel University's executive MBA program.

L. Nicole Stringfellow

L. Nicole Stringfellow is the program manager for leadership development with the Delta Regional Authority. Her professional and academic background includes a 4-year career as the regional vice president for the Delta with Together for Hope with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a 19-year career at Delta State University, where she was the former regional director for the MDSC/AmeriCorps*VISTA program at Delta State University, and served five years in an interim capacity as director for The Center for Community and Economic Development. L. Nicole has a diverse education with a bachelor's in criminal justice from Mississippi Valley State University, a master's in criminal justice from Delta State University, and a master's in human capital development from the University of Southern Mississippi. She is also a certified economic development finance professional from the National Development Council (New York). She is a distinguished and diverse professional with 27 years of experience in case management, 25 years of community outreach and solutions development expertise, 21 years of experience assisting nonprofit organizations in developing and implementing strategic plans, 23 years of program

management experience, 15 years as an educator and a lifetime of service to people and communities. Her education and experience make her preeminent in working with grassroots communities, leadership development, program compliance and monitoring, volunteer management, and training and development.

Dr. Michael A. Stubblefield

Dr. Michael A. Stubblefield serves as vice chancellor for the Office of Research, Strategic Initiatives, and Economic Development (ORSI-ED) at Southern University (SU) and A&M College. ORSI-ED provides technical and administrative oversight for various university, government, and company projects. Dr. Stubblefield is a senior research administrator at one of the largest historically black universities in the United States. With over 25 years of higher education experience, his true passion lies in the need to drive economic growth, particularly in communities of color anchored by HBCUs. A mechanical engineering graduate of SU and A&M College and doctoral degree recipient in engineering science from Louisiana State University, Dr. Stubblefield has secured over \$40MM in contracts and grants from federal agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, NASA, the National Science Foundation, as well as nonprofits and private businesses. Michael has developed operating policies and mentor-protégé relationships between higher education, agencies, and businesses in furthering contracting opportunities at universities. He has authored/co-authored 25 refereed journals and aligned the University's federal awards, contracting, and workforce development efforts by establishing the SU Office of Governmental Contracting Services, guiding the operation of the Louisiana Small Business Development Center at Southern, and creating the SU Innovation Center. An invited speaker at national and international conferences and symposiums, Dr. Stubblefield continues to serve on various boards and commissions that support economic and community development, research, workforce development, entrepreneurship, education, technology, and cyberinfrastructure.

Crystal G. Talley

Crystal G. Talley, originally from Pisgah, Alabama, earned an associate of science degree in technical and vocational education from Northeast Alabama Community College in Rainsville, Alabama, a B.S. in economics from the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama, and an MBA from Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama. Crystal has been employed by the State of Alabama for 21 years, 19 of those with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). During her career at ADECA, she has worked with numerous federal grant programs and currently holds the position of federal initiatives and recreation (FIR) division chief. The FIR Division consists of programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Recreational Trails Program, Appalachian Regional Commission, Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, and the Delta Regional Authority.

Adam Tartar

Adam Tartar manages the Economic Development program for the Regional Planning Commission, serving the eight-parish New Orleans metro area. With a background in urban planning and the arts, Mr. Tartar helps the communities he works with achieve their economic and community development goals. Born and raised in Connecticut, Mr. Tartar first gained a fascination for brownfields from the abandoned factories and

warehouses that littered his hometown in the 1980s. In 2003, driven by a desire to learn about more complex urban challenges, he moved to New Orleans to pursue a B.S. and M.S. in urban planning from the University of New Orleans. Mr. Tartar recently won a \$500,000 brownfield assessment grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to support the redevelopment of brownfield sites in St. Bernard Parish. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and serves on the Board of the Louisiana Brownfield Association.

Barry J. Walker

Barry J. Walker is an immigration attorney who practices in Tupelo, Mississippi. Mr. Walker has been a practicing attorney since 1975. For the last 28 years, he has concentrated his practice on the representation of foreign medical graduates, hospitals, clinics, and university-affiliated healthcare systems. He regularly represents healthcare facilities and foreign medical graduates in J-1 waiver cases, H1B visa cases, O-1 extraordinary ability cases, and permanent residence cases for physicians. Barry is a regularly invited speaker on immigration matters involving Foreign Medical Graduates and is the author of business employment and foreign physician immigration topics. He holds a LL.M. in international law and trade from Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he was a distinguished graduate. He obtained his J.D. from the University of Mississippi and a B.S. from Mississippi State University. Barry has been listed in "Who's Who in Corporate Immigration Law" for the years 2014-2022. Barry served on the National Ethics Committee for the American Immigration Lawyers Association from 2014 to 2017. On June 20, 2019, Barry was recognized with the Roberta Freedman Lifetime Achievement Award, given annually by the International Medical Graduate (IMG) Taskforce. IMG Taskforce lawyers collaborate for continuing legal education and government advocacy efforts and are dedicated to the improvement of access to health care for all Americans, including indigent persons and people who live in medically underserved areas of the United States. The Roberta Freedman Lifetime Achievement Award is given each year to a member attorney who has demonstrated sustained commitment to the educational advocacy objectives of the IMG Taskforce.

Dr. Corey Wiggins

Dr. Corey Wiggins was confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate on March 10, 2022, to serve as Delta Regional Authority's (DRA) federal co-chairman. Nominated by President Biden on December 15, 2021, Wiggins became the fifth DRA federal co-chairman to serve in the position. A native of Hazlehurst, Mississippi, Chairman Wiggins most recently served as the executive director of the Mississippi State Conference NAACP. Previously, he served as senior vice president of policy at Hope Enterprise Corporation and Hope Credit Union. He also served as executive director of the Mississippi Economic Policy Center and as director of the Hope Policy Institute, where he focused on strengthening communities, building assets, and improving lives in economically distressed parts of the MidSouth. In addition, Wiggins served as a Barbara Jordan Health Policy Fellow in the U.S. Senate and as a policy analyst for the Mississippi Legislature Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) Committee. Wiggins also held the rank of visiting assistant professor of health policy and management at Jackson State University. Chairman Wiggins completed his undergraduate studies with a B.S. in biology from Alcorn State University. He received an M.S. in public health with an emphasis in health

policy and a Ph.D. in health promotion and health education from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Additionally, he has a certificate of nonprofit leadership from Boston College and has furthered his training through fellowships with the Kaiser Family Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Amy Williams

Amy Williams is a dedicated professional serving as the community development manager for Northeast Arkansas at the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. With a passion for fostering growth and prosperity, Amy has been a driving force in advancing economic initiatives and enhancing community development in the region. With a background in chamber and economic development, Amy brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her role. Her commitment to collaboration and engagement has made her a vital bridge between local communities and economic opportunities. Amy's strategic approach and innovative thinking have contributed to the successful implementation of projects that have positively impacted the economic landscape of Northeast Arkansas. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Amy's dedication to community well-being is evident through her active involvement and volunteering with Main Street Arkansas, Little Rock Air Force Base Community Council, Arkansas State University, and Williams Baptist University. Her leadership and advocacy extend beyond the office, demonstrating her genuine desire to make a lasting, positive impact on the lives of those around her. Amy's ability to inspire and lead by example sets her apart as a professional in community and economic development. Her drive, expertise, and dedication continue to shape the trajectory of Northeast Arkansas's growth and prosperity.

Rhea Williams-Bishop

Rhea Williams-Bishop is director of Mississippi and New Orleans programming at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKFF). In this role, she leads the foundation's strategy and grantmaking in the region, which is done in close partnership with her team, WKFF grantees, the community, and other partners. Prior to joining the foundation, Rhea served as the director of the Mississippi Center for Education Innovation, a nonprofit education intermediary focused on impacting and transforming education through engagement and innovation. Rhea previously held several positions with the Children's Defense Fund Southern Regional Office, most recently serving as deputy director. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, she worked to ensure that children and families were not further traumatized by reuniting families and securing resources during relief, recovery, and restoration. Rhea holds a Ph.D. in education leadership, a master's degree in public policy and administration, and a bachelor's degree in urban affairs, each from Jackson State University. She has completed numerous leadership programs: Rockefeller Foundation Next Generation Leadership Program, Leadership Mississippi, Leadership Madison County, and most recently, the Southeastern Council of Foundations - Hull Fellowship Program. She also received professional development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Patrick Witty

Patrick has served as the director of Small Business and Community Services at Louisiana Economic Development since 2005. He has over 40 years of experience in community and economic development, banking, public finance, and government. In addition to his work with small businesses and community capacity building, Patrick serves as staff support for the department's engagement with regional economic development organizations as well as disaster response, recovery, and resilience. Patrick earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He has served on the New Roads (Louisiana) City Council, as president of the Pointe Coupee Chamber of Commerce, as president of the Louisiana Industrial Development Executives Association, and as state president of the Louisiana Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees). Patrick was ordained a permanent deacon in the Catholic Church in 2022, serving the Diocese of Baton Rouge. He and his wife of 42+ years, Stephanie, reside in Pointe Coupee Parish.

Christina Wooden

Christina Wooden joined the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) in March 2016. She oversees DRA's health programs, including Delta Doctors, Innovative Readiness Training, Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program, and Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program. She holds a B.S. in business administration from the University of Missouri at Columbia and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Christina is also a graduate of the Delta Leadership Institute and Harvard University's Executive Leadership Academy. She has over 16 years of experience in community development.